The result of the Bundestag election has many Germans despairing and some foreign observers believing the fascists are back on the march to seize power as the Nazis did in 1933. This is nonsense. The German philosopher Karl Marx recognized as much when he remarked that history doesn’t repeat itself exactly, but rather first as tragedy, second as farce. Today’s Germany bears little resemblance to the unstable Weimar Republic of the early 1930s. Its president today is the distinguished democrat Frank-Walter Steinmeier – no comparison to the monarchist, nationalist Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, who in 1933 appointed Nazi leader Adolf Hitler Reich Chancellor. In its ranks today, the AfD has rabble rousers, xenophobes, anti-Islamists, and anti-Semites. Its leaders have pledged to “hunt down” Chancellor Merkel and the country’s democratic parties. Let them try! The AfD enjoysouting itself. In Germany’s Saxony region it became the biggest party by a narrow margin. In total nationwide, however, it took only 12.6 percent. More than 87 percent voted against these chauvinists. We democrats should therefore not make the mistake of overstating the AfD, but instead assess the situation calmly and realistically.

Yes, this party of nationalist loudmouths is a disgrace to every humane society and every liberal democracy. But every open society also has its share of racists, xenophobic deportables. In this respect the United States is no different than Italy, France, or Hungary. In some countries the so-called populists even run the government. In such cases the democratic majority must resolve to defend freedom and restore it in full.

This spring, in France the populist Marine Le Pen took a share of the vote nearly three times the size of the AfD’s in Germany. Of course, that is no solace. Any vote for the AfD is one too many. We, the open society and overpopulated majorities, must guard our own way. And, the democratic parties as well as politicians should do their homework.

Their first step should be to recognize their own mistakes. The center-right “grand coalition” with Chancellor Merkel followed a good course for Germany. It gave asylum to people in need. Yet it failed to lead to the fears of parts of the German population. Without question, that needs to be done better. Calmly, but resolutely. That’s how we safeguard freedom and humanity.

The democratic majority must decide to defend freedom and restore it in full.

Confident and Prudent

The citrus fruit etrog, the front of a date palm tree lulav, as well as branches of myrrh and willow are all symbols of Sukkot. Since ancient times, the Feast of Tabernacles has symbolized the unity of the Jewish people. This applies as much today as it ever has. It is a festival of joy.

BRIGITTE ZYPRIES

Germany’s Chances

“If Industry 4.0 is a neologism invented in Germany. Today, the term is commonplace in China and the U.S. There, machines made in Germany are in great demand,” Germany’s Minister for Economic Affairs Brigitte Zypries tells the Jewish Voice. She also discusses the difficult situation of her party, the SPD. For her, an important task for the future is fighting anti-Semitism, first and foremost using schools.

Supporting the Needy

Since its founding in 1991, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (JCC) has devoted itself to the material compensation of Holocaust survivors and to their care. Rüdiger Mahlo, the representative of the JCC in Germany, tells the story, frequently a pawn of top level politics. His account includes the organization’s ongoing efforts to ensure that survivors can live their lives out in dignity.

Dear Readers,

Seven is a Jewish lucky number. The menorah, the Jewish candelabrum, has seven arms; the week has seven days. The next issue of the Jewish Voice will usher in the seventh year of the paper’s existence. For that, we thank you, our loyal readers. It is your interest that has helped us nearly double our original circulation of 30,000. In collaboration with Axel Springer publishers, for the past four years we have added a German-language edition as a supplement to the newspaper The Week.

We would also like to thank the editorial team and our many freelancers. Top-flight journalists such as Michael Rutz, Heribert Prantl, Roland Tichy, Peter Huth and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks are writing for us. Political leaders and artists we have interviewed include Angela Merkel, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Sigmar Gabriel and Metz Shalev.

Our paper is financed through ads for companies and institutions. Our corporate sponsors, including global groups such as Allianz, BASF, Coca-Cola, Deutsche Post, Deutsche Bahn and Mercedes, have remained loyal through the years. They do so to reach decision-makers and influencers throughout the world – but also to help keep the German-Jewish relationship thriving.

The success of the Jewish Voice has stirred interest among others. That’s a positive situation. Competition is good for press and business alike. But the playing field should be an even one, not slanted by public funding. That would violate the principle of a free press and economy.

We hope to keep reporting freely for you, dear readers – and keep your valuable interest.
Germany’s Challenges Will Grow

Populism, Europe’s excessive debt, Trump, climate change, international terror

By Rafael Seligmann

A ngela Merkel has the chance to become Germany’s longest-serving chancellor. The Christian Democrat received the people’s mandate to form her fourth cabinet. That puts her in line to replace Helmut Kohl’s sixteen-year tenure. Angela Merkel and her Christian conservatives have picked a wet baby, Martin Schulz, to run for chancellor. Schulz, now, will need to govern on borrowed fuel. The European Central Bank is lending money under steam using borrowed fuel. The result is an era of free money. The ECB is purchasing state and corporate bonds to the tune of €700 billion every month. The total volume of these asset purchases has reached €2.4 trillion.

This era of free money will inevitably come to an end. Less robust national economies, especially that of Italy, rely on the interest-free cash injections like junkies. Once free credit is gone and reasonable interest has to be paid once again, Italy’s economy will be thrown into crisis. France, too, will face instability – not only in France. Germany. The success of populist movements in France, Italy, Hungary, Poland, and even the U.S. demonstrate as much. Germany is no island of the blissful. One voter in ten opted in favor of the far-right populist AfD. In parts of the east that figure was one in five.

Meanwhile, however, the populist nationalism and/or putatively devout governments of some European countries and the U.S. have big issues with Germany’s democratic, liberal values. Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan keeps trying to pressure Germany because Berlin needs Ankara’s cooperation to keep an EU-Turkish refugee deal operating. The governments of Hungary and Poland, meanwhile, refuse to take in the share of refugees assigned to them by the EU.

Russia refuses to hand the occupied Crimea peninsula back to Ukraine. Moscow supports pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine militarily. The Kremlin also rejects the NATO membership of the Baltic States. Indeed, Moscow continues to try to re-establish its political and economic hegemony over all these states, belonging as they once did to the Soviet Union. Neither Berlin nor NATO can accept Russia’s conduct without losing their credibility as reliable partners and the legitimacy of the transatlantic alliance.

The result is a latent conflict between Berlin and Moscow. Even more profound is Germany’s sudden but now ongoing verbal confrontation with the United States under the administration of Donald Trump. He claims to represent “America first.” Trump launched his presidency by decrying NATO’s obsolete and ridiculing the EU. These two institutions are pillars of Germany’s prosperity and reputation, with free trade for the German economy. Trump’s xenophobia and fear of fascist and racist agitation directly violates the principles of Germany’s democracy. Here, Berlin publicly, however, by lecturing the U.S. president on democracy and human rights as Chancellor Merkel and her challenger Martin Schulz did, was no example of far-sighted diplomacy.

Donald Trump has three years left in his current term as president. Berlin has to try to find a way to co-exist with Washington during the Trump era and, especially, thereafter. The United States is and will remain Germany’s strongest and most important ally.

Threats at home and abroad stemming from climate change and international terrorism will rise in an unstable world. To come to grips with these and other threats, Merkel will need a clear political concept, good luck and, first and foremost, the loyalty of the democratic German citizenry.

North Korea’s and Iran’s Blackmail Strategy

A political settlement guaranteeing peace must be found

By Elisabeth Neu

P yongyang’s ambition of becoming an “invisible nuclear power” is spreading fear. The latest causes for concern were the dictatorship’s missile tests and a俩ndan dysentery outbreak. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Japan would not tolerate the threat from North Korea. The UN Security Council unanimously condemned North Korea’s missile tests and tightened sanctions on Pyongyang.

The deal with Iran does not mention Israel’s right to exist

The U.S. president reacted forcefully. A tense, robust, and stern letter to Israeli dictator Kim Jong-un with “fire and fury.” Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, on the other hand, squarely back a political solution. Germany supports a similar approach. Chancellor Angela Merkel has cited the 2015 Iran Nuclear treaty as a possible template. In that treaty, Iran committed to slashing its nuclear program and transferring already highly enriched uranium – which is essential for building a nuclear weapon – to Russia. Also, international observers would be permitted to inspect production sites for potential nuclear weapons zones. In return, Western states agreed to release frozen Iranian assets. The treaty has an effective lifespan of years from the beginning. Iran’s neighbors expressed reservations over the deal, and with good reason. The clear-cut conditions have come from Israel and Saudi Arabia, but other Gulf states have also expressed serious doubts. Even under so-called “moderate” presidents, Iran’s clerical regime has always espoused the goal of destroying the Jewish State. Iran also treats the majority-Sunni Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an enemy power. The nuclear deal with Iran makes no mention of neighboring states’ right to exist, neither Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, or the UAE.

Some breathing space

In Washington, congressional Republicans have been discussing serious doubts about the deal. In the end, the treaty was ratified. Iran ceased production of highly enriched uranium. Western states lifted sanctions against Iran and unfroze Iranian assets. Yet Tehran keeps developing and testing medium-range missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. The country has redoubled its sponsorship of terrorist groups such as the Shi’ite Hezbollah militia in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. Iran is propelling the Saudi-backed government in Yemen, which is fighting the Saudi-backed government there and seeks a guerilla war against Saudi Arabia. All this springs from Iran’s unabashed objective of eradicating Israel and destroying Iran’s Arab rivals Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Moreover, the Obama administration worked to improve relations between Iran and the world’s leading powers, and to reach an agreement with Iran that would prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon – to Russia.

The United States will remain Germany’s strongest ally

But the United States is and will remain Germany’s strongest and most important ally. Threats at home and abroad stemming from climate change and international terrorism will rise in an unstable world. The United States is and will remain Germany’s strongest and most important ally. Threats at home and abroad stemming from climate change and international terrorism will rise in an unstable world.
You are a biologist. Angela Merkel is a physicist. What does that mean in practical terms for politics?
The special thing about biology is that it functions in extremely complicated, integrated systems, namely ecosystems, which display a high degree of complexity. What bothers me about Mrs. Merkel is that, as a physicist, she knows what the climate crisis is going to mean for us, what these scientific numbers mean and that one cannot negotiate compromises with laws of nature. By the way, in politics I do not like the expression “no alternative.” In politics one finds alternatives around every corner. We have to fight the climate crisis now and stop just talking about it. Merkel talks a lot about the climate crisis but she doesn’t do anything. In 2016, Germany’s CO₂ emissions were as high as in 2009. We have made no progress in Germany in the fight against the climate crisis. The diesel scandal, climate change, faulty nuclear reactors – all these are core Green issues – but at the federal level the Greens cannot get the same results that Baden-Württemberg’s premier Winfried Kretschmann and Tübingen’s mayor Boris Palmer achieve at the regional and local levels.

One reason is that there is a large measure of dishonesty in government policy today. I grew up in Bavaria when Franz Josef Strauss was the regional premier. A difficult person, but when he said, “I support nuclear power,” he supported nuclear power. Merkel, on the other hand, says, “I support climate protection,” but she doesn’t do anything about it. We Greens have not yet succeeded in convincing German voters of the contradictions between what she says and what she does. We have to make the difference between talking green and acting green even clearer.

Your goal is to phase out internal combustion engines by 2030. I am firmly convinced that the German industry has to be given clear requirements to move toward zero-emissions vehicles by 2030, otherwise the companies will not invest enough and not move fast enough. In the end they won’t only be causing serious health and climate problems; they’ll have made themselves obsolete and put hundreds of thousands of jobs in Germany at risk.

Policy is communicated by people. Why is it that Green leaders at the federal level cannot achieve the same feedback for their talking points as a mayor in Tübingen does? You cannot compare a mayor’s job with federal politics. Or a state premier. Or, in his time, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. Joschka Fischer never got more than 8 percent of the vote either.

Is the state of Israel disproportionately criticized in public in Germany? On the one hand there is, I believe, justified criticism of the Israeli occupation and the ever-tighter rules in Israel on the activities of critical non-government organizations. On the other hand, we in Germany have an anti-Semitism problem that should not be underestimated. Criticism of Israel is often used as a gateway for anti-Semitism. It often comes in the guise of claims that one cannot legitimately criticize Israeli policy without being called an anti-Semite. These cases do exist, but of course they are not prevalent. We’ve been watching it closely. Here in Germany we have the classic brand of homegrown anti-Semitism, in addition to another form that should not be neglected, namely that held by some people calling themselves leftists and claiming solidarity with Palestine. And then we...
Mentshen

Hannah & Hannah

Hannah born in 2017

By Rafael Seligmann

Hannah is my first granddaughter. She was born in Rosh HaAyin near Tel Aviv. Hannah is named after my mother. That Hannah was born in 1905 in Galicia, in the east of Austria-Hungary, her life spanned 85 years, to 1990; in other words, almost all of the 20th century, with its tragedies and triumphs. My mother lived something like Hannah did. Hannah and her family were killed instantly. Malka extinguished my mother’s burning hair, saving her life. At the war’s end, Hannah went with Malka to Berlin. She worked as a seamstress and cared for her sick mother Until her death in 1942. Then Hannah lived with her sister Sima and her family. Besides her job she had to do domestic work for her relatives. Following the brief hiatus of the 1930s, Hannah turned with the Great Depression. Hannah lost jobs repeatedly and had to keep looking for work. The economic situation sent unemployment soaring. That led to political radicalization. More and more Germans turned to the Nazis. The party’s leader in Berlin, the future propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, actively incited anti-Semitism among the people. Hannah watched as more and more Jews were persecuted in public, on the streets. When Hitler became Reich Chancellor in 1933 and the Nazis seized power, Hannah fled to Palestine. The British mandate administration turned down her application to emigrate legally, so she acquired forged papers. That made it harder to find work. Delicate Hannah had to take any job she could. Once Hitler started the Second World War, her illegal existence in Palestine became potentially life threatening. The British were deporting Jews back to Europe. But Hannah was lucky. She fell in love with Ludwig Seligmann who had emigrated from Bavaria and married him. Finally, she could reside legally in Tel Aviv.

After the war ended in 1945, Hannah learned that nearly her entire family had been murdered by the Nazis. She was left traumatized. Yet, two years later, Hannah became a mother at age 42. She loved me with all her heart. In 1948, she came to Israel. In the space of a few years, the young state of Israel took on milli- on Jews. But Hannah returned to Israel. In the space of a few years, the young state of Israel took on millions of Jews. That threw the economy into crisis. My father lost his job. He wanted to return to our German home. My mother refused to go back to the “land of the Israel’ite.” In the end, it was necessity that prevailed.

Peace and security

Hannah and Ludwig immigrated again, to West Germany. In Munich, my father found professional esteem. For the first time in years, he and my mother lived something other than a hand to mouth existence. Yet the old wounds remained. Hannah never warmed to Germany. When, however, following my father’s death in 1975, I suggested we return to Israel, Hannah was afraid. She feared even more difficulties. She kept clinging to me and forbade me to go to Israel.

However, my daughter Yael performed Aliya, the emigration to Israel. She served her time in the army, studied IT at Beer Sheva University, married a Zabar, an Israeli-born man, and works in a startup. Hannah is Yael’s second child. Since its inception, Israel has fought a permanent struggle for its existence, through wars and terror. Yet a new generation of self-taught Jews is growing up. These Zabarim know neither the constant hostility of anti-Semitism nor the diaspora Jews’ pleading for recognition. Israel has achieved amazing things. It will, in the end, make peace with its neighbors. It is my wish that Hannah—unlike her great grandmother—grows up in peace and security.

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LIFE & INTERVIEW

MENTSHEN

We must act resolutely against all forms of anti-Semitism

Missiles were not part of the negotiations. Indeed, the deal does not solve all problems, but we are convinced it was a step in the right direction. Of course, more steps need to be taken, so that the states of the region and ideally beyond the region—recognize Israel’s right to exist. One of our concerns is that the Jewish community in Germany and the state of Israel receive more than lip service. We want people to stand up for the human dignity of Jews and actively promote the Jewish community. That is a matter of course for us.

Anton Hofreiter talked to JVG editors Elisabeth Neu and Rafael Seligmann in his office at the Bundestag in Berlin

There is no mention of that in the treaty. But the treaty does state that Iran will not obtain any nuclear weapons in the coming years and Iran has no indirect connection there. Despite the pact, Iran can continue building intercontinental missiles and is doing so. These missiles threaten not only Israel but also parts of Europe.

There is no criticism of China, no criticism of Russia, no criticism of Syria—yet we constantly hear that criticism of Israel is legitimate. Should not you, as a leading Green lawmaker, point out that criticism of Israel opens the gates to delegitimizing Israel?

That is something that one should always be aware of. Israel’s right to exist is repeatedly called into question explicitly or implicitly. That’s not the case in criticism of the U.S. In general, and using the example of Israel, one should be careful how one formulates. There is a big difference between saying, “I criticize Israel” and “I criticize the policies of Mr. Netanyahu” or “the current government.” When I watch how Netanyahu acted in Hungary with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, then I have some criticism for Mr. Netanyahu. But that has to be worded precisely.

In 2008, Chancellor Merkel told the Knesset that Israel’s security was a tenet of German statehood and non-negotiable. Later, negotiations came after all. The nuclear deal with Iran is purely technical in nature. Nowhere does it mention the right of all states to exist. The treaty is effective for another eight years. Once again, no mention of Israel’s right to exist. Where is the criticism by the Greens?

I do not believe that during the negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program that Israeli security was disregarded. On the contrary, we seem to have succeeded in preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. When we look at the situation with North Korea, it was a big step. I also believe that had the states of the region it strongly helped ease tensions. The treaty certainly changes nothing in the systematic violations of human rights in Iran and Iran’s problematic role in the region, but in view of the great threat I believe it was a step in the right direction—including for Israel’s right to exist.

In Berlin schools Jewish kids are bullied mainly by other kids from Muslim families whose parents are exposed to anti-Semitic propaganda. Their children are being incited against Jews. This is where schools, parents, all of us are called upon to reject anti-Semitic prejudice, incitement and violence. We must act resolutely against all these forms of anti-Semitism.

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Stalemate or forward thinking?
Starting a family? Building a house? Or beginning a business? You need courage to do any of these. We support curious people like you reliably, knowledgeably and with financial backbone. Still going strong after 127 years.
We Cannot Afford Brexit

Personal reflections on economic and political blessings at stake

By Christian Lawrence

H ere’s an anecdote from the height of the Empire that offers a revealing view of the British soul. A French diplomat, trying hard to be fair, wanted British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, “If I were not French, I should want to be an Englishman.” Palamonist, trying hard to be fair, “If I were not an Englishman, I should wish to be an Englishman.” To be sure, this kind of self-assurance could be found not only in the United Kingdom especially in the 19th century, the age of the nation state. Probably in no other country has this sense of confidence been as unshakable as in the UK, by no means just among societal elites. One small but revealing sign of this is the box of souvenirs from the evacuation drama Dunkirk. The mystique of the British Isles as a sanctuary, a safe haven from the threat of persecution by alien powers holds its sway to this day. And haven’t we always envied the Brits for this very reason? Is this not ever-redoubtable Britishness that we have always acknowledged as the most elegant example of the national self-esteem, serenity, “If I were not French, I should want to be an Englishman.”

This single example among millions reveals the kinds of subtle cross-cultural influences that are so recognizable in many people in Europe carry within them. From our joint study, we can readily conclude that any weakening of Europe’s powers of keeping peace must be avoided. In his day, Lord Palmerston was laughed at for his remark that the unification of Europe was a choice between war and peace. Today, we would not be laughing. None of this, of course, lessens the referendum choice for or against the EU – such a referendum was already held once before, in 1975. What matters is the style and substance of the debate. It is grossly negligent to reduce Europe to an assemblage of grievances, the pre-Brexit public succession in Britain often did. The oldest trivialities were trotted out – about EU regulations on how bent cucumbers could be is something no one knows today. Brussels is impatiently waiting for the British negotiating position that does not yet exist – because the British themselves cannot come to terms with the mutually exclusive demands of restricting the movement of labor and keeping maximal access to the European market.

A growing chorus of voices is demanding a second referendum in 2019 once the framework conditions for Brexit have taken shape. What shape that will be is something no one knows today. Every effort should be made, however, to keep British political values, namely globalization, challenges of our age, namely globalization, climate change, terrorism, and migration.

In history as in life, nothing is ever certain. Perhaps there can still be an exit from a Brexit that would harm all of us. We and our governments should try to find that exit.

Christian Lawrence is a partner at the strategic communications consulting firm Brunswick Group. The article expresses the author’s own personal opinions.
The reporter is amazed as he stands in front of her hut. The young woman is illiterate. Anju Devi is considered to be a world-renowned activist, a campaigner for the right to water and an opponent to the Coca-Cola global corporation. And yet Anju Devi is curiously unaware of this. Research by the daily paper Die Welt reveals this.

Mehdiganj, a village in the north-east of India. Coca-Cola operates a bottling plant here, which was repeatedly the target of protests. The drinks manufacturer, it was alleged, took the groundwater from the farmers. Their crops withered, their cattle died of thirst.

Water neutral manufacturing

Anju Devi sits on the village council. One day, she tells the reporter, a man came to the village and asked her for a signature. She didn’t know what she was signing. But that document spread around the world. An organization put it on the internet. Stubborn Indian farmers against a global company. Sounds good. Unfortunately, the story is too good to be true. And it just shows the means by which not only the battle for water is conducted, but also the battle over opinions. The reporter enquires further. Development workers confirm this to him: Just a few meters away from the factory walls, the grass is lush, and the ground is damp. Wholesale water theft? “A myth”. Even the activists admit: People are always looking for someone powerful to blame. It is the only way to gain the necessary attention.

It had already previously been proven that the allegations against Coca-Cola were unfounded. Nevertheless, the company not only took the protests seriously, but also set itself an ambitious goal: By 2020, Coca-Cola’s manufacturing must be water neutral. That means returning to the environment at least as much water as it has used. Muhtar Kent, Coca-Cola’s Chairman of the Board, talks of a “wake-up call.” “In the future, anyone who does not deal with water responsibly will no longer be in business,” he says.

In 2015, Coca-Cola was the first Fortune 500 company to fully offset its water consumption. Five years earlier than planned. “Water is the most precious resource on earth. It is our responsibility to safeguard it for future generations,” says Ulrike Sapiro, the company’s Sustainability Director for Western Europe. “For each drop that we use, we give one back.”

The consumption per liter of beverage alone has declined by a quarter since 2004. Bottling plants in more than 200 countries have analyzed the regional water resources and more than $300 million have been invested in community water projects in over 70 countries. Even in Germany. For example, the renaturing of the Old Elbe river near Klieken in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Central Germany. The Coca-Cola Foundation invested $50,000 euros in order to revive the silted-up branch of the river. This hasn’t just pleased around 240 species of breeding birds. In the long term, everyone benefits from a healthy ecosystem. The groundwater of the region is thus naturally filtered and stabilized. Last but not least, a local recreation area was also created.

Programs in Africa and India

By 2020, Coca-Cola has pledged a further $35 million to support programs across the entire African continent to secure access to water. Since 2007, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT, Coca-Cola has enabled access to clean water and sanitation facilities in particularly poor regions of the world. Any by the way, this program was established by Coca-Cola right here, where the reporter met the activist Anju Devi: in India.

Ensure access to clean water and sanitation facilities in particularly poor regions of the world
Today, compensation for Nazi injustice is considered an outstanding achievement both within Germany and abroad, and for decades has been an integral part of the country’s coming to terms with its Nazi past. It therefore comes as a surprise that Holocaust survivors received their compensation at very different points in time. Survivors with similar histories of persecution were compensated as early as the mid-1950s, yet others had to wait decades longer. The gradual expansion of compensation for victims of Nazi persecution was closely linked to German foreign policy and always inextricably bound to macro-political trends. In other words, the Cold War influenced compensation policy just as much as the rapprochement between East and West, the fall of the Iron Curtain or German reunification. Compensation for Nazi injustice was apparently a pawn of top level politics.

**Bureaucratic obstacles**

The acceptance of Germany into the international community following the genocide, was only conceivable once the Federal Republic had accepted responsibility for the crimes against European Jews. It was Chancellor Konrad Adenauer who opened the path for reparations when in a 1953 speech to the Bundestag, he publicly declared that the un-speakable crimes committed in the name of the German people compelled both moral and material compensation. In Israel, the opening of compensation negotiations with the Federal Republic was the subject of an emotionally charged discussion. Tumultuous scenes played out during a two-day Knesset debate on the issue. There were mass demonstrations and street riots in front of the Knesset that could even be heard in the Knesset chamber. Nevertheless, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion finally secured approval for negotiations with his parliamentary majority. The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (JCC), founded in 1951 as a governing body of 23 inter-
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 Homeland’s 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 Europe’s most dynamic cities, with more than 200,000 Jews and a steadily growing number of Israeli residents. Berlin’s Jewish community has the largest percentage of American Jews. In 2012, the Israeli Embassy in Berlin estimated the number of Israeli residents in the Jewish capital between 10,000 and 12,000. 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 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 visited Germany regularly to get a first-hand impression of modern Jewish life in our country. Over the past years, groups including Rabbis from 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

By William H. Weitzer

The United States has provided opportunities to live and prosper

In the late 18th century when German Jews were the largest percentage of American Jews, 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 culture 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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American friends and acquaintances de- nied 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 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 Command- er in Chief – it felt like the end of the world as we know it. The signs 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 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 talked about more votes, but 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 a welcome demonstration of the Obama era. The Liberty Bell has weathered threats, and it has endured. Like American democracy, the Liberty Bell has weathered threats, and it has endured.

Checks and balances are still working

The Democrats have only themselves to blame 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 the final hour of civilization approaching. What is the issue here, Irma or any other major natural disaster? No. We are talking about 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 too 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 talked about – but 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

American democracy rests on firmer foundations than that of Germany

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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 chuppah. Here in Berlin. Right in the heart of the city, at the Tiergarten. Just before my grandmother, 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. 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 breathed with hatred of the Jewish people. They do not feel the historical respect religious communities have 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 do not mean it very clear to any refugee who comes to Germany that part of the package of responsibilities is the awareness of the right to respect religious symbols, 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 very vigilant, awake: but if we do not mean it very clear to any refugee who comes to Germany that part of the package of responsibilities is the awareness of the right to respect religious symbols, respect others, respect the Jewish past and the Jewish present in this country, 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 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 body to join us. Two thirds of the funds are not sufficient. 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. 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. 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.

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“Remember, it’s schver 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.

By Rabbi Yehuda Teichtal

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 engaged 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 Yiddishkait 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.

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

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German Jews in America

The years following the Civil War provided great visibility for American Jewish commitments to unity and Jewish pride as Americans.

Their status as Americans provided great visibility for American Jewish commitments to unity and Jewish pride as Americans.

Jews in need, including the many who recently immigrated to Israel, were able to move to the U.S. to pursue an MBA. Post-college, I settled in New York City and during my studies in 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 that there was no 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.

After World War I, Germany's cultural ideals and influences endured. Reform and Conservative Judaism remained influential throughout the 20th century, and the German Jewish view of relations with American religion and Jewish life. Many families of immigrant Jews continued to move to the U.S. To pursue an MBA.

The American dream is still built of individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 who, after having arrived in a new land, they contribute to American society, skills, and knowledge with them to America. They contributed to American society, skills, and knowledge with them to America. They contributed to American society, skills, and knowledge with them to America. They contributed to American society, skills, and knowledge with them to America.

Most German intellectual figures were able to become active participants in American cultural and intellectual life. Their in-sider/outside 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 onward. One of their German Jewish backgrounds combined with America's cultural environment 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.

Furthermore, the equality gap has been decreasing 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 calls for a small retribution of development in which African Americans, Muslims, and Jews share the same side of the table, is unique in its ability to unify all its citizens under one flag and instill national pride among all, regardless of the identity of the one who has been addressed more openly, since only the society of open and healthy debate will gain the strength it requires to unite around the issues that it faces.

Therefore, a strong stance must be taken against all forces threatening the values the U.S. While the American 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, and the Holocaust survivors, the émigrés and their families contributed to American society, skills, and knowledge with them to America. They contributed to American society, skills, and knowledge with them to America. They contributed to American society, skills, and knowledge with them to America. They contributed to American society, skills, and knowledge with them to America.

The émigrés and their families established new organizations to help each other, and built organizations and businesses to serve as cultural, social, and spiritual homes for their fellow emigrés. 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 up-brinnings. 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/outside status helped to fuel their creativity and achievements, often blending European approaches and new American priorities.

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The Best of Both Worlds
How science and education build bridges across cultures

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 many leading 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 renowned 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 II. 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 (1885-1977) 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 175,000 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 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 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 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 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 of 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 level, 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 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 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.
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.

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 unrestrict ed 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.

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 16th 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 20th 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 declined 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 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 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 40-50% 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 $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.

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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 populist. For example: Donald Trump, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Marine Le Pen, Viktor Orbán, Jaroslav Kaczyński, Władimir Putin, Geert Wilders, Beppo 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 profiles of being curious about the unknown while exercising only its need to feel 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 representatives 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 Philippine President Duterte, who incites the police and vigilante groups to kill “drug dealers.” These murders are then praised in public as necessary and beneficial actions in the interest of the people. The transformation of perfidy and crime into beneficence is an invention of early fascism that the Nazis readily copied. Benito Mussolini, the “duce” of 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 duce 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 look 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 tactical manipulation. The neofascists 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 human dignity and the right to asylum enshrined in the German constitution. The AfD vowed to take up the mantle 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 Petty 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 Petty 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 refugees from Syria and Afghanistan that began that same summer appeared to confirm her 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 reform the mantles 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.

Populists claim to know the majority’s putative national, religious, economic, and social interests
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I

n your eyes, what were thechief reasons for the SPD’s
dissant election results?

Despite the SPD’s shortterm in
office, both parties in the gov-
erning coalition suffered heavy
losses, including to the AfD. For
the SPD, the loss cannot be cre-
it for many of the projects we ac-
complished, such as a minimum
wage and eligibility for pensions
following 45 years of contribu-
tions. In the next Bundestag all
democratic parties will have to
work together and with deter-
mination to win back voters and
solve people’s problems. That will
eliminate the AfD’s basis.

Franz Müntefering, an old ally of
former Chancellor Gerhard
Schröder, called being in the op-
position “crap.” Now the SPD
has decided to go that way any-
how. What can the party achieve
economically in the opposition?

We have excellent minds and
clear positions and will remain a
strong voice of democracy in the
opposition. Germany needs Social
Democratic policies that will benefit
from growth and prosper-
ity. More investment in education,
schools and digital infrastructure
are only a few of the steps we
need. We will continue to fight
for them in the opposition.

Will the presence of the AfD in
the Bundestag harm Germany’s
democratic parties?

I certainly hope not. We have a
strong and robust economy that
offers high value products that
are rightly prized internationally.

The “Agenda 2010” labor market
reform was arguably the most
successful economic legislation
in recent decades in Germany. And
yet instead of taking credit, the
SPD is now trying to distance it-
self from the reform. It’s true that Gerhard Schröder
was the chancellor who took the
last major step to modernize
Germany. There’s been no cour-
age to continue since. The SPD
is debating Agenda 2010 openly,
and I think an open discussion
is important and correct.

The SPD has a heroic history,
for instance in 1933, when it was
the only party to vote against
granting Hitler dictatorial pow-
er. Why is it having such a hard
time in day-to-day politics?

For more than 190 years the
SPD has been the party of so-
cial progress in the interest of
the great majority of Germa-
ny’s people. I do not think we
are having a hard time in day-
to-day politics. In the past four
years we accomplished a great
deal in government. And the essen-
tial achievements of this past legisla-
tive period came from us. Just remember mini-
mum wage, pensions following
45 years on the job and – in my
own portfolio – forward-looking
issues such as the challenges of
digitization.

Your fellow party member, Mu-
ich’s former mayor Christian
Ude, has warned the SPD it has
to be political at the local level,
then it will win more elections.

That’s true. In practically all
big cities, even in conservative-
governed regions as well as the
city-states, the SPD is in power.
We do politics on the ground.
Still, the image being conveyed
is not what it should be. But one
thing is clear: We Social Demo-
crats have left our mark on the
government’s work in the past
four years, and we’ve made sure
that people in our country are
doing better today.

The SPD began as a workers’
party. Today, most workers vote
for other parties. Classical voter allegiances
to single parties have eroded.

In Israel funding for research and
development accounts for 4.1% of
gDP, in Germany that figure is 2.9%.

During this entire legislative
period, the SPD has insisted
on tax breaks on research. But
Finance Minister Wolfgang
Schäuble and Chancellor
Merkel have put up roadblocks.
We have to invest more in re-
search and development. We
also must create tax incentives
for companies, especially small-
and mid-sized ones.

What’s going on in economic
cooperation with Israel? What
will we learn from one another?

Germany is Israel’s biggest
trade partner in the European
Union. Cooperation is espe-
cially close in energy or GOMs.

That’s the core of our EX-
IST program for founding busi-
nesses. Israel is currently the
country that has a good business
relationship with us in that.
It includes easier access to
possible German subsidies.

You were also German Justice
Minister. The country has strict
laws against anti-Semitism. But
how can we win the minds and
hearts especially of young peo-
ple, and most particularly mi-
grants from Muslim countries
who have grown up with every-
day anti-Semitism?

Laws are the one side. Anti-Se-
mitic utterances or using compa-
rable symbols can be prosecuted
in this country. But we must also remain committed to tolerance
and equality in society, which
people respect one another, regardless of what religion they espouse.

That applies not only to religions
but also to other forms of discrim-
ination, based on age, gender,
national origin and discrimination
against women. This is where we
must make sure education and awareness in schools are as
good as they can be.

No child is born an anti-Sem-
tic. Besides schools, the family
homes also play a role. As a state we have access to
the young only through the schools
and that is why this kind of ed-
cation must take place in the
schools. For example, through
role-playing or discussion cir-
cles. That way people get to
know and therefore accept each
other better. We also see that in
the refugee debate. Of course
there are also people here who
talk about excessive migration
and who reject refugees. But
happily, there are also a great
many others who actively help
and support refugees.

You did no longer seek a
Bundestag seat. Why would you
do that, as one of Germany’s
most experienced female politi-
cians? I have decided that it’s enough.
But I will remain a political per-
son and remain committed, for
example as President of the
German-Israeli Lawyers
Association, a position I will con-
tinue to carry out.

Brigitte Zypries talked to
JWG editor Rafael Seeligmann

Sustainability

These days, investors are putting a stronger focus on
environmental, social, and governance (ESG) crite-
ria. The precondition that sustainability would have a
negative impact on rate of return has been sufficiently
 disproved. The economist Alexander Bassen showed rec-
ently in a meta-analysis of 2,250 studies on the returns
of ESG that sustainable in-
vestments mostly performed
better than conventional in-
vestments. According to this
study, investments in environ-
mental projects – whether in
infrastructure or real estate
– have identi
ced signi
cantly better than tra-
analysts and investors.

Investment performance
in ESG funds has been
significantly better than in
conventional funds.

But, according to Bassen, in
most cases, returns in ex-
change for this influence.
Private investors, especially in
the younger generation, are
also increasingly using their
assets to make a positive im-
 pact. Having the support of an
independent family office is
thus very wise, because eval-
uating types of investments
and companies according to
ESG factors is deeply com-
plicated and a job for specialists.

One seemingly simple option
for getting ESG criteria and
good returns in one place
is through public mutual funds
that focus on sustainability.

But, according to Bassen, in
these portfolios, in particu-
lar, the correlation between
ESG criteria and investment
returns is not so clear-cut.
In that case, investors should
focus on the actual value added
and not let themselves be
blinded by marketing.
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Motik's Reel-to-Reel

Singer Sveta Kundish revives the story of her family

By Gideon Wollberg

A circle has closed,” muses Sveta Kundish, soprano vocalist who performs a wide variety of Jewish music throughout Europe. “Just like my great-grandfather, I stand today on a bimah and lead the congregation as they at that time did for my grandparents, I sing Yiddish songs.” Born in Ukraine and later moving to Israel, Kundish completed her cantorial training at Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam this past summer, already holding degrees from Tel Aviv University and the Prayner Konservatorium in Vienna; she is about to earn a B.A. in Jewish philosophy and then pursue a Master’s in cantorial training at Berlin’s Choralakademie and Weimar. The program “The Two Faces of the Cantor,” presenting sacred music and Yiddish song, met with enthusiastic applause.

All my life is now based on the roots that go back to the shtetl Ovruch in Ukraine, a small town near the border with Belorussia,” Kundish explains. In the 1990s, following the breakup of the Soviet Union, hundreds of thousands of Jewish families from the former USSR emigrated to Israel, Germany, and North America. Sveta Kundish’s family was part of this great wave relocating from Ukraine to Israel in 1995. Years later her parents discovered a tape recorder. And here begins a narrated concert of our performance in which their relatives whose voices my grandfather recorded are no longer alive, and my parents and grandparents literally join a class reunion.” An estimated 1,000 Jews emigrated from the town since the fall of the Soviet Union. Today, a small prayer house on Lenin Street serves the about 35 remaining members of the local Jewish community. “My large family, who lives in different countries around the world, is very touched that Motik’s tape recordings sound on stage today,” she adds. “Many relatives whose voices my grandfather recorded are no longer alive, and my parents cry and laugh every time they watch the video of our performance in which their beloved ones are heard. According to my mom, my grandparents literally join through this recording. I learned that my grandmother was an excellent folk singer. Yiddish folk songs and ballads were her passion, as well as mine today.”

Cherish Life!

Life is good, death is bad. One of the themes we focused on over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur was making life affirming decisions. In Deut. 30:19, we read “I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse — therefore choose life!” However, on Yom Kippur afternoon, the Torah reading from Leviticus was rather sobering, particularly those verses concerning forbidden sexual relationships. The Torah condemned homosexuality in biblical times as an abomination that carries the death penalty. The same penalty, however, applied to adultery. It seems hard to reconcile the death penalty and our Jewish perspective on the importance of concern for our fellow man. The Torah specifies a host of 36 offenses for which one may be put to death, including wizardry and rebellion against one’s parents. While supporting the death penalty in principle, it placed substantial obstacles to its implementation. Cain is exempted from the ultimate punishment, and later, all the stringent demands on witnesses in capital cases restricted the very likelihood that a defendant would be convicted. The whole tendency of the sages who wrote the Talmud was toward the complete abolition of the death penalty. The rabbinic law is so many barriers that in practical terms it was almost impossible to punish anyone by death. The discussion of capital punishment became a theoretical speculation: After a long, elaborate discussion of the class of capital crime befitting the stubborn and rebellious son, and a description of how the execution was to be carried out, the Talmud states: “It never happened and it never will happen.” The passage then explains that the entire matter is preserved purely for study.

For decades, the Jewish rebellion against capital punishment has been expressed in the values of the Jewish state. The death penalty has been carried out only twice in Israel’s history. The military conviction of Meir Tohianski in 1948 was posthumously nullified. The only civil execution took place when Adolf Eichmann was hanged in 1962. While the Knesset had voted to abolish the death penalty for the crime of murder in 1954, it was retained for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Judaism strongly focuses on the idea of teshuva, repentance for one’s sins, a concept in conflict with the finality of capital punishment. Furthermore, the risk of executing an innocent person shouldn’t be taken lightly. Someone wrongly put to death can never be redeemed. Each choice has an impact on other beings. When we are told to choose life for ourselves, aren’t we also commanded to advocate life for others?
Splendor and Misery of the Weimar Republic: An artistic chronicle

By Hartmut Bomhoff

What do I expect for art in the new people's state? Nothing and everything: Freedom" wrote Max Liebermann in December 1918. The years between the end of World War I and Hitler's ascension to power witnessed an unprecedented cultural explosion that embraced the whole of Europe but was, above all, centered in Germany. Born of revolution and in the midst of crisis and transition.

They captured the stories of their contemporaries with an individual signature: the processing of the Weimar Republic with depictions of maimed soldiers and "war profiteers," public figures, the big city with its entertainment industry and increasing prostitution, the political unrest and economic chasms, as well as the role model of the New Woman and the public debates regarding homosexuality and abortion.

Flash points retain validity. "Splendor and Misery" traces the rise of the artistic culture that bloomed ever so briefly in the 1920s and the advent of a new sobriety. The glittering parties came to an end with the beginning of the Great Depression in October 1929, when poverty and despair gripped the nation, with the state being torn between the barbarism of the right and the irresponsibility of the left.

The paintings of Otto Dix (1891–1969) still shape the picture of the Weimar democracy, the political unrest and economic chasms, and the state being torn between the barbarism of the right and the irresponsibility of the left. The images on show are as melodious and haunting as the era they chronicle. The focus of the exhibition lies on the unease of that particular era, which was reflected not only in the broad stylistic range of the age, but also in the topics and content.

Arranged in thematic groups, it assembles scenes that have hitherto frequently been regarded separately. The various flash points retain their validity to this day. This attests to Peter Gay, who in his book Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider concluded: "Despite the ephemeral nature of the Weimar democracy, the influence of its culture was profound and far-reaching, ushering in a modern sensibility in the arts." One-hundred years after its advent, the artistic revolution of the Weimar Republic has lost nothing of its relevance and potential for discussion.

On show from October 27, 2017 until February 25, 2018

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Prologue

Paul Levite was a man of flesh and blood. Stab him, and he will bleed. Insult him, and he will seek revenge. Like all politicians, Levite craves power. For its sake he is willing to sell his soul. Paul Levite uses his Jewishness as a front to claim impeccable morality. The Germans believe him and follow him. They await the war and the Shah, at first compulsorily and then voluntarily, cannot save the Germans from the fallibility that all nations share. Paul Levite’s political journey is a tale of one person’s desire to lead and many others’ desire to follow.

Show of force

One million people have gathered in Berlin – demanding Paul Levite as Chancellor… “German men and women! You have come here to start a revolution, the first pan-German revolution for freedom and democracy!” The frenzied applause finally unmasking himself as Judas…

With the U.S. president

Promptly at 8AM, the U.S. president and the German chancellor sat opposite each other at Camp David. Jack Barns was smaller than he looked on TV. It was because of the 40-pound body that he did his close-cropped, straight-parted hair. The president’s features were plain. He had an average build, but blue eyes were remarkable. They observed their surroundings at once with the clarity of youth and the detachment of old age… Chancellor Levite reiterated his “absolute and unconditional wish for peace.”

“Then I’ll have to do something for it!” the president said, hoarsely. “Everything has a price – including the peace. I would love to pay up, but first I must be able to afford it,” the German Chancellor replied. The price demanded in the U.S. memorandum was higher than Germany could politically pay, he continued. Therefore, no German politician willing to go further to compromise than he, Levite said, added that he had promised as long as he could remember. “But I must also be able to convince my people that this pact is worth the price. I want peace, Mr. President. I am a Jew. We know like no one else what war in Europe means. It means the end for us all.”

“You have it in your hands to prevent that, Mr. Levite!”

“If we affirm our commitment, will our troops be spared from bloodshed?”

“You Germans seem to fear war more than the devil fears the inside of a church.”

“You will continue to be so?” the Chancellor pledged.

“Okay, you reaffirm your NATO precommitment. Political and militarily. We will express satisfaction with that and not ask for German boots on the ground.”

Excerpts from the novel Deutsch Meschugge by Rafael Seligmann, Translit 2017

Berlin Synagogue Gets New Lease on Life

How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, 101 years ago, these verses from Num 24:5 were sung at the inauguration of the new synagogue on the Landwehr canal in the heart of Berlin. The capital’s vibrant Jewish community was proud to add another temple to the city. And the Jewish community was proud to add a large complex also comprised a hall for youth services. And now you dimwits let yourself be bribed! The Jew is lying! He must at least claim his share of the vote from 9.1 to 27 percent, and is therefore the real winner of this election…

Putch

Paul Levite, the token Jew in the populist DNMP Party, launches his grab for power…

If, in the movement’s hour of triumph, Levite were to stage a coup, the Nazis would nail him to the cross as a Jewish traitor. Yet he must at least claim his share of the victory. But he felt inhibited along the way. By his upbringing… Because of the Jewish ethic that requires respect for the dignity of others as much as for one’s own…

Party leader Urban Hansen peered into the circle with a mixture of bewilderment and disgust. “Comrades! Do not let yourselves be bribed!’ The Jew is lying! He must at least claim his share of the vote from 9.1 to 27 percent, and is therefore the real winner of this election…”

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Channel One’s special coverage of the early election. Today, September 15, 2019, the German people voted on who will enter the 20th Bundestag.

The ensemble was designed by Michal Blum, Lucas Kircher and Nicolas Kumano. It reflects the continuing, armed the continuing, pressively documented: JEWISH VOICE FROM GERMANY | OCTOBER 2017

Deutsch Meschugge

 berlin.de

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Deutsch Meschugge

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C 350 e Sedan/Estate, E 350 e, GLC 350 e 4MATIC SUV/Coupé, GLE 500 e 4MATIC – Fuel consumption combined: 3.3–2.1 l/100 km; combined CO₂ emissions: 84–48 g/km. Power consumption combined: 16.7–11.0 kWh/100 km. Efficiency class: A+.

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Welcoming Supernal Guests

The sukkah is a place to experience a ray of heaven on earth

By Rabbi Walter Homolka

You shall dwell in booths for seven days; all Israelites shall dwell in booths,” tells Lev. 23:42. In compliance with this commandment, Jews around the world erect outdoor huts in which the autumn holiday of Sukkot is celebrated. Once observed as a festival of thanksgiving for the bounties of nature, the Feast of the Tabernacles is also linked with the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. Thus, the booth, or sukkah, itself must be a temporary abode.

“Be a mentsh and you can sit in the sukkah,” says an old Yiddish adage. It reminds the young that there is an adult ideal they should try to reach; in general, the sukkah teaches us not to put our trust in the size, the strength or the improvements of our home, but in God.

The medieval Jewish thinker Maimonides admonished that anyone who sits comfortably with his family within his own walls and does not share with the poor is performing a mitzvah not for joy but for the stomach. This applies to meals in the sukkah as well, and it is customary to extend a personal invitation to the needy.

The huts today come in all sizes and materials and there are thriving prefab sukkah businesses in many larger Jewish communities. Throughout the ages, there has been a tendency to make this temporary home as comfortable and welcoming as possible, accommodating family and friends who are eating, reading and even sleeping there. However, the famous master of Zanz, Rabbi Chayim Halberstam (1793–1876), preferred a sparsely decorated sukkah to ornate dwellings. While many of the Hassidic rebbes of Galicia would spend enormous amounts of money for such a holiday extravaganza, he explained: “There is no finer way of decorating the sukkah than to see to it that the poor are not hungry.”

Another custom is to open the hut symbolically for seven ushpizin (Aramaic for “guests”) to take up residence in the booth. The formula originated among the Kabbalists in the 16th century and is based on a verse in the earlier Book of Zohar which says: “When a man sits in the shadow of faith (sukkah) the Divine Presence spreads Her wings on him from above and Abraham and five other righteous ones of God (and David with them) make their abode with him. A man should rejoice each day of the festival with these guests.” Each one of the seven supernal guests in turn is seen as leading the others into the sukkah. They join us as we discuss their teachings and honor their contributions to our people. “The past, in this way, becomes the present,” explained Rabbi Louis Jacobs (1920–2006).

Especially in Progressive Judaism, it has become popular to single out female characters alongside with the seven exalted men of Israel, first of all the matriarchs and other important women of Israel: Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca, Leah, Miriam, Abigail, and Esther. Of course, it seems appropriate to grow the invite list to reflect the contemporary Jewish landscape, pairing biblical leaders with our role models of today. It is said that the ushpizin would refuse to enter a sukkah where the poor are not welcome, and sometimes provisions or donations are sent to the needy along with a note saying, “This is the share of the ushpizin.” The inspiration for this hospitality to guests goes back to the first patriarch, Abraham, who generously welcomed three wayfarers to his tent who then proved to be angels.