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JEWISH VOICE FROM GERMANY

קול יהודי מגרמניה

PRICE €3 | \$4

VOL. 24 | OCTOBER 2018

USA GERMANY ISRAEL

Self-Absorption

When we reflect upon the current situation in the US, Germany and Israel, and review the developments of recent years, it is hard not to recall one of Bob Dylan's early songs. *The Times They Are a-Changin'*. The US has repeatedly been involved in foreign wars: Korea, Vietnam, the fateful attack of 9/11, and military engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq. But at home, there was a democratic consensus.

One symbol of this consensus was Senator John McCain, who passed away in August. He is rightly remembered for his reply to a supporter late in the 2008 campaign, who said she had heard that Barack Obama was "an Arab." "No, Ma'am," McCain replied, "Senator Obama is a decent person." President Donald Trump is indifferent to this form of democratic common sense, if not outright hostile to it. His political strategy is one of disruption. Trump seeks to strengthen his own hand by exacerbating political and social divisions.

“Common sense is in decline

His success is encouraging other politicians to follow his lead. These developments are increasingly fracturing the country's democratic consensus and chipping away at what remains of common ground.

After the defeat of Nazi Germany, West Germany was a "model student" of democracy. This paid off during the postwar years, when the country was rewarded by the

Wirtschaftswunder or "economic miracle." In relatively short order, West Germany became Europe's leading industrial and economic power. This position rested upon the foundation of a stable democratic system and democratic political parties, who were

staunch supporters of the liberal order. After 1990, this political and economic stability allowed West Germany to integrate the former communist East with relative ease. After reunification, Germany bolstered its reputation as a democratic force for peace. But beneath the surface, both the former East Germany and the West harbored a violent and xenophobic neo-Nazi scene.

Despite a spirit of goodwill and the mobilization of substantial financial resources, the influx of refugees in 2015 was the cause for considerable difficulty – people are never easy, especially those fleeing violence and war. In the wake of this upheaval, Germany's political landscape began shifting. The nationalist and populist AfD party continued to gain ground, and soon joined forces with neo-Nazis. The German model democracy is no longer as stable as it once seemed. Now more than ever, the country must mobilize a robust and confident commitment to democracy.

Israel's new Nationality Law is wholly superfluous. Democracy there is stable. As a result, calls from abroad for greater democracy in Israel have grown quieter. Germany and the US are both preoccupied, and have turned their attention inward.

SIMCHAT TORAH

שמחת תורה



The Torah is celebrated with good reason. It recounts the history of the Jewish people, serves as the source of Jewish law, and teaches us to love God and our fellow human beings.

FM HEIKO MAAS

On Israel's Security



German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas confirms Germany's responsibility for Israel's security. In an interview with *Jewish Voice*, he defends the nuclear deal with Iran. Maas believes that, despite its deficiencies, the agreement enhances Israel's security. He fears that if Tehran follows the example of the US and withdraws from the agreement, Iran will resume its uranium enrichment program. This could lead to war.

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GERMAN BANKS

New Strategy

Germany's economy may be booming, but its banks are suffering from a wasting disease. The crisis has its roots in prior mismanagement and chaotic leadership. Former CEOs set their sights on investment banking as a way to boost profits. However, they were no match for the aggressive business practices common to the sector. The banks suffered massive losses. The new strategy is to shift the focus back to regular banking operations.

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5779

A new year, and along with it a spirit of forgiveness, the annulment of vows, and above all a commitment to reconciliation, brings with it new opportunities. For humanity and for peace. In the summer, I accompanied German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas to Auschwitz. My visit was made in commemoration of my aunt Jente Hammersfeld and her family, who were murdered there.

In this most horrific place in the world, Germany's top diplomat explained, that every one of us is confronted with a choice. Will we resign ourselves, or will we stand up for human dignity? For every humanist, every democrat, and every rational person, there can be only one answer. We must all take action to preserve human dignity.

As Maas states in his interview with *Jewish Voice*, this also includes solidarity on behalf of Israel's security. This

vigorous statement of support is much appreciated. At the same time, however, Iran is objectively endangering Israel's security. Tehran continues to proclaim the destruction of the Jewish state. Iran is also on the military offensive, not only in Syria but also in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen.

This is the reason why nearly all independent Arab states

are demanding that any deal with Iran must include an affirmation of the right to existence of all states. Including the State of Israel.

The year 5779 presents us with a new

opportunity to achieve peace, freedom and security. This must be defended not only in Israel and the Middle East, but also in the heart of Europe and Germany. Here at the *Jewish Voice*, we hope to contribute in making this a reality.

Rafael Seligmann

POLITICAL STRATEGY



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Keep democracy working

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Praying for Rain
Sustenance and blessing

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GERMANY 2018

The Tired Republic: Reluctant to Reform

By Rafael Seligmann

Germany today has no existential fears to contend with. German society is free to bask in its self-made prosperity and indulge in fretful overreactions. No topic of debate is too small. Indeed, Germany was the only country that expressed a strong opinion on the most trivial of questions in an EU poll on whether daylight saving time should be abolished or not. Politicians, theologians and moralizers of all stripes are debating whether an opt-out organ donation system is ethically permissible, even as tens of thousands of critically ill people die before an organ becomes available. It's tempting to imagine how these opinionators and finger-waggers will change their tune if they ever find themselves languishing on an organ donor list.

While time is frittered away debating trivialities and self-evident truths are deliberated into oblivion, important questions that will shape our future are avoided and ignored. In Germany, a nationalistic political party that claims to represent the concerns of ordinary citizens but has so far failed to put forth either a policy platform or a charismatic leader has nonetheless managed to hoodwink millions of voters.

Will the European Union survive Britain's exit? Why are the member states unable to join forces to bring Britain back on board? Despite his occasionally erratic behavior, some of US President Donald Trump's observations are very much on the mark – for example, his warning that Europe and especially Germany have long been shortchanging their defense budget. While its support of poor and developing countries is commendable, Europe must nonetheless boost its defense capabilities. Germany, too, will need to significantly increase its defense budget.



Pieter Bruegel the Elder: *The Land of Cockaigne* (1567)

Also, the awareness of citizens, and particularly the younger generation, needs to be raised. One year of compulsory military or national service for young people would help foster the appreciation of the needs of society and the community. The General Secretary of the Christian Democratic Party, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, floated this idea in August, but her proposal was dismissed as little more than a filler story for the slow news season.

Self-righteous lethargy

By contrast, the EU was unified in its condemnation of President Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal. Likewise, Europe has spoken with one voice in its support of the International Atomic Energy Report that found Tehran continuing to comply with the nuclear deal. At the same time, however, Iran continues to develop its nuclear-capable ballistic mis-

sile program, acquire regional dominance over states such as Iraq and Lebanon, provide military support to the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad in his total war against his own people, exacerbate the civil war in Yemen and persist in its outrageous threats of annihilation against Israel – whose security Chancellor Angela Merkel has said is part of Germany's reason of state. Nonetheless, all of this is ignored in favor of what is being called "peace".

In the fall of 2018, Germany is a fool's paradise – mired in a kind of self-righteous lethargy. This desire to preserve the status quo, however, threatens to devolve into political inertia. After all, even the very meekest cannot be at peace if his ill neighbor will not let him rest. History has shown that such "ill neighbors" will always be with us. Many would prefer to ignore the lessons of history. But present circumstances offer ample proof that peaceful intentions do not always prevent aggression.

In Syria, some half a million people – among them hundreds of thousands of women and children – have been killed in Assad's war of annihilation. Half the population has been forced to flee their homes. The world's democracies, including Germany, watched from a safe distance and provided humanitarian aid.

Remember the 1930s

Then, in 2015, the German government opened its doors to refugees. Chancellor Merkel's rallying cry was "Wir schaffen das" – "we can do it." That promise has not yet been fulfilled. It is not only Germany's political leadership but the entire country that is to blame. Germany's generosity in opening its doors to refugees was exemplary. But initially, at least, the rules were

anything but clear. Why did Germany fail to properly register so many of the new arrivals? Why were refugees not given to understand that they, too, must observe German laws and norms? Why were people whose asylum applications were denied not expelled?

Germany, Europe, and all the countries of the Middle East could indeed benefit from a viable nuclear deal with Iran. But the prerequisite for such a deal is that Iran must acknowledge the right of all states to exist – and this includes Israel. Without this prerequisite, we are inviting Tehran to maintain its policy of expansion and annihilation by other means. Convincing Iran it must accept this additional proviso will not be easy. But it must be done. Our security and prosperity depend on our insistence that liberal norms and principles be observed on both a national and global level. Anything else would be a fatal policy of appeasement. The example of Europe in the 1930s should serve as a warning. ■

GERMANY'S TROUBLED EAST

The Dwindling Power of the 1989 Freedom Ideals

By Frank Bernbeck

In the September 2017 German federal election, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) became the strongest party in the eastern state of Saxony. This is a showing the far-right populists hope to repeat in next year's state parliamentary election. The AfD is currently polling just behind the Christian Democrats. But why is that? In eastern Germany, many people feel that they are not being heard or understood – a sentiment that continues to strengthen the hand of the AfD. In the wake of the violent right-wing riots in several eastern German cities, the residents of Chemnitz are now claiming that their town is being maligned as a "hotbed" of mob violence against foreigners. It would be tempting to simply blame the "ungrateful East Germans." After all, it is

the former East that continues to blur the boundaries between the so-called "besorgte Bürger" – or "worried citizens" – and far-right extremists. But if we wish to prevent further erosion of democratic parties and norms, we must seek to reach those who are not – or not yet – radicalized.

Economic anxieties

Many people in eastern Germany share a sentiment that is common in eastern European countries. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, many believed that they had finally found a home in the West. But by the start of the refugee crisis, if not before, some Germans in the former east felt that their home no longer belonged to them.

Like a lot of Eastern Europeans, eastern Germans tend to be deeply skeptical of refugees, who they believe are stealing

their share of the pie – a pie they have acquired themselves only recently. Along with these economic anxieties, many in eastern Germany feel unjustly

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To prevent further erosion of democratic parties and norms, we must seek to reach those who are not – or not yet – radicalized

stigmatized by their fellow citizens in the West for their criticisms of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's refugee policy. This hostility toward Merkel's refugee policy may be in parts understandable. However, it is

now giving rise to what can only be understood as a profound distortion of the ideals of democracy that East Germans had fought for in 1989. Indeed, today many

many once fought so hard to achieve, memories of civil disobedience are being revived for a new purpose. After all, if East Germany once succeeded in overthrowing a hated regime, why not again? Others are propagating arcane theories of the "right to resist" and overthrow tyranny – as though Chancellor Angela Merkel were a dictator and not a freely-elected head of government.

The AfD and the Pegida movement may once have been motivated by criticism of Merkel's policy on refugees. Today, however, they are betraying the ideals that once gave rise to the revolutions of 1989. Democracy does not mean that yours is the only opinion that matters. The slogan of the 1989 East German democratic uprising – "We are the people" – applies not only to a select few, but to everyone. ■

Although such a revolution would undermine rather than promote the democracy that the citizens of eastern Ger-



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HEIKO MAAS

Better an Imperfect Deal than No Deal at All

Foreign Minister on Israel's security, the treaty with Iran and Germany's responsibility

What has happened to Germany's model democrats? They seem to be running scared of right-wing extremists, or throwing up their hands in resignation. And worst of all, some are even marching alongside them...

For far too long, many people have been lulled into complacency, believing that Germany does not have any problems with racism or anti-Semitism to speak of. Thanks to social media and networks, we are now seeing the sad truth. This reality has long been ignored, largely because the debate within Germany has been dominated by purely economic issues in recent years. But now we have realized that we must urgently begin attending to the values that define us, and that have brought us a good life here in Germany. Freedom, democracy and the rule of law must not be taken for granted. We must make them our joint project, and stand up for them.

You want people to get up off their sofas, and get loud. What exactly do you mean by that?

We can all help in some way. We often encounter racism and anti-Semitism during our everyday lives – at home, at work, on the subway, on the soccer pitch. Then it is up to us. Either we pretend we didn't hear what was said, and look away. Or we speak up. In many cases, even asking "why would you say such a thing?" is enough to signal disagreement. We must all be willing to take a stand against xenophobia and anti-Semitism. It's not that hard.

When you visited Auschwitz in August, you said that we will need to choose between resignation, hopelessness, or draw upon fresh hope and strength...

It may seem paradoxical at first glance. When you're at what I would call the most horrific place in the world, and see what happened there, you find yourself becoming very quiet. But we must not remain quiet. The lessons of our own history demand that we find the strength to ensure this past will never repeat itself.



Populism is on the rise worldwide – in the Philippines, Russia, the US, Turkey, Hungary. Why are we calling it populism, rather than nationalistic egotism, chauvinism, or excessive nationalism...?

That's a good point. In fact, I do tend to talk about populism and nationalism in the same breath. Populism is a form of nationalism – one that seeks to promote isolation and exclusion. It's the opposite of what we must do in order to meet the challenges of our time. We will not be able to solve our problems alone – and that includes economic and social problems, as



well as problems related to climate, security and migration policy. No country in Europe, be it large or small, will be able to solve these problems on their own. We can only do it together. That is why we need the opposite of populism and nationalism. We need international cooperation and shared rules and norms that we all adhere to.

You've called for a "balanced partnership" between Europe and the US. What are the central pillars of that partnership?

First of all, we must assume greater responsibility here, in Europe. That's the only way we will succeed in preserving our own interests and values in those areas where President Trump has departed from our shared path and left a vacuum. We will have to join forces to succeed. Our response to "America first" must be "Europe united."

What do you see as the future of the German-Israeli relationship?

The German-Israeli relationship will always be a very special one – when it comes to our international relationships, this one is unique. Even apart from our own history, one thing is very clear: the security and existence of Israel will always be part of Germany's reason of state.

I am concerned and worried about the fact that a deal was reached with Iran in 2015 that is purely technical in nature. Would it not have been incumbent upon Germany, which has a special relationship to Israel, to say that we want the agreement to incorporate a statement affirming that every state in the region,

“The German-Israeli relationship will always be a very special one – when it comes to our international relationships, this one is unique

including Israel, has a right to exist? Given that the US has withdrawn from the deal, could Germany not take up this issue again?

What we must remember is that those negotiations were being held to contain the looming threat of an acute nuclear crisis. The German government believed that preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power would increase not only our own security, but the security of Israel. That is why we decided to support the deal.

Under the current circumstances, wouldn't it be best for us to insist on an affirmation of the right to exist?

The German government acknowledges Israel's right to exist in every interaction it has with Iran, at every level. It would be neither honest nor sincere for us to do something knowing full well that, given the current situation, there is no chance that we will succeed. Right now, our concern is

whether this nuclear deal has a future at all. In the wake of the US withdrawal, we must ensure that Iran continues to abide by the agreement and prevent a possible nuclear escalation.

How can someone who is as aware of history and the past as you are be willing to allow a state to continue to publicly and without shame call for the destruction of the State of Israel? An exception has been made, but it is an unhuman and politically dangerous one...

I cannot and will not reverse the decision that has been made. I'm more concerned about the potential for further escalation should the nuclear deal fail. The deal is not perfect, but we must do everything in our power to prevent such a dramatic escalation.

But Iran is waging a campaign of conquest and intimidation throughout the region...

Together with France and Britain, we are devoting a great deal of attention to this topic, also because of the role Iran is playing in Syria and in Yemen. The same holds for Iran's ballistic missile program, which is extremely problematic.

In the past, Iran and the Jewish state always had a good relationship. We have no common borders and no refugee problem. For Tehran, this is only a vehicle to

gain power and esteem within the Islamic world. I believe that global pressure could bring Iran to the point where it would be willing to affirm the existence of all states.

Honestly – even if we were able to discuss this issue, how realistic is it that we could reach such an agreement under the current circumstances?

So it all looks quite bleak...

I hope that's not the case. We also believe that what Iran is doing is unacceptable, both in Syria and with respect to its missile program. But let's say Iran succeeded in developing a nuclear program with military capabilities – that would be a far greater escalation than anything we are witnessing now. A deal that gets Iran to agree to shelve its nuclear ambitions, at least for now, is better than no deal. An imperfect deal is better than no deal at all. ■

Heiko Maas talked to JVG editors Elisabeth Neu and Rafael Seligmann at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin





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ANNEGRET KRAMP-KARRENBauer

Rise up? We Must Dare to Disagree!

The CDU General Secretary issues a call to political leaders and committed democrats

By Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer

Our republic is in turmoil. Hatred and incitement are not confined to social media. On the streets, we are witnessing incidents of incitement and abuse against people who are members of certain groups. Jewish restaurants are being vandalized, and Jews are being attacked. We are watching people performing the Nazi salute, hearing calls to violence and slogans reminiscent of the darkest moments of our history. Police officers are being attacked and our parliamentary inboxes are being flooded with mails and messages roiling with violent fantasies. Anti-Semitism and xenophobia have found their way directly into the German Bundestag and other parliamentary bodies.

All of this – and much more – is repulsive, offensive, and ignorant of the lessons of history. And all of this is quite rightly arousing indignation, refusal and resistance. We are hearing from all corners that it is time to take a stand. People are calling halt, calling foul, demanding that the offenders leave the field – signaling that xenophobia and anti-Semitism have no place in Germany. So far, so good. Who would disagree?

Entrusted with a mandate

There is no question: a free society based on the values of responsibility, respect and civility in our public interactions cannot remain silent and indifferent in the face of such debasement of our shared values. But I still have my doubts whether such calls for civic resistance are an adequate response. Particularly when some of these appeals are made in such a paternalistic and moralizing way. Here, I am also thinking of the demand that citizens should “get out of their comfort zones.” Is this really all that political leadership has to offer us? After all, these leaders have all been entrusted with a mandate to undertake concrete political action. Now they appear to be shifting that responsibility to the citizenry and the broader public.

This is not an adequate response. In my view, our political leadership must issue a two-fold response. The first response is that of an assertive, effective and resolute constitutional state. When crimes are being committed, a calling for a “revolt of the righteous” – however laudable – is inadequate. We need a vigorous police force, public prosecutors who are committed to prompt investigation, and courts that



Reichstag building in Berlin: Down in the plenum politicians are arguing, up in the dome the people are strolling

will issue unambiguous verdicts. And these crimes are indeed wide-ranging – slander and defamation, performing the Nazi salute, vandalism, violence, disturbing the peace, calling for and threatening violence, Holocaust denial, incitement, coercion, and more.

our democratic state and its legal institutions would also help reassure our citizens that the state is willing and able to take action. But this also means that political leaders must ensure that our security forces are provided with the resources, staff, and equipment they need. We

of opinion and respectfully engage with people who do not agree with us. We must maintain civil discourse. And we must understand that compromise is essential to the maintenance of democracy in a free and open society. Democratic debate in Germany is foundering. The loudest voices today are the extremists, the dogmatists, the simplifiers: everyone in the state of Saxony is a Nazi; all asylum-seekers are criminals; anyone who speaks out against left-wing extremism is by definition an adherent of the far-right; anyone who does not repudiate all military responsibility is by definition a war-monger. Anyone who dissents or has a different opinion becomes the target of defamation or ridicule. Nuanced opinions are drowned out. Only the most simplistic and dogmatic opinions are heard. This has created a culture of debate in which hate, incitement, fundamentalism and extremism can flourish – on all ends of the political spectrum. Anyone who believes hate can be fought with hate has already lost, has already ceded the terms of the debate.

– must stop allowing ourselves to be drawn into this spiral of outrage. Democratic debate must be more than simply professions of outrage and indignation. Outrage is a dead-end; outrage is like a soft, warm blanket that allows me to withdraw into my safe, comfortable world view. Democratic debate forces me out of my comfort zone. Engaging with those who disagree with us is not always easy. But democratic debate requires that we address the questions and dilemmas of our day together. Democratic debate cannot be a one-way street.

Fact over emotion

The democratic center, its political leadership and institutions, must take up the mantle of responsibility. We are the ones who must lead by example. And that means valuing fact over emotion, and valuing nuance and complexity over simplistic sloganeering. It means showing respect for those who disagree with us, rather than shouting them down and defaming them. And sometimes it means taking the time to think and reflect. I refuse to lose faith in the importance of robust public debate. Democracy cannot function without it.

I have immense respect for everyone in this country who is taking a stand, who is taking to the streets in opposition to hate and incitement. They deserve our support – whether it be in the protest against right-wing extremism, the fight against anti-Semitism or homophobia, or the fight against left-wing ex-

“Anyone who believes hate can be fought with hate has already lost, has already ceded the terms of the debate

What is at stake is not simply our ideals of respectful and civil discourse and behavior; we must also ensure that our criminal justice system takes a very clear stand. A state that operates according to the principles of the rule of law must set limits and enforce them with vigor and impartiality.

To do that, however, we must assign adequate personnel and legal resources to the problem. Why, for example, do we not send additional public prosecutors to monitor certain demonstrations and rallies so that they can identify criminal activities as they are taking place, and initiate an appropriate police response? Such a direct and visible response on the part of

cannot allow our leaders to issue an appeal to civil society – and then fail to support our police forces and other institutions charged with maintaining security and the rule of law. The overriding principle is clear: any criminal offence will be met with a clear, unequivocal and firm response by the state and its legal authorities. And to be completely clear: this applies irrespective of the motives and the identity of the offender.

Target of defamation

Secondly, our political leaders must ensure that we cultivate and value the process of open, democratic debate. We must be able to tolerate differences



Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer

tremist violence. Civic engagement is central to our democracy. Democracy cannot survive without committed democrats. However, in the final analysis, I believe that the greatest share of the duty and responsibility lies with our political leadership. ■



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THE 1973 YOM KIPPUR WAR

Learning for Israel's Survival

Recklessness led Zion to the edge of the abyss



After severe setbacks, Israeli troops crossed the Suez Canal, October 1973

Ron Ilan / Government Press Office Israel

By Rafael Seligmann

Forty-five years ago, on Yom Kippur at 2pm, the armies of Syria and Egypt simultaneously attacked Israeli positions at the Suez Canal and in the Golan Heights. It was the beginning of the Yom Kippur (or October) War. With the exception of the 1948-49 Israeli War of Independence, it would be the costliest armed conflict for Israel in its history. Some three thousand Israeli soldiers were killed in three weeks of fighting. Several thousand became prisoners of war, many of whom were abused or tortured. Some did not survive. As a percentage of the total population, four times as many Israelis fell in October 1973 than Americans did during the entire Vietnam War. Consequently, Israel's chief of staff David Elazar, military intelligence chief Eli Zeira, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and, finally, Prime Minister Golda Meir all resigned. The conflict became a national trauma from which Israeli society has yet to recover.

other sentence is distorted or, especially, misunderstood at the political and strategic level as this one. With it, Clausewitz clearly establishes and repeatedly underscores the primacy of politics. This means that the outcome of the fighting, or the victory on the battlefield, is secondary. What matters more is what politics makes of military events. In the October War, no one grasped and vigorously exploited the political dimension of the fighting better than Egypt's president Anwar el-Sadat. The Israeli side did not have this deep sense of politics and strategy. This is all the more astonishing given that the Israeli chief of staff was Moshe Dayan, who was recognized around the world as an outstanding commander and shrewd politician. Yet before and during the war, Dayan and his government leader Golda Meir committed grave errors, both in judgment and decision. As a result, despite its military successes, Israel lost the war politically. And although his armies were defeated, Sadat won.

warning against euphoria. But both the government and military top brass were set on staying where they were. The Suez Canal was "the best anti-tank ditch," Dayan said.

Misjudgments and arrogance

The Arab governments refused to accept defeat. Egypt began a campaign of attrition at the Suez Canal. The casualties Israel suffered from Egyptian shelling were untenable in the long term. Israel therefore agreed to a truce on the basis of the status quo. The Israelis kept their side of the deal even after Egypt deployed its Soviet-made anti-aircraft systems the

finally consented in a remarkable manner: Two hundred IDF tanks were to face 2,000 Syrian tanks. In the south, where 200,000 Egyptian troops and more than 2,000 Egyptian tanks stood poised to invade the Israeli-occupied east bank of the Suez Canal, Dayan authorized the deployment of 150 Israeli tanks. These IDF forces would suffice to deter the Arab armies and political leaders from attacking, Dayan believed, citing his victories in the 1956 Sinai War.

Dayan's decision was suffused with arrogance, perhaps even megalomania. He was certain that a modest amount of Israeli armor was enough to hold back an enemy with a ten-fold superiority in

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Despite military success, Israel in the end suffered a political defeat. Egypt's President Sadat triumphed – despite the failure of his armies

Tank battle in the Golan Heights



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Understanding the impact of a war does not mean reconstructing battles with tin soldiers, topographical models or – today – computer animation, but analyzing the conflict's political and strategic significance. With his brilliant work *On War*, the Prussian military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) left us an array of instruments to analyze wars that remains sound even today. Clausewitz' philosophy is encapsulated in his assertion that "war is the mere continuation of politics by other means." Perhaps no

How could it have come to this – and what can we learn from it today? The origins of the Yom Kippur War lay in the previous Arab-Israeli conflict, the Six Day War of 1967. In the space of just a few days, Israel decisively defeated the combined armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Israeli troops occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights and the West Bank. The Israeli army stood at the Suez Canal, within 50 kilometers of Damascus, and at the Jordan River. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, was already

following night directly along the Canal. That effectively neutralized Israel's strongest weapon, its air force – because Israel wanted to avoid fresh casualties under any circumstances.

When Sadat, who became Egyptian president in 1970, offered Israel peace talks under the condition that it evacuate the Sinai Peninsula, the Israeli side refused. Israel kept this stance all through the following years, whilst Egypt and Syria rebuilt and modernized their armed forces with Moscow's help.

In early October 1973, Israeli intelligence reported that the Egyptian and Syrian armies were ready for war. Elazar, the Israeli chief of staff, clamored to mobilize the army. Yet Defense Minister Dayan dismissed the demand as unnecessary. Military intelligence chief Eli Zeira likewise saw little danger of war, pointing out that Israel's armed forces or IDF far outclassed their Arab enemies. When Elazar insisted on reinforcing the troops at Suez and on the Golan Heights on the basis of intelligence reports, Dayan

numbers. Dayan also counted on the Israeli Air Force as the ace up his sleeve. But Dayan's assessment was more than hubristic. His analysis was superficial strategically and, what is worse, ill considered. Along the 160 kilometers of the Suez Canal, Israel maintained only 12 bunker complexes manned by 1,000 troops in total. Even the most upbeat Israeli generals doubted that these would suffice to hold



Prime Minister Golda Meir

U.S. News & World Report

out against a direct attack by 100,000 Egyptians supported by masses of artillery. The former commander in chief of the south front, Ariel Sharon, a proven commander during the Six Day War, considered the strategy of holding the Canal's east bank with a handful of strong points "dangerous nonsense." The inferior Israeli bunkers sufficed at most for enemy observation, Sharon said, adding that they would never withstand an Egyptian attack. He recommended a more flexible approach instead. The IDF should pull back about 30 kilometers from the Canal to the Sinai mountains at the Mitla and Gidi Passes and await the Egyptians from secure positions there. Dayan agreed with his maverick subordinate in principle from a military standpoint, but considered the flexible strategy politically unacceptable. For as soon as Israel withdrew from the Canal's east bank, he was sure the Egyptians would occupy it and, from this advanced position, draw Israel into a conflict of pinpricks. Hence, the IDF had to hold out at the east bank for political reasons. The Israeli forces at the waterway were certainly outnumbered, but the IDF also counted on its greatly effective air force, which had determined the 1967 Six Day War.



Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and war hero Arik Sharon, the "King of Israel"

People – including politicians and military officers – often rely on experience, even if events have since overtaken the realities of the past. To carry out his strategy, Dayan appointed General Shmuel Gonen, an inflexible enactor of orders, to command the south front.

Repeated warnings

During the night of October 6, military intelligence received direct information that Syrian and Egyptian forces would simultaneously attack Israeli positions the following day. In

an emergency meeting at first light, chief of staff Elazar demanded authorization for a preemptive strike by the Israeli Air Force against the poised enemy positions. Prime Minister Meir and Defense Minister Dayan rejected the demand – Meir because she foresaw that Israel would need US support in any future war. Dayan, on the other hand, was sure that Israel's highly modern air force would inflict such high casualties on the advancing Syrian and Egyptian armies that these would then be engaged and thrown back by Israel's battle-

ready ground forces. Despite repeated warnings from his chief of staff, Dayan did not budge from this position.

Darkest hour

On October 6 at 2pm, following a heavy artillery bombardment, 100,000 Egyptian infantry crossed the Canal in several waves. They soon overran the Israeli positions, with most of the Egyptian forces bypassing them to strike deeper into the Israeli rear. The Israeli armored units struck out at the invaders, but these were armed with anti-tank rockets. Within hours, the Israeli armor was knocked out. And the Israeli Air Force? The military branch Dayan considered his trump card was largely neutralized by the Soviet-built SAM-2 and SAM-3 anti-aircraft missiles of the Egyptian army. Behind the shield of the advancing Egyptian infantry, engineers built pontoon bridges that soon allowed thousands of tanks and artillery pieces to cross to the Canal's east bank. With this superior force, Egypt consolidated its position on the western side of the Sinai Peninsula.

Meanwhile, the Syrian army under the orders of President Hafez al-Assad attacked Israeli

positions in the Golan. Syrian armor advanced following heavy artillery shelling. The Israeli armored units were too small to stop a Syrian force ten times their size. Israeli warplanes took heavy losses to prevent a Syrian breakthrough. After heavy fighting, Syrian paratroopers managed to occupy the Israeli positions on Mount Hermon. Syrian tanks in the Golan Heights attacked in the south, towards the Israeli Sea of Galilee, some 2,000 meters below them. During the night, Syrian armor broke through the Israeli front. Israel's north lay open to the invaders. Dayan, having ignored earlier warnings, panicked. He declared this was the looming destruction of the "Third Temple," meaning the modern state of Israel.

In this darkest hour, strong personalities rescued Israel from disaster. Prime Minister Meir recalled General Haim Bar Lev from retirement to command the southern front. The armored reserve was entrusted to the likewise reactivated Ariel Sharon, so that Elazar could finally send the IDF back on the offensive with a fighting spirit. For days Sharon searched for the Egyptian army's weak point.

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Federal Ministry
for Economic Affairs
and Energy

*I wish all our Jewish citizens here in Germany
and their friends and family across the world
a happy and peaceful new year:
Shana Tova!*

Peter Altmaier
Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy

GERMAN BANK CRISIS

Reasons for Decline and a Way Out

No longer a big player on the global market

Von Michael Balk

What's going on with Germany's big banks? Ten years after the global financial crisis the country's two leading lenders are in worse shape than ever. On the international stage, in their profitability and market valuation, Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank now play only a marginal role. Chaos in management and strategy, incessant scandals, nose-diving share prices and now, even the exit from Germany's blue chip index have all accompanied the former heavyweights' downfall.

While Germany's economy keeps growing at a healthy clip and the country remains Europe's political and economic locomotive, its banks – i.e. the backbone of the economy – are caught lagging behind. As a European banking market slowly takes shape and the EU moves ahead with plans for a banking union, the German players watch from the sidelines, too preoccupied with their own problems.

European counterparts," says a recent report by consultants Ernst & Young. And the gulf, it adds, is widening. US banks got back on their feet quickly following the financial crisis and forced capitalization by the government. Currently they are benefiting from the booming domestic economy and Donald Trump's tax reform. While interest rates at historic lows continue to depress revenues in the Eurozone, the Federal Reserve began raising US rates long ago, ensuring a more amenable banking environment.

At the Frankfurt bank summit, German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz expressed the government's wish for a big and strong German bank that can accompany the country's booming exports abroad. With this in mind, the possibility of merging Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank has repeatedly been considered. But both lenders' CEOs consider such plans illusory, at least in the shorter term. Christian Sewing and Martin Zielke instead point to the unfinished business of re-

cess. Bankers Trust epitomized the brash new Wall Street approach to moving markets, while Frankfurt remained the domain of pinstriped banking with private customers and lending to midmarket companies and prosperous industries. The outcome of this *Kulturkampf* is well known: The investment bankers won the upper hand and made the lender their cash cow. CEOs Hilmar Kopper, Rolf Breuer and Josef Ackermann failed to rein the investment bankers in. Tasked with rolling out a new beginning at Deutsche, the following chief executive tandem of Jürgen Fitschen and Anshu Jain, installed by still-serving supervisory board chair Paul Achleitner, could not implement a new culture at the lender.

A shoe that does not fit

In 2015, despite the bank posting billions in losses, it also paid out 2.4 billion euros in bonuses. Billions more in write-offs and massive legal costs for its scandals followed. Deutsche Bank is an illuminating case study of what happens when a company hurriedly adopts an Anglo-Saxon business model that does not fit, writes economic historian Werner Abelshauser. Now, Deutsche Bank is caught in a strategic trap: Investment banking, which once guaranteed high profits, no longer works. And in retail and corporate banking, Deutsche does not have the necessary size.

Germany's other big private sector bank offers a similarly bleak picture. Commerzbank had to be rescued from oblivion with billions of taxpayer euros in late 2008. Its takeover of Dresdner Bank shortly before Lehman Bros collapsed proved disastrous for Commerzbank. Several subsequent changes in strategy have since cost the bank its very identity.

One handicap against international competition is Germany's splintered banking market. While the country's consumers benefit from the intense competition by paying less for financial services than their European neighbors do, the banks themselves are saddled with inadequate market share and profit



Dresdner Bank, once Germany's second largest bank, is history

margins. France's five biggest banks, including BNP Paribas, Société Générale and Crédit Agricole, account for over 80 percent of the domestic market there. Germany's top three manage barely fifteen percent. The relatively profitable and stable retail market is firmly in the hands of state-affiliated savings and loan banks (Sparkassen) as well as cooperative Volks- and Raiffeisenbanken. Sparkassen alone take 40 percent of the domestic market.

Also, Germany is "overbanked." There is a bank branch for every 2,500 citizens. In Sweden that figure is 5,000, and in the UK even 6,000. That keeps costs high and binds capital that would otherwise go toward investments such as foreign expansion or digitization.

Both German big banks share a fear of being taken over from abroad. Switzerland's UBS is reportedly interested in Deutsche, while BNP Paribas and Italy's Unicredit are believed to have Commerzbank in their sights.

The fates of Germany's two big banks are not yet clear. Over the medium term a merger is very possible. A "Deutsche Commerzbank" would be number three on the European market while fulfilling the wish for a German national champion. Yet a foreign takeover, including a hostile one, cannot be ruled out given the lenders' depressed share values.

For the historian Abelshauser there is only one way forward

for Germany's export-based economy: back to the roots, i.e. back to the business of financing corporations that leave their mark internationally. ■

Michael Balk is head of the business section of the daily Frankfurter Neue Presse

Return to tried and tested strategies

Policymakers in Berlin worry that the two banks will become mere pawns in the looming consolidation of Europe's banking sector instead of helping shape the transformations. A brief look at market valuation reveals the gulf between the German, French and Spanish lenders. Both France's BNP Paribas and Spain's Santander have market capitalizations exceeding 70 billion euros, which is three and a half times that of Deutsche Bank. Even numbers two and three in France can easily take on Commerzbank (market cap 10 billion euros).

Widening gulf

The gap with US banks is far wider. "Since 2012 the profits of American banks have been at least double those of their

structuring both businesses. A hurried merger would resemble an emergency operation with an uncertain outcome.

The reasons for the decline of Germany's once-proud lenders do not lie only in the 2008 financial crisis. They were primarily homemade: mismanagement, chaos at the top, loss of trust. For Deutsche Bank things began to sour when Germany's then-flagship lender joined the free-for-all adventure of investment banking. With the takeover of US investment bank Bankers Trust, then considered the bad boy of Wall Street, the heretofore antiquated Deutsch-bankers set themselves a challenge they would not rise to. Two worlds collided in the pro-

Frankfurt is Germany's financial hub



ISSN 2193-4800 ZKZ 24792 PvSt
JEWISH VOICE FROM GERMANY

PUBLISHER, V.I.S.D.P.
Dr. Rafael Seligmann

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PRINTED BY
Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei
Bartash Printing Philadelphia

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jvg@berlin.de

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CLOSE FRIENDS?

Economic Power – Political Weakness

The EU must step up cohesion of its economic area to compete with the US

By Klaus D. Oehler

Donald Trump has a clear goal: Make America great again. The US President repeats his election slogan tirelessly. But his often controversial and unusual methods and decisions are having an effect. The US economy is actually doing well, not least because of the tax cuts, but also because of protectionist measures Trump wants to enforce to boost domestic industry. Whether all this is necessary and how sustainable this turnaround will be – politicians and economists are arguing about it. The US President doesn't seem to care much about critical voices. He prefers to refer to his balance sheet. And that's something to be proud of: Only recently, online giant Amazon rose to become a company with a market capitalization of a trillion dollars. This makes it the only company in the world besides Apple that has ever reached

this value. What the companies have in common, apart from their market power, is their network of customers, which – thanks to digitization – can be expanded almost infinitely. The European companies closest to the trillion dollar mark are SAP with 142 billion dollars and Royal Dutch Shell with 271 billion dollars, which makes it the most valuable European company. In order to give their

outcome of this dispute is difficult to predict given the somewhat unconventional approach of the American president.

Differences in performance

It is equally difficult to predict how the relationship between the long-standing “close friends”, the US and Europe, will develop. Almost at the last

vantaged in the end by the measures taken in Brussels and the decisions taken by individual EU governments. Some felt patronized, others did not want to pay so much for the rescue of other states. Later, there was the refugee crisis, to which the governments also reacted differently; a common European solution could only be achieved in part. Juncker also admits all this: there is no convincing single foreign and security policy and even the monetary union is stagnating because of the all too great differences in economic performance. However, the heads of state and governments were able to agree on a banking union, a first step forward. The president of the EU Commission also made it clear that a country that wanted to leave the Union could not only benefit from the advantages a membership offers – a clear signal to London, where the Brexit is still controversial. Juncker's proposals for reforming the EU envisage that majority decisions should make the EU more able to act in foreign and financial policy terms. Migration is to be managed efficiently with a mix of legalization and consistent repatriation. A new partnership with Africa – also to combat the causes of flight – should complement this. As a global currency, the euro should finally be brought into line with the US dollar.

Economists, however, regard this goal difficult to achieve. “Different regions do not have the same economic power, be it in terms of growth trends or innovative capacity; they also do not have the same political power, and that is the real challenge,” says Philippe Waechter, chief



US Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross

“As a global currency, the € should be brought into line with the \$

economy a boost, according to experts recently quoted in the newspaper “Die Welt”, closer cooperation between the states in addition to facilitating market access is called for.

The new US economic and financial policy is also having an effect in the rest of the world. Trump has launched a veritable trade dispute with China, which – according to the fears of some experts – could even turn into a trade war. Only in mid-September did the US president impose new punitive tariffs on Chinese goods worth 200 billion US dollars and warned Beijing not to react with countermeasures. The

minute, the President of the EU Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, negotiated a compromise with Trump that averted punitive tariffs on German cars to be sold in the US. The outgoing convinced European Juncker is the one who sees more opportunity than risk for the European Union in the new relationship with Washington. In early September, in a much-noted speech before the European Parliament in Strasbourg, he presented his vision of a united Europe. The EU is a sovereign power that represents half a billion people and has enormous economic power, Juncker said. He added that nationalism had never solved problems.

This reference was important because a trend towards nationalist governments has increased in Europe in recent years. The first trigger was the euro crisis, in which both sides felt disad-

economist of an asset manager belonging to Natixis Investment. The international reference currency is the currency of the dominant political power. He recalls Japan having a strong economy in the eighties. “But its currency never competed with the dollar because of political weakness ... And the same could be said of Europe, which does not manage to dictate strong political decisions in the long run,” says Waechter.

But it should now be clear to everyone involved that competition in the globalized world will be fought out primarily between three triads in the future: America, Asia with a strong China, and Europe. The Europeans, with their high export ratio, should above all be interested in strengthening the cohesion of their economic area. Many German industries, for example, now account for 60 to 80 percent of sales abroad – only free world trade can bring further growth in the long term. ■

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



EU Commissioner for Trade, Cecilia Malmström

THE SPUDY COLUMN

Garage Gold – A Safe Investment?



In the wake of the global finance crisis, fine art and especially vintage cars have seen a remarkable increase in value – up to five or even ten percent per year. This comes as no surprise given that the market for artwork and vintage cars is governed by a highly limited and finite supply coupled with virtually unlimited capital availability. In addition to the investment aspect, many such investors tend to be vintage car enthu-

siasts or even hobbyists. This element also helps explain why this very interesting asset class can be unpredictable and difficult to assess. A vintage Aston Martin, Bugatti or Ferrari is generally regarded as a very secure investment. These brands enjoy legendary prestige, and prices for vintage sports cars have risen steadily over the last three decades. However, many vintage cars are not secure investments. These include many pre-war vintage cars as well as the vintage Ford Mustang. At the

major classic and vintage car auctions, such vehicles usually sell for well below their purchase price, if they sell at all. Investors who choose unwisely or base their purchases on faulty market projections are liable to incur a significant loss.



Investors who do not wish to rely solely on their personal preferences or life experiences but who are seeking a safe and profitable investment are well advised to consult an expert who is knowledgeable about vintage vehicles and their price development. This, of course, must be coupled with careful asset-value management services. After all, two things are crucial for the long-term maintenance of this class of asset – top-notch asset management and a top-notch car mechanic! ■

Jens Spudy is executive partner of Spudy Family Office

A PERSONAL APPEAL

Britain Must Stay in Europe

By Elisabeth Neu

The tea is piping hot and strong, the cucumber sandwiches are delicious, the lawn green and rolling. A perfect English late summer afternoon. But the mood is sombre. Like everywhere on my short tour of the UK and Ireland we are talking about: Brexit.

"This is a nightmare. I voted out – but I am beginning to think that was a huge mistake," muses Bob, a retired policeman. "We were misled. Right now, it does not look like the promises of 'Leave to Take Control' will ever come true. Quite the contrary. We should not have listened to these charlatans."

Claire, who runs the admission department in a private school in Cambridge, makes sure "to get as many international kids in as we can – to keep up the cosmopolitan atmosphere that was always our school's trade mark." And indeed that of Britain! Brexit itself Claire deems nothing short of a "disaster. I was born on the 'continent' as it is called here," she says with a smile, "but here in England I found the love of my life. We raised our family here. So far I have always had the best of both worlds." The smile leaves Claire's face.

"Now, I just feel sad and disoriented. I can't believe what is happening."

"To my horror, my parents voted Out," says Michael, a GP from Manchester. "They thought Brexit won't affect them and their lifestyle. But for certain it will affect the life of their children and grandchildren very much. I obviously failed to make that clear to them." Michael's wife, a nurse working with homeless people, is distraught: "We are already feeling the cuts in social spending. With Brexit, this will get much worse. How on earth are we going to look after our people?"

A rough ride

"To be honest, I didn't vote at all," says George, the cab driver. "Perhaps that was not a clever move but there you are." Is he afraid of Brexit? "Well, the riding will be rough for a bit. Probably very rough. But then things will look up again. And as you know, when push comes to shove, we are a tough lot. We'll pull through," explains George as we head through the Belfast morning drizzle.

Not everybody in Northern Ireland shares George's optimism. Apart from the list of withdrawn financial capi-

tal, non-valid driving licenses, a stop to the flow of goods and work, and so on... here we have the issue with the border to the Irish Republic. In Northern Ireland, where 56% voted "Remain", this makes people uneasy. What will happen to the peace between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, which is only two decades young and by no means as stable as it might appear?

The recent assessment of a senior police officer in the *Sunday Times* that the forces are working 24/7 just to keep a lid on things is less than assuring. Will the old conflict, the old violence and hatred return?

Back to London. As a financial hub, the city is especially dependent on close ties with Europe. Here, the fear of a hard Brexit is especially great. Hence Mayor Sadiq Khan cooked up the idea of a second referendum. He is not the only one. And he is not the only one who says "that this is not a re-run of the referendum but the British people having a say for the first time on the outcome." Bingo, Mr. Khan. Let's



give the Bobs and grandmas and grandpas and Georges a moment to re-think. And another vote to all those who were against Brexit in the first run: all the Claires and Michaels, the Olivers and Ingridis. All those who want to Remain.

And, above all, we are running out of time. A couple of months are a long time for child on a summer holiday. But a short time for grown ups in difficult negotiations. Hard Brexit, No Deal, Chequers Plan, Soft Brexit, Norway Model... Stop the muscle flexing. Stop drawing up one emergency plan after another. Stop the nightmare. Use common sense. All sides – Deal? ■



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LACK OF ALTERNATIVES

Generation Bibi

Young Israelis trust Netanyahu despite his shortcomings

By Sarah Fantl

Jerusalem – we humans are creatures of habit. We tend to be wary of the unknown. And embarking on something new requires courage, strength and faith. When it comes to trying a new café or experimenting with an unfamiliar recipe, we'll take that risk every now and then. The decision to end a relationship, though, requires a great deal more thought. And when it comes to electing a new prime minister, the plunge into the unknown is even more daunting. But this is precisely the problem Israel will soon find itself confronted with. Elections are slated for November 2019 – but may well be called even earlier.

The unknown is something that is especially feared by the “Bibi generation” – those Israelis who have little or no memory of any political leader before Benjamin Netanyahu, who was first elected Prime Minister in 1996, nine years before German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrived on the scene.

Michael Cohen, a 23-year-old from Jerusalem, is part of this generation: “Bibi is a patriot. He knows this country, knows what needs to be done, and protects it.” And what about Netanyahu's scandals? “If you're prime minister, there will al-



Kobi Gideon / Government Press Office

ways be some who want to destroy you. If he did accept bribes, that's not good. But it doesn't affect Israel itself. His biggest flaw is his wife. He's still the right man for the job though. In any case, who else could do it?”

No experiments

Such sentiments are common in the Jewish state, which lives under a permanent state of threat. Netanyahu is known for staking out bold positions, particularly in the area of foreign policy. Israel is now the strongest and most secure country in the Middle East, which is also

a testament to Netanyahu's leadership. Despite some domestic political difficulties, Israel is in a solid position. It boasts one of the world's most vibrant start-up scenes. Bibi is a canny politician – he is charming but also willing to demonstrate strength and to protect Israel. With some interruptions, he has served his country for more than twenty years. So why should Israel risk a leap into the unknown – one which might even end in disaster?

Anna Avezova is a 36-year-old who made *aliyah* from her native Germany five years ago. She also supports the reigning Prime Minister: “I can't imagine anyone else in office. He knows how to lead this very complex country. That alone would be quite a lot to live up to. And as far as his scandals are concerned: who is completely free of scandal? Everyone has something to hide.” But the question remains – does the Bibi generation truly back the nearly 70-year-old charismatic statesman or do they simply see no viable alternative?

But perhaps there's a simpler explanation: people can get used to almost anything. We grow familiar with the nooks and crannies of our homes, to the point where we can find our way into the kitchen, in the dark, half asleep. We grow used to our partner's quirks and eccentricities and accept them, because

the good outweighs the bad. Or perhaps because we are simply too lazy or fearful to leave and look for someone new. A leap into the unknown is a daunting and draining task. In the end, we may well find ourselves left with nothing but regrets and the wish that we could turn back the clock. And who among us doesn't have all sorts of other things to worry about? So we stick with what we know. We choose Bibi, so at least we know what we're getting. He might not be perfect – but who is?



Orayon Aiz / Government Press Office

45 Years Yom Kippur War

◀ PAGE 9

On the tenth day he discovered a gap between the Egyptian 2nd and 3rd Armies, and promptly attacked with his armor. Defying the explicit orders of the general staff, Sharon crossed the Suez Canal on a single bridge. He attacked the Egyptian SAM installations, thereby enabling the Israeli warplanes to join the fight effectively for the first time

help propel him decades later to the office of prime minister.

The Golan Heights became the scene of bitter fighting. Only slowly did the Israeli reserve units manage to first halt the Syrian advance and finally turn it back. After two weeks, the IDF was on the offensive in both the north and the south. Israeli forces were advancing on both Cairo and Damascus.



Sadat and Kissinger: Cairo lost the war but won the peace

United States Information Agency / Public Domain

“

The decisive factor is Israel's readiness to fight and make sacrifices

in the war. Through his bridgehead on the African continent, Sharon surrounded the Egyptian 3rd Army in the following days and then advanced on Cairo. Sharon's troops celebrated him as the “King of Israel.” This was the beginning of Sharon's mystique, which would

Following the encirclement of the Egyptian 3rd Army and the invasion of Africa, the Egyptian leadership became caught up in confusion, resignation and panic. The general staff wanted to pull all forces back to defend the capital Cairo. But, like his Israeli ri-

val Golda Meir, President Sadat kept his nerve. He turned his attention from the units that were cut off in Suez and concentrated instead completely on the political field. In US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Sadat found a sympathetic partner to work toward a new peacetime order. The Egyptian's efforts paid off because he believed the military was only a means toward a political end. Israel, on the other hand,

suffered a long-term political defeat and heavy loss of life despite its victories on the battlefield.

Foundations for peace

Today Israel's government is more careful. It resolutely strikes at Iran's units and hardware in Syria. But against Russia's modern weaponry, Israel is powerless. Hence, Benjamin Netanyahu tries to maintain

cordial relations with Vladimir Putin. Yet Israel relies first and foremost on the United States, despite an erratic Donald Trump. The US has been Israel's decisive political and military insurance policy ever since the Jewish state's inception. The decisive factor, however, is Israel's readiness to fight and make sacrifices. This is the foundation for peace – and, if necessary, for an existential war.

Hope in Auschwitz

The duty to counteract evil

By Rafael Seligmann

For many years, I was reluctant to visit the former death camp of Auschwitz. I was of course familiar with its historical background. In an isolated area of Eastern Poland, Nazi Germany established a labor camp, which was expanded by the establishment of a death camp the following year. More than a million people were killed there. Among the victims were my aunt Jente Hammersfeld, her husband Jechiel, and their children. I knew I would find a visit to the former death camp difficult to bear.

Heiko Maas has often said that it was Auschwitz that inspired him to go into politics, a sentiment with which I felt an immediate affinity. We all have to do our part to ensure that such a crime against humanity will never be repeated. The desire to kill is part of our human inheritance. The Bible tells of Cain's murder of his brother Abel. "Thou shalt not kill" is one of the most important biblical commandments. And yet, it happens all the time and

everywhere. In Greek mythology, Oedipus kills his own father. But the knowledge that murder, manslaughter, violence and war will always be with us must not lead to resignation. Those who seek to prevent it are worthy of our respect.

When I received an invitation to accompany Foreign Minister Maas on his visit to Auschwitz in late summer, I accepted it immediately, despite my deep misgivings. I traveled on a German military aircraft decorated with the Iron Cross of the Bundeswehr to Krakow. From there, I continued onward to Auschwitz, traveling on an air-conditioned bus. The journey was an unsettling experience. My thoughts turned to 75 years ago, and my aunt Jente and her family. How long were they forced to remain inside the cattle cars before they arrived at the ramps at Auschwitz, where Joseph Mengele or one of his fellow officers sent them to the gas chambers? What fears were they forced to endure? What forms of humiliation? The parents, the children, and countless other people.



In his memoirs, written from prison in 1946 and 1947, the commandant of Auschwitz Rudolf Höss described how two children entered the gas chamber, lost in play, suspecting nothing. Their mother asked Höss: "How can you bring yourself to kill such beautiful children? Have you no heart at all?" But most of the victims, as we know, died without a word and petrified.

Heiko Mass was guided through the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp by 92-year-

old Auschwitz survivor Marian Turski, and listened to his account. At such a moment, every visitor is reduced to silence. But silence is not an option for a politician, who knows he is expected to make a statement. "I stood in the gas chamber ... saw thousands of children's shoes that were taken off them on their way to the gas chamber, tons of human hair that was taken from people. ... This is the most horrific place on Earth. It is a place where you must make a choice: either you

lose faith in humanity. Or you find the hope and strength to stand up for the protection of human dignity." Maas closed with the following words: "We need this place, because our responsibility will never end."

Visiting Auschwitz was the right choice. The Shoah was unique. But crimes are happening all the time, everywhere. We must not allow ourselves to be paralyzed by horror and succumb to resignation. It is our duty to confront evil wherever we find it. ■



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REDISCOVERY

Face to Face with the New Woman

Frankfurt's Städel Museum presents a solo exhibition of Lotte Laserstein



VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018 / Photo: Anja Elisabeth Witte / Berlinische Galerie

By Hartmut Bomhoff

Lotte Laserstein was a forceful and determined lady who told me that she decided at the age of 11 that she would never marry, but devote her life to painting," remembered Caroline Stroude in her obituary of the artist. Said and done: Laserstein, who began "painting properly" when she was about nine, was one of the first women to study art at the Berlin Academy and embarked upon a bright career in Weimar Germany.

Born in Preussisch-Holland, a small town in Eastern Prussia, in 1898, Lotte Laserstein was the eldest daughter of pharmacist Hugo Laserstein and his wife Meta, née Birnbaum, a piano teacher. After the early death of her father, her mother moved with her and her sister Käthe to their widowed grandmother in Danzig. Being from a bourgeois Jewish family, Lotte later remarked she was raised with "no religion." Ten years old, she received her first drawing lessons from her aunt Elsa Birnbaum, who ran a private painting school. In 1912, the family moved to Berlin. Six years later, Laserstein enrolled at Berlin's Friedrich Wilhelm University, to study Philosophy and History of Art. From 1921 to 1927, she attended the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts where she was one of the first women to complete her master studies.

A brilliant talent

She soon succeeded in building a reputation with her sober neo-realistic style and immaculate technique. Arts pages and critics acclaimed her as a "brilliant talent." During Germany's runaway inflation, she took a variety of odd jobs, including reducing oriental rug patterns for a carpet manufacturer, decorating china, and illustrating a massive anatomical textbook. The painter's predominant theme was people, focusing on representations of the so-called "New Woman"; the female nude was one of her principal subjects. Her tennis coach Gertrud "Traute" Rose became Laserstein's favorite model and lifelong friend. She features in many works: "Traute, being a natural athlete, was superb at holding long and difficult poses."

From 1928 to 1931, Lotte Laserstein participated in 22 exhibitions and performed well in various competitions. In

the course of the Prussian Academy of Arts' spring exhibition in 1928, she sold her painting *In the Tavern* to the Berlin City Council. That same year, Laserstein participated in the competition "The Most Beautiful German Portrait of a Woman" organized by the cosmetics company Elida in cooperation with the Reich Association of Visual Artists. Out of the 365 works submitted, her painting *Russian Girl with Compact*, now in the collection of the Städel Museum, was nominated for the final round and exhibited together with twenty-five works by almost exclusively male artists in the prestigious gallery of Fritz Gurlitt in Berlin, where Laserstein's first solo exhibition also took place in 1931.

After the National Socialists seized power, Laserstein's nascent career ended abruptly. She was declared a 'three-quarters Jew' and no longer able to exhibit. Her painting *In the Tavern* was confiscated as "degenerate art." Dismissed from the board of the Association of Berlin Women Artists, she could present her works only within the frameworks of the *Kulturbund Deutscher Juden* (Cultural League of German Jews).

Her works remained virtually unknown outside of her adoptive Sweden where she stayed extremely productive. In 1987, a solo show was mounted in London. In Berlin, the artist was rediscovered in 2003 through the exhibition "Lotte Laserstein. My Only Reality." In 2010, the Nationalgalerie in Berlin acquired her monumental key work *Evening over Potsdam* from 1930.

Sobriety and psychological depth

Laserstein's oeuvre is one of the great recent art historical rediscoveries, featuring sensitive and compelling portraits from the final years of the Weimar Republic. This fall, the Städel Museum in Frankfurt am Main presents the artist's first solo exhibition in Germany outside of Berlin. "Lotte Laserstein. Face to Face" builds upon works from the collection of the museum, which in the past few years was successful in acquiring important works by the artist. With approximately forty paintings and drawings, the exhibition focuses on Laserstein's artistic development. Emphasis is placed on works from the 1920s and 30s, which mark the peak of her artistic activity.

the more pleased that our exhibition will provide an opportunity to take a fresh look at the work of this important painter and introduce her to a wider audience."

In her portraits on show in Frankfurt, Laserstein brilliantly depicts the people of the interwar period, such as in *Girl Lying on Blue* (1931) or *The Mongolian* (1927), whereby her works are characterized by sobriety, modernity and psychological depth. In her oeuvre, there are also motifs that speak of the enthusiasm of the time for technology and sports, although these are much fewer in number. In her portraits, Laserstein paints types from modern everyday life: athletic women, young girls putting on make-up, a motorcyclist in full gear and fashionably dressed city dwellers. Her masterpiece *Evening over Potsdam* is also included in the Frankfurt exhibition. The seven foot long 1930 painting shows five young people sharing a meal on their terrace, with Potsdam's skyline arrayed in the far distance. The preparations for this picture were elaborate, as her model Traute recalled: "The very long canvas was first transported to Potsdam on the Berlin railway, and then



Russian Girl with Compact (1928)

VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018 / Photo: Städel Museum

She had to close her private teaching studio and depended on friends to buy her paint and materials while working as an art teacher at a private Jewish school. An exhibition at the Galerie Moderne in Stockholm in 1937 offered her the opportunity to leave Germany, taking many of her paintings with her. To obtain Swedish citizenship, Lotte Laserstein married Sven Marcus pro forma, but never lived with him. Laserstein died in 1993 at the age of 94 in the southern Swedish town of Kalmar. She never returned to Germany.

Excluded from public activity as an artist, Lotte Laserstein disappeared from Germany's collective consciousness. For half a cen-

"Lotte Laserstein shares the fate of many of her contemporaries, who began to build a reputation during the Weimar Republic, but whose artistic careers were severely curtailed by the Nazi system," emphasize the curators of the exhibition, Alexander Eiling and Elena Schroll. "She can be included among the so-called 'Lost Generation', since her realistically painted images were neglected by post-war research oriented toward the avant-garde." Regarding the exhibition, which he initiated, Städel director Philipp Demandt comments, "the work of Lotte Laserstein in general has accompanied me both personally and professionally for many years. I am thus all

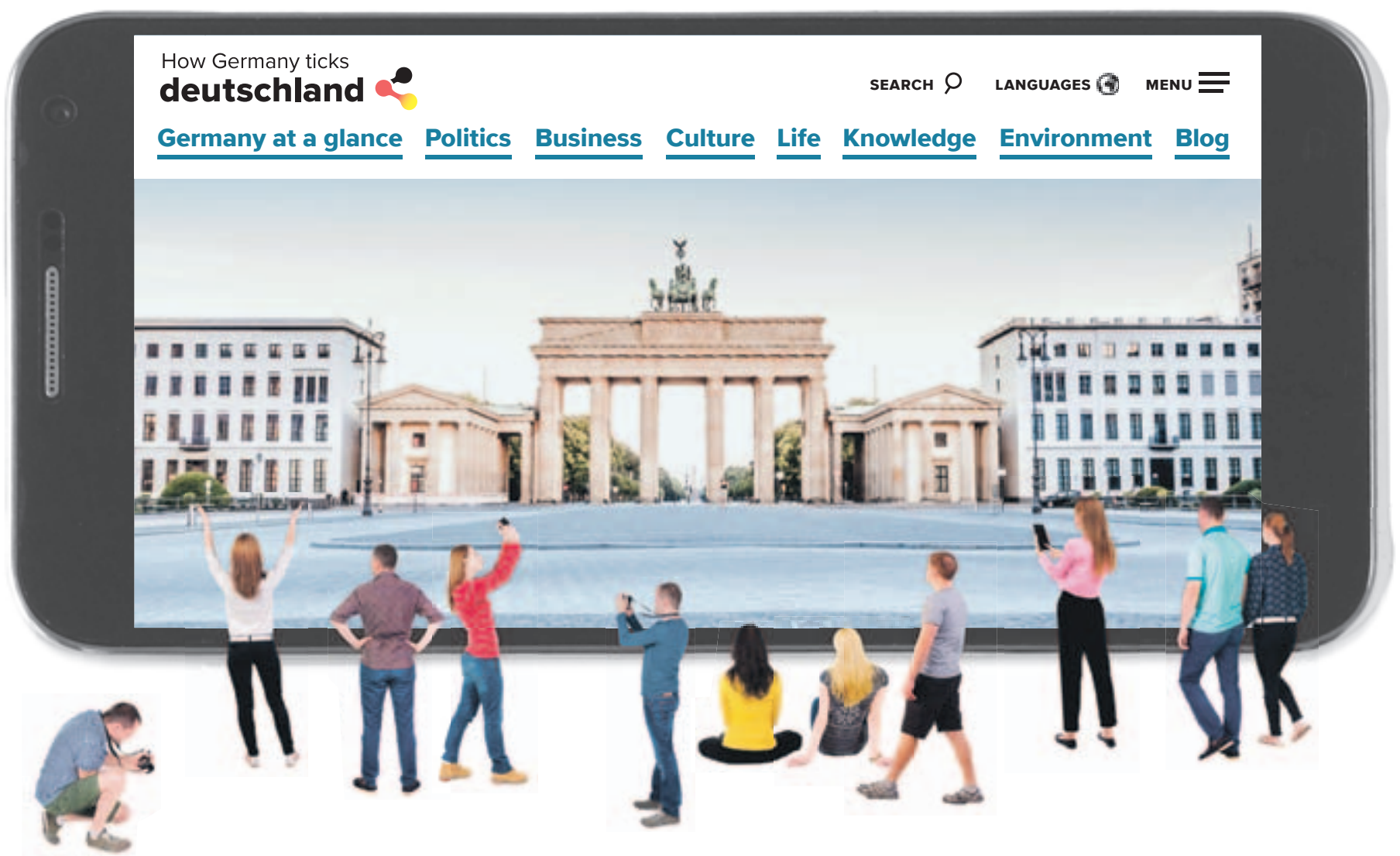
by horse-drawn carriage to its destination with friends who had a roof garden overlooking Potsdam." The mood is pensive with something melancholic about it.

"Face to Face" confirms Lotte Laserstein's reputation as one of the Weimar Republic's outstanding woman artists. After its launch at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt am Main, the exhibition will travel to the Berlinische Galerie, where it will be complemented with, among others, works created by Lotte Laserstein while in exile. ■

Lotte Laserstein. Von Angesicht zu Angesicht runs at Städel Museum Frankfurt from 17 September 2018 to 17 March 2019

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GURLITT ART TROVE

The Incomplete Status Report

Berlin exhibition avoids key questions

By Robert Kahn

Keeping things secret is the best way to keep them safe," said Munich customs official Siegfried Klöble in 2013, one and a half year after the discovery of the Gurlitt trove. When the public learnt about the 1,500 works of art found in the homes of Cornelius Gurlitt, all kinds of speculations were raised. Initial estimates placed their total value at more than \$1 billion. Gurlitt died in 2014, leaving behind a tangle of questions about the vast art collection amassed by his father under the Nazis. In the past few years, only few answers have been found. The Gurlitt task force, a group of German researchers, has been trying to clarify the origins of what has been called the biggest artistic find of the postwar era. The task force has faced much criticism over the slow pace of the investigation. So far, the experts have

been able to identify the former owners of only six paintings. The international sensation has been replaced by both discontent and more serious research on looted art.

This fall, an exhibition at Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin presents about 250 works of art from the Gurlitt collection, which belonged to the German museum professional and art dealer Hildebrand Gurlitt (1895–1956), Cornelius Gurlitt's father. Organized by the Bundeskunsthalle Bonn and Kunstmuseum Bern, *Gurlitt: Status Report* focuses on the campaign against 'degenerate art' and on the Nazi regime's Europe-wide theft of cultural assets. It spans a wide range of eras and styles – from Dürer to Monet and from Cranach to Kirchner and Rodin. By shedding light on the provenance of each of the works on show, the exhibition also presents the complex history of the individual objects. For ex-



Bernhard Kretzschmar: *Streetcar*

VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018

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Political and moral obligation to address the issue of looted cultural assets

ample *Portrait of a Seated Young Woman* by Thomas Couture, which has been identified as Nazi-looted art in 2017, belonged to one of the most famous French victims of the Nazi regime, the high-ranking Jewish politician and anti-Nazi Georges Mandel.

The Gurlitt case draws attention to the role of the art trade within the criminal Nazi regime and to the fact that Hildebrand Gurlitt benefitted enormously from the gradual disenfranchisement, dispossession and despoliation of Jews in Europe. "As an art historian, Hildebrand Gurlitt championed the art of the avant-garde, but as an art dealer, he tendered his services to the Nazi regime," explain

the curators. "The provenances of the works shown here clearly demonstrate that he had no qualms about their often problematic origin." The exhibition depicts Hildebrand Gurlitt as a man who was prepared to exploit every aspect of Nazi policy to personally enrich himself.

The exhibition comprises works confiscated as 'degenerate' from German museums in 1937/38 as well as works whose origins remain to be identified. Some of the latter are under suspicion of having been seized as a result of Nazi persecution and of being Nazi-looted art. The exhibition also sheds light on the fate of some of the previous owners – most of them Jewish collectors or art deal-

ers. "Their stories appeal to our political and moral obligation to address the issue of Nazi-looted cultural assets and their history in public and private collections with sensitivity and respect," the organizers emphasize.

To facilitate the investigation of the provenance of the individual works and safeguard the transparency of the process, the suspect works were registered on the Lost Art Database. In most cases, however, the provenance has not yet been verified. This applies for example to *Straßenbahn* (Streetcar) by Bernhard Kretzschmar (1889–1972), a founding member of the Neue Dresdner Sezession in 1932. His art was regarded as 'degenerate' during National Socialism. While the exhibition doesn't unravel the mysteries of the reclusive Cornelius Gurlitt and his enigmatic father Hildebrandt, it sheds light on modernist artists whose achievements have as yet not been completely explored and investigated. Still, *Gurlitt: Status Report* remains unfinished business. ■

Gurlitt: Status Report is on show at Martin Gropius Bau Berlin until 7 January 2019



Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland GmbH / Photo: Albrecht Fuchs

Auguste Rodin: *The Crouching Woman*

A Fresh Look at What Comes Next

Israeli artists are shaping their future in Germany's cultural landscape

By Fanny Schlesinger

When we think of 'Next Generation,' we think of kids and their future," explains Ohad Ben-Ari the theme of this year's ID Festival. "Children are our future, says the cliché. So what is the next generation going to be like? I find this question fascinating, nonetheless what is just as intriguing: what is our world going to be like for the next Gen?" The Berlin-based Israeli-American pianist and composer is the founder of the interdisciplinary art event. Launched in 2015, the festival explores concepts of identity, particularly the identities of Israelis who live in Germany. Hence the telling name: ID, short for identity, stands also for Israel and Deutschland.

"When I moved to Berlin in 2010 I was amazed to meet so many Israeli musicians," Ben-Ari recalls. While the festival serves as a showcase platform for the works of Israeli artists, it aims at celebrating diversity.

Over the past years, it has addressed issues that matter to a wide audience. In 2015, the festival's theme was identity. In 2016, reflecting on the refugees in Germany, the festival's topic was migration. Building on the previous years of work, the 2017 theme was "integration?". This year, from October 12–18, the ID Festival presents new artists and formats and tackles current debates on the present and future of German-Israeli coexistence. It touches upon issues like the motivation of many Israelis to emigrate, especially to Germany. Do they expect a promised land in Germany, where milk and honey flow? What does the rising anti-Semitism and openly expressed xenophobia mean for the Israelis living here – even in retrospect?

One highlight of the program is *Cinderella*, a ballet adaptation of an opera by 13-year-old composer Alma Deutscher, performed by the young dancers of Kinder Ballett Kompanie Berlin, founded in 2016 by David Simic. Deutscher has performed her own violin concerto and piano con-



Johanna Ruebel

certo as a soloist with orchestras around the world; her first full-length opera, *Cinderella*, was composed between 2013–17 and performed initially in Israel. The artists also address their currently biggest challenge: how does one appeal to a younger audience?

Since the program starts on a Friday night, the audience is invited to participate in a special Kabbalat Shabbat celebration as an immersive experience. Shabbat is a taste of the World to Come, thus fitting in very well in the exploration of the next generation. Ohad Ben-Ari is convinced that the days of multi-genre artistic performances can usher in moments of the heavenly – "but it can also be seen as a taste of our future here on earth, a future that we can shape ourselves by working hard all week long. A future of peace and prosperity, a next generation of coexistence." The ID Festival is certainly a creative laboratory for progressive thinking. ■

<https://idfestival.de/>

GILAD HOCHMAN

Grant Peace to the World

Berlin-based Israeli composer revives synagogue music

By Elisabeth Neu

Grant peace to the world, goodness and blessing, grace, love and compassion for us and all the people of Israel..." – the blessing "Sim Shalom" features twice on the album "Heritage". Just released on the eve of Yom Kippur, it is dedicated to "Treasures of Jewish-German Composers". And it just sounds like a long and rich tradition is being continued by a young composer – Gilad Hochman, an Israeli who has found inspiration in Berlin.

Liturgical music is new grounds for Hochman. Acclaimed for his chamber music and his pieces for solo instruments and for symphony orchestra, Hochman by his own account "had never dealt with this kind of music before. I had never composed for a chazan or with the idea that my music will be performed in a synagogue. But after some time, music just started to surface." He smiles. Suddenly, "there was a natural feeling about compos-

ing this old Hebrew text ... after all, it's not the first time I relate to Jewish topics – but there was an additional layer of spirituality being a part of the actual process of composing."

Why "Sim Shalom"? When commissioned to contribute a piece for the collection "Heritage", Hochman "started reading and was immediately captured by the Sim Shalom blessing which puts 'peace' at its centre by repeating the word several times." And then, Gilad Hochman began talking to Azi Schwartz. The Israeli born celebrated cantor of New York's Park Avenue Synagogue introduced Hochman to the rich tradition of Jewish liturgical music created in Europe. Much of it in Germany. Take Louis Lewandowski, the doyen of liturgical melodies, in his days deemed the "Mendelssohn of synagogue music." His "Tsadik Katamar" features in "Heritage" as does Israel Alter's "R'tze Vimnuhateinu." And then, there are fine samples of this very special worldly-spiritual music com-

posed by those having left the old continent behind to become part of the New World. Richard Rodgers, born into a German-Jewish family in New York, one of America's greatest composers of musicals. Or the amazing Kurt Weill, son of a cantor from Dessau. Both, his "My Ship" and "Kiddush" feature in "Heritage." Vastly different spiritual journeys through music.

The sound of silence

In his "Sim Shalom" Hochman, a classically trained composer, develops a dialogue between the chazan, steeped in Jewish tradition, and a choir, using specific modal scales, known in medieval tradition. The result of this experiment makes you hold your breath. Silence. Filled with tension, meaning, resolution, and ultimately redemption. Silence. As always in Hochman's work. "I know that a piece works the moment there is no sound, silence," Hochman says. And here these split seconds work towards



JMG

"offering a bridge where people of different beliefs can find a common cultural and spiritual place."

Hochman is very happy with the recording of his latest piece. Berlin's RIAS Kammerchor, voted "one the world's best ten choirs", directed by the young British Conductor, Justin Doyle, has the range of purity, emotion and depth needed for liturgical music. "It was obvious to me that they love their work," says Hochman, "Our connection was immediate."

Why two renderings of "Sim Shalom" on one album? Max Janowski's beautiful piece shows a certain restraint and seeks to hold, to preserve. Hochman's finds doubt, departure, and hope. Grant peace to the world.

"I am intrigued by the connection between the words *Shalom* (meaning peace) and the word *shalem* (meaning being complete, whole)" ... muses Hochman. Hopefully he will put his reflections on this connection into music soon. ■


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HERITAGE

As Time Flows By – Jewish Life on the Oder River

Exploring the past and present along the German-Polish border

By Hartmut Bomhoff

My mother tried to get me out of Breslau whenever Hitler visited the town. Once I went to a small village on the banks of the River Oder which was in flood, but the waters covering the meadows through which the village children and I waded were quite warm.” The memories of Kenneth Graupner, formerly Klaus Gräupner, come to mind at the travelling exhibition at the Berlin City Hall this fall, *As Time Flows By*. Twenty panels depict Jewish life along the River Oder, or Odra, from its beginnings to the present day.

The river has carried many conflicting narratives, memories, and allusions with it since Ptolemy referred to it in the second century c.e. Today, it is Poland’s third-longest river, running from the Czech Republic to the Baltic Sea. It flows through many cities and touches many Jewish sites. The landscape, with its changing dominional and national

affiliations, has been a melting pot for centuries. Also German-Jewish and Polish-Jewish cultures crossed here. In modern times, nationalism, coupled with anti-Semitism, threatened this cultural diversity. National Socialism destroyed it.

After the Second World War, the Oder River became the German-Polish border. The German population from regions east of the river was expelled. Polish citizens found a new home here and for a short time it seemed that Jewish life could emerge again in Lower Silesia and Pomerania. Several tens of thousands of Polish Jewish Holocaust survivors settled here, but due to anti-Semitic violence most emigrated by the end of the 1960s. The centuries-long presence of Jews on the Oder fell into oblivion, their traces were often destroyed.

The exhibition has been designed by the German Culture Forum for Eastern Europe (Potsdam). The visitor learns that in regions which before WWII were part of Pomerania, of the Neumark



Jewish cemetery in Groß Neuendorf

area of Brandenburg, or of Silesia – all of which belong to the western region of Poland since 1945 – there was a Jewish cultural presence since the Middle Ages. It developed as a result of trade and of immigration from both East and West. Over centuries, the Oder region became a place in which different cul-

tural influences crossed paths and mutually enriched one another. From at least the 19th century onwards, this led to a unique cultural and economic upsurge, which turned cities such as Breslau (today Wrocław), Görlitz, Frankfurt and Stettin (Szczecin) into centers of art and culture, science, and business.



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As *Time Flows By* explains how with the realignment of Europe after 1945, the history of the former German Eastern provinces has largely been forgotten. Jewish history was particularly affected by this. "The exhibition is dedicated to moments of Jewish history on both sides of the Oder," explained the curators at

ish-Jewish cultural heritage of this landscape." Indeed, there are many Jewish spaces to explore alongside the border river. In Görlitz, the splendid synagogue from 1911 has recently been thoroughly renovated. In Groß Neuendorf, a small village in eastern Germany on the Polish border, one comes across a Jewish



Days of Jewish Music at the National Museum Szczecin

of Jewish Music in the Baltic port city Szczecin met an enthused crowd when the Vox Varshe singers and organist Jakub Stefek renewed and transformed the musical tradition of Stettin's pre-war Neue Synagogue, which is so closely connected with the Jewish composer Louis Lewandowski.

The hub of Jewish life on the Oder river is Wrocław. Here the small Jewish community and its cultural attraction, the grand White Stork Synagogue, enjoy great interest. "Wrocław can finally and proudly live its heritage as a city of many cultures and can find a new identity as a city of mutual respect," hopes Aleksander Gleichge-

wicht, the Jewish Community's president. Bente Kahan, whose foundation runs the synagogue, which underwent extensive reconstruction before being reopened in 2010, is grateful for lots of visitors every day. Kahan and her team set up another milestone event this October, the opening of the restored mikveh and spaces in the basement of the synagogue, including the new exhibitions "Jewish Lifecycle" and "Unfinished Lives."

As Time Flows By, which has been produced in both German and Polish, is presented in locations along the German-Polish border from the middle of 2018

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Wrocław can finally
and proudly live as a city
of many cultures

its opening at Berlin's city hall. "We want to stimulate reflection and conversation between the former and present inhabitants of the region. It is also an invitation to rediscover the German-Pol-

cemetery, the only visible reminder of the small Jewish congregation which thrived here in the 19th century; the former synagogue has been converted into a private home. In September, the Days

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FUTURE CONGRESS

‘Cause I Want to Live Here

New perspectives on Jewish identities in Germany

By Gideon Wollberg

Today's diversity of Jewish life is a stroke of luck, enlivening the city in a way that one could only dream of, given the history of Berlin and the history of our country," says Klaus Lederer, Mayor and Senator for Culture and Europe in Berlin. Still haunted by its Nazi history, the capital has become the epitome of personal freedom and a symbol for Jewish revival. It is the home of a diverse and sometimes divided Jewish population which wavers between seclusion and high visibility. The wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union multiplied Germany's Jewish population in the 1990's and 2000's and boosted Jewish self-confidence. Thousands of young Israelis have been moving to Berlin in the past years, too. However, the official membership numbers of Germany's synagogues are declining. While Jewish congregations are graying swiftly though, Jewish life outside synagogue walls is growing in importance and visibility. Findings say that one third of second-generation Russian Jewish immigrants believe that Jewishness is determined more by Jewish culture, festivals, mov-

ies, and music than by the Jewish religion. The same applies to many Israelis who have made Berlin their home. When questioned about the future of the Jewish community in Germany, many young adults express hope for a secular, pluralistic European Judaism. So what is the common denominator of Jewish identities in Germany today?

Consolidation and renewal

From November 5-8, the Jewish Future Congress in Berlin will serve as a forum that can provide impulses for the consolidation and renewal of Jewish life in Germany in all its diversity. Initiated by the Leo Baeck Foundation, Berlin's Senate Department for Culture and Europe and the Federal Agency for Civic Education, the congress wants to link opinion leaders and activists and create



Jüdischer Zukunftskongress

a space for self-reflection. More than sixty speakers and panelists will share their ideas and encourage the audience to think out of the box. With many

young Jews being satiated with clichés about them, "disintegration" has become a keyword for rejecting social attributes and reversing popular misperceptions of Jewishness. Bringing together a wide array of groups, the hope is that a broader sense of Jewish community will emerge. To stir discussions, a book will be launched by the conference organizers in mid-October, presenting young Jewish voices about Germany and Europe. With the rise of both the far-right and of hatred from Muslim immigrants, its programmatic title, *Weil ich hier leben will*, suggests reasons for both concern and confidence – 'Cause I Want to Live Here. The Jewish Future Congress will open up an overall social perspective for a new togetherness in Berlin, in Germany, and in Europe.



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Have Your Say!

The other day, I went to an amazing performance of “Cabaret,” the Weimar-era musical. As I heard “Tomorrow Belongs to Me” eerily played on stage, the chilling anthem reminded me that the story of the rise of the Nazis is far from dated. Today, German society is drifting apart, and our ingrained social cohesion is showing cracks. With far-right groups and the nationalist Alternative for Germany party making their presence felt, the lyrics of the catchy song appear in a new light: “Now Fatherland, Fatherland, show us the sign your children have waited to see.” Some call it premature to see parallels with today, but the musical production tells us what happens when those inside the cabaret ignore what is really going on outside.

In our polarized and fragmented society, we all live in our respective bubble. It’s convenient to mock the neo-Nazis, to ignore them, or to be satisfied with futile gestures. Four years ago, thousands rallied in Berlin against anti-Semitism and all racism. And where are we now? We must get up to address, and confront, far-right issues in our neighborhood and our communi-



ties constantly. Many of our co-citizens have lost their sense of proportion in their pre-occupation with migration, and this includes synagogue members, too. However, instead of having ideology come between us, we need to support a strong sense of commu-

nal welfare and to advocate communal oversight as long as our economy is still booming.

Since the reunification in 1990, Jews around the world were always scared of a German state that is too strong. Today, it is the other way around: Jews are becoming afraid of a German state that is too weak to guarantee security. Those Jews who do support the right-wing AfD to have an anti-migration policy enforced are on the wrong track. The party might claim that the country’s Jewish population is safe, but in its program, it rejects rituals which are at the core of Jewish identity: circumcision and shechita.

Remember this scene in “Cabaret”? At first, the Kit Kat Club regulars are poking fun at the Nazis. Then all of a sudden the audience is dominated by party members, and after witnessing this growing support for the National Socialist movement, Brian asks Max, “Do you still think you can control them?” Later, Brian’s confrontation with a Nazi in the street leads to him being beaten up.

In the past decades, the Jewish community in Germany has been perceived as the ‘canary in the coal mine,’

heralding threats to tolerance and democracy. We do know that when a society turns on its minorities, it is usually a sign of wider ill health: What happens to the Jews will eventually befall everyone. We are trained to feel how open a society is. If Jews are concerned, it should concern the society. That is why the Jewish Future Congress taking place in Berlin in early November is of such great importance. It is an opportunity to speak up.

80 years after the November pogroms of 1938, Jewish life in Berlin is more diverse than could ever have been imagined after the Second World War and the Shoah. The past with the memory of the expulsion and annihilation of Jewish life meets a dynamic Jewish civil society today. Young Jews not only shape their own society but also Berlin’s society at large. The Jewish Future Congress will focus on the confidence and the concerns of the younger Jewish generation; it can spark debate and provide visions for a Germany more open to social change. Instead of just keeling over and dropping dead like a canary, we must raise our voices and have our say.



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“I Will Grant the Rain for You in Season”

Jewish traditions remind us to appreciate our water resources

By Rabbi Walter Homolka

Hit by years of drought, Israel is running out of water. Throughout the times, water was a limited resource in the Middle East, and the Talmud says in the words of Rabbi Yosef that the world’s dependence on rain for its sustenance is so total that rainfall is compared to the revival of the dead. Our sages tell us that the world is judged on all aspects already on Rosh Hashanah but the final judgment is sealed for each feature only in its specific time; for grain on Pesach, for fruits of trees on Shavuot and for rain on Sukkot. In rabbinic thinking, Sukkot is a rain holiday. Rabbi Akiva states this most clearly: “Bring the water libation on the holiday so that you be blessed with rain...”

Prayers for rain are among the earliest liturgical texts and the Hebrew Bible regards withholding of rain as a punishment from God who pledges: “I will grant the rain for you in season” (Deuteronomy 11:13–14). In Temple times, a libation of water was made together with the pouring of wine at the morning service on the last six days of the week-long Sukkot holiday. Today, we continue recognizing the value of water through *tefillat geshem*,

the beginning of our prayers for rain on Shemini Atzeret, the holiday after Sukkot.


Rain in Israel is seasonal. It falls in the winter, seldom starting before the end of Sukkot or continuing beyond Pesach. That is why there are special insertions in the Amidah – the central prayer of all Jewish services – concerning rain and dew that change with the season. *Tefillat geshem*, the principal prayer for rain, is recited as part of the second benediction of the Amidah where the rabbis inserted the phrase *mashiv ha-ruach umorid ha-geshem*, “He makes the wind to blow and the rain to fall.” God is acknowledged as the power causing natural phenomena. This special prayer on Shemini Atzeret is composed of *piyyutim*, liturgical verses. The most popular in Ashkenazi tradition is by the poet Eliezer Kallir. In his alphabetical acrostic poem, God is asked to remember the merits of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron, and the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

For plenty and not for famine

The opening words mention *Af-Beri*, the ruler of rain, and are derived from a verse in Job 37:11, *Af beri yatri’ah av*

yafitz anan oro (“He also loads the clouds with moisture and scatters his lightning-clouds”). *Af* means anger and the word *beri* means health, thus alluding to the two ways in which rain can

death; for plenty and not for famine.” The dates for the prayers for rain were fixed by the rabbis with regard to the climate and the agricultural needs of the Land of Israel. However, our sages had to adjust these dates to the holiday calendar. Thus the prayer for rain is not recited before Shemini Atzeret, for rain in the midst of the holiday is regarded as a bad omen. Moreover, praying for rain at the beginning of the holiday would be inappropriate since it would prevent one from the mitzvah of dwelling in the Sukkah. Remember that Sukkot is one of the three pilgrimage festivals? That is the reason why another petition in the ninth benediction of the Amidah, “and give dew and rain for a blessing” is recited only two weeks or more after the *tefillat geshem*: in Temple times, the pilgrims had to return from Jerusalem to their homes before heavy rain would cause them hardship. And of course, there are no rules without exceptions: Babylonian Jews began requesting rain on the 60th day of the fall equinox, which marked the beginning of their rainy season. Whatever date and tradition we follow today: the Prayer for Rain is an important reminder to appreciate and protect our water resources.



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