

The German Times

A TRANS-ATLANTIC NEWSPAPER

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- SAVE CLIMATE

- ERADICATE POVERTY

- EMPOWER WOMEN

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Young people are spurring on the transformation of the world.

Read about how reason, resolve and new recipes can make for a more perfect tomorrow.

IN THIS ISSUE

They set out to help refugees in danger of dying on the open sea – and were misled, blocked and even arrested. Peter H. Koepf tells the story of a group of German men and women, their self-funded rescue boat in the Mediterranean and their struggle with Italian authorities (pages 20–21).

Germany is reeling from the assassination of a government official by a neo-Nazi with close ties to a right-wing network (page 4). The national debate on democratic socialism was initiated not by an old Bernie but by a young Kevin, and its underpinnings speak to fundamental questions about the world economy (page 9). Meanwhile, the economic order is being shaken by China's forays into the former Soviet republics (page 16) and the US president's erratic trade policies (page 11).

Have some fun probing the peculiar relationship between Germans and their dogs in the latest chapter of our series about the Krauts and their peculiarities: "Zee Germans" (page 18).

In *The Berlin Times* section (pages 22–24), read about the capital's attempts to alleviate the homelessness problem, nifty vegan food trends and a fierce debate about the political undertones of Charlottenburg's Walter-Benjamin-Platz.

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Saving the bond

The trans-Atlantic relationship must start again from scratch

BY THEO SOMMER

We will be back" – that was the comforting message Joe Biden had for the Europeans just four months ago. Speaking at the Munich Security Conference, the former US vice president and current Democratic front-runner in the incipient 2020 electoral campaign, sought to reassure US allies that after Donald Trump, the trans-Atlantic estrangement caused by his America First policies would quickly be overcome, and the previous consensus re-established as a matter of course. "The America I see does not want to turn our back on the world or our allies. Don't have any doubt about that."

Since Munich, the doubts have grown, and the hope fed by Biden has vanished in many European quarters. At best, many experts feel that one can expect a new administration to rescind the tariffs on steel and aluminum, and to rejoin the Paris climate accord and the nuclear deal with Iran. But the old narrative will be hard to revitalize.

Trump has certainly done his best to create this impression. His foreign policy centers no longer on the pursuit of broader interests and ideas. In fact, it increasingly boils down to tariff tiffs. Sylvie Kaufmann of the French daily *Le Monde* put it in a nutshell: "The former New York real estate king is spreading fear and horror no longer with the number of nuclear warheads, but with a frightening arsenal of economic sanctions and tariffs."

World War II was decided by huge tank battles. Potential future wars between great powers will likely be conducted in cyberspace; already they are planting digital mines in each other's power grids. For the time being, the US president is engaged in a rampant trade and tariff war. His battlefield is the global commercial system.

Small wonder that the term "weaponization of trade" dominates the international discussion these days. "Weapons of mass disruption" *The Economist* titled a cover story a few weeks ago. It was illustrated by a bomb tipped with Trump's face roaring

downward. Four terms were stenciled on its side: TARIFFS, TECH BLACKLISTS, FINANCIAL ISOLATION, SANCTIONS.

These are the weapons Trump employs without distinguishing between friend and foe. Whoever makes a surplus trading with the United States is automatically an adversary. And Trump uses tariff and tech sanctions indiscriminately not only to achieve trade concessions, but also to put through political outcomes. As 88 percent of world trade is transacted in dollars, he has enormous leverage. The results, however, are minimal. Fred Kempe of the Atlantic Council has pointed out the unfortunate truth "that tariffs are insufficient at best and counterproductive at worst in achieving non-trade outcomes." And Trump's weaponization of trade can't but rile up America's friends and allies.

Yet it is not only the bullying from Washington and the president's nationalist, protectionist and populist instincts that worry the Europeans. The realization is dawning on them that even after the end of the Trump presidency – which might not come before January 2025 – things won't be the same again. The US is decoupling from its 70-year-old partnership with

Europe.

François Delattre, consecutively French ambassador to the United States and to the United Nations during the past ten years, who will assume the post of Secretary General at the Quai d'Orsay on July 1, wrote in a farewell article in *The New York Times*: "America's disengagement started before the current administration. I believe it is here to stay." He discerns a "Jacksonian impulse" as the dominant trend in US foreign policy – "a strange mix of unilateralism and isolationism" pursued by President Andrew Jackson in the 1830s.

In the same vein, Alain Frachon editorialized in *Le Monde* about the coming "Atlantic disalliance," posing the disquieting question: "For how long will America remain our strategic partner?" His witness is the former US diplomat Tony Corn, who argues

Potential future wars between great powers will likely be conducted in cyberspace

Holding the center

The German chancellor refuses to become a lame duck

BY LUTZ LICHTENBERGER

In December Angela Merkel gave up her post as head of her party, the center-right Christian Democratic Union, a far more important post in German politics than, say, the Democratic or Republican National Committee chair in the US. Her governing coalition of the CDU/CSU and the Social Democrats has run its course after six years – with officially two more to go. There has been a brew of simmering unhappiness in both parties despite a mostly solid working relationship. In the EU elections in May, both suffered dramatic losses, with Merkel's party dropping below 30 percent. The CDU lost votes to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and to the center-left Greens.

Merkel has been Germany's chancellor for 14 years. Her subdued style of government has seemingly gone out of fashion in our Twitter-frenzied times.

Throughout all her years at Germany's helm, the physicist by training has stuck to her patented mode of quiet negotiation, piecemeal policy engineering and clinical compromise.

Merkel is pleasantly free of both strong ideological predisposition and blistering vanity. In 2015, she put all her political capital on the line to let close to one million refugees having fled war and poverty, mostly from Syria, Iran and a handful of African countries, cross into Germany. It was a move both bold and humane – and the ripple effects it caused in German society continue to reverberate to this day. It has earned Merkel both praise and scorn internationally. The jury is still out as to Germany's success at integrating the new arrivals.

Incidentally, during the worst backlash against her policy, which spurred the rise of the AfD, Merkel changed course. Immigration restrictions were tightened again while the deportations of rejected applicants for asylum were untethered from red tape. The EU-Turkey deal of 2016, capping the number of refugees entering the European Union through Turkey, was her brainchild and only passed by dint of her deft legislative acumen. Yet a

broader perspective reveals she didn't actually abandon her initial stance, but rather counterbalanced it.

A similar pattern can be discerned in two other major storylines of her chancellorship. After the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Merkel set faster target dates for the phase-out of nuclear power and laid out ambitious plans for the so-called *Energiewende*, a green-energy transformation. Often enough, however, Germany blocked initiatives in the EU to reduce emissions, protecting the interests of the big automakers who still wanted to sell their luxurious gas-guzzlers; and the phase-out of coal was postponed to 2038.

During the EU financial crisis – the most important story of the chancellor's earlier years – she became known as "Madame Non" for her insistence on financial austerity. Repeatedly she allowed Greece to come close to having to leave the eurozone. In the end, however, Greece was bailed out with Germany absorbing a significant chunk of the cost.

Chancellor Merkel's opponents can be divided into two camps. One camp thinks that she does too much – the other blames her for not doing enough. After giving up her party post, she barely campaigned in the run-up to the EU

elections. Contrary to their expectations, the Christian Democrats lost far more votes to the liberal and eco-friendly Greens than to the AfD, whose base consists of many former CDU-voters repelled by Merkel's supposedly left-leaning course.

And yet, despite all the reports heralding the imminent end of the chancellor's reign, there is a third camp of Germans with strong and positive opinions of her: She still enjoys the highest approval rating of any politician in the country. And indeed, after each media outlet had penned her political obituary earlier in the year, Merkel soldiered on undeterred, a true dealmaker at home and on the international stage, never quite "winning," but certainly not losing either. To put it in more prosaic, Merkelian terms, she has simply continued her quest for workable solutions.

She will be missed the second she's gone.

continued on page 3

Realism, not sentimentality

We can't act jointly with Trump, yet we can't act alone without the US

BY SIGMAR GABRIEL

When people in Germany talk about trans-Atlantic relations, the conversation soon turns to Donald Trump. He's regarded as the source of all conflict between the United States and Europe, especially with Germany.

Yet Trump is not to blame for everything. And he's not always wrong, for instance when he criticizes China. We won't solve any problems with the US – whether trade issues, dealing with Iran or Nord Stream 2 – through Trump-bashing and finger-pointing. We must broaden our view and consider the wider geopolitical context.

What we're currently observing has far less to do with Trump than we would like to believe and far more with a dramatic transformation in global politics. We're witnessing a shift in the axes of global power, and with it a change in the world's political and strategic orientation. The Atlantic is no longer the center of gravity for global economic, political and military power. Supply chains have very quickly shifted to the Pacific.

The US has for years been in a state of imperial overstretch. It's stuck in a strategic dilemma. While it wants to (and should) be the guarantor of a liberal world order, it also wants to be the world's leading economy. Being both overstrains the US, notably in light of China's dynamism, size and power.

This is why Trump's predecessor, President Barack Obama, sought to concentrate his country's strength on competing with China and to withdraw from certain other roles in the world. In this sense, Trump's foreign



Critical of Trump, but committed to trans-Atlantic cooperation: In June, Sigmar Gabriel assumed the chairmanship of Atlantik-Brücke, a non-profit association founded in 1952 to promote German-American understanding.

policy in many ways represents the continuation of a US foreign policy that started well before his time.

That said, in contrast to all previous presidents, Trump is unable to discern what it is that has made the US so successful over the past 70 years and what distinguishes the country from revisionist, autocratic regimes such as those in Russia or China. Unlike all previous superpowers, the US has always had partners, friends and allies. Its ability to maintain a tight network of partners has always been one of the most important factors in reinforcing its influence.

Trump has dispensed with this alliance-based policy. Europe, the most important ally of the US over the past 70 years, often seems to him to be a “conspirator” against US interests. This view of the world is a far greater

cause for concern than any differences on specific issues such as trade disputes, the Iran deal or the planned Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. History has shown that the trans-Atlantic partner-

ship can overcome these kinds of differences of opinion, as well as far more serious ones. One need only to think back to the early 1980s and the debate on the stationing of medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe.

Where do we Germans and Europeans stand in this situation? It must be clearly stated that if we fail to quickly get a grip on this new reality, the future world order will reflect There would be a lot at stake for the US, Germany and Europe if the trans-Atlantic partnership were to further erode. The US risks losing those with whom it has united to fortify its authority, who have strengthened its unrivalled power base – its close network of allies, friends and partners. Europe risks not only losing its most important ally; in a fundamentally transformed geopolitical context, it also risks drifting into insignificance as a partner. We can't act jointly with Trump, yet we can't act alone without the US.

What direction Europe will take depends heavily on the attitude that Germany adopts. Germany's role as the central power in Europe must always be one that has the unification and strengthening of Europe as its goal, yet it must never relinquish its ties with the US and should strengthen them wherever possible. Germany

We Europeans are like the last geopolitical vegetarians in a world full of carnivores

a G-2 world, dominated by the twin poles of the US and China. Europeans are like the last geopolitical vegetarians in a world full of carnivores; we are in danger of fading into global insignificance.

strongest party. In defiance of a formal resolution by the national party, the Christian Democrats at the state level are pondering if they have no alternative but to form a coalition with the AfD in order to hold on to power.

has always navigated its allegiance between Europe and the Atlantic. And it must continue to do so; we can't afford to divide Europe.

The old trans-Atlantic partnership, in which Europe could concentrate on itself and largely keep out of international issues, leaving difficult problems to the US, is decidedly over. It will not return.

From a European perspective, we must recognize that the US is undergoing a permanent and fundamental transformation. In just a few years, the majority of Americans will no longer have European roots, but will rather have Asian, Hispanic or African origins. This new America will see trans-Atlantic relations in a very different light, and not necessarily in a friendly one.

However, the new America will, hopefully in good time, realize that in the world of tomorrow, alliances and allies will continue to be essential in protecting its values and pursuing its national interests. “Bowling alone” is not an attractive way to live, neither in private life nor in international relations.

We Europeans should thus invest in the America of tomorrow and the new trans-Atlantic partnership, in the coming generation and in the descendants of immigrants from Asia, Africa and Latin America. And we should travel not just to New York, Washington and California, but develop a wider view of the cultural, political and economic diversity of this truly great country.

Sigmar Gabriel is an SPD member of the Bundestag. From 2013 to 2017, he was Germany's federal minister of economic affairs. He then served as foreign minister until March 2018. This text is an excerpt of a speech on the future of trans-Atlantic relations at an Atlantik-Brücke event.

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Wunderbar together | Germany and the US.

BY ROBERT NORMEN

There is one undisputed winner of the EU elections – and it's Die PARTEI (The PARTY). They quadrupled their share of the vote, from 0.6 to 2.4 percent, giving them a gain of two seats in the European Parliament. Die PARTEI is a satirical party, albeit of the higher order – picture Stephen Colbert getting elected to the House of Representatives and then fully embracing his new role.

The EU elections have been considerably less fun for the Social Democrats (SPD), the earnest mainstays of the German party system and currently still together with Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats as part of the Federal Republic's governing coalition. The SPD suffered heavy losses, ending up with a meager 15.8 percent – a loss of 11.5 percent – its worst results in nationwide elections since 1949.

Party chairperson and floor leader Andrea Nahles had for months been under a barrage of nagging criticism by party rivals. After the elections results became known, her critics wasted no time declaring her the culprit for the SPD's demise that had in fact been underway for years. Nahles is both a serious policy wonk and a politician deeply anchored in her party's peculiar sentiments; she has stayed true to the ever-elusive ideal of social justice.

After several former big players in the SPD tried to get back in the game and began jostling for Nahles' job, she pulled one final House of Cards-like move. Nahles tried to make her rivals, chief among them Martin Schulz, a failed candidate for chancellor in 2017, to come out

of the woodwork and declare their candidacies. She preponed the leadership election in her caucus by six months, for the next week.

Yet no one dared publicly challenge her. Instead, the party sent emissaries suggesting she should resign. A day later, Nahles relented, announcing she would leave politics altogether.

The Social Democrats are now reeling in an existential crisis. An emergency crew of regional and mid-tier officeholders assumed interim leadership roles while the party is yet again left searching for its soul and for new party heads. For the first time in its history, there will be two people at the helm, to be decided by a party-wide vote in the fall.

All the while, the Greens are enjoying their moment in the sun. The eco-friendly party won 20 percent of the vote, its best result in its history. They're currently capturing the *Zeitgeist* with their clear message of being decidedly liberal on social matters like gender equality and LGBTQ rights, moderately left-leaning in their economic policies and very much in favor of protecting the environment while

having shed some of their former more radical positions.

They are led by Robert Habeck, the favorite son-in-law type, a charismatic orator who can speak without the stilted platitudes of so

many of his colleagues. The second party chairwoman – the Greens have always had both a man and a woman in the top posts – is Annalena Baerbock, herself an affable character, but also a smooth operator running the party machine. The Greens profited from the hoopla around the Fridays for Future demonstrations, in which students skip school to advocate for stricter climate policies.

Habeck acknowledged the pressure the party is now under. The Greens feel humbled given the unprecedented support, he said, “yet everybody knows that we have to deliver now.”

The poor results for the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, formerly considered the country's big-tent parties, together won only 44.7 percent of the vote. In the national elections of 2017, they had combined to win 53.4 percent, which was sufficient to form a “grand coalition,” a moniker that is seeming increasingly quaint.

The CDU is beginning to resemble the SPD. After Merkel's withdrawal from the party's leadership, her successor Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer has been zigzagging between appealing to the party's more conservative flank, which has been unhappy about Merkel's course during the refugee crisis, and following Merkel's more liberal course.

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) won 10 percent of the vote, which is less than they had hoped for. However, in the upcoming regional elections in the eastern states of Brandenburg and Saxony, the party expects to win big, with the chance of even becoming the

Shake it up

The EU elections have put a spin on all the German parties



Great Green hopes: Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck

strongest party. In defiance of a formal resolution by the national party, the Christian Democrats at the state level are pondering if they have no alternative but to form a coalition with the AfD in order to hold on to power.

Meanwhile, on the day after the election, experts from the CDU published the findings of their study, revealing that in fact more former CDU voters had switched to the Greens than to the AfD. In a rather stunning admission, Kramp-Karrenbauer herself confessed to having made the mistake of overeagerly trying to appease the part of the electorate embracing “traditional conservative” positions. A member of the party's leadership said to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: “The unity of the party does come with a price, and on election day we had to pay it.”

Since her ascent to the top of the party in January, Kramp-Karrenbauer was widely seen to be Merkel's heir apparent as chancellor. She is now being questioned again by a party that is increasingly doubtful that it will be able to hold on to power once Merkel leaves office.

Their best shot would likely be through a partnership with the Greens. Due to the Greens' newfound strength, the Christian Democrats would have to accommodate their calls for stricter environmental policies. Although far from being climate-change deniers, the CDU has been slow to catch up to the new realities, both at the ballot box and in the atmosphere.

Robert Normen is a political correspondent based in Berlin.

PICTURE ALLIANCE/AP PHOTO

The next war

Washington's hawks seem to be doing all they can to provoke Iran into a conflict



Marching into another war? Members of the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, an Iranian opposition group, marched in Washington D.C. on June 21, advocating for regime change in Tehran. National Security Advisor John Bolton and President Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, have voiced support for the controversial group.

BY ANDREAS ZUMACH

During the critical final phase of the negotiations over the nuclear deal with Iran in March 2015, John Bolton published an opinion piece in *The New York Times* titled "To Stop Iran's Bomb, Bomb Iran."

When President Donald Trump named Bolton his new national security advisor in March 2018, the next day's *The New York Times* editorial column included the following passage:

"The good thing about John Bolton ... is that he says what he thinks. The bad thing is what he thinks. There are few people more likely than Mr. Bolton is to lead the country into war."

Is this bleak fear now becoming a reality?

At the very least, the danger of war between the US and Iran – with the potential participation of Saudi Arabia and Israel – is greater than at any time since 1979, when the Islamic revolution deposed the pro-American shah and the revolutionary students occupied the US embassy in Tehran for over a year. The attacks on six oil tankers in the Persian Gulf since mid-April – the exact circumstances and perpetrators of which are still unclear – as well as the mid-June

downing of a US drone flying extremely near or, in fact, in Iranian air space provide a preview of how such a war might begin.

Since the Trump administration's unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal in May last year, it has been waging an economic war with increasingly harsh sanctions against Tehran as well as illegal secondary sanctions to force foreign companies and third-country nationals to abandon trading with Iran. The effects on the Iranian population have been devastating.

Iran's comparatively moderate president, Hassan Rouhani, is facing ever-increasing pressure from two sides. While the younger generations welcome reform and hope that the nuclear deal will improve the country's economic situation, as well as their own outlook on life, the hardliners in Tehran have always been against the deal and now feel vindicated by the Trump administration's bad-faith withdrawal.

It is quite possible that Tehran could soon undergo regime change. However, the shift would not be towards a more democratic government with a greater appreciation of human rights, as Bolton and other anti-Iran ideologues in Washington are said to be angling for. –The result of

either the demise of Rouhani or, at the latest, the next presidential election in 2021 would rather be a victory for the hardliners in Tehran.

All signs point to further, seemingly unavoidable escalation, as the three European parties to the nuclear deal – France, the UK and Germany – have, besides offering up empty rhetoric, done nothing effective to enable Iran to continue selling oil or to maintain access to the international financial system. Fear of US sanctions has prevented the Europeans from even ensuring that Iran can purchase medicine and other humanitarian goods that are critical to survival.

The memory of the war of aggression carried out by the US and the UK in violation of international law is painfully fresh

Meanwhile, China, Russia and India have demonstrated how US sanctions can be circumvented. But this alone cannot suffice to keep the Iranian side in full compliance with the treaty. Iran's announcement that at the beginning of July it would resume enriching uranium beyond the level of purity required for energy production and beyond the 3.67-percent cap permitted by the treaty could be followed by further breaches of the agreement as a way of exerting pressure on the Europeans.

Berlin, London and Paris have made it expressly clear that such violations would make Tehran, not Washington, responsible for the collapse of the agreement. But would they join an alliance to carry out military strikes, an eventuality that President Trump has said is still "on the table"?

The memory of the war of aggression carried out by the US and the UK in violation of international law is painfully fresh. The Iraq war and its catastrophic humanitarian consequences have cost more than one million Iraqi lives. The war and the subsequent eight-year occupation of Iraq by the US created a fertile ground for the proliferation of the terrorist organization known as Islamic State (IS). A war with Iran would most likely have even more dev-

astating effects – for Iranians, for their neighbors across the entire Middle East and for the rest of the world.

How Russia and China would react in the case of a military escalation of the conflict between the US and Iran is hard to predict. The only certainty is that the two UN Security Council veto powers will reject any US resolution to request international legitimation for military action against Iran.

Russia and China have considerable interests in Iran. For Russia, Iran is an important sales market for industrial goods in the fields of energy production, civil aviation and railway transportation, for arms and for nuclear technology; Russia built the Bush-ehr nuclear power plant in southwest Iran. The two countries also have identical interests in keeping the world oil market open. Their cooperation in military and nuclear matters is proving to have strategic significance.

While military cooperation between Moscow and Tehran in the Syrian conflict has been limited, their interventions using aircraft and ground troops have ensured, at least for the time being, the political survival of Bashar al-Assad's regime. Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Russia has been the first country to be granted the right to use an Iranian air base – Noje, in

the western province of Hamadan – for strikes against IS in Syria.

A planned tripartite meeting between top Russian, US and Israeli security experts in Jerusalem at the end of June has nourished speculation that a potential deal might be in the works. It is said that Iran will terminate its military presence in Syria in return for the US and Israel recognizing the Assad regime. It looks to be a very tall order.

In recent years, Russia has provided Iran with a S-300 surface-to-air missile system. This will give Tehran additional defensive weapons as well as reconnaissance capabilities in the event of possible air strikes or missile attacks by the US. The delivery of offensive weaponry that Iran could use to attack US ships or military bases in the Gulf region appears for now to be off the table, as would be direct military intervention by Russia in a possible war between Iran and the US.

The same goes for China. Beijing is above all interested in reliable deliveries of oil and natural gas. Iran is also poised to become an important transit country for China's One Belt, One Road initiative. ■

Andreas Zumach is a Geneva-based journalist for the Berlin daily *taz*.

continued from page 1
Saving the bond

that the spirit of Alexander Hamilton is enjoying a resurgence in the United States. Hamilton, one of the US founding fathers, co-author of the constitution and the first secretary of the treasury, was a mercantilist and, like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, an opponent of "entangling alliances." According to Corn, America's elites feel that maintaining the liberal world order has reached the threshold of diminishing utility. "Americans are exhausted by the global leadership role," concurs *New York Times* columnist David Brooks. He quotes two studies; according to the first, 20 percent of those surveyed were traditional internationalists, while the second found only 9.5 percent. In Brooks' view, Donald Trump is the exponent of a fundamentally changed mood, attitude and foreign policy stance: No more constraints by rules and allies.

This analysis chimes with the view Sigmar Gabriel, German foreign minister from 2017–2018, articulated in his recent book *Zeitenwende in der Welt-politik*. "Regarding US policy," he argues, "we have been relying on something we thought would eternally endure. But the pendulum won't simply swing back.... We have to make Europe a global actor. This also calls for an enhanced capability to act militarily. In a world full of fiends and carnivores, a political vegetarian won't be taken seriously."

He has a point there, a sore point. As Alina Polyakova and Benjamin Haddad have underscored in *Foreign Affairs*, the current crisis in the trans-Atlantic relationship isn't merely the result of a White House hostile to Europe; it is first and foremost the consequence of the power asymmetry between the United

States and Europe. The EU is an economic titan, yet it lacks *Weltmachtfähigkeit* – the capacity to act decisively in the global arena. The rise of China is one reason why America is primarily looking to the Pacific, no longer to the Atlantic. Leadership fatigue is another. But it is Europe's weakness, indecision and internal discord that makes decoupling an option free of cost.

The realization that Europe is no longer America's priority, that the US defense umbrella has become leaky and Washington's trade policy vexatiously selfish has shocked the Europeans into a bout of self-inspection. With friends like these, who needs enemies, European Council President Donald Tusk said last fall. Trump "has made us realize that if you need a helping hand, you will find one at the end of

your arm." Meaning, Europe is more or less on its own – a feeling German Chancellor Angela Merkel had likewise given vent to in a Bavarian beer tent.

The question is what Europe, wracked by Brexit, Franco-German incompatibilities, East European orneriness and populist afflictions everywhere, can do to manage the transition from a playground of other powers to a self-confident and self-reliant global actor. It will have to deepen its financial and social union, lest increasing inequality amongst member countries lead to further, perhaps fatal disruption. Carving out a greater role for the euro must secure Europe's financial sovereignty. Moreover, the Brussels community must enhance the dynamism and the innovatory power of its economies, if it does not want to be crushed between the US

and China. Rising and multiplying security challenges necessitate building up the EU's military muscle by making planning and procurement more European, more connected and more capable. And in foreign policy, the EU must learn to speak with one voice if it wants to have any impact at all on international relations.

None of this will be easy; all of it will take time. But first steps have been taken. More is bound to follow, once the EU's new leadership has settled in.

Norbert Röttgen (CDU), the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Bundestag, shares this assessment. "The repercussions of Trump's tenure will outlast his term of office, and the United States will be a different country for it," he writes. "To save the trans-Atlantic alliance, both sides must make a

significant effort. The United States needs to understand that to blame and threaten allies while withdrawing from multilateral agreements provides no basis for cooperation and trust. Europe, for its part, needs to develop a common foreign and security policy, and that will, at the very least, require real investments in its defense capabilities. If both sides do their part, the relationship could emerge from the current crisis more balanced and therefore stronger."

It will be the task of American and European statecraft in the next few years to build a new relationship in a rapidly changing world order. We must all hope our leaders, our political elites and our voters are up to the task. ■

Theo Sommer is executive editor of *The German Times*.

POSTER BOYS

A tale of three mayors

ROSTOCK

The future mayor of Rostock is Danish. In the city's mid-June elections, Claus Ruhe Madsen captured 57 percent of the vote. It's been 20 years since Madsen, fresh out of university, came to Germany to get away for a while and experience something new. But he stayed, worked as a furniture salesman in the Ruhr Valley, moved to Rostock where he soon opened his own furniture store – called *Möbel Wikinger*, or Viking Furniture – which he then expanded into a chain before ultimately becoming director of the local chamber of commerce. The 47-year-old has no political party affiliation. Before he takes office, he has one last task to perform: disposing of all his election posters bearing the face of a classic big-city hipster. As he told the *FAZ*: "I can't look at those any more." Madsen will hold the distinction of being the first mayor of a major German city to lack a German passport.

GÖRLITZ

In Görlitz, deep in the east of Germany, the middle of June revealed something rather threatening that may loom in the state elections this fall: high vote totals for the right-wing populist AfD (Alternative for Germany). In the runoff election for mayor of Görlitz, the AfD's Sebastian Wippel won 44.8 percent of the vote. Octavian Ursu of the CDU, who came to Germany from Romania at age 10, was the victor with 55.2 percent, preventing Wippel from making history as the first AfD mayor of a German city. The Christian Democrat's victory relied on support from the SPD, the Greens and even The Left.

BRUNSMARK

If the UK leaves the EU, it will have immediate consequences for Iain McNab. He'll have to find a new job. The Scot is in his 11th year as mayor of the Brunsmark, a town of 170 residents in the state of Schleswig-Holstein. This winter he was informed that he would have to step down if the Brexiteers succeed in isolating the UK from continental Europe. Citizens of *Drittländer*, or third-country nationals, may not occupy a mayoralty in Germany. But McNab seldom follows the news about Brexit. "It's just too much to bear," he says. Needless to say, the 69-year-old opposes Brexit, which would have another particularly irritating effect on McNab: when he visits his family in Scotland as he does every summer, he'll have to stand in a different line at the Scottish border: the longer one.

Targeting tolerance

A local politician near Frankfurt was shot in the head at his home. A right-wing extremist has confessed to the killing. Is far-right terrorism on the rise in Germany?



BY RONEN STEINKE

It was after midnight, but Walter Lübcke, 65, was still sitting on the terrace of his house in Wolfhagen-Istha, a small town near Frankfurt. The local politician, a member of Chancellor Angela Merkel's CDU, lit a cigarette. He could probably still hear the music from the party tent at a nearby carnival when the bullet hit – fired at short range, from a 9mm pistol, into the side of his head.

It was a political murder committed by a far-right radical, it now seems. The killing has shocked the entire country. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has commented on the case, as has Merkel. It was an "attack on us all," one with completely new characteristics, said Interior Minister Horst Seehofer.

On that night of June 1, a bout of violence erupted that had been building noticeably for years in much of the country, the investigation suggests. In 2015, as Germany was taking in 10,000 Middle Eastern refugees each day, sometimes more, and criticism of the policy was growing steadily, Lübcke took a clear stance.

A town meeting was called to discuss plans for a new asylum shelter in the area. Lübcke regarded the acceptance and sheltering of people in need as a necessity, a Christian duty. Supporters of the anti-migrant Pegida movement, who were also in the room, had a different opinion. Lübcke took to the stage to address them: "Anyone who does not share these values is free to leave this country at any time."

Ever since that Oct. 14, 2015, the statement can be found online. Pegida supporters immediately uploaded a video of it on YouTube, creating a basin to collect all the hate and incitement against Lübcke. If, perhaps, this remark was the reason for his killing, what does that mean for Germany?

For security authorities, the crime was their worst fear come true. The threat

posed by violent, extremist right-wing offenders and terrorists has been growing for years. The number of potential violent offenders keeps rising. Police and surveillance authorities are beefing up their own efforts; but apparently the threat is growing too fast for them to keep up.

DNA analysis at the scene led investigators to a man who's now the chief suspect. The key bit of evidence was a single flake of skin on Walter Lübcke's checkered shirt. Computers delivered a definitive ID: a man named Stephan E., born in 1973.

At about two in the morning on June 15, a police SWAT team arrested Stephan E. at his home, not far from Walter Lübcke's house.

Investigators are still uncovering the full scope of the crime. The suspect confessed, leading to the discovery of the murder weapon and a cache of other firearms, including an Uzi submachine gun. On July 2, however, he recanted his confession. But many questions remain. Why did Stephan E. choose Lübcke as his victim? Besides a political motivation, could personal reasons have also played a role? Why would a right-wing extremist, whose most recent offense was back in 2010, allegedly kill someone now?

The case has many parallels to an October 2015 knife attack on Henriette Reker, then a mayoral candidate in Cologne, who was stabbed by a right-wing extremist named Frank S. Like Lübcke, Reker had authority at the municipal level for accommodating refugees.

According to police records, the extremism of Reker's assailant, who was sentenced to 14 years in prison for the attack, had been dormant for nearly two decades before he drew his knife. It's believed the refugee influx in 2015 reactivated his xenophobia. Unlike Lübcke, Reker survived the attack on her life. She is now the mayor of Cologne.

Henriette Reker and Walter Lübcke share another trait, one that is now raising fears among other local politicians. Lübcke headed a municipal authority and was known to be easily accessible – a man of the people. Unlike many local and federal politicians, such as state interior ministers and many members of the federal government, these local leaders do not have constant police protection. They are easy targets.

Many in Lübcke's region of North Hesse knew where and how he lived. His number was in the telephone book. He was by all accounts a down-to-earth person with no need for self-promotion. Lübcke had two sons and a one-year-old grandson. Deeply rooted in his home region, Lübcke knew a thing or two about agriculture, rural life and enabling coexistence among people of different ages, views and ethnicities.

One core question still to be answered is whether the suspect acted alone or with the help of a far-right network. A good deal is already known about Stephan E. He was born in Wiesbaden but has lived for many years in Kassel, which is the known hotbed of the region's far-right scene. Kassel was also one of the places where a cell of killers called the National Socialist Underground (NSU) struck during their years of unsolved attacks across Germany, killing nine foreigners and a policewoman before being discovered in 2011.

The NSU relied on a broad array of supporters in Kassel. Stephan E. was one of those identified during an official probe of the neo-Nazi network in Kassel following the NSU killings. He was cited as an example of a "right-wing extremist ready to commit violence" – although not as a confidante or supporter of the NSU members Uwe Mundlos, Uwe Böhnhardt and Beate Zschäpe.

Earlier on, Stephan E. had been an active member of the extreme-right NPD party and, according to security sources, the Autonomous Nationalists – a neo-Nazi group that disguises itself by wearing clothing associated with leftist anarchists. He is believed to have joined multiple

far-right demonstrations in Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia. In 2009, he allegedly took part in an attack on labor activists in Dortmund, but his record of court convictions is much longer, ranging from aggravated assault and disturbance of the peace to firearms violations. For the attempted bombing of an asylum shelter in the Hessian town of Hohenstein in 1993, he was sentenced to six years of juvenile detention.

Did the authorities lose sight of him in recent years, perhaps failing to detect any of his revived far-right activities? Stephan E. had become quieter over time, having married and fathered two children. He was no longer officially classified as a potentially violent far-right threat and was no longer being monitored, which has led the head of Germany's domestic intelligence agency, Thomas Haldenwang, to draw a remarkable parallel: Perhaps the phenomenon of "sleepers," a concept more often associated with Islamist terror cells, now also exists within the extremist right.

However, investigators analyzing Stephan E.'s mobile phone have revealed numerous inflammatory comments on social networks, especially YouTube. In 2018, using the alias "Game Over," he allegedly posted: "Either this government resigns soon or people will die," as well as "Stop all the talking. There are a thousand reasons for action and only for doing 'nothing': cowardice."

Investigators are now also looking at evidence of additional culprits. A neighbor of Lübcke's said he noticed two cars "driving aggressively" through the town on the night of the killing. The witness, a former soldier, claimed to have heard a shot fired 20 minutes earlier.

The witness said he had the impression that the two drivers had taken a wrong turn. He said one of the cars was a VW Caddy – a model Stephan E. owned – but could not identify the other. No one knows how close Stephan E. was to extreme right-wing groups. But this is now the chief question investigators are looking into.

Ronen Steinke is an editor at *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

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Germany, a country of anti-Semites and xenophobes? Last October, 250,000 Berliners demonstrated against racism and for a tolerant and humane Germany. Expressions of intolerance and hate are not “commonplace” in today’s Federal Republic.

BY PETER H. KOEPF

Germany has a problem, and that problem goes by the name of Alternative for Germany (AfD), “the most popular party” in certain parts of eastern Germany. No one would question that. Paul Hockenos, in his *New York Times* op-ed from April 15, has this much right. Nineteen months ago, the far-right party won 12.7 percent of the votes cast in the Bundestag elections, garnering 91 seats in parliament. This fall, it could top the ballots of one-third of all voters in Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia, three districts of the former GDR.

It’s irrefutable that the AfD is a racist, nationalist political party, with members that are avowed homophobes, xenophobes and even anti-Semites. But the AfD also counts friends of Israel among their members, as well as Jews and Muslims, and gays and lesbians.

While Hockenos is not wrong in writing that “people wearing Jewish headgear are harassed on the street” in Germany, his statement that “expanded expressions of intolerance and hate” by AfD party members in the Bundestag have become “commonplace” cannot go uncontested. And it’s also off the mark to claim that “the AfD is riding a shocking rise of German anti-Semitism and xenophobia.”

But are anti-Semitism and xenophobia truly on the rise? Has Germany really “forgotten the lessons of the Nazis,” as the title of *The New York Times* piece asks?

Anti-Semitism and xenophobia were present in Germany 10 years ago as well, and 20 years ago, and 40 years ago. In 1981, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt commissioned the Nowak and Sörgel Social Science Institute (SINUS) to conduct a study that ultimately showed that around 13 percent of West German adults had “an ideologically closed, far-right frame of mind, the main supports of which are a National Socialist view of history, hatred of foreigners, democracy, and pluralism and an exaggerated devotion to das Volk, fatherland and family.” The study revealed a frame of thinking that included a cult of leadership and anti-Semitism, as well as mistrust of the media – as we see again today, and not only in Germany. It also showed that more than one-third (37 percent) of Germans were “disposed to authoritarian-

ism,” but that this mindset did not lead to action.

It is not the case that anti-Semitism and xenophobia have risen in Germany. First of all, the far right’s hatred for refugees has a distinct target: Muslims. In 2014 already, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in Dresden and elsewhere to protest the influx of migrants. At that time, there was no serious political party that dared admitting hostility toward foreigners.

Back then, the spokespeople for the AfD, and those of the party’s more radical faction, embraced this theme, despite resistance from the party’s less extremist leadership, who were focusing more on the EU and the euro crisis. As a result, right-wing radicals and extremists – as well as the more authoritarian slice of the middle class – rallied behind the AfD, and the far-right xenophobes gained the upper hand within the party. The far right now controls the AfD, which has absorbed most members and supporters of the NPD, the relatively insignificant former bastion of Germany’s right wing.

Fear of outsiders generally rears its head wherever a large number of foreigners settle upon “native soil.” This has been and still is the case not only in Germany, the final destination for one million refugees in 2015, most of whom were fleeing war and terror and Islamism in Syria. Germany originally welcomed these refugees and displaced persons with open arms. Hundreds of thousands helped – and are still helping – the newcomers learn the language and cope with the hardships of everyday life in a foreign country. Xenophobia became apparent later when the refugees were to be resettled in

various areas across the country, especially in places where there had so far hardly been any foreigners – like eastern Germany.

In this respect, the results of the recently published Leipzig authoritarianism study are particularly interesting. Last year, researchers surveyed 2,416 people in Germany (1,918 in the former West Germany and 498 in the former East) as to whether they agreed with certain stereotypes about Jews and whether the country should halt the immigration of Muslims. The result was that almost one in four Germans were against accepting more foreigners, but the figure was significantly higher in the East. The study also found that anti-Semitism is decreasing, but only in the West, not in the East.

Nonetheless, the Berlin daily newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* recently ran an article titled “Violence against Jews sharply on the rise.” The source? It emerged from the federal government’s response to an enquiry by the Left Party that in 2018, 1,646 crimes had been committed against Jews – a nearly 10-percent increase from the previous year. And the number of violent acts had risen by more than 60 percent, from 37 to 62 offenses, leading to 43 injuries and no fatalities. Of the 857 suspects, 19 had been arrested but none was ever detained.

There are those who chalk up this growing problem to the immigration of Muslims. Charlotte Knobloch, former president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, disagrees. In an interview with *Spiegel Online*, she called it “an extremely simplistic view. Those who are blaming the refugees exclusively for anti-Semitism are making it too easy on themselves.”

It goes without saying that neither propaganda crimes nor graffiti at cemeteries nor physical or verbal abuse can be tolerated, not to mention the assault of people wearing kippas. And these offenses are indeed not tolerated in Germany, where violence against Jews is covered with a very high level of attentiveness and scrutiny by the media.

Expressions of intolerance and hate are thus not “commonplace” in 2019 Germany. In fact, the objection to offensive language and those who express intolerance, hatred and anti-Semitism, especially in social media, is actually increasing.

Germany did not eradicate “deep-seated prejudices toward outsiders,” and it “practiced widespread discrimination against immigrants,” writes Hockenos. That sounds as if the answer to the article’s title question – “Has Germany forgotten the lessons of the Nazis?” – is a resounding “yes.” And it sounds as if Germany is again resorting to a *Sonderweg*, or special path. But the opposite actually appears to be the case.

A study by ComRes for CNN titled “Anti-Semitism in Europe Poll 2018” (<https://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CNN-Germany-Tables.pdf>) found that Germany has fared comparatively well in reducing xenophobia, anti-Semitism and hatred of minorities: While 10 percent of Europeans admitted they had unfavorable views of Jews, the figure is 7 percent in Germany, although the number jumps to 21.5 percent when only German Muslims are counted.

German answers to other questions also produced results that were more positive than the Euro-

pean average: Fewer Germans believe that Jews have too much influence in business and finance (25 percent in all Europe vs. 18 percent in Germany), in conflicts and wars across the world (25 percent vs. 22 percent), in the media (25 percent vs. 14 percent) and in politics (20 percent vs. 16 percent). While 28 percent of all Europeans said anti-Semitism in their countries was mostly a response to the actions of the state of Israel, the figure is 25 percent in Germany. And when questioned, 18 percent of Europeans said anti-Semitism in their country was a response to the everyday behavior of Jewish people; the number was only 15 percent in Germany. Nevertheless, 55 percent of Germans believe that anti-Semitism is a growing problem in their country, while less than 13 percent disagree.

These figures coupled with Germany’s low levels of disapproval of minorities such as LGBT+, immigrants, Muslims and Roma lead to one conclusion: Germans are more tolerant than the average European.

While providing no sources, Hockenos maintains that “40 percent of Germans say it’s right to blame Jews for Israel’s policies in the Middle East.” Also unattributed is his claim that, in the aftermath of the refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016, “many Germans – including mainstream, middle-class citizens – embraced the far right’s premises.” While it’s correct that surveys show that more and more Germans “desire an authoritarian leader and distrust liberal democracy,” this is also true for citizens of other European countries as well as the United States.

Germany has not forgotten the lessons of the Nazis

The intolerance and hate shown by AfD representatives in the Bundestag is by no means commonplace in Germany

The opinion piece in *The New York Times* also claimed that Germany “overlooked other aspects of the Nazis’ genocidal racism,” such as the persecution of Slavs, Roma and homosexuals. Hockenos writes that Germany has indulged a “selective moral reckoning.” The numbers cited above refute one part of this statement. And even if the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin outshines all others, there is a nearby monument to homosexuals persecuted by the Nazis as well as one each for the Sinti and Roma. Berlin also commemorates George Elser, a Communist and would-be assassin of Hitler, as well as the 96 Reichstag representatives killed by the Nazis: Communists, Social Democrats, liberals of all stripes and members of the Catholic Center Party.

Sure, the former communist East Germany may be called “a hotbed of xenophobia and the far right.” But those choosing to use these words must provide reasons for doing so. And it doesn’t suffice to give a cursory list of those reasons, which stand out even more in the US, such as the “disorienting effects of globalization and the resentment stemming from the ever-wider discrepancy between the haves and the have-nots.”

But above all, Hockenos’ reference to “a new tolerance for racist ideas and violent hooliganism” is most misleading. In October 2018, Berlin saw 250,000 people demonstrate against racism and for a tolerant and humane Germany. The mighty yet nonviolent march ended where Barack Obama had given his speech in 2007, the Großer Stern, and when the first marchers arrived, the last were just departing Alexanderplatz where the demonstration had begun. The memory of Germany between 1933 and 1945 marched right along with the protesters. The Holocaust has become an inseparable and firmly anchored element in the historical consciousness of the vast majority of Germans. “Has Germany Forgotten the Lessons of the Nazis?” read the heading in *The New York Times*. Not at all.

Peter H. Koepf is editor in chief of *The German Times* as well as a co-author of the book by Franziska Schreiber titled *Inside AfD. Der Bericht einer Aussteigerin* (Inside the AfD. The report of an ex-member), Berlin, 2018.

PICTURE ALLIANCE / IMAGEBROKER



Germany is still a polity on alert. The Holocaust Memorial in Berlin is a reminder of how quickly democracies can fail and societies can descend into hatred and violence.

BY FRANK BIESS

In May, the Federal Republic turned 70, making it by far the longest-lasting political formation in the history of modern Germany. It will soon have outlived the German Empire (1871–1918), the interwar Weimar Republic (1918–1933) and the Third Reich (1933–1945) combined.

The Federal Republic is a remarkable democratic success story and the only such story in German history. Built on the ashes of the Nazi dictatorship, it has become a stable, prosperous and pluralistic democracy. With the collapse of Communism and German Reunification in 1990, the West German state absorbed the territory of the former German Democratic Republic in the East.

Post-unification fears among Germany's neighbors of an unpredictable and dangerous enlarged country at the center of Europe have proven unfounded. Instead, the country that perpetrated the worst genocide in human history – the murder of European Jews in World War II – now ranks among the “best” countries in the world, according to the annual study by the *U.S. News & World Report*.

Amidst the celebration, it is important to remember that it could have turned out differently. In fact, postwar Germans always feared that democracy might fail again. Surprisingly, the Federal Republic has owed its success in no small part to an unpleasant emotion: fear. While liberal philosophers from Montesquieu to Martha Nussbaum have associated fear with tyrannical forms of government, describing it as antithetical to democratic societies, fear has also played a positive and productive role in creating and

preserving democracy in postwar Germany.

The main source of trepidation for postwar Germans was the fear of repeating the Nazi past, a specter that retained a powerful presence over the Federal Republic, as any visitor to the many memorials in Berlin can attest. Yet the centrality of commemorative culture not only helped Germans make sense of their past; it also defined their anticipation of possible futures.

In the immediate postwar period, Germans perceived themselves as victims of war and fascism, and they feared being victimized again in a nuclear war at the forefront of the Cold War. In the 1960s, Germans began to grapple with their role as perpetrators, such as during the trial of former concentration camp guards at Auschwitz (1963–65). A more critical memory of the Nazi past mobilized fear of a possible authoritarian transformation of the Federal Republic. It sensitized West Germans to powerful authoritarian tendencies within their society that had remained hidden, just like former Nazi perpetrators, beneath the surface of democracy.

Such fears for the demise of democracy also influenced the West German student movement,

the “68ers.” This movement arose in response to new “emergency laws” that made it possible to rescind democratic rights during a national emergency. Student activists feared that this would lead to a new 1933, the year Hitler came to power. These protests ensured that the final draft of the laws passed in May 1968 by the first grand coalition of Christian and Social Democrats had important democratic safeguards built into them.

The feared “emergency” has never been invoked. Still, fears of an authoritarian turn persisted for quite some time. West Germany's most prominent intellectual, the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, said in 1994 that he had not fully trusted the democratization of the Federal Republic until the 1980s.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to dismiss such fears as irrational or hysterical. But their articulation provided a powerful safeguard against authoritarian temptations. The ever-looming Nazi past served as a powerful reminder of how quickly democracies can fail. West Germany remained a polity on alert.

Fear not only helped avert a new authoritarianism, it also served as an emotional engine for political

activism. Fears drove the West German environmental and peace movements of the 1970s and 1980s: fear of radioactive poisoning, fear of a nuclear accident, fear of nuclear war.

These movements had a powerful impact on West German political culture. To this day, Germany houses one of the strongest environmental movements in the world. The peace movement of the early 1980s was the largest protest movement in the history of the Federal Republic, with mass demonstrations comprising up to 500,000 people. A newly explored memory of the Holocaust – resulting in the very word becoming part of the West's cultural vocabulary – informed apocalyptic scenarios of a “nuclear Holocaust.” German pacifism has also endowed the Federal Republic with a deep aversion to military endeavors.

Center-right and left-wing governments refused to participate in the Iraq wars in 1991 and 2003. Conservative critics within Germany and abroad condemned this attitude as indicative of a “German Angst” – an unhealthy and excessive fear unique to the Federal Republic, and another term that has become part of the Western lexicon. Yet in the aftermath of

Chernobyl and Fukushima, and in light of the disastrous consequences of the Iraq war, with up to 288,000 violent deaths so far (according to the database iraqbodycount.org), these fears no longer appear so pathological. In retrospect, they seem quite perceptive and indeed appropriate.

Yet, not all fears are good, of course. In particular, there is a difference between fears of an abstract future scenario – an authoritarian transformation, nuclear war, climate change – and fears afflicting specific individuals or groups. The Federal Republic has featured those fears too: fears of revenge by Holocaust survivors and former slave laborers, fears of subversive Communists, fears of terrorist sympathizers in the 1970s, fears of guest workers, Muslims, and, most recently, refugees.

In fact, a right-wing populist party – Alternative for Germany (AfD) – is currently mobilizing fears of Muslims and foreigners with barely disguised racist electoral campaigns that earned the party 12.7 percent of the national vote in 2017. The AfD is the German version of a global right that specializes in the racist othering of specific groups. The presidency of Donald Trump is based

on the mobilization of such fears as well. Such personalized fears always bear the risk of being transformed into hatred and eventually into violence.

The global rise of authoritarianism demonstrates that we can no longer take for granted the natural progression of liberal democracy. At a moment when democracy in the US and elsewhere faces unprecedented challenges, we would do well to remember postwar Germans' anticipation of a catastrophic future. Their sense of coming uncertainty as well as their awareness of the fragility of democracy speak again to our present predicament.

Climate activist Greta Thunberg invoked this progressive possibility of fear when she demanded that world leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos “panic” and “feel the fear that I feel.” Fears for the demise of democracy are an essential and important element of democratic societies.

Today, it is no longer “fear itself” that we have most to fear, as US President Franklin D. Roosevelt famously declared in his first inaugural address. Instead, we should carefully consider what exactly we are afraid of, as these fears could indeed prevent the realization of the future that they imagine. ■

Frank Biess is a history professor at the University of California San Diego. His book *Republik der Angst. Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Republic of Fear. An alternative history of the Federal Republic) was published by Rowohlt Berlin in February 2019. An English version is due to appear in 2020.

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BY ULRICH MENZEL

On Feb. 17, 1941, Henry Luce published his essay, “The American Century,” in *Life Magazine*. He meant, of course, the 20th century, during which the US established the basis for its international leadership in all areas, and called on the government to end its isolationism, assume leadership and get involved in the war to defeat fascism. Now, 80 years later, the US is drifting into a new isolationism.

On Oct. 18, 2017, Xi Jinping gave a keynote speech at the 19th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in which he announced that 2049, the 100th birthday of the People’s Republic, would be the year in which China would assume global leadership. The country would then occupy the position that it had maintained as the Middle Kingdom over many centuries and only lost in the mid-19th century, when it was opened up to trade by means of “unequal treaties” and divided into spheres of interest.

According to Xi, the “Chinese century” will begin in 30 years, once his country’s peaceful rise is complete, or perhaps even earlier, as many of the prognoses involving China have become reality ahead of time. Leadership requires an ascent phase and hegemonic transition, which can take place gradually and cooperatively, or abruptly and violently in an all-or-nothing conflict.

When comparing the way the US and China rose, major differences in their originating conditions come to the fore, as do striking parallels in the courses of their respective ascents.

The rise of the US occurred between its war of liberation from its colonizing power, the British Empire, and the Spanish-American War (1898), a contest for the remnants of the Spanish Empire. At that time, the US had long since overtaken its “mother country” economically, as the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago had demonstrated. The war with Spain also showed that the US was becoming a military power.

China’s rise began at the end of the 1920s and was interrupted only by the Japanese occupation and its civil war, which also had anti-colonial aspects. It gained momentum once the country began opening up in 1978 during the Deng Xiaoping era, and with the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2015, it was regarded as complete.

If one takes the view that the US replaced the UK as the world’s leading power, and that China will replace the US, the first parallels become clear. The UK’s actual challenger was Germany, while America’s actual challenger was the Soviet Union. Both failed; Germany in two world wars, the Soviet Union in the Cold War. The US was the country that came off best in those scenarios, and now it’s China, as their respective isolationism enabled each to evade the costs of an all-out hegemonic fight.

The first debate on British decline began in the 1890s, as German industry was starting to overtake that of the British Empire. The first debate on American decline began in the 1970s, when the US found itself exposed to cut-throat competition from Japan. The hegemonic transition to the US took place during the two World Wars, although the War Revenue Act of 1917 and the Lend-Lease Act of 1941 provided the UK with funds for wars that the country could no longer raise on its own. China is currently helping finance US military spending through its purchase of US government bonds.

What these histories also have in common is that the rise of each country was accompanied by policies of protectionism, isolationism and neutrality. In the 19th century, the US kept out of European conflicts and pursued a protectionist policy, arguing that it had to separate itself from its “mother country” through political as well as economic independence.

The Chinese analog to Hamilton’s Report on Manufactures



Flags of their fathers: Preparations for a military parade celebrating the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army in 2017

Chimera

The hegemonic transition from the UK to the US was peaceful and promised normative continuity. The hegemonic transition to China will be conflictual and accompanied by a shift in the normative paradigm

(1791) – a plea for US self-sufficiency through increased manufacturing – was Mao’s slogan of being “independent and trusting in our own strength.” It reduced China’s economic relations with the West to a minimum and, with its break with the Soviet Union in 1960, the country turned against its former close socialist ally.

China’s Three Worlds Theory (1974) formulated its version of the Monroe Doctrine, one directed against the two prevailing superpowers that also called for a position of leadership for developing countries. The frequent debates between isolationists and internationalists that have taken place in the US since President George Washington’s farewell address have been echoed in China by a debate between the “yellow” (oriented towards the land) and “blue” (oriented towards the sea) factions, which has a long tradition in China.

Its neutrality was also the reason why the US was able to dispense with an expensive military apparatus. Its army consisted mainly of the US Cavalry, whose main task was to secure the expansion of the frontier to the west. The Chinese People’s Liberation Army consisted mainly of an infantry that was large in number but trained only for guerrilla warfare. Its primary purpose was to keep the country’s own population in check, as it did during the Cultural Revolution and Beijing Spring.

So what were the differences? The southern US states, with their plantations, operated within the classic international division of raw materials from manufactured goods. China, although a semi-colony, operated within this division only in a rudimentary sense. The country’s size meant that it always had a natural domestic orientation unlike the one that still characterizes the US.

A second difference was and is factor endowment. Since its expansion westwards, the US has had plenty of fertile land but too few people to use it. The consequence was immigration and the mechanization of agriculture at an early stage.

China had plenty of people but not enough land for the size of its population. The consequence was intensive rice cultivation in paddies, which relied on manual labor to terrace and irrigate the fields and work them like small gardens.

Another consequence was the emigration of many Chinese to Southeast Asia, where they now constitute sizeable minorities.

In the US, the main focus was increasing the productivity of labor, a principle that, after the end of the land rush, was transferred to industry in the northeast in the form of Taylorism and Fordism – two systems aimed at increasing efficiency in manufacturing. In China, the focus was increasing the productivity of the land, and, as industrialization gained momentum, the labor-intensive industries.

The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 proved that US isolationism was

junks sailing among the Philippine and Indonesian islands and through the Straits of Malacca to India, where Chinese immigrants established their Chinatowns and transnational family businesses. These tended to concentrate on trade and finance, as the rest of the economy was often closed to them.

The era of advanced industrialization reveals more parallels. The breakthrough in the northeastern US occurred after the Civil War to protect high tariffs, but it was also a conflict between the free-trade interests of the southern states and the protectionism of the north, which wanted to shield its

The opening up of China was a welcome development in the US, which was led to believe in the myth of a limitless Chinese market

not entirely fundamental to the country’s character. Americans did want to keep out of European conflicts, but still felt that the Western Hemisphere should belong to the Americans alone. European powers were driven out of North America by means of purchases, war, agreements and contracts during the westward expansion, which was legitimized by Manifest Destiny and the myth of the frontier; it was also felt that the Europeans should exit South America.

Chinese isolationism was pursued just as selectively. One need only think of the expeditions of Admiral Zheng He’s fleet in the South China Sea and the exploration of the Indian Ocean in the early years of the Ming dynasty. The People’s Republic also asserted Qing dynasty conquests in the west and north (Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Tibet) and claimed the entire South China Sea as part of the province of Guangdong and Taiwan as Chinese territory.

The “sugar islands,” those “jewels” of Europe’s colonial powers, were in the Caribbean. The Spanish fleet gathered there to transport silver from Mexico and Peru to Seville and to defend itself from pirates. The South China Sea was secure water for Chinese

era, with its emphasis on heavy industry, was protected by radical isolationism. The difference, however, was that it lacked a generation of capitalist Carnegies, Rockefellers and Fords and stuck to its long tradition of bureaucracy.

The country’s late opening has not changed much about the model of a bureaucratic developing state. Elements of the market economy are instrumentalized and foreign capital in the form of joint ventures is welcome, as it ensures a transfer of technology. Control remains with the Chinese partner, while ultimate control – not only in state-owned enterprises – remains with the party secretary. The opening up of China was a welcome development in the US, which was led to believe in the myth of a limitless Chinese market and the illusion of being able to play the Chinese off against the Soviet Union.

Another parallel is that the US initially tolerated China as a free-rider, just as Britain had tolerated the US as a free-rider by securing a liberal global economic system on its own. China exploited liberalism for its own export campaign while limiting access to its markets. Chinese tankers and container ships made use of the freedom of the seas that the US has guaranteed, while China itself made no contribution to global security.

At the height of the Chinese-Soviet conflict in 1968, China even received a signal that it was under the protection of the US nuclear umbrella. China’s military spending was only about 0.5 percent of its domestic product at the time.

Only during Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency did the US upgrade its navy and pursue the same imperialist policy as the great European powers had. Once its continental expansion reached the west coast of North America, the new frontier then extended to the Asian coast on the other side of the Pacific, with the seizure of Hawaii, Midway, Wake, Guam and other islands – a chain of stops spanning the “American Lake” between Asia and the New World.

The Europeans and Americans were involved in opening up China after 1842, especially through the British Concession in Shanghai. In 1853, Commodore Perry’s Black Ships alone secured the opening up of Japan. Spain sold the Philippines to the US in 1898 and the islands then had to be defended in a costly

guerrilla war legitimized as “White Man’s Burden.”

When the Europeans divided China up among themselves, US Secretary of State John Hay reacted with the Open Door Note in the expectation that the US, as the most competitive power, would prevail on the Chinese market. However, the “open door” proved no barrier to subsequent involvement in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion.

The second expansion was in the Caribbean, which was to be cleared of Europeans. Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands as well as Honduras and Nicaragua on the Isthmus were occupied, annexed or controlled. The real trophy after the intervention in Colombia, which led to the province of Panama being separated from the country, was the leasing of the Canal Zone by the US for 99 years, once the French and the British had been bought out and ousted. The Panama Canal became an intra-American waterway between the continents’ east and west coasts.

China is now playing neo-imperialist catch-up. After the take-off, four decades of 10-percent growth, it is no longer satisfied with just exports and foreign investments but is launching a geopolitical campaign that involves high levels of military spending, as was the case for the US in the past. Its campaign has included land-grabs in Africa, accessing the waters of the Nile and outsourcing industrial parks, as wages are rising, even in China.

China’s chief trajectory is, as always, towards the south. The South China Sea has become Chinese territorial water, while its islands have been transformed into airfields and new ports have been built in Kyaukpyu (Myanmar), Hambantota (Sri Lanka) and Gwadar (Pakistan). The Chinese are also building up the island of Male, which is under threat from rising sea levels, have established a first naval base in Djibouti and, as the final link in the chain, have wholly or partly purchased the ports of Piraeus and Venice.

Meanwhile, the Indian Ocean has become the “Chinese Lake.” China is building a fleet of aircraft carriers to enable it to secure sea routes through to the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. Their future land route will run through Pakistan, Central Asia, Iran and Turkey to Europe. The stationing of troops in these areas to protect Chinese investments has already been announced.

China is becoming more active as it realizes that its time as a free-rider is coming to an end and as President Donald Trump continues to destabilize the liberal world order and the US is no longer willing to ensure international security on its own. Yet, Chinese expansion is not accompanied by any missionary activity. There is no “Yellow Man’s Burden” compelling the Chinese to impose their idea of civilization on the wider world.

Just as China refuses to tolerate any interference in its internal affairs, it neither involves itself in the internal affairs of its partners in Asia and Africa nor insists on humanitarian conditions in its infrastructure projects. This makes it attractive to autocrats the world over, especially as it demonstrates that industrialization can also be carried out on authoritarian and bureaucratic terms.

The hegemonic transition from the British Empire to the US was peaceful and promised normative continuity. The hegemonic transition to China will be conflictual and accompanied by a shift in the normative paradigm. Yet a “peaceful rise” is but a chimera – the Chinese century promises to be more than a mere continuation of the American century.

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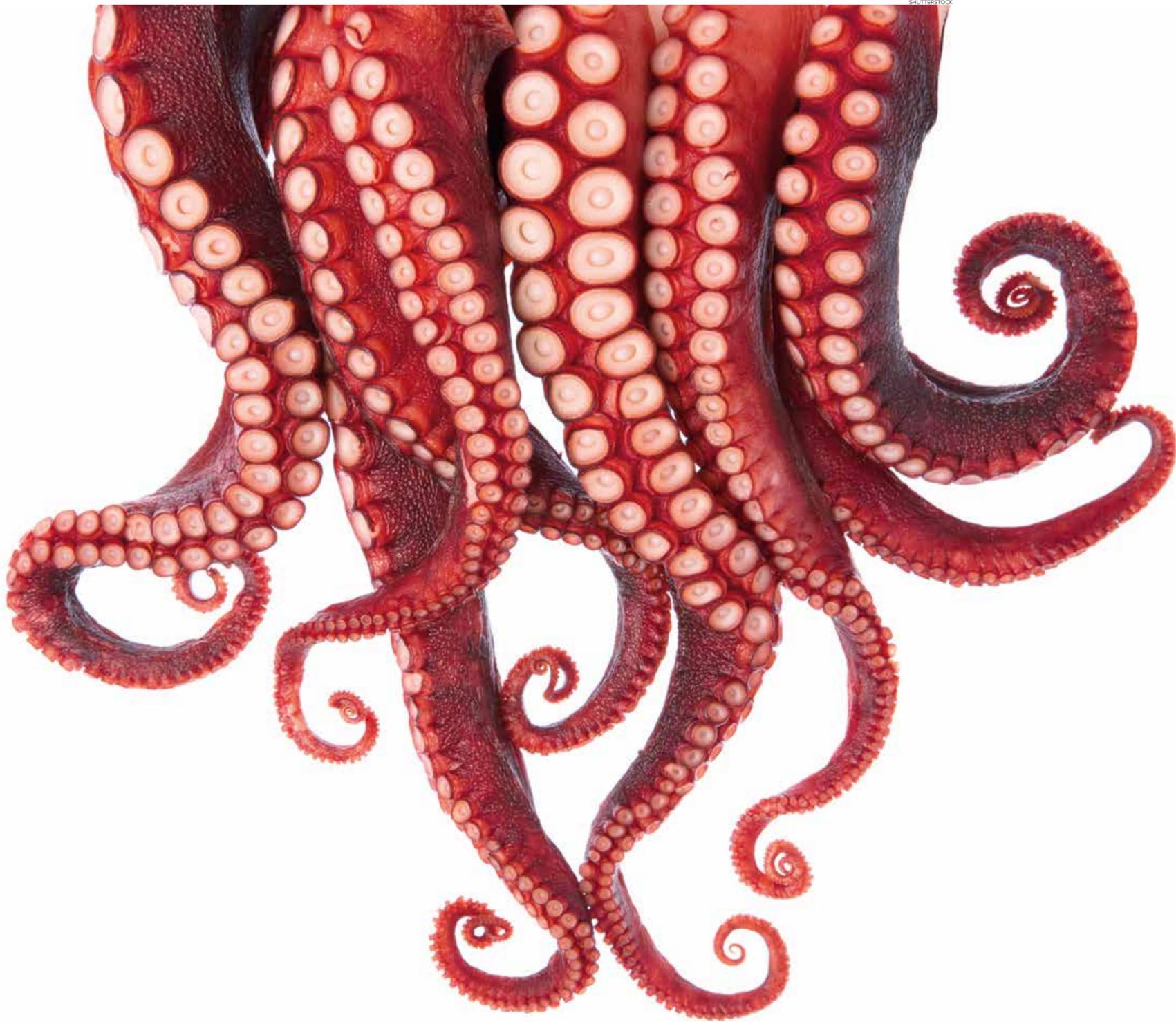
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These truths

The histrionic debate over nationalization and forcible expropriation in Germany distracts from a more urgent conversation

BY ALBRECHT VON LUCKE

In early May, Kevin Kühnert, who heads the left-wing SPD youth organization – the Jusos – sparked national and even international discussion. In an interview with the weekly *Die Zeit*, asked whether he favored the collectivization of the auto-maker BMW, he answered: “In a democratic way, yes.”

Is it possible that today, roughly 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, serious thought is being given to communism in Germany?

To be sure, Kühnert made it very easy for his opponents to launch their counterattack, especially thanks to his use of the word “collectivization,” a GDR-era term that carries a heavy load of historical baggage. Indeed, Kühnert’s statements prompted an almost automatic conservative backlash, including the popular go-to slogan “freedom, not socialism.” However, what was completely overlooked in the process was the fundamental question Kühnert had actually thrown into the ring, namely “How do we work and what do we produce?” – and “How can we maintain and/or recapture democratic control over work and production?”

Given the enormous imbalance between the power held by global corporations – for example, in the financial and digital areas – and the growing powerlessness of large parts of the population, it is urgent

that we ask these very questions. And there’s another question, too, one that recalls the 50-year-old dictum uttered by former SPD Chancellor Willy Brandt: “We want to dare more democracy.”

Throughout the entire tradition of the Social Democratic party, the concept of democratization has been applied to all areas of society, not least to the economy. This is what Kühnert was talking about – that is, the old issue of economic democracy, social participation and the relationship between private profits and the common good.

In the face of rising digitalization and globalization, this question has lost none of its currency; on the contrary, we just need to imagine the not-so-unlikely scenario in which one of the current internet giants on the already rigidly carved-up global market becomes a digital monopolist and thus master of all our data. The excessive power of such a data monopolist would be utterly incompatible with the idea of a free market economy, and thus with democracy as well.

This is why the EU is now – finally, and unfortunately much too late – starting to think about whether they might themselves need an international platform to be able to stand up to the US giants, rather than continuing to provide them with more and more of this century’s biggest currency: our data. Incidentally, the driving force behind this push has come from Margrethe Vestager,

the European Commissioner for Competition.

In a worst-case scenario, if it isn’t possible to restore free and fair competition, we might actually be forced to collectivize the data monopolists. Unfortunately, instead of at least considering this possibility, what unfolded in Germany was a fundamental debate on the country’s Basic Law, the constitution called the *Grundgesetz*, which has just celebrated its 70th anniversary. The debate

head of the pro-market Free Democratic party, Christian Lindner, called for the article to be deleted immediately, arguing that there’s no place for it in the free market economy: “It is a constitutional relic that – for good reason – has never been applied,” he argued.

But the fathers and (few) mothers of Germany’s Basic Law very consciously left the nation’s economic order open and did not define or even curtail the options at the state’s disposal.

In a worst-case scenario, if it isn’t possible to restore free and fair competition, we might actually be forced to collectivize the data monopolists

focused specifically on a hitherto ignored section in the constitution, namely Article 15, which contains precisely the radical option suggested by Kühnert.

Article 15 provides that “Land, natural resources and means of production may, for the purpose of nationalization, be transferred to public ownership or other forms of public enterprise by a law that determines the nature and extent of compensation.” The

One former federal constitutional judge, Dieter Grimm, responded to Lindner’s remarks with a very clear rebuttal in the daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that “a norm that has been contained in the Basic Law from the very beginning cannot be unconstitutional.”

Grimm’s argument makes clear the full extent of the historical amnesia suffered by those who want to recklessly change the existing Basic Law. The fact

that the state and society can be helplessly exposed to capitalistic powers was still very present in the minds of the fathers and mothers of the Basic Law; indeed, the 1930s global economic crisis had taken place less than 20 years prior. In contrast, Germany’s economic liberals and neo-liberals find the current model of capitalism so unquestionable that they will not consider anything other than the total protection of private property.

And yet, it’s hard to overlook the signs that we might be headed toward a very different future; and this is exactly what today’s politics should be prepared for. According to Grimm, the constitutional expert: “Who can say today that we might not actually be thankful for the possibility [of collectivization] one day?” Especially if our justifiably celebrated, “well-fortified democracy” actually had no other possibility for self-defense than to collectivize a capitalistic giant.

One thing is certain: the largest challenge facing us today and tomorrow will not come primarily in the realm of property, but instead in the use of the environment and resources – that is, in the realm of consumption. The current debate on expropriation in Germany is undermining the challenges we face by focusing primarily on today’s unfair distribution of wealth. In contrast, anyone who truly focuses on the future – that is, on the sustainability of our entire way of

life – will have to come up with far more radical changes.

As we have all noticed, not least after the increasing number of summer droughts, the ecological challenge is rapidly become the most pressing issue of our century. And this problem cannot be solved merely by adopting an ownership redistribution program. In this sense, all debates over property and expropriation represent only one part of a much larger discussion revolving around the issue of consumption and growth. Or, to put it in more fundamental terms, we’re talking about the question of democracy in all areas here, too: Who makes the decisions about “how we work and what we produce,” and, above all, about what and how much we consume?

These discussions will no doubt trigger major conflicts, including inter-generational debates. We don’t know exactly what these are going to look like. One thing is certain, however – we’ve already lost too much time. In turn, this means that future conflicts will be more content-oriented and harder to solve. But therein lies at least one opportunity: to awaken our somewhat dormant democracy.

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Engender equality

Women in Germany are still massively under-represented in positions of leadership in business, politics and culture, but they themselves contribute to this stagnation

BY INGE KLOEPFER

They do, in fact, exist – women in leadership positions in Germany. Janina Kugel and Lisa Davis, for example. And, since the beginning of this year, Birgit Bohles. The first two women are board members at Siemens and the third recently made it onto the board of directors at Deutsche Telekom. There are others, as well: Renata Jungo Brüngger and Britta Seeger, for example, are two management executives at Daimler AG responsible for legal issues and sales and distribution, respectively. Seeger was appointed to the executive board at the automaker two-and-a-half years ago and is now the third woman in the history of the 130-year-old, Stuttgart-based company to occupy a position on its highest governing body. And that says it all: women are pushing their way into traditionally male-dominated domains, but they remain exotic creatures there, embodying the eminent exceptions that prove the rule. And the rule in Germany is simple: men continue to have much greater opportunities to attain leadership positions thanks alone to their gender.

This applies not only to large corporations listed on the stock exchange. It applies equally to the startup sector and to the world of fine arts – in spite of its vast diversity – where a male name above all promises success. Of course, there are also some women in leading positions in these worlds. But they are few and far between, and can hardly refute the fact that it's typically gender rather than capability that determines an individual's career ascent.

Joana Mallwitz, for example, is a young conductor currently making her way up the ranks as General Music Director at Staatstheater Nürnberg. Still, her budding career is meager consolation to all the hopeful young female artists out there. After all, hardly any other field of work is more sexist than classical music.

For almost 14 years now, Germany has been governed by a woman. When Angela Merkel was sworn into office in the Bundestag in November 2005, she made history as the first woman to head up the Federal Republic. A whiff of fresh optimism then wafted over the country with regard to the future of women. Many women saw their chance as having arrived. Today, however, there is no longer any trace of that fresh air.

On the contrary, the number of women in politics is on the decline, even in the Bundestag. The share of female parliamentarians fell from 36.5 percent in the previous legislative period to 30.9 percent today. In late 2018, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of women gaining the right to vote in Germany, the chancellor lamented the low numbers of women in leadership positions in politics and business. She pointed out that Germany's current parliament had no more female members than even the national legislature of Sudan.

It is worth noting here that the chancellor never saw herself as a champion of equal opportunity for women, preferring instead to allow others to fight that battle. That is to say she behaved much like many of the other exotic females who've made it to the top. Indeed, most of that tribe of women prefer not to talk about the topic and seek to avoid it whenever possible. In no way do they want to be associated with the idea that their gender – not

their performance – had anything to do with them reaching their top spot.

There is another way to portray the malaise associated with women's opportunities for advancement in Germany. This approach does not draw on famous individual cases – those examples that are so impressive precisely because they are the exceptions to the rule. It instead focuses on sheer data. A 2019 study by the Swedish-German Albright Foundation compiled data on the topic of diversity with researchers there coming

June 30, 2022." In other words, many companies don't even want women in the first place.

This is the case even though the federal government passed a law in 2016 introducing a 30-percent quota for women on supervisory boards. Since then, the law has stated that seats vacated on supervisory boards must be filled with women until they reach a share of 30 percent.

The motivation behind this law reflects the above-mentioned spirit of optimism: the hope is that more women on supervisory boards will lead to more

different. Women receive less film funding and the industry shows a negligibly low percentage of female directors. And circumstances in the realm of classical music are even worse: there are hardly any women in leadership positions at the multitude of opera houses and concert halls that make up Germany's unique cultural landscape. Female orchestra members rarely assume leadership roles and contemporary female composers are hardly ever performed.

And why is that?

ent way than men's due to internalized gender-specific stereotypes.

There's no better place to observe this bias than in startup financing rounds, where it has been scientifically proven that the mostly male investors evaluate identical business plans differently – and prognosticate different chances of success – depending on whether the plans were submitted by a man or a woman. "A female name in and of itself will cost a female founder 40 percent of the potential financing amount," notes the

edge that – at least according to current German law – not only will they have no choice other than to remain permanently dependent on their life partner, but they are also setting out on a direct path to poverty in their old age.

Women cite all sorts of reasons as to why they have a preference for part-time work. These include a lack of reliable childcare, men's reservations with regard to women's capabilities and other preconceptions to which women simply have no desire to expose themselves in the first place. They also point to the often annoying and cut-throat tactics one sees in many organizations where employees stop at nothing to gain influence and power. Some women even cite the perceived loneliness felt by individuals in leadership positions. In other words, why should a woman even pursue a high-level career?

This attitude is one of the reasons why things never change for women with regard to their power and influence in the worlds of business, science and politics. It should be no surprise that when almost half of all women go to work only every other day, the number of women qualifying for higher positions in line with traditional notions of advancement shrinks to 50 percent. This fosters the male-held perception that there simply aren't enough women with leadership qualities at their disposal. "Lean in!" was the call to arms sent out to women across the globe in 2016 by Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg. It appears that few in Germany took notice.

Germany's most beloved employer, the software company SAP, recently devised and implemented an innovative plan to counter the phenomenon of part-time work. For some time now, every management position at SAP has been advertised as a part-time job. Women and men are invited to apply for the position without having to specify in advance whether they want to work full-time or part-time.

Two insights inform this approach: The first is the fact that physical presence is not the most important factor for success, but rather one's ability to prioritize and, most of all, to delegate. The second is that SAP is increasingly eliminating the stigma of part-time work, which has until recently been seen as a half-hearted commitment to the company and thus an obstacle to a successful career.

There is no mistaking that companies taking this approach justifiably hold the utilitarian hope of being able to meet women halfway with regard to their life plans while at the same time continuing to involve them in the company. Given the growing labor shortage – of skilled workers, in particular – no company can afford to forego women professionals.

To this day, however, gender continues to determine an individual's chances for advancement in Germany, more so than in most other post-industrial, knowledge-based economies. A man will almost always be considered more qualified for a leadership position at a business or cultural enterprise simply by virtue of being male.

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Setting the tone: Joana Mallwitz (top), Lisa Davis, Janina Kugel and Birgit Bohle (l. to r.)

to the following conclusion: "The increase in the number of women on the boards of Germany's 160 publicly traded companies was so small last year that it roughly corresponded to the increase in the number of men named Thomas in the same time period." Today, the share of women on the boards of listed companies in Germany is 8 percent, lower than in almost any other Western industrialized country. The previous year, that number had been 7.3 percent.

And there's more: roughly one-third of companies listed on the German Stock Exchange have explicitly issued a target of zero women on their boards. The line goes something like this: "For the period after June 30, 2017, the supervisory board once again sets the target level with regard to the percentage of women on the supervisory board and management board of Sixt SE at 0 percent with an implementation deadline of

women on management boards, which are at least formally filled by members of supervisory boards. Unfortunately, we are now forced to conclude that this attempt has not worked for women so far.

Furthermore, things don't look any better at Germany's uni-

German women resist making themselves fully available to the labor market over the entire course of their lives

versities, where only 23 percent of professors are women, even though there are now more and better educated female academics than male academics. In the realm of film, radio and television, the situation is not much

Germany has been debating this topic for years. Time and again, a number of widely accepted explanations are given as the cause, such as the glass ceiling, steadfast male alliances that have made it their mission to hold women back rather than foster their advancement,

and the still lacking infrastructure for childcare. These are accompanied by the theory of unconscious bias, which holds that society – including women themselves – rates women's achievements in a much differ-

well-known US neuroscientist Vivian Ming, who founded companies first as a man and then, after a sex change, as a woman. She experienced the phenomenon first-hand and later analyzed the bias using data from 100,000 male and female founders.

Interestingly, there is also a specifically German factor at play in this realm, namely the idea that women themselves are to blame for the abysmal state of affairs. According to a survey carried out by Eurostat, almost half of all women in Germany between the ages of 20 and 64 work part-time. In the rest of the EU, the figure is 30 percent.

Moreover, most women in Germany responded that they were satisfied with their part-time status and had no intention of changing it at any time before retirement. In other words, German women resist making themselves fully available to the labor market over the entire course of their lives. And they are doing so with full knowl-

Trading down

German companies are doing well in the US, but Trump's unorthodox trade policy is producing a "climate of instability"

BY NIKOLAUS PIPER

Economically, at least, things are just fine between the United States and Germany. Bilateral trade is flourishing. America is the biggest consumer of German goods worldwide, ahead of France and China. Exports across the Atlantic rose last year by 1.5 percent to €13.5 billion. In 2018, imports from the US into Germany grew even more rapidly, rising by 4 percent to €64.6 billion. The bilateral trade surplus with the US is still the largest of all of Germany's trading partners but at least it has declined, which, with a little good will, could be construed as a step towards more normalized relations.

German companies that invest in the US are reporting excellent financial results, thanks, among other factors, to Donald Trump's tax reforms. Last year, Washington reduced the tax rate on corporate profit from 35 to 21 percent, which has resulted in something of an economic upturn.

"The order books are full and some of our members are reporting record results," says Dietmar Rieg, President and CEO of the German-American Chamber of Commerce in New York. Yet, like most people dealing with international trade issues these days, he adds a big "but." "But there's a great uncertainty looming over everything." This is a consequence of Trump's unorthodox trade policy in Washington.

Entrepreneurs, traders and investors don't know what's still to come from Trump: tariffs? Or maybe even an open trade war with China? Their worst fears were confirmed in May, when the US president threatened to impose punitive tariffs on Mexico if the Mexican government failed to stop the flow of immigrants and refugees from Guatemala to the southern border of the US. And this is happening in a dispute with a country with which the US has just concluded a renewed free trade agreement called UMCA to replace the expiring NAFTA agreement.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Germany (AmCham Germany) is also reporting good business outcomes, but great uncertainty about the future. The Transatlantic Business Barometer, which the Chamber of Commerce published in April together with the Roland Berger management consultancy, makes this abundantly clear. It notes that the lack of reliability in US politics is weakening overall business outcomes. Just 8 percent of German companies in the US rate Trump's policies as positive, while 37 percent expect business conditions in the US to deteriorate over the next three to four years.

Conversely, the great majority of American investors regard business conditions in Germany as good or very good, although a quarter of those surveyed also expected more challenging times ahead, due to higher energy and

labor costs and deficits in digital infrastructure, among other factors. Decisions at the national level will not be enough to maintain the attractiveness of Germany and the US as countries to do business in, says Frank Sportolari, president of AmCham Germany. "Instead, we will have to rely on dialog and trans-Atlantic cooperation to counteract protectionist measures."

In terms of atmosphere, the deterioration in US-German economic relations is already making itself felt for many people working in government administration. Cooperation is still working well at the operational level, according to German government circles. Many experienced officials are still at their desks in Washington. "But as soon as it's about anything out of the ordinary, a tricky visa issue for example, things get very tough."

One particular problem seems to be the highly controversial US ambassador in Berlin, Richard A. Grenell, who was appointed by Trump in May last year. Contrary to usual diplomatic practice, Grenell has repeatedly, publicly and sharply criticized the German government for adhering to the nuclear deal with Iran and spending too little on defense, for example. "The man is a disaster, he is actively damaging German-American relations," says a Berlin insider. Grenell is not helping to solve conflicts; he is exacerbating them.

The German automobile industry is especially affected by this altered political climate. The Trump administration has postponed



Are the wheels about to come off Trump's trade policies? The BMW plant in San Luis Potosi, Mexico

its threatened punitive tariffs on European car manufacturers until November, so BMW, Daimler and Volkswagen now simply have to wait and see what will happen.

If 25-percent import tariffs really are imposed in the fall, the consequences are predictable. Car prices will rise, supply chains will be disrupted and manufacturing capacity will fall idle.

The example of BMW highlights the absurdity of the US trade policy. For the Munich carmaker, the United States is a far more important market than Germany, so it stands to suffer greatly from the tariffs. BMW has also just opened a new factory in San Luis Potosi in Mexico, which would be impacted if the US were to carry out Trump's threat to impose sanctions on its neighbors to the south. BMW's biggest factory is in Spartanburg, South Carolina. SUVs made in the southern US mean thousands of jobs there, but most of those vehicles are shipped to China, so BMW would be a major casualty in any unlimited US-Chinese trade war.

However, the dispute about tariffs and cars is not the only thing straining economic relations between the US and its European allies in general and Germany in particular.

This crisis is far more general and it's affecting the basic trust between the partners.

There have been frequent trade disputes in the past, including the legendary 1960s "Chicken War," when Europeans and Americans fought over high protective tariffs on poultry. Its power has enabled the US government to forcibly assert its national interests again and again. Yet the fundamental trust among its allies remained, as it was based on the assurance that foreign firms in the US would be treated fairly.

This trust is about to be lost. You can expect almost anything from a government that seriously believes foreigners (the Chinese, the Germans) are to blame for the deficit in the US balance of trade and must be punished for it.

There was a time, according to an editorial in *The Economist*, when the US directed its power towards achieving certain clearly defined goals, such as opening up Japanese markets to US exports. Trade policy is being used to deal with issues that have nothing at all to do with trade. Tariffs are constantly being used to create a "climate of instability" among US trade partners. This will erode trust. At some point the US will pay a high price for this loss of

trust, for the country's global power is based not just on successful companies and aircraft carriers, but, perhaps most importantly, on trust.

Even issues on which the US has fundamentally valid arguments are affected by this loss of trust. There is much to be said for exercising extreme caution when involving Chinese companies in your country's digital infrastructure. The Beijing government's claims to power are already ominous. But when the US government threatens to end intelligence cooperation with the German government if it permits Huawei to contribute technology to its 5G mobile phone network, as *The Wall Street Journal* reported, the conflict takes on a whole new dimension. A problem that the West should be able to solve together risks becoming a US-German dispute in which Germany will have to defend its own national interests.

These are not good prospects for the future.

Nikolaus Piper is an editor of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Munich. He was their US business correspondent in New York from 2007 to 2014.

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SEE—OWE_{TOO}

We often hear that more R&D is necessary to save our climate, but the necessary technologies have long existed – we just have to put them to use

BY MARLENE WEISS

In 2010, *The Washington Post* ran a Tom Toles cartoon that regrettably seems to become more and more relevant from year to year. The cartoon depicts researchers in 2060 still searching for a breakthrough technology to solve climate change; what they've come up with is a time machine to take the scientists 50 years back to the point in time when humanity should have put a price on CO₂. From the perspective of many experts, this is pretty much the answer to the question surrounding groundbreaking climate-protection technologies: in principle, all the necessary high-tech has long since been available; we now must finally generate the political will to make sure it actually gets used.

For example, the use of energy derived from wind, sun, water, biomass and other renewable sources would have to be expanded more quickly. A recent report issued by the Ren21 network showed that renewables already account for more than one quarter of the electricity consumed in 2018. In addition,

renewable energy is often the most affordable option for generating electricity; it's cheaper than coal or gas. "This is good news, but it's not perfect," says Rana Adib, secretary general of the network, which is supported by the UN's environmental program and brings together international experts from science, government, industry and NGOs.

In other words, the transition to green energy is progressing too slowly, and this snail's pace is due to political policy. "Renewable energies often compete against subsidized fossil fuels," says Adib. According to the Ren21 report, much more money is still being spent on subsidizing coal, oil and gas than on support for green energy.

In addition, the vast majority of countries are fostering renewables solely in the production of electricity, even though more than 80 percent of the energy that is consumed is used for heating, cooling and transport; in those areas, however, renewables are not making any headway.

This is also the case in Germany, where the much-heralded *Energiewende*, or energy transformation, has thus far primarily

been a transformation in electricity. While the share of renewables in the production of electricity has consistently increased over the years, nothing much is happening in other areas: buildings are only slowly being insulated as the associated tax incentives have not yet been decided; three-fourths of residential buildings are still heated with oil or gas; heat pumps that harvest heat from their surrounding environment remain rare; and transport continues to emit as much CO₂ as it did in 1990.

However, countries like Denmark prove that things can work differently. More than half of the electricity there comes from wind turbines and solar cells – facilities that only deliver energy when the wind blows or the sun shines. No other country in the world has such a high proportion, and this is made possible for two reasons:

First, Denmark has a broad and highly advanced system of networks, with high-performance power lines to neighboring countries Germany, Norway and Sweden, thus ensuring that electricity can be either exported or imported, depending on supply.

Second, Denmark has long since combined electricity and heat. They have very flexible and efficient power plants that produce electricity and heat energy, for example from biogas. If the windmills aren't turning, these plants step in. Excess electricity is sometimes also used to heat water that is then pumped via district heating networks to homes for use in their own heating.

Another way of making use of excess wind power is called Power-to-X, where "X" stands for gas or liquid. This technology has been around for some time and uses electricity to split water into hydrogen and oxygen. Together with CO₂ from the air or from industrial plants, it can be used to produce chemically synthesized methane (gas) or gasoline, kerosene and diesel (liquid). Although quite a bit of energy is lost in the process, these fuels can be used in, for example, aircraft or trucks, which will not – at least in the foreseeable future – be powered by electricity.

This artificial gas can even be converted back into electricity; however, this also leads to even higher losses. Still, it's currently the only option we have for stor-



Reporting on the bright colors of the trans-Atlantic relationship and the ties that bind the US and Germany



Tightrope act in Monument Valley: A German slackliner at an altitude of 500 meters © wunderbarttogether

The German Times
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April 2019

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Trading up

The European Union is trying to forge
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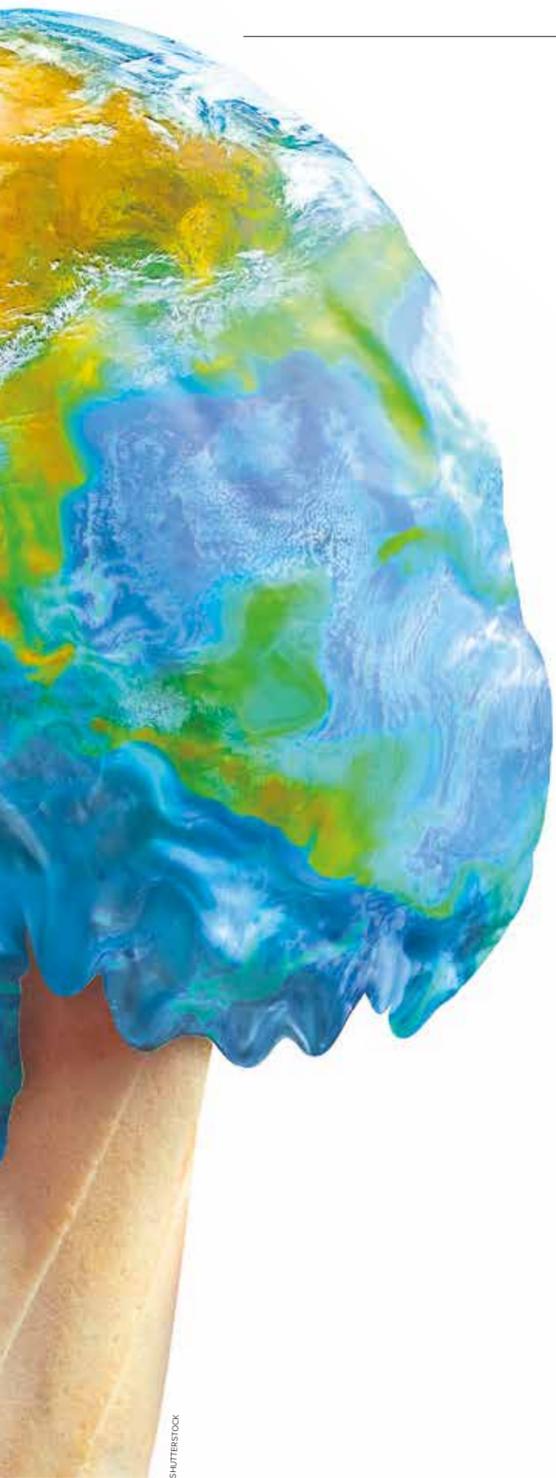
Trading places

The US is pursuing a protectionist agenda
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ing large amounts of electricity over a long period of time; that is, for the moment when the last conventional power plants are shut down.

Experts agree that this technology will be needed at some point in the future – the only thing not clear is exactly how we get there. The plants are still expensive, and they're only worth setting up if there's a large amount of green electricity that nobody else is using. "For the coming years, Power-to-X won't be feasible in Germany, because the excess electricity accrued from renewables won't be available until well into the 2030s," says Matthias Deutsch from the Agora Energiewende think tank. Until then, the state will have to foster the technology – and, above all, make sure that it becomes more affordable.

"The question is whether we get this done via research and development or by widespread use," says Deutsch, who thinks things won't work without the latter. The situation is similar to that of photovoltaics, which became affordable only after countless roofs in Germany were equipped with solar cells through state funding. But one thing is certain,

he says: "Someone will have to carry the learning costs." That is, the more countries get involved, the cheaper it will be.

In other words, the technology required to transform the energy system away from fossil fuels is already here; we just have to expand renewables, strengthen the networks, bring together sectors such as electricity and heat, and set up Power-to-X plants over the long term. None of this technology need be invented. And yet, this alone will not be enough to meet the Paris climate goals or avert the worst-case scenario; the world has simply dragged its feet for too long with regard to the energy transformation.

People like Peter Viebahn are thinking about the consequences of this behavior. Viebahn is responsible for technology at the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy. "At this point, almost all climate scientists assume we are going to need negative emissions, perhaps even well before 2050," he says. What he is referring to are technologies that allow us to filter already emitted CO₂ out of the air and store it in the ground, if possible, forever.

There are two promising options for doing this. One is called bio-energy with carbon capture and storage, or BECCS. It involves harvesting energy plants that absorb CO₂ from the air during their growth phase; after that, the energy is stored and used, for example, by burning the plants or fermenting them into biofuels like Ethanol. The CO₂ released in the process is captured and stored – that is, withdrawn from the atmosphere. This variant is technically feasible but has strict limits; its biggest obstacle is the need for large areas of agrarian land, which would mean that the land could not be used to feed the world's growing population.

For this reason, many researchers are setting their hopes on a second option called direct air capture (DAC). This involves devices that remove CO₂ from the air. A number of companies are developing machines to do just that, including a Canadian firm called Carbon Engineering. The largest facility so far is operated by a startup called Clime-works near Zurich in Switzerland, which can filter 900 tons of CO₂ from the air in one year.

Although that amounts to the total annual emissions of 100 Germans, it's a start. But again, the biggest problem is the price tag: It currently costs at least \$600 to extract one ton of CO₂ from the air. According to the founders of Clime-works, they will be able to lower that price to \$100, but it will require a lot of work and a lot of money.

Viebahn continues to think that the problem is not the technology, arguing that the plants just need to be improved and expanded: "The real challenge is a political, ecological and social one," he says. The questions in need of answers include who will build these plants, who will pay for them, where should they be built, and where should we store the recovered CO₂?

Such answers would be easier to find if the world could agree on a price for CO₂ and had a clear plan to address the climate crisis. If and when we find these answers are open questions. In the meantime, the only technology we need to focus on is that cartoon time machine.

Marlene Weiss is science editor for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

TEAMWORK

CONQUERING THE UNDERGROUND

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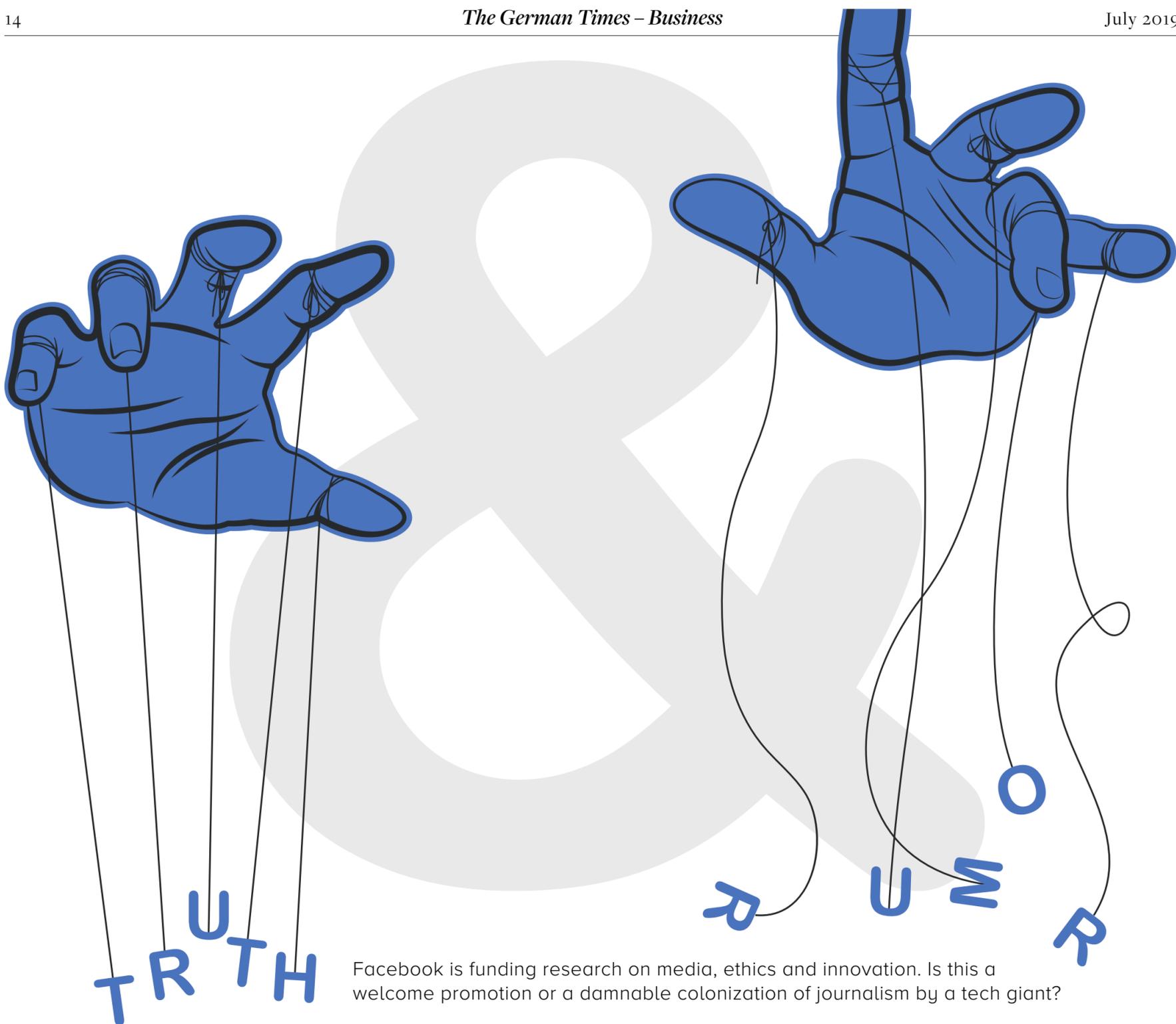
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PIONEERING UNDERGROUND TOGETHER





Facebook is funding research on media, ethics and innovation. Is this a welcome promotion or a damnable colonization of journalism by a tech giant?

BY THOMAS SCHULER

It was a bit of good news, at least for the *Rheinische Post*: “Facebook is promoting journalists in Germany,” ran a May 2018 headline of the Düsseldorf daily. “Facebook is honoring a pledge to invest in the struggle against online fake news via technological solutions as well as through advanced training.” It sounded like Germany’s journalists and public at large had been longing for such a commitment.

Since November, Facebook has been financing a training program at the Hamburg Media School (HMS), an institute that educates and trains journalists and other hopefuls in the film and media sectors. Stephan Weichert designed the program “to promote a culture of innovation in German editorial offices.” The professor of journalism and communication is seeking to “reconcile the divide between journalistic aspiration and the digital transformation.”

Others, however, have voiced strong opposition to Facebook’s program funding. Thus, the online expert Peter Welcherer says: “Journalistic training financed by an internet company with a controversial business model, by a firm that commissions smear campaigns to silence its critics? This sort of journalistic training contributes to the demise of journalism.”

According to an HMS press release, 40 days of training scattered over one year expose the fellows to “the entire spectrum of digital journalism, from mobile storytelling to entrepreneurial thinking and the ethics of digital media.” The program concludes with a 10-day trip to New York City and Silicon Valley.

Along with coding and data journalism, verification and ethics figure prominently in the curriculum. Whether and how the fellows critically address the phenomenon and content of Facebook remains unclear.

The university is financed with public and private funds, partly

by the city of Hamburg and the public broadcaster Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) and with support from *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, the publishers Gruner + Jahr as well as Springer, Bertelsmann, Google and Xing, Telekom and various other media companies. The board of directors representing the sponsors has signed off on the project.

Carsten Broda (SPD), the Hamburg cabinet member in charge of culture and media, welcomed the cooperation with Facebook: “The philosophy of promotion practiced by HMS amounts to a public-private partnership in league with other esteemed institutions such as the European Journalism Center, the Poynter Institute, the Reuters Institute in Oxford and the City University of New York.”

Facebook has been a benefactor since 2017. According to the HMS website, “Facebook has forged a partnership with HMS in establishing the global News Integrity Initiative (NII).” The training program is a global pilot project for Facebook that is initially limited to one year.

An advisory board of renowned journalists will ensure its independence, assist in the selection of applicants and advise Weichert in terms of content. Guido Bülow, a Facebook employee, is but one of many advisors – an assurance he and Weichert stressed in an interview. In terms of content, Facebook is allowed zero influence.

One requirement of all 20 fellows is several years of experience in journalism. Heike Hampf was trained by a local daily newspaper and had already been an editor for four years. She then jumped ship and became a spokesperson for a local government as well as an online editor for the party newspaper of Bavaria’s ruling CSU. Since 2017, she has again been working for a daily newspaper. Klaus Irler is an online editor for *taz*, the left-leaning alternative daily newspaper published in Berlin. Gabriela Keller is as a multimedia editor

in the investigative team at *Berliner Zeitung*. Ann-Katrin Müller has been a politics editor at *Der Spiegel* since 2013. And Laura Terberl is responsible for podcasts and digital product development at *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

After just under eight months, Weichert considers the fellowship to be a success. He would like to offer it again in 2020 and to add as many new benefactors as possible. “The positive resonance of the DJF program shows that we – the HMS – have made a meaningful contribution to democracy and society by offering a tuition-free advanced training program for independent and institutionally employed journalists.”

A spokesperson for Facebook vows: “We will carefully evaluate the experience and in a timely manner make a decision on whether to continue the program.”

Facebook and the HMS have

The topic is too important to allow Facebook, of all corporations, to compromise research with a golden straitjacket

remained silent on the amount of funding the program requires. A Facebook spokesperson stated that “we are making no public disclosures on the matter. The vision of the Facebook Journalism Project – to contribute to the organizations and programs that strengthen the future of high-quality journalism and an informed public – is a significant investment. Our funding allows the HMS to select the right instructors and participants for a tuition-free training experience that also includes travel costs.”

What qualifies as “significant” for a corporate giant swimming in billions of marketing dol-

lars? The funding could be in the ballpark of that which was announced by Facebook in January 2018 for several international journalist associations, each of which received \$250,000. The program at the HMS, which includes speaker fees as well as all travel expenses and lodging for the 20 fellows, could presumably be fully financed with even less than that amount.

Is Facebook’s funding of the program a corrupting influence? Not all journalists are wary of the proximity of the elephant, Facebook, which informs and influences politics, industry and society. Google and Facebook dominate the advertising market – and have now become two of the world’s most active financiers of journalism. They determine what is funded – and what isn’t. Emily Bell, the journalism professor who conducts research at New York’s Columbia University, has coined the term “frenemy” to

describe the two giants.

NDR has raised questions as to whether HMS is too close to Facebook. One journalist critical of Facebook is the online expert Peter Welcherer, who reports regularly on the social media behemoth for German public radio. In some cases he has addressed suspicions that Facebook gathers information on its competitors. Welcherer speaks of a Facebook secret service. He has also reported on Germany’s Gesellschaft für Informatik, an association of 20,000 computer science educators, which eliminated its Facebook presence in May, warning that “Facebook

is a threat to democracy and an enemy of data protection.”

Welcherer sees no hope for change in the foreseeable future. Volker Lilienthal, a journalism professor at the University of Hamburg, also points to the “precarious ambivalence of Facebook’s relationship towards journalism,” going as far as to speak of a “colonization of journalism.” Media and, above all, the journalism training program should “maintain a critical distance” from Facebook and Google, “even if it’s impossible to completely forego Facebook in the digitalized media environment. Facebook and Google are doing something for journalism, including at the HMS. But in my opinion, what they are giving is mere tactical consolation for the considerable losses suffered by journalism and the media due to the existence of Facebook.”

Lilienthal continues: “The HMS says: Facebook has no say in our curriculum and an independent supervisory board will see to it that this remains the case. And I believe them. But Facebook’s proximity is already having a corrupting influence, for instance in terms of gratitude towards a sponsor. Won’t the supported students, i.e. the beneficiaries of this fellowship, be more positively inclined toward Facebook?” Lilienthal is distancing himself from any such promotion via the HMS.

For Christian Kreiß, an economics professor at Aalen University and the author of a book on “bought research,” the establishment of HSM as a public-private partnership is “a planning error. The moneyed and commercial interests co-financing the HSM have no place in an open and free educational format, as well as nothing at all to seek. Otherwise it would no longer be open and free.” He bemoans the fundamental lack of transparency, as there is no disclosure of who pays the HMS how much and what influence they may wield. “Transparency should be the bare minimum to be provided when accepting commercial funds.”

Even more problematic is yet another example of Facebook sponsorship, says Kreiß. In January, Facebook and the Technical University (TU) of Munich, one of Germany’s most renowned institutions of higher learning, announced that the TU received €6.5 million from Facebook to found an ethics institute for artificial intelligence and to research ethical guidelines for the development and use of artificial intelligence. A board of esteemed scientists, scholars and other public figures will determine who researches which topics; the first projects will be presented at a conference this October.

The university and the Bavarian state government welcomed the funding. However, the Green Party’s spokeswoman for research policy in Bavaria’s state parliament, Anne Franke, warned that the topic is too important to allow Facebook, of all corporations, to compromise research with a golden straitjacket.

Christian Kreiß is also critical: “I assume that the university will conduct flawless industry-relevant research.” However, if the Facebook/TU Munich example becomes the rule, he warns, future university policy could look like this: large national and international corporations pick and choose the 1,000 professors at German state universities whose pro-industry leanings and statements would be most favorable to their bottom lines. “They decide to make tens of millions of euros available to each of these professors – without a tendering process or a competition for the money, as in the case of TU Munich/Facebook – to be spent entirely at the discretion of the selected people without the direct assertion of any influence, since it’s not necessary to begin with. Only the true free-thinkers among them would need to be spoon-fed or muzzled.”

Thomas Schuler is a freelance journalist based in Munich.



Mercedes star: Ola Källenius is the new CEO of Daimler.

BY MARTIN GROPP

Ola Källenius seemed to be in an almost motionless state as he watched what was likely the most important moment in his career. Roughly 5,000 people had traveled to the annual shareholders meeting in Berlin to witness Daimler CEO Dieter Zetsche hand over the reins to his successor at the venerable automaker. The meeting marked the end of Zetsche's 13-year reign, and while the auto world's most famous mustachioed man was saying goodbye, Källenius – who had until that moment been head of research at the company – looked out into the Berlin exhibition hall with a dry and focused stare, allowing himself only the hint of a smile.

Källenius' facial expression was a perfect fit to the current state of the company he now oversees as chairman of the board of management. The 50-year-old Swede speaks fluent German, is seen as a hard and unrelenting worker and, although he studied business administration and majored in finance, has earned himself the reputation at Daimler of being a "car guy," who knows his way around both old and new technology.

Källenius' management career at Daimler reflects this standing. After 20 years at the com-

pany, he first moved onto the executive committee as sales and marketing director in 2015, and only two years later took over the research and development division. And his focused stare is going to be absolutely necessary given the task ahead for Daimler – and thus also for its new CEO.

"We're going to have to change – without forgetting who we are and what our customers and shareholders expect of us," Källenius informed his employees the day after taking up his new position. He argued that Daimler's business had to become more sustainable while at the same time remaining profitable. Most important of all, said the new CEO, is the transformation of "our company."

Källenius faces three challenges in particular:

1. The automaker will be adopting a new structure that is set to come into effect starting in November. Three independent joint-stock companies will be bundled under the umbrella of what until now was Daimler AG, divvying up among themselves the previous business areas of passenger cars, vans, busses and trucks. The already existing Mercedes-Benz AG will handle the manufacturing of premium cars and vans; the new Daimler Truck AG will handle trucks and busses; and, finally, Daimler Mobility AG will focus on financial services and promising future business areas, i.e. modern mobility services such as car-sharing and ride-sharing services. The "old" Daimler AG will act as a holding company responsible for steering the joint-stock companies and determining their strategy.

Although at first sight this might appear to be a purely administrative exercise, it is, in fact, a highly complicated undertaking. After all, according to Daimler, roughly 800 individual companies in more than 60 countries will be affected by the change. In addition, the roughly 130,000 Daimler employees in Germany are going to have to reorient themselves, as they will be shifting from Daimler AG to the newly formed companies. All of this will have to be well planned in advance and is likely to cost more than €600 million.

Of course, the automaker will be looking to win back this initial investment over time. The company expects its new structure to produce an increase in efficiency; and each individual company will be able to act more flexibly and enter into partnerships more easily, thus generating new growth for the entire group.

2. However, before that moment comes, Daimler needs to save – and this is Källenius' second challenge. Over the past decade, the automaker has increased its sales year after year from roughly €79 billion in 2009 to more than €167 billion in 2018. Earnings were also impressive in this period, reaching the targeted return of more than 8 percent in the years from 2013 to 2017.

Daimler bends

How the automaker's new CEO, Ola Källenius, intends to lead the company into the future

Last year, however, the company sustained a hit when earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) fell to just over €11.1 billion, which corresponds to an operating margin of 6.7 percent. This is less than other automakers earned and far too little to meet Daimler's aspirations.

The goal now is to neutralize this blow. However, as car sales are lagging at the moment, the company is looking first and foremost to lower its costs. MOVE is the name that has been given to the efficiency initiative Källenius must now implement. "We are going to have to become more Swabian," he said in early June, invoking the proverbial southeastern German housewife with a reputation for being economical, prudent and efficient. Rumor has it that up to 10,000 jobs will be cut; the austerity program will now most likely proceed without an active severance pay program for employees willing to go. In any case, Daimler employees already have a program in place that protects against operations-related redundancies until 2029.

3. In light of such efforts to cut costs, the third challenge facing the new Daimler CEO could necessitate squaring the circle. Källenius will have to steer his company into the era of electromobility, and this will require a large initial investment.

The first step in this direction has already been taken with the first fully electric Mercedes-Benz, the EQC urban SUV, which will be followed by at least nine additional battery-operated vehicles under the EQ brand by 2022. Daimler is spending more than €10 billion to make this happen.

What's likely to cost even more is meeting Källenius' long-term goal of making Daimler's entire fleet of new vehicles carbon-neutral by 2039. "It's not that we're looking to institute a sustainability strategy as a supplement to our regular operations; our entire business strategy has to be sustainable," says the man now running a company whose founding fathers Carl Benz and Gottlieb Daimler invented the internal combustion engine 133 years ago.

Källenius is well aware of this admired tradition, yet it is not something he considers sacrosanct. Back in May, when he presented his plans for sustainability, he put forth the following guiding principle: "Don't be afraid to question everything." It looks as if the chief executive himself will be the one fostering constant self-questioning – with a dry and focused stare, of course.

Martin Gropp is the automobile correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.



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China in your land

The People's Republic wants to consolidate its emergence as a world power based on the new supercontinent of Eurasia, as the US and the EU look on from the sidelines



"Silk Road" hub for trains at the border to China: The Kazakhs call Khorghos "the biggest dry port in the world" and "the new Dubai."

BY KATJA GLOGER

The city of Khorghos in Central Asia is a barren steppe. It's unbearably hot in the summer, and temperatures in the winter can get down to a teeth-chattering minus 40 degrees Celsius. Until a few years ago, this patch of land was a small post on the border between China and Kazakhstan. In fact, it's not far from Eurasia's "pole of inaccessibility," that is, a geographical location marking the farthest point away from the nearest coastline in all directions. And yet, at the moment, the city is well on its way to becoming a major hub at the center of the Eurasian continent.

There is talk of investments of upwards of \$600 million here in the "largest dry harbor in the world." This harbor will comprise a massive logistics center, a railway terminal and an industrial and free-trade zone. Some are even calling it a "second Dubai." Within the coming decade, Khorghos is set to become the home of 100,000 people, with the city acting as Kazakhstan's "gateway to the east."

In other words, it looks like the inhabitants of Khorghos are facing a bright future, as is all of Asia. The billions of people living there are striving for one thing above all, namely a higher level of prosperity for themselves and their children. Will these people be the winners of globalization?

For China, Khorghos is just one of many stations that make up the largest infrastructure project of all time: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Up to \$1 trillion has already started flowing into the "project of the century," as China's President Xi Jinping calls it. Some see the BRI and its new "Silk Roads" as a tool with which to shape the future; others, however, see it as a weapon in the struggle for global supremacy, a mega-project designed to safeguard China's model of economic and political power, that special mixture of state capitalism and repressive power so attractive to authoritarian regimes.

In Khorghos, the Chinese state-owned shipping company COSCO has invested in what is likely to be the largest dry port in the world. Containers will be loaded onto railway cars rather than onto ships, and they will transport goods such as wine and fresh food from Europe to well-off citizens in China. However, it remains to be seen whether the investment will pay off. While the Chinese-Kazakh land connection will indeed shorten transport times between China and Europe by a half, the cost of transporting containers by land is actually ten times more expensive than by ship. Plus, most Chinese goods don't go to Europe, but rather to Uzbekistan or Iran. In this sense, Khorghos

is a stop on only one of many new Silk Roads. Nothing more – but certainly nothing less.

The changes could hardly be more dramatic; in fact, they more resemble a tectonic shift. A new world order is unstoppable emerging in the East in geographical, political and economic terms. And how is the West responding? The US is – at least for the moment – abandoning its leadership role as beneficiary and guardian of a liberal world order; Europe and the EU are struggling to find some sense of unity; and Germany – still one of the world's largest trading powers – is primarily engaged in political navel-gazing.

What it all comes down to is control over resources, trade routes, infrastructure and communication. "It is the countries of the Silk Road that really matter in the 21st century," writes British historian Peter Frankopan in his book *The New Silk Roads*: "The West has fallen asleep at the wheel yet still wants to return to 'normal.' This is no new world being born; it is an old world being reborn. The West is in danger of becoming less and less relevant."

At the end of the 19th century, after extensive research trips through China, the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen came up with the term "Silk Roads" to describe the networks of exchange that once linked historical China with the rest of the world. For today's China as well, the Silk Roads span the whole world. They promise "win-win" projects that will benefit everyone – of course, on Chinese terms and conditions. These projects extend all the way to Africa and also involve strategic investments in Europe, such as in the port of Piraeus and an entire container terminal in Antwerp. Pakistan is set to function as the transport corridor to the Indian Ocean. And there will be Silk Roads running through South America as well. There are also plans for a Silk Road in the Arctic.

The Chinese see digital Silk Roads as bundling global data streams, while communication paths will be shaped by hardware and algorithms – preferably those "Made in China." They also see a new world order of information and propaganda emerging with the help of the "Belt and Road News Alliance" media program – under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, of course.

Silk Roads will no doubt serve to open up long-neglected regions. There's the Caucasus, which is just three hours by plane from Frankfurt. And there are also the five

states of Central Asia, all of which were once Soviet republics – that is, the poor, Moscow-funded backyard of the Soviet Union.

Incidentally, there was one man who had his "brand" patented in Central Asia and the Caucasus 12 years ago. He planned to build glamorous casinos in Georgia, financed among others by the Silk Road Group, a company not free from controversy. That man, of course, was one Donald Trump.

The Caucasus Republic of Georgia is certainly looking to free itself from its dependence on Russia by means of the new Silk Road. While Vladimir Putin goes about expanding the annexed Crimean peninsula into a weapons fortress, construction has begun on a deep-sea port in the Georgian town of Anaklia on the Black Sea. It is said that this port will become the largest on the Black Sea coast. The credit for this project is coming from the China-led "Asian Infra-



structure Investment Bank" (AIIB), among others. Georgia hopes this project will establish it as a Caucasian trade bridge between Europe and Asia, with reach to Turkey and Iran as well.

In other words, the blossoming of Eurasia – that gigantic land mass that comprises a good third of the earth's surface – is already underway. Some definitions of the geographic term even include the Indo-Pacific area stretching from India to Japan.

Eurasia is the new supercontinent. It's home to five billion people and is responsible for generating 70 percent of the world's economic product. It is also the resource treasury of the world, with its abundance of oil, gas, wood, rare-earth elements and agricultural land.

The fate of the democratic world would be decided in Eurasia, according to Samir Saran, president of the Observer Research Foundation, an Indian think tank still underappreciated in Europe. Either the liberal world makes a concerted effort to counter China's grab for the supreme position, "or the so-called Pax Sinica – the Chinese world order – will unfold." At stake here is nothing less than who gets to determine the rules of the game for the post-Western world in the 21st century.

The Russians also see the US-

dominated world order as now irrevocably broken. This has led to a dangerous era with a "high risk of war," according to Sergey Karaganov, an apologist for Russian geopolitics. In one last desperate gasp, he argues, the US is attempting to win the global struggle to top this new world order. Taken in this sense, the concept of "America First" does not mean withdrawal, but rather the opposite: "The US is the revisionist power!" Still, "neither Russia nor China will become a junior partner to the US," he notes. The future of Russia lies in "Greater Eurasia."

The Russian leadership elite by no means wants their country to be degraded to the status of a mere transport corridor; nor does it want to become cut off from new Silk Roads running from China across Central Asia and the Caspian Sea to the west and south. Despite the rejection of the symbolic project comprising a high-speed train,

been helping out again since 2014. For \$400 billion, Russia's state-owned Gazprom has committed to gas exports to China for the coming 30 years via its "Power of Siberia" pipeline – but at the very lowest price. As a matter of fact, Russian-Chinese economic relations appear similar to colonial trade relations in the 19th century: roughly 75 percent of all Russian exports to China are raw materials, while 80 percent of China's exports to Russia, in turn, consist of consumer, electronics and industrial goods.

Despite this state of affairs, leaders in Europe and Washington would be wise not to underestimate the rapprochement between the two neighbors. The Chinese leadership presents itself as loyal, and it respects Russian interests in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the military Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). And there are Russian military bases in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In other words, Moscow remains the policeman of the region, seeking to prevent "color revolutions" and Islamist extremism as well as to ensure the ongoing existence of the authoritarian-dictatorial regime.

The US and Europe are struggling to find an answer to the Eurasian challenge and to navigate their way in this new Asian century. A joint response is important, with at least a minimum of unity. As Henry Kissinger recently told the *Financial Times*, a crack in the Atlantic alliance would turn Europe sooner or later into "an appendage of Eurasia," and force it to increasingly align itself with China.

Today's reality is that President Trump is actively fostering the division of the EU and declaring NATO obsolete. Plus, he is carrying out a trade war with China.

Last year, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo insisted that the US was highly aware of the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region and said the government would be making \$113 million available for new initiatives. But that is a laughable amount, no more than even the side income of White House advisors Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner in 2017. However, in the core area of the new Silk Roads, the US plays virtually no role.

The EU is trying to win ground in Eurasia via its strategy of "connectivity" or all-encompassing networking. At the end of 2018, it launched the Strategy for Connecting Europe & Asia, and in 2019 it plans to adopt its Central Asia Strategy as well. The EU is seeking

to position itself in Central Asia as the partner of choice for sustainable regional development based on ecological, fair and fundamental Western values. It wants to safeguard water resources, install power lines, build wind farms and deliver digital infrastructure – while also fostering civil society, education for young girls, student exchanges and the rule of law. The EU Commission and its member states are making €1 billion available – making Europe the biggest donor in the region.

According to official figures, China invested more than \$300 billion in the economies of Central Asia in the past five years alone. The advantages are obvious, including the strategic dependence on China with regard to the export of raw materials. For example, the gas exports of Turkmenistan go almost exclusively to China. This leads to so-called "debt traps" caused by high Chinese credits for pointless prestige projects that cannot be repaid. In such cases, the doors in authoritarian regimes swing open to corruption and nepotism.

And then there are the local protests, with farmers fearing that their land will be sold off to Chinese leaseholders. "When the Chinese come, the apocalypse follows," reads one Kazakh proverb. And yet, China's ever-increasing activities in the heart of Eurasia "are set up for the long term and represent a turning point in the development of Central Asian states," says Marlene Laruelle, head of the Central Asia program at George Washington University in Washington, DC.

Some have said that joint European-Chinese projects in the region would be able to foster Central Asia's development to the benefit of Europe. This might include the fair financing of high-quality infrastructure, ecological sustainability and transparency projects. The first Western governments – France, Spain and Italy as well as Canada and Japan – have already signed agreements with China on "market cooperation with third parties."

This approach leads to a "win-win-win" situation, as officials in Beijing benevolently assert. The ultimate goal was to "march arm-in-arm toward a bright future," as Xi Jinping put it at the World Economic Summit in Davos in 2017, "history is made by the brave."

For better or for worse, this also applies to those who venture onto the new Silk Roads.

Katja Gloger is an author for the weekly *Stern* and a longtime Moscow correspondent. In 2018, she published *Fremde Freunde* (Estranged friends) on the long and fateful history of Russian-German relations.



The dark side of the moon mission

When Neil Armstrong, “Buzz” Aldrin and Michael Collins flew to the moon 50 years ago, they used German technology

BY PHILIP ARTELT
AND NANA BRINK

Nothing is impossible in the land of opportunity. “We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard,” said US President John F. Kennedy in 1962. And he wasn’t the only one who believed in the unlimited possibilities ahead. On July 21, 1969, US astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin set foot on the moon, infecting an entire generation with space fever – even in Germany, at least in the western part. But was the moon landing an exclusively American success story?

On Oct. 3, 1942, a young engineer named Wernher von Braun was in good spirits. The weather was no doubt perfect as he walked through the forest on the northern tip of the German island of Usedom on the Baltic Sea. For three years, the charismatic director of Germany’s Army Research Center in Peenemünde had galvanized the team of scientists working with him. And now, finally, he found himself gazing at the rocket launch pad known as Test Stand VII and his Aggregat 4 rocket, which stood 14 meters high and weighed almost 13 tons. When the rocket’s 8,600 kilograms of alcohol and liquid oxygen ignited, the sound was deafening. It shot into the sky with 650,000 horsepower, taking it a full 84.5 kilometers straight upward.

Wernher von Braun had achieved his goal. The first step had been taken. For the first time in history, a man-made object was able to reach the border to outer space.

While one could contest that the history of the moon landing began at Test Stand VII, it’s indisputable that it launched the incredible career of Wernher von Braun. The outer-space visionary, born into a German noble family in 1912, would become famous for inspiring both Adolf Hitler and John F. Kennedy.

Von Braun built the Aggregat 4 for the Nazis. It was a rocket that would go on to spread fear and terror as the infamous V2 – V for *Vergeltung*, retribution. It would indeed eventually cost the lives of tens of thousands of forced laborers, concentration camp prisoners, and residents of London, Antwerp and Paris.

After the war, von Braun went on to develop the Saturn V rocket

that would elevate Apollo 11 to the moon in 1969. “Science in and of itself does not have a moral dimension,” he would later say.

In fact, von Braun was a clever opportunist who always achieved his goals – just like his rockets. He was an exceedingly ambitious scientist. Even as a child, he was constructing firework-like rockets and shooting them into the sky in Berlin’s Tiergarten.

And von Braun never stopped wanting to go higher in the true sense of the word. He wanted to go to space. But in order to do so, he made a pact with the devil, just like Goethe’s Faust. The Nazis financed his dream and his team of researchers, and in 1937, he became technical director of the newly founded Army Research Center in the fishing village of Peenemünde. There, on 25 square kilometers of land, emerged one of the most high-tech laboratory landscapes in the world at the time. And the legendary Test Stand VII was the heart of the operation.

In order to get to Test Stand VII today, historian Philipp Aumann has to drive through a jungle-like landscape. The surrounding area has been a nature reserve since 1990 and is not open to the public. Aumann is scientific director of the Peenemünde Historical Technical Museum, so he knows how to steer his jeep over barely visible paths with crushed trees and overgrown railway tracks to the right and left of him.

The site was used by the East German army until 1990. It continues to be a restricted area to this day, contaminated by the remains of munitions and rocket debris. The only thing visible from afar is the former power plant that once provided electricity for the elaborate experiments and serves today as an exhibition space. In front of the power station, a black-and-white V2 rocket towers up into the sky. It’s a popular backdrop for selfies taken by visitors to the museum. “Many people are unaware that what they’re photographing is a weapon of terror,” says Aumann.

After arriving at a particular point in the dense forest, Aumann gestures towards an inconspicuous stone; on it are the words “Launch site of the A4 rockets.” Does that mean that this spot is the “birthplace of space travel”?

The stone sits on a small granite base. “Concrete would have ruptured due to the enormous heat created by a launch,” says Aumann, looking up to the sky. In a con-

templative tone of voice, he notes: “Some of the things invented in Peenemünde became crucial to US rocket technology, and many German engineers like Wernher von Braun made a seamless transition in continuing their work after the war.”

Yet another contribution to the history of space travel began in Ladbergen, a town of 6,000 inhabitants in northwestern Germany. To this day, one can find the farm belonging to Fritz Kötter, a young man who left Germany for good in 1864 and made his way to the US. Roughly a century later, many years after the Kötters settled in Ohio and changed their name to Katter, one of their descendants became the first person to walk on the surface of the moon: Neil Alden Armstrong, a slight boy from Ohio who grew up loving airplanes, served in the Korean War and journeyed to the moon on behalf of his country. One could argue that Armstrong owed this opportunity to his great-grandfather Fritz, who changed continents to avoid being drafted into the Prussian army.

Armstrong never made a big deal of his German heritage and never visited Ladbergen. And “unexcited” is also probably the best word to describe Germany’s culture of remembrance with regard to the moon landing. But this doesn’t diminish the fact that it would have been inconceivable for two Americans – no matter what their family origins – to walk on the moon in 1969 without the contributions of German scientists. And Wernher von Braun was only one of them. Space pioneers such as Hermann Oberth, who became famous for his work *The Rocket into Planetary Space* (1923), and engineer Walter Hohmann, who distanced himself from rocketry for a time, were responsible for much of the preparatory research that was eventually merged to create an almost 111-meter-high rocket in the US: the Saturn V.

With names such as Zeiss and Varta, roughly half a dozen medium-sized German companies worked on products for Apollo 11; and they did so largely unnoticed by the general public. These contributions have also been mostly forgotten by NASA. When asked, the agency responded that it had

a comprehensive list of contractors involved in the lunar landing, but it contains no companies from Germany.

On the third day of the flight to the moon, Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin radioed back to Earth: “We’re thinking about taking the monocular with us on the lunar module.” He uttered these words to the delight of many people at the optics manufacturer Leitz in the town of Wetzlar, Germany. Just prior to that, however, Aldrin had complained about the single-barrel telescope made by Leitz. He had noted that the image was too shaky, and that the most sensible way to keep the device steady was not to hold it at all; instead, Aldrin let the monocular float weightlessly in the air, allowing him to get a much less wobbly image.

The initial plan had been to leave the monocular in the Columbia space capsule, but the fact that it even made it onto the Apollo moon mission was a big deal. Due to limitations regarding the weight and space taken up by each item, NASA had been forced to plan precisely which equipment could be brought aboard the lunar module. Some items were even left behind on the moon to make room for collected moon rocks.

At Leica, as Leitz is known today, the NASA monocular is not a big topic. “Binoculars never had a special cachet,” explains Alfred Hengst, former head developer of the relevant division at Leica and now a retiree. People mostly talked about “the Leica,” the world-famous camera, he notes. Still, the Leitz Trinovid binoculars were a great innovation; they were small and light yet had outstanding optical performance thanks to their newly developed roof prisms. The Wetzlar-made binoculars were ultimately convincing enough to win over NASA.

At the time, however, they were much too bulky, so the space agency ordered a single-barrel version, pretty much a pair of binoculars cut in half. They also scrapped the attractive leather encasing, as it was unnecessary in the spaceship. One of these rare monoculars is said to have been bought years later by a very lucky individual at a flea market in the US for only a handful of dollars.

Other German companies have completely forgotten their own contributions to the moon landing. The team at Healthineers, the spin-off medical division of the Siemens corporation, was surprised by the request for information about the moon landings. However, the company previously known as the Wernerwerk für Medizinische Technik based in

Erlangen was also involved in the mission. It didn’t provide medical equipment for the astronauts, as one might expect; instead, the team was responsible for the zinc sulfide phosphors needed to light the ship’s instrumentation “in magic green,” as the company’s in-house newspaper called it back in 1969. This energy-saving light was, in fact, a by-product created by the division and was usually employed in medical devices.

Retiree Peter Hitzschke enjoys talking about quartz glass, perhaps even more than about the moon landing. And yet he, too, has a connection to the Apollo 11 mission: the small case containing quartz prisms that is still on the moon to this day. The quartz crystals originated at the Hanau-based high-tech firm Heraeus, Peter Hitzschke’s former employer.

The communications department at Heraeus is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the moon landing to a greater degree than other companies in Germany. They’ve even set up a website featuring short films and comics and are seizing on the anniversary to boost their stature with the general public. Heraeus is also one of the few companies to contact eyewitnesses like Peter Hitzschke. In the 1960s, Hitzschke worked as a mechanical engineer at the company and helped produce the glass made of Brazilian rock crystal that ultimately ended up in the moon case.

The smoothed quartz from Hanau resembles the orange cat-eye reflectors mounted on the spokes of bicycles. If you aim a laser at the quartz, you can measure the distance between the Earth and the moon. Scientists use this method to gain information about the position of the Earth in space, about the continents and even about the inner structure of our home planet.

Heraeus had sold glass to NASA for various uses even before the Apollo 11 mission, and in this sense the quartz prisms were “a regular job,” Hitzschke recalls. Still, he does exude a hint of pride at the fact that the case continues to fulfill its purpose; indeed, even today, scientists send out lasers to the moon on occasion. In fact, the quartz prisms from Hanau are the only Apollo mission experiment that is ongoing 50 years later.

In contrast, there’s not much going on today at the once legendary Test Stand VII, the launch pad for rockets on the site of the

former Army Research Center in Peenemünde: “Things have been growing here for the past 75 years,” says historian Philipp Aumann. “It shows us the extent to which the efforts of humans will eventually disappear in the forest.” Still, the site that many refer to as the “birthplace of space travel” continues to tell the story of the dark side of innovations in aerospace engineering.

Shortly before the end of World War II, SS Sturmbannführer Wernher von Braun traveled to Bavaria – in anticipation of the arrival of the US Army. In his hand was a suitcase containing all of his knowledge concerning the V2 rocket. The Nazi past of many German engineers would be of little interest to the US military and later NASA. “These men were too important, they were simply years ahead of American scientists,” explains Aumann. The Saturn V rockets that would bring the first men to the moon were to become von Braun’s greatest achievement. The German engineer would even go on to become an American media star known as the “missile man.”

Every now and again, it is suggested that the Test Stand VII be reconstructed and made open to the public. It would be a difficult task, and an expensive one. No one knows exactly what lies beneath the overgrown remains in the restricted area. If it were up to the historian Aumann, they would do nothing: “Decay is part of this story,” he says. “I find it much more exciting than walking through some sort of Disneyland where everything is displayed the way it was back then.”

Philip Arteelt and Nana Brink are reporters for the German radio station Deutschlandfunk Kultur. Their complete broadcast on the subject can be heard on that station on July 18 at 1:05 pm. www.Germanyfunkkultur.de/laenderreport

THE FIRST ROCKET IN SPACE

Between 1936 and 1945, the Army Research Center in Peenemünde was one of the most high-tech centers in the world. It was here that scientists launched the first-ever rocket into space.

Tens of thousands of forced laborers, concentration camp inmates and prisoners of war were employed in the construction of the “weapon of retribution” known as the V2 rocket, starting in 1943 in the underground tunnel system belonging to the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp in the Harz Mountains. Up to 20,000 of them lost their lives. Historian Philipp Aumann: “Wernher von Braun was involved from the very beginning in the system of forced labor relating to the war effort. He even selected inmates himself.”

Hitler’s Wunderwaffe (miracle weapon) was used roughly 3,000 times until March 1945, in particular against the UK, France and the Netherlands. These rockets caused the deaths of approximately 8,000 people.



Rocketmen: Wernher von Braun and John F. Kennedy



Zee Germans & their dogs

Dogs are popular pets all over the world, but there's something special – one might say odd – about the Germans' relationship with their four-legged friends

BY BETTINA WEIGUNY

In Germany, you can joke about everything," quipped Peer Steinbrück recently, "except about dog owners." And Steinbrück, a former German finance minister under Angela Merkel, would know. While still a politician for SPD, he became well known for his quick wit, and today, after retiring from politics, he has been touring the country on a regular basis, performing in a satire show with popular German political satirist Florian Schroeder. In other words, he has a lot of experience when it comes to figuring out where that famous German sense of humor begins – and where it ends.

According to Steinbrück, Germans will laugh about almost everything – even about themselves and their own children. But the subject of dogs is taboo. It's sacred, so to speak. At least in this regard, German dog owners are absolutely humorless.

Indeed, if we take German dog owners at their word, people who don't own a dog are incomplete. Dog owners never tire of communicating this fact to the rest of humanity. They stride with their chests out and noses up past all those poor, dog-challenged half-people. It doesn't matter whether the worshiped creature at their side is large or small, purebred or rescue, attack dog or lapdog, a loud barker or an obedient accomplice. For dog owners, dogs are more than pets; they are the source of meaning and identity. Plus, they make it possible for their owners to differentiate themselves from one group while still belonging to another. In other words, dogs are a means to an end. They are a status symbol similar to all the other things people like to show off: my Porsche, my yacht, my children, my dog. Sometimes dogs even become full-fledged family members who make an indispensable contribution to the development of children on their way to becoming well-rounded individuals.

While it's true that this human-dog relationship might be similar in other countries, there is no question that the attachment to

this kind of four-legged friend is nowhere else as intimate and emotional as it is in Germany.

No other country in Europe is home to as many dogs as Germany – a total of 10 million. Today, every fifth home in Germany has a dog. And the numbers are rising year after year.

Dogs are best friends, substitutes for absent partners or children and faithful companions who forgive everything, overlook every blemish and keep everyone happy when spouses or kids are in a bad mood. All you have to do is look at Fido, Lady or Fletch and the beasts will start wagging their tail and drooling with joy, day after day, as if their happiness depended on it – which it actually does.

Dogs are dependent on the humans who take care of them; in return, they reward humans with love, loyalty and devotion. From time to time, however, the boundary between humans and dogs shifts, and it's not always clear who needs whom. A questionable and not necessarily animal-friendly symbiosis occasionally emerges, where dogs share their owner's bed, eat their steak at the dinner table and take over the family sofa.

But, alas, nothing is too good for the dogs Germans love. And it would appear that nothing is too expensive either. In 2018, Germans spent almost €1.5 billion on dog food alone, which is more than they've ever spent. The market for dog snacks is growing rapidly, too, becoming a veritable treasure trove for enterprising inventors. For example, one beachside restaurant on the German island of Sylt – a popular and often luxurious holiday destination – offers a very special delicacy: dog-friendly frozen yogurt in two delicious flavors: "Beef & Carrot" and "Wild Salmon & Carrot." Each mini cup costs €3.

There are apparently no limits to the foolish lengths humans will go to when seeking to pamper their four-legged buddies. The list of inventions extends from luxurious dog baskets and brand-name clothing all the way to electric car ramps for getting the animal into and out of cars. There's also a constantly growing army of hairdressers, masseurs and psychologists training dogs' minds and bodies alongside – and often in competition with – fitness facilities, dog schools and yoga studios.

According to Germany's Industrial Association of Pet Care Producers (IVH), the average total cost of owning a dog adds up to about €35,000 over the course of the animal's life, and the numbers are only rising. That sum does not include the money spent by owners on specialist books or for tickets to live shows organized by popular dog coaches like Martin Rütter. For years now, Rütter has been selling out arenas and soccer stadiums – places normally reserved, at least in Germany, for big names like Helene Fischer, Radiohead and Ozzy Osborne.

Dog owners flock to these shows. They sit there and laugh. On these occasions, Rütter – the "dog whisperer" – is allowed to make dog jokes, but only because he's one of them.

Things were a lot different for dogs a couple of centuries ago, when humans weren't yet putting them on pedestals. At that time, they had a more practical use like acting as a guard dog on a farm. Their homes were sheds outdoors and their meals consisted only of leftovers. However, the nobility soon discovered dogs as useful companions on hunting trips and

in evocative family paintings. The burgeoning bourgeoisie then followed suit, thus prompting the dog's breakthrough as everybody's darling. In the mid-19th century, dogs even began serving as trusted political sidekicks.

On this point, in particular, the Germans have always been special. The dogs belonging to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck came to be known as *Reichshunde*, literally "dogs of the empire." Bismarck regularly appeared in public with his dogs and even had them buried with much pomp and circumstance on his estate near what is now Koszalin. One of his favorite dogs, a Great Dane named Tyras, even provoked a tumult at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 when he attacked the Russian foreign minister and tore his pant leg.

Great Danes were considered "imperial dogs" for the duration of the German Empire. For his part, however, Kaiser Wilhelm II preferred short-haired dachshunds, typical small hunting dogs that have remained popular to this day. When his favorite and constant companion named Erdmann died, the Kaiser built him a memorial that is maintained to this day by

the Kassel chapter of a Dachshund association called the Deutscher Teckelklub 1888.

The Nazis took the love of dogs to the pinnacle of political appropriation, seizing upon the German Shepherd as a contrast to shabby foreign imports, such as Danish mastiffs and English pugs. Indeed, the animals had to be purebred German if they were to embody the virtues of courage, strength and discipline. Adolf Hitler himself made several appearances with Blondi, his German Shepherd. To this day, this breed has been unable to entirely shake off its reputation as a Nazi dog. But it would be a grave injustice to categorize every German Shepherd owner as a right-winger; after all, these clever animals are in high demand as detection dogs or watchdogs at all levels of society.

Still today, many Germans make political statements with their choice of dog. Some deliberately avoid getting purebred animals, even though they could easily afford to. That would be much too conventional, too petty-bourgeois. Some people bring a street dog home with them from vacation in southern Europe or employ the services of *Streumerhilfen* – stray dog helpers – that match willing adoptive parents with dogs from Bulgaria or Romania, thereby saving them from being euthanized.

Big German cities' hip urban districts – where progressives, greens and bleeding-heart liberals live – and upscale villa neighborhoods the bastion of conservatives – are full of these rescue dogs. Each one of these shaggy crossbreeds is living proof that its owner has a big heart and has done something good by helping those in need – not just refugees, but also four-legged friends. In most cases, these tail-waggers are grateful, and don't even complain when given such illustrious names as Camus or Mozart. Better not to joke about it.

Bettina Weiguny is a freelance journalist based in Bad Soden. She writes a weekly column in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*.



The size of the dog in the budget: Dog owners in Germany spend more on their pet than on their car.

THE BALANCE

"Anti-Amerikanismus": March 2019 issue

I am a retired US diplomat who served in Germany for four years (Munich 1993–97) and a retired Honorary German Consul (seven years of service 2010–2017 in the state of New Mexico). I just finished reading your article on "Anti-Amerikanismus" and felt that I should write you, immediately, and compliment both authors on their characterization of the US-German relationship. It was thoughtful, poignant and spot on, as the English would say. Your publication is an important forum for English-language expression of views. Keep up the excellent work.

Stephan Helgesen, Albuquerque, NM; via email

MOVIE NIGHT

"Things will not go well": March 2019 issue

Thank you so much for the March issue of *The German Times*. I have enjoyed reading it. The article about Christian Petzold is especially timely for me because I saw his film *Transit* just yesterday.

Charlie and Sigrid Horner, Lincoln, NE; via email



RE STOCKING THE BOX

I just wanted to thank you for selecting the DANK Haus German American Cultural Center as a location for your newspaper distribution box. I also wanted to let you know that the papers were gone within 24 hours. I created a Facebook post and many people are now dropping in my office inquiring when the box will get restocked.

◀ **Laura Engel**, Director Marketing & Events; via email

THE GESTURE

"...We receive your newspaper monthly and are grateful for the free copies we receive, as we display them in our museum for visitors to take as a nice gesture to thank them for stopping by..."

Sarah Marsteller, Museum Curator, German-American Heritage Museum of the USA (April 2019)

DOUBLE TAKE

"I have now received for the second time copies of *The German Times*. The paper is excellent. I enjoy reading it and passing it on to potentially interested persons."

Karl Kaiser, Senior Associate, Project on Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Adjunct Professor of Public Policy emeritus, Harvard Kennedy School, Cambridge (May 2019)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



AIRMAIL For comments, questions or complaints send a letter to:

redaktion@times-media.de

BY LUTZ LICHTENBERGER

In March 1952, the German writer Kurt Kusenberg published what today would be called a “think piece” in a newspaper – its headline: “Nothing is to be taken for granted. In praise of hardship.” With more than a touch of nostalgia, the author reflected on the oddly halcyon days after the war had ended seven years hence. Nothing was working – no mail, no trains, no traffic; people were homeless and hungry; dead bodies were still being found under the rubble. But Kusenberg fondly remembers the time. “Like children,” people had begun to re-establish close ties, to reweave the social fabric that had come undone. He recommended his readers put themselves back into the state of mind of the time that had been “starved, tattered, wretched and dangerous.” In the absence of order of any kind, people had to redefine what morals and social cohesion meant: “Decency did not rule out ingenuity and subterfuge – or even the petty theft of something to eat. But in this life of part-time crime, there was honor among thieves, and it probably rested on higher moral underpinnings than today’s iron-cast conscience.”

The journalist Harald Jähner tells Kusenberg’s story in his magisterial new book *Wolfszeit. Deutschland und die Deutschen – 1945–1955* (The time of the wolves. Germany and the Germans – 1945–1955), published this year by Rowohlt Berlin that has become the surprise hit of the season, even surpassing Michelle Obama’s *Becoming* on the non-fiction bestseller list. While not exactly a beach read, Jähner’s gripping 500-page X-ray-vision tale of an often overlooked and misperceived phase of German history reveals, like all great history books, as much about the first decade after the war as about today.

Jähner combines the scholarly inquisitiveness and big-picture view of the historian with the seasoned journalist’s keen eye for the rich anecdote and colorful detail. For many years, Jähner worked as the editor of the feature pages of the daily *Berliner Zeitung*, where he wrote clever and whimsical essays of the highest order on everything from Angela Merkel’s

SLUB DRESDEN/DEUTSCHE FOTOTHEK/RICHARD PETERSEN



Project (clearing the) runway: Trümmerfrauen at work

Nobody time

Harald Jähner’s story of the first 10 years after the demise of the Nazis has mesmerized German readers

workaround style of governing to his longings for the time when people still addressed him with a “Dear” in e-mails instead of the now common “Hello,” which is so devoid of any light-footed charm.

In *Wolfszeit*, Jähner set out to tell the story behind the “force of history’s huge events,” the changes in Germans’ daily lives, like suddenly having to live hand to mouth, to loot and barter on the black market. Some embraced the temptations of a society bereft of its former sexual mores, while others waited futilely for husbands or lovers to return from Soviet prisons.

At the outset of Jähner’s story, Germany is in ruins, both physically and spiritually. More than half of the population is in a place where they do not belong or do not want to be. Nine million Germans have lost their homes or been evacuated; there are 14 million refugees and displaced persons, 10 million newly released forced laborers and several million prison-

ers of war returning to an uncertain existence.

Jähner is well aware of the multilayered narratives and political provocation implicit in retelling the struggles of the time. These issues strike at the heart of the country’s psyche today as much as they did 75 years ago. Usually, he writes, the past becomes rosier over time, but in the case of the postwar era, the opposite is true. It has become darker in retrospect, partly due to “the widespread need of Germans to view themselves as victims.” The indeed lethal winters of 1946 and 1947 had to be recounted in ever-gloomier language for people to assuage their feelings of guilt for the atrocities of the Nazis, of which so many regular Germans were at least somewhat aware of or involved in.

Whenever Jähner writes of the undisputed suffering and hardships Germans were forced to endure, he calmly contrasts their plight with the abominable fate of Jews and other victims of persecution by

the depraved “master race.” Yet he also notes that the survival instinct tends to override the guilty conscience. This collective phenomenon on display after 1945 is so disturbing as to call into question one’s faith in mankind; yet these doubts are somewhat dispelled by the fact that from this literal and figurative rubble would emerge a society that has become an anti-fascist bulwark among Western democracies.

In the immediate aftermath of the Nazis’ lock on power, order on the streets broke down. Policemen looked at each other in disbelief, wondering whether any of their authority remained. They often just took off their uniforms, burned them or dyed them a different color. Many high-ranking officials committed suicide, jumping out of buildings, poisoning themselves or slashing their wrists. “The ‘nobody time’ had begun,” Jähner writes. “Laws were suspended, nobody was responsible for anything. Nobody owned anything if

they weren’t literally sitting on it. Nobody provided safety. The old power had run away, and the new one hadn’t yet arrived.”

And yet there was already a new can-do spirit taking shape. Jähner takes his readers into the mind of Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, a journalist of sterling anti-Nazi credentials. During the summer of 1945, a mere two months after Hitler’s death, she sat in a demolished but bustling Berlin and recorded in a diary her urge to at last get a grip on life:

The entire city is in a rush of anticipation. Everyone wants to work themselves to the bone, to possess a thousand hands and a thousand brains. The Americans are here, the Brits, the Russians. This is what is important; that we are at the center of activity; that the world powers meet among our ruins; and that we prove to their representatives just how serious we are with

our fervor, how infinitely serious we are with our efforts at redemption and ascent. Berlin is running on all cylinders. If they can now understand us and forgive us, they will get everything from us. Everything! That we renounce National Socialism, that we consider the new to be better, that we work and are principally of good will. We have never been so ripe for redemption.

Jähner evokes picture after picture of a society corrupted, demoralized and freed – all at the same time. The tale of the *Trümmerfrauen* (rubble women) illustrates a more nuanced story than the iconic images of women clearing away rubble in their fancy dresses – the only ones they had left. These women were often forced to work in the clearance of debris – a monumental task that took years to complete. It was part of their denazification requirements or disciplinary provisions for “HwG” women, shorthand for those who had had “frequently alternating sexual partners.” Yet the images of women handing off buckets to one another became a “visual metaphor” for community spirit amid a society rent at the seams. “Reconstruction was presented with a heroic, almost erotic face, something gratefully easy to identify with and to feel proud of, despite defeat,” Jähner notes.

Through all the storylines of the detailed and sweeping book runs a delicate argument not to be mistaken for moral indifference. The author carefully delineates how for some time after 1945, Germany needed to block out the unspeakable crimes it had committed against humanity. Jähner is conflicted about the outcome, as he realizes there would have been no such smooth transformation to stable democracy and open society without the partial amnesia and uncanny zeal that defined the first decade after the war. In a pointed encapsulation, Jähner neatly sums up the unconscious public awareness of the time: “No optimism without bitterness, no grievance without gratitude.” There is but one glaring lesson to be drawn from his story – to fully embrace the persistent ambivalences of history.

LUTZ LICHTENBERGER'S TRANS-ATLANTIC BOOK REVIEW

ALL TOGETHER NOW

In the late 1990s, Heinz Bude became a star German intellectual. The sociology professor wrote an essay published by a small publishing house on low-quality paper: “Generation Berlin” perfectly captured the *Zeitgeist*. Berlin was the nation’s new capital and Bude detected a spirit of transformation in its wake. There would be no more ill-fated notions of German destiny, as evidenced by the horrors of Nazi ideology, or of the student revolts of 1968 and their overwrought mission to transform humanity with half-digested Marxist theories. Instead, a new pragmatist generation would finally cast aside old grievances and outdated ideas and make Germany a modern and individualistic society.

Over the past 20 years, Bude has established himself as a shrewd diagnostician of the many social insecurities of the upper middle class. In his latest volume he muses over the idea of “solidarity, the future of a great idea” (*Solidarität. Die Zukunft einer großen Idee*). Just as when

Camus wrote the *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Bude says, we live “in an age of disillusioned ideologies and overrated science.” There was no way to trace the realities of our personal lives or the events of world history back to a set of laws or principles. Solidarity under these circumstances – i.e. not being able to impose the notion – was not a solution, but a question: “What is worth living for?” Solidarity might often fail to make a major difference on the whole and could come at a high price for the individual. But to be aware of the absurdity of being meant coming together, proving “that we can continue together and [the individual] doesn’t have to give up.”

HEINZ BUDE

Solidarität. Die Zukunft einer großen Idee, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich, 2019

NO MORE WELTANSCHAUNG

Hannah Arendt may well be the political philosopher of the hour. She was born in the north German city of Hanover to secular Jewish parents. In the 1920s, Arendt studied under Martin Heidegger, the young and ingenious superstar of philosophy who became her lover for a time before revealing himself to be a crude anti-Semite and flirting with the idea of becoming the philosophical mastermind of the Nazis. (They ultimately had no use for him; after 1945, Heidegger partly recanted his allegiance and became a recluse.) Arendt fled Germany in 1933, first to Paris and in 1941 to New York, becoming a US citizen in 1951. In 1961, she wrote a series of highly controversial articles for *The New Yorker* about the trial of the German war criminal who organized the transportation of Jews to the concentration and extermination camps. Arendt’s work on the “banality of evil,” later published as *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, made her a household name. She later became a professor at the New School for Social Research and wrote a series of books on political philosophy.

Maike Weißpflug, herself a political theorist in Berlin, has now written a thorough examination of Arendt’s “art of thinking politically.” Weißpflug canvasses the distinct style of Arendt’s “approach to reasoning,” eschewing classical abstract theories that falsely claim objectivity. Instead, the political should be understood as based on individual experiences. As Weißpflug claims in her intellectually engaging portrait, Arendt’s concept of placing truth over *Weltanschauung*, or worldview, “of not playing a role but trying to somehow be human,” has made her the North Star of our crazed times.

MAIKE WEISSPFLUG

Hannah Arendt. Die Kunst, politisch zu denken, Matthes & Seitz, Berlin, 2019

COUNTERREVOLUTIONS

Just like in the US, there’s a bull market abroad for books trying to explain the populist movements of the world, the success of the Trumps, Orbáns and Bolsonaro, the Front National in France, Lega Nord in Italy and the Alternative for Germany.

And now, along comes another contender by the German sociologist Cornelia Koppetsch: *Die Gesellschaft des Zorns. Rechtspopulismus im globalen Zeitalter* (The society of rage. Right-wing populism in the global age). While the surprise hit is written in sufficiently sociological jargon to pass as a scholarly work, it is also refreshingly clear-sighted and devoid of speechifying, patronizing undertones. It faces its subject on equal footing. The German weekly *Die Zeit* called it today’s most bracing book on the matter.

Koppetsch argues that the rise of right-wing parties correlates with a “counter-revolution” against globalism and transnationality. Their rise follows a “collective emotional reflex” against societal change. Koppetsch limns with concision the decline in power of the Western nation state over the past 30 years, from the fall of the Iron Curtain to the repercussions of the 2008 financial crisis, which is unresolved to this day. Governmental institutions no longer have the scope to efficiently assist those most affected by job-market upheaval.

However, Koppetsch argues, today’s divisions run deeper – in an “affective ontological” sense. They pit those feeling secure and in control of their lives in a liberal cosmopolitan world against others who sense a loss of influence over their “habits, views and perceptions – their identity.”

CORNELIA KOPPETSCH

Die Gesellschaft des Zorns. Rechtspopulismus im globalen Zeitalter, transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2019

The deadliest border in the world

Europe's equivalent to the Mexican border is not a wall; it's water



Just another day on the job: the *Iuventa* crew during a 2017 rescue operation in the Mediterranean Sea

BY PETER H. KOEPP

When the catastrophe began, the maritime rescue team on board the *Iuventa* wasn't anywhere nearby. In early May, 3,000 people had set out from Africa in several boats and were now floundering helplessly in flimsy dinghies and worm-eaten wooden vessels along "by far the deadliest border in the world," as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) called the Mediterranean in 2015. The coast of Libya had long since disappeared on the horizon, and the Italian shoreline appeared almost unreachable.

When the group originally set out, the weather had been clear and the sea calm. But then the winds had gotten stronger, with two-meter-high waves rocking the boats, prompting the frightened refugees to cling fast to one another. A number of NGOs had endeavored to help them and succeeded in evacuating unconscious individuals, pregnant women and small children. But those left on board lacked life jackets, and anyone wading through the stink of water in the boat – a mixture of salt, gasoline and feces – subjected themselves to burns on their legs, arms and even lungs.

For its part, the *Iuventa* still had a full six-hour journey before it could reach the very search-and-rescue area it had been forced to leave only three days prior. Over the radio, Dariush Beigui, the first officer on this trip, had heard that there were several boats adrift there, and that one wooden vessel in particular was already sinking. "And we weren't there," he says indignantly, shaking his head and recalling the incident. "We were off taking five people to Lampedusa!"

The order for the *Iuventa* to undertake the seemingly nonsensical trip to Lampedusa had been given by Italy's Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Rome – and it had been unequivocal. According to Beigui, by withdrawing one of four vessels from the rescue operation, the Italian coast guard had "knowingly accepted the possibility of human deaths."

Even at the time, the crew of the *Iuventa* suspected something wasn't right, but they followed the orders given to them nonetheless. Only months later would they find out why the MRCC had ordered them to Lampedusa. "That was the day," says Sascha Girke, the former on-scene coordinator, "they began criminalizing us and our work."

The *Iuventa* has since been confiscated and 10 members of the crew are now under investigation by authorities in Trapani, Sicily. If

legal proceedings go ahead, crew members face up to 20 years in jail and heavy fines. But let's be clear: the authorities are investigating the crew not because they failed to help, but because they tried to help. The fact that justice officials intervened to stop a rescue mission represented a brand new development in the Mediterranean. "It marked the first time," Girke explains, "that a criminal investigation was brought against an NGO for coming to the aid of shipwrecked people."

The *Iuventa* was originally a fish trawler – that is, until four years ago, when 2,000 donors contributed over €150,000 to enable the Brandenburg-based association known as Jugend Rettet ("Youth Rescue") to purchase the 33-by-6.7-meter ship and restore it as a seaworthy vessel. On June 25, 2016, they received their first mission. "Back then," notes Girke, "the navy, coast guard and maritime rescuers were all working on the same side." In other words, they still shared the goal of saving refugees, giving them emergency

"I saw people dying by the thousands in the Mediterranean, and I saw the rescuers. I just had to get involved." In April and May of 2017, Beigui was first officer on the *Iuventa*. It was his second mission.

On May 4, the *Iuventa* found itself just northwest of Tripoli. At 3 a.m. UTC (Coordinated Universal Time, or 5 a.m. CET), on-scene coordinator Sascha Girke radioed "good morning" to the MRCC. "Our intention is to patrol approx. 15 nm from the Libyan coast." He gave the *Iuventa*'s position as 33°14.08'N and 012°25.19'E. The sea was calm; it was a beautiful day in early May. In other words, the conditions were ideal for escape attempts across the Mediterranean.

Less than two hours later, the crew spotted a wooden boat. This was a rare event, as the *Iuventa* was usually given the coordinates of unseaworthy vessels by the MRCC, or sometimes it was another boat that requested support. What happened after that was pretty routine: The *Iuventa* placed a

"We proceed with rescue," radioed Girke to the MRCC, "and take the ppl [people] temporary [sic] on board the *Iuventa*." Girke also spoke via VHF radio with the on-scene coordinator on the *Phoenix*, which belonged to the Malta-based aid organization Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), which also received its order from the MRCC.

The transfer of people from one boat to the other is a dangerous operation. Beigui himself had been in rescue boats on many occasions and seen firsthand how people jump into the water and try to reach their rescuers by swimming to them or grabbing hold of their boat. He had seen desperate parents raise their children from out of overcrowded and crumbling boats. He has had to resist the impulse to immediately reach his arms out to them; indeed, if he were to do that, the parents would inevitably push forward, followed by other passengers, which would lead to capsizing the boat.

On May 4, the *Iuventa* stayed at an appropriate distance. It took

operated by SOS Méditerranée and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the *Vos Hestia* belonging to Save the Children, *Sea Watch 2* and the large *Phoenix* operated by the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), which was originally supposed to have taken on all the passengers on the *Iuventa*.

Some of those passengers were already on board the *Phoenix* when the MRCC instructed that ship's captain to take on only a portion of the refugees. The idea was for 25 people to stay on the *Iuventa* – almost all of them under the age of 18 – and then have the *Iuventa* take them 90 nautical miles north to meet a coast guard ship.

The agitated telephone conversations that followed this order were later summarized by Girke in an e-mail to the MRCC. He would argue that the *Iuventa* could not guarantee the security of these passengers on such a journey due to the ship's unsecured railing, which meant that these young passengers could fall overboard in rocky waters. Also, due to a lack of space below deck, they would be exposed to wind, sun, rain and waves. Plus, supervision at night would be impossible and the crew would be exposed to unacceptable risks. "*Iuventa* is not able to proceed to place of safety" wrote Girke. "And if we transfer the ppl to a place of safety, we are no longer able to assist with SAR in the area."

Not only the *Phoenix*, but also the *Vos Hestia* would have been willing to take in the young refugees, but the MRCC rejected this proposal. There was a major maritime emergency and an urgent request for help from other rescuers, but officials at the MRCC threatened legal consequences. At some point, they started writing in all caps: "PLEASE PROCEED ASAP TO RENDEZVOUS [sic] POSITION," was the message. And "I REMEMBER YOU [sic] THAT YOU CHOOSE THIS MRCC FOR THE SAR CASES. YOU'RE UNDER OUR COORDINATION."

The next morning at 3:09 a.m. UTC, the MRCC gave in a bit, with new "instructions" ordering the *Vos Hestia* to take on 20 of the remaining young passengers. They ordered this transfer to take place immediately, that is, in the middle of the night, two hours before sunrise. This was unusual due to the high level of danger. The *Vos Hestia* was instructed to take them and journey immediately to Sicily. The *Iuventa* was told to "proceed towards CP904 Fiorillo [an Italian coast guard ship] in R/V psn. LAT 34°30'N - LONG. 012°30'E." The instructions were explicit: "CP904 Fio-

riello is already waiting there for you." The MRCC, noted Girke, "was obviously in a hurry. And we knew right away that something wasn't right."

One large RIB remained with the other teams, while the *Iuventa* followed orders and set off northwards with its remaining five passengers. At the rendezvous point, however, there was no CP904 Fiorillo to be seen; instead came the instruction to continue on to Lampedusa, which meant a journey of at least 10 more hours.

Upon arriving in Lampedusa, Girke and several crew members were escorted to the harbor police station and interrogated. For six hours, Girke answered the officials' questions and provided all photos and the ship's logbook. Finally, they had him sign a protocol, but it was in Italian so he couldn't read it. His request to see a translation was rejected, so to avoid wasting any more time, Girke signed it, "contrary to all reason," as he would later say. "I just wanted to get out of there."

On Aug. 1, 2017, the *Iuventa* was once again instructed to dock at Lampedusa, where further interrogations then took place. The day after that, the ship was confiscated, and it has been in the port of Trapani, Sicily, ever since. The official confiscation order proves that local prosecutors there had been investigating the *Iuventa* crew since the fall of 2016. The crew also eventually found out why they had been asked to sail to Lampedusa in May: the wiretaps on the ship were activated on May 6, the day the *Iuventa* was permitted to return to the search and rescue area.

One man who raised his voice against refugees and maritime rescuers in Italy is today that country's minister of the interior: Matteo Salvini of the far-right Lega party. During the election campaign, he had repeatedly called for the confiscation of all NGO rescue ships and for their crews to be prosecuted. Various right-wing parties went to great lengths in the media to insist that the NGOs were financed by "large international powers." This, they argued, made them no better than human traffickers, and the *Iuventa* nothing more than a "taxi del mare." After the elections, Salvini ordered Italian ports to block all ships belonging to maritime rescue operators from mooring.

The lawyer for Jugend Rettet, Nicola Canestrini, has since learned of a notification sent to the Italian secret service by a security contractor who had been installed on the ship belonging to Save the Children, which often



"And we weren't there." Sascha Girke (left) and Dariush Beigui (right) are under investigation for giving refugees a helping hand.

care and escorting them to a safe harbor – and nothing else. In fact, roughly 200 volunteers would go on to participate in 16 *Iuventa* missions that would rescue 14,000 people from drowning.

However, in May 2017, the mood in Italy turned against the refugees – and against the EU, with many Italians feeling that the EU had failed to support their country. Around 160,000 people had crossed the sea and reached the Italian shore in 2016 alone. Right-wing parties in particular started taking an active stance against the maritime rescuers, whom they denounced as "partners to the human traffickers." This is when the *Iuventa* became caught in the crosshairs.

Beigui is an inland ship operator by profession. His cargo is usually diesel fuel. Like many of his fellow rescuers, on several occasions he sacrificed his vacation to work for a good cause. Why?

call to the MRCC, which then ordered the rescue, upon which two 30-knot rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) were put in the water. These two boats had solid bases and each contained 150 life jackets and life rafts for 80 people. The crew then set off to the people in need.

"Yes, they need rescuing," says Beigui emphatically, arguing that people minutes away from drowning are not the only ones who need help. For example, the boat's engine could give out or the occupants might have nothing to eat or drink. "Every refugee boat in the area is in distress. They're simply not capable of reaching any port on their own steam."

Girke reported the ship's position as 33°03.49'N 012°50.2'E, and the MRCC instructed the *Iuventa* to take on 35 individuals from the boats. Almost one hour later, a second wooden boat approached.

many hours before the smaller RIBs had brought all the refugees to the ship, which was not equipped to take them on for a longer period of time or for transport; the *Iuventa* was too small for such tasks and only had one toilet and no cooking facilities. Still, on previous missions, when storm clouds loomed on the horizon, they had taken 480 people on board – even though 120 was the official limit. A large number of them had been in inflatable life rafts that they then tied to the ship.

Back on this particular day, the *Iuventa* rescued 75 male passengers, including 55 minors, before the MRCC instructed them to sail to a different "search and rescue" (SAR) operation three or four nautical miles away, where further refugee boats were in distress and other rescue ships were also occupied with saving the passengers: the *Aquarius*

collaborated with the *Iuventa*. The man sent e-mails to Salvini as well as to Luigi di Maio from the populist Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S), in which he insisted that the rescue missions were no coincidence but rather a direct transfer of refugees, with the *Iuventa* as the last link in a chain of human trafficking. He claimed that the crew had communicated with smugglers via a WhatsApp group and said that they had even dragged an empty refugee boat back into Libyan waters and allowed smugglers to reuse it. In another instance, he argued, they had made it possible for a fisherman or smuggler to dismantle the boat engine and take it with him.

Girke denies these accusations. A report from the Forensic Architecture research group at Goldsmiths College at the University of London also exonerated the crew. Their research findings come to the conclusion that “the seizure of the *Iuventa* is emblematic of a new attempt by European authorities to stem the flow of migration across the Mediterranean.”

The individuals rescued on that day have not been questioned about these events. Canestrini has signaled his readiness to provide the PIN numbers and passwords of the confiscated phones, tablets and computers as soon as an independent expert is put in charge of evaluating the devices and their content.

Italian state prosecutors continue to defend the confiscation of the *Iuventa* as a “preventive measure” designed to thwart further “aid in illegal entry” into the country. Other maritime rescue ships have also been confiscated for months. In 2016 and 2017, there were 13 NGO ships operating on the Mediterranean; in 2016 alone, these ships saved the lives of roughly 180,000 people. Today, according to Canestrini, there is only one NGO ship still out there. He calls it a “Europe-wide wave of repression” and a “campaign against solidarity.”

In the *Iuventa* case, 24 investigations are currently being carried out into search and rescue crews on suspicion of aiding and abetting illegal immigration to Italy. In addition to the 10 *Iuventa* crew members, these also include individuals at Save the Children and Médecins Sans Frontières. A total of more than 100 investigations and criminal cases are underway for so-called “crimes of solidarity,” such as those against aid workers in Lesbos, Tunisian fishermen, Italian mayors, French farmers, Eritrean priests and others.

If the *Iuventa* crew members will actually be charged, they face imprisonment as well as hefty fines. Public prosecutors have set a price of €15,000 for each of the 14,000 refugees rescued and transported, which brings the total to €210 million. All of this is going ahead even though the MRCC ordered the rescue of each and every one of these people. “Not once did we take someone on board without getting a prior order to do so from the control center,” says Girke. “There were also no transfers to other ships that weren’t ordered in advance.”

Beigui is outraged that the very agency “trusted by all seafarers across the globe” participated in this event. On that day back in early May 2017, there were 21 boats in distress in that area alone; five of them – three rubber dinghies and two wooden boats – disappeared. “This means that as many as 1,000 people drowned, many hundreds of which we could have saved.”

In 2018, more than 2,000 refugees died in the Mediterranean. Today, the Libyan Coast Guard alone is responsible for assisting people in maritime distress and monitoring “by far the deadliest border in the world.” But this is not stopping people from drowning. Which is why Girke regretfully reports: “We really should be there now.”

Peter Koepf is editor in chief of *The German Times*.

Swimming to Berlin

Their heroic flight from war-torn Syria made the Mardini sisters, Yusra and Sarah, famous all over the world. They now live very different lives in Germany

BY VERENA MAYER

Two sisters. Their father is a swimming coach; both started swimming at a very young age. They trained, they competed and their lives were like those of lots of children from ordinary middle-class families. Yet there is nothing ordinary about these sisters. They come from Syria where they had to flee the war. From Lebanon they traveled to Turkey, and from there they crossed the Mediterranean to Greece. When the engine of the inflatable boat they and countless other migrants were crammed into suddenly broke down, they leapt into the sea and helped keep the boat above water for several hours. They made it to the coast and from there to Macedonia and Hungary and then finally on to Germany, where they caught the attention of the media. Two female Syrian swimmers who saved others from drowning while fleeing the war – their story catapulted the two young women into the global spotlight.

The girls’ odyssey ended in Berlin in 2015, and from that point on the sisters’ stories have taken diverging paths. Yusra Mardini is now 21

caught between the front lines, how their house was destroyed, how a bomb hit their local pool. After bombs forced the family to move six times in two years, the sisters realized they would rather risk their lives and flee Syria than continue living in a war zone. Their mother then sent her daughters to Europe with a relative. Yusra can still clearly remember sitting with her sister in the plane from Beirut to Istanbul. It was full of Syrians and the cabin crew threatened to arrest anyone trying to bring a life jacket with them. Since fleeing Syria, she has avoided the sea, says Yusra. But she still wanted to keep swimming.

In Arab countries, people look askance at a female swimmer, a woman in a swimsuit, said Mardini in a 2018 interview at Berlin’s Olympic Stadium. “People thought I was just doing it to meet men.” In Germany, she was able to prepare for her next big dream, the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. She trains for three to five hours a day. She might have been a refugee, “but when I’m in the water, I’m an athlete.” She is often asked whether she feels she’s living a dream with her story, which has taken her from a refugee boat to the Olympics and then to meeting the US president and the Pope.

fewer inhabitants. Sarah served as a translator and interpreter, looked after the children and bought washing machines with donated money so the refugees could at least wear clean clothes.

But in the eyes of the Greek authorities, she was committing a crime. In August 2018, Sarah and three dozen other helpers were arrested and accused of human trafficking, membership in a criminal organization, money laundering and spying. It was alleged that Sarah had cooperated with people smugglers and communicated with them over encrypted networks to bring people illegally to Lesbos.

Sarah denies these accusations. She has personal experience with the methods used to exploit people fleeing their countries, so she would never make common cause with human traffickers. Prosecutors had no proof of Sarah’s alleged crimes and in December she was freed on €5,000 bail and allowed to leave Greece for Germany. However, her trial in Greece wages on. Greek authorities are seeking to criminalize the work of voluntary refugee helpers on Greek islands, said Sarah’s lawyer, Zacharias Kesses, at a December press conference in



Becoming butterflies: In 2016, Yusra and Sarah Mardini received the renowned German Bambi award in the “Quiet Heroes” category.

years old. In Germany, she took up where she had left off in Syria: training to swim. She joined the swimming club Wasserfreunde Spandau 04, where sports officials noticed her and nominated her for the new refugee team that was to compete at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Yusra qualified and by the time she clambered out of the pool after her races in 2016, she had become an international star and one of the few feel-good stories of the global refugee crisis. She met Barack Obama and the Pope. *Time* magazine named her one of the world’s most influential teenagers.

Yusra is now also a special ambassador for the UN Refugee Agency. She travels the world and takes the stage at events. In one interview, Yusra announced that she wants to use her fame to give other refugees hope. So she tells her story repeatedly, most recently in a book titled after her favorite swimming stroke – *Butterfly* – in which she recounts how her family’s home in Syria was

But she assures people that they wouldn’t want to trade places with her. She and her sister have lost so much, “and we just want peace.”

This could all end happily ever after. The Mardini’s story could stand as an example of how you can achieve it all, even if you’ve had to leave everything behind to flee a war – that is, if it weren’t for Yusra’s sister Sarah, her elder by three years. Sarah injured her shoulder on their journey to Europe and had to give up swimming. She went to Lesbos, where in 2015 she washed up in an inflatable raft and nobody would sell her any water, even though she had money to buy it. Sarah resolved to save other refugees from this sort of experience. She was active as a lifeguard and helped settle the refugees arriving in boats when they washed up on the coast. She volunteered at the refugee camp on Lesbos, where thousands of refugees still live in the worst possible sanitary conditions in a tent city designed for far

Berlin. Sarah’s case highlights the challenges confronting NGOs, those rescuing people at sea and others helping refugees across Europe; these heroes operate in a legal gray area and face increasing pressure from a range of unsympathetic governments and critics.

The two sisters don’t see much of each other at the moment. They both travel a lot and each has her own life. Yusra is training in Hamburg, while Sarah lives with their parents, who were also able to leave Syria, in the German capital, where she is studying politics and economics at Bard College Berlin. The last time the wider public saw the two sisters together was in 2016, when they were honored with a Bambi Media Award. The award they received was in the “Quiet Heroes” category.

Verena Mayer is an editor for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Berlin.

Carola Rackete did what her conscience told her was right: After 17 days floating in Italian waters of the Mediterranean, with 40 increasingly desperate refugees onboard her rescue boat *Sea Watch 3*, the 31-year-old German captain docked at Lampedusa harbor, without permission from authorities. In so doing, she flouted a decree initiated by Italy’s newly minted interior minister, Matteo Salvini, which forbade ships operated by NGOs from calling at Italian ports. The minister of justice then detained her on June 29 and placed her under house arrest.

Salvini subsequently tweeted: “Law-breaking captain arrested. Pirate ship seized. Big fine on foreign NGO. Migrants all redistributed to other European countries. Mission accomplished.”

UNSAFE HAVEN

Rackete has become a hero for opponents of Salvini’s blockade policy. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas criticized the arrest: “Saving human lives is a humanitarian obligation. Rescue at sea must not be criminalized.” Rackete herself announced: “I am ready to go to jail.” As of the latest reporting, Rackete is supposedly being sued for “battering” a small motorboat belonging to the Italian police. The vessel, with five policemen on board, had to quickly evade the *Sea Watch 3*. Rackete “deeply regretted” the near mishap. As of the printing of this paper on July 2, two defense funds, one in Germany and one in Italy, had already collected €1.3 million to cover Rackete’s legal costs.



PAID FOR BY THE POOR

There once was a world without borders – many millennia ago. Strict border-control measures began only after World War I, claims the sociologist and journalist Harald Welzer in his new bestseller *Alles könnte anders sein. Eine Gesellschaftsutopie für freie Menschen* (Everything could be different. A utopian society for free people). National and ethnic identity became one and the same and obligatory identification cards were introduced, making possible the “ethnic cleansings,” resettlements and genocides that “have left such a lasting moral scar on the 20th century.”

Walls are experiencing a renaissance the world over, according to Welzer. International conflicts are currently giving rise to walls on Cyprus (1), the Korean Peninsula (2) and between India and Pakistan. Illegal migration is the cited cause of walls and fences in Hungary (3), between Turkey and Syria (4), between the US and Mexico (5) as well as between India and Bangladesh. And ethnic and political conflicts are triggering the building of walls between Palestinian territories and Israeli settlements in the West Bank (6), between Saudi Arabia and Iraq as well as through Morocco in the Western Sahara.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the planet has gained no less than 50 new and expansive walls, including in Europe. It would behoove the Europeans to consider “the increase in freedom and quality of life brought by the inexistence of borders.”



The Wurst is over

The German capital has emerged as a hot spot for vegetarian and vegan cuisine – as the city’s marketing bodies are happy to point out

BY SUSANNA GLITSCHER
AND EVA-MARIA HILKER

When Berlin takes time to celebrate its best chefs at the annual Berlin Master Chefs gala dinner, these prize-winning culinary artists are usually asked to do the very thing they’re being honored for: cook. In 2015, Lukas Mraz – head chef at a hip Berlin restaurant at the time – was one such honoree. On that evening, he created something very special, namely a vegan tartar – albeit with a fried egg on top. A couple of courses later, he served a more traditional plate of warm beef tartar with brown butter, soy sauce, mushrooms and roasted onions. People have called Mraz a “wild young chef,” and that night he showed the dinner guests – almost all of them Berlin-based businessmen and businesswomen – just what contemporary cuisine could do. From that moment on, vegetarian and even vegan food culture has been considered socially acceptable in Berlin.

Today, roughly four years later, one might get the impression that the entire country has gone wild for meatless burgers. One US brand, in particular, has become a big hit. According to media reports, their burgers sell out the minute they hit the shelves at major German discount supermarkets.

Indeed, plant-based eating has now emerged as a lucrative new branch in the food industry, with producers using modern strategies to expand their market share. However, as animal welfare, sustainability and climate-friendly policies are all hot topics, conscientious consumers point out that the plant-based burgers are shipped to Germany all the way from California – in copious amounts of packaging to boot.

“Is this the new green schizophrenia?” asked one blogger recently. “For me, eating vegan goes hand-in-hand with a conscious respect for our environment.”

Even though the popular US plant-based burgers do not fulfill

those criteria, they’ve nevertheless struck a nerve among consumers, in particular by calming their bad conscience and suggesting a sensible handling of resources. And it’s true, these days everyone in Germany is aware of the extent to which industrial livestock production involving cattle, pigs and poultry damages the environment.

The younger generation in particular is fighting to create a better and more just future. And the youngest among that group are now an aggressively courted target group in the food industry. Kids simply don’t want to eat meat anymore, especially when they find out where the sausage, schnitzel or burger comes from and that an animal had to die to get it there. “I don’t eat anything that has eyes,” they say.

This often makes it difficult for families to keep the peace at dinner time. So it’s understandable that environmentally conscious parents are grateful for any alternatives to meats and sausages, such as those churned out by Rügenwalder Mühle, one of Germany’s best-known meat product manufacturers.

In Lower Saxony, Rügenwalder Mühle has been connected almost exclusively to meat products for the past 183 years. Since 2014, however, it has been producing vegetarian alternatives designed to perfectly mimic meat. For example, supermarket chains now carry frozen vegan Mühlen steaks, vegetarian Mühlen ground beef and vegetarian Mühlen bratwurst. And revenues are growing fast. In fact,

according to managing director Godo Röben, they’re increasing at the same rate as consumers’ environmental consciousness.

Until only a few years ago, vegans and their missionary attitude towards food consumption were still subject to ridicule from the majority of consumers. They had to buy their food in stores that sold exclusively vegan products, and some vegetarians considered themselves lucky if their carnivorous friends took them to a restaurant serving meat, even if they had to make do with just side dishes.

These days, vegans, vegetarians and carnivores can enjoy a

full dinner together, at least in big cities. Especially for health reasons, the idea of going without meat every once in a while is catching on, and all the more so since prominent TV chefs like Sarah Wiener began campaigning for meatless alternatives.

Stefan Hentschel is a wizard with vegetables. He’s also head chef at the first and only German vegetarian restaurant to receive a Michelin star. Roughly 11 years ago, he helped build up Cookies Cream, a vegetarian restaurant belonging to Cookie, a committed vegetarian and long-standing stalwart of the Berlin club scene. At that time, scandals like mad cow

meaning “to put to the acid test” – this Berlin locale is known to vegans, vegetarians and carnivores alike for using all parts of the plant or animal and foregoing industrial goods and replacement products. “On average, one-third of our guests order vegetarian,” says Köhle. “What was once an exception is now a part of everyday life.”

This kind of peaceful coexistence is not the rule, however. For the majority of people in Germany, a good meal still includes a piece of meat. For the post-war generation, in particular, it remains an expression of a certain standard of living. And

disease had shaken consumers’ trust in the safety of the Big Food industry.

In its first year of business, Cookies Cream hosted countless guests from the club scene, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, in particular. They would eat at the restaurant and then take a flight of stairs directly to the adjoining club without having to wait in line. On the other days, back then, business was slow.

In Berlin’s surrounding countryside, things are still moving comparatively slowly. “In more rural regions,” notes Michael Köhle, “the idea of going without meat is not nearly as widespread as in the cities.” Köhle is the host at Herz & Niere, a restaurant chosen as 2016 Host of the Year by the Berlin Master Chefs. In spite of its somewhat grisly name – it means heart and kidney in English but also alludes to a phrase

meaning “to put to the acid test” – this Berlin locale is known to vegans, vegetarians and carnivores alike for using all parts of the plant or animal and foregoing industrial goods and replacement products. “On average, one-third of our guests order vegetarian,” says Köhle. “What was once an exception is now a part of everyday life.”

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this applies especially to men. The German magazine *Beef* knows this and even advertises its monthly publications with the motto “Männer kochen anders” (men cook differently). For one restaurant opening, the magazine went so far as to ban women from participating – supposedly as an advertising gag.

Germany’s tradition of hearty food has yet another key element, namely the so-called “Brauhaus” or brew house. And now, even in this realm, Berlin is showing that it can do things differently. “We focus on vegetables,” says Ben Pommer of very popular BRLO Brwhouse, located at the edge of the always-crowded Gleisdreieck park. “Vegetables are exciting, vegetables are multifarious. With the help of different cooking and preparation methods, you can make vegetables so amazing in terms of their texture, appearance and taste that you won’t miss meat at all.” At Pommer’s brewery, meat plays only a subordinate role. However, as so many of his guests eat meat on a daily basis, he still hears a lot of people say “wow” when they see the menu.

Hentschel is convinced that Berlin’s food tourism promises “more turnover than its party tourism.” Food lovers the world over continue to travel to Berlin to dine at every locale on their culinary hit list. And today, vegetables have acquired a new and more prominent status on that list, with many Michelin-star restaurants now offering a separate vegetarian menu.

Marketing experts for this kind of Berlin tourism love this trend. They now cleverly advertise the German capital as a “vegetarian and vegan hot spot.” Even meat-loving Brazilians are said to have discovered the city as a culinary metropolis for vegetarian and vegan cuisine.

Susanna Glitscher is project manager and head of content for Berlin Food Week.
Eva-Maria Hilker is editor and publisher of the food magazine *EssPress Berlin*.



EMILEY

Foodie fantasies: Haute cuisine made vegan in Berlin

Circling the square

The brouhaha at Walter-Benjamin-Platz

BY JONATHAN LUTES

A week ago, I set out on a subway for Charlottenburg, one of the swankier districts in Berlin and the birthplace of Walter Benjamin (1892–1940). My destination was the square named in honor of Benjamin, the German Jewish philosopher and cultural critic who ultimately took his own life in 1940 rather than be captured and most likely killed by his Nazi pursuers.

I was determined to get to the bottom of a controversy that’s surfaced of late in the German press. A recent edition of the German architectural journal *ARCH+* had dedicated an entire issue to *Rechte Räume* – German for “right spaces” – which documents and elaborates on various corners of Europe that have a right-wing architectural, and thus political, orientation. One essay was dedicated to Walter-Benjamin-Platz. But how could this be? A square named for one of the great 20th-century Jewish intellectuals in the most liberal city in one of Europe’s most ardently anti-fascist countries?

While most German print media outlets have weighed in on the merits of the *Rechte Räume* piece, including *Der Spiegel*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Die Zeit*, and most Berlin dailies, few question that it’s

taken so long for the controversy to come to the fore. Not long after arriving at the scene, I realized why. Two features of the site are mentioned in virtually all the reporting.

The first is the “bleak, cold and naked” (*Stuttgarter Zeitung*), exceedingly long pair of façades supported by Spartan colonnades that line the entirety of the square’s two sides that don’t face the street. While this upright linearity and stone complexion undeniably recall the building style of the Nazis as well as the martial architecture of most authoritarian regimes – especially Mussolini’s fascism – this general feeling the square exudes is not unique to Walter-Benjamin-Platz, in Berlin or even in Charlottenburg. After all, there are plenty of Nazi-era buildings that survived the war and have been repurposed by the state or are in private hands. And it’s also true that some individual elements of fascist architecture have not been thoroughly discounted by social or architectural critics, so their mere employment is not a cause for immediate dismissal, but it certainly raises an eyebrow.

Especially when coupled with the second feature cited in the media, which is the focal point of all of the outrage – the engraving in a paving stone of three lines, translated into German, of an Ezra Pound poem:

WITH USURA HATH NO MAN
A HOUSE OF GOOD STONE.

EACH BLOCK CUT SMOOTH
AND WELL FITTING,

THAT DESIGN MIGHT COVER
THEIR FACE.

A few facts to help the reader understand why this has caused offense: Pound (1885–1972), an American, was an anti-Semite, as he himself admitted late in life with regret; he was indicted (and acquitted for reasons of insanity) by the US for treason, primarily for broadcasting propaganda for Mussolini that included calls for a more successful pogrom targeting more powerful Jews than the “small Jews” usually killed, as well as his claim that “Adolf Hitler was a Jeanne d’Arc, a saint. He was a martyr”; “usura” is Italian for usury, the unethical lending of money with interest, which is an ancient stereotype for Jewish

crime and a justification for pogroms; and, the poem is unattributed.

The reason it took some time that day for me to feel the controversy I had read so much about was that the paving stone bearing the inscription is almost impossible to find. One yard wide and a foot long, it is positioned neither at the latitudinal or longitudinal center of a public space as long as a football field and about 25 yards wide. And for most of the day, the quote sits in the shade of an olive tree. After searching for 10 minutes, I gave up and asked a bookseller, whose shop is right on the square, and he politely gestured in the direction of the olive tree, and then it still took me a minute and some hollering by the man before I saw it at my feet.

The poem’s lack of attribution and obscure location left me with the feeling that the quote was a sort of dog whistle for the right. Verena Hartbaum, the author of the *ARCH+* piece, called it an “anti-Semitic message in a bottle” smuggled into the German present from the time of Italian fascism. Hans Kollhoff, the architect of the Walter-Benjamin-Platz project, when confronted in an interview with *Der Spiegel*, claimed that the poet blamed capitalism, not explicitly Jewish capitalists, for the world wars.

He went on to say that the accusation of anti-Semitism is “preposterous and fully unacceptable,” and that “Pound was no anti-Semite.” Needless to say, this is hard to square with what we know about Pound.

The only thing more difficult to find on the site than the Pound quote was any information at all about Walter Benjamin, the honoree of the square – no engraving, no plaque, not even his years of birth and death. After circling the square once more, I stopped at the bakery directly on the square and asked the woman who served me a coffee: “Who was this Walter Benjamin anyway?” “No idea,” she answered, “some German, I reckon.” If even someone who spends most their time working at Walter-Benjamin-Platz knows next to nothing about the man, perhaps a memorial plaque would be in order, and maybe, beside the Pound poem, this line from the end of his most celebrated essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935):

ALL EFFORTS TO MAKE
POLITICS AESTHETIC
CULMINATE IN ONE THING: WAR.

Jonathan Lutes is an editor of *The German Times*.



Theory and practice

With the US as a role model, Berlin is working harder than any other European city to help its homeless. But the capital's efforts also create a number of problems

BY FRANK BACHNER

The man hit her. He hit her hard and it hurt like hell. But Sabine Müller* accepted the pain. She clung to the illusion that the man who beat her time and again loved her. It was only once he had thrown her out of the apartment – when she found herself on the street, desperate and destitute – that she knew it couldn't have been love.

Sabine lived on the streets of Berlin for five years. For short periods of time, she stayed at a women's emergency shelter. That facility had only one shower for all the residents. Today, however, she has her very own shower. She even has her own apartment. It was a welcome stroke of luck.

Sabine is one of 25 homeless people, including 10 women, who were able to take the step from a rough life on the street to the sanctuary of their own apartment. These people were supported by the Berlin-based projects known as Housing First Frauen and Housing First Berlin, two initiatives that organize apartments for single individuals who've been homeless for a long time. For most of these people, the act of finding an apartment they can afford is an exceedingly difficult undertaking. Berlin's department for integration, labor and social services is heading up the overall project; it spent €143,000 in 2018 and will spend €580,000 in 2019. By the end of 2021, the plan is to get 80 individuals settled in their own apartments.

Housing First is not a Berlin original. The idea comes from the US, where a woman named Tanya Tull developed the first Housing First program in Los Angeles in 1988. Tull was tired of standing idly by and decided to help improve the plight of homeless families with small children. Housing First is now an established aid program in many countries.

But no other city in Europe is as committed to helping the homeless as Berlin. In the winter, the homeless shelter known as Berliner Kältehilfe (aid against the cold) offers 1,200 emergency overnight accommodations. In another facility, people can charge their mobile phones and even bring their dogs, and

anyone who shows up is considered a "guest." Berlin also has a *Kältebus*, a bus that collects homeless people in danger of freezing on the streets. A total of 200 places are available all year round for emergency shelter, and homeless people without any health insurance are treated in particular clinics free of charge. Since 2018, Berlin also has a 15-bed medical station where homeless people who've received emergency treatment at the hospital are able to recover for up to four weeks. In general, homeless people in Berlin are tolerated, even if they don't have legal residency status in the city.

The woman responsible for the political side of this commitment has a background in social work and trade unions; Elke Breitenbach of the Left Party is Berlin's Senator for Social Services. For her, Housing First is part of a larger battle plan to effect social change and get as many homeless people permanently off the streets.

It is a grand humanitarian concept and represents an ideal of charity and brotherly love. The only problem with the theory is that it often comes up against a cold, harsh reality. Indeed, Berlin is an example of how altruism can quickly reach its limits.

The official idea was introduced with much fanfare in Janu-

ary 2018. Experts subsequently debated how to combat homelessness at a strategy summit led by Breitenbach. When it was over, Ulrike Kostka, chairman of the social organization Caritas, said: "I am proud that we are a capital of the heart." And, as the politicians announced, Berlin's heart was apparently quite big: "Every homeless person in the city, no matter what country they come from, no matter what their status is, will be given a permanent place to stay, and, of course, if possible, an apartment. And every homeless person will be given medical treatment."

Accommodation for everyone no matter where they come from? And medical care? It wasn't long before Breitenbach's phone started ringing off the hook. Media from all over the world had one question for her: Is it true?

Yes, it was true.

Roughly 30,000 homeless people live in emergency accommodations and collective living facilities in Berlin. While around 6,000 live entirely on the street, no one knows the exact number. Many of them come from Poland, southeast Europe and Russia. Nobody can say how many people have made their way to Berlin to benefit from the promised permanent accommodation and medical care, but news

of such a policy is sure to get around.

Berlin's district offices are required by law to provide a couple of weeks of accommodation to any homeless person that requests it. But the law also says that citizens from the EU who haven't found a job after three months – or who can no longer prove that they're actively looking for one – are required to return to their homeland. For non-EU citizens, even stricter rules apply. Hamburg, for example, is a city that takes great effort to compel such people to travel home. It is also a city where the number of homeless people from eastern Europe has decreased.

The Berlin approach is considerably softer. The city doesn't put any pressure on homeless people to actually leave, and whoever doesn't elect to go voluntarily can simply continue living there.

But does this mean that these people are also to be given accommodation? Is that even possible in a city where the locals themselves can barely find affordable housing? It's not surprising that some Berliners now see the homeless as presenting an actual problem.

And this problem has manifested itself in other ways as well. In 2017, rats infested a so-

called "wild camp" inhabited by homeless people in the district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. The rodents scuttled between dirty mattresses, leftovers and garbage, thereby posing a public health risk and fostering the spread of disease.

"The situation with homelessness has become more extreme," district officials announced at the time, and proceeded to have the camp vacated. Other camps suffered a similar fate. The city then held a strategy summit to tackle the problem. However, the summit ended up sending out the signal that Berlin could still create accommodating conditions for homeless people.

This has certainly made the situation even worse. Additional "wild camps" had to be vacated due to complaints from nearby residents. Plus, the district health offices have also sounded the alarm. After all, homeless people lie on park benches, under train bridges and in metro stations, while many of them are aggressive and drunk and scare people.

Berlin's department for social services is now walking back its original claims. They no longer speak of shelters for all homeless people no matter where they come from. The department is now planning to institute a process whereby a person's claim to permanent accommodation must

first be examined. If an individual does not fulfill all the criteria, they will not receive a permanent place to stay.

At Berlin's central bus station, some of the busses are shuttling homeless people back to their home countries in eastern Europe, with the districts covering the travel costs. In these cases, however, the bus ride is voluntary and the number of passengers is manageable. In the meantime, the number of homeless people on the streets is increasing.

The latest proposed solution to the problem is to create official campsites for the homeless, with sanitary facilities and social workers on hand to provide advice on assistance programs. Ideally these would be set up on unused open spaces that are not near any residential buildings. This is yet another project that came to Berlin from the US – a camp city has already been built for homeless people in Seattle.

But there's still the issue of healthcare. Berlin's City Mission already operates an outpatient clinic for homeless people near the main railroad station, where volunteer doctors and nurses each provide four-hour office hours two times a week.

The head nurse at City Mission responds with an exhausted smile when she hears that all homeless people in Berlin are to receive medical care. "In practice," she says, "it simply isn't feasible."

Today, Berlin's City Mission treats roughly 40 patients every week. "Where are thousands of homeless people supposed to be examined?" the nurse asks. Most patients have to be washed first, she notes, and some of them have lice. This means that medical professionals treating such patients need additional staff, not to mention all the other related costs.

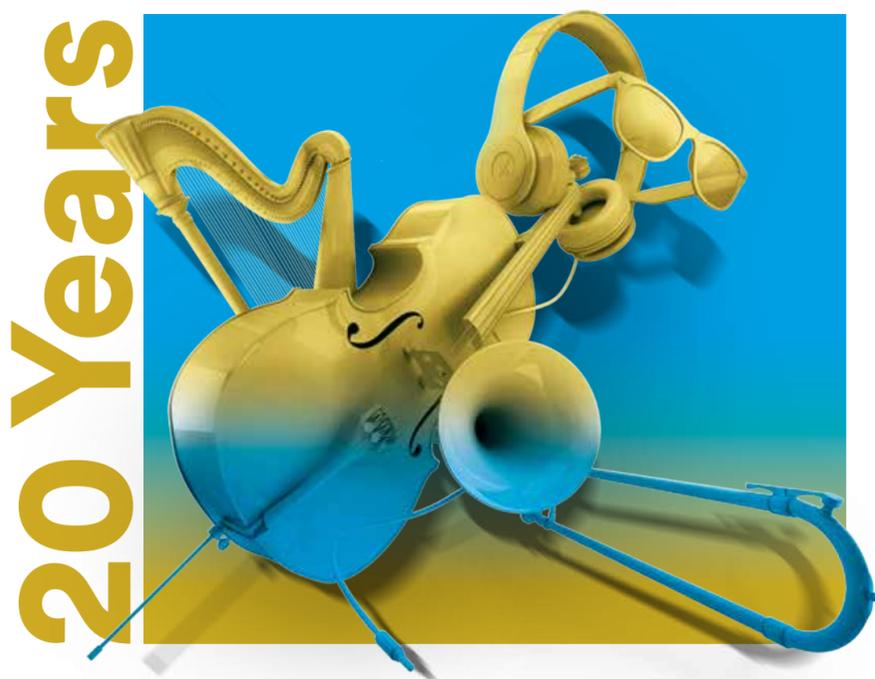
No one at the city's department for social services still talks about providing medical care for all homeless people. The goal at this point is to provide as much care as possible for people who have a right to receive it. But maybe even that is an illusion.

**Name changed for purposes of anonymity*

Frank Bachner is a metro editor at the Berlin daily *Der Tagesspiegel*.



A room of their own: Emulating Los Angelinos, Berliners are looking for apartments to house the homeless.



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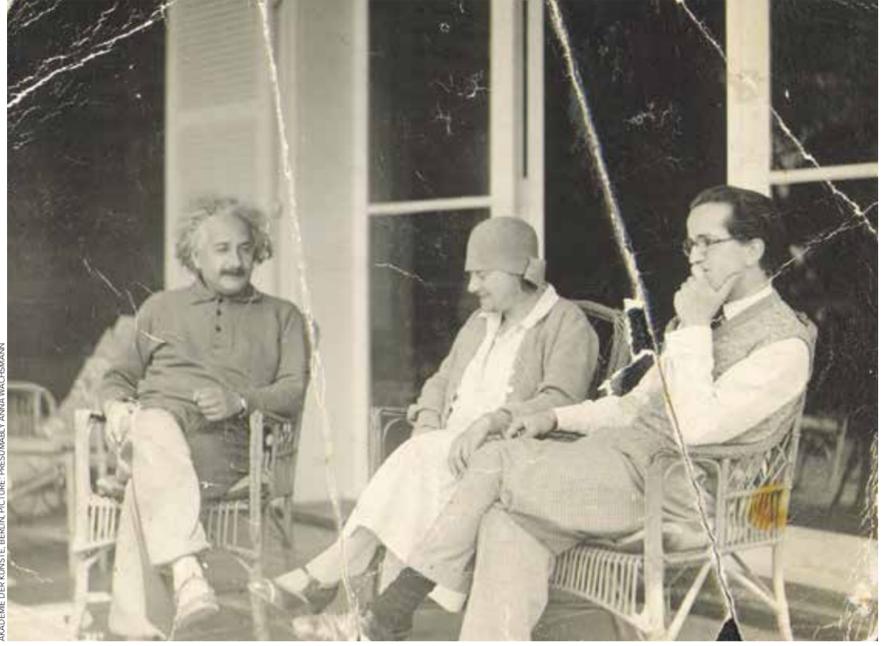
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Starter home: Wachsmann's first work, the summer house designed for the Einsteins



At the Caputh crib: Albert Einstein with his wife Elsa and architect Konrad Wachsmann in 1930 on the porch of the Einsteins' summer house

Summering with the Einsteins

Konrad Wachsmann was a pioneer in industrial construction and a highly regarded architecture professor in the US

BY KLAUS GRIMBERG

In his pursuit to impress the great physicist Albert Einstein, Konrad Wachsmann resolved to put on an extraordinary performance. As chief architect at the construction firm of Christoph & Unmack, which specialized in manufacturing timber buildings, Wachsmann borrowed the fancy limousine and driver of the firm's director and set off from the small Saxon town of Niesky. It was the spring of 1929 and Wachsmann was headed to the village of Caputh near Potsdam, half an hour outside Berlin, where the Einsteins were looking to build a timber summer home directly on Lake Templin.

The young, ambitious architect was fully aware that his opportunity had come, and he pitched his design to Einstein and his wife with a great deal of vim and vigor. Although his audacious masquerade was soon exposed, the Einsteins took pleasure in the ideas of this brash young man. Wachsmann got the contract and ended up designing the couple's modest yet picturesque wooden house, which was to become a beloved summer retreat for Einstein and his family until they left Germany for good in 1932.

For Wachsmann, what began in Caputh was not only a lifelong friendship with Einstein; he also gained independence as an architect and would go on to work in many major cities across the world. In retrospect, however,

the almost four years he spent in Saxon seclusion proved to be the most formative phase in his professional life. In early 1926, the then-destitute university graduate had made his way to Christoph & Unmack in Niesky upon the suggestion of his teacher and mentor, the renowned architect Hans Poelzig. Upon arriving at the firm, Wachsmann had no tangible plan other than to stay for four weeks and eat as much as he could.

Contrary to his expectations, the barely 25-year-old architect did not find himself in the clutches

of the workshops. He delved with increasing dash into the innovative methods of building wooden houses with prefabricated parts in economical and yet varied ways. This architectural approach would carry him through his entire professional career.

In Niesky, Wachsmann quickly worked his way up from a simple constructor to chief architect. And it was in this function that he created the *Direktorenhaus* (director's residence) for Christoph & Unmack in 1927. With its modern, Bauhaus-inspired formal language,



of rural tristesse; he instead felt immersed in a world of fascination. In the huge production halls of Christoph & Unmack, timber buildings were being industrially fabricated and produced in series. From that moment on, Wachsmann became an enthusiastic supporter of rational and standardized construction methods and spent day and night in

the structure is considered an outstanding example of industrialized prefabricated construction to this day.

Wachsmann's highly functional *Blockhaus* has a clean cubic structure with dividing walls that are inserted through grooves in the outer walls. This gives the façade a taut, almost skin-like character. Yet another new feature was the

possibility to vary the rooms on the ground floor by means of sliding doors. The construction was technically precise down to the smallest detail and also tailored to serial prefabrication.

Wachsmann was of Jewish origin and, after the Nazis came to power, made the wise decision not to return to Germany from his study abroad in Rome. He was eventually interned in France and ultimately managed to emigrate to the United States thanks to the intercession of his father figure and friend, Albert Einstein.

in nine hours without the workers having to get their fingers dirty.

Although the company started off successfully, Gropius and Wachsmann ended up losing money and had to give up their business in the early 1950s. Needless to say, visionary architects are not always good businessmen.

As a university professor and scientist, however, Wachsmann went on to great international renown. The idea of the universal usability of individual components drove his theoretical considerations throughout his entire life. Among other innovations, he developed the "Wachsmann knot," an ingenious fastening system consisting of different wooden elements that can be used in almost any construction. Wachsmann also became famous for the concept of "teamwork" in architecture. According to his theory, the full team of experts shared responsibility for each building they made – a revolutionary suggestion in the 1950s and 1960s.

Wachsmann returned to his home country of Germany in 1978, just two years before his death. He was officially invited to act as an expert on the restoration of Einstein's summer house in Caputh, which at the time lay behind the Iron Curtain in East Germany.

The 78-year-old took the opportunity to visit a number of sites from his childhood and early years as a professional. He was particularly drawn to his native city of Frankfurt (Oder). In spite of his many years abroad, he still saw the city – which had become a border town to Poland after World War II –

as his home. In a final act of reconciliation, he requested that he be buried there.

At the time, the wooden house Wachsmann had built in Niesky was still the district office of the local socialist youth organization known as the Free German Youth (FDJ). The house was only listed as an historical monument in 1983 after American architectural connoisseurs called attention to the importance of the structure. After the collapse of East Germany in 1989, it took 25 years before the house could be restored to its original splendor and re-opened as a museum. Since that day, the building at the southeastern tip of Saxony has attracted over 10,000 guests annually, including many groups of young architecture students from all over the world, who visit the site as a way of locating the beginnings of Wachsmann's theoretical cosmos.

Wachsmann once summed up the importance of his early years in the following way: "Everything that came after that, everything that took place in Berlin, New York, Tokyo, Chicago, London, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Zurich and Warsaw, it all began in the Moravian Church village of Niesky. In that timber house factory, I discovered the path that led me to a turning point in building."

For more information, visit www.wachsmannhaus-niesky.de

Klaus Grimberg is a freelance journalist based in Berlin.



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