

Palin, Sarah: *Going Rogue. An American Life*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers 2010. ISBN: 9780061939907; 448 S.

Rezensiert von: Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, Gloria Center, Herzliya

That fateful night changed a lot – not only for Sarah Palin and her family. Then Alaska's governor delivered an electrifying acceptance speech. Thereafter, she shot off like a comet in the vice presidential nomination.

A star was born the night of September 3, 2008 at the Republican convention in Minneapolis. The starlets of her orbit moved behind her: a beautiful family of five children and her husband Todd. Their oldest son Track was preparing for his yearlong deployment in Iraq. The youngest, Trig, an infant with special needs, later became the target of despicable attacks in the media.

However, America's old-new spirit is revitalizing out of Alaska. After reading her memoirs, *Going Rogue: An American Life*, the reader may conclude that Palin is indeed very American. Yet her presence seems to provoke many. While life in America has changed dramatically, Sarah Palin adheres to traditional values, such as family, work, church, and common sense.

From 2006-2009, she served as governor of Alaska, America's largest and oil rich state. Palin was the youngest person and first woman elected to this office. As governor, she successfully fought against the old boys network and corruption and promoted energy independence, ethics reform and a flourishing private sector. Since she and her husband, Todd, managed a family business in commercial fishing, Palin was aware of the needs of the economy's backbone and engaged in substantial reforms.

Palin was born on February 11, 1964, in Sandpoint, Idaho. Her family moved to Skagway, Alaska when she was an infant. Her father worked as a teacher, her mother as a school secretary. Reflecting on her childhood, Palin recalls: „My parents gave us [their four children] equal opportunity and expectations.“ They were expected to work, build, chop, hunt, fish, and fight equally. She did not subscribe to radical mantras of the early femi-

nist era. But she was a beneficiary of the 1972 legislation insuring equal opportunity to both sexes in education and athletics.

After completing high school and studying at several colleges in Hawaii and Idaho, in 1987, Palin received her B.A. in communications and journalism at the University of Idaho. It took five years because she paid for her education and had to take off a semester to work in order to pay the tuition fees. Her college years coincided with the presidency of Ronald Reagan, whom Palin regards as one of the most inspiring men ever to occupy the White House. At the age of eighteen, she voted for him. After he took the oath of office, she recalls, Iranian militants released 52 Americans held hostage for 444 days. Palin wondered why President Jimmy Carter allowed the United States to be humiliated and pushed around.

Reagan's policies made sense to her as a believer in individual rights and responsibilities rather than heavy-handed government intervention and in free market principles that included reward of hard work, respect for equality, support for a strong military, and a belief in American exceptionalism. At this time, she became a Republican.

From 1992-1996, Palin served in several executive positions in the City Council of Wasilla, her place of residence. She was elected mayor and served until 2002. Her book recalls the events of September 11, 2001. She received a phone call to turn on the news. She then learned of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had been hit and the crash in Pennsylvania. For the first time, the authorities had ordered every plane out of the sky. She wondered if the terrorists would strike next at the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Her parents traveled from Wasilla to New York to volunteer with the Wildlife Services near the World Trade Center; keeping predators and pests away while detectives searched through evidence and remains. At 37, Palin belonged to those generations which called 9/11 their traumatic event.

Relating to the vetting discussions regarding her candidacy, she believes that her knowledge of the history of the Middle East conflict equaled that of most Americans. Here, the limitations of Americans, who live

a whole content life in their homeland, are noteworthy. Some Americans lack an international perspective. They cannot compare directly regions or government systems. School boards recognize this lacuna and send students to Europe for two weeks. While they return home safely, it is still hard to attain an adequate understanding of other regions. The reader may wonder if more Americans had experience abroad and gained knowledge of comparative global systems, some mistakes could be avoided in making choices at election time.

After her failed vice-presidential campaign, the media did not cease harassing the Palins and their children. Sarah Palin's legal bills reached half a million dollars. She could not govern Alaska properly, despite the fact that her approval rating remained over fifty percent. Palin had the highest rating of a dozen governors and only three surpassed her. On July 3, 2009, she declared her resignation as governor, eighteen months before the term's end. Ever since, there is ongoing speculation as to whether she will run for the Republican presidential nomination in the elections of 2012. According to some, at the end of 2010, she has stopped short of this goal.

As a private citizen, Sarah Palin embarked upon one of the happiest periods of her life. Her memoirs, *Going Rogue* were published in November 2009 and were followed a year later by *America by Heart*. Both were best-sellers. She was able to straighten out her finances and to act independently. In early 2010, she became the keynote speaker at the inaugural Tea Party convention in Nashville.

The midterm elections showed that she is still a powerful figure. Her former rival's party suffered a setback. Should she go for the presidential challenge? The reader may turn to her memoirs to find out. It is clear that she is neither an ideologue nor an apologist for her country's history. She is not confused about her identity and does not appear unreliable to its allies or comforting for its foes. Palin does not envision herself as a distributor of wealth for „social justice“ or a lawmaker against a majority of voters. Instead, she presumably brings down-to-earth reasoning and proven family principles into the office as seen from the yin of the yang side.

Chinese, American, Indian, Russian and Islamic affairs do shape national security. *Going Rogue* is an eloquent read and a hopeful statement of current history.

Wolfgang G. Schwanitz über Palin, Sarah: *Going Rogue. An American Life*. New York 2010, in: H-Soz-Kult 04.03.2011.