

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation and its Dialogue with the Jewish World



The Konrad Adenauer Foundation and its Dialogue with the Jewish World

**The Konrad Adenauer Foundation
and its Dialogue
with the Jewish World**

Imprint

Konrad Adenauer Foundation

Cover Design:

Druckerei Paffenholz, Bornheim.

Illustration Rights:

Cover: Getty Images (Stephanie Dalton Cowan), Bundesbildstelle.

Bundespresseamt page 15, Roman Czyrka 21, Douglas Guthrie 10, dpa 22, Matthew Mauro 16, 17, Henning Lüders 11, 23, 25, 26, all others Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Translation:

TransForm, Cologne.

© 2005, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., Sankt Augustin

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in Germany.

This publication was printed with financial support of the Federal Republic of Germany.

www.kas.de

ISBN 3-937731-17-2

Contents

	Page
Foreword	7
<i>Bernhard Vogel</i>	
The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Israel	9
The Konrad Adenauer Conference Center	13
<i>Teddy Kollek</i>	
The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the United States	15
The Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Partners in the American Jewish Community	17
A US Perspective: The American Jewish Committee and the Partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation	19
<i>David A. Harris</i>	
The Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Jewish Life in Europe	20
Cooperation with B'nai B'rith Europe	20
Activities in Poland	21
Activities in the Czech Republic and other Eastern European Countries	22
B'nai B'rith Europe and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation	24
<i>Ernst-Ludwig Ehrlich</i>	
Dialogue in Germany	25
Commemoration	25
Jewish Life in Germany	27
Appendix	
Publications	28
Contact	28

Foreword

One of the main goals of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation – following the spirit of Konrad Adenauer – is to promote reconciliation and understanding with Jews in Germany and around the world. *„Those who would deny our special obligation toward the Jews and the state of Israel are historically and morally blind, and also politically blind.“* This statement, which Adenauer made in 1966, remains as correct and relevant today as it ever was. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation actively pursues this obligation through its projects in Germany and abroad.

We know that a good relationship between Jews and gentiles in Germany, solid connections between Germany and Jewish communities and organizations worldwide, and good, close relations between Germany and Israel are all of crucial importance to our country. For its part, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation will work to ensure that this state of affairs continues in the future.

Prof. Bernhard Vogel
Chairman of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Israel

Reconciliation with the Jewish people and the state of Israel was one of Konrad Adenauer's top political priorities. As early as two years after the Federal Republic of Germany was founded, on September 27, 1951, Adenauer stated in the German Parliament (Bundestag) that it was the foremost obligation of the German people to ensure that a spirit of true humanity takes root and guides relations with the state of Israel and the Jewish people. This attitude shows that restitution and the establishment of a constructive relationship with Israel was not only an issue of practical politics for Adenauer (i.e. a means of overcoming Germany's isolation in the aftermath of the Holocaust); it also demonstrates that Adenauer viewed reconciliation with the Jewish people as one of the moral pillars of a new democratic Germany governed by the rule of law.

Because of its commitment to the political legacy of Konrad Adenauer, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF) feels a special responsibility toward Israel, and in Israel. For this reason, the KAF and the former mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, jointly came up with the plan to build a *Konrad Adenauer Conference Center* in Jerusalem, with the foundation actively supporting the implementation of this ambitious project. In 2004, some three years after it opened, this facility is recognized as the center of German-Israeli dialogue.

Not a single Israeli protested against the construction of the building, and absolutely no one had anything against naming this facility in the center of Jerusalem after a postwar German politician. Taken together, this demonstrates the extent to which relations between the two countries have become normalized, as well as the respect that the name Konrad Adenauer has earned in Israel.

At the same time, discussions with high-ranking German guests, which may become very emotional, illustrate that the German-Israeli dialogue – particularly in Israel – must maintain its special significance: When the second Intifada practically killed off tourism, and pilgrims were avoiding the Holy Land, people in Israel were gratefully aware of the fact that the Konrad Adenauer Conference Center continued without any interruption the open, critical discussions conducted by Germans, and between Germans and Israelis.

Israel, which once again believes its existence to be threatened by a hostile climate in the region, feels that it has been abandoned by Europe over the past few years. A policy of rather uncritical support for the Palestin-



KAF Chairman Dr. Bernhard Vogel (left), former Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek and Dr. Johannes Gerster (KAF Jerusalem) at the Konrad Adenauer Conference Center in Jerusalem (May 31, 2001).

ian Authority, together with what is often one-sided criticism of Israeli policy, has led many Israelis to feel alienated from Europe. It was therefore very fortunate for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation that the *Helmut Kohl Institute for European Relations* at the *Hebrew University* provided a forum for intensifying an exchange of ideas with the increasingly unpopular continent in a manner that goes far beyond academia. The institute has continually gained in significance as a think tank for the government on European issues, as a research center for European developments that affect Israel, and as a center for political discussion regarding Europe and European policy. Slowly but surely, Israel is once again beginning to realize that its stability requires a secure secondary partnership with Europe as a supplement to its close relationship with the U.S.

Both the Konrad Adenauer Conference Center and the Helmut Kohl Institute serve as a bridge between Israel, Germany and Europe. The KAF has also become increasingly relevant in the context of Israel's social policies.

During its 56 years of existence, Israel has defended its democratic foundations in what is largely an undemocratic environment. Moreover, large segments of the population, such as the Arab minority (20 per cent), Russian immigrants (12 per cent), ultra-orthodox Jews (12 per cent) and Jews originally from the Middle East, have practically no experience with Western-style democratic systems. Israel's permanent conflict with its Palestinian/Arab neighbors, which often results in security considerations superseding policies that would further expand the civil society, isn't exactly a fertile ground for democratic development. In other words, the further

development of democracy in Israel faces a variety of dangers. This is why the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is now being called upon more and more often by governments, parliaments, local communities and universities to serve as an advisor and co-organizer of socially critical forums. The main issues discussed are often related to human and civil rights, equal opportunity and support for women, and the minority rights of the Arab population in Israel. The key aspect here is that the KAF can influence political discussions in a sensitive and discreet manner, while at the same time avoiding any appearance of dictating what actions the participants should take. The foundation is sought after as a partner, not as an organization that „knows better.“ That would be the last thing any German organization in Israel would want to convey. Thus the KAF was very pleased when *Tel Aviv University* suggested that the two organizations jointly establish a *Konrad Adenauer Center* for Jewish-Arab cooperation. This center will bring together, coordinate and organize all activities at Israel's largest university that have a special impact on the Arab population.

You cannot compare different historical events; instead, you must learn from history. This general principle appears to be driving forward another phenomenon that has increasingly become part of the scope of the KAF's activities over the last few years: The miraculous development of German-Israeli understanding after the Holocaust has led some Israelis to specifically call upon German organizations, such as the KAF, to step up their sup-



Members of the Israeli-Palestinian economic delegation at the KAF Academy in Berlin.

port of joint Israeli-Palestinian projects. It basically comes down to this: If Germans and Israelis were able to succeed in making the impossible possible, why can't Israelis and Palestinians do the same? In any event the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, in cooperation with an Israeli-Palestinian partner, has been organizing and coordinating the most stable unofficial dialogue between government representatives from both sides for some years now. This dialogue seeks to avoid media publicity, which is why it is so successful.

The meetings address everyday problems between the two governments, which are resolved without any fanfare. An *Economic Road Map* was also developed within the framework of this program as a supplement to the *Road Map for Peace* drawn up by the U.S., EU, UN and Russia. The *Economic Road Map* has been made available to those countries and organizations in order to assist in their policymaking. This government dialogue also provided us with the leeway we needed to conduct numerous seminars for Israeli and Palestinian teachers and another series of seminars for journalists. German-Israeli dialogue has thus evolved into an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue with strong German participation, and the Konrad Adenauer Center has become a trusted location in the Middle East where Jews, Christians and Muslims can come together. The KAF program involves a total of nearly 250 conferences, seminars and workshops each year.

Germans continue to have an *obligation* to support Israel's right to exist. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation's *mission* to work for peace, liberty, democracy and justice applies to Israel as well, but also to the Palestinian territories and the Palestinians. There is no contradiction here, despite the fact that each side often interprets the work done for the other as support for „the enemy.“ The art of playing a truly effective role lies in balancing the two key principles (working for Israel as well as for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation), striving to achieve anything that is realistically possible, and working to avoid any favoritism. Ultimately, a peaceful environment in each society and a peaceful climate between the two peoples is in the interest of both Israelis and Palestinians. Contributing to the achievement of this goal remains the „foremost obligation for Germans,“ who themselves were given a chance to live in peace, liberty and justice after the horrendous acts committed by the criminal Nazi regime.

Dr. Johannes Gerster
Konrad Adenauer Foundation Jerusalem

The Konrad Adenauer Conference Center

It has been 55 years since the foundation of Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany. The first step toward reconciliation was taken in 1949, when Konrad Adenauer declared that the German people wished „to make up for every injustice committed by a criminal regime in their name against the Jews.“

There was great opposition to this here in Israel; it seemed that the country was facing a dilemma that could not be solved. The young state of Israel was in desperate need of support from abroad, but it was a difficult question of conscience as to whether the country should accept money from Germany. It was true that restitution could not bring the dead back to life – but it could help secure a future for those who had survived.



The Konrad Adenauer Conference Center in Jerusalem.

In 2001, we celebrated the inauguration of the Konrad Adenauer Conference Center in Mishkenot Sha'ananim in Jerusalem. The center was built by the Jerusalem Foundation and generously funded by German sponsors. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Jerusalem also supported us in a variety of ways, and we are therefore very grateful to the foundation and its director, Dr. Johannes Gerster.

Today there is a contract between the Jerusalem Foundation, Mishkenot Sha'ananim and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Jerusalem that governs use of the center, which is of course open to other foundations as well.

Konrad Adenauer and David Ben Gurion achieved the impossible in the aftermath of the Holocaust: Germans and Israelis began building bridges over the tragic past that separated them. The two statesmen decided that tolerance, openness, and pluralism should become the guiding forces behind their cooperation. The efforts they made to this end have certainly borne fruit.

Today, Israel and Germany work closely together on practically all political issues and at all levels. Many Israelis emphasize the fact that Germany is one of the best and most reliable friends that Israel has in Europe today. I can only say that I completely agree with this assessment.

The Konrad Adenauer Conference Center, which is the first public building in Israel to be named after a postwar German politician, is a symbol of German-Israeli and Jewish-Christian dialogue. It is meant to bring together people of different religions, cultures, traditions and nations, and is thus increasingly becoming a meeting place for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The center also seeks to assist in making possible in the Middle East what has long since become reality between Germans and Israelis in the aftermath of the Holocaust: That a spirit of humanity should overcome the monstrosity of violence. The ultimate goal here is that the peoples of the Middle East should finally be able to live together peacefully in an atmosphere free of violence.

The ongoing German-Israeli dialogue and the cooperation between the Jerusalem Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation at the Konrad Adenauer Conference Center in Jerusalem are making an important contribution to the achievement of this goal.

Teddy Kollek

Former Mayor of Jerusalem and Founder of the Jerusalem Foundation
2004

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the United States

The legendary meeting between Germany's first postwar chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, and Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York on March 14, 1960, is considered symbolic of the efforts made by the young Federal Republic to revive German-Jewish relations. This first face-to-face meeting between the two statesmen after the Holocaust also marked the highpoint of the policy of restitution for Jewish victims of the Nazis and for the state of Israel, a policy Adenauer referred to as a „moral issue of great importance“ in a speech he made at a *Kristallnacht* commemoration service on November 11, 1949.

Although the Federal Republic of Germany had already advanced to become Israel's second most important partner after the U.S. by the end of the 1960s, there were still no institutional relations between American Jews and the new German democracy. Then, at the end of the 1970s, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation became the first German organization to respond to the initiative proposed by the *American Jewish Committee*, to create an exchange program between Germans and American Jews. Thus, thirty years after Adenauer's *Kristallnacht* speech, a sustained institutio-



Konrad Adenauer and David Ben Gurion at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York (March 14, 1960).

nal dialogue was launched between Germans and American Jews. With this move, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation reaffirmed its commitment to the legacy and mission of its namesake. The first exchange took place in 1980; in 2005, this program will be able to look back on 25 years of dialogue and the development of trust between Germans and American Jews.

This quarter of a century of efforts undertaken by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the American Jewish Committee toward understanding and reconciliation also forms the key element of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's dialogue with the Jewish community in the United States. At the end of the 1980s, just before German reunification, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Washington began to establish relations with other American Jewish organizations as well, particularly with the oldest such organization, *B'nai B'rith* and the *Anti-Defamation League*. Around the same time, the foundation's Washington office began cooperating with the *American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)*, which is the official Israeli lobby in the U.S., and with the *Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations*, the largest umbrella association for American Jewish organizations.

Nearly half of the world's Jews (more than 6 million) live in the U.S. today; 4.6 million live in Israel. Through its 25 years of promoting cooperation between Germans and American Jews, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation has made an important contribution to establishing an understanding with this important segment of the American population. Such understanding



At the celebration in honor of Konrad Adenauer's 125th birthday at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York in June 2001, Adenauer's grandson Dr. Patrick Adenauer presented Alon Ben Gurion, grandson of Israel's first prime minister, with a photograph of the meeting between Konrad Adenauer and David Ben Gurion.

has led to the disappearance of many prejudices and stereotypes on both sides of the Atlantic more than 50 years after the end of the war. In view of the decreasing number of American Jews of German ancestry and the global political impact of the terrorist attacks of September 11, the history-conscious and forward-looking program of dialogue with the Jewish community in the U.S. has become even more important and will remain a key element of the foundation's activities in Washington in the future. This dialogue is an indispensable contribution by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation to the transatlantic relationship and to German foreign policy.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Partners in the American Jewish Community

Among the many American Jewish organizations the Konrad Adenauer Foundation cooperates with, the *American Jewish Committee (AJC)*, with its more than 150,000 members, is one of the most important. The AJC was founded in New York in 1906 by Jews who were mostly of German ancestry. It viewed itself as an organization dedicated to representing Jewish minority interests and defending civil rights. Dialogue and enlightenment were key elements of AJC policy from the very beginning. Today, the AJC is the largest Jewish political organization in the U.S. It is also the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's most important partner in the American Jewish community. The focus of cooperation with the AJC for the last 25 years has been the exchange program between the two orga-



AJC honorary president Bruce Ramer receives the Honorary Medal of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation from former German chancellor Dr. Helmut Kohl. At the left is the deputy chairman of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, former State Minister Anton Pfeifer (June 25, 2001).

nizations. The objectives of this KAF/AJC exchange are to present a realistic picture of Germany to American Jews and to enable interested Germans to experience the living Jewish culture in the U.S. The more than 500 Germans and Americans who have participated in the program up to now include important opinion leaders, such as journalists, teachers, university professors, businesspeople, legislators and scientists.

Ongoing cooperation with the AJC also involves numerous dialogue forums: seminars, presentations and background discussions, as well as a series of conferences with high-ranking participants that take place alternately in the U.S. and Germany. This traditionally bilateral conference series was made trilateral in 2003, when representatives from Israel participated in a conference that took place in Jerusalem. A highlight of the cooperation between the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the American Jewish Committee was the jointly organized celebration of Adenauer's 125th birthday at New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel in June 2001. In his keynote address, former German chancellor Dr. Helmut Kohl praised Konrad Adenauer's legacy and mission with respect to German-Jewish relations.

Another important partner of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Washington is *B'nai B'rith*, the oldest American Jewish organization, which was founded in 1843 by German-Jewish immigrants. The KAF has been conducting a variety of dialogue forums, delegation visits and conferences in cooperation with B'nai B'rith for more than a decade. Future projects will also be geared toward the objective of including dialogue partners beyond the officials from American Jewish organizations. One example here would be a visit to Germany by a delegation of Jewish business representatives from America.

The KAF's Washington office also cooperates with the *Anti-Defamation League (ADL)*, a human rights organization that has been battling anti-Semitism and racism in the U.S. and abroad since 1913. The chairperson of Germany's CDU (Christian Democratic Union), Dr. Angela Merkel, spoke at an ADL forum in February 2003 in New York. The largest umbrella association for the most important Jewish organizations in America, the *Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations*, and the official Israeli lobby organization in the U.S., the *American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)* are other important partners for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in its promotion of dialogue between Germans and American Jews.

A US perspective: The American Jewish Committee and the Partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

Konrad Adenauer recognized over half a century ago that we live in a „world indivisible,“ in which the welfare of one nation or one people is intrinsically interconnected with that of the entire world. Through this far-reaching vision and through bold action, he helped lay the groundwork for the European Union, initiated Germany's relations with the State of Israel, and began a new and successful chapter in German history.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation has long toiled to cultivate the spirit of a world indivisible within the heart of German citizens. The Foundation has worked to build the bridges of intergroup and international understanding that make possible the growth of pluralism and democratic values in a global arena.

We at the American Jewish Committee are particularly well aware of the Adenauer Foundation's vital efforts in the realm of German-Jewish relations. In cooperation with the Foundation, we have conducted for nearly twenty-five years a German-Jewish exchange program that has met extraordinary success. We look forward to celebrating with the Foundation that notable anniversary in 2005.

In Germany, a nation with the world's fastest growing Jewish population, and in Europe in general; in America; and in the State of Israel, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is a creative force behind some of the most thoughtful and effective German-Jewish initiatives today.

In the realm of German-Jewish affairs, the Foundation grasps, as few others do, the need to respect and draw lessons from the past and, with equal emphasis, to strive towards a future filled with the promise of democracy and mutual respect.

On behalf of the entire American Jewish Committee family, I congratulate the Foundation on its many wonderful achievements and extend my warmest wishes for every success in the future.

David A. Harris
Executive Director
American Jewish Committee

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Jewish Life in Europe

Jewish life in Europe has been marked by two developments in recent years. On the one hand, there has been a renaissance of Jewish life since the fall of communism, particularly in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, latent anti-Semitism in the old EU member states has been increasingly permeating the public consciousness and is manifesting itself through anti-Semitic incidents. Some speak of a new anti-Semitism. Whatever the case, these developments present various challenges for the KAF.

The discussion regarding the extent of anti-Semitism in the European Union has intensified lately. A conflict between Jewish organizations and the EU with respect to an opinion poll that showed Israel having a negative image among the European public was in fact quickly resolved. Nevertheless, it indicates a new dimension in the relationship: Old resentments and prejudices are reemerging under the guise of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and frustration resulting from disagreements on this issue is in turn breeding new prejudices. In addition, a social transformation is occurring as a result of the growing number of Muslim immigrants and citizens in Europe, and this social effect is increasingly taking on a political form. To fight against this „new“ anti-Semitism is an important issue for the KAF. Whether through its own conferences, discussion rounds with experts, or participation in international conferences such as the OSCE Anti-Semitism Conference in Berlin in 2004 – the measures taken by the KAF are designed to contribute to the analysis of the „new“ anti-Semitism in Europe and develop strategies to counteract it.

Cooperation with B'nai B'rith Europe

Back in the early 1980s, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation began addressing the issue of European-Jewish dialogue in addition to its commitment to German-Jewish and German-American dialogue and understanding. Some of its activities in this regard are conducted in close cooperation with *B'nai B'rith Europe*. Several interesting projects have resulted from this partnership, such as the recent exhibition on Jewish resistance to National Socialism. After a two-year preparation phase, this exhibition was presented for three months at the Royal Museum for Military History in Brussels, Belgium. The exhibition graphically depicts European Jewry's steadfast and decisive resistance to genocide. The KAF supplemented the presentation of the exhibition in Berlin with a symposium and a major conference.

The results have been published in the book Hans Eler / Arnold Paucker / Ernst-Ludwig Ehrlich, Eds., *Gegen alle Vergeblichkeit. Jüdischer Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (see Appendix: Publications). There is no doubt that the KAF will continue to address historical realities. At the same time, just as it cannot be the primary task of the KAF to substitute itself for dialogue between its partners in other EU countries and their Jewish communities, the foundation also cannot focus solely on the past. In the future, the KAF will increasingly concentrate on influencing the interpretation and formulation of the European Union's policy on Israel. The fact that American Jewish organizations are strengthening their presence in Brussels – as the American Jewish Committee (AJC) recently did – will make it possible to intensify cooperation with them directly in the EU's capital.

The situation in the new EU member states is different. Here there are also old prejudices. In addition, there is a lack of experience regarding different religions' dealings with one another, and Israel remains the subject of much criticism. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to participate in the renaissance of Jewish life that is taking place in the region.

Activities in Poland

Among the most important elements of the foundation's work in Poland are presentations and speeches organized in cooperation with the Jewish Institute for History or the Society for Polish-Israeli Friendship.

Prof. Dr. Bernhard Vogel and Dr. Peter Weilemann at the wreath-laying ceremony in Auschwitz (October 2002).



Also of particular note here is the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's involvement since the mid-1990s in the establishment of the *Museum of the History of Polish Jews*, which was organized through cooperation between members of the foundation's advisory council and the project's director, Jerzy Halbersztadt. Another important event in Poland was a joint conference on social values with the *Miroslaw Dzielski Center* in Cracow and the Center for Human Rights in Auschwitz which took place in October 2002. In a speech given at that conference, the chairman of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Dr. Bernhard Vogel, emphasized that „the crimes committed here (in Auschwitz) were made possible by the lack of what one might refer to as civic virtues.“

Activities in the Czech Republic and other Eastern European Countries

Activities in the Czech Republic revolve primarily around cooperation with the Institute for Contemporary History and the Federation of Jewish Communities. In addition, cooperation with the small Jewish community in



The Old Synagogue in Prague.

Slovakia and the Institute for Judaic Studies at Comenius University in Bratislava has had an effect that goes far beyond that country's borders.

A series of lectures has been addressing various issues regarding Jewish life for many years now. Topics include an introduction to Judaism, synagogue architecture, and even studies of Jewish jokes.

Joint efforts undertaken by the foundation's offices in Eastern Europe and the Academy in Berlin have made Germans more aware of the traditions and various ways of life of the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. The Academy also stages special evening presentations on Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe that include cultural events as well.

The KAF also seeks to ensure that dialogue with the Jewish communities in other Eastern European countries will develop in a manner similar to what has occurred in Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Such efforts are being accompanied by a broad program of dialogue among the various religions of Eastern and Southeastern Europe.



Professor Irena Veisaitė (left), Baltic expert Jan Pallokāt and author Markas Zingeris discuss „Jewish Life in Lithuania“ at an evening event at the KAF Academy (April 29, 2004).

B'nai B'rith Europe and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation and B'nai B'rith Europe have been organizing speeches and presentations with subsequent discussions in Central and Eastern Europe for many years now. Most of these have taken place in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Bulgaria. A variety of topics have been addressed at such events. On the one hand, an attempt has been made to convey knowledge about the Jewish people, including their experience with the Holocaust. Beyond that, we have also made an effort to become better acquainted with the situation of Jews in the countries in which these events have taken place, and to assist where we can. In the end, part of the issue has to do with problems that these countries have with Germany at the moment. We also placed special emphasis on preparing these countries for entry into the EU, which also involves working to remove whatever prejudices happen to exist in a particular country.

Our experience with the events described above has shown that the KAF has good relations with the Jewish communities in the region, and many contacts among them. A positive atmosphere has dominated throughout all the years of cooperation, and the directors of the various KAF offices have played a key role in this regard. It should also be mentioned that prominent guests from the political and clerical realm, as well as from the media, attend our events, thus ensuring that a broad segment of the public is informed about our projects.

Prof. Ernst-Ludwig Ehrlich
Honorary Vice President of B'nai B'rith Europe

Dialogue in Germany

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation's work in Germany focuses on two main areas. One of these involves the search for forms of commemoration of the Holocaust and National Socialism that are appropriate for the times we live in and can be expected to remain so in the future. The other has to do with addressing issues affecting Jewish life in Germany today.

Commemoration

For many years now, the „Day of Commemoration of January 27“ has served as the memorial day for the victims of National Socialism. It is also a key date in the KAF's annual educational programs. A variety of events are held on and around this day at the more than 20 civic education centers the KAF operates throughout Germany. These events range from discussions with Holocaust survivors, film presentations and readings to panel discussions and visits to various memorial sites.

The „DenkT@g im Internet“ (Day of Commemoration on the Internet – www.denktag.de) youth competition established by the foundation is an effective instrument designed with young people in mind in order to get them interested in learning more about the Holocaust. The program calls on young people to design websites that either deal historically with the



Awards ceremony for DenkT@g 2003.

Holocaust and National Socialism or else address current issues such as anti-Semitism, xenophobia and violence. Regardless of which type of website they choose to design – the important thing is that the participants develop a sense of the relationship between past and present. Moreover, their encounter with past totalitarianism and current anti-democratic trends serves to motivate the young participants to „learn their lesson from history“ and make a contribution toward strengthening democracy.

„DenkT@g im Internet“ has attracted great interest among students and teachers alike. Although the competition entries display great variety, they do have two things in common: their seriousness and the great efforts the young people make in creating their websites, a process in which they are supported by the KAF in terms of both content and technology (e.g. html training). The foundation also conducts seminars and arranges presentations and discussions with individuals who lived during the Nazi era. It is exactly this combination of educational events and programs to develop media skills that makes the „DenkT@g im Internet“ competition such an ideal and appropriate program for commemoration, one which will continue to have an impact in the future.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation not only addresses the question as to what educational form commemorative work should take in order to ensure that it carries on into the future and makes the future a better place; it also looks at the scholarly and theoretical side of the issue – for example, at symposiums such as „Commemoration in the Entertainment Society“ or „Commemoration in the Multicultural Society,“ as well as in various



Young Jews from Berlin at a discussion at the KAF (January 17, 2004).

publications. The book „Erinnern und Verstehen“ (Remembering and Understanding), which was edited by Hans Erler, is the result of a conference that looked back on developments seven years after the day of commemoration for the victims of National Socialism was introduced in Germany.

Jewish Life in Germany

Along with its commemorative work, the KAF also focuses on the current state of Jewish life in Germany and expectations for the future. It now appears necessary to promote the spread of knowledge about Jewish life, and dialogue with the Jewish community, as we are living in a period in which anti-Semitism seems to be becoming fashionable once again, and when old clichés are cropping up – mostly among people who either do not know any Jews, or simply know nothing about them.

What is Jewish identity in Germany today? What types of problems do Jewish communities face? What is modern Jewish culture in Germany and how is it viewed? What role do Israel and the conflict in the Middle East play for German Jews – particularly for the younger generation? There is great interest in all of these questions, especially among young people. For this reason, various seminars on the „life issues“ (Salomon Korn) are offered not only by the foundation's Political Education department but also by the department responsible for promoting especially gifted youths. Groups of students who receive KAF scholarships also seek out contact with the Jewish communities in the cities where they are studying. In addition, the art exhibitions and readings by authors organized by the KAF enable visitors to gain insight into modern Jewish identity through an experience of the arts.

Hans Erler (KAF Education Center Eichholz) and Ernst-Ludwig Ehrlich (B'nai B'rith Europe) have put together what has now grown to a six-volume work, whose relevance and use goes far beyond the KAF's „Jewish Life in Germany“ program, for which it serves as the foundation. The books – the first one published in 1997 – are the result of various conferences on Jewish-Christian dialogue. The volumes „Jüdisches Leben und jüdische Kultur in Deutschland – Geschichte, Zerstörung und schwieriger Neubeginn (Jewish Life and Jewish Culture in Germany – History, Destruction and a Difficult New Beginning; 2000) and „Judentum verstehen – Die Aktualität jüdischen Denkens von Maimonides bis Hannah Arendt“ (Understanding Jewishness – The Contemporary Importance of Jewish Thought from Maimonides to Hannah Arendt; 2002) offer an excellent scholarly foundation for addressing current issues in Jewish life. These volumes contain essays by renowned experts on Judaism, theologians, historians and philosophers.

Appendix

Publications: See German Version

Links

www.kas.de

www.denktag.de

Editor

Anne von Fallois

Contact

Dr. Melanie Piepenschneider

Director of the Academy of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Berlin

Tiergartenstraße 35

D-10907 Berlin

Phone: + 49 30 2 69 96-230

E-Mail: melanie.piepenschneider@kas.de