
IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST

The Changing Image of German Jewry
after 1945

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At its first postwar congress, in Montreux, Switzerland, in July 1948, the political commission of the World Jewish Congress passed a resolution stressing “the determination of the Jewish people never again to settle on the bloodstained soil of Germany.”¹ These words expressed world Jewry’s widespread, almost unanimous feeling about the prospect of postwar Jewish life in Germany. And yet, sixty years later, Germany is the only country outside Israel with a rapidly growing Jewish community. Within the last fifteen years its Jewish community has quadrupled from 30,000 affiliated Jews to approximately 120,000, with at least another 50,000 unaffiliated Jews. How did this change come about?

It belongs to one of the ironies of history that Germany, whose death machine some Jews had just escaped, became a center for Jewish life in post-war Europe. The number of Jewish Displaced Persons or DPs (concentration camp survivors and Jews who had fled to the Soviet Union during the war) in only the American Zone of Germany increased from 39,902 in January 1946 to 145,735 in December of the same year.² Some areas that Hitler did not have to make *judenrein*, because Jews never had lived there, now were populated by several hundreds or thousands of Jews. The numbers of the Jewish population in unlikely Bavarian places such as Feldafing, Föhrenwald, Pocking, and Landsberg approached those of the pre-war Bavarian centers of Jewish life, such as Munich and Nuremberg. Bavaria was one of the very few places in Europe where the Jewish population one year after the Holocaust was higher than at any time before. To be sure, this phenomenon was a temporary one but, during their stay in Germany, the Jewish DPs developed a wide-ranging network of religious, social, and cultural institutions. Of the approximately 250,000 Jewish DPs who went through Germany in the postwar years, approximately ten percent remained there.

The Eastern European DPs were the largest and most prominent group of Jews living in Germany immediately after the war. They were not alone, however; at the same time, there existed a small group of German Jews who had survived the Nazi terror within Germany itself. Approximately 15,000 German Jews were liberated in 1945, some of whom had been in hiding, others in concentration camps. Most of them had had only very loose contacts with the Jewish communities before 1933, and a high percentage of them had survived only because they had been protected to a certain degree by a non-Jewish spouse or parent. More than two-thirds of the members of the Berlin Jewish community of 1946 were intermarried or children of mixed marriages. In some smaller communities all of the members were either married to non-Jews or were Jews only according to Nazi definition.

A considerable number of Jewish communities were officially reestablished as early as 1945. The Jewish community of Cologne resumed its activities even before the end of the war, in April 1945.³ By 1948, more than 100 Jewish communities had been founded, and a total of some 20,000 members were registered in the reestablished communities in 1948. Thus there developed two distinct groups of Jews living in Germany after 1945: a large number of East European Displaced Persons who came more or less by chance to Germany, many of whom again lived in camps and expressed their wish to leave the country as soon as possible, and a small group of German Jews, most of whom had been highly assimilated and connected with their German surroundings because of their non-Jewish spouses or parents.

The principal question that divided East European and German Jewish Holocaust survivors in post-war Germany was to stay or to go. The officially expressed attitudes of the two groups concerning this question differed substantially. Most Jewish DP organizations, on the one hand, regarded their stay on unholy German earth as a short interlude before emigration to the Jewish state that was to be built up in Palestine and that needed their support. The German-Jewish organizations, on the other hand, expressed their willingness to help in the process of the foundation of a new Germany with democratic structures.

It is a psychologist's task and not that of a historian to analyze the reasons why Jews stayed or settled in the postwar Germanys. It may suffice here to state that there was more than one reason: some were just not able to move again to a foreign place and to learn a new language after all they had been through; others had found German non-Jewish partners; others again had established themselves economically; finally there were those German Jews who returned immediately after the war to help building up a new and democratic Germany. Those political idealists could be found more frequently in the East, where the more prominent Jews lived in the first postwar years: the writer Arnold Zweig returned from

Palestine, Anna Seghers from Mexico, and quite a few leading Communist politicians were at least of Jewish descent. In absolute numbers, however, the Jewish presence in East Germany was almost negligible, especially after many Jews had left in the tumultuous weeks of antisemitic propaganda in the late Stalinist years 1952/53. This wave of emigration left only about 1,500, mainly elderly, Jews in the Jewish communities of Eastern Germany, a number that was further reduced to 350 by the late 1980s.⁴

I will concentrate here on the attitude of the world Jewish community toward Jews in West Germany, an attitude that was clearly negative in the beginning but changed over the course of time. The World Jewish Congress' 1948 de-facto ban on Jews residing permanently in Germany often is mentioned in connection with an analogous reciprocal ban allegedly issued by Jewish authorities after the 1492 expulsion from Spain. A closer look reveals that in Spain no credible evidence exists of such an official rabbinical ban or *herem*. Apart from that, the situation was indeed quite different from that in post-1945 Germany. We should not forget that it was the Spanish monarchy that expelled the Jews and did not allow them to resettle in their realm for a few centuries. Even if some rabbis had declared a ban on Jewish life in Spain in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, it would not have made any difference. They could not have settled there anyway.

In Germany, the situation after 1945 was almost the opposite: as two German states arose a few years after the war had ended, both claimed to represent a new, a democratic Germany, and the successful integration of Jews could be perceived as a distinction from the old authoritarian Germany. The presence of Jews served as a litmus test for the new democracies. Thus, any official declaration from a Jewish side that Jews should not settle there did in fact matter and was registered, also by foreign observers. In an interview with the *Montreal Daily Star*, John J. McCloy, the United States High Commissioner for

Germany, expressed his regret “that the World Jewish Congress felt it necessary to warn Jews to leave Germany. I have always believed that it would be most beneficial if Germany could present to the world after the disastrous example of the past a spectacle of tolerance and good neighbourliness.”⁵ And at a conference of the future on the Jews in Germany, convened in Heidelberg in 1949, McCloy made a similar statement: “What this community will be, how it forms itself, how it becomes a part and how it merges with the new Germany, will, I believe be watched very closely and very carefully by the entire world. It will, in my judgement, be one of the real touchstones and the test of Germany’s progress towards the light.”⁶

The Declaration of Montreux was of course no rabbinical ban, no herem in the narrow sense of the word. It served, however, as a moral stigma on those Jews who despite the warning remained on the “bloodstained territory.” Thus, Chaim Yachil (Hoffmann), the first Israeli consul in Munich, declared categorically: “All Jews must leave Germany.” Those who stayed were for him “a source of danger for the entire Jewish people....Those who are tempted by the fleshpots of Germany must not expect that Israel or the Jewish people should provide them with services for their convenience.” This, of course, was a thinly veiled threat that the world Jewish community, and Israel in particular, were to isolate the few remaining Jews in Germany. The American-Jewish writer Ludwig Lewisohn shared this opinion and predicted that the remaining Jews not only of Germany but of Europe as a whole would become “outcasts, paupers, untouchables, in separate quarters of Europe” who would live a “life without dignity, creativity, and hope.” And one of the leaders of the Jewish Displaced Persons, Samuel Gringauz, gave a programmatic speech entitled “Adieu Europe.” On another occasion he stated categorically that for the surviving Jews Europe was no longer associated with the art treasures of Florence or the Cathedral of Strasbourg, with Westminster Abbey or Versailles. In the collective Jewish mind, he continued,

Europe stood for the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the Russian pogroms, and the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Some voices were more cynical, as soon as they noticed that not everyone had emigrated even after they could. “Let them stay where they are,” one former German Zionist declared. “Let them wait in their beloved fatherland until their throats are slit too.”⁷

The *official* positions of the world Jewish community differed with respect to the fate of Jews in postwar Germany. The Zionist Jewish Agency, and later the State of Israel, were the most adamant in their resistance to any resurgence of Jewish life on German soil. In December, 1949, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* captured that feeling: “Only a complete severance of ties between the Jews of Israel and those who, for whatever reasons, still prefer to remain in Germany, will bring the latter face to face with the necessity of deciding to leave Germany at once or remain outside the Jewish camp.”⁸ A few months later, the Israeli Consulate in Munich (which was not accredited to the German state, but to the Allied powers) stopped granting preferred treatment to the DPs who remained in Germany, thus sending them the signal that they should not expect any further assistance from the State of Israel. This policy coincided with the embarrassing fact that some Jewish Displaced Persons who had made *aliyah* and settled in Israel were now returning to Germany, escaping war and economic hardship.⁹ The politics of exclusion continued. In 1951, the German Zionist Organization was not invited to the Zionist Congress. A year earlier, a German delegation was allowed only after much hesitation to the Maccabiah Games in Israel, but it was not officially registered and was forbidden to display any national symbols.¹⁰

Perhaps the clearest expression of rejection concerning the Jewish community of Germany was a letter from the second Israeli consul in Munich, Eliahu Livneh, to his foreign office; he wrote, “The Jewish world considers this Jewish community to be a result of chance selection and will under no

circumstances grant it the right of its own political will.” The response from the foreign office was telling, however. After acknowledging that it would be ideal but unrealistic to believe that the Jewish community dissolved, the foreign office official suggested that “you continue with your policy of resistance [to official relations with the Jewish community], which you had practiced so far, with the inside knowledge, however, that in the long run this position is untenable. Thus, it is not worth that you put too much energy into the matter.”¹¹

German-Jewish émigré organizations held a different position from the outset. Their leading spokesman, Rabbi Leo Baeck, expressed the necessity to help those who, for whatever reason, might decide not to leave Germany. To be sure, Leo Baeck had declared that the one-thousand-year history of German Jews had come to an end with the Nazi genocide. In other words, he believed that the postwar Jewish life on German soil was no continuation of the previous German-Jewish history. He expressed, however, his willingness to support those who chose to remain in Germany and build a new, largely East European, community. A similar position was taken during the 1960s by Baeck’s former younger colleague in Berlin, Joachim Prinz, by then a prominent rabbi in the United States and president of the American Jewish Congress: “There are Jews who live in Germany today; the Jewish people has recognized the existence and the legitimate rights of the Jewish community in Germany, but as a totality we shall not return to Germany as we have not returned to Spain after 1492.”¹²

Part of the conflict over the legitimacy of postwar German Jewry was not just of moral but of material concern. Who could lay claim to the heirless property of the prewar German-Jewish communities? If the re-established communities were their heirs and there to stay, then they also could claim their property, although they constituted a mere shadow of the prewar communities. But there were obviously other contenders. There were the émigré organizations of German

Jews in the United States, Great Britain, and Israel; and there was the State of Israel, which claimed to represent all those who had vanished in the Holocaust.

It was indeed without the involvement or consent of the German-Jewish communities that Jewish trust organizations, the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (IRSO) in the American Zone and the Jewish Trust Corporation (JTC) in the British Zone were founded. They decided about the distribution of the heirless Jewish property, often not considering the fact that the new German-Jewish communities might be there to stay. In some cities fierce legal battles broke out between the trust organizations and the Jewish communities.

The battle waged over this property was tough. Hendrik Georg van Dam, the secretary general of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, told a *Commentary* reporter in 1953 that “this property, after all, is German Jewish. The least we have the right to ask for is a fair share to meet our present needs, and to be decently included in consultations on where the rest should go. While we in the Central Council barely exist on an IRSO dole, they drive around in great limousines.” On the other hand, Chaim Yahil, from the Israeli mission in Cologne, drew a picture that clearly contradicts van Dam’s self-description: “There is a sharp controversy between the congregations and the inheriting organizations over what needs of the congregations are justifiable. In fact, the organizations approve very large budgets, just in order to avoid a rupture between themselves and the congregations and prevent their turning to the German authorities; but this barely satisfies the appetite of the congregations which have got used to inflated administration and an easy life.”¹³ Both accused each other of leading too easy lives!

It goes without saying that the WJC did not always speak with a single voice. There were different offices, the most important ones in New York, London, and Geneva—all with their particular opinions, and even within the various offices the

judgment in this question was not always the same. One may sum up the different views in three categories;

- 1) Those who were categorically opposed to any Jewish presence.
- 2) Those who had no ideological objections to Jews living in Germany but did not really believe in a future life there.
- 3) Finally, those who were principally against rebuilding a Jewish future in Germany but argued pragmatically: as long as Jews are living there, they have to get the support of international Jewish organizations.

The first position was taken by a broad variety of Jewish officials, but most prominently by those in Israel, a state that after all forbade its citizens to travel to Germany. The Israeli passport contained the well-known stamp: “Valid for all countries except Germany.” If Israel did not want its citizens even to *visit* Germany, how could they be agreeable to the idea that other Jews would make their *living* there! Thus, in 1950 the Israeli office of the WJC broke all ties with the Jews remaining in Germany. It was a minority within the WJC.¹⁴

The second position may have been best expressed by an official report of the WJC-sponsored Institute of Jewish Affairs, in 1949: “Despite the intensive social and cultural activities of the Jewish Communities in Germany, the conclusion appears inescapable that German Jewry will cease to exist.... Those who are able to leave will leave the country. The others will die off.”¹⁵ Jewish leaders made similar statements over the years. One example was British rabbi Isaac Chait who toured Germany in 1962 and, according to the *Jewish Chronicle*, reported that there was no future for Jews in Germany. “When the old people die and the younger ones leave for Israel there will be nothing left save the beautiful synagogues.”¹⁶

The third position was adopted by Nahum Goldmann and became the WJC’s dominant position. During a meeting with the London members of the

executive in October 1948, Goldmann argued that “the slogan that no Jew should live in Germany after the Hitler catastrophe was unrealistic.”¹⁷ The WJC, thus, took a rather pragmatic position. In 1949, the WJC decided to establish its own office in Frankfurt to assist Jewish organizations and communities in Germany, to maintain a liaison between them and the WJC, to maintain contact with the Allied authorities, and to collect material on the revival of antisemitism.¹⁸

A crucial moment came in 1949, when West Germany was about to become a sovereign state. At that time much of the discussion among the European members of the WJC executive was dedicated to the future of Germany in general and Jews in Germany in particular. Guest speakers at this session included delegates from the Displaced Persons still living in Germany and raising critical voices about a future in Germany.

Thus, Chaim Eife of the Central Committee of the Liberated Jews in the U.S. Zone expressed his hope concerning the remaining DPs: “that steps be taken to ensure they remain under the jurisdiction of the occupying authorities.” His colleagues from the British Zone, Jossel Rosensaft and Norbert Wollheim, both of whom were about to leave for the United States, also stressed the problematic side of staying in the face of continuing antisemitism. On the other hand, Hendrik Georg van Dam, the main spokesman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, expressed a more confident position when he “favored the establishment of an overall representative body of Jews in Germany” and stressed that the World Jewish Congress “should restrict its action on Germany to two matters: The legal protection of the Jews in Germany, and the protest against the reinstatement of Nazis...” Similarly, Heinz Galinski, chairman of the Berlin Jewish community, expressed his belief in the construction of a new democratic German state in which Jews would find a place, too.

These discussions were embedded within more general positions towards postwar Germany, with some delegates advocating the boycott of German goods.

Not surprisingly, those in favor of a strict boycott envisioned a Germany without Jews. As one delegate, Dr. S. Levenberg stressed, “The Congress should advocate the evacuation of the Jews from Germany” and another, Dr. Maurice L. Perlzweig, echoed this voice when he demanded that “we should take all Jews out of Germany, so that they should not remain there as hostages.” A Rabbi R. Kapel went as far to state “that Germany constituted danger No. 1 for the Jews in the world.”¹⁹

In 1950, the eve of the establishment of the Central Council of Jews in Germany as the umbrella organization of those communities that were there to stay, the WJC majority opinion was expressed in the following statement by Alexander L. Easterman: “While it was the opinion and policy of the World Jewish Congress that Jews should leave Germany, those who chose to stay in Germany would be gladly given advice, if they should call on the World Jewish Congress.”²⁰ It was in fact the Central Council who initially did not want to be associated with the WJC, as it had taken up contact with other Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Committee. Only in 1954, four years after its establishment, did the Central Council officially approach the WJC concerning terms of affiliation. There was some controversy among the London WJC European executive members, ranging from strong advocacy of the affiliation to the opinion that it “would be a mistake, since it would encourage Jews to remain in Germany.” In general, there was agreement that while it was not a good thing for Jews to remain, those who did should be affiliated with the WJC.²¹

Once the Central Council was established, conflicts arose again and again about the question of who should represent Jewish matters before German politicians: the German-Jewish representatives or the WJC. Thus, a 1951 meeting of the London members of the WJC executive criticized the Central Council for writing a letter to West German President Theodor Heuss. The Council had asked

to establish formal relations with the government, without prior consultation with the WJC.²²

The WJC representative in Germany, Saul Sokal, reported to the London office in May 1952 his concerns about a new self-confidence of Jews living in Germany: “Some German Jews are beginning to develop a new ‘ideology’ according to which German Jewry is called by history to assume the role of a mediator between Germany and world Jewry.... The very small group of people who speak for the Jews would like to establish a standing for the Jewish community in Germany. The attitude of the postwar forties, even of 1950, has been reversed. They do not consider the existence of Jews here as transitory, nor do they pretend their stay is transitory. Just the opposite is now the prevalent philosophy. ‘The history of the Jews in Germany is not finished.’ This is the slogan.... Although they do not know what is the mission of the Jews in Germany, or what they would like it to be, they want it very emphatically.”²³ This new attitude among German Jews is confirmed by other sources. Thus, in 1951, the Association of Jewish Communities in northwestern Germany passed a resolution “rejecting all attempts to denounce the Jews who remained in Germany.... The Jews in Germany consider themselves an integral part of world Jewry.”²⁴

When the next plenary of the WJC was held in 1953, Jews still were living in Germany. Among them was a group called the “hard core”: it referred to those DPs who for a variety of reasons still had not moved out of Germany. The most visible of this group were the 2,000 persons living in the Föhrenwald DP camp. In this connection, it is fascinating to examine the minutes of the early postwar WJC congresses, where different languages, including Spanish, Yiddish, Hebrew, and French, were spoken. While quite a few delegates of the Congress—namely exiled German Jews—spoke in German, a delegate from Germany, Maurice Weinberger, chose to speak not in German but rather in his native Yiddish, which can be taken as symptomatic of the new situation. He stressed more than anything

else that the remaining Jews in Germany were old and sick, and that ninety percent of them wanted nothing more desperately than to leave Germany. It was the WJC's duty to help them get out. Weinberger, himself a DP in Munich, did not distinguish between German and East European Jews and represented the position of the communities in the south of Germany, to which few prewar German Jews had returned.²⁵ Several other observers referred to the postwar German-Jewish community as a "broken people who were earning a precarious living."²⁶ One such 1951 report predicted that "the German Jews are bound to die out because of their age structure." For a short period, however, there will nevertheless remain a Jewish community that would not change their attitude and leave Germany "even if world Jewry decided to break relations with them."²⁷

The first international Jewish organization officially to travel to West Germany was the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, an organization with German-Jewish roots. In 1954, the three members of this delegation intensely toured Germany for four weeks at the invitation of the German government. Objections against such a trip had been raised within the Anti-Defamation League, but those who "carried the day" argued "that if we did not embrace this opportunity, we might at some future date find that we had failed in an important obligation."²⁸ During their trip they also visited several Jewish communities. In their report they rendered a rather bleak picture of empty synagogues, over-aged communal gatherings, but also one bustling Purim celebration in Düsseldorf. And the report discussed the question of a future Jewish life in Germany by reflecting the variety of voices among the Jews they met there: "... the dominant question is not whether Jewish life in Germany can or will survive, but whether it should.... One called for the removal of the last remaining Jews from German soil; a second called for the effort to reconstitute Jewish life in Germany in the old tradition, believing that Judaism can and should flourish once more on German soil; a third expressed little faith in the community's ability to survive, but saw no reason for a

self-imposed liquidation. There were other expressions of many shadings that fit in between these basic positions.”²⁹

These different shadings still were present in a special session of the 1966 WJC plenary assembly in Brussels. By this time, West Germany had become more accepted in the Jewish world, after reparation treaties, the first major German trials against Nazi perpetrators, and especially the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. A major symposium was held at the congress, featuring distinguished speakers Gershom Scholem, the leading scholar of Jewish studies in Israel; the historian Golo Mann, son of Thomas Mann; and West German parliament speaker Eugen Gerstenmaier, an outspoken opponent of the Nazis. Still, for some delegates, the attitude towards Germany remained basically unchanged. Thus, Hungarian-born Orthodox New York rabbi Bernard Bergman, turned to the participants with the following appeal: “We call upon every Jew to limit the relations with Germany to the minimum. The blood of our brethren is crying out and demanding from us not to have any treaty with Germany.”³⁰

It was, again, Nahum Goldmann, who called for a pragmatic approach towards Germany. He assured the delegates that this special session was not to be a “Feast of Reconciliation,” and that “I would be ashamed to be a Jew if anyone would even dream about forgiving or forgetting,” but he also opposed “a policy of ignoring problems, of being *broiges*, because we were a persecuted, because we were a helpless people.” A people that wants to be the master of his own fate, Goldmann proclaimed, can’t conduct politics by being “*broiges*.”³¹

By the mid-1960s the Jews in Germany felt a growing acceptance among the worldwide Jewish community. An official report of the Central Council in 1964 made this clear: “The Central Council has been insisting since its establishment that the Jewish community of Germany has a right to exist.... We fought for this right against much resistance, especially against world opinion.

Now we see success in that we are represented in many world Jewish organizations....”³²

German-Jewish organizations now were indeed accepted in almost all international Jewish organizations. One of the longest battles over acceptance was fought among the Jewish student organizations. By the end of the 1960s, it was clear that Jews would remain in Germany. A second generation had grown up, and while many of them had left for Israel or other countries, quite a few stayed. They were joined by new immigrants from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Israel, and Iran. New synagogues were built, new schools opened. In the 1980s, another development could be observed. German Jews had developed a still higher degree of self-confidence in their dealings with the outside world. The street protests against the Reagan-Kohl visit to the Bitburg cemetery with its Waffen-SS graves, and the public protest on a Frankfurt theater stage against the performance of the antisemitic Fassbinder play “Garbage, the City, and Death” in the mid-1980s marked an obvious deviation from the behind-the-stage politics that had characterized German-Jewish politics until the 1970s. Furthermore, in religious perspective the Jewish communities developed a new pluralism. The mainly Orthodox congregations were joined by Conservative and Reform congregations, often expanding the already existing nucleus around American military bases.

All these changes would have been merely cosmetic, as the community remained small and over-aged, never exceeding the official number of 30,000 members. The most significant shift occurred with the fall of the wall on November 9, 1989. What irony that this date, that since the pogroms of 1938 had marked the tragic side of German-Jewish history, now became the starting point of an unexpected new chapter. With the opening of East-West and Soviet borders, Jews emigrated in great numbers, mainly to Israel and to the US. The only other country that could not say no to Jews knocking at its doors was Germany. For many Russian Jews, this option meant choosing a destination that had been spared

from recent war and economic crisis, and remaining in Europe. As a result, over 100,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union have immigrated to Germany in the last twenty years.

The Jewish community is undoubtedly a bare shadow of the pre-Nazi community of about 600,000. A closer look at the numbers reveals, however, that the difference between the numbers in pre-Nazi and today's Germany in the territory of what used to be "West Germany" is not particularly large. The majority of Jews in Germany before 1933 lived in the central regions (which became East Germany after the war) or the eastern parts (which became Polish or Soviet after the war). In Berlin and Breslau alone, there had been over 200,000 Jews. If we subtract those communities and the rural communities of Franconia, Hesse, Baden, and Württemberg and take into account the significant reduction of Frankfurt's Jewish population (from 30,000 to 8,000), we can see that the numbers in many of the remaining communities today approach those of the Weimar period. Some places have communities the same size, or even larger than before 1933. Even though, ironically, Germany is the only European country with a rapidly increasing Jewish community, it will remain an almost invisible minority of 0.2% of Germany's 80 million. With 100,000 Jews spread over almost one hundred communities, most Germans will live their lives without ever seeing a Jew.

The prospects of a Jewish revival should be seen realistically. Perhaps 20%, maybe 30% of the immigrants will remain active in some way within the Jewish community once they have settled and begun to work. Few of them will, in the near future, be able to contribute much to religious Jewish life. However, the structure of the German-Jewish communities, with its centralized administrative system and obligatory Jewish religious education in most states, enables the systematic education of the young generation. Already now, many of the children resemble their earlier German-Jewish counterparts in speaking German,

participating in Jewish communal youth activities, and being oriented towards Israel. If this young generation, which is mostly of former Soviet-origin Russian today, succeeds in creating its own religious and cultural leadership and in counterbalancing the path of forced assimilation taken by their ancestors, there may indeed be cause for cautious optimism regarding a future Jewish life in Germany.

What about the opinion of world Jewry? While Israel was the most vocal opponent to any normalization with Germany and Jewish life in Germany, its position has shifted most dramatically over the decades. After the two states took on diplomatic relations in 1965, economic, political, and cultural ties grew between the two countries. Germany became Israel's main ally within the European Union, its most important trading partner in Europe, and basically every Israeli city is connected to at least one German sister city. Still, while relations with Germany normalized, it took longer to accept the fact that Jews would continue to live there. An outspoken rejection of Jewish life in Germany could be heard at President Ezer Weizman's official state visit to Bonn in January 1996. He publicly claimed that he could not understand how Jews could live in Germany today. What was different from similar previous occasions was the reaction to this statement by German Jews. Instead of the usual shock or expressions of bad conscience, they responded with a significant amount of self-confidence. It was clear: for better or worse, they were there to stay. This attitude stood in blatant contrast to a former generation of Jews residing in Germany who would say, when visiting Israel and overheard speaking German, they had come from Austria. This was still accepted in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s, but today would certainly be worse than acknowledging Germany as one's home. The attitude among Israeli representatives has changed, too. Weizman's successor, Moshe Katzav was the first Israeli president to attend the inauguration of a synagogue in Germany and on that occasion expressed his wish for a fruitful Jewish future in that country. The

same shift of opinion could be seen among the public statements of the Israeli ambassadors to Germany. Avi Primor, Israeli ambassador to Germany in the late 1990s and early years of the new century, stated that Israelis today can accept the continuity of a Jewish diaspora next to the State of Israel, and more specifically have to accept that Jews continue to live in Germany. This opinion contradicted not only President Weizman's view but also that of his predecessors as Israeli ambassadors who were proud to engage in good relations with Germany, but hesitant when it came to accept the German-Jewish community as a given fact.

American Jewish organizations began a dialogue with Germany and German Jews some time ago, as well. The American Jewish Committee opened a permanent Berlin office in 1997. American Jews were heavily involved in the most impressive documentation of Jewish culture in Germany, the Berlin Jewish Museum. Finally, within European Jewish organizations, German Jews are today not only accepted but take leadership roles, as it behooves a community that has become the third-largest in Europe.

Jews living in Germany today, more than sixty years after the Shoah, are not yet just a Jewish community like those everywhere else. Perhaps they still live more in the shadow of the Holocaust than does any other community. But having become a haven for many Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe and enjoyed close relationships with Israel and American Jewry, Germany has been welcomed back both into the family of civilized states and become the home of an active Jewish community. Understandably, some individuals may still not like such a development, but it is not to be changed. In retrospect, both the State of Israel and the World Jewish Congress have understood this since as early as 1950, with rhetoric often being contradicted by *realpolitik*. Much of this development was a function of the seriousness with which Germany faced its own past, of the economic development in the country and, perhaps most important, of the successful integration within a unified Europe. Should there ever be a viable

European Jewry as a third pillar next to Israel and American Jewry, Germany will play its part in it—no matter if one welcomes this development or not. For German Jews this prospect is a particularly challenging one, because it will enable them to look forward to a bright European future and not just to look back to a bleak German past.

NOTES

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¹ Quoted in Tamara Anthony, *Ins Land der Väter oder der Täter? Israel und die Juden in Deutschland nach der Schoah* (Berlin: Metropol, 2004), 123. For a discussion of the position of German and world Jewry see also, see Shlomo Shafir, *Ambiguous Relations: The American Jewish Community and Germany Since 1945*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999 and Anthony Kauders, *Unmögliche Heimat: Eine deutsch-jüdische Geschichte der Bundesrepublik, Münche 2007*.

² Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, "Jüdische Überlebende als Displaced Persons," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983), 429–44, here: 436. This number is of course not to be taken literally, as these counts overlooked a considerable number of non-officially registered Displaced Persons.

³ Cf. Günter Bernd Ginzel, "Phasen der Etablierung einer Jüdischen Gemeinde in der Kölner Trümmerlandschaft 1945–1949," in Bohnke-Kollwitz, Jutta et al., eds., *Köln und das rheinische Judentum: Festschrift Germania Judaica, 1959–1984*. Köln: Bachem, 1984, 445–461, here: 446–447.

⁴ There is by now a long list of publications on Jews in the GDR, most recently Detlef Joseph: *Die DDR und die Juden*. Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 2010 (with a bibliography by Renate Kirchner). In English, see Robin Ostow, *Jews in Contemporary East Germany: The Children of Moses in the Land of Marx*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

⁵ Reprinted in a memorandum of the Canadian Jewish Congress, January 4, 1950, RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 164.

⁶ Quoted in: Anthony, *Ins Land der Väter*, 61.

⁷ The previous quotations all appear in Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997, 66.

⁸ *Ha'aretz*, December 27, 1949. Quoted in Anthony, 96.

⁹ Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, *Deutschland und Israel 1945-1965: Ein neurotisches Verhältnis*. Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2004, 133.

¹⁰ Anthony, *Ins Land der Väter*, 100.

¹¹ Letter from Livneh to the Western European Division of the Foreign Ministry, February 12, 1951, quoted in Anthony, 173. Letter from Gershon Avner to Livneh, May 16, 1951, *ibid.*, 174.

¹² RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 132, Special session of World Jewish Congress meeting, Brussels, August 5, 1966.

¹³ Both quotations are to be found in Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, "Leo Baeck, Nahum Goldmann, and the Money from Germany (A Document)" in Peter Y. Medding, ed., *Studies in Contemporary Jewry 5 - Israel: State and Society, 1948-1988* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 237.

¹⁴ Anthony, 125–126.

¹⁵ "Report by the Institute of Jewish Affairs," vol. II, no. I, July 1949, published by the World Jewish Congress. RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 233.

¹⁶ *The Jewish Chronicle*, August 24, 1962 in RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 351.

¹⁷ Short Minutes of the meeting of the London members of the WJC Executive Committee, October 28 1948, p. 10. RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 62.

¹⁸ European Executive Meeting, Feb. 13/14, 1949. RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 62.

¹⁹ Enlarged Meeting of the European Members of the World Executive, August 25–28, 1949. RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 62.

²⁰ Short Minutes of the meeting of the London members of the WJC Executive Committee, July 14, 1950, RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 62.

²¹ Meeting of the London members of the European Executive, September 16, 1954, RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 62.

²² Meeting of the London members of the European Committee, July 4, 1951, RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 62.

²³ Memorandum from S. Sokal to A.L. Easterman, May 27, 1952, RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 164. Relations between the WJC and the Central Council remained tense for over a decade, as a March 30, 1961 letter from Gerhart Riegner to van Dam reveals: “Ich habe den Eindruck, dass die Beziehungen zwischen dem Zentralrat und dem Kongress schon seit geraumer Zeit nicht als befriedigend angesehen werden können...” RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 164. Much of the tension around this time was based on the WJC’s accusation that the Central Council belittled the antisemitic incidents starting with the swastika graffiti at the Cologne synagogue in 1959. The accusation culminated in a January 14, 1960 letter of A.L. Easterman to Nahum Goldman, in which he asked that van Dam’s conduct must “be the subject of the sharpest condemnation.” He called him a “disgraceful prevaricator. In good, though English, Greek, this can be fairly translated as ‘a vandamte liegner.’” RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 165. See also in this folder related correspondence revealing that Easterman despised van Dam. Ibid. *The Jewish Telegraphic Agency Bulletin* added that the Council “denied the right of the W.J.C. to represent it”—an expression from which the Zentralrat distanced itself. See the letter of Dr. Hans Lamm to WJC London, January 19, 1960. RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 165.

²⁴ *Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung*, July 20, 1951, 1.

²⁵ Proceedings of WJC plenary session 1953, RG-68.059M, Reel 130.

²⁶ See e.g., the reports of Dr. Jacoby, who directed the WJC Frankfurt office. See Minutes meeting of the London members of the WJC Executive Committee, May 14, 1950, RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 62.

²⁷ Dr. Jacoby in a meeting of the London members of the European Executive, January 25, 1951, RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 62.

²⁸ *Germany Nine Years Later* (A Report of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith of a Study Tour Undertaken at the Invitation of the Federal Republic of West Germany by Jacob Alson, Benjamin R. Epstein, Nathan C. Belth), July 1954. A copy of this report can be found in the library of the USHMM.

²⁹ Ibid., 8.

³⁰ RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 132, letter by Bergman, dated August 2, 1966.

³¹ RG-68.059M WJC London, Reel 132, Proceedings of the conference, p. 24.

³² Bericht des Verwaltungsrates des Direktoriums des Zentralrates der Juden in Deutschland. Referiert von Generalsekretär Dr. H.G. van Dam, 22.3.1964. In RG-68.045 WJC Geneva, Reel 127.

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