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JEWISH VOICE FROM GERMANY

קול יהודי מגרמניה

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70TH BIRTHDAY

The Israel Miracle

The foundation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948 is a miracle. It is a miracle that after two millennia and a genocide that claimed the lives of a third of their nation, a people who had been dispersed and persecuted around the globe were able to reunite in their biblical homeland and establish a national state, which they would over the next seven decades defend in wars and against attack.

This miracle has a religious, historical and social foundation. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, a portion of the Hebrews held fast to their Jewish faith in the Diaspora, even in the face of threats, persecution and temptation, thus succeeding in preserving their identity. In Germany, Poland, India, the United States, Peru and elsewhere, Jews sought to be loyal citizens and to contribute to the welfare of the coun-

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Enormous success in science, technology, culture and security

tries that they had made their home. But “they would not allow it,” and Jews were decried as foreigners and outsiders, as the Viennese journalist and visionary Theodor Herzl correctly noted.

Herzl, who had experienced implacable anti-Semitic hatred in Vienna and Paris, penned his pamphlet *The Jewish State*. The book met with an enthusiastic response, particularly from the Jews in Eastern Europe, who were facing imminent threat. This marked the birth of political Zionism. After the inaugural Zionist congress in 1897, Herzl wrote in his diary, “Today I founded the Jewish State ... Perhaps in five years, and certainly in fifty,

everyone will know it.” Herzl’s prediction would prove right. Herzl expected that his ideas would be welcomed by the Arabs in Palestine, yet this was nothing but wishful thinking. His fellow writer Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky, who knew Palestine well, was more of a realist. “The Arabs love their country as much as we do,” he noted. “If we want a Jewish state, we must be prepared to fight for it.” This is a historical fact. Every country was founded through violence and bloodshed. Israel as well. That is something that many who know Jews such as Jesus and the inmates of Auschwitz only as victims to this day refuse to forgive.

Nonetheless, Israel has developed into a modern state. Even today, it is a refuge for all Jews. Israel has achieved enormous success in the areas of science, technology, culture and security. It has also made mistakes. The ongoing occupation of Arab territories is part of that. Israel will succeed in mastering this task, too, together with the Palestinians and its Arab neighbors. But today, our task is to celebrate the 70th birthday of the miracle that is Israel. ■

COMMEMORATION



When Memory Becomes History
Remembering the Shoah

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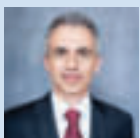
EXILE



Library of Freedom
New permanent exhibition

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A MENTSH



Peter Feldmann
Frankfurt’s Jewish mayor

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MAZAL TOV

מזל טוב ישראל



This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State ... We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness.

The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel – May 14, 1948

ISRAEL – GERMANY

A Secure Homeland



“Israel is a vibrant and secure homeland for the Jewish people.” Jeremy Issacharoff, Israel’s ambassador to Germany, provides a positive assessment on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of his country’s founding in an exclusive interview with JVG. He says, the Israeli-German relationship is stable. But Issacharoff is critical of the German public viewing the Middle East largely through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In so doing, they overlook the threat that Iran poses to Israel.

►PAGE 4

PHILOSOPHY

Freedom vs. Dictatorship

Almost 90 years ago, an intellectual battle was waged between German philosophers Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger. Cassirer was fighting for the survival of the Weimar Republic against the rise of National Socialism, whose philosophical propagandist Heidegger would become. ►PAGE 18

Dear Readers,

This issue is dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. Israel’s creation and its continued existence are a miracle. Only three years after the Shoah, Jews of Zion and from all around the world found the strength to create a state in their bibli-

ly been in the hands of the Nazis in such a short time became one of Israel’s best allies? In an exclusive interview with *Jewish Voice*, Israel’s ambassador in Berlin Jeremy Issacharoff speaks about his country’s relationship with Germany and the world. We also discuss



cal homeland, defend their independence, and build a modern society.

In this issue and the others that will follow in 2018, we will examine various aspects of this actual miracle. Israel is more than the policies of its government. One topic of interest will be the phenomenal development of German-Israeli relations. How was it possible that the country that had so recent-

Israel’s economic, cultural and social development. A further focus is Israel’s most important neighbor, Saudi Arabia – a reflection of the fact that Israel’s future will be powerfully shaped by its relations to the Arab world.

We wish Israel and its neighbors Shalom and Salaam. And we thank our readers and advertisers for their solidarity.

Jewish Voice

GERMAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS

The Human Element

By Rafael Seligmann

The State of Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany established official diplomatic relations on May 12, 1965. But the relationship between the two states is rooted in nearly 2000 years of German-Jewish history. This is a unique situation. The Jewish people meanwhile have a longer history on German soil than in any other country, including their biblical homelands of Judea and Israel. And no other country has carried out such a coldly organized genocide, the Shoah, as Germany.

Auschwitz and the Yad Vashem memorial, as well as the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, continue to powerfully shape German-Israeli relations. But history continues its march forward. Israel is celebrating the 70th anniversary of its founding. This is a good time for a look back – but also for a look forward to the vision that will shape the relations of these two countries in the future.

The first West German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, had been an opponent and victim of the Nazis. He was a democrat. But he appointed Hans Globke, a man who had assisted the Na-

zis and who wrote a commentary on the Nuremberg racial laws, as head of the Federal Chancellery.

West Germany and Israel initially did not maintain diplomatic relations. Germany did not wish to risk its beneficial economic relations with Arab countries.

Ambivalent politics

At the same time, Adenauer was determined that Germany would assume moral and material responsibility for the Shoah. In 1952, Germany signed the Luxembourg Agreement. This law was the basis for reparations made to Jews and to Israel.

For Israel, Germany's material reparations played a crucial role during the country's early years. In addition, from the late 1950s on, Germany began supporting Israel with secret weapons deliveries. Israel is a small country with limited economic capacity. It is in no way comparable to the 22 nations of the Arab League, let alone the 57 member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which together are home to more than one billion people.

The balance between responsibility for the genocide of the Jews and Germany's material interests in the Islamic world

explains Germany's ambivalent policies, and even more so the dithering of the German population, which unlike their government is not prepared to display consideration to Israel's sensitivities.

The shipment of German submarines to Israel was and remains an important contribution to the latter's security. They form the core of Israel's nuclear deterrent force. One milestone in the willingness of reunified Germany to live up to its responsibilities for Israel was Chancellor Angela Merkel's speech on March 18, 2008 before the Knesset, in which she stated: "This historical responsibility [for Israel's security] is part of my country's *raison d'être* ... Israel's security will never be open to negotiation." But politics depends not only on morality, responsibility and symbol-laden speeches. It is primarily a matter of concrete interests. That is why Germany joined the permanent members of the UN Security Council to negotiate a deal with Iran that made no mention of Israel's right to exist.

The agreement had only just been signed when German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel flew to Tehran. The aim was to help German businesses secure deals



The Worms Prayerbook of 1272 tells a chapter in German-Jewish history

with Iran that would potentially be worth billions. At the same time, Berlin was voicing increasingly sharp criticism of Israel's settlement policies. Alongside the political consideration it is showing the Islamic world, Berlin once again has put morality on its agenda. Israel would be well advised to lend greater voice to its own political needs.

Different lessons

But Germany and Israel have learned different lessons from history. Germany places a priority on avoiding war, violence and occupation. Israel is determined to ensure that as a people the Jews will never again stand defenseless before their enemies.

Germany and Israel have different interests, and the politicians of the two countries do not share the same view of the world. This in turn explains their political differences. But mutual understanding is key. Berlin should not seek to decide what is good and right for the Jewish state. The two countries should listen to each other, and practice understanding each other's position.

This is not a task that can remain limited solely to the political sphere. It is also incumbent on all citizens. Especially young people, the many who enjoy international travel, and the worlds of science and business. German-Israeli relations will remain distinctive. With that in mind, we should take care to emphasize the human element. ■

POPULISM

From Left to Chauvinism

The world over, voters change their allegiances



Donald Trump and Rodrigo Duterte

crats face further marginalization. The success of the Left Party in the west of the country would have been unthinkable without Schröder's lurch toward the center – a move that has left the Social Democrats permanently weakened.

No sense of security

Meanwhile, the Social Democrats find themselves bleeding ever more votes to

the far-right populist AfD party, particularly in cities that have seen high levels of immigration. In France, Socialist voters have defected in droves to the National Front. In the United States, too, Democrats have lost a share of their traditional voting base to the Republicans. During the last presidential election, many on the Democratic left faced a dilemma. Should an unemployed worker from the Rust Belt vote for Hillary Clinton? After all, Clinton was a proponent of free trade and a supporter of globalization, the very same policies and processes that they blamed for their plight. Many instead cast their ballot for Donald Trump, who promised them new jobs achieved through protectionism and tariffs.

Around the world, traditional left parties are unable to provide a sense of security to those who feel left behind. Many of these voters believe that the center-left parties are at least in part to blame for their predicament. And when they give voice to their fears, they often feel that they are being lectured by elites who dismiss their concerns out of hand, or even branded as far-right sympathizers. Many indeed did then turn to the right. Left-leaning Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev believes that the trite anti-populist rhetoric of elites is nearly as dangerous as populism itself. Rather than scolding populist voters, it would be better to solve the problems that are providing the far-right with fertile soil to flourish and grow.

For far-right populists, fears about globalization and competition are a wedge

democracies, more and more people are rejecting democratic institutions and expressing admiration for "strong men" such as Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and even Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte – while ignoring that these "elected autocrats" are dismantling the very principles of democracy. Among these the principle of freedom of expression – a freedom that far-right populists are profiting from.

In the US, the system of checks and balances has put the brakes on Trump's populist agenda. In Germany, the majority continues to support democracy and democratic institutions. But in the September 2017 election, the share of votes won by the coalition partners – the Christian Democratic CDU/CSU and the Social Democrats – declined by a combined total of nearly 14 percent as compared to 2013. The far-right populist AfD party entered the German Bundestag for the first time, after winning nearly 13 percent of the vote. During the coalition negotiations, the parties were well aware of the risks they face. The CDU/CSU and the Social Democrats want to finally get a handle on the question of immigration. CSU boss and hardliner Horst Seehofer was awarded the post of Interior Minister – which now comes with a new and revealing second title of Homeland ("Heimat") Minister. ■

By Frank Bernbeck

Populists the world over feed not only from the conservative pool and those even further to the right. They also receive many votes from those who once voted left. Many of them feel abandoned by the Social Democrats and the socialist parties. The decline of the international left started 20 years ago, when Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder began to direct their policies more toward the glossy new middle class rather than their traditional supporters. This brought the Social Democrats a quick electoral boost – but one that they paid for dearly over the long term. In Britain, Labour lost its grip on power, only regaining momentum after old-school traditional Labourite Jeremy Corbyn took the helm. In Germany, the Social Demo-

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The articulation of social grievances serves as a cloak for criticisms of democracy as such

through which they propagate nationalism and chauvinism. They transform people's skepticism about the undue economic and cultural impact of immigration into outright racism.

The articulation of social grievances comes to serve as a cloak for criticisms of democracy as such. Even in stable western



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JEREMY ISSACHAROFF

Israel is a Secure Homeland for the Jewish People

Jerusalem's ambassador to Berlin on bilateral relations, the new Middle East and Iran

Mazal tov on Israel's 70th birthday. What are Israel's greatest achievements?

Israel has not only established the state but also created a vibrant and secure homeland for the Jewish people – for those living in Israel as well for Jewish people in any part of the world. Our country has very few natural resources, so we developed our own human resources. We succeeded in bringing people from all over the world together and created a cohesive society. Israel is a functioning stable democracy. We have developed enormous expertise in agriculture, in science and high-tech. We are not only trying to be a good country for ourselves but also try to provide as much assistance and expertise as we can to other countries too. And last but not least, we have also succeeded in reconstituting Hebrew as a living language.

But what about peace?

Israel has always been eager to be a part of the neighborhood we live in. Whenever a genuine opportunity for peace showed itself, we have seized this opportunity and fulfilled it to the best of our ability. When after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the worst war Israel ever underwent, Egypt's president Sadat, the architect of that war, offered to come to Jerusalem, people were out on the streets welcoming him. The peace treaty with Egypt has now lasted for

Things look quite different on the Arab streets where anti-Israel sentiments are raging...

Whilst we have been able to have very good relations with our Arab neighbors a lot of the time, this has been discreet, it happens far away from the public eye. I think sometimes some Arab countries have not yet understood just how much the role of Israel in the area has changed in ways that benefits them directly. Now, if Israel, Egypt and Jordan are cooperating against elements in the area like DAESH (IS) and other terrorist groups, this is not necessarily seen and felt in the public, but it is there.

Can you imagine regular relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia?

To see a country like Saudi Arabia and a country like Israel bridging gaps and having normal relations to me seems natural, desirable and something that could be ultimately very strong. The convergence of interests between the moderate Arab world and Israel has never been greater than it has been over the last couple of years. And this could happen with many more Arab countries, not just Saudi Arabia.

In the 1970s and 80s, German-Israeli relations were excellent ... Today, if you look at public opinion, Israel has a very low profile when it comes to a good image...

First of all, I think it is important that we explain and show to the people in Germany that Israel's role in the area has



“The regime in Tehran understands that it would better find someone else to mess with their security than with Israel

Iran, its involvements in Syria. For sure, Iran is not in Syria to stabilize it, it is not there to help the Syrian people – all these are the pressing issues.

I hear that some people consider the settlements in the West Bank as the biggest problem in the Middle East – but this seems to me like a picture some people want to see, it is not much connected to reality.

Ten years ago, Angela Merkel announced in the Knesset in Jerusalem that Israel's security is a vital German interest and non-negotiable. Was this not precisely what happened in the negotiations on the nuclear deal with Iran in which Germany took part, a deal in which Israel's right to existence is not even mentioned...

What Chancellor Merkel said in the Knesset about Germany's historical responsibility and its commitment to our country's national security is a cornerstone of her policy towards Israel. She has been a very major leader in German thinking on that issue and generally she has remained faithful to that commitment. We had very strong frank ongoing discussions with the German government throughout the entire negotiations and this exchange was very important to us. My impression is that it is understood also in Germany that a country that is developing intercontinental ballistic missiles is not just an Israeli problem or an Arab problem, it is also a German and a NATO problem.

Germany was one of the countries voting against the resolution to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital...

Relationships between any two countries if they are serious, vibrant, living, breathing relation-

ships they have elements where you agree and they have elements where you disagree...

North Korea is negotiating with South Korea... Can you imagine a situation where an Israeli delegation visits Tehran – or the other way round?

We have no quarrel with the Iranian people. In fact, we feel for them that they have to live in a regime that denies rights to women, that denies essential human rights, freedom of the press, does not recognize gay rights and executes minors. From that point of view, there is a great deal of sympathy from Israel towards the Iranian people and what they are living under. There is also a very strong memory in the minds of Israelis regarding the once cordial relations between Israel and Iran under the Shah. I can't see how the regime in Tehran is going to sustain itself, a regime which believes that within several years Israel will not be able to sustain itself – believe me, Israel is a much more vibrant, stronger country that knows how to defend itself. The regime in Tehran understands that it would bet-

ter find someone else to mess with their security than with Israel. I think that in the end the regime will change and our countries can return to a whole different relationship.

Ariel Sharon decided to disengage from Gaza. Can you imagine a scenario where an Israeli government would disengage from the West Bank, Judea and Shomron?

No. This is not a viable option. In my view, the only option will be a political settlement that will fully take into account primarily Israel's security interests.

Not for the next 70, but the next ten years – your wishes for Israel?

On the national level I think that we must continue to push towards greater regional understanding between Israel and the Arab countries. This could be a vital component in ensuring a possible political settlement between Israelis and the Palestinians. A very major challenge will be to prevail over the more destabilizing and radical elements in the region. If we are able to make progress on that we can also make progress in bringing more people from abroad making Aliyah to Israel. Tourism is also a vital component. We have had a record number of visitors last year and with greater stability, even more people would come to visit Israel. Things can change very quickly, people-to-people relations, confidence grows. This could also be a very vital element in creating this new kind of reality: Making our area of the world not be seen as an area of despair, but as an area of hope – Hatikva. ■

Ambassador Issacharoff talked to JVG-editors Elisabeth Neu and Rafael Seligmann at the Israeli embassy in Berlin



forty years and it is a strategic pillar of our national security. Security challenges will always remain. Israel is very much at the forefront of fighting terrorism. Some of the achievements of Israel in this respect have been very much envied by other countries in the world. In Israel, we have had every type of level of terrorism at every level of intensity. The Middle East is a fundamentally unstable area. Israel has coped with the opportunities but we have also dealt with the dangers and the vast majority of Israelis are still interested in broadening the process of peace with our Arab neighbors.

changed. Often people here just focus on Israelis and Palestinians, the settlements, the two state solution, yes or no ... They are not seeing the entire Middle East, they are not seeing the real picture of what's going on in the region. I don't think it is yet known sufficiently in Germany what we are doing [in humanitarian aid] in our own modest way on the border with Syria. But let's also talk about Hezbollah in Lebanon which is a massive military threat to Israel. Let's talk about the situation in Syria with the Russian presence that has developed there. Let's talk about the challenges to the area as a whole emanating from



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SAUDI ARABIA

A Cluster of Necessary Reforms

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is the motor for change

By Rainer Hermann

The news would appear to be a relic from the past if it were not coming from Saudi Arabia. Beginning January 1, women have been allowed to attend sports events in some stadiums in the country. The first cinemas are now opening, and Saudi women will be legally allowed to drive from June of this year. The religious police have been banished from the streets. Since late 2017, public concerts have been drawing fans of all ages. In mid-March, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said that it would be left to women to decide what type of “decent and respectful attire” they choose to wear. Saudi women must no longer wear traditional black abayas or headscarves, or cover their faces.

The driving force behind these reforms is the 32-year-old Crown Prince, known colloquially by Saudis as MBS. In March 2015, he was appointed second crown prince by his father, King Salman. In June 2017, he became the first Crown Prince. Since then, Mohammed bin Salman has accelerated the pace of reforms, which aim to transform the hardline kingdom – long an exporter of a particularly intolerant form of Islam in addition to petroleum – into a youthful and more open society headed by a political leadership that does justice to the position of responsibility it holds both at home and abroad. Quite befittingly, Mohammed bin Salman on his recent three-week journey across the US gave the magazine *The Atlantic* an interview in which he as the first Saudi politician recognized Israel's right to existence.

An end to extremism

The road is a long one, but Rome was also not built in a day. In any case, the glass is no longer entirely empty. What other countries have long taken for granted is also becoming the norm in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The ruling House of Saud is breaking its pact with the reactionary Wahhabi clerical establishment – a pact that has served as the foundation of the ruling family's legitimacy for more than 200 years. Today, Wahhabi ideology has become a burden that is no longer compatible with a modern society.

In October 2017, Mohammed bin Salman vowed that Saudi Arabia, the country that is home to the “two holy sites” of Islam, would return to a more moderate form of Islam, one that would be open to all religions and to the world. He said that he wanted to destroy the “destructive ideas”

of the religious extremists and bring an end to extremism. Saudis should be given the opportunity to lead normal lives, and religion and tradition should be expressed in a more tolerant form.

New social contract

The House of Saud is increasingly keeping its clerics on a short leash. At the same time, it is making overtures to the Kingdom's subjects with the aim of turning them into citizens. This is transforming the social contract upon which the Kingdom has rested. The House of Saud now seeks to secure political legitimacy via a new social contract, which is still in the process of being written. Until now, this contract has rested on a generous welfare system that provided for every Saudi subject from the cradle to the grave. In return, Saudis relinquished their right to political participation. This welfare state was funded by proceeds from petroleum production, with crude oil serving as its lubricant. But due to ongoing low oil prices coupled with a rapidly growing population, this model is crumbling.

To remain stable, Saudi Arabia will need to change. Before Mohammed bin Salman was appointed Crown Prince, all attempts to launch reforms in the reclusive kingdom had stalled. Yet surveys have shown that the yearning for change is greater in Saudi Arabia than any other country in the Arab world. The previous policy of “progress without change” is no longer sufficient; young Saudis are demanding reforms. In surveys, some 90 percent of young Saudis say that “the leaders of the Arab world should do more to improve individual human rights and women's rights.” That percentage is higher than in any other country in the Arab world. And young people are in a clear majority in Saudi Arabia, where two-thirds of the country's 22 million citizens are under 31 years of age.

Consequently, King Salman instructed the Crown Prince to draw up a comprehensive program of reforms. On April 25,

2016, Mohammed bin Salman presented the main features of the *Vision 2030* program. The program aims to undertake fundamental economic reforms, which will indirectly lead to social change. For example, women make up two-thirds of university graduates in Saudi Arabia, and yet only 21 percent of Saudi women work outside the home. Increasingly, Saudi women are demanding employment opportunities commensurate to their education, and an end to the ban on women's participation in public life. Women are now becoming a more visible part of the economy, society and politics in the Kingdom. The lifting of the ban against women drivers is also a step in this direction.



Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

Sweeping economic reforms are key to this transformation. In particular, *Vision 2030* seeks to reduce the Saudi economy's dependence on oil. The share of oil and gas in the country's GDP is slated to fall from 47 percent to just 11 percent by 2030, while per capita GDP is expected to nearly double to \$6,000. The aim is to transform a country whose prosperity has not been founded on the productive use of labor and capital into a competitive and knowledge-based economy. A massive education initiative, which seeks to increase the current low labor productivity rate, is also an essential part of the program. The entire educational system is to be overhauled. These are ambitious goals. Even if the *Vision 2030* reforms are only partly implemented, it is clear that the Saudi Arabia of the future will be different from what it is today.

The opening move came on November 4, 2017, when the Saudi attorney general ordered the detention of 208 people as part of an anti-corruption investigation. Among those detained were prominent members of the royal family, former government ministers, and leading business people. Corruption was endemic in Saudi Arabia, as much a feature of the country as its petroleum reserves. The unprecedented move was heralded as a necessary step in the Kingdom's crackdown on the corruption that had been thwarting the country's development. According to Saudi leaders, the anti-corruption investigation will bring a new era of public transparency and accountability. The wave of arrests also cemented the Crown Prince's popularity in a society in which complaints about corruption and the privileges enjoyed by the princes were growing ever more sharper and pointed.

Withstanding Iran's aggression

The domestic reorganization of the Saudi state is now underway. In terms of foreign policy, the Kingdom has taken up the gauntlet thrown by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Saudi Arabia is the last remaining Arab power that can withstand Iranian aggression. King Abdullah, who ruled Saudi Arabia from 2005 to 2015, repeatedly called on the United States to “cut off the head of the Iranian snake.” Like Israel, Saudi Arabia rejects the nuclear agreement with Iran. Saudi Arabia and Israel share a common interest in containing Iran, which has lent its backing to militia forces that have carved a land corridor all the way to the Mediterranean and the Israeli border. Saudi Arabia and Israel have now joined forces against this threat. For many years, Saudi Arabia was part of the problems facing the Middle East. Under the leadership of its young Crown Prince, the Kingdom is increasingly becoming part of the solution.

For many years, Middle East expert Rainer Hermann has been a foreign correspondent and editor of the daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

His latest book: *Arabisches Beben*, Klett-Cotta publishers, 2018, 378pp., €16.95



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CLAIMS CONFERENCE

When Memory Becomes History

How are we to commemorate the Shoah in the future?

By Rüdiger Mahlo

The number of approximately 450,000 Holocaust survivors worldwide is about to decrease by 50 per cent over the next few years, and hence those who bore witness to it. By now, the fourth generation after the Shoah is growing up. It is likely to be the first generation to become acquainted with the destruction of the European Jews only through history books. How will this generation commemorate the genocide? Will there even be a remembrance of it? Will it be purely consigned to history or will the Shoah play a crucial role in future society? A comparison between Israel and Germany can be used to illustrate different approaches to this issue.

Until now, the memorial work has mainly been carried out by the first and second generations. Personal memory and historical reappraisal went hand in hand. They found their way into society and often provided a stimulus for public discussions and debates. Thus, confrontation with the Shoah has shaped society in Israel and Germany. While foundations were laid for social change in Germany with the so-called "Wiedergutmachung" and the way in which the generation of 1968 tried to come to terms with their parents' past, for Israel and the Jewish world this was symbolized by founding the Jewish state of Israel, the erection of Yad Vashem and the Eichmann trial.

Today, it is the irreconcilable, the divisive, which has brought the German and Israeli societies together. In the face of so



On Yom Ha-Shoah, live in Israel comes to a complete standstill

locust has not become historical past, but instead forms part of present-day life. Hundreds of thousands of survivors found a new home in the Jewish homeland before, during and after the Shoah. Almost all Jewish families mourn the death of a loved one, almost all have a grandparent who is a Holocaust survivor.

A Jewish memorial day.

Yom Ha-Shoah, which mainly takes place within Israel, commemorates the six million Jews who fell victim to the Nazi regime. Unlike International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, Yom Ha-Shoah is primarily a Jewish memorial

one picture hung in Dagan's office. It was that of his grandfather cloaked in a tallit, kneeling before the Nazis, shortly before his execution.

And on the German side? What is the perception of the Holocaust in Germany? In contrast to Israel, the Holocaust in Germany seems to be decreasing in importance for present-day life; it is drifting more and more into the historical narrative in spite of all the commemoration ceremonies, all the "Stolpersteine" (stumbling blocks), all the memorials – or for that very reason? Is it due to the fact that commemoration is a priori retrospective, or that only positive events in history are suitable for fostering a sense of identity within society?

It is clear that societies always enshrine events of momentous historical importance in their collective memory, which they consider relevant for their continued existence and sense of belonging. Both positive and negative experiences can be understood as epochal and defining; they represent the strife for an ideal state of society, as well as its opposite, that is, the state which society does not want.

Our societies see the Shoah as the epitome and archetype of evil and inhumanity. Socially speaking, there is nothing more evil than the Holocaust. Hence, the Holocaust represents the absolute reference point for inhumanity and contempt for mankind in almost all Western societies. The Shoah emanated from a highly industrialized

country, a cultured country, a country with a highly educated population in the center of Europe. However, all this offered no protection against the greatest crime against humanity in history. "There is no certainty after Auschwitz", is how German Bundestag President Wolfgang Schäuble described this fact in his speech to the parliament when commemorating the liberation of Auschwitz.

Many other important foundations in today's Germany also have a direct or indirect connection to the Shoah. There are provisions throughout the German Basic Law which are designed to prevent another dictatorship and, hence, a genocide. The Federal Armed Forces introduced the principle of the citizen in uniform, bearing in mind the role of the Wehrmacht during the Third Reich. Now, a German soldier is expressly obliged to adhere to human rights and in the event of non-compliance, cannot appeal to superior orders. A number of high-ranking politicians, according to their own account, such as Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, attribute the personal motivation for their political actions to Auschwitz.

A moral compass.

We need to realize even more clearly which fundamental reference point the Holocaust represents for our democracy and for our moral compass. Only thus can future generations understand the genesis of our value-based community and our democratic principles. Those who detract from and discredit the remembrance of the Holocaust, attack the most important moral convention in this country. If the destruction of European Jewry is not embedded as a reference point in the collective



Stumbling blocks on German streets commemorate the victims of Nazi persecution

“There is no certainty after Auschwitz

many weaknesses and the fragility of the German-Israeli and German-Jewish relationship, this development was both inconceivable and unforeseeable. A joint remembrance of the Shoah, as distinct as experiences were, was the guiding principle behind this process. Both societies perceive the Shoah as an integral part of their identity. For future generations who have no immediate connection with the Shoah and can only rely on historical records, remembrance of the genocide represents a formidable challenge.

The Shoah plays a crucial role in Israeli society and within the Jewish world. In Israel, the Ho-

day. At 10 a.m., sirens sound in every part of the country. For several minutes, life comes to a complete standstill, people remain exactly where they are, in remembrance – the Jewish world is still in a state of shock to some extent; grief is omnipresent, heavy and you can almost touch it.

Besides the collective remembrance of the Shoah, which shapes Jewish culture and history, there are also individual memories. The concurrence of both aspects may be illustrated by a memorable event from the life of the former Director of the Mossad, Meir Dagan, who passed away two years ago. Only

As such, the Shoah is and will forever be a vital reference point in Germany. It will continue to play an important role in shaping our society in the future, since the foundations of this country are connected to the rupture of civilization represented by the Shoah in so many ways; such that it is impossible to forget. No German federal ministry, no large German corporation and no German university can authentically review its history without reflecting upon their role during the years between 1933 and 45.

memory of future generations, the foundations of our own society will crumble and it will lose its parameters. Remembrance of the Shoah means responsibility towards the victims and a commitment to the values of our society. Or to use the words of American philosopher George Santayana: "Those who do not remember the past, are doomed to repeat it."

Rüdiger Mahlo is the representative of the Jewish Claims Conference in Germany

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GLOBALIZATION

No Winners in a Trade War

Reforms rather than confrontations

By Klaus D. Oehler

Peter Altmaier, the new Economy Minister in the recently formed German government, was not in attendance at the first major speech of the new term given by his erstwhile and new Chancellor Angela Merkel before the Bundestag. Immediately after being sworn into office, Altmaier left for Washington in hopes of averting fresh damage to the German economy. The US government and President Donald Trump had announced that new “punitive tariffs” would be imposed on steel and aluminum imports on March 23. A further sword of Damocles was Trump’s suggestion that automobiles might soon also be subject to higher import taxes. For the time being, at least, Altmaier and his colleagues from the European Union appear to have won the day. The EU was exempted from the metals tariffs.

President Trump has now shifted his attention to China. But Beijing is also going on the offensive. In response to US tariffs, China has imposed tariffs of between 15 and 25% on 128 US goods, including wine, pork and fruit. The tariffs will affect some \$3bn of US imports. Beijing has also threatened further retaliation if Trump extends his tariffs to \$60bn of Chinese tech imports. Whether these tariffs will go ahead is unclear. Fearing retaliation, many US industry and corporate groups warn against a fresh round of tariffs.

With a total merchandise trade volume of \$636bn, China was the US’s most important trade partner in 2017. During that same year, however, China ran a record \$375bn goods trade surplus with the US. Beijing has warned the Americans against launching a trade war. Speaking at a press conference on the last day of China’s annual National

People’s Congress, Premier Li Keqiang said, “We don’t want to see a trade war. There will be no winner in a trade war.”

This is not only China’s view. Within the European Union, industry and politics are also worried about the prospect of a spiral of tariffs and counter-tariffs. On his visit to Washington, the German Economics Minister was joined by a number of his European colleagues. The G20 governments argue that the problem of trade imbalances and unequal taxation must be solved jointly and in collaboration. Moreover, they do not dispute the existence of a trade imbalance. Germany has long been the focus of criticism in this respect. The global export champion has a large trade surplus. Nearly all key German industries have export quotas of well over 60%, and a large share of these exports flow to countries outside the European Union.

Economic woes

Germany’s trade surplus deprives other countries of purchasing power and jobs. In a time when many Western economies are still struggling to emerge from the global finance crisis, politicians are naturally tempted to blame countries that boast a trade surplus for their own economic woes. As a result, protectionism has been on the rise for some years. Italy and France see themselves as victims of Germany’s “mercantilistic” policies; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) believes that Germany’s surpluses are one of the main sources of risk for the global economy.

For its part, German industry has repeatedly countered with the argument that its products are competitive on the global market and have a global reach.

Indeed, German automotive manufacturing, mechanical engineering and the chemical industry now account for as many jobs abroad as they do within Germany. German cars are popular in China. Chemicals giant BASF is the global market leader and German machinery and installations can also be found at every production site around the globe.

Nonetheless, trade imbalance is a legitimate topic of international negotiation and debate – but it must not take the form of a trade war. For example, the Americans have noted that the EU imposes a 10% import tar-

“Trade imbalance is a legitimate topic of international negotiation and debate

iff on US-built cars, while the US imposes only a 2.5% tariff on cars assembled in the EU. But, as the EU Commission has noted, in other areas the tariffs skew in the opposite direction. On average, the EU levies tariffs of 3% on US imports, while the average US tariff is 2.4%. For this reason, the EU believes that it should be possible to reach an amicable agreement with the US. French Economics Minister Bruno Le Maire has made it clear to US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin that Europe is “waiting for a full exemption from these new American tariffs for the European Union as a whole.” This goal, he said, is “difficult, but not out of reach.”

Potential countermeasures

Nonetheless, the European Union has been laying the groundwork for potential countermeasures. The European Commission has proposed

new measures to tax large digital firms – a move that would have a major impact on US giants such as Google and Facebook. The proposals are targeted at profits made through activities such as selling user-generated data. For some time now, the Commission as well as individual Member States have been demanding fair taxation of these profits by moving to a system in which taxation is based on where the users are located, rather than where the companies are headquartered. Most digital giants are not headquartered in the countries in which they operate, and thus pay minimal taxes within the EU. The Commission has put forward two proposals. As an interim solution, Brussels wants to introduce a 3% tax on digital companies with total annual worldwide revenues of €750mn and EU revenues of €50mn. The tax would apply to revenues resulting from user activities in the broad sense of the term, including revenues achieved from online advertising, intermediary activities that facilitate the sale of goods and services, and the sale of data generated by user-provided information. Tax revenues would be collected by the Member States, based on the number of users in each country. The EU Commission emphasizes that this proposal would only tax revenues that until now have not been subject to tax.

Experts say the US government could also explore new approaches to making Trump’s “America First” campaign slogan a reality. Much of the computer giant Apple’s hardware is made in China. Google’s software is maintained in India,

and so forth. This is the point at which the European Commission’s new strategy is taking aim. The Commission wants to introduce the principle of a “digital presence” or virtual permanent establishment whereby profits would be taxed in the territory where they are generated. Reforms are urgently needed – currently, digital companies pay on average an effective tax rate of 9.5% within the EU, compared to 23.2% for traditional businesses. Social media behemoth Facebook had a turnover of \$40bn last year, while Google’s turnover was more than \$100bn. Although much of this revenue is generated from users in the European Union, these digital firms pay only minimal tax within the EU. This fact alone is further proof that there would be no winners in a trade war. ■

Klaus D. Oehler is the financial editor at the daily Stuttgarter Zeitung

THE SPUDY COLUMN

Investing in Israel

Private equity investments are an interesting asset class, especially for investors with long-term investment horizons, such as family portfolios. Such investments provide a better risk-return profile for the portfolio and generate higher average returns than shares, while displaying lower volatility. Through direct participation in innovative startups, investors may take part in the development of interesting fields such as medicine technology or digitization. In recent years, Israel has developed into an incubator for young and innovative companies with enormous potential in these exciting areas.

This success is no accident. In Israel, many university graduates prefer to grow their own ideas in their own companies, make their own decisions and assume responsibility rather than seeking a position in a large company and join an existing hierarchy. The formation of startups is also aided by the connections formed by young people with their peers during compulsory military service. Strong peer networks of young people with similar interests facilitate the founding of new companies. And, of course, Israel’s exemplary investment in research and development also plays a role.

As a result, international investors are increasingly focusing on Israel’s innovative potential. One recent example is the German automotive supplier Continental’s takeover of the Israeli company Argus. Last year, Continental purchased the Israeli cybersecurity startup for an estimated price of over €300 million, with the aim of developing technologies for use in self-driving cars. For private equity investors who get in on the ground floor, such trajectories can prove especially lucrative.

At the same time, however, investors must accept that their capital will have limited fungibility. The investment risk is also higher, and in a worst-case scenario an entire investment could be lost. In many cases, potential investors also face an information gap when it comes to decision-making. For this reason, potential investors should remember that success in this area requires professional and systematic selection of investment options, as well as market knowledge and experience. Most importantly, they require independent advice and investment management, to include not only investment controlling but careful attention to tax and legal aspects. ■

Jens Spudy is executive partner of Spudy Family Office



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COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE IN GERMANY

Safe Haven with Great Potential

Foreign investment is on the rise

By Bernhard Heinlein and Thomas Völker

Up until the start of this millennium, the German commercial real estate market was still dominated by domestic investors. International investors, that is predominantly institutional investors such as pension funds, insurance companies and other funds, were rare. Various reasons were put forward for this, including lack of transparency due to a still rather rudimentary system for recording transactions in comparison to other real estate markets with a high level of institutionalization, such as Great Britain. Other factors mentioned were Germany's federal structure and the associated complexity of the marketplace, as well as low expected returns.

Since then, both the commercial real estate market in Germany and international investors' perceptions of Germany have evolved positively. The professionalization of market research means that adequate market information is now available. It is precisely because risk is distributed across a number of investment locations that foreign investors now hold Germany in high regard. In addition, the low interest rate environment is contributing to the view that there is virtually no alternative to real estate investment (the so called "wall of money").

Based on transaction volume, in 2017 Germany ranked second in Europe, behind Great Britain and well ahead of France, which for a long time held second place.

There are further factors that make Germany attractive as an investment location, in addition to the points already mentioned above.

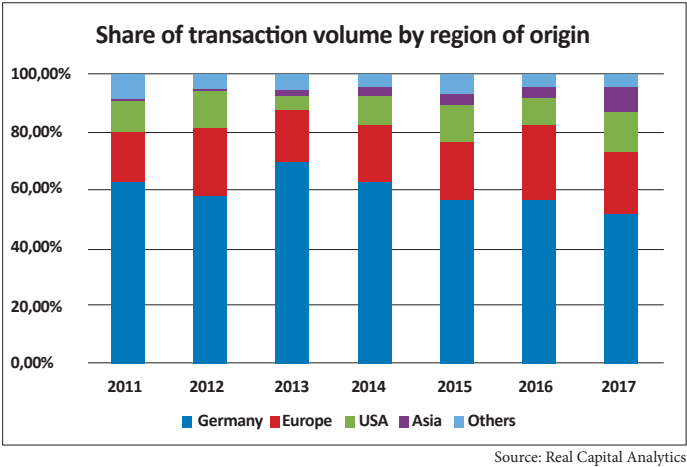
Political stability

These principally include, beside Germany's political stability, its solid and diversified economy, which has recorded economic growth for the eighth successive year. Employment is at a record high (45.3 million). The unemployment rate of 6.3% is at its lowest level since German reunification. Combined with this, user (tenancy) markets are in good shape, with low risk combined with low property vacancy rates and rents that are continuing to rise moderately. In this regard, Germany again has an advantage in comparison to other countries. One example is Great Britain, where the results of the Brexit referendum are being felt in the London office market and various investments have either not gone ahead or have been made in other countries instead.

Furthermore, Germany has a stable financing market with over 1,800 banks, which demonstrably provide the economy with sufficient liquidity even in periods of crisis.

All of the above arguments have led to Germany count as a secure investment location ("safe haven"), and therefore consequently the share of international investors in commercial transaction volumes has risen in the last few years.

In 2017, almost every second euro in Germany was invested by international investors. Alongside investors from the rest of Europe, investors from the US and Asia are particularly active. It is striking that in 2017 Asian investors invested almost three times as much in Germany as they did in 2016.



Source: Real Capital Analytics

The most popular investment locations in Germany in 2017 were the regions of Berlin (€ 11.9 billion / 17.6% of transaction volume) and Frankfurt (€ 8.3 billion / 12.3%), followed by Munich (€ 5.9 billion / 8.7%). In this regard, international investors prefer in particular high-value and sizable office properties (49.9% of the transaction volume of international investors), logistics portfolios (17.1%) and retail properties (15.2%) in established and property-specific locations.

Rising demand

In line with this, the two largest transactions in Germany over the past year were both carried out by international investors. The Sony Center in Berlin was acquired by Blackstone (US) for € 1.11 billion and the Commerzbank Tower in Frankfurt by Samsung Life Insurance (Korea) for € 0.73 billion.

Rising domestic and international demand for real estate has pushed purchase prices up across Europe and thus also in Germany. At approx. 6.4%, average purchase yields of all real estate classes are at a historically low level. Average yields for absolute prime properties in major European cities are under 4%.

Over the last 12 months, purchase yields for top office properties in Germany fell by 20% and are at a historically low 3%.

In spite of these historically low yields, and despite an environment of slightly rising interest rates since the start of the year, real estate continues to constitute an unparalleled form of investment. Investment pressure among investors thus remains high, such that demand will also remain high. Various international investors

from Asia have already announced their intention to invest several hundred billion euros in European real estate markets over the next ten years. A price correction and an end to the run on real estate in the commercial sector are therefore not expected.

Bernhard Heinlein is Member of the Board of Management, Münchener Hypothekenbank eG; Thomas Völker is Head of Commercial Real Estate Clients International, Münchener Hypothekenbank eG. Münchener Hypothekenbank eG (MünchenerHyp) is one of Germany's major real estate financing institutions. As part of the cooperative financial sector in Germany, it acts as the close partner of Germany's regional cooperative banks (Volksbanken and Raiffeisenbanken). In commercial real estate finance business, the bank's target markets include Germany, Great Britain, France, Spain, Benelux and Austria.

Country	Transaction Volume	%
Great Britain	70.3 billion	24.0%
Germany	67.5 billion	23.0%
France	33.9 billion	11.6%
Rest of Europe	121.7 billion	41.4%
Total	293.4 billion	100.0%

Source: Real Capital Analytics, Europe Capital Trends 2017





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BREATHTAKING DEVELOPMENT

Human Capital as the Basis

A result of Jewish history and Israeli needs



Particle accelerator at Weizmann Institute

By Benjamin Ludwig

Jaffa oranges! When the State of Israel was founded 70 years ago, citrus fruit were the country's only significant export item. But then as now, Israel faced strategic economic and political challenges that have remained fundamentally unchanged, even as they have taken on new strategic forms. In 1948, fewer than 700,000 people lived in the Jewish state. The country had no significant mineral resources. And shortly after the proclamation of Israel, the new state was invaded by the armies of several Arab nations.

To secure its existence as a state and as the Jewish national homeland, Israel promoted Jewish immigration. This policy proved a success. Within just three years, nearly 1.5 million people arrived in Israel. Today, the country is home to nearly nine million citizens. From the very start, national founder David Ben-Gurion and his government understood that Israel's economy could not rest only on the export of citrus fruit. Instead the country would need to rely on the only resource it had in ample quality and supply – human capital and human ingenuity.

This view also accorded with a deep understanding of Jewish history. For the Jewish people of the Diaspora, preserving their identity over thousands of years in the face of persecution was in part accomplished by preserving their tradition of scholarship and the life of the mind. Historically, most Jews were able to read. As soon as Jews attained some measure of emancipation, these intellectual skills gave rise to unusual accomplishments in the areas of science, art, culture and business.

Israel's first President, Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), was a distinguished chemist. Today the world-renowned Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, southeast of Tel Aviv, ranks among the country's most important research facilities. Many of the best Jewish scientists from around the world spend at least part of their ca-

reer there. At the institute, they are free to pursue their own research interests. In return, they must generate a large share of their budget through income from patents or through cooperative agreements with industry. Israel also has five major universities: the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, the Institute of Technology in Haifa, and Ben-Gurion University in Beer Sheva. Israel devotes 5% of its GDP to research and development – more than any other country in the world. Some 50% of the adult population have completed tertiary education, placing the country among the most educated worldwide. Israel also trains the most engineers as a share of its population. These figures are just some of many that demonstrate the value that Israel attaches to its human capital.

Putting to practical use

As the Weizmann Institute illustrates, Israel does not only support theoretical education and research. Wherever possible, this research is put to practical use. This is most evident in the military sector. Since everyday life in Israel continues to be shaped by terror and by the strategic threat posed by Iran and other countries, the Israeli military must be able to quickly provide technological solutions to any threats. This is done with particular effec-



High-tech park Nazareth

tiveness in the Israel Defense Force's Unit 8200, whose specialists are tasked with deploying the latest technology against new challenges rapidly and with little preparatory groundwork. Among the successful examples are the Iron Dome and Arrow missile defense systems.

After completing their military service, many of these young specialists continue to work in the field of data technology. Many have joined forces with scientists and researchers to launch successful start-ups. One example is the driver-assistance system Mobileye. Co-founded by Amnon Shashua, who received his Master's degree at the Weizmann Institute, Mobileye was eventually acquired by an American multinational for some \$15 bn.

Israel's economy rests on its human capital. And the root of that human capital lies in the history of the Jewish Diaspora, which has flowed into the State of Israel. In Israel, theoretical knowledge was confronted and enriched with the demand for practical application. The Israeli success story will continue to evolve. Until recently, the country's Haredi Jews and its Arab population have remained on the sidelines. But now these two groups are beginning to take part in the country's economic development, particularly in the area of data technology.

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REVIVAL

Coloring Judaism Outside the Lines

A fresh take on our cultural heritage

By Hartmut Bomhoff

Tradition!" – the opening number for the Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof* anticipates the tragicomic story of prejudice, tradition and change. At Berlin's Komische Oper, Barrie Kosky's German-language adaptation *Anatevka* is fully booked for months ahead, and you will always meet Jewish visitors who stress how much they can relate to the characters in this production. That's quite an exceptional statement in a city where Jews find it difficult to come to terms with the way Jewishness is being staged and celebrated everywhere.

In Berlin and beyond, the wider Jewish community is negotiating and re-inventing its identities. How to make one's heritage chime with a modern world view? Tevye the Milkman embodies this struggle when he shouts "Tradition!" but cannot help adding: "On the other hand..."

Judaism has always been diverse rather than conforming to a single, supposedly "authentic" model. This applies especially to the situation in Germany today. A 2010 Pew study reported a Jewish population of 230,000. Thanks to immigration from the former Soviet Union, synagogue membership has quadrupled since the 1990s. However, the 2017 statistics prove that there are less than 100,000 synagogue members today, with at least another 100,000 unaffiliated: since the rabbinate in Germany doesn't recognize patrilineal descent, the major part of post-Soviet immigrants whose former passports gave their nationality as "Jewish" were not counted in. In addition, there are some tens of thousands of Israeli Jews who don't identify as religious, and English-speaking expats. In the light of such heterogeneity, there are as many stories as there are Jews. However, despite cultural cleavages, conflicting memories and diverging perceptions, there is a growing sense of cohesion.

Germany is facing a resurgence of far-right politics, coupled with hate speech and racist crimes. Throughout Europe, anti-Semitism again plays a major role in shaping Jewish identity. With their reference to national heritage and "historical truth", populist parties devalue minority groups and individuals alike. In Budapest,

for example, one of the most un-engaged Jewish communities in the world, the avant-garde Jewish community center Aurora was closed last year, and Hungarian born Jewish billionaire George Soros has become a useful punching bag for the government. Rejection, however, creates a renewed affirmation of Jewishness.

Where do we belong?

For many secular or non-observant Jews one question emerges: Where do I belong? It is impossible to enliven traditions one has escaped from for generations. Some might seek a contemporary Jewish faith that is both spiritually compelling and intellectually honest. The foundation of the Swedish Paideia Institute, dedicated to the study and interpretation of the textual sources that have served as the wellsprings of Jewish civilization, was a milestone in 2001, and so was the opening of the School of Jewish Theology in Potsdam five years ago. Initiatives like Let's Start Davening! (LSD!) practice, advance and revive Jewish spirituality through davening and "togetherness" for young adults, while retreats and summer camps, culture festivals and educational programs provide information and knowledge. But the panacea to engage a majority of the Jewish population and to rebuild a Jewish consciousness is still missing.

To secure and demonstrate Judaism as a living and pluralistic religion, we must think out of the box and lis-

ten to the dissonances of Jewishness. We need spaces outside of the Jewish institutions – but within the Jewish mainstream – to discuss the significance of Judaism in the public arena and define the common ground of Jewish identities. So far, festivals, theatres and museums provide such opportunities.

"Jewish museums can offer a big tent for visitors from across the Jewish spectrum, especially for the unaffiliated, the intermarried, those more attracted to culture and the arts than to religious observance, and those who enjoy experiences in mixed rather than strictly

“

Jewish museums offer a big tent for visitors from across the Jewish spectrum

Jewish crowds," explains Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Chief Curator of the Core Exhibition at POLIN Museum in Warsaw. "As a third space, an attractive place to gather, socialize, and engage that is neither work nor home, museums offer a complement to synagogues, JCCs, and other institutions serving the Jewish community."

Building a Jewish future

There are many signs for a Jewish revival in Germany and beyond, against all odds. Some examples: Jewish Heritage Europe is a web portal that maps Jewish landmarks and sites and also conferences, festivals and other events. POLIN, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews,

has become a success story with more than one million visitors since its opening in April 2013 – though much resentment it stirred in the right-wing sector of Polish society. The Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow is the largest presentation of contemporary Jewish culture worldwide – but why not stop over at the Jewish Culture Festival Trondheim while traveling this summer? Small museums all over Europe, very often in cooperation with the local synagogue, uncover the story of the local Jewish communities and their contribution to the country's arts and culture – from Oslo to Istanbul, from Minsk to Padua to Porto, reflecting the different realities of each country.

To build a Jewish future, however, we need to think beyond museums and the narratives of survival. Rabbi Elliot J. Cosgrove of Park Avenue Synagogue in New York reminds us: "In order to win the Jewish future, the Jewish people must field a dynamic and compelling Judaism, a Judaism worth defending, a Judaism that is willing, if necessary, to color outside the lines." The teachings of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, pioneers of Jewish learning in Weimar Germany, resonate with Cosgrove's conclusion: "Engaging curriculum, musical creativity, spirited prayer, ritual innovation – these are the interventions of renewal that seek radical transformations of Jewish expression in order to create a Jewish renaissance." Tradition? Today, no one lives according to some original Judaism, and neither did Tevye the Milkman. Jews have always adapted to the changes and challenges of time. It is diversity that brings forth innovation and helps Jewish culture evolve. ■



Reconstruction of the wooden ceiling of the lost 17th-century synagogue of Gwoździec in Warsaw's POLIN museum



Final concert of the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, 2017

FKZ / Michal Ramus

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PHILOSOPHY

High Noon at Davos

The historic debate between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger in 1929

By Dieter Sattler

On March 26, 1929, the eminent philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) and the rising star Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) met for a debate in Davos. The result was a historic disputation between democratic and authoritarian worldviews. In his book *Zeit der Zauberer*, Wolfram Eilenberger recreates the duel in the Swiss mountains as a Wild West showdown. Cassirer was an emphatic supporter of the Weimar Republic. Heidegger was already showing signs of the “turn” that would see the acclaimed author of *Being and Time* (1926) become an apologist for National Socialism.

Whoever came up with the idea for the duel almost certainly and with unerring instinct had in mind the eternal war of words between the rational enlightener Settembrini and the mystical Jesuit Naphta in Thomas Mann’s *Magic Mountain*, a novel set in Davos. In the real-life version, Cassirer played the role of Settembrini; Heidegger stood in for Naphta.

In his life and work, Cassirer was the quintessential democrat – a staunch advocate of ethical and rational humanism. Not long before the Davos debate, Cassirer had been invited by the Hamburg senate to give a speech celebrating the anniversary of the democratic Weimar constitution. And Cassirer delivered. Marshalling all his philosophical erudition, he vigorously refuted the widespread argument that democracy had been imposed upon the Germans and that Weimar and its constitution was somehow “un-German.” In what was at times a rather lofty philosophical defense, Cassirer drew a sweeping line from Leibniz’s philosophical support of certain inalienable rights for serfs and slaves to the American Bill of Rights and the French Revolution, contending that this political and intellectual tradition had found its way back to Germany through that most German of philosophers, Immanuel Kant.

What is Man?

Aby Warburg, a German cultural theorist and patron of the arts, was taken with the lecture, which he described as a “preface to the Magna Carta of the German Republic.” Warburg asked Cassirer for permission to prepare a special print edition of his speech.

But Cassirer’s wife Toni remained skeptical of the speech’s political utility. As she later recalled: “Many of the ‘persons of concern’ were nowhere to be seen after the festivities. Those who were convinced were, as always, those who wished to be convinced. To shake Germany out of its stupor would at the time have required other means, which Ernst was not accustomed or inclined to employ.”

Cassirer also would not find those means at the Davos dispute. Instead, he remained largely on the defensive. Hei-



degger was widely regarded as the winner of the disputation – and as the challenger, his task was certainly an easier one. Cassirer’s health was also flagging during the week of preparation in advance of the dispute. By contrast, and in keeping with his rather cultivated image as the robust and vigorous philosopher of the dawning era, Heidegger and his cohort of admirers and sycophants spent much of the week before the disputation on the ski slopes.

The theme of the disputation was the Kantian question, “What is Man?” But the theme was not as philosophically traditional and immaterial as it sounded. By that time, the figure of Kant as a representative of Enlightenment and Republican thought had unexpectedly stumbled into a political battle zone. Nationalist-conservative and *völkisch* thinkers were seeking to recover the “German” Kant from the clutches of the “Jewish” Kant they claimed was being propagated by the Neo-Kantian school, most prominently by the Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen and, of course, Ernst Cassirer.

For the National Socialists, this battle over philosophy was a matter of great significance. Four weeks before the 1929

Davos dispute, Adolf Hitler was feted by his supporters for paying a visit to a lecture on Kant being held by an ideological fellow-traveler in Munich, who also extended Hitler a personal welcome. At a time when German universities still regarded themselves as entirely apolitical, this stunt raised more than a few eyebrows.

The disputation at Davos, by contrast, was a more sedate affair. Cassirer expanded on his guiding principle, arguing that the human spirit adopts forms that allow him to overcome his existential anxiety and lead a human life. This was the philosophical foundation for the concept of “freedom in security,” as we might call it today.

Heidegger, by contrast, sought to demonstrate that “the task of philosophy is to cast man back from the laziness of using the works of the spirit onto the hardness of his fate.” Today, we know that Heidegger was beginning his move toward National Socialism. In that sense, we can interpret his arguments at Davos as an attempt to make his existential philosophy of “Being toward the end” available to the *völkisch* movement and its rhetoric of heroic self-sacrifice.

But the Davos duel was fought in a civilized manner, not unlike a boxing match being waged in kidskin gloves. For observers, it was only dimly apparent that the rather dry, academic language on evidence heralded a profound turning point.

The correspondent of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* described the encounter as follows: “Rather than watching two worlds collide, the viewer enjoyed at most a theatrical performance, involving two monologues, one by a very nice man, and another by a very violent man who, however, made a terrible effort to be nice.”

Viewed from our contemporary remove, this characterization is still an apt one. The Davos disputation reads like a lofty duel in which a rather traditional and staid republican pathos is countered by a wild and rebellious mode of thought that seeks to demolish all certainties in support of a state of war.

Guilt and complicity

In defense of existentialism, however, it must be noted that Heidegger’s “turn” was not immanent in his central work. The existential philosophy of *Being and Time* fascinated even leftwing thinkers such as Herbert Marcuse and Jean-Paul Sartre, who cast a critical eye on the alienated and mechanized world. The Jewish philosophers Walter Benjamin and Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose intellectual trajectories are also described by Eilenberger in *Zeit der Zauberer*, were also closer to the existentialism of *Being and Time* than to Cassirer’s dignified rationalism.

The special twist that Heidegger lent to his existential philosophy was much more a personal choice than a purely logical outcome. After all, even when a philosopher is cast into the world, there is nothing that compels him to submit to any particular political movement. Heidegger wanted to become the “master thinker” of what he saw as the dawn

of a new age, and to enjoy all the career opportunities he believed it might bring. In 1933, Heidegger was appointed rector of the University of Freiburg after his Social Democratic predecessor was dismissed. Heidegger would later distance himself from National Socialism. But he embedded this volte-face into a sweeping critique of the alienation wrought by modern technology that

allowed him to brand Americans and Jews as avatars of the greater evil. In so doing, he relativized his own guilt and complicity. It was this tendency which Heidegger’s student, Hans-Georg Gadamer, would describe as a clear failure of self-reflection.

And Ernst Cassirer, the staunch defender of the Republic? He departed for Switzerland as soon as the Nazis came to power. Not to engage in further disputation, but to seek safer shores. Cassirer’s path of exile eventually took him to Sweden, England and the United States. He died in New York City on April 13, 1945, only a few weeks before the Allied victory.



Ernst Cassirer



Martin Heidegger

CULTURE OF REMEMBRANCE

The German Library of Freedom

A new permanent exhibition traces the fates of emigrants

By Sophie Walther

My classmates are very polite to me. They keep asking me about Africa, and how many lions I've seen. No one ever asks me how I arrived in Africa," wrote Stefanie Zweig, a young girl who returned to Frankfurt after the war. Stefanie and her family had fled to Kenya to escape Nazi Germany.

It is hard to blame Stefanie's young classmates for focusing more on the picturesque details of her experiences, given that during the postwar period even German adults were not particularly interested in hearing much about the Nazi crimes that had prompted their flight. Stefanie Zweig (1932-2014) later became a writer and recorded her memories of exile in her well-known autobiographical novel *Nowhere in Africa*, the film adaptation of which won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Now, Zweig is one of eight people whose history and fate serves as a red narrative thread in the recently opened permanent exhibition of the German Exile Archive at the Frankfurt National Library.

The exhibition presents a total of 250 documents from the estates of emigrants, who include both prominent and lesser-known people who fled the Hitler regime. The exhibition is outstanding. Modern infotainment elements, which often serve to confuse rather than to educate, are not part of the exhibition design. The lighting effects only serve to illuminate and highlight the content. According to exhibition director Sylvia Asmus, "We wanted to exhibit original documents because, unlike copies, they are imbued with a special historical quality."

Original documents

The logically structured and handsomely presented exhibition is pleasingly austere, allowing visitors to viscerally comprehend the tragic fates of those who were forced into exile. The exhibition is divided into three main themes: "Escape," "Exile," and "After Exile." The period of exile is captured by three narrow passageways lined by display cases. Often a suitcase serves as the symbol of flight and exile. In his suitcase, the writer Walter Meckauer transported not only the usual personal items, but a seemingly endless number of his own short stories, which he brought with him on his journey into the unknown.

At first glance, a colorful fabric travel bag embroidered with pictures looks charming, but it is an artifact of dispossession and flight. Irma Lange made the bag for her son Hans to explain the steps of their journey to the Isle of Man. After the war broke out, some of the exiled German Jews were interned in England as "enemy aliens."

From his exile in Ceylon, ten-year-old Thomas Häfner sent a picture he had drawn, depicting him sitting on an elephant, to his parents who had remained behind in Germany. He hoped to convince his mother and father that he was all right. Earlier on, Thomas had



country which they had called home could have taken such a terrible path. On their return, they were greeted with little by way of remorse, nor did the Germans extend much of a hand in welcome to them.

This is demonstrated, for example, by the hateful words of the poet and essayist Gottfried Benn. Because he had sympathized with the Nazis for a time, he was

written, "Dear Pappie, I am in Marseille right now in a hotel that is not entirely displeasing. Tomorrow at 4:00 a.m., our ship will set out into the Mediterranean..."

The drawings and letters created by children are particularly poignant; although the difficult circumstances they describe are told tempered by the child-like depictions, the emotional impact is a powerful one.

Cries for help

Many visitors will be surprised to learn that the approximately 500,000 Jewish refugees from Germany did not all end up in Palestine and the United States; many ended up in countries such as Ceylon, Libya and Kenya. A large world map illustrates the diversity of their routes of escape.

As the political situation continued to deteriorate, the Jews who remained trapped in Germany grew ever more afraid, and their cries for help grew louder. In 1941, a married couple named Fink wrote to the relatives in Caracas who were trying to secure their emigration: "You are working much too slowly, unfortunately." Before the letter arrived at its destination, the Nazi regime closed the routes of escape. The Finks were killed.

Those who did manage to flee often faced many hardships in exile. Well-worn vocabulary notebooks belonging to the Social Democrat Hans Vogel,

who fled to England, bear witness to his struggle to learn English. For many of the intellectuals who went into exile, learning the language represented their only hope to rebuild their lives.

One impressive example of the iron will which this required is the story the Frankfurt economist Fritz Neumann. After five years in exile in Turkey, he was able to publish academic works in Turkish. Although Neumann lived in safety in Turkey, he was still forced to submit to the German embassy in Istanbul stamping the name "Israel" into his passport.

Few exiles had such comfortable circumstances as the writer Thomas Mann, who confessed that he has never lived so well as in his new California home. This did not prevent him from continuing his fight against the Nazis. An audio recording of his radio broadcasts, in which he calls upon Germans to resist Hitler and the regime, is included in the exhibition. On the title page of a newspaper produced in exile, the Social Democratic politician Hans Vogel likewise exhorted his fellow Germans: "Do not make yourself complicit in this guilt."

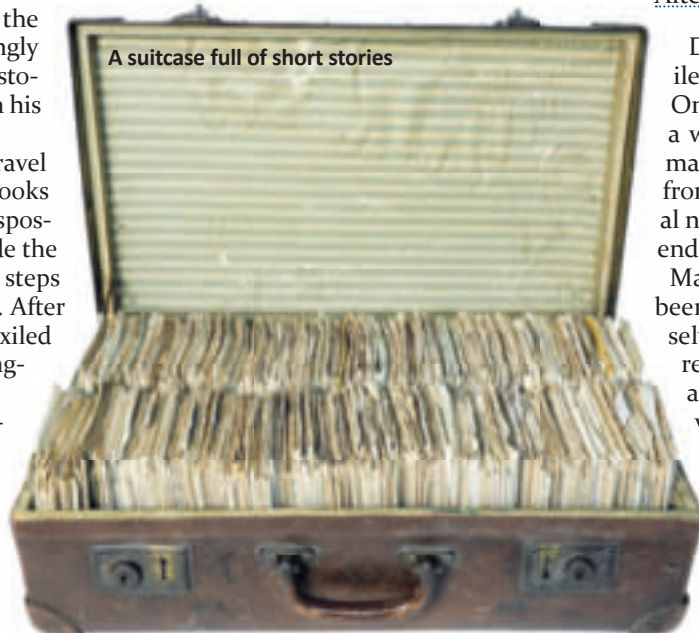


A forged ID-card could save lives

After exile

Despite their efforts, many exiles lived in poverty and despair. One was Arnold Zweig, who was a well-known writer in the Weimar Republic. In Palestine, cut off from his personal and professional networks, he could barely make ends meet.

Many of the refugees who had been able to re-establish themselves in their country of exile remained there. But more than a few returned to Germany and ventured a new start. But of course, that could do nothing to change the past. Along with mourning their families who had perished, those who returned were also left struggling with the question as to how the civilized



A suitcase full of short stories

The Frankfurt exhibition is a highlight of Germany's culture of remembrance. It is all the more important today, at a time when the numbers of witnesses are dwindling, and when anti-Semitism is on the rise on many fronts. For visitors who wish to delve further into this history and its documentary record there is also a basement archive, which serves as a repository for many items not currently on display. For Arnold Zweig, who welcomed the founding of the archive after the war and donated a number of books to its collection, the archive was no less than the "German library of freedom."

Exile. Experience and Testimony. Permanent Exhibition of the German Exile Archive, 1933-1945. German National Archive in Frankfurt am Main. Admission is free

THROUGH SCIENCE TOWARD JUSTICE

The Einstein of Sex

Marking the 150th birthday of Magnus Hirschfeld

By Hartmut Bomhoff

I confess that it was more difficult for me to leave Jerusalem than any other city I visited on my world trip, I was never so sorry to bid farewell to any country as to Palestine.” That’s not a quote from the notebooks of Albert Einstein but by sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) one of the first great pioneers of the gay liberation movement. “Hirschfeld’s legacy resonates throughout the twentieth-century and around the world,” explains his biographer Ralf Dose. “Guided by his motto ‘Through Science Toward Justice,’ Hirschfeld helped found the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Germany to defend the rights of homosexuals and develop a scientific framework for sexual equality. He was also an early champion of women’s rights, campaigning in the early 1900s for the decriminalization of abortion and the right of female teachers and civil servants to marry and have children.”

“

Love is a conflict between reflexes and reflections

Born to a Jewish family in Kolberg on May 14, 1868, Magnus Hirschfeld studied medicine at various universities throughout Germany. He completed his doctorate in 1892 before traveling the United States and then setting up a medical practice in Magdeburg. In 1896, he moved to Berlin where he began research into sex and sexuality. He became the object of significant respect and attention, both at home and internationally, with an entry in *Jüdisches Lexikon*, a fine encyclopedia harvesting the best of German Jewish scholarship, in

1928. His political activism, his Jewishness and homosexuality made him a target for rightwing attacks from the 1920s onward. He was abroad when his Institute for Sexual Sciences was raided by Nazi groups on May 6, 1933. Research material was looted and destroyed, with about 10,000 books from the institute library being burned. Hirschfeld never returned to Berlin and died of a heart attack in Nice in France on his 67th birthday, on May 14, 1935.

Traveling Palestine

In postwar Germany, the legacy of Magnus Hirschfeld has been “neglected, underrated, and dismissed,” writes Elena Mancini, author of a concise study on the history of the first international sexual freedom movement (2010). However, since his rediscovery in the late 1960s and early 1970s, interest in Hirschfeld has grown remarkably, and by now, everything seems to have been said about the man whom the Hearst newspaper chain in 1931 dubbed “the Einstein of Sex” – and yet there is so much left to discover in his works. “He lectured everywhere and published even more than he lectured,” explains historian Shaun Jacob Halper. Hirschfeld’s *Men and Women*, *The World Journey of a Sexologist*, published in Switzerland in 1933, is for example a detailed and vivid report of his adventures and experiences on this trip; it also reflects his sentimental attachment regarding the Jewish settlement in Palestine. After his graduation as physician, Hirschfeld had traveled France and attended the four meetings of Max Nordau, the Zionist writer. He didn’t embrace Zionism himself, but when he visited Palestine in 1932, he was impressed by the social experiment of the kibbutz – including free love and positive body attitudes. “He greeted this erotic liberation as an overcoming of ‘all the repression and unconscious feelings of erotic inferiority frequently found at this age,’” says Mancini. The journal cap-



Magnus Hirschfeld met Li Shiu Tong, the companion of his twilight years, in Hong Kong

tures many more trivial moments, too. It was during this visit that Hirschfeld met again with actress Hanna Rovina, the First Lady of Hebrew Theatre, whom he had seen in Habima’s production of Anski’s *Dybuk* in Berlin in 1926.

Large audiences, lively interest

Described as “one of the most faithful pupils of our Sexology Institute”, Chaim Berlin, who had established a sexological practice in Tel Aviv, had promised to arrange Hirschfeld’s lecture tour in Palestine, which was sponsored by a number of institutions, including the Hebrew University. In the five weeks of his visit there, Hirschfeld managed to give ten lectures on sexological topics. His itinerary included Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv as well as Ein Harod, the first large kibbutz, and Bet Alfa in the Emek Valley. Facilities like the Technion auditorium in Haifa proved too small for the large audiences.

“Not only did Hirschfeld find a lively interest in sexology, but he also succeeded in turning this interest into a contribution for the development of the new Jewish homeland”, concludes Erwin J. Haeblerle, one of postwar Germany’s leading sexologists. In 1932, another pupil of Hirschfeld, Abraham Matmon, who had finished his medical studies in Germany a year before, became one of the founders of the Institute for Hygiene and the Sexual Sciences in Tel Aviv. Today, Bet Hatefutsot, the Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, lists Hirschfeld among “The most influential Jewish Men and Women.” In Germany, after 30 years of advocacy by the Magnus Hirschfeld Society and other associations and individuals, the Federal Government in 2011 established the Magnus Hirschfeld National Foundation. This Bundesstiftung supports research and education about the life and work of Hirschfeld, the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, German LGBT culture and community, and ways to counteract prejudice. ■

Kaddish for Babushka

Writer Marina B. Neubert evokes the presence of the past



Sharon Adler / pixelmeede

By Gideon Wollberg

In the early 1990s, a quarter of a million Jews from the former Soviet Union embarked upon a journey to Germany. Marina B. Neubert (in the pic-

ture) took a different way: Born in Lviv (formerly Lemberg) in 1968 and raised in Moscow, she left for the United States and studied in San Francisco before relocating to Germany. Soon after she settled down here, her radio feature *Memories* won a prize in 1996. “*Memories* was my first effort as a representative of the generation of grandchildren to cope with the subject of the Shoah – the painful and unwelcome memory in my Lemberg-born family,” she says.

In March, AvivA – a Berlin-based publisher which puts women writers in the focus – launched Neubert’s *Kaddish für Babuschka* at the Leipzig Book Fair. “This novel on which I worked for a long time is my

literary confrontation with the legacy of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, with both private and general consequences: for me personally, for my family as well as for Judaism, which was robbed of its history,” explains Neubert, who works as an author, literature critic and teaches creative writing. In *Kaddish für Babushka*, she artfully interweaves two parallel stories about the attempt to confront and overcome a silenced past. Her protagonist, a young Berlin author, makes her own fictional character Hannah travel to Lviv to her Jewish grandmother, a woman believed dead long ago. As the news of the death of her own grandmother reaches her, the narrator flies head over

heels to Lviv, the hometown she had hastily left in the 1990s. Together with her parents she spends four days in the apartment of the deceased woman. While looking for traces of her beloved Babushka, who suddenly seems strange to her, the author encounters fragments of her own self.

The notes and traces her protagonist collected for her book blend with the author’s memories, as she writes: “These records openly tell the story of my grandmother. For all my life, I refused to believe that story. As a child, I feared and admired my strange babushka. As a teenager, I was ashamed of her. As an adult, I felt sorry for her, but this was not enough. So I tried

to stay away from her by hiding her in a novel.” The visit to Lviv becomes a journey into the writer’s childhood. She recognizes the heavy mahogany table on which she had to lie down when she was eight years old, and quotes her granny, a ghetto survivor: “She has to learn to sleep on wood.”

Marina B. Neubert’s novel is a deeply personal narrative that throws light on migration, memory and belonging of three generations of Jewish women. So far, *Kaddish für Babushka* is available in German only, but it deserves an international readership, as the book mirrors the feelings of the younger generation who manage to live transnationally. ■

ISRAEL

Pride and Confidence

The Promised Land liberates the soul

By Elisabeth Neu

An old Israeli joke goes, “How does a clever Jew talk to a dumb one? By telephoning from New York to Tel Aviv.” In its latest incarnation, the punchline is “From Berlin to Beer Sheva.” Today, some 30,000 Israelis live in Berlin. For Israelis, it would seem, the German capital has lost none of its fascination.

The punchline implies that it is the dumb Jews who live in Israel – the idealists, pioneers, and risk-takers. But the smart ones, the successful achievers, live and work in the Diaspora. And indeed, cleverness is often measured in terms of net dollar worth,

“Who is rich? The man who is content with his lot

and not just in *Forbes*. If monetary wealth is the measure of success, then American Jews are indeed very well situated. The New Economy billionaires Sergey Brin, Michael Dell and Mark Zuckerberg rank

among the richest of the rich. Sheldon Adelson is also noteworthy in this respect. While many a fortune has been made in gambling, Adelson is so wealthy that he has taken up ownership of *Israel Hayom* as his own personal hobby. As a free daily newspaper, *Israel Hayom* has decimated the Israeli press landscape. As a result, the US casino mogul has become a major power broker in Israeli politics. Until now, Adelson has lent his clout to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Now that Bibi has proven to be somewhat volatile, there is speculation that the American billionaire might throw his weight behind someone else – religious-nationalist Minister of Education Naftali Bennett, for example.

American Jews run the show, at least financially. But they are also prominent figures in the fields of science and culture, with Philip Roth, Steven Spielberg, Woody Allen being but a few of the notable examples. Some 20% of American Nobel Prize winners in the natural sciences are Jewish – even though Jews make up only 2% of the US population. This is a source of pride for the Jews of the Diaspora, particularly in the United States. But in Israel, Jews make up three-quarters of the population and *all* of the Nobel Prize winners. Clearly, Jews in Israel can also scale the heights of achievement and

receive worldwide – or nearly worldwide – recognition for their successes.

All witticisms aside, does this mean that it is Jews who live in Israel who have actually made the clever choice? Yes, if the World Happiness Report is to be believed. The report, which ranks countries by

content with his lot.” This is where Israel excels. In Israel, Jews have a massive psychological advantage that can’t be measured in money or wealth, and that is confidence and pride. In Israel, Jews are not an exotic minor-



The hoopoe is Israel’s national bird

their happiness levels, freedom and integrity of society, has Israel in 11th place, Germany in 15th, and the United States in position 18. Based on this ranking, at least, the old witticism should be turned on its head. “How does a clever Jew talk to a dumb one? Via conference call from Tel Aviv to Berlin and New York.”

Let us consider the more serious question. Where can you feel most at ease and at home as a Jew? Everyone has their own criteria. But our sages give a clear-sighted answer: “Who is rich? The man who is

ity. They are free to state their views, to shout, to protest, to announce what they support and what they oppose. That may not always be objectively wise. But so what? Objectivity, shmobjectivity! In the US or Germany, Jewish writers and journalists who violate the tenets of political correctness fall victim to self-censorship. “What would the goyim say to this?” This is a question that has beset every Diaspora Jew – if not subjectively, then it is imposed upon them by publishers and by society as a whole. Israel liberates the soul. ■



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LEO BAECK INSTITUTE

365 Lives

The 1938Projekt – Posts from the past commemorate individual stories

By William H. Weitzer

Eighty years after momentous events that constituted a singular rupture in German-Jewish history, the Leo Baeck Institute – New York | Berlin is using original documents to present the year 1938 through the eyes of Jews through a new website and a traveling exhibition in Germany.

September 1938. In the synagogue on Berlin's Prinzregentenstrasse, a group of young men is waiting to be confirmed as full members of the Jewish Community. The Bar Mitzvah ceremony is a joyous occasion, but Rabbi Manfred Erich Swarensky tries to impress this on the fifteen youths that stand before him in an unusual way. "I have no other wish for you," he says in his sermon, "beyond the hope that, even in your later years, when you look back on the day of your Bar Mitzvah, you will consider yourselves Jews – gladly, with joy and pride – even in a time and place where one is not forced to be a Jew by the external factors of life."

Despite the Rabbi's warm words for the young men and their families, the mood on this Shabbat is gloomy. Those gathered know all too well that they are witnessing the last such ceremony in their community. Nevertheless, Swarensky reminds his audience of the achievements of earlier generations and the "once so grand and beautiful history of German Jewry," so that it might be preserved in the memory of succeeding generations. Even he is painfully aware, however, that "it is easier to destroy than to build up." In retrospect, his speech, which he wrote down on September 28, 1938, seems almost prophetic. Only two months later, on the night of November 9, the magnificent synagogue was set ablaze by gangs of Nazis. Rabbi Swarensky was arrested and interned in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, and the Jewish Community was forced to pay for the structural stabilization of the burnt-out shell



A Jewish-owned clothing shop in Magdeburg, destroyed during the pogrom night of November 9-10, 1938

1938, that such discrimination was part of a temporary phase. They believed that the social position that they had fought so hard to attain over centuries would still protect them. Germany and Austria were their homelands, where they had won their emancipation long before the anti-Semitic ideology of the National Socialists took hold.

Exclusion and persecution

In 2018, we mark the eightieth anniversary of the dramatic events of 1938. As a repository for the cultural legacy of German-speaking Jews and a key institution of the German-Jewish Diaspora, the Leo Baeck Institute – New York | Berlin (LBI) commemorates these events with the 1938Projekt. A bilingual online calendar, a traveling exhibition, and numerous conferences and public programs place individual stories in the foreground to make the past present. The project is unique in both scope and perspective. The online calendar uses documents from the archives of the LBI and numerous partner institutions to tell 365 individual stories, one for each day of 1938. Every day, the 1938Projekt publishes a new story for the corresponding date in 1938 on its website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Each document or object reflects the private experiences and perceptions of its creator, thus highlighting the personal fates behind the grim statistics. A traveling exhibition in Germany will highlight 12 representative stories.

The events of 1938 constituted a rupture, the irreversible revocation of any hope for the future, which burned itself into the memory of German Jews and left traces in letters and diaries. A cascade of new legal restrictions increasingly served to eliminate the already severely curtailed ability of Jews to earn a living. In March, the German annexation of Austria extended the restrictions on Jewish freedom to hundreds of thousands of Austrian Jews. Physicians saw their licenses revoked, lawyers were banned from practicing law. An international conference in Evian brought together representatives from 32 nations and numerous relief organizations but offered no practical solutions to the refugee crisis. A new law on name changes served to mark Jews by mandating the assumption of "typically Jewish" surnames like "Israel" and "Sara." Passports were declared invalid until they were stamped with a red "J." In late October, thousands of Polish citizens living in Germany were deported.

All this happened before the pogrom of November 9, 1938, euphemistically referred to as the Kristallnacht. That night, symbols of Jewish life in Germany were destroyed by gangs of vandals putatively motivated by popular anger against the Jews, but who were in fact organized by the state. The targets included synagogues, schools, hospitals, cemeteries, and businesses large and small, but the perpetrators also attacked private homes and individuals. The devastation was so great that even the countries that had thus far refused to take action to help the refugees could no longer close their eyes. Great Britain loosened its immigration restrictions

somewhat, allowing thousands of unaccompanied children to immigrate in an unprecedented humanitarian action. Many families saw the *Kindertransport* as the only way to save that which they treasured most, their children. With heavy hearts, desperate parents sent their children abroad to an uncertain future. They saved their children's lives, and in many cases, never saw them again.

LBI has worked to learn from the experiences of the surviving eyewitnesses to these events and to preserve the material record of their experiences. As the generation of the youngest refugees passes away, we will lose a vital connection to the German-Jewish past that makes this kind of memory work all the more crucial. Their letters, diaries, and mementos will be the most immediate way to access this history, and it is these materials that will transmit their cultural legacy to future generations. Today, as right-wing populism gains new followers internationally, the private thoughts recorded by German Jews in letters and diaries in 1938 take on new meaning. They can tell us much about a minority's struggle for civil rights and social integration, as well as the tremendous achievements that follow when such struggles are successful. They also offer a warning about the disastrous consequences of discrimination, exclusion, and persecution.

William H. Weitzer is Executive Director of Leo Baeck Institute New York | Berlin
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Each day of the 1938Projekt online calendar tells a different story

of the building. In 1941, they were forced to sell the land to the city far below its actual value.

Violence like that of November 9, 1938, which destroyed countless livelihoods within hours, was still unimaginable at the beginning of that year. Despite the many anti-Jewish measures that had been enacted since the Nazis rose to power in 1933, some German-speaking Jews still hoped, even at the beginning of

PETER FELDMANN

The Jewish Ethical Imperative

Frankfurt's mayor takes care of his city's people

By Dieter Sattler

Frankfurt Mayor Peter Feldmann is a person who takes care of others. He demonstrates to his fellow Social Democrats, many of whom right now are mired in crisis, how to maintain people's trust. In his six years in office, Feldmann has remained committed to ensuring the availability of affordable housing in the high-cost financial hub. He also succeeded in lowering fares for public transportation in the city. This social commitment has been rewarded by Frankfurt's residents. In the March 11 run-off election, Feldmann was re-elected with a 70-percent share of the votes.

Feldmann is Frankfurt's first Jewish mayor since Ludwig Landmann was removed from his post by the Nazis. Largely unknown, Feldmann was able to run for mayor in 2012 because prominent Social Democrats were reluctant to take on the Christian Democratic candidate, who was a clear favorite. Feldmann ran a well-organized grassroots campaign, knocking on many doors, scoring a surprising upset. He won over Frankfurt's voters. "I think politicians need to be close to the people to better understand their concerns and requirements," he said after taking office on July 1, 2012. Over the years, he has stayed true to his principles. His commitment and dedication are also products of his own upbringing. Although his father was a psychologist and his mother a



Stadt Frankfurt am Main

teacher, Feldmann grew up in a working-class neighborhood in the north of the city, which today has fallen on hard times. Young Feldmann witnessed the struggles of many his neighbors in the high-rise development. That may well have shaped his choice of profession. After completing high school in Frankfurt and studying politics in Marburg, he worked as head of a youth center and later as a managing director of a nursing center. He became active in the SPD at a young age. He was the city school representative for the Young Socialists. In 1989, he became a city councilor but maintained a low profile until 2012, when he decided to seize the opportunity.

“Wide respect both in the city and nationwide

According to Feldmann, “Religion is a private matter.” But his Jewish faith is important to him. Before attending university, he spent two years living on a kibbutz. In 2007, he founded the Working Group of Jewish Social Democrats. One of his first official trips as mayor took him to Frankfurt's partner city Tel Aviv. In an interview with a tabloid last

year, he described how in 2015, on an official visit to Tel Aviv with a large delegation from Frankfurt, he proposed to his wife, Zübeyde Feldmann.

Effective leadership

As this story shows, Peter Feldmann has learned how to play to the cameras. At the beginning of his tenure, the city found him rather lacking in glamour. Many fondly recalled his predecessor, the long-time conservative mayor Petra Roth, a popular politician who was a familiar figure across the country.

As the recent election results show, Feldmann has meanwhile won wide respect. He has also become more comfortable with the rhetorical and persuasive demands of his

learning from Feldmann means learning how to win. But Feldmann, who will turn 60 in October, has no plans to seek state or national office. As mayor of his home city, he will be able to help people more directly. For Feldmann, that is a Jewish ethical imperative. ■

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BOMHOFF RECOMMENDS

Remember for the Future

“Even though we are in the second decade of the 21st century, and World War II ended almost seven decades ago, the crimes committed against the Jewish People during the Nazi regime retain a singular identity in the annals of horror,” opens a slim guide book called “Germany for the Jewish Traveler.” This year, as we remember the pogrom night of 1938,



Kristallnacht, Jews and non-Jews alike must confront this devastating legacy again. A series of events will be launched to mark the 80th anniversary of the Night of Broken Glass on November 9-10. We will recall how simultaneously, in hundreds of towns across Germany and Aus-

tria, thousands of Jews were terrorized, persecuted and victimized. And speakers across the spectrum will remind us that anti-Semitism and racism have no place in our land.

However, will these days of commemoration have some impact on the wider Jewish community in Germany and beyond? Politicians in Berlin are hoping to rebuild

a synagogue set ablaze in 1938 and consider a dedication ceremony this fall. In Berlin's immigrant district of Kreuzberg, this would be a strong message, blending a Jewish landmark into a predominantly Muslim neighborhood.

But is it appropriate to rebuild a vast sanctuary when there are not enough worshippers to fill its floor? In many places, there are empty synagogue buildings where there is currently no vital Jewish population. Re-erecting synagogues is partly an attempt to combat anti-Semitism. The lesson of anti-Semitism, however, is that people should stop hating. Throughout Europe, we have to address the ongoing relevance of the Jewish tradition in societies where small Jewish communities exist alongside a rising Muslim population. While searching for common grounds, we must offer an introduction to Judaism to Muslims. Judaism differs from Christianity more than many believe, and it has closer ties to Islam than most might assume.

Before taking such steps, we must take stock. For the time being, it is key to make Judaism relevant for all of those who iden-

tify as Jewish but remain unaffiliated. There is much work to be done to ensure that every person of faith feels welcomed. We must strive to become more open, create a cultural identity that is profound, and acknowledge emerging Jewish communities outside the synagogue walls.

Group identities are always enlivened, reinterpreted and contested. Eighty years after the destruction of Jewish homes, businesses and places of worship, memory becomes history. We must take a fresh look to negotiate our Jewish identities. Our politicians and Jewish leaders can contribute to this renewal – not by rebuilding oversized synagogues but by funding programs that foster Jewish creativity and help build our future. Only with well-educated community activists and advocates we can secure and demonstrate Jewish continuity as a living religion. ■

Counting Our Blessings

How the Omer Calender helps us appreciate the value of each day

By Rabbi Walter Homolka

The creed of the Jew consists of his calendar,” wrote Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888). One feature of the Jewish calendar is to count out loud and publically each day between Passover and Shavuot, beginning on the second night of Passover, or Pesach. Right now, in the seven weeks between the two Jewish festivals, the biblical mandate to “count the omer” (*sefirat ha-omer*) implores us to count the days which link the exodus from Egypt with the giving of the Torah: “From the day after the Sabbath,

brought by the ancient Israelites. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 BC, these practices were completely abandoned. In the process of transformation of the Jewish religion, the counting of the omer took on a symbolic and meditative flavor. When we do so, we cherish the days that span the time from the liberation from Egyptian slavery to our spiritual liberation. A special omer calendar helps assure that the proper count is kept and gives the appropriate formula for the blessings of each day.

The splendid papercut work on this page, created by Baruch Zvi Ring in 1904, combines a monumental memorial plaque for

the deceased members of the Mishna study society of Rochester, New York, with a traditional omer counter. The two outer circles of the center field are the calendar. The first holds the blessing said nightly

at the counting and the formula for the first night; the outer band of roundels contains formulas for the remaining forty-eight nights, traveling clockwise and specifying each day’s count. With reference to Shavuot and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Ten Commandments prevail over the commandment of counting omer, flanked by two protective lions and the crown of Torah.



Omer Calendar and Memorial Tablet, papercut by Baruch Zvi Ring

Rabbi Hirsch, the founding father of Neo-Orthodoxy in Germany in the 19th century, explains why Pesach coincides with spring: “The festival of our historical revival must also be the festival of the revival of nature. The God whose breath of spring awakens nature from the death-like numbness of winter is the same God who delivered us from death and bondage and granted us life

and freedom.” Shavuot complements Pesach as the responsibility that comes from liberation, and the idea of counting each day represents spiritual preparation and anticipation for the giving of the Torah.

Reform Judaism had dropped the counting of the omer generations ago, but as Rabbi Michael Shire suggests, it might be time to bring it back: “On our journey from Pesach to Shavuot, we symbolically walk away from the things that oppress us ... If the rituals of our tradition, ancient and modern, can assist us to do so, then they will have fulfilled their function,” says Rabbi Shire, who serves as professor of Jewish education at Hebrew College. “Counting of the omer may seem one of those strange anachronistic Jewish folkways, but it may just be another way to understand ourselves and our journeys through life arriving at Shavuot in order to let the Torah come to us in a new and inspired way.” Like Baruch Zvi Ring’s splendid artwork, that truly would be beauty within beauty. ■

“Teach us to count our days, that we may obtain a wise heart

(Psalm 90:12)

the day that you bring the sheaf of wave-offering, you shall count off seven full weeks.” (Leviticus 23:15).

This ancient tradition is rooted in agricultural tasks of reaping and bringing sheaves of barley to the Temple in Jerusalem. An omer is a unit of measure which was offered at the begin of these seven weeks, hence the name. The Book of Leviticus opens with a detailed description of the sacrifices



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