



Konrad  
Adenauer  
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# “A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE”

30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE KAS/AJC PROGRAM

Deidre Berger | Jens Paulus (Hrsg.)

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## FOREWORD

Thirty years ago, on 23 June 1980, fifteen American Jewish visitors arrived in the Federal Republic of Germany for the first "Adenauer Exchange" as our American partners from the AJC call the program. Since then over 350 of them visited Germany while over 350 Germans returned their visit to the USA. The program is intended to familiarize the German participants with the Jewish community of America including its diversity, its history and its social and cultural achievements from their own experience. On the other hand, the representatives of American Jewry – according to the AJC Memorandum – "... are to get an idea about the development and achievements of the Federal Republic from their own experience. These insights shall be disseminated within their country – both in Jewish organisations and the American society at large".

It was a historic offer the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung received from the American Jewish Committee in 1980. After the great injustice the Germans had done to their Jewish fellow citizens and the Jews of Europe, after all the horror and distress, after all the mourning, it was an American Jewish organisation – whose members, though to different degrees, were all affected by the holocaust – that made a proposal on its own initiative to try and break down prejudices between Germans and American Jews and to help improve Germany's image in the USA.

There were good reasons for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung to accept the offer of trusting cooperation. The policy of its name giver with regard to the Jews and Israel remains an ongoing commitment for us. "Bringing about reconciliation" is, in the words of Konrad Adenauer, the "noblest" aim – for reasons of moral responsibility vis-à-vis the past, as a sign of remorse and atonement, as an attempt to strengthen moral categories in Germany again and regarding the feeling that humankind owes the Jews incredibly much in all fields.

We firmly believe that today's challenges in a globalised and ever less predictable world can only be solved on the basis of shared values, norms and principles. Therefore, the German-American-Jewish dialogue will always be a contribution to the strengthening of transatlantic relations, too.

The partnership the KAS and the American Jewish Committee entered into thirty years ago has become a central element of our transatlantic commitment.

I would like to thank the AJC and its representatives for the cooperation which has always been marked by trust and mutual openness.

It was almost exactly five years ago in Berlin when we celebrated "a quarter of a century" of the KAS/AJC exchange program. We used the anniversary as an opportunity to take stock of previous activities by publishing a compilation of reports of experiences.

Five years later after another five delegations from either side have visited each other's country you now hold the new edition in your hands. The reports impressively reflect the value and the importance of our exchange program both for everyone individually as well as for the German-American-Jewish relations. The American Jewish Committee and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung have been busy building a stable and resistant bridge for the past three decades – and a new pier will be added each year.

Berlin, May 2010



*Michael Thielen*  
Secretary General, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

## INTRODUCTION

AJC was founded in 1906 by an accomplished group of American Jews of German origin with the purpose of combating anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry and promoting human rights. For more than 100 years, this organization has grown in the vision of its founders, bringing people of all races, ethnic groups, and religions together to enhance the democratic and pluralistic fabric of our world.

AJC's relationship with the Federal Republic of Germany holds a special place in this history. The German annihilation of European Jewry in the Second World War stands as a singular crime – and, from a Jewish perspective, a tragedy that remains fundamentally unfathomable even today. The principle of "Never again" continues to drive our work moving forward with a decided sense of urgency.

At the same time, AJC embodies a central Jewish tenet – the inextinguishable belief in the possibility of a better world, and the determination to work toward its realization. This flame of hope moved the organization to help sponsor the first Jewish prayer service on German soil since the war's onset, which was broadcast in the U.S. and Germany as a symbol of renewed life from Aachen on October 29, 1944. The same hope led AJC, just a few short years after the end of World War II, to involve itself in the U.S.-led effort for democratic political education in Germany, to be the first Jewish group to support German unification in 1990, and finally, in 1998, to open our own office in the heart of Berlin, the first permanent American Jewish permanent presence on the ground.

Thirty years ago, our belief in the possibility of building relationships and drawing from history's lessons was institutionalized in a people-to-people exchange program with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. We celebrate that program today with deserved fanfare. The personal visits of hundreds of American Jews to Germany as guests of the Kon-

rad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and the parallel visits of their counterparts in Germany with AJC to the United States, have in their own way made history, opening the doors of compassion and understanding for hundreds of individuals and touching the lives of many thousands more.

This program at its root is about breaking down barriers and facilitating genuine communication. It is about experience – the greatest teacher of all. It is an attempt to ensure that the lessons we have learned about the dangers of the slippery slope of anti-Semitism and bigotry are well understood. It is about looking to the future with a shared sense of purpose and a passion for justice.

We are grateful to the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for its partnership in this endeavor, and for the commitment and vision it has shared with us. In particular, I would like to thank Michael Thielen who, along with a wonderful, dedicated team of colleagues, has been so instrumental in making this thirtieth anniversary reunion of our partnership possible. It is gratifying to have such dedicated friends.

It is fortuitous that this anniversary should occur in the very same year as another occasion worthy of celebration. The year 2010 marks the forty-fifth anniversary of relations between Germany and Israel, a giant leap in the history of both countries and a special relationship that deserves continued nourishing and support.

Germany and the Jewish people know so well the power of democracy to transform and open societies, and know equally well the mortal danger of tyranny. It is, therefore, my most fervent hope that we can continue to work together in advancing this worthy cause in the Middle East and around the world. In that same spirit, I yearn for the day when the people of Israel will know true peace in a region where ploughshares one day will replace swords. Germany has a key role to play in realizing these historic possibilities.

Let this anniversary year remind us, then, of the uniqueness and importance of the bonds we have worked together so diligently and farsightedly to develop. The German-Jewish relationship is like none other in the world. If we tend to it, it can be an ongoing source of strength and purpose, a source of continued contemplation and reflection. In this spirit, the recollections contained in this volume will provide both uplifting reading and food for thought.

The hope that we put in Germany after the cataclysmic war has not been misplaced, far from it. Our relationship should stand as a source of inspiration to others that today can be brighter than yesterday, that history can indeed move forward in a positive direction, and that we can be visionary architects of our destiny.

Washington, May 2010

*David A. Harris*  
*Executive Director, American Jewish Committee*

MESSAGE TO MARK THE 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
EXCHANGE PROGRAM OF THE KONRAD-ADENAUER-  
STIFTUNG AND THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

*Dear participants in the exchange program of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee,*

I would like to convey my cordial greetings to today's anniversary celebration in Washington.

In 1980, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee established a program which continues to be of special importance to this day. As the very first joint program co-sponsored by a Jewish American and a German organization, it showed the way ahead.

As participants in this exchange program, you have made a valuable contribution towards rebuilding a relationship which was almost destroyed as a result of the Holocaust. This program was one of many elements intended to further consolidate German democracy, which is founded on human rights and committed to protecting freedom.

Both the German and the American program participants have often said that their experiences during the exchange changed their lives. The program has also had a profound impact on the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

In this anniversary year, our hearts are filled with gratitude as we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of German unity. In this connection, it is worth remembering that in 1990 the American Jewish Committee was the first Jewish organization to wholeheartedly welcome German unity, thus signaling its confidence in united Germany. That certainly could not be taken for granted and I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support.

I can only encourage you all to continue these encounters, which are imbued with a spirit of trust. In the awareness of our responsibility for the past, let us keep up our joint efforts to foster security, democracy and human rights – both at home and around the world.

Berlin, May 2010

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Merkel', written in a cursive style.

*Dr. Angela Merkel  
Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany*

OVERVIEW:  
30 YEARS OF COOPERATION  
KAS/AJC EXCHANGE PROGRAM

# 30 YEARS OF COOPERATION: KAS AND AJC

SOME THOUGHTS ON HOW THE COOPERATION WITH JEWISH  
ORGANIZATIONS STARTED

*Josef Thesing | Former Deputy Secretary General, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*

## **INTRODUCTION**

There are some memorable dates that are oddly difficult to ascertain. This is true for the origin of cooperation between the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC). If we take the first exchange program that was organized as a starting point, both organizations, in 2010, can look back on 30 years of successful cooperation. At the invitation of the KAS, 15 American-Jewish program participants visited the Federal Republic of Germany between June 23 and July 5, 1980. Actually, however, the cooperation had already started in 1979.

As someone who witnessed and shaped this cooperation right from the start (from 1979 to 2000), I would like to use this opportunity to share some of my thoughts and ideas about it and explain the reasons and circumstances that prompted the KAS to start co-operating with other organizations in addition to the AJC. I will also briefly deal with other projects and programs that have been launched with Jewish organizations in other countries. The 30th anniversary is a

good opportunity to sketch the broad outlines of the KAS's involvement with Jewish issues and its work with Jewish organizations. I will, however, only refer to the international work of the KAS. It would certainly be fascinating as well to include all the programs and projects that are managed by the KAS's Education for Democracy Department, the Research Department and by the Archives for Christian-Democratic Politics. This, however, cannot be done here. Let me just point out that the cooperation with Jewish partners and Jewish organizations generally is of key interest to the KAS.

The KAS bears the name of the most important German statesman after 1949; this has been and still is a valuable connection, a pleasant competitive advantage that can be perceived all over the world. But the KAS's commitment to Konrad Adenauer goes much deeper. The KAS feels a special obligation to his values, principles, insights and experiences. Konrad Adenauer and his values shape the agenda of the KAS and impose a certain obligation on it. Whoever wants to describe the cooperation between the KAS and Jewish organizations cannot avoid answering the question about Konrad Adenauer's relationship with Judaism.

### **KONRAD ADENAUER AND JUDAISM**

"The German people are prepared to make up for the wrongs, as far as possible, that were perpetrated in its name against the Jews by a criminal regime, after millions of lives have been irretrievably destroyed. We consider this effort to make up for the misdeeds of the past to be our duty."<sup>1</sup> These are Konrad Adenauer's words, spoken on November 25, 1949, in an interview given to the German-Jewish weekly *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*. For Konrad Adenauer, who had been elected Federal Chancellor on September 15, 1949, with a one-vote majority, the relationships to Judaism and to the State of Israel, which had been recently founded on May 14, 1948, were among his political priorities. "When I became Chancellor in 1949, I felt that one of my most important tasks was to re-establish our relations to the Jews. We were able to demonstrate our goodwill mainly by providing material assistance. However, we had to avoid creating the impression that we thought we could atone for the wrongs that had been perpetrated merely by giving material goods. This could only be an external sign of our desire to achieve some kind of restorative justice."<sup>2</sup> Konrad Adenauer was very aware of the burden that the crimes the National Socialists had

perpetrated against Jewish people constituted. At a personal level, too, trying to repair these wrongs done to the Jews was very important to him. The political and social system of the new and democratic Germany demanded a genuine commitment to this issue. Hans-Peter Schwarz describes how Adenauer felt about this question as follows: "In this context, Adenauer keeps using the term 'moral': 'My determination to correct these wrongs is sincere. I consider it a major moral problem...' He does not use the everyday term 'moral' with the indifference so common in political life. For him, the attempt to repair the wrongs of the past is a 'moral problem' because the misdeeds perpetrated against the Jews have violated the moral world order. Taking a stand by showing remorse through action is an attempt to re-establish the moral categories – in Europe, in the souls of the Germans."<sup>3</sup> For this reason, Adenauer considered his policy of reparation to be one of his major political challenges. His definition of this challenge is very clear: "No fuzzy, non-committal sense of guilt but clear categories: responsibility of the individual, responsibility of a people and a state, disgrace and honor, claims of the victims and obligation of the German citizens to symbolically reinstate the moral law."<sup>4</sup> As Adenauer had a sharp sense of political realism, he did not overlook the practical side of the issue at all; indeed, he was aware of the great influence American Jews had.

Negotiations with Jewish organizations and the State of Israel about a reparations agreement were difficult. The cause for these difficulties lay in the problem itself. In the early 1950s, there were major reservations, in Israel and in Jewish organizations, about holding talks and negotiations with Germany. But, as Adenauer and Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion were keen to solve this problem, it was possible for the Jewish Claims Conference and the Federal Republic of Germany to sign an agreement on September 10, 1952, in Luxemburg, in which reparations payments were fixed. Adenauer was lucky to meet a man like David Ben Gurion, who as Prime Minister of Israel was able and prepared to make sure that the policy of reparations would be accepted. "Ben Gurion once said that a statesman – as opposed to a politician, who thought about the next elections – was someone who set his sights on future generations. David Ben Gurion and Konrad Adenauer were men of such stature. Adenauer clearly realized that the rebuilding of Germany would be impossible without a renewed dialogue with the Jewish people based on trust and honesty. Ben Gurion recognized that those Germans needed to be encouraged who made an effort to build a different, demo-

cratic and humane Germany and tried to impart new values to young people.”<sup>5</sup> This assessment is from Shimon Peres who even then was already actively involved in the development of the relationship between the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel.

Adenauer and Ben Gurion only met twice. The first meeting took place at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City on March 14, 1960, at 10 a.m. A picture that was taken of this meeting between the two statesmen shows two faces radiating kindness and trust and an atmosphere of mutual respect and humanity. This photo has become a political symbol. Until today, it has remained a vivid sign of a new beginning in the relationship between Germany and Israel. Adenauer was impressed. In his memoirs, he quotes a statement Ben Gurion made during the meeting: “I have met Germans on several occasions who are your political opponents and do not agree with your policies. All of them unanimously stated that your attitude towards the Jewish people is shaped by your conscience. I rate such an attitude even more highly than purely material reparations. The acknowledgment of a moral responsibility by the German people is, for me, more important than purely material aspects.”<sup>6</sup>

The two statesmen met again during the private visit Konrad Adenauer paid to Israel between May 2 and 5, 1966. Both men were no longer in office at that time. They got along very well. Meeting Ben Gurion at his kibbutz, She Boker in the Negev desert, made a lasting impression on Adenauer. Even if this trip does not go entirely smoothly, Adenauer, in a speech accepting the honorary doctorate awarded to him by the Weizmann Institute in Rekovoth, briefly reviews his policy of reconciliation: “Bringing about reconciliation with Israel and the entire Jewish people – that was my foremost concern. It was based on a sense of a deeply felt inner obligation and also on the feeling that mankind owes so much to the Jewish people in particular, in all areas of the human intellect and in the field of religion.”<sup>7</sup> The visit on Israeli soil is, on a personal level, a very moving experience for Adenauer. He realizes that meeting with David Ben Gurion on the soil of the State of Israel is an extraordinary event in every respect. This is how he puts his emotions in words: “This is one of the most serious and most wonderful moments of my life. It is one of the most serious because it reminds me of the injustice that was done to your people especially, but also one of the most wonderful because I can see here what your people have achieved.”<sup>8</sup> Ben Gurion travelled to Germany on April 22 and 23, 1967, to attend the state funeral for Konrad Adenauer.

Konrad Adenauer and David Ben Gurion had laid a solid foundation for building a new relationship between the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Israel, and Judaism. Until today, this foundation has remained the cornerstone of the relationship. Adenauer would have liked to see his efforts crowned by the opening of diplomatic relations with the State of Israel. But this was not to be. It was his successor to the Chancellorship, Ludwig Erhard, who was able to implement that step on March 7, 1965.

### **KAS AND AJC: THE START OF THE COOPERATION**

Konrad Adenauer’s policy towards the Jewish people and Israel is an integral part of the national and international work of the KAS. This statement certainly applies to the longstanding chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Bruno Heck (1917-1989), who was for many years a close associate of Adenauer in the party both in the German Parliament and in the government. He was a faithful and reliable custodian for the KAS and a champion of the ideas, principles and results of Konrad Adenauer’s policies. His successors Günter Rinsche, Bernhard Vogel, and Hans-Gert Pöttering also stuck to the course he had charted.

The Stiftung, which was named after Konrad Adenauer in 1964, was forced to realize in the early years that it was almost impossible to get into contact with, or establish cooperation with, Jewish organizations in the U.S. or with individuals and institutions in Israel. Memories of the horrifying events that had happened in the years between 1933 and 1945 were still too fresh. True, there were occasional talks and meetings with Jewish politicians, scientists, scholars and journalists. One could talk with them, even if some of these talks started out a little awkwardly. I can still remember talking to a politician from Israel in September 1978 who was on a visit to Germany. When I wanted to welcome him to the KAS and tried to shake his hand, he refused and explained to me that he did not really want to talk to the sons of the murderers of his parents and relatives. We did end up talking to each other, however, partly because I managed to get across to him my own personal and political background. This experience is firmly rooted in my memory. Whenever I went on a visit to Poland or Israel, I always remembered it and definitely decided to think carefully about each and every phrase before uttering it in conversation with our partners from the two countries. I had to assume that everyone I met had in some way been affected by the horrible past. That is why, in the first years of our cooperation, I used to be very tense and focused in talks with Jewish guests or

visitors. I often tried to find out about their personal or family background beforehand. So I did feel some embarrassment at first, but it passed over time. I think it is important to remind people of this today, because these inhibitions in talking to Jewish people have largely disappeared. This, too, can be regarded as a successful result of the KAS's work. But things were difficult in the beginning. What was needed was sustained patience, a lot of sensitive understanding and an open and stable atmosphere for talks. Bruno Heck deserves credit for what he achieved on this score. His ability to listen patiently, sympathetically and attentively and to engage in talks with a high degree of verbal subtlety on very delicate and complex issues gradually created a basis of trust in our contacts with our Jewish guests. His advantage was that he was able to explain Adenauer's policy of reconciliation and reparation in great detail and with great credibility.

In 1977, the KAS opened an office in Washington, D.C. This basic structure enabled us to develop a network of contacts with individuals, institutions and organizations. We were also thinking about contacts with Jewish organizations. The first opportunity for this presented itself in July 1979.

On June 8, 1979, during a visit of the then-Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to New York City, talks were held with representatives of the AJC. In these talks, the AJC representatives suggested to the German Chancellor that they start an exchange program. The AJC envisaged sending younger American Jews on a trip to Germany to give them a chance to gather objective information and knowledge of present-day Germany. "They are supposed to get an idea, through personal experience, of the development and the achievements that the Federal Republic has seen in more than thirty years. They can then pass on these insights in their own country – both in Jewish organizations and in the broader American society of which they are a part."<sup>9</sup> The program targeted younger representatives of the American Jewish community, especially from the media sector, the educational system, the business community, labor unions, judicial administration and political science.<sup>10</sup> Part of the AJC proposal was an invitation extended to young Germans in comparable occupations and academic fields "in order to get acquainted with the Jewish community in the U.S., which today is the largest in the world and lives under historically unique conditions amidst the cultural and religious diversity of America, including its history, its social and

cultural achievements and its prospects for the future. Potential German participants could come from the following groups: younger MPs from the federal parliament and state parliaments, cultural officials from the federal states, staff of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Culture, representatives of the mass media and representatives of the Protestant and Catholic churches."<sup>11</sup> The program was to be developed jointly by the AJC and the competent bodies in the Federal Republic of Germany. Initially, it was planned to have groups of 12 participants visit the respective host country for a period of four weeks. The AJC suggested the following priorities for the U.S. leg of the program: a) introduction to the diversity of the American Jewish community; visit to institutions of orthodox, conservative and reformist Judaism; b) development and structure of Jewish communities and Jewish social work in the U.S. (e.g. College of Social Work which was founded at Jewish initiative; local chapters of Jewish charities); c) Jewish cultural and educational institutions (visit to the Jewish publishing company in Philadelphia; Jewish Museum in New York City; Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies in Chicago); d) immigration as experience – talks with recent Jewish immigrants; e) Jews in the political life of America – meetings with Jewish Members of Congress in Washington, D.C.; f) meetings with Jewish representatives from the business community and labor unions. The AJC attached special importance to including home hospitalities in the program.

This was the framework for the exchange program that the AJC representatives presented to Chancellor Helmut Schmidt on June 8, 1979, in New York City. The project was further coordinated with the German General Consulate in New York City. Consul Wolf Calebow showed a high personal commitment to the project. On July 5, 1979, the General Consulate stated its support for the AJC proposal. On August 7, 1979, the Federal Chancellery also issued a favorable comment: "In our view, it seems well-suited to help eliminate the lack of personal contacts ("generational problem") in German-American relations which is becoming more and more noticeable. In the recent past, the Federal Chancellor has repeatedly emphasized (e.g. on March 16 at the German-American conference in Hamburg organized by the 'Atlantik-Brücke' and on May 6 at the University of South Carolina) the need to encourage the young generation to get personally involved in the German-American partnership and to rededicate ourselves to the joint challenges of the Federal Republic of Germany and the U.S. by enabling more personal contacts

and friendships as well as exchange programs.”<sup>12</sup> The Chancellery also points out the importance of the AJC and underlines the open-mindedness and willingness to improve the relations between the American Jewish community and the Federal Republic of Germany. The document issued by the Federal Chancellery then briefly deals with the difficulties of financing such a project and the question whether the federal government can even be a partner in this program. It suggests examining the possibility “of winning a political foundation or some other societal group for the program. ... The proposal made by this influential Jewish organization to launch a German-American exchange program demonstrates, in a particularly impressive way, the change in attitude to the Federal Republic of Germany that a large segment of the American Jewish community has undergone. It is also for this reason that we should respond positively to the proposal for an exchange program.”<sup>13</sup>

Partly for the reasons cited in the Chancellery statement, the KAS decided in 1977 to open its own office in Washington D.C., the U.S. capital in order to use its resources to give a new boost to German-American cooperation. We, too, had observed that the generation responsible for laying the foundation for a comprehensive partnership based on mutual trust, and who had kept that relationship vibrant through its personal experience and commitment, had retired from active politics. A new generation of political leaders who largely lacked the personal experience of the Second World War and of the rebuilding of a democratic Germany with its value-driven policy of forming alliances was now called upon to further the values, ideas and structures characterizing German-American and transatlantic relations. That is why we considered it to be absolutely necessary to have our own office in Washington D.C. and be visible there with our own KAS representative. The office was given the following main functions: to present developments in Germany, to put common problems on the agenda, to organize meetings and visits for influential politicians, businessmen, academics and journalists. Briefly put: the KAS wanted to bring together important opinion leaders and political actors from both countries that were part of the younger generation, organize talks between them, and engage them in a constructive dialogue on how to shape the future. What had become obvious was a lack of personal contact among these people. In this sense, the AJC’s proposal, apart from its fundamental importance, also corresponded to our own interests. For the KAS, the opportunity arose for gaining an important and influential partner, the American Jewish community.

The Federal Chancellery passed on the AJC’s proposal to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Barthold Witte, a senior ministry official, wrote letters to the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung and the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, informing them about how the idea for an exchange program had developed, emphasized its importance, and asked them to communicate to the ministry “whether your foundation is interested in such a program. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would very much welcome it if the political foundations took up the idea put forward by the American Jewish Committee, because it is observing with some concern that the interpersonal contacts between Germans and Americans, not least with American Jews, which were so close after the war, are becoming less frequent and less fruitful.”<sup>14</sup>

I talked to the chairman of the KAS, Bruno Heck, about the letter on October 29, 1979. We quickly agreed that the KAS should accept the proposal. We communicated this to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The KAS was the first – and initially the only – political foundation that reacted favorably to the AJC’s proposal. On October 30, 1979, I wrote a letter to the then-director of the KAS office in Washington D.C., Manfred von Nordheim. I informed him about the AJC’s offer and asked him to get in touch with AJC representatives in New York City. The first meeting there took place on November 27, 1979. On the side of the AJC, it was William S. Trosten who participated in these talks. He was the actual driving force behind the initiative. He deserves most of the credit for getting the project moving. He knew Germany very well, often travelled to Germany on business and spoke excellent German. Especially in the early years, he invested a lot of time and effort in the program. Consul Calebow from the General Consulate in New York City had attended the first meeting. As the other political foundations had not responded, the KAS and the AJC quickly came to an agreement to jointly organize the exchange program, which was supposed to start in 1980. The KAS was willing to invite 15 AJC representatives to Germany. In the following weeks and months, Manfred von Nordheim, William S. Trosten and Rita Blume, who, on the AJC side, were responsible for the practical implementation of the program, met frequently in order to coordinate the details of the first visit of the AJC guests to Germany. The personal commitment of Manfred von Nordheim turned out to be particularly fortunate and helpful for the project. He and his successors in the director’s office at the KAS Washington office, Wolfgang Pordzik, Gerhard Wahlers and Franz-Josef Reuter, were all particularly dedicated and

committed supporters of the exchange program with the AJC. This was an important factor in the project's success.

The first program ran from June 23 to July 5, 1980. It produced a number of questions and a degree of uncertainty on the part of the KAS and those who were responsible for developing, planning and implementing it. We were breaking new ground. What were the things we had to pay attention to? What sensitivities did we have to be prepared for? Which special eating habits did we have to take into account? With what kind of expectations and biographies would the participants confront us? And, most importantly, with how much knowledge would our guests come to Germany, and, possibly, with what kind of prejudices? Almost none of them had been to Germany before.

The program was planned around stays in Berlin, Bonn/Sankt Augustin (head office of the KAS), Munich and Dachau. In Berlin, the group met with, among others, Richard von Weizsäcker. Also scheduled were visits to the Jewish community, to the Aspen Institute, to the Reichstag, to East Berlin as well as a discussion with journalists of the weekly *Die Welt* in the Springer building. Political conversations were held in Bonn and Sankt Augustin (e.g., with Hans Stercken, MP), where we presented its philosophy and its activities in various areas (Education for Democracy, Academic Research, International Work, Scholarship Program). This was followed by an event organized by the University of Bonn where group members talked with historians about "The Jews and the Third Reich." On June 30, 1980, Bruno Heck hosted the guests for dinner and used this opportunity to give them a detailed presentation of Germany's development after 1945. A visit to the Dachau memorial concluded the program. No difficulties worth mentioning arose during the program. While we felt relieved at first, we were also interested in hearing the opinion of the group members. Rabbi David Gordis from the University of Judaism in Los Angeles made the following comment in a letter of July 8, 1980: "As you know, the group was a good deal more heterogeneous than most of us had anticipated. In addition, a broad range of interests on the part of the participants, a very considerable span of backgrounds and the fact that this was the first experiment of its kind, all contributed to the complexity of programming especially under the kind of the time pressures that were faced by the Foundation. In spite of all these difficulties, the total experience of the visit was profound and deeply enriching. I shall always remember these two weeks and shall always be grateful to the Foundation for the enormous effort that went into making them possible."

The group's impressions and experiences were the subject of a discussion, on September 16 and 17, 1980, between Manfred von Nordheim and AJC representatives Richard Weiss, William S. Trosten, and Rita Blume. In his detailed report from September 22, 1980, Manfred von Nordheim states: "The picture that emerges from written reports, newspaper interviews and from what the three participants personally told me is that the visit was a success because it greatly reduced prejudice. A stereotypical image of Germany has been challenged and has already been turned around into a positive one. Participants have talked about their trip to numerous Jewish groups, and the rabbis have given presentations in their synagogues."

So, by and large, the exchange program had had a successful start. We felt we were on slightly firmer ground afterwards. The experiences group members had shared with us and the critical remarks they had communicated to us were taken into account in planning the next programs. Beate Neuss was kind enough to analyze and describe the development of the exchange programs between 1980 and 2000<sup>15</sup>. She was especially qualified for this assignment because she had participated in the program between 1982 and 1988 herself. For this publication, she expanded her analysis to include the last five years of the program.

#### **OTHER PROGRAMS WITH JEWISH PARTNERS**

1979 not only marked the beginning of the partnership with the AJC. In the same year, the KAS also launched its cooperation with partners in Israel. The then-director of the Institute for International Solidarity, Lothar Kraft, travelled to Israel from November 24 to December 1, 1979, to explore possibilities for KAS to begin operating in the country. In his report from December 5, 1979, he points out: "There are some good reasons for the KAS to start work in Israel: our special relationship to Israel; the memory of the meetings between the two great statesmen Adenauer and Ben Gurion which has remained very vivid in Israel; as well as aspects of development policy in a narrower sense, such as an interest in the socio-political development of the country."<sup>16</sup> In 1980, the KAS started its work in Israel. The Hebrew University in Jerusalem was the first project partner. The activities were continuously extended in the following years by including projects with the Israel Interfaith Association, e.g. Jewish-Arab understanding with *Newe Schalom* and *Brit Bnei Schem*. Other partners were added. In the last few years, the KAS's work has focused very much on the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian dia-

logue. Especially in difficult periods, the dialogue and talks among important actors must not be cut off, because eventually these actors cannot avoid having to talk to each other again. In this context, the special personal commitment shown by the former KAS representative in Israel, Johannes Gerster, must be mentioned. It is largely owing to him that, even in the very difficult times marked by terror and violence, the dialogue between Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs was not broken off.

A project of outstanding significance is the establishment of the "Konrad-Adenauer-Conference Center." Johannes played an active role in getting this project off the ground as well. The idea of establishing a conference center in Israel that bears the name of Konrad Adenauer goes back to the 1980s. Originally, Jaffa had been chosen as its location. For various reasons, however, it had been impossible to implement this plan. But the idea was kept alive. In September 1997, Teddy Kollek and Yissakhar Ben-Yaacov of the Jerusalem Foundation suggested setting up a conference center bearing the name of Konrad Adenauer in the heart of the city. Johannes Gerster's response to this plan was enthusiastic: "It is a wonderful objective to bring together, in the future, Jews, Christians and Muslims, people of different origins, from different cultural backgrounds and from many different nations in the vicinity of David's Tower and the Wailing Wall, of Via Dolorosa and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. If, in this place, where you can almost physically feel 3000 years of history, a joint Israeli-German project such as the Konrad-Adenauer-Conference Center becomes possible despite the horrors of the past, there is justified hope for understanding in the Middle East and especially in Jerusalem, the city of peace."<sup>17</sup> The foundation stone was laid on November 2, 1999. On May 31, 2001, the center was opened in a ceremony which was attended, among others, by the former KAS chairman, Bernhard Vogel. A bold political idea had thus been realized, which former Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl expressed as follows on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone: "The fact that an Israeli foundation, the Jerusalem Foundation, and a German foundation, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, are willing to cooperate in the spirit of reconciliation, compromise and peace, is a wonderful sign, 54 years after the Shoah, that what seemed to have been divided forever can be rejoined again."<sup>18</sup>

Alois Mertes (1921-1985) was an important Christian-Democratic politician. As a diplomat, a member of parliament and a minister of state,

he mainly emphasized the ethical side of politics. He was a practising Catholic and took a value-oriented approach to difficult issues. What he did not like was political arbitrariness, the use of questionable arguments, ill-defined policies and fuzzy terms. In the foreign-policy field in which most of his responsibility lay, this was no easy position to take. But he always managed to get his message across and to maintain his credibility. He did a lot for the German-American and transatlantic partnership. He had close contacts to Jewish-American organizations. In a particularly difficult phase – during President Reagan's visit to Germany and Reagan's and Federal Chancellor Kohl's joint visit on May 5 1985, to the military cemetery at Bitburg, which houses the graves of some members of the "Waffen SS" – he flew to New York City and, a few days before the visit of the U.S. President, gave a well-received speech at the Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Committee. In this speech, he mentioned that his devout parents and his late elder brother, who had been a Catholic priest, had "taught him to have respect for Jewish piety and Jewish law-abidingness."<sup>19</sup> Alois Mertes passed away much too early, on June 16 1985. In memory of him, the KAS and the AJC launched the "Alois Mertes Memorial Lecture" in 1986. Since then, this annual lecture has been given alternately in the U.S. and in Germany. On June 8, 1988, the then-AJC President Theodore Ellenoff was guest speaker of the lecture series and came to Bonn. The subject of his speech was "Democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany – A new understanding and commitment for the rule of law."

Other programs with Jewish organizations followed. In 1990, cooperation started with B'nai B'rith. Exchange and dialog programs were implemented. Numerous lectures on Christian-Jewish cooperation in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and in the Czech Republic were organized with the special input of the director of District 19 (Continental Europe), Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich.

In Poland, the KAS initiated a seminar in which the concept for the "Museum of Jewish History in Poland," located in Warsaw, was discussed. From April 24 to 26, 1996, seminar participants exchanged views on the role and function of museums of history in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe. The experiences of other museums were supposed to be used for developing a concept for the Jewish Museum in Warsaw. Highlevel experts met in Warsaw for this event: Jeshajahu Weinberg, founding director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in

Washington D.C. and of the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv; Joel Cahen, deputy director of the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv; Israel Gutman, director of the International Research Center Yad Vashem, Jerusalem; Hermann Schäfer, president of the "Haus der Geschichte" of the Federal Republic of Germany (Museum of Postwar German History), Bonn; Georg Heuberger, director of the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt; Leo Pavlat, director of the Jewish Museum, Prague; Judith Bellinfante, director of the Jewish History Museum, Amsterdam. Very tangible results were produced for the construction of the Museum of Jewish History.

Under the auspices of the then-Federal President, Roman Herzog, a German organization for the promotion of the museum project was founded. I am a founding member and a member of the board of this society. When Roman Herzog met with German sponsors of the museum project on February 22, 1995 at the Bellevue Palace in Berlin, he said: "We are gathered here today in order to show our support for a project that is supposed to open our eyes, and the eyes of future generations, to the contribution that the Jews living in Poland have made to the history and culture of their country for centuries. The National Socialist racial madness did not only annihilate the Jews in Central and Eastern Europe but also delivered a cruel blow to their culture. Irreplaceable objects of Jewish culture were destroyed, historic synagogues with their rich ornamentation were reduced to rubble, books, manuscripts, old prints, masterpieces of sculpture, painting and graphic arts were burned, and still – thank God – the Nazis did not manage to wipe out this past. Jewish culture in Eastern Europe survives in its literature and prose, in its poetry as well as in its scholarly and religious writing. That is why the Museum for Jewish History shall become a museum that celebrates life and not the museum of a bygone world."<sup>20</sup> The project has overcome initial difficulties and is now in the concrete planning phase. The City of Warsaw has made a plot of land available for the building free of charge.

The KAS has organized several programs with the "Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations." These activities are also designed to promote personal contacts and dialogue among people. My own experience with these programs is that getting to know each other, talking to each other, listening to each other, an open and respectful dialog, and the necessary sensitivity when dealing with people from

different religious and cultural backgrounds creates a solid foundation of mutual trust. To me, this is the biggest success that the KAS can rightfully claim to have achieved through the programs it has conducted with Jewish organizations over the last 30 years.

- 1| Anneliese Poppinga (ed.): *Konrad Adenauer – Seid wach für die kommenden Jahre*, KAS, Bergisch Gladbach 1997, p. 345.
- 2| *Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1953 – 1955*, Stuttgart 1966, p. 132.
- 3| Hans-Peter Schwarz: *Adenauer Bd. 1 – Der Auftrag 1876-1952*, dtv-edition, München 1994, p. 899.
- 4| Hans-Peter Schwarz, aaO.
- 5| Shimon Peres in his foreword to the book by Niels Hansen: *Aus dem Schatten der Katastrophe – Die deutsch-israelischen Beziehungen in der Ära Konrad Adenauer und David Ben Gurion*, Düsseldorf 2002, p. 2. This book presents an excellent and authoritative analysis of the start of German-Israeli relations. Another work that should be mentioned is: Hanns Jürgen Küsters (ed.): *Adenauer, Israel und das Judentum – Rhöndorfer Gespräche Bd. 20*, Stiftung Bundeskanzler Adenauer-Haus, Bonn 2004.
- 6| *Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1959-1963*, Stuttgart 1969, p. 33.
- 7| Rolf Vogel: *Deutschlands Weg nach Israel. Eine Dokumentation*, Stuttgart 1967, p. 197.
- 8| Annemarie Poppinga: *Meine Erinnerungen an Konrad Adenauer*, Stuttgart 1979, p. 288.
- 9| *Proposal for an exchange program between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Jewish community in the United States*, submitted by: The American Jewish Committee, Institute of Human Relations, New York. o.D., p. 1, called AJC-proposal, Quelle: Thesing-Archiv.
- 10| AJC-proposal, aaO.
- 11| AJC-proposal, aaO.
- 12| *Statement of the Federal Chancellery (Dg 20) of 7.8.1979*, p. 1-2.
- 13| *Statement of the Federal Chancellery of 7.8.1979*, p. 3.
- 14| *Letter MDg Dr. Barthold Witte of 23.10.1979*, p. 1-2.
- 15| Beate Neuss: *Zwanzig Jahre Kooperation zwischen der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung und dem American Jewish Committee: Persönliche Begegnungen als Politik gegen Vorurteile und Unwissen*, in: *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Washington Office: Zwanzig Jahre deutsch-jüdische Partnerschaft – American Jewish Committee / Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*, 2000, p. 35 61.
- 16| Lothar Kraft: *Bericht vom 05.12.1979 über Dienstreise nach Israel*, in: Norbert Chauvistré: *Perspektiven für die Tätigkeit der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Israel*, KAS, Sankt Augustin 1988, p. 109.
- 17| Johannes Gerster in a foreword, in: *The Jerusalem Foundation: The Konrad-Adenauer Conference Center in Mishkenot ShaAnanim Jerusalem*, Jerusalem 2000.
- 18| *The Jerusalem Foundation*, aaO.
- 19| Jürgen Aretz: *Erinnerung an Alois Mertes: Das Ethische in der Politik*, in: *Die Politische Meinung*, Nr. 386, January 2002, p. 87-93.
- 20| Josef Thesing: *Bericht vom 06.05.1996 über die internationale Konferenz in Warschau vom 24.-26.04.1996*; Quelle: Thesing-Archiv.

## BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS DEEP DIVIDES

GERMAN AND AMERICAN JEWS

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A Chinese proverb tells us that it is more effective “to see something once than to hear about it a hundred times.” In that spirit, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung began showing the Federal Republic of Germany to members of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in 1980. The initial delegation of the AJC, an organization entirely dependent on fundraising to finance its programs, inquired whether an exchange program with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung could be put on a sustainable footing. That first visit thus became the start of an extremely successful exchange program, the initiative for which came from the American Jewish Committee (cf. Josef Thesing’s article).

At the time, only a handful of Germans knowledgeable about the United States knew of the AJC. As a result of the AJC’s initiative at the end of the 1970’s to place their sporadic contacts with Germans on a new future-oriented course, today many more Germans are familiar with the AJC. Furthermore, the AJC is the American-Jewish organization nurturing the most intensive contacts to Germany today. Currently, the AJC can boast that of all American-Jewish

organizations it has the closest contacts with German institutions and enjoys fruitful relationships with prominent Germans. But the AJC's prominence in Germany is also the result of the unhesitating commitment of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung to enter into a new closer partnership with the AJC. This is why, today, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is an institution that is highly respected and well-known by Jewish Americans.

## JEWISH AMERICANS

Few Germans are aware that there are 5.2 million Jews in the United States, accounting for about 2% of the U.S. population and for 40% of the 13 million Jews worldwide (with 5 million in Israel). Almost half of all American Jews (40%) live in the Greater New York area, and of those, 1.1 million call the "Big Apple" itself home. New York is also where the major organizations, among them the AJC, are located. The American Jewish community is highly diverse; reform, conservative, orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews belong to different synagogues and hold widely divergent opinions and views of the world. They are the prime example for what Alexis de Tocqueville took note of with amazement more than 100 years ago and what the current *American Encyclopedia of Associations* confirms statistically: Seven in ten Americans belong to an organization, with one in four belonging to four or more organizations. Statistics show that Jewish Americans participate in organizations at an even higher rate. No other ethnic or religious minority in the United States supports such a wide range of organizations. The historian Abraham J. Karp<sup>1</sup> observes of Jewish Americans that they are "a community of organizations lacking in organization." The *Encyclopedia* cited above lists more than 300 Jewish organizations, some of them umbrella organizations of local associations that deal with cultural, social, political, ethnic, and religious areas of concern. The last of these alone accounts for 200 organizations. Some associations are Zionist, while others reject the current rebirth of the state of Israel as contrary to Providence. None represents the majority of American Jews. By all accounts, the network of Jewish organizations is extraordinary – even by the standards of the organization-friendly United States. But there are also Jews who are neither religious nor members of any organization; their only engagement with the Jewish community might be as minimal as an occasional contribution to a Jewish organization. It makes little sense then to talk of "American Jewry" as such; rather, the breadth of Jewish organizational involvement should be seen as a reflection of the rich variety of Jewish

life in the United States and as proof of Jewish Americans' enthusiasm for taking an active part in their nation's affairs.

This keen involvement is readily understandable. American Jews enjoy above-average levels of education, with more than half holding college degrees. As a consequence, they enjoy above-average incomes. Jewish Americans also participate in elections in greater numbers than the national average and therefore impact American politics and policy. And while most American organizations have a strictly local rather than national, let alone international, focus, Jews in America belong disproportionately to the small group of American citizens with an international outlook. As a function of origin, life experience, concern for Jewish minorities throughout the world, and educational and professional attainment, they have a greater interest in foreign policy than the population at large. The fate of Israel, whose very existence hung in the balance in the Six-Day War of 1967, also played a major role in heightening the engagement of American Jews in foreign policy. The disproportionately high level of involvement of American Jews in the political process is underscored by the fact that, in the current Congress, which was elected in 2004, eleven of the 100 Senators, and 26 of the 435 Representatives, are of Jewish origin, figures that remained unchanged from the previous Congress.

## THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE: PARTNER OF THE KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG

What is the AJC?

The American Jewish Committee was founded in New York in 1906 by a group of well-established Jews of predominantly German origin in response to the Russian pogroms of 1903 and 1905 that caused widespread death, injury and homelessness. Since ad hoc measures in the wake of massacres could do little to make Jewish life in general safer, a permanent organization was formed whose mission, as expressed in the AJC's charter, was "to prevent civil and religious rights abuses directed against Jews anywhere in the world, to provide all possible legal assistance, to take remedial action when basic rights are threatened or violated, and to offer relief to the victims of anti-Semitic persecution wherever it occurs." This initially small group of civic leaders thought it desirable to integrate the Jewish community into the larger American

society and to mobilize the latter in support of Jewish communities around the world in times of crisis. While the initial focus was on anti-Semitism in Czarist Russia, it was soon superseded by the post-1917 burst of American anti-Semitism and then the catastrophe brewing in Europe.

American Jews, most of whom immigrated into America to escape persecution, have always perceived that their continued existence was directly linked to the constitutional safeguards embodied in the society they lived in. That is why constitutional government, democracy and equal rights for all were seen as a bulwark against anti-Semitism. As a consequence, the AJC began to see itself not simply as an organization devoted to advancing Jewish minority interests but rather as a champion of civil rights *per se*. It took up the cause of Catholics under siege by the Ku-Klux-Klan and played a major role from the 1950s onward in securing the civil rights of African Americans and other minorities.

From the beginning, dialogue and enlightenment were the key concerns of the AJC. Since the AJC was convinced that prejudice and racism were rooted in ignorance, it took on the task of educating the American public about Judaism and its Jewish community. True to the responsibility it had taken on, the AJC has been engaged in an inter-religious and multi-cultural dialogue.

The AJC has in-house research capabilities and addresses foreign policy issues that concern Jews. It defines its role as that of forward thinker and generator of ideas and publishes the *American Jewish Yearbook* and the highly regarded magazine *Commentary*. Its mostly liberal membership belongs to the upper or upper-middle class. The AJC is axiomatic of the status of the American Jewish community as a whole: rather than being on the margins, it has "arrived" in American society. A former president of the AJC in the 1950's is quoted as having said that the members of his organization "are not counted but weighed." Today, the AJC – the largest American-Jewish organization with some 150,000 members and supporters – plays an important role in the political life of the nation.

It should be noted that the AJC is not the only American-Jewish organization actively engaged in foreign policy questions. B'nai B'rith, the oldest American-Jewish organization, which was founded in 1843 by German-Jewish immigrants, along with its affiliate since 1913, the Anti-

Defamation League, has been fighting anti-Semitism and racism both domestically and abroad and has also been working with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for years. Another organization, the American Jewish Congress, founded by East-European Jews in 1918 and Zionist in outlook, has declined in both membership and importance over the last decade. The World Jewish Congress was founded in 1936 in order to co-ordinate efforts to save European Jews. Germans are familiar with the WJC due to the unfortunate attempt made by its then-president, Edgar Bronfman, to persuade Israel and international public opinion to oppose German reunification.

Largely because of the World Jewish Congress – backward-looking and experiencing waning influence on American-Jewish politics – the impression was created in Germany that American-Jewish organizations were intent on fixing the image of Germany among its members as irredeemable. That is not true of the American Jewish Committee. To be sure, there was little genuine interest among organized American Jews to take a closer look at the "new" Germany. Since 1933, the topic "Germany" has been freighted with negatives, and dealing with Germany has been associated for a large number of American Jews with excruciatingly painful memories. Even if they are not Holocaust survivors or the children of survivors themselves, they are part of the collective trauma visited upon them by the historic catastrophe. All are affected by the murder of millions of European Jews and the eradication of their rich culture in the Old World. There is also a sense of having failed to do enough to avert the tragedy. Engagement in things German was thus confined to righting wrongs. Along with other organizations, the AJC advocated the prosecution of war criminals, the restitution of Jewish property, and compensation payments to the Jewish State. As was the case with all organizations, the AJC kept a suspicious and critical eye on the Federal Republic for a potential resurfacing of National-Socialist and anti-Semitic tendencies.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Israel and its citizens, American Jews felt that they did not have to deal with Germany. This refusal took on rather banal manifestations: while Daimler-Benz taxis were commonplace in Tel Aviv, Jewish-Americans did not buy Mercedes automobiles.

Since West Germany, as a partner of the United States, was to be re-integrated into the international community, it was in the interest of Jews and the U.S. to have democracy and tolerance anchored deeply within that society. The AJC did not consider anti-Semitism as an incur-

able disease; rather, it offered its remedial approach, enlightenment and education, to Germany as well. Despite criticism from other Jewish organizations, the AJC was determined to play a leading constructive role in relations with Germany. For the AJC, the problem of German-Jewish relations was not solely a question of a democratic German government or of financial compensation for Jewish victims but rather one of attitude. The exchange program "Operation Candle," initiated in 1952, turned out to be premature. Neither the German nor the American government showed much of a commitment. A visiting program for German teachers did not materialize until 1959, at a time when there was anti-Semitic violence, stoked, as we now know, by the GDR, but nevertheless indicative of certain attitudes. The AJC did not pursue the initiative, and it died promptly in 1960.<sup>3</sup>

#### **THE EXCHANGE PROGRAM: IMPETUS FOR CONTINUOUS CONTACTS BETWEEN GERMANS AND JEWISH AMERICANS**

Two decades after this first initiative, the landscape had changed: an American-Jewish organization, the American Jewish Committee, inaugurated an *exchange* program. The next generation of German and American "future leaders," to use American parlance, would be experiencing each other's culture during two-week seminars. Despite a number of difficulties, these exchanges were successfully institutionalized and have now been running for 30 years. The exchanges have been playing an extraordinarily positive role in the dialogue between Germans and Jewish Americans and have gone a long way toward bringing about reconciliation between them.

In 1980, a delegation of the American Jewish Committee visited the Federal Republic on the invitation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and the exchange program was born. The first American delegation, like its counterpart of 15 young German academics a year later, must have looked forward to meeting its hosts with a mixture of curiosity and anticipation, but also with unease. The German contingent had accepted the invitation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung to participate in a program of the American Jewish Committee in the United States. The young people were thoroughly acquainted with the history of Germany under National Socialism and with the inhuman terror of the Holocaust. Some had already been to Israel and done the kind of traveling there that allowed for political and personal encounters. The Konrad-Adenauer-

Stiftung, along with the Federal Center for Political Education, organizes and sponsors such trips. Others had explored Israel on their own – but nobody had ever had contact with American Jews.

The first groups of German participants must have begun to realize during the preparatory briefings by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung that the reciprocal visits of young Germans and Jewish Americans represented a breakthrough and a completely new opportunity. While there was already a structure of official and private relationships between Germany and Israel, there was practically no contact between the numerous American-Jewish organizations in the United States and German non-governmental entities. Even the contacts between the German government and American-Jewish organizations were at best sporadic and tended to center on the burdens of German history.

Political relations between nations are entered into for compelling reasons of state. That is why the Federal Republic by the late 1960's had already become Israel's most important partner after the United States and had laid a foundation for meaningful private contacts. However, there was no compelling reason for Jewish organizations across the Atlantic to enter into a relationship with a country that had embarked on a path in 1933 whose endpoint was the horror of the Holocaust. The few unofficial encounters in the decades after World War II on the part of the AJC, the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith, and other organizations did not lead to any sustained contact.<sup>4</sup> The elite on either side of the Atlantic kept their distance and clung to their preconceptions about each other, about Jewish life in America and life in Germany. The image of Germany among Jewish Americans remained frozen as of 1945, and Germans tended to overestimate the undeniable influence of American Jews on their country's policies and on the media's reporting on Germany.

The American Jewish Committee showed courage in initiating an exchange program that put the relationship to Germany on a qualitatively different footing. The initiative got the cold shoulder from other Jewish-American organizations, who had no interest in working toward an understanding with Germany. As they saw it, intensive and sustained contact by American Jews with Germany was neither in their own nor Israel's interest; to these assimilated Jews, Jewish identity was defined by the Holocaust.

It was fortuitous that in 1978 the then Associate Director of the AJC, William S. Trosten, met German Consul Wolf Calebow in New York. Calebow himself was looking for dialogue partners in American-Jewish organizations so that the silence between Germans and Jewish Americans might finally be broken. Only in the AJC did his offer fall on receptive ears.<sup>5</sup> Trosten, who took the lead within the AJC, knew the Federal Republic of Germany and was aware of the number of travelers to Israel who had chosen Frankfurt as a stopover for only one reason: to visit Bergen-Belsen or Dachau. He also saw that reservations toward Germany were growing among young American Jews in particular. The compensation payments to Israel as part of Germany's efforts to make reparations and its adherence to commitments – even in times of crisis such as Suez in 1956 and the 1967 war – had earned Germany a measure of respect from the AJC. William Trosten knew that Germany had lent massive support to Israel during the Six-Day War, and that fact provided him with justification for his initiative vis-à-vis the Jewish community.

Trosten and the AJC under its president Theodore Ellenoff recognized that the rapidly deteriorating climate of German-Israeli relations since Menachem Begin had become Israeli Prime Minister could ultimately weaken support for Israel in Germany. In addition, the 1979 debate on the application of the statute of limitation to war crimes committed under National Socialism put Germany under scrutiny. Then there was the matter of Germany's growing economic power and political importance within the European Community striving for a united foreign policy. Finally, the broadcast of the television series "Holocaust" in the United States in 1978 and the Federal Republic in 1979 put the spotlight on Germany because Germans – deeply affected by the emotional impact of the series – began talking about the eradication of Jews as never before, as if the subject had never been addressed in school, in books and in television documentaries.

A permanently distorted picture of Germany and a lack of dialogue with the most important supporter of Israel in Europe served the interests of American Jews as little as ignorance and misconceptions about the American Jewish community served the interests of Germans – especially in light of Germany's importance for transatlantic relations as a key partner in NATO.

As a first step, Calebow and the AJC agreed to sponsor contacts among young people. They seemed the most promising for connecting the German postwar generation's knowledge of the Holocaust to the reality of contemporary Jewish communities. The especially pronounced, almost instinctive anti-German feeling among young Jewish Americans might be tempered by objectivity gained in actual encounters with Germany.<sup>6</sup> During Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's visit to the United States in 1979, an AJC executive delegation proposed the establishment of an exchange program. Initially, only the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung responded to the proposal transmitted by Chancellor Schmidt. The KAS was prepared to pursue the initiative immediately because it was in the spirit of the man after whom the KAS is named – Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. In his first policy statement on September 20, 1949, Adenauer addressed the issue of German culpability for the fate of European Jews, and on November 11, 1949, during a speech commemorating the *Kristallnacht*, he offered reparation payments to Jewish victims and to Israel. For him, doing that was "a matter of the highest moral imperative."<sup>7</sup> With great determination, he pushed through agreements with Israel and the Jewish Claims Conference that some members of parliament considered too burdensome for the financially strapped government of the war-scarred Federal Republic. As a statesman, Adenauer sought to put the democratic rebirth of Germany on firm moral ground through material reparations and reconciliation with the victims of National Socialism. This perspective also shaped his policy toward all the countries of the West. As a politician, Adenauer realized that accepting responsibility for the crimes committed under National Socialism and paying compensation would ease the Federal Republic's reintegration into the community of nations. He also took account of the influence American Jews exercised on the attitude of the United States toward Germany, an influence he judged to be considerable.

## THE PARTICIPANTS

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee began establishing a program that, with some modifications, has endured to this day. Young Germans born after 1945, future leaders who would help shape public attitudes, were to learn about living Jewish culture in the United States, and Jewish Americans were to form first-hand impressions in the Federal Republic.

The initial exchange adhered to the AJC's preference for hosting primarily university-educated young professionals. As the AJC saw it, a choice of participants chronologically closer to the Nazi era would further compromise a program that was already controversial in the American-Jewish community. Moreover, the young were more open-minded. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung therefore selected participants from the preferred group: university graduates on career paths in business, politics, higher education, print and broadcast journalism, and government service on the federal or state level. It also identified university students who showed promise as future propagators of mutual understanding. A considerable number of these program participants received financial aid from the KAS as part of its scholarship program.

Over time, the composition of the delegation changed. In short order, both the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the AJC recognized that members of the post-1945 generation who were still relatively young but already firmly established in leadership positions as journalists, academics, teachers, and appointed or elected official on the state and federal level were more interesting program participants than their younger colleagues just beginning their careers. As a result, the average age of participants in the program increased, and the number of participating students declined. German participants came increasingly from key positions within the federal or a state chancelleries, the federal or state parliaments, and, naturally, from within organs of the CDU and the relevant departments of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung itself. Local politicians who were dealing with the increasing influx of Jews from Russia, and with immigration in general, were afforded insight into the multi-ethnic American society. Staff members of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish institutions were also sent invitations and subsequently contributed significantly to an inter-denominational dialogue. As established by precedent, the participant groups in the 1990's always included journalists, professors, teachers, academics, and representatives from business and the arts.

As soon as the Berlin Wall came down, invitations were extended to participants from the new German states. Both the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and AJC were anxious to provide the new East German leadership groups with opportunities for first-hand learning experiences. The GDR had been promoting an anti-Zionist "anti-fascism" whose notion of the power of Jews, especially in the "imperialist United States," was

tinted with anti-Semitism. The GDR had also refused to accept any historical responsibility for Germany's past.<sup>8</sup> The Americans were therefore eager for dialogue with East Germans, to discuss their emergence from the ideologically closed world of the GDR into the democratic world community, the problems of transformation, and the old regime's distorted picture of America and Israel.

The spectrum of Germans who have had the opportunity to learn about Jewish life in the United States for themselves over the last thirty years has been extraordinarily broad, encompassing practically all areas of civil society and all levels of politics in the Federal Republic as well as regional perspectives and a wide variety of professional experiences. But all visitors to the United States had one thing in common: upon their return they would be spreading what they had learned to others.

The AJC also has been choosing participants from among the professionally established, primarily inviting journalists, educators, scientists, businesspeople, and lawyers to participate in the program. Most of them are members of the AJC who are employed full-time but volunteer their time with the AJC, whether at headquarters in New York or its 33 local chapters. The members, who are both opinion shapers and sponsors of the AJC's programs, are natural candidates for gathering first-hand knowledge of Germany's development since 1945. Since the AJC has regional affiliates in all geographical areas of Jewish population concentration, it draws participants from all over the United States. As a result, their impressions of Germany are disseminated across the entire U.S. Jewish community. Thus the work of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, particularly its exchange program, is remarkably well known in American-Jewish circles – the fruit of extensive contacts and reporting on the experiences gained in travels within Germany.

Early on, there was a discernable difference between the exchange groups: the Germans were younger on average, the Americans were professionally more advanced. This had partly to do with the financing structure of the exchange on the American side. The AJC depends on sponsors or self-payers for all its programs. The value of feedback from more established people to the AJC membership was another factor in not selecting the very young. In the face of considerable criticism by other American-Jewish organizations and by its own members, having people report back on their German experience who had already estab-

lished careers in business, politics and law, or held leadership positions in social institutions, made it easier to justify the costs of the program.

Not only the composition of the participants but also the structure of the exchange program changed over the course of two decades. In 1981, two groups of 15 persons each were the first to engage in this precarious face-to-face German-Jewish dialogue. The group size soon grew to 20, only to settle on 10-12 participants on either side since 1989. The number of travel days was reduced from 14 to one week, not because of cost considerations but because professionals found it difficult to take leave for as long as two weeks.

### **THE GERMAN PROGRAM: A DEMOCRATIC GERMANY THAT REMEMBERS ITS PAST**

The German program organized by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is designed to give a multi-faceted impression of the Federal Republic and its society – one that deals with its successes and failures in a self-aware and self-critical manner. Through meetings with decision makers and private invitations, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung seeks to familiarize its guests with democratic post-war Germany, to show them the recent dynamic development and renewal of Jewish life here, and to discuss current problems, be it the integration of immigrants or combating the re-emergence of far-right and extremist tendencies. The German hosts also want to give their guests a sense of the regional diversity of their country. The itinerary for the American visitors includes visits to Bonn, always to Berlin, as well as to Frankfurt and to another city, often in the Eastern part of Germany, such as Erfurt and Dresden. Regular components of the program are contacts with Jewish institutions and communities that have seen rapid growth since the end of the East-West conflict, and visits to a concentration camp and other memorials, such as the House of the Wannsee Conference in Berlin. In Frankfurt, a meeting with the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany has become a fixture of the program. The visits to Berlin, to the capitals of federal states and to Bonn give the delegation a chance to meet with high-level government officials in the Federal Chancellery, the Office of the Federal President, and the federal ministries. Premiers of federal states, such as Bernhard Vogel and Roland Koch, have also received AJC visitors for talks. As a rule, the program includes visits to the Foreign Ministry, where the most frequent topic of conversation concerns German-Israeli relations, as well

as the Defense Ministry, where discussions center on the new role of the *Bundeswehr* and its well-accepted deployments some sixty years after the end of World War II. Contacts with officers of the armed forces are of particular interest since they throw light on German democracy from an angle that is fraught with the ghost of the past.

The program also includes visits to the embassies of the United States and Israel, as well as contacts with high-level CDU parliamentary or party representatives. In Berlin, guests are taken to places commemorating the tyranny and genocide that mark Germany's recent history under National Socialism, since the memory of the Holocaust is of paramount importance to the visitors.

In the 1980's a key German concern was to convey the reality of a divided country. Berlin was the place to experience that reality first-hand. Since reunification in 1990, the focus has shifted to dealing with the past and the coming together of the two parts of the country divided for so long. In recent years Joachim Gauck, who has been in charge of the documents of the GDR state security service for many years, has been meeting with a number of visiting groups to apprise them of the structures and mechanisms of oppression devised by the second dictatorship in Germany and their effect on civil and human rights.

### **THE AMERICAN PROGRAM: DIVERSITY IN UNITY INSTEAD OF A "MELTING POT" SOCIETY**

In most respects, the program for German guests in America mirrors the program in Germany. The program includes visits to the German and Israeli embassies and engagement with the tragic German and Jewish history of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is achieved through a visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum and talks with the museum staff and other experts on Holocaust education, among other issues.

The German visitors always go to New York City, home to more than half of America's Jews and the AJC's headquarters. They also visit Washington and an additional city with a large Jewish community that might illustrate a specific theme the hosts wish to highlight, be it San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Miami ... the list goes on and on. The thrust of the American program was pinpointed by Rabbi Andrew Baker, Director for Foreign Affairs in the AJC: "We want to show the

German visitors here in America how the Jewish community in Germany would have developed if there had been no Holocaust.”

The groups meet members of the social elite—well-to-do Jewish Americans who are making significant contributions to American society as entrepreneurs, attorneys, politicians, film directors, philanthropists, and patrons – as well as poor Jews who are supported by Jewish relief organizations, and Orthodox Jews who live traditional lives in the Brooklyn borough of New York. The Germans get to know Jewish communities and the relief work of charitable organizations financed by them or by Jewish associations. They visit privately financed schools and elite Jewish institutions of higher learning, such as Brandeis University and Hebrew Union College. They discuss such issues as Jewish immigration and the consequences of Jewish assimilation with their Jewish partners. Attending a worship service in a synagogue is also a standard feature of the program.

Some of the initial contacts in the 1980s were especially painful and moving, be they meeting elderly Jews who had survived the horror and were now asking about the places of their childhood and youth, or attempting a dialogue with the children of survivors who, traumatized by their parents’ experience and its effect on their own lives, were now coming face to face with actual Germans for the first time.

The central concern has always been to provide an insight not only into various Jewish lifestyles but also into the multi-cultural nature of American society. Comparisons of the very different roles played by the state and the churches on both sides of the Atlantic have been particularly fascinating. The program of the AJC could be described as seeking to present the United States not as a melting pot but as a place where different ethnic groups coexist without giving up their cultural and religious identities. That is why the program always includes meetings with various ethnic groups in the United States and information about their role and significance within American society, as well as the challenges they confront. The program thus reflects the increasing impact of ethnic groups on the domestic and foreign policy of the United States.

The Germans are also given the opportunity to speak with American politicians about current problems facing U.S. foreign policy and transatlantic relations. As a rule, the American side addresses issues that touch directly or indirectly upon Jewish concerns: U.S. policy toward the

Middle East, the treatment of minorities, the origins of renewed far-right extremism, and German foreign policy toward states that promote terrorism against Israel. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center, the fight against international terror has also become part of the agenda of the dialogue among the exchange partners. In addition, the German visitors meet members of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) to become acquainted with the AIPAC’s self-confident lobbying work on behalf of Israel.

The visits on either side of the Atlantic are oriented toward the future. They deal with questions of German-Jewish coexistence, the future of Jewish communities in Germany and the United States, and the social and legal attitudes toward minorities in general, at a time when both America and Germany are experiencing substantial immigration. But the visits are also retrospective. Jewish Americans visiting Germany remember the eradication of Jewish culture in Europe, and Germans visiting America reflect on the murder of millions of Jews perpetrated by Germany.

Both sides learn a great deal. At first, the Americans and Germans betrayed a certain unease, but today they already know more about each other before the actual visit. While a number of Germans had their first contact with Jews, a number of Americans learned for the first time that both the history of the Third Reich and the fact of the mass murder of Jews are regularly taught in German schools. The Germans are struck by the diversity and breadth of American-Jewish culture, and the Americans in Germany witness a liberal society and critical engagement with the past. As a result, many stereotypical notions fall by the wayside – on both sides.

## **NETWORKS FOR THE FUTURE**

To date, some 650 people have participated in these trips to an unfamiliar world. They occupy places in society that enable them to disseminate the knowledge and experience they have gained. Jewish newspapers and local publications in both countries use the opportunity of the visits to inform a wider public about the program and its impact.

Personal encounters, discussions, challenges to preconceptions, conversations about shared interests – these are the elements that make the visits so valuable.

An aspect of each exchange program that everybody identifies as special are the informal "home hospitalities" – invitations to private homes after scheduled presentations. These are often extended by former program participants and give the visitors the opportunity to interact with additional people, usually the friends or colleagues of their hosts. Experience has shown that these in-depth encounters in a small circle in intimate surroundings are not only especially meaningful and instructive but are also often the start of sustained contacts and even friendships. Thus networks are created that both endure and expand. Similar networks also grow in the host countries. Since the German program also includes German-Jewish participants, it fosters not only transatlantic cooperation but also inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-institutional dialog among German and American Jews and other Germans.

Many program alumni in both countries remain in professional contact. During their lifetime, Theodore Ellenoff and William Trosten, the god-fathers of the cooperation on the American side, promoted mutual understanding through the Armonk Institute, an educational program for American teachers in Germany, that they had founded after leaving the AJC. New contacts are spawned by already existing connections. Alan Mittleman, for instance, a former staff member of the AJC and one of the early program participants, has worked with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in other areas. A second generation is already growing up: there are some instances of children of "alumni" who have been hosted as guests or interns by American-Jewish or German families. Eugene DuBow, one of the key players in the AJC's contacts with Germany, accepted a lectureship at the University of Bayreuth and taught at the Technical University of Chemnitz at the invitation of the no-longer-quite-so-young "future leaders" of the exchange program. These are but a few examples of the afterglow of the initial spark lit in the seminars.

#### **THE EXCHANGE: NOT EVERYTHING – BUT THE HEART AND CATALYST OF THE PROGRAM**

The cooperation that started successfully with the exchange program has expanded over the past twenty-five years with the addition of several joint initiatives and activities. Since 1987, the American Jewish Committee and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung have been co-sponsoring the *Alois Mertes Memorial Lectures*. This lecture series, named after Alois Mertes, the CDU Parliamentarian who died prematurely, honors a man who was

devoted to the work of bringing about reconciliation between Germans and Jews. The occasional lectures give Germans and Americans an opportunity to present their thoughts on German-Jewish relations and transatlantic issues to large audiences in Germany and the United States.

The American Jewish Committee has consistently invited high-ranking German politicians to speak at its annual meetings and share their views on issues with the Jewish community. Among others, Richard von Weizsäcker, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Klaus Kinkel have availed themselves of this occasion to present their ideas. Several of the AJC's annual meetings have been held in Germany to give its leadership the opportunity to confront German issues directly.

Within the 32 chapters of the AJC, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has become a household name, just as the AJC has become known and enjoys a prominent status in Germany.

Most importantly, however, the cooperation between the AJC and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has been instrumental in breaking the silence that kept Germans and Jewish Americans apart, with the AJC championing dialogue and reconciliation with Germany. In subsequent years, a number of German foundations and organizations followed the example of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and began a fruitful cooperation with the AJC. Initially critical competitors of the AJC in the United States have also followed the AJC's lead and established contacts with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and other German institutions and organizations. In terms of the intensity and the quality of the dialogue with the Federal Republic of Germany, however, the AJC remains the leading organization. It benefits from its long-standing involvement with Germany, because these comparatively close relations have given it better insight into German politics and developments in the country than enjoyed by other organizations.

As an outgrowth of the cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the American Jewish Committee currently maintains strong contacts with Germans in important positions. On average, more than three AJC delegations visit Germany in any given year. In addition, there is lively informal contact with politicians from all parties as well as with foundations, scientists and journalists. The "Atlantikbrücke" in Bonn participates by arranging conferences and exchanges of politicians, scientists and

artists. For many years, there has also been a program under which junior officers of the *Bundeswehr* have been invited to attend seminars in the United States. Contacts with the *Bundeswehr* have become very close over the last decade.

At the beginning of July 1997, the American Jewish Committee was the first and only American-Jewish organization to open an office in Berlin. The 'Lawrence and Lee Ramer Center for German Jewish Relations' opened in February 1998 during the annual meeting of its executive board – a symbol of the burgeoning interest in Germany over the last twenty years! It comes

as no surprise that the people who championed the opening of a Berlin office are the same people who took the lead in establishing the exchange program: Lawrence Ramer and his wife Lee are the principal financial sponsors of the 'Center for German-Jewish Relations' that bears their name. Lawrence's brother, Bruce Ramer, who looked after the program from the start, was President of the American Jewish Committee for a long time and has been a vigorous supporter of his organization's involvement with Germany. Eugene DuBow, who had been active in the exchange program from the beginning, managed the Berlin office with much success in this early phase. His successor, Deidre Berger, has shown great commitment in continuing the cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in the last years.

Also, there is a close cooperation between the AJC office in Brussels, which was opened some years ago, and the Brussels office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. The European political dimension of the AJC's work is becoming more and more important, and the list of common interests is long.

The AJC announced its decision to open an office in Berlin in March of 1997 during its conference on "The Jewish Dimension of German-American Relations – Perceptions and Realities." While the "welcome to Germany" on the part of participating German scientists and journalists was genuine, one unspoken question was hovering in the air: "What may be the motivation for American Jews to underwrite a presence in Germany?" Why would the American-Jewish interest group locate its only European office in Germany, in the former and present capital of Berlin? Do people still consider today's German democracy to be so much at risk after 50 years that they think it is necessary to watch over it from close by?

Eugene DuBow's reply to the question of the mission of the Ramer Center addressed the connection between the origins of the cooperation and its goals for the future: "We want to inform gentiles about Judaism, deepen and strengthen the dialogue between the parties, continue the existing exchange program with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and intensify the cooperation with government representatives." The AJC office has, by now, become an important pillar of the transatlantic dialogue. Its cooperation efforts extend beyond the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. The office not only observes political developments in Germany, but keeps in touch with Jewish communities in Germany and in Central Eastern Europe.

The program has had a "spill-over effect" that cannot be overstated. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee, in cooperation with third parties, also organize conferences that bring together scientists, journalists and public figures. Rather than dealing with Germany's past, the 1996 gathering in Washington addressed foreign policy; the 1997 conference in Frankfurt dealt with immigration and naturalization issues; and the 1998 conference in Los Angeles focused on politics, the media and remembrance. With this agenda, the two foundations reach a large circle of renowned scientists, journalists, politicians, and representatives of associations.

Today, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee cooperate in many areas of shared interest: at a trilateral conference in 2003, the two organizations had a discussion with Israeli partners about peace in the Middle East. There are plans to have a follow-up conference. In 2004, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, along with the AJC and other Jewish organizations, organized an NGO conference on the eve of the OSCE conference on anti-semitism in Europe. Thus, the dialogue that was started 30 years ago is bearing the fruits of cooperation on various projects!

#### **COOPERATION: A MATTER OF PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT**

It is people, not institutions, who make policy. That holds true for the relationship between the AJC and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Without the engagement of individuals on both sides, the program could never have taken off; without their devoted support, the program could never have flourished.

Associate director William Trosten and President Theodore Ellenoff had an active partner in the chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Bruno Heck, who was prepared to take the initiative and follow through. His successors, Bernhard Vogel and Günter Rinsche, took to the concept with equal enthusiasm and built upon it with the support of their Secretary Generals Gerd Langguth, Ottfried Hennig, and Wilhelm Staudacher. Wilhelm Staudacher was already heavily invested in German-Jewish relations due to his service as head of the Office of the President of the Federal Republic, where he maintained close contacts to the AJC, which he continues to cultivate. David Harris, Executive Director of the AJC, has been involved with the program right from the start. He backed the Berlin office and intensified the dialog. In David Harris, the AJC has an Executive Director who is intimately familiar with Germany from many visits and is committed to deepening mutual relations. He understands the value of personal encounters. During an extended visit to Germany, David Harris conveyed to German students an impression of life in the American-Jewish community.

However, an enduring and multi-faceted program such as this cannot survive on the commitment of its leadership alone. The representatives of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Washington, Wolfgang Pordzik, Gerhard Wahlers, and Norbert Wagner, along with Rabbi Andrew Baker, made sure that the dialog did not end in the wake of difficult situations and adversarial debates. Josef Thesing managed the German part of the program for more than twenty years, while the tireless Eugene DuBow looked after the American side of the program. DuBow, who worked quietly and patiently to tear down the barriers to understanding between Jewish Americans and Germans, was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1997 for his effort.

### **AFTER SUCCESSFUL 30 YEARS: NEW CHALLENGES IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

What are the fruits of a generation of successful cooperation? Why should the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the AJC keep up their commitment? How should the program continue?

The future depends on human interaction and exchanges of ideas that address the past but also build greater mutual understanding. The seminar program has served as a corrective to the preconceptions held by

either side. Germans, for most of whom Jewish culture has been a lifeless image in the absence of contact with Jewish fellow citizens or familiarity with Israel, have been given insight by the exchange program into the rich heritage of Jewish culture, Jewish religion, and the various Jewish lifestyles. The way in which they observe the re-emergence of Jewish communities in Germany is now colored by their experiences in the U.S. Jewish Americans, in turn, gain a whole new perspective on Germany. They see first-hand a self-critical democracy and a self-aware, engaged citizenry. Their reports reflect the transformation of their preconceptions of Germany as informed entirely by its past. In addition to the numerous contacts provided by the exchange program, there are spontaneous experiences that call into question long-held preconceptions. The personal contacts facilitated by the program have been providing opportunities for examining and correcting the static images held on both sides of the Atlantic.

Many of the initiatives and forms of common activity were driven by idealism. While idealism still plays a part, the current relationships are more professional and less emotional, but nevertheless whole-hearted. Both partners pursue substantial interests through their mutual engagement.

The AJC has been successful in making itself a key player in German-American relations on Jewish questions and interests. Over the course of nearly two decades, it has been able to establish excellent contacts to German politicians at all levels of the administration, as well as among the opposition. With the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung as the facilitator, access during Chancellor Kohl's administration to the Chancellery Office and the Foreign Ministry, as well as to Ministers-President and state ministries were assured when important questions were on the table. Michael Mertes in the Chancellery and Wilhelm Staudacher, head of the Office of the President of the Federal Republic, were fully aware of the considerable value of the institutionalized relationship between the AJC and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Consequently, the AJC's leadership could take up problems directly with Chancellor Kohl and Federal Presidents von Weizsäcker and Herzog. The regular contacts between the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, CDU politicians and representatives of the AJC helped foster personal relationships that took sufficient account of each side's perceptions and constraints to help prevent disagreements over critical issues from escalating.

The advantages of the relationship are entirely mutual. The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, as the lead German institution in forging the relationship, has succeeded in making the AJC look at German policy and society objectively rather than reflexively, i.e., through the lens of historical wrongs. This is an important development since the AJC, as the largest Jewish organization in America, can bring influence to bear on how the American-Jewish community views Germany. The AJC's importance derives from its good relations with the American Administration and Congress as well as its close contacts to Israel – partners of primary importance to Germany. German diplomats in Washington regard the AJC as the most important transnationally active organization impacting German-American relations. The AJC has the ear of top U.S. government representatives and can therefore moderate the impact of other American-Jewish voices. It works to the advantage of German-American relations that the AJC, as a Jewish voice of great influence, is able to transmit to the American government solid, reality-based judgments in critical situations. A number of examples underscore that fact. The controversial reconciliation meeting between President Reagan and Chancellor Kohl at the Bitburg military cemetery in 1985 drew sharp criticism from the AJC. But unlike other American-Jewish organizations, the AJC did not view the ceremony as amounting to a denial of Nazi crimes.

The reaction to the fall of the Berlin Wall was even more illustrative of the difference the years of dialogue had made. While the World Jewish Congress, in cooperation with the SED and PDS, tried in 1989/90 to mobilize opinion in the United States and Israel against German reunification, the AJC saw no basis for opposing it. On the contrary, its *Statement on German Unity* approved at its annual meeting on May 17, 1990, declared that "democracy and human dignity are the winners; fear, repression and control economies are the losers. Countering concerns expressed within the Jewish community in 1989/90 that there might be a resurgence of German nationalism, renewed aggression, and disinclination to acknowledge the crimes of the Nazi past, the AJC pointed to the Federal Republic's four decades of democracy and active role in international organizations, its compensation policy, and its close relationship with Israel. The AJC regarded the transfer of democracy and constitutional government to East Germany as positive for more than the obvious reason that it ended support for Middle-Eastern terrorist groups and the wholly one-sided "anti-fascism" practiced in the GDR. True to its role as representative of Jewish interests, the AJC issued a reminder regarding

the GDR's refusal to make reparations to Jews for their losses and suffering from 1933 to 1945. The demands made on the "new" Germany were unequivocal: understanding and sensitivity for Jewish concerns, especially Holocaust remembrance; continued close relations with Israel; protection of human rights; continued membership in NATO; renunciation of nuclear arms and related technology exports; fidelity to European integration; and acceptance of the inviolability of borders. Those who remember the agitation of that time will appreciate this matter-of-fact recitation of what was expected of Germany. Needless to say, the AJC's positive reaction was as welcome to the U.S. government as it was to the German government. One of the AJC's key concerns is the security of the state of Israel. Thus, the lobby organization expected German reunification to be advantageous, just as it was felt at the time of German reunification that a permanent seat in the UN Security Council for Germany as an important EU member and close partner of Israel would have a similar positive effect for Israel's security. While there are major differences on foreign policy – for instance, on the so-called "critical dialog" with Iran – both sides respect each other's perspective and thus minimize hard feelings. In its relentless lobbying for payment of reparations to Central- and East-European Jews and slave laborers in the 1990s, the AJC has not always been a comfortable dialogue partner for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung or the German Federal government. American lobbying methods, in which the AJC is wellversed, do not always seem fair to the German side; it looks askance at the full-page ads in the American press designed to put international pressure on the Kohl government. The AJC is also subject to competition and therefore knows how to promote its own interests.

What does the future hold? Since the AJC is an advocate for Jewish concerns, it places continuing emphasis on Germany's coming to terms with its past and holding fast to democratic principles. The AJC and its members care deeply that the atrocities of the Holocaust not be forgotten and that its victims be remembered. There is little doubt that anti-Semitic and racist incidents in Germany are being judged more harshly than similar incidents in other countries. Even though there is an understanding at the AJC's New York headquarters that Germany is not the only country troubled by these phenomena, Germany is singled out for condemnation because it ought to know better in light of its history. Germany is still viewed by many Jews as something of a "dry drunk" whose taking a drink alarms because it threatens a full-blown return of

the disease. The AJC is not impervious to such fear, but it seeks discussion to gain insight – for example, with the Defense Ministry over right-wing incidents in the armed forces. And it will intensify the dialogue with politicians and multipliers. For many years, American Jews made tolerance of Jewish life and culture the test of democracy and the rule of law in post-war Germany. Today the treatment of foreigners is rapidly becoming the litmus test. With their experiences and resources, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the AJC can make significant contributions to the fight against intolerance and hatred as committed advocates of democracy and freedom of thought. Both organizations also need to address the issue of why second-generation Islamic immigrants are tempted by Islamistic terrorism – and what can be done about it. The organizations have the contacts to stimulate discussion on the role of the mass media and the Internet regarding these and other political issues.

There is a wide range of topics waiting to be addressed. What are the differing experiences with and perspectives on the integration of immigrants in general and Jewish immigration in particular? How can the development of civil society be promoted in Eastern Europe, which is still home to large Jewish communities? What opportunities and challenges do democratic societies face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; what is the relationship between the individual and the state; and what are the effects of the economic systems of Europe and America? Are there limits to what the media may do, and where is the line to be drawn when human dignity and social harmony are at stake?

The cooperation between the AJC and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung began with inter-personal contacts, and they should remain the focus. The importance and broad effect of personal encounters cannot be overestimated. That is why the exchange program has not become a routine but has remained fresh and important. The strong response to the events celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Berlin shows how strongly the alumni of the program felt about the exchange in all its aspects: they flocked together from both sides of the Atlantic in large numbers in order to share their experiences and talk about current problems and how to continue the dialogue. This, by itself, demonstrates the program's success, because even a generation ago, there was only ignorance and silence. But even things that work well can still be improved. It is not difficult to imagine how the cooperation can be intensified. One of the promising avenues for overcoming stereotyping could be a privately-

organized exchange of interns. And why should the existing network not be strengthened and expanded? The conferences organized with the AJC and third partners show how interests can be brought together and how more attention can be attracted to joint causes. Both foundations address political and societal issues that often overlap. There is still a great deal of untapped potential. Thirty years of exchanges represent a fine start; it is a beginning.

- 1| *Karp, Abraham: Haven and Home: A History of Jews in America, New York 1985, p. 35; Cf. Sachar, Howard M.: A History of Jews in America, New York 1992.*
- 2| *Temple, Silke: Legenden der Allmacht. Die Beziehungen zwischen amerikanisch-jüdischen Organisationen und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland seit 1945, Frankfurt a.M., u.a. 1995, p. 15 ff.*
- 3| *Temple, p. 22-33.*
- 4| *Shlomo Shafir, Ambiguous Relations: The Jewish Community and Germany Since 1945 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999).*
- 5| *Wolf Calebow wrote about his diplomatic and personal efforts toward reconciliation between Germans and Jewish Americans in his memoirs Auf dem Weg zur Normalisierung [On the Road to Normalization] (Berlin: 1999), p. 21 ff.*
- 6| *Shafir, op. cit., p. 279. 7) Konrad Adenauer during the CDU national leadership meeting of March 11, 1953, in*
- 7| *Adenauer, "Es musste alles neu gemacht werden," Records of the CDU National Leadership Meetings 1950-1953, ed. Günther Buchstab (Stuttgart: 1986), p. 421.*
- 8| *Wolffsohn, Michael: Die Deutschland-Akte, München 1995.*

## “THE ADENAUER”: A 30 YEAR PERSONAL RETROSPECTIVE

*Eugene DuBow | Senior Advisor, American Jewish Committee*

Things (and people) that have been around for a while, in order to be more easily identified, at times acquire a “nickname”. In the case of the exchange program between the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) the name that has emerged in AJC circles in the last 30 years is “The Adenauer”. AJC’ers ask, “Have you been on the Adenauer?” or say, “In 2008, I went on the Adenauer”. It has become part of the AJC lexicon.

Identity aside, when the first American Jewish and German groups were exchanged in 1980, few would have waged that this ground breaking undertaking would last for 30 years and become the longest running program between a German political foundation and an American Jewish organization. Those of us in AJC then would not have wanted to bet the family farm on “The Adenauer” becoming AJC’s longest running program in any field – which it is.

When it all began the world was a different place than it is today. Germany was divided and the Cold War was very much a factor. German influence worldwide was negligible and American Jewry was still in a 1940’s mind set as far as

Germany was concerned. From the AJC perspective it started out as an attempt to get to know this vanquished enemy which we were told had changed its ways. No one thought this divided land was a really important country. That was then. Today it certainly is different.

As the newly appointed AJC field director in those days I helped identify some of the people who made up the first delegation. Many of the people we sent were not AJC'ers at all but Jewish community leaders from other organizations and walks of life. In 1981 other matters took precedence and it wasn't until 1982 that AJC sent its second group. Bill Trosten, AJC's Associate Director, the father of the program (He was a Germanophile of the first order, spoke fluent German and had many friends in the German government) suggested that I accompany the group. I did and it changed my life!

In 1982 Bill decided that we would only send AJC leaders as the program would then have greater direct connection to the agency. We did exactly that and it has been the rule ever since. Interestingly, the KAS delegations in composition have not changed at all. They still send up and coming academics, government people, foundation employees and journalists just to mention a few categories. The basic agenda for each group hasn't changed either. The Germans get to see how AJC relates to the national government in Washington, how a local Jewish community operates and finally what it is AJC national (New York) is all about. Our American groups meet local German leaders, important members of the German Jewish community and get a taste of how both the KAS and how the federal government operates.

Perhaps more important than the meetings and the information that delegation members absorb are the personal relationships that develop. Invariably the most important part of each of our delegate's experience is the "Home Hospitality" evening when in small groups they eat dinner and spend an evening in the home of what I call, "a real-life German". They get a taste of how they live. As far as understanding is concerned, it does more than a stack of books or a series of lectures. Rollo May, the American psychologist and humanist once said, "There is an energy field between humans. And, when we reach out in passion, it is met with an answering passion and changes the relationship forever." He might have been talking about the results of a Home Hospitality dinner.

In thinking back over 30 years of exchanges, while the basic agenda hasn't changed, because of financial and time considerations, the length of each visit has. We started out with two week trips and are now down to less than half that. However, I don't think the impact on our participants is any different. Almost invariably they still come away with the feeling that they had an experience that is unique in both what they have learned and how they feel about Germany and Germans. It may not always be 100% positive but I believe it opens a door in their minds. If it does that, then AJC has succeeded in doing for its leaders what is vitally important for them as individuals – expanding their horizons.

As for me, the 1982 experience changed my life dramatically. My interest in Germany led me to bring the small Jewish community in East Germany closer to the U.S. and the West before the Wall came down. Through the good graces of David Harris it brought me to Berlin as the Founding Director of the AJC Berlin Office (now Ramer Institute) and it put me in touch with Deidre Berger who became my successor in Berlin and with whom I remain very close to this day. In my semi-retirement it allowed me to continue to work with the KAS on the exchange program and, last but not least, it impelled me start up my two newsletters (*DuBow Digest*) on American Jewish-German relations. This project began with only those about to go on the exchange as recipients. In the last two years it has blossomed into having a mailing list of more than 1300.

Like other former exchange participants it is the personal relationships I have developed over the years that are to me the most valuable asset I have derived from what started out it in 1982 as just another overseas trip. Most of my oldest and closest friends in Germany are those I met via the exchange process.

The horrors of the Holocaust and Germany's relationship to the Jews before and after Hitler have deep meaning for Jews, even those born long after 1945. That "something" is implanted in our hearts and minds and frequently has a need to be explored. I believe that "The Adenauer" helps do that. It is not just a trip but rather part of a journey. For the AJC people it starts in Germany but certainly doesn't end when they return home. It is one that continues as long as their interest in Jewish life remains – and that is usually forever.

EXPERIENCES OF  
AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS

## PREFACE

*Deidre Berger | Director, American Jewish Committee Berlin office /  
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Thirty-years ago, the AJC/KAS leadership exchange program became the first institutional effort to create people-to-people understanding between modern Germany and the American Jewish community. Since then, on an annual basis, the program has provided exposure to various facets of contemporary political and cultural life in the U.S. and Germany, offering insights into German-Jewish history and modern Jewish life. In so doing, the program confronts openly the emotional and complex nature of this relationship, recalling the legacy of the Holocaust while addressing the realities of modern Germany and of contemporary American Jewish culture.

Despite the passage of three decades, the original bridge-building vision of bringing together two highly diverse communities linked both positively and negatively by history and destiny remains as relevant as ever. It is a tribute to the many professionals involved in planning this program that the exchange program has radiated undiminished vitality and attractiveness for the participants. The overarching themes of transatlantic relations, democracy promotion, reconciliation and Jewish life have lost none of their significance since 1980, the year the program was launched.

As we can read in the reports of past participants, this trip has been a formative experience for the hundreds of American and German participants who have taken part in the program. Although the trip is brief, the experience is so intensive that it has often had a dramatic impact, influencing both professional and personal lives. Many of those who participated in the program have remained closely linked to one another, forming supportive networks for those interested in closely following American Jewish-German relations. On a local level, many of the participants have lectured and even organized forums to advance German-Jewish relations.

The AJC/KAS exchange program has spawned hundreds of ambassadors for German-Jewish relations on both sides of the Atlantic. It has fostered a greater understanding of transatlantic relations as well as serving as a model for reconciliation, a subject of growing importance in an increasingly global world.

For the American Jewish Committee, this program has been an essential anchor for our work in Germany and Europe. The week-long program helps participants gain critical insights into the role of the transatlantic relationship in ensuring security, democracy and human rights. The exposure to the political and societal challenges of contemporary Germany and Europe has had a profound impact on participants, who take this knowledge back to colleagues, friends and family. Most importantly, these essays demonstrate the power of personal experience in shaping a difficult but highly rewarding dialogue on German-Jewish relations in the wake of the Holocaust, in light of the daunting challenges to democracy and security in our 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

## David M. Gordis (1980)

### **RECOLLECTIONS AND REMINISCENCES OF A PARTICIPANT IN THE FIRST PROGRAM**

The world has changed since our 1980 visit to Germany as part of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung-American Jewish Committee group. The first of many visits to Germany since then, the dramatic changes were perhaps no more dramatically clear than in my visit to Berlin last summer, my most recent trip. In 1980 we navigated the S-Bahn and crossed the border between West and East Berlin on a day highlighted by a visit to the magnificent Pergamon Museum. On this recent visit, we experienced the rejuvenated and electric city of Berlin, now, of course, united, and actually stayed in what was formerly the Eastern Zone of the city. The Pergamon and Museum Island were a short walk from our hotel and Checkpoint Charlie is now a museum and memorial to the sad past of the divided city.

In 1980, the Germans we met were already struggling to find ways of dealing with the tragic past of the Holocaust and the destruction of European Jewry. I was struck even then by the genuine desire to confront the gruesome reality rather than deflect it. The magnificent Jewish Museum in Berlin and the soon-to-be-built Memorial to the Victims of the Holocaust are significant and substantive indicators that, by and large, Germans are committed to addressing the horrors of the Holocaust, teaching its lessons to their children to ensure that it cannot be repeated, and grasping for an answer to the unanswerable question: How could it have happened in one of the most civilized countries in the world? Even in 1980, in conversations our group had with historians, sociologists and political and cultural leaders, it was evident to me that this soul-wrenching confrontation was one that Germans were not attempting to avoid in the manner of some fellow-traveller countries.

Personally, the trip in 1980 was so meaningful that I returned the next year with my wife and daughters to continue my personal processing

of the Jewish-German relationship. I have returned many times since, lecturing and preaching and just visiting, and always my visits are shaped by that first trip with the Adenauer group.

I'm writing this on Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in 2005 in Boston. My relationships with the German community in Boston are very strong. Tomorrow evening, at the invitation of my friend, the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, I will attend the opening reception for a new exhibit on Jewish Berlin to be shown at the Boston Public Library for several months. The Hartmut Lang lectureship on German-Jewish Relations at Hebrew College, where I serve as President, was established in memory of a German diplomat in Boston who did much to foster relationships between Jews and Germans. This is yet another reflection of the importance of this relationship to me. Without exaggeration, I can say that the AJC-Adenauer trip was a key formative experience for me and continues to inform many areas of my life and work.

### Steven L. Swig (1982)

There we were, almost 23 years ago, standing in the forest of the Prince of Steinfurt, looking at the magnificent German Black Oak trees that his family had been in the business of harvesting for centuries. This was 1982, and, with rampant inflation, interest rates around the world were at their highest peak, running at 20% and over. The Prince could not have been more gracious or self-effacing in the pleasant and informative manner that he showed us his trees, running for hectare after hectare over the gently sloping hills of that relatively pristine area of northern Germany. The wonder for me was that he was harvesting trees that his great, great, great, great grandfather had planted, and he was, in turn, planting trees for his great, etc. grandchildren.

In response to his explication of his business, questions naturally flowed. Most were economic in nature. "At what point do you harvest the trees?" "The optimum time appears to be 275 years," he answered. "How much do you get for a tree?" someone asked somewhat crassly. "About \$2,700," he kindly and revealingly said. "And if you don't cut them just at that time, what is the increase per year?" "About \$75 per year." "Just a minute," someone said, "that is only about a 3% return. Why

don't you just cut all of them down and put the money in the bank? Your return would be so much higher." The Prince looked as if he had been garroted, then shot, and then dismembered. He looked at the questioner and graciously, if a little bit red-faced, answered, simply and purely, "But, but... these are my trees!"

While the questioner didn't exactly understand the answer, I received a great lesson in the invaluable nature of sustainability. I have derived great benefit over the years from that exchange, and have now formed a business school that gives an MBA in Sustainable Management. The human, social and environmental message that I received that day has been with me constantly. The human and social issues that we learned throughout our German trip, thanks to the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, have served me so well, and, as this brief story suggests, have changed my life. There were so many other incidents of a positive nature that occurred during the all-too-brief but exhaustive tour of Germany. I am truly a better person for it. Thank you so much for the privilege of having been included.

### Nancy Petschek (1981)

I was part of what must have been the second AJC group to go to Germany on the Konrad Adenauer Exchange Program. That being about half my life ago, it is hard to remember the details of the trip! There are three things that stand out from my overwhelmingly positive response to the trip. First, the visit to Bergen-Belsen and thinking about all who perished there, including Anne Frank, the young woman who introduced me and so many others to the horrors of the Holocaust. I also remember well our visit to a school, where I was relieved to learn that Holocaust education had become a mandatory part of the curriculum in Germany. Thirdly, I remember searching the streets of Berlin with Gene Dubow to find the location of the house that my father grew up in. It was hugely exciting for me when we found the street location, even though the house had been torn down years before.

I must confess that it took me years after returning from my Germany trip to become truly involved with AJC, but when I did, I jumped in deep. Two years ago I became a trainer for AJC's "Hands Across the Campus"

program. When the city of Berlin began to adapt the program for use in its school system, I had the opportunity to return with AJC to help train teachers in the three pilot schools. I enjoyed seeing the new Berlin, without the wall and now the capital of Germany. Around the same time, I joined the Board of AJC's Westchester chapter, where I have become active in many areas. AJC allows me to be involved in some very exciting work, both as a lay leader and professionally.

I am truly looking forward to the 25th anniversary celebration of the Konrad Adenauer Exchange program, which gives me the chance to reconnect with Gene and my fellow participants. The gathering also gives me the opportunity to bring my children to Berlin to see where their grandfather grew up. I am particularly excited that they will be able to share this experience with their grandparents, who will also join us in Berlin for this wonderful celebration!

### Mont S. Levy (1983)

It has been twenty years since my participation in the Exchange program, so you will excuse me if my memories are somewhat faded. There is no question, however, that the program has had a lasting impact for which I continue to be grateful. The opportunity to visit Germany as guests of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung provided special insights into post-war Germany that have raised my awareness of German affairs. I found the relationship of organized religion and government to be most fascinating. The idea of religion having an official status with the government was then and continues to be a very foreign concept. I gained a particular appreciation of the country's commitment to being a democratic state. At the time I believed the nation would therefore not allow the rise of extremist movements. In recent years I have been surprised to see what appears to be a diminishment in Germany's willingness to deal with skin-heads and other hate groups.

The post-war history of Jews in Germany and Germany's relationship to Israel were important lessons. I remember leaving Germany with the rather sad feeling that Hitler had been successful, since by all appearances the future of the Jewish Community in Germany seemed so bleak. It has been gratifying to watch the growth, strength and resilience of

the Jewish Community. It appears to me that it has gotten healthier over the last two decades. I hope that is true and that the Jews will continue to be important contributors to the German society. During the Exchange Program I learned of Germany's special relationship as Israel's trading partner. This was a very welcome reality and continues to influence my opinions about Germany and some of its foreign policies.

I remember our constant concern with how the German government and citizens respond to foreign workers, particularly the Turks. It was a topic that we brought up with most of the officials we met with and our group spent hours strategizing how best to raise the topic. I would certainly like to get an update on this situation.

My most vivid memory remains the trip we made to East Berlin, several years before the Wall came down. It was eerie to walk the streets and watch average citizens observing our movements from their apartment balconies, ready to call the authorities if necessary. As the time neared for us to head back to West Berlin, we hailed a cab to take us to the station. Three of us got into the cab and in very broken English the driver began a conversation. The second question he asked was whether we were Jewish. We were of course rather startled and a bit anxious, but responded in the affirmative. He then asked if we wanted to see the remains of the old Synagogue in East Berlin. How did he know? What made him ask? We will never know, but he did take us to the abandoned remains of a once vibrant synagogue.

Our Exchange Program was led by Bruce Ramer – then a young but rising leader of AJC. It was a great opportunity for me to get to know Bruce and watch him grow into one of AJC's great presidents. The Exchange Program provided opportunities to see some wonderful places, meet fascinating people and in typical AJC fashion it greatly enriched my life. I look forward to returning to Germany for the reunion.

### George A. Makrauer (1983)

Participating in the 1983 AJC/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung exchange program answered many then-lifelong questions for me. Twenty-two years later, some new questions arise today.

Growing up Jewish with a German name and a non-Jewish punim in the latter half of the 20th century occasionally prompted special education. As a youngster, the only Germans I knew – or were introduced to – were family acquaintances, friends and relatives.

In those days, my parents introduced me to necessary necessarily uncomfortable terms: “anti-Semitism”, “different people”, “hatred”, “World War II”, “concentration camp”, “storm trooper”, “discrimination”, “prejudice”, “restricted”, “Nazi”, “Ku Klux Klan” and other terms shorter in spelling but nastier in connotation – and not just about Jews. Books, Hollywood films and TV productions were other media that built images of Germany and Germans for me. During my high school years in the 1960s, many of those uncomfortable terms came to life, hearing them wrongly spoken by adults and contemporaries who wrongly inferred things from my German name and non-Jewish punim.

My personal Reform Jewish and cultural ties to Germany, combined with religious fears about Germans, were a strange mix of emotions and perceptions. My favorite uncle, who had spent WWII in the Air Force in England, would not buy German products – or Japanese, either.

In the 1970s, when my business began buying manufacturing equipment from German machinery companies, I crossed a line. “What did your firm do during the War?” always garnered the response, “We made ammunition and light weapons.” In the early 1980s, when we were visited by German plastics and chemicals companies that had oozed out of the I.G. Farben conclusion, there was no need to ask, and no need to buy either.

Becoming active in AJC in the 1970s offered me a way to tangibly address the terms my parents had taught me early. Being invited to participate in the AJC/KAS program in 1983 offered a way to better understand, I hoped, Germany, Germans and people in general.

My best memories of the program are the friendships that my wife Taaron and I developed with Stephan Wegener of Meerbusch, Hubert Fexer of Regensburg and Michael Thomes of Munich. They were enlightening and enjoyable as program participants and then friends.

Since 9/11, looking back, our personal contacts from the AJC/KAS exchange program created some sharp contrasts in our international life and relationships, both before and after the world changed. An inevitability of our personal relationships has been sharing personal views on these historic events.

My personal KAS contacts have expressed opinions both similar and different to mine on the entire world terrorism matter. However, the matter most disturbing is one which seems to counter a primary objective of the origination of the AJC/KAS program itself, namely, a better understanding by American Jews of Germany (and vice versa). Unfortunately, the official position of Germany vis-à-vis the U.S. post-9/11 is tragic, as I view it.

Combine the terror of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda with a tyrant in Iraq (one of many), and to me the answer is a simple but terrible one. The experience of WWII should be the example. If a nation based on true liberty does not take pre-emptive military action (open or clandestine) against a tyrant and his horde, millions will die. I would have hoped modern Germany would have been with us, almost in lock-step. The last thing I naively could have imagined is that it would have been complicit in the Iraqi Oil-for-Food mess.

I’m not certain what the life-lesson is in this experience. My gut suggests things quite cynical. But my mind would like to believe the important asset I retain is personal relationships with influential people on the other side of the issue who allow room for discussion, negotiation and consensus-building. Without that asset, perhaps I would be strident and activist in unproductive ways. With that asset, I can engage in dialog with friends.

In that important way, my AJC/KAS experiences and relationships are more important than ever.

## Jon Bridge (1983)

I have to rank my participation in the AJC-Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Exchange Program as the highlight of my 30-plus years of involvement with the American Jewish Committee. Going to Germany after diligently studying German history and particularly the Holocaust was emotionally difficult. I was sure that I would be uncomfortable with the country, its people and my physical surroundings. After meeting with and sharing time with other participants and our German counterparts, my attitudes changed. All of a sudden I was dealing with individuals with names, families and friends.

My time in Germany was most enjoyable. Not only was I sightseeing, I went running in each and every town and city we visited. What a thrill to run along the Berlin Wall (and almost get lost)! It was also an experience to visit East Berlin and speak to an East German couple to get directions to see some of the outlying suburban developments. The trick was that the couple didn't speak English, and I don't speak German. We conversed in Spanish, a language they learned by living as East German representatives in Cuba!

Nevertheless, the most worthwhile and long-lasting result of the Exchange has been the friendships made and deepened by the trip. In particular, my wife Bobbe (who was on an earlier Exchange) and I have become part of Herbert Schreiber's extended family. This was truly an objective of the program that was wonderfully met!

## Kenneth D. Makovsky (1985 & 1988)

### **GERMANS AND AMERICAN JEWS TOGETHER**

A friendship between Germans and American Jews? Is it possible? In the face of Bitburg, Holocaust Remembrance ceremonies and the public

bombardment of Nazi-era books and films, could the American Jews work their way through the layers of hate piled over the decades to find out if there is a New Germany? Would American Jews want to? And, if so, why?

The initiative to build a bridge between these two peoples became the mission of two organizations whose philosophies converge on the tenet, "Knowledge is understanding." The American Jewish Committee, the program originator, and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the educational arm of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), which is currently in power in Germany, created an annual exchange program six years ago to begin chipping away at the barriers.

As one of 20 American Jews invited to go on the mission to Germany this past June, I viewed this as an opportunity to put the Germans on the spot and get the tough questions answered. Was your father a member of the SS? What crimes did he commit? Is there anti-Semitism in Germany today? How are Germans teaching their youth about the Holocaust? The democratic process? Could Hitler happen again? Granted, I knew I would be getting a Christian Democratic view of Germany, and it was unlikely I would be exposed to those critical of the government. Also, there would be little time during our tight two-week agenda to explore much in depth.

As compelling as my need for information, I shuddered at the thought of hearing the rough, guttural German tongue which I associated with goosestepping Nazi soldiers screaming commands at those trapped in death camps. But before being confronted with Germans, we were faced with local Jews at a B'nai Brith meeting in Munich. This group of 25- to 40-year-old Jews did not choose to live in Germany, I learned, but were the children of Eastern European Jews transported to Displaced Person Camps there following the war. There are 5,000 Jews in Munich and 30,000 in the whole country.

Is it difficult being a Jew in Germany today? Practically speaking, Jews we encountered were successful in their careers but most felt isolated from German society. They were taught by their parents to disregard their coincidental geographic location and focus on growing up as good Jews and good people. Many live with a "suitcase" mentality. Despite the limited neo-Nazi movement, it is more the sins of the past than the barely noticeable discrimination of the present that afflicts them. "Ger-

man tolerance cannot even be tested", one young man emphasized. "There are too few of us."

Many see themselves rooted here by family and business, but they talk of their children as the first generation since the war who might have the commitment to rebuild the Jewish community. "We were taught by our parents to leave Germany when we grew up," one woman said, "but we are telling our children to do as they please. They express a desire to stay and get active politically and civically. Our youngsters are correct: you have to give something to get something."

The occasional feelings of despair expressed by the Jewish community were paralleled by the feelings of guilt over the Holocaust expressed by German leadership and German laymen. But today this is a society that possibly has a more regimented Holocaust education program in the schools than our own country. Although it does not begin until the high school years, we were told it is intense. On our visit to Dachau, we noticed class tours and instruction. On our visit to Dachau High school, we were shown a teacher's manual which said, in part, some people will find concentration camps unbelievable, and thus it needs to be seen by students to be believed. Teachers should point out the negatives that made it happen: 1) blind obedience; 2) master race concept; and 3) brutality against adversaries.

But the Holocaust education program only started ten years ago, and it has been further inspired by the American television miniseries, "Holocaust," which made it real for German youth. Today one finds books on the subject in bookstores, and during my brief stay in Frankfurt, I observed the publicity all over town on the current museum exhibit, "The Life of Anne Frank."

"My generation didn't learn about the Holocaust in school or at home because our parents and our teachers were ashamed to talk about it," the national security advisor to the chancellor, a man who appeared to be in his mid-40's, told us. "But today's youth, in schools and cultural outlets, are surrounded by the horrors and lessons of this period."

Nevertheless, the Germans are convinced that they have put the Nazi period to rest and are eager for the world to recognize the democratic society they have built in the past 40 years. The very fact that they

believed Americans acknowledged their historic achievements was at the foundation of their shock at the American reaction to Bitburg. An American President placing a wreath at Bitburg, for the German leadership, symbolically meant the war was behind us.

"Even 40 years after the war, the wounds of the war and the Holocaust have not been overcome in the United States," a top official commented. "We apparently have not done a good job educating Americans on the new Germany, and we have our work cut out for us in the future." But another leader said, "The fact that President Reagan finally came was a statement in itself: a new era has arrived."

While it is obvious that most Germans are haunted by the Holocaust, I did not observe a society that intended to bury its head for the next 200 to 300 years. But the devastating war experience may have caused an underlying confusion about identity. Perhaps it involves the responsibility many Germans expressed they feel over the actions of their fathers and grandfathers. One member of parliament said, "Many of us don't feel proud of being German. We don't have the same patriotism that Americans have. We lack an identity of what it is to be German."

But can we expect miracles from a society that until 40 years ago had a tradition of dictatorship? The much publicized German discrimination of its own Turkish population flies in the face of the very democratic process it is trying to nurture. However, the German Office of Foreigners' Affairs displayed materials being prepared attempting to influence Germans to be more tolerant of people who are different than they – an encouraging sign. And a German high school student, when asked about the lessons of the Third Reich commented, "I view the world as being without races, colors or creeds. Everyone is equal. Perhaps I am idealistic, but this is how I will approach my life. My grandfather was a member of the SS."

My conclusion? Germany in the 1980's is a nation dedicated to cooperating with other nations and diverse groups. It sees itself as one small people in a global community. Perhaps its division has forced this position of dependency. And while there may be flaws in this young democracy, Germany has a unique need to be recognized by the world as democratic. Yet a 25 year-old architecture student I met questioned the German affinity for democracy: "Unlike Americans, a group of my fellow countrymen faced with two or three viewpoints will not take a vote; they will still

follow the one who speaks loudest. The democratic process is not ingrained here, and not enough is being done to teach it.”

If his perspective is accurate, this is a decided weakness. And in a country with the history of Germany, there must be safeguards to avoid the dangers that might arise from that weakness. Isolating the society, if post-World War I actions are an example, produced a Hitler. On the other hand, the opportunity to exchange information and feelings can produce understanding and friendship. This is one way we have to influence and strengthen a democracy.

Therefore, should the Jews forgive and forget? That is an individual matter. But this is not the overriding issue in 1985. In fact, the issue is not just Germany; it is only the most prominent example. Another could be the Czechs or the Poles, the Italians or the Russians, the Spanish or the Irish. The issue is getting along. It is my belief that the Germans, the American Jews or any other group or nation cannot afford to remain isolated and not build bridges with others. Inaction threatens the preservation of life. Bearing grudges engenders unproductive hostilities. Bringing goodwill touches the heart of the matter. (1985)

## Rhea Schwartz (1985)

My Adenauer Exchange turned out to be a very significant episode in my life. As an exchange dinner host, my husband and I had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Fritz Holzwarth who, at the time, worked for the CDU. When it was my turn to participate in the exchange, I was hosted in Germany by Dr. Holzwarth and due to his political involvement, I saw him at several points on our trip. During my time in Germany we spent hours chatting – predominantly in French since that was the language with which we both struggled least. Now, his English is perfect. Over time (more than 20 years), and after initial hesitation and uncertainty, we have become close friends. We both travel a great deal, which enables us to see each other several times a year in Washington, Bonn or places more exotic. We have shared life experiences: parental illness and death, marriage, children, career changes. We have spent time at each other’s home. We have witnessed changes in the political climate of both the US and Germany. Most importantly, as we share experiences, we have learned from each other.

To say that I was a reluctant visitor to Germany is an understatement. The notion of having a German friend couldn’t have been more improbable. But here is the gift of the Adenauer Exchange. It enabled Fritz and me to relate on a one-on-one basis – on a human level, not as a generalization or a surrogate for our respective countries. This allowed us to get beyond the labels and stereotypes, to work together to overcome our discomfort, our knee-jerk responses, and most importantly our resentments, our guilt and our misinformation. Fritz became a willing student of Judaism because it is important to me, and I likewise have learned about German Lutheranism.

One friendship does not change a national mindset, and I am well aware of this. But it can be a start. It provided a means for me to think more openly, to be willing to think about people in a new way, and to be hopeful. For this I am ever grateful to the AJC and the Adenauer Exchange.

## Andrea L. Kaye (1986)

### THOUGHTS AND REMINISCENCES

I remember how excited I felt when Hinda Beral from the Orange County AJC Chapter called and asked me to join the local delegation to visit Germany in 1986. It was such an honor and privilege. There were so many wonderful experiences. Even though it was over 18 years ago I remember the trip like it was yesterday. What stands out are the following:

- Meeting President Richard von Weizsäcker in the German “White House”
- Visiting the Berlin Wall and seeing it from the West and then from the East Berlin side – so very white and stark
- The high fashion stores in West Berlin
- Drinking shots of gin in the Dutch border town and not wanting to refuse a drink thinking it would be impolite as we toasted everyone
- The horror of Dachau on a cold bitter day in November
- Friday night services in an East German synagogue
- The camaraderie during the trip and the fabulous interpreters assigned to our group

- The late night discussions in the hotel lobby and bar – debriefing the meetings and talking about what happened during the day
- Meeting young German couples like the Schleu Family and seeing their pain and embarrassment of their grandparent’s generation vis à vis the Holocaust

This was a once in a lifetime, life-changing experience. I went to a country I would not have considered visiting on my own. I returned back to the States a different person than when I went, with a new understanding of Germany at that time.

## Joseph Rackman (1987)

One day in my 1987 trip stood out from all the rest. Thursday afternoon, we had arrived at Worms and were addressed by the Lord Mayor of Worms. He expressed how proud he was that the local synagogue had been restored some 25 years ago. “It had been destroyed on Reichs Kristallnacht in 1938, during the Third Reich. Unfortunately, no Jews are left here now, and the Jews of the nearby city of Mainz take care of the synagogue. We try to explain Jewish history to the people of our town. And we were very proud when President Herzog of Israel visited here a few months ago with the president of the Federal Republic of Germany.”

Amazing as it may sound, on this seventh day in Germany, it was the first time that I heard a German actually state the words “Third Reich” other than during the visit to Dachau. Always the references were to “earlier times” or “our recent history” or some other such circumlocution. But in Worms, no such circumlocutions were utilized.

Then Dr. Fritz Reuter, the director of the City Archives and Rashi Synagogue, spoke with candor about the Nazi era. He spoke with a depth of feeling that only the repentant can muster. It turns out that he had come to Worms to be the City Archivist and recognized that absent a knowledge of Hebrew, he would be forced to ignore a significant segment in the history of the City of Worms. Thus, he and his youngest daughter had learned Hebrew. (Dr. Reuter even taught Hebrew in the local high school, where the language was an elective course.)

Dr. Reuter explained that there had been Jews in Worms for over a thousand years. There is even a statement recorded that the Jews were in Worms before Christ. He explains that this was probably untrue, but rather it was an attempt to pre-date the Jewish settlement in Worms to a time before the crucifixion; this was an attempt on the part of the Jews of Worms to avoid blame and responsibility for the crucifixion.

In reality, Dr. Reuter explained, the Jews probably settled in Worms in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. The Jews of Worms did not escape the persecutions of the Middle Ages and during the time of the plagues were accused of poisoning the wells and were subjected to a reign of terror. In the year 1349, the Jewish community suffered a pogrom and the Jews of Worms never recovered their earlier fame. The centers of Jewish learning passed to Prague and Frankfurt. Dr. Reuter explained that the modern day community had reconstructed its famous synagogue, the so-called Rashi Synagogue. It was built after the time of Rashi, but had been named after its most famous student. In addition, there is a magnificent Jewish museum depicting the history of the Jews of Worms.

“We hope to counteract history repeating itself. It is my impression that the number of persons willing to examine the past is on the increase. There is no predicting the future of the Jewish community in Worms. But this is a true Diaspora synagogue. It awaits the return of the Jews.”

Back on the bus traveling to Bonn, one of the members of the group, Sara Jane Bloomfield of Washington, D.C., commented that seeing the museum and the Rashi Synagogue was sadder, in a way, than Dachau. It showed what Jewish life had been like here once upon a time. It showed what has been lost.

A number of members of the group were inspired by the museum to devote more of their lives to Jewish endeavors to ensure that Judaism become a living, breathing entity, not something encased in a museum.

It was a day that taught me about the uses of memory. For the City of Worms, memory had served as a vehicle for repentance in a very public and constructive manner, one that moved our group very deeply. At the same time we, as Jews, were inspired by this act of repentance to dedicate ourselves to our rich heritage and the living future. Ironic is too

soft a word to describe this situation, one in which a group of Jews were moved to be more Jewish by the act of a German community. I prefer the word 'inspired'.

## Joyce Follman (1984 & 1988)

### **LOOKING BACK...**

I participated in the AJC/KAS Exchange Program in 1984 and 1988, before the Berlin Wall came down ushering in the reunification of the German Democratic Republic with the Federal Republic of Germany. This past June, I traveled to Berlin to work with AJC and KAS to plan for the 25th anniversary celebration. While in the city, I joined the 2004 Exchange group in some of their activities.

Reflecting on these travel experiences, some twenty years apart, I recognize the enormity of the Exchange Program's influence in my adult life. Earlier on, I learned of the possibilities – the risks and rewards – of building bridges of understanding among disparate peoples and nations. Thanks to the exchange, I carried with me the values of outreach and the respectful exchange of ideas in my years as an elected public official, community volunteer and mother. I realize now that many of my accomplishments, small and large, were shaped by dispelling misinformation and encouraging alliances to effect trust.

Home hospitality is a key component of the Exchange Program. On a microcosmic level, a comparison of my experiences in 1984 and 2004 speaks to how our KAS partners have worked to balance their understanding of Germany's dark history and their vision of a democratic society. In Bonn, the seat of government in 1984, I visited with a young couple about my age and their baby. The Herman Wouk TV miniseries, "Winds of War" and "War and Remembrance" had recently been broadcast in West Germany. The question was put forth, Would American Jews hold their babies' generation responsible for the acts of their parents' generation? The question was filled with anxiety.

In Berlin I visited with a young couple who were my children's ages. They spoke about being taught in school and by their parents to abhor war and to remain skeptical of political leadership in a respectful and thoughtful manner. They wanted to explain their support for Germany's opposition to the United States invasion of Iraq. Their words were spoken with self-confidence and rooted in a secure German identity.

The AJC/KAS Exchange Program is just one of many ways that Germans have worked for sixty years to place their country rightfully among the western nations by building on the values of preserving peace and freedom and promoting law and justice. Understanding and bearing responsibility for Germany's past history is a key factor in their success. It has been my privilege and a personal benefit to engage in reconciliation and bridgebuilding through the AJC/KAS Exchange Program.

## Allan J. Reich (1990)

To paraphrase an old saying, "People who fail to study history are bound to repeat its tragedies." However, equally true is the fact that people who dwell too much on the past fail to recognize the opportunities of the future.

Thirty years ago two great organizations, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee, had the vision to establish an exchange program for their respective members. The purpose of the program was to build bridges of greater understanding between the German people and American Jews. The fact that we are now celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the program bears testimony to its enduring success.

Each of us who has participated in the program truly has had a life-altering experience. (I participated in 1990. What a time to be in Germany!) Hopefully, these experiences have not only afforded us greater mutual understanding, but also reaffirmed the unique bond of responsibility that we as Germans and Jews share. Both of our organizations are dedicated to promoting democracy, pluralism and mutual understanding. The exchange program has reinforced the critical importance of working together to achieve those goals.

Five years ago, I had the privilege of serving as the AJC chairperson of the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the exchange program. At that time, a large number of alumni of the program, both Americans and Germans, came together in Berlin. We met not simply to share our experiences and celebrate the past twenty-five years, but to come together in recognition of the importance of the program. We used the opportunity as well to exchange ideas on ways to best to assure its continuing significance. At the Berlin meeting, I declared that I looked forward to returning to celebrate the program's fiftieth anniversary.

Therefore, remembering the past with an eye to the future, I wish to express my congratulations on the thirtieth anniversary of the KAS/AJC Exchange Program. Furthermore, I continue to look forward to our being together in Berlin in 2030 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the program's ongoing success and relevance.

## Kenneth Gold (1992)

I participated in the Adenauer Exchange in 1992. I had never considered traveling to Germany, but when the AJC asked if I'd participate, I didn't need much persuasion. Most of my knowledge about Germany was based on books and movies about World War Two, and I knew that there was much more to learn. I also knew that Germany had done much to support Israel. So I knew that modern Germans did not necessarily follow in the footsteps of those from the first half of the twentieth century. But I wanted to see and hear for myself.

During the exchange, we met many people, including politicians, journalists, businesspeople, and students. Most of these people were very friendly, open and extremely interested in talking with our group, in our capacities as both Americans and Jews. They were interested to learn about us and also very eager to teach us about Germany – primarily, how much it is unlike the Germany of the Nazi era. I came away with an appreciation for how much Germans appreciated democracy, how much value they placed on relations with the U.S., how many Germans were willing to take an unflinching look at their nation's Nazi past and how many Germans saw nationalism as a dangerous thing to be avoided.

I got the sense that some Germans fear their own tendency toward extreme nationalism, which had led to a sort of counter-extremism against nationalism.

We were treated with great respect and shown excellent hospitality by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, to which I would like to express my sincere gratitude. I would also like to express my gratitude to AJC for selecting me for this important exchange. I came away with a much better understanding and impression of Germany and Germans, and I hope that the people with whom we interacted can say the same about Jewish Americans. It was an overwhelmingly positive experience and I hope the exchange continues for many years.

I'd like to share a few specific experiences that may be of interest:

I was fascinated to be in a country that less than 50 years earlier would have murdered me without a provocation other than my being alive. I had one conversation in particular that showed how at least some Germans tended to gloss over the past. During a home hospitality visit, I was speaking with a man about the modern German army. He volunteered that in WWII his father was in the SS and said that most of the SS men were just "regular guys" trying to survive in a rough situation. I was surprised that he would tell me this. I did not wish to offend or cause a scene, so my first thought was to not respond. But then I imagined the souls of murdered people watching my conversation, feeling betrayed as one of their own failed to defend their memory. After all they had been through, speaking up was the least I could do. So I told him that I could not agree that anyone who served in the SS was a regular guy. Soldiers drafted into the army, maybe, but not the SS, which was a volunteer unit who received special privileges in return for their willingness to do especially dirty deeds. The man nodded, that was the end of the conversation, and the rest of the evening passed uneventfully.

I also recall a conversation in which a young man spoke of the "German tribe." I asked if a Jew could be considered a member of the German tribe. He was surprised that anyone could think this possible; the answer was a clear "no," although he acknowledged that a Jew could be a citizen of the German state. I don't think his answer was necessarily an anti-

Semitic sentiment, but it did teach me something about why the Jews' best efforts to assimilate and be more German than the Germans were doomed to failure, in the past as well as, most likely, in the future. I'm guessing this is true for the rest of Europe as well. It also gave me an appreciation for the fact that few Americans view Americans as a "tribe."

When we were in Buchenwald, we met an older man and his wife. He said he was a Jew from the Cleveland area and that, as a young man, he had been imprisoned in the camp. He said that this was his first visit back since liberation. I had countless questions for him, but felt that we should leave him and his wife alone to deal with undoubtedly very strong emotions.

I took many photos of the camp. They all came out great, except that my photo of the crematorium is fuzzy and unfocused, as if my hand was shaking. It's eerie, as I do not remember my hand shaking when I took that picture, and all my other photos are clear.

Also in Buchenwald, we saw a group of German students sitting on the grass. I was told that they were discussing a book or play called "My Brother Eichmann," which apparently is intended to show the banality of evil – how even a mundane, otherwise nondescript person can do incredibly evil things. I was happy to hear that this was a part of their curriculum and viewed it as evidence that modern Germany is willing to openly examine its past.

We met Jews in the city of Erfurt, including one man who had been in Buchenwald and who returned to live there after the war. I asked how he could return to live among the people who had been at least silent partners in the Shoah. He said that, if he had left, the Nazis would have won. I asked whether he felt that his children and grandchildren had a future as Jews in Germany, and he said that he wasn't sure. I'm still not sure how to explain the disconnect between his own desire to defeat Hitler by living in Germany and his admission that his own descendants probably don't belong there.

We met other Jews, including some from the former Soviet Union. I'm sorry to say that most Jews I met seemed afraid to be public about their religion, including fighting for Jewish rights or against anti-Zionism. I believe that this indicated a deep lack of confidence in their security as

Jews in Europe. I then believed, and even more strongly believe today, that their lack of confidence is justified.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts and memories with you.

## Herman „Hy“ Algazi (1993)

For most of my adult life, I have been reading, researching and obsessing about Germany and Germans in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

How could a cultured nation that has produced greatness in music, science, art, medicine, psychiatry, engineering, poetry, literature, education and industry ever have been persuaded to perpetrate a ghastly phenomenon such as the Holocaust?

Are all Germans evil? Has evil been inbred in their DNA for ever and ever? Were most Germans "Hitler's Willing Executioner's" as Daniel Goldhagen described in his book?

Most of my life I had a dislike, distrust, hatred and fear of Germans, Germany and all things German! I swore I would never step on German soil. I openly remarked that the permanent division of Germany would be to my liking, in the world's best interest and a reminder into perpetuity to all Germans of their crimes to humanity. It troubled me greatly when Gorbachev and the Russians decided to pull out of East Germany and the country reunited.

My wife was in Munich to pick up a car, visited Dachau and departed Germany as soon as the vehicle papers were finalized. It was her desire never to return to Germany ... I had the opportunity to participate in the AJC and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung exchange program in 1993. I did not know exactly what to expect in the way of open, honest and direct discussions. We were briefed beforehand on issues, topics, history, current events and attitudes. We also were informed about the German participants, our hosts.

I traveled with our group throughout Germany, meeting with officials as well as East German high school students. Our dialogues were formal and frequently informal. We were hosted in homes and in government buildings. It felt like a complete and diverse experience.

And it seemed like there was a lot of honest sharing... At times it was difficult to express feelings and prejudices but we all – Americans and Germans – seemed to manage.

I came away with an entirely different impression of this new generation of Germans and Germany. I learned that I cannot hold these new people responsible for the acts and atrocities of the generations that preceded them. I was also impressed and moved by the efforts of the new Germany to deal with the past and to educate their present and future generations about genocide and the Holocaust.

Of course, I am aware that hosts generally put on a good show for their guests and try to present their best faces. However, I was left with the impression that a genuine effort was made to tell all... and not cover up! The AJC/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Exchange Program did what it was supposed to do. It gave me a different perception of all things German and the new German people.

Approximately 20 German officials were later the guests of AJC in the United States and visited many of our chapters. When they arrived in Orange County, California, our chapter hosted meetings and a dinner. The interchange between our groups was once again poignant and felt open, direct and honest.

I came away impressed with what seemed to be our mutual ability to express feeling, anger, dismay and bewilderment about how such an enlightened people could have witnessed and participated in these horrific events.

As much as we would like to bury the past, everyone acknowledged that that would be impossible and unproductive for the future. So, we continue to have these dialogues and exchanges. We must continue to build bridges!

As an aside, my wife Linda also was affected by the meeting in Orange County because of her conversation with a "wonderful and intelligent" German woman minister who was part of the delegation to the United States. My wife has agreed to accompany me to the reunion in Berlin.

The AJC/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Exchange has had a significant and positive influence on us.

## Louisa Kasdon (1993)

I went to Germany prepared to react as a political scientist and journalist, not as a Jew. I had spent a great deal of my adult life traveling in Europe, especially in Switzerland, but had steadfastly refused each opportunity to visit Germany for work or pleasure. Our trip was only a year or so after reunification, and it was clear (at least then) that Germany would be the economic powerhouse to energize Europe and dominate the European community. As a serious person, it was obvious that I had to go.

I landed in Frankfurt, not bothered at all by the German surroundings. I was perfectly fine – the model of a jaded journalist – until I got on the train. When I heard the word "Achtung" on the loudspeaker as we left the station, my breath caught.

I chided myself for having such a strong reaction to a sound and context that owed more to Hollywood than Holocaust, and filed the memory of the moment away. I arrived at the hotel, met the rest of the delegation, and embarked on all the prescribed events with a professional detachment. We met young Germans, and older Germans, Jew and Christians, rabbis, and newspaper editors. The questions are obvious for a journalist in Germany, and I am sure that I asked my fair share of obvious questions. All was very cerebral until we went to visit one of the concentration camps. It was to be Concentration Camp-visit "light," not Auschwitz or Dachau, a secondary place, used more as an administrative human processing center than a place where lives were ended.

The visit completely shattered any of my pretensions of professional detachment. I came undone. Every single entry in the meticulous ruled journals, every gun tower, the cold cement of the holding cells felt like an electric jolt, and I cried for a horror that I had never lived, for a time that I had been spared, for lives that had never touched mine. But they had touched mine, if only courtesy of movies, memoirs, and the grim, long history of Jewish martyrology that I absorbed in Sunday school, at home, in life. That visit to the concentration camp has made me feel small, and permanently anxious about my Jewishness. Fearful, and conscious of the sweet serenity that is my life as an American Jew. I think I feel much the way I do on a sailboat in the middle of the ocean when a storm is on the horizon. A hurricane, perhaps. A small, little nothing that simply gets to bob along in cheery denial until a powerful force chooses to take me.

Since my trip with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, my sense of having personal stake in the current of anti-Semitism all over the world has become a permanent layering, a kind of prism refracting my thought process. I travel a lot for work, from Rwanda to Nepal, from Kenya to Morocco, Turkey to Micronesia. And most often to Western Europe. I see the edges of anti-Semitism everywhere I go, whether the racial prejudice is about Tutsis in Rwanda, or Muslims in Thailand, or Jews in Morocco. I feel that I understand what it means to be an innocent and hapless target of hate.

I travel protected by my American passport but with the vulnerability that is my heritage as a Jew.

Debra N. Diener (1994)

#### **WHAT THE ADENAUER EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE MEANT TO ME**

The phrase "life-changing experience" is invoked so frequently to describe so many types of events that it has almost become a meaningless cliché.

Yet there is no other phrase which so succinctly and accurately conveys the full power of the Adenauer Exchange program experience for me.

Being an Exchange participant has had lasting effects on me on multiple levels, both personally and professionally, with a flow of positive benefits between the former and the latter.

The most immediate effect was that I was choosing to travel to Germany, a country to which I had never previously gone and to which, I am sure, would not have gone unless required to do so for my job. Never traveling to Germany would have made it very easy, very comfortable and, yes, very convenient for me to maintain my preconceived ideas about – and prejudices against – Germany. The Adenauer Exchange program forced me to confront those attitudes and to come to grips with realities I had chosen to ignore – chiefly, my investment in preconceived ideas about the German people writ large. While I know we met a very special group of officials, those discussions, as well as the incidental tourist-type encounters with other Germans during our trip, made me face my own prejudices. I stopped lumping all Germans into my own negative stereotypes and be open to giving myself the chance to get to know the people we met as just that – Germans not symbols. Recognizing that I held such a deeply seated attitude towards Germans without actually ever having first-hand interactions with them was an important life lesson and reality-check for me.

That aspect of the Exchange experience stood me in good stead professionally, as shortly after the Exchange program, I began serving on the United States delegation to the "transnational organized crime working group" associated with, and reporting to, the G-8 leaders. My assignments required that I work closely with the German delegation on a wide array of issues. I was able to establish successful working relationships with the German delegates because I could approach them as individuals – not stereotypes, – and I ascribe that directly to my Adenauer Exchange experience.

For these reasons, and others far too lengthy to enumerate, participating on the Adenauer Exchange has helped me in lasting ways and for that I will always be most grateful.

## Dottie Bennett (1995)

I was privileged to travel with the KAS/AJC program to Germany in 1995.

This became a life-altering experience for me. I come from a German family. My mother was born in Mannheim and my father in Strasbourg to German parents. My parents came to the States in late 1939 after my father was able to find safe haven for the family. I was born here in 1941. I grew up speaking German, and learned early that my parents had very different concepts of Germany, particularly post war Germany. My mother hated Germany. My father, on the other hand, had a grudging respect for the country. At no time could he or would he excuse what happened during the Holocaust. But he learned to understand that time moves on and that one can not keep history standing still. It is this attitude that has become a part of my persona. My father proudly would tell my sisters and me that he was German and Jewish. He was proud of both 'labels.'

My Adenauer experience was important in that I learned that the KAS promoted civic education and tolerance and worked diligently to strengthen democracy. This instilled hope in me that the past could not and would not be repeated.

One part of my trip took me to Berlin. Although I had been in Germany many times, this was a first for me in the re-unified city. This city, so near the confiscated Adler-Oppenheimer Family factories, was an emotional roller coaster for me. My family had sought since 1978 to recover assets which were 'stolen'. With no real thought that success would ever come to pass, as a matter of principle for the next generations, we spent the next fifteen-plus years attempting to get restitution for what was rightly ours. In 1994 funds were returned to the family. I received a sizeable sum and knew that I wanted to do something positive with the money. On the Adenauer trip, I was shown the memorial to the book burnings. I was completely overcome by its simplicity and message. The attempt to eradicate Jewish thinkers and their creative processes went to the core of Jewish existence. At that moment, I knew what I would

do with the funds. I would return them to Germany in the form of a library of American Jewish thought in memory of my father to whom Germany remained his 'home'. I went to the American Jewish Committee and David Harris to bring this to reality. The AJC was then the only American Jewish organization with offices in Germany and with an office in Berlin. The rest is history. The Dr. Hans Adler Library, which is stocked with books on American Jews and the American Jewish-German relationship, is testament to the fact that relationships can continue despite the odds. I am proud that the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung continues to promote partnership and, through that, friendship. For me, it was coming full circle. We are a German family and our family was materially hurt. I have thus been able to bring back to Germany, in a positive vein, a growing testament to the proud history of German Jewry. The guiding principles of *tikkun olam* ("repairing the world") and *tzedakah* ("good deeds or charity") give hope that we can learn from the past and look forward to the future.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) remains an important part of my growing concern in the development of transatlantic relationships. The more we talk to each other, the more we learn. I have made many friends in the years since my initial association with the KAS. A special relationship developed with Volkmar Schultz who shares a love of Ernest Barlach sculpture with me. I take pride in having hosted many Adenauer delegations in my home. I have learned much from them.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention a tragedy that befell our group. One of our group, Michael Blum from Chicago, died during our trip. It was a devastating occurrence. Each morning, on the bus, Mike and I shared an *International Herald Tribune* and in the evening a bottle of wine while recalling the day's events and talking about our grandchildren. This painful loss was handled with great sensitivity and dignity by Dr. Michael Lange and Gene DuBow. Without their caring ways, our trip could not have continued. We saw first hand the fragility of life. Heiner Sussebach, whose translation work was masterful, became a wonderful shoulder to lean on. The many experiences of this trip remain with me. I continue to expand my knowledge of Germany and the political, social and economic questions which drive today's discourse. I travel to Germany yearly and take part in the German-American Advisory Committee of the Berlin AJC office. My relationship with Germany continues. It was a privilege to "be an Adenauer."

## Bonnie M. Orkow (1997)

I was born at the end of World War II in a Christian home where issues surrounding world events and the Holocaust were discussed each evening over the family dinner hour. My parents were pro-Israel and very supportive of the Jewish people and causes. In high school I dated the only Jewish boy in our class. So when I converted to Judaism, my family was not surprised, and, actually, quite supportive. As a college graduation gift, I got to trek across Europe, visiting thirteen countries in ten weeks. Germany was on the list of countries I visited, and it was the only one I did not like. Twenty years after the Holocaust, Germans were bitter, short-tempered, and not at all gracious to American teenagers. I vowed never to return.

But my enormous respect for the American Jewish Committee swayed my earlier resolve. In 1997, as president of the Colorado Chapter of AJC, I was encouraged to participate in the Adenauer Exchange Program. If AJC felt a trip to Germany would be beneficial, then I would go. At the same time there was a fear of being overwhelmed by propaganda once in Germany.

Before I landed in Germany, I stopped in London to visit with Dr. Anthony Lerman, Executive Director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. In their 1997 edition of the Anti-Semitism World Report, the Institute noted "a further diminution of manifestations and expressions of anti-Semitism"; "Anti-Semitism in Germany is at an all-time low in the 20<sup>th</sup> century." The report predicted no serious problems in this area in the immediate future. I felt prepared to visit Germany.

Once I arrived in Germany I saw and heard things that impressed me about their resolve to honor and financially support Israel, as well as welcome Jews as citizens in their country. But the voices in my head kept telling me to watch out; an anti-Semite was just around the next corner. I heard officials whose words were comforting and supportive, but the

tapes kept running in my head: when was the real Germany going to rear its ugly head? It never did. By the end of the trip I was fairly certain that Germany was working quite diligently to change its rhetoric, beliefs, and actions. Despite their commitment, it may take another generation to even begin to wipe clean the slate of horrors left by the Holocaust.

I am one of the (almost) 6 million.  
 Yet I am a shadow of my former self.  
 I am a remnant of my people.  
 I am an American Jew.  
 (October, 1997)

I really look forward to this anniversary event. I look forward to witnessing further changes in German rhetoric, beliefs, and actions. I believe enormous good will result from this very special celebration and I want to be a part of that evolutionary change.

## Daniel J. Spiegel (1997)

### **MY BRIEF RECOLLECTIONS OF OUR WONDERFUL ADENAUER ADVENTURE IN GERMANY**

Who said that opportunity only knocks once? It certainly is not true for me. Gene DuBow asked that I participate in the 16<sup>th</sup> Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Exchange Program, and I had to decline. On a fine spring day in Minnesota in 1997, Gene called again for the 17<sup>th</sup> Exchange and I gladly said yes.

The structure of the Adenauer-Stiftung Exchange Program allows a small group of AJC members and others to be together, day and night for ten days, while experiencing the planned and unplanned events set out for us by the Program.

I would be remiss at the outset, if I did not once again thank Gene DuBow, our coordinator Frank Spangler, and our interpreter Heiner Sussebach, for all that they did to make my visit to Germany so rewarding in so many ways.

Berlin: A large beautiful City that was still in the process of being rebuilt as the new Capital of Germany. One visit that stands out was meeting Mr. Gauck, who started the now-famous Gauck Commission that addresses the tyranny of the former East Germany. We also met with Dr. Nachama and other leaders, as well as members of the Berlin Jewish Community. We had a wonderful Shabbat evening at a Synagogue – preceded by dinner at a beautiful Jewish Community Center – that survived WWII basically intact because the entrance hides what is behind it! We visited the US Embassy, saw former East Berlin, checkpoint Charlie, the wall, Holocaust memorials, and even took some free time to stroll the city with the other participants.

I traveled a short distance from Berlin to see the historic House of the Wannsee Conference and learned a great deal about what took place there in January, 1942 – events that would change the world forever, namely, the development of the plot to exterminate Europe's Jews. Another side trip took us to Potsdam where we visited the palace of Frederic the Great. In the 18th century, it was Frederic who invited more Jews to come to live in Germany.

Erfurt: A medieval City that was virtually undamaged by World War II or the Russian Communist occupation that followed. The only building damaged by a stray bomb was the Church where Luther translated the New Testament into the precursor of the modern German language.

Frielendorf: On our bus ride west, we stopped at this wonderful small town. We met the Mayor and visited a very old Jewish cemetery. The town still maintains this cemetery even though its' remaining Jews were taken away and murdered in the Holocaust. This small town held a major event to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Kristallnacht on November 9, 1988. The Mayor and his whole community continued to honor the memory and contributions of the Jews of Frielendorf.

Army camp: Frank Spangler arranged for us to take a special detour to visit a Tiger tank Germany Army base. We even had a wonderful lunch with members of this unit. Who could forget being allowed into one of these huge tanks?

Bonn: The soon-to-be-former Capitol City of Germany. There was so much history to see and experience. This is the City on the Rhine River

that Chancellor Adenauer ("der Alte") chose and built to be the Capital of the reborn Federal Republic of Germany following WWII. The program provided a special evening at the home of Mr. Hermes, the son of one of the former Ambassadors from Germany to the United States. Together with Cookie Shapiro and Richard Sideman, I was privileged to have a splendid evening learning about Germany history and the new Germany from the Hermes family. Heiner provided a special tour of the German People's Museum in Bonn, translating and explaining what we saw for hours on end. He even showed us the Roman ruins that were discovered when the Museum was recently built. We also had a meeting and lunch with US Ambassador John Kornblum at his home. We in the US are most fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated Ambassador representing us.

Frankfurt: Our last city to visit. Again, there was so much history – especially Jewish history. We toured the Jewish Museum as well as a large Jewish cemetery (where many prominent German Jews are buried) that had been desecrated by the Nazis during WWII.

The most emotional part of our program occurred near Weimar, when we visited Buchenwald. The camp is just a short distance from the beautiful city of Weimar. At Wannsee we saw the photos of one of the concentration camps and, ironically, we stood in the exact spot in Buchenwald depicted in that photo. All of us said Kaddish (the Jewish prayer for the departed) at the foundations of a former barracks in which inmates were forced to live and die.

A special thank you to all of the people at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for the planning, care and concern that made my visit to German so rewarding, educational and unforgettable.

## Cookie Shapiro (1997)

The KAS Exchange program has made a difference by affecting some of my long-held beliefs and negative stereotypes of the German government. The people that we met with were openly and painfully honest about their horrid past and seemed to have a strong desire to change the way the German people and the government deal with bigotry, especially

anti-Semitism. They also acknowledged the fact that they are still fighting neo-Nazis – in most cases, they seem to be winning – and they recognized that neo-Nazis are still problematic and will continue to be for many years to come.

The German government, so far, has been a good friend of Israel and the Jewish community in Germany. The world is a dangerous place for unprotected Jews – that is, unprotected by the community and especially the government. The German government has established harsh punishments for those exhibiting anti-Semitic behavior and/or Nazi affiliation. As long as that policy is strongly enforced, I will continue to believe in the German government as a symbol of hope. These positive feelings, as well as longterm friendships, are the direct result of my participation in the KAS Exchange Program.

### Eva Fishell Lichtenberg (1998)

Because I am a Holocaust émigré from the Czech Republic, most of whose family perished, I always have conflicting feelings upon traveling to Germany, and the experience each time is emotional as well as intellectual. My 1998 visit under the auspices of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Exchange Program was no exception. It was neither my first trip to Germany nor my last, but in important ways it was the most meaningful. Unique in providing me the unparalleled opportunity to meet and question politicians, journalists, clergy, national leaders and ordinary citizens in various locations, it promoted my learning about present-day Germany and forced me to compare some of my preconceived notions with reality.

I came away with the impression that Germans are indeed trying to deal with their past, accept responsibility for the Holocaust, and are determined to maintain and perpetuate democratic institutions and policies. To that end, Germans seemed to emphasize their country's role as a European nation and its future as an integral part of the European Union. Despite some lingering doubts or concerns about Germany's ability to withstand increasing economic and political pressures without relapsing into totalitarianism, I was largely persuaded that Germany's efforts to understand its history and reform its past were sincere.

The other American participants did not necessarily agree that the Germany on the brink of the 21st century was a different entity than the one existing in the first half of the 20th. Daily discussions amongst ourselves revealed considerable diversity of opinions and raised issues for further consideration; these conversations enriched an already complex experience. As we traveled together, we established rewarding relationships and generated a shared camaraderie; when we meet again at AJC events, there is a special affection between us.

For me, one of the best outcomes of the trip was developing a friendship with a mature student from a small town in former East Germany whom I met during one of the semi-social evenings at a school, the equivalent of an American high school. The occasion was the first time that this young woman had any contact with Jews. Seventeen-year old Stephanie and I began an e-mail correspondence that has persisted to this day. We are sufficiently in touch with each other that on a trip to Germany two years ago, Stephanie traveled to Munich to spend a memorable day with my husband and me.

Another highlight was worshipping at Shabbat services in an Orthodox Berlin synagogue. Once savagely expelled from German society, we were again a valued presence in the capital of Germany, attesting to our survival and vitality. Seated next to me among the pews reserved exclusively for women were several old German non-Jews attempting to express their kinship and professing their desire to expiate the horrors perpetrated by their fellow citizens. What a transformation!

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee for affording me this unique trip to Germany.

### Bernard Hertzmann (1999)

Even though it has been almost five years since my trip to Germany, the memories are so vivid, it seems like only yesterday. It was an experience that hopefully will remain so for many years to come. It truly was that good. Let me try to describe the most dominant memories I have, because it would take more pages than Gene allows to accomplish a more complete task.

The initial meeting with my compadres was really special, as they all were and are. They were a great bunch of amazingly compatible people, some of whom I have formed a strong and long lasting friendship with. Even though the opera in Frankfurt left a lot to be desired, it was really our first experience together and certainly "misery loves company" bonded us early.

The many experiences we had were saddening and exhilarating, poignant and uplifting, moving and at times depressing. However, my opinions and feelings about Germany and the German people radically changed in that short twelve-day period. I will summarize by making some general statements about situations that truly affected me.

- The colonel at the army base who tearfully apologized for the misdeeds his father did while serving in the Wehrmacht
- The experiences of touring the German "FBI" and Stasi Headquarters
- The wonderful group of high school students in Erfurt with whom some of us had the extreme pleasure of spending an evening out on the town
- The eerie feeling of sitting at the table at Wannsee where the Final Solution was concocted
- Seeing the Jewish Museum before it was really open to the public
- Spending evenings with our group at each hotel bar sampling the local brew
- Visiting the Turkish community leaders to better understand their plight
- Meeting Bernhard Vogel, Governor of Thuringia, and commiserating with a fellow Bernard

I have gained an especially great appreciation for and developed warm feelings towards Gene, Deidre, and Frank. All of them made the trip happen and made it one of the most unforgettable experiences of a lifetime.

## Ann Gilbert (2000)

Let me quote from a letter I sent to my friends upon my return: "Before I took this trip, I had little knowledge of the country and its culture. Like most American Jews, I was angry and horrified about the way Hitler treated the Jews from the time he took power in 1933 until the end of the

War. To my surprise, I met compassionate people who felt the pain of the past and yet had moved on.

I can now read the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (in English) and understand the problems which face Germany – pension reform, the party differences between the CDU and CSU, and the plans to celebrate ten years of unification next week.

We started the trip meeting with the Mayor of Berlin and ended the trip meeting with the Vice Chair and treasurer of the CSU group in the Bavarian state parliament, with a meeting with the Lord Mayor of Erfurt in between.

We learned about Germany's political parties and the schism between the East and the West, which will take a generation to close. We talked about the rise in right-wing extremism in young males (age 16 and older), and Holocaust instruction in the schools. We spent an evening at a Gynasium in Erfurt and listened to a choral program that included Israeli songs. We visited the American Embassy where we were briefed by State Department employees about slave/forced labor reparations. A few days later we were briefed by military leaders at military barracks in Thurginia."

The letter goes on and on. I came back feeling very positive about my trip and the people I met. Our hosts put together a thoughtful and provocative program. I encouraged my friends who had not visited Germany to do so.

Let's move to 2005.

My Adenauer group has had a reunion every May when the AJC annual meeting takes place in Washington. All but one person has attended at least two reunions.

Since I live in Washington, I have had the pleasure to see Heiner when he is here to translate and enjoyed the friendship of Gerhard Wählers when he was head of the Adenauer office in D.C. 2004 – I persuaded my husband, Frank, then age 73, to spend a week in Berlin. He was one of those: "I will never set foot in Germany. I was uncomfortable when we changed planes in Dresden 15 years ago. I can never forgive the German people for what happened to the Jews during World War II."

He went, he saw, and he was compassionate. He loved the architecture and arts – that was the carrot. We had a superb tour of the Reichstag by Volkmar. We were fortunate enough to attend an AJC meeting held in conjunction with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. One of the highlights of the trip for Frank was spending a half-day with the architect who restored the Neue Synagoge. Dr. Simon arranged it; Wendy translated. He enjoyed going to services with Wendy and Jonathan in the Neue Synagoge. I think that really turned his head around!

Frank will be with me in June and we are both looking forward to returning to Berlin.

Wendy has shown five sets of friends around Berlin. Of course they love her and she enables them to enjoy the city.

Visiting Germany with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung was one of the most important trips I have taken. It is with me every week as I read the paper and reflect on the news and think about the friends I made both from the States and in Germany.

Thank you, AJC. Thank you, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. I was truly fortunate to have been introduced to this rich, interesting, and controversial country through you.

## Judith Beiner (2000)

### **ADENAUER**

I sat in a lovely Munich restaurant, flanked by two extremely handsome, extremely blonde, young Air Force officers, discussing modern day Germany and its burden of guilt. While I tried to hang on to their words, the overwhelming thought in my mind was "What would my mother do if she saw me now?" And this sense of ambiguity followed me throughout one of the most profoundly intense experiences of my life, the Adenauer Exchange Program.

A young child when WWII ended, I had little realization of the horrors of the Shoa. My family lost no one in the camps, and so it was not until

I began my adult odyssey of learning that I fully understood the truth of the madness that was Nazi Germany.

Germany as a geographical and cultural entity lived up to my expectations. The cities, the countryside and the museums did not disappoint. But far and away, the people we met and the meetings we held, gave me hope that the fanatics would not rule Germany again. I cried first for the Jews lost to us, and I prayed for the small Jewish community, mostly Eastern European, who tenaciously held on to our religion as the remnants of a once flourishing culture.

I didn't think it would be easy to like Germany, but I did. Of course the extremists still exist there, spawned by a new political history which began with the fall of the Wall. Germany has tried, amidst its own travails and pressures, to be a friend and a partner to Israel and protect its own Jews and other minorities. Our meetings introduced us to a cross section of the population, from the highest ranks of government to schoolchildren, and each wrote for me a new page of awareness, a new piece of knowledge that I added to my Weltanschauung.

However, beyond all the German experiences, I was blessed to be surrounded by a most remarkable group of fellow sojourners. We have grown even closer as these few years have past, reuniting in Washington each May. I have met spouses and significant others, and while Germany was our initial bond, we are no longer just the Adenauer class of 2000, we are a group of great friends with a wonderful treasure trove of shared memories.

The experience of my Adenauer journey has been written into my life in indelible ink. I am so very grateful to have been part of it.

## Robert A. Fuerst (2001)

I visited Germany through the American Jewish Committee's Adenauer Exchange Program in July of 2001. The trip was certainly one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I met many wonderful people, developed some good friends and learned a great deal about Germany and particularly about the situation for Jews in Germany.

The first thing that was so striking was the tremendous growth in the Jewish population of Germany due to the great influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union. I learned about the problems this created for both the German government and the Jewish community of Germany. Since religions are supported by a tax, and since most of these immigrant Jews were on welfare, they hadn't paid any tax. As a result, there were insufficient funds to support this rapidly expanding Jewish community. I remember the frustration of the leader of the Bamberg Jewish Community, who said he'd only received 140,000 Deutschmarks per year out of which he had to pay a teacher, a rabbi and a social worker and was spending much of his time working for free to help these immigrants settle in his community.

Looking back, I also feel very privileged to have met many important leaders from different areas of German society, including the President of the State of Hessen, one of the publishers of Germany's leading newspaper, and several scholars and government officials who gave us a good understanding of German history, Jewish history in Germany and German values.

There were also a few specific instances which stand out.

The first was our visit to the village of Aufsess and the tour we received of the town from Mr. von Aufsess, whose family had owned the castle and surrounding property for hundreds of years dating back to the 1200s. As a real estate lawyer, I was particularly amazed to see the land records of the town dating back to the 1200s, which were kept in a room that looked like a basement. Mr. von Aufsess complained about the difficulty and expense in maintaining the castle and updating the records which he said were last reorganized 200 years ago.

I was also struck by our visit to the Stasi Museum in Leipzig, where we learned about the repressive control which the East German government exercised through the Stasi Secret Police. We learned how the Stasi would steam open and read thousands of letters a day and how they would destroy the reputation of perceived enemies by planting lies about the person.

Finally, I thoroughly enjoyed our final night of in-home hospitality where we had the opportunity to talk and socialize with Germans to learn about their values and concerns.

I feel truly privileged to have had the opportunity to visit Germany and to have participated in the Adenauer Exchange Program. It is an experience that I have treasured and will continue to treasure for the rest of my life.

## Hermann A. Berliner (2002)

### **GERMANY REVISITED**

In 1981 my parents had the opportunity to return to Germany for a visit. My mom had lived in Frankfurt until, wisely, she left in 1938, and my dad (who had not yet met my mom) left Germany the same year for the same reason. My parents were fortunate to come to the United States where they met and married in 1942 and then settled in a heavily populated German-Jewish neighborhood in upper Manhattan. My parents often spoke German, while my grandmother (who was able to flee Germany in 1942) spoke German almost exclusively; many of their friends spoke German; and I attended a camp which was almost totally populated by the sons and daughters of German-Jewish immigrants, now happily living in the United States. As much as German-Jewish identity was part of the fabric of my life, Germany was not.

This past spring, as a result of my involvement with the Long Island Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, I received an invitation from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung to participate in a briefing tour on Jewish life in Germany along with nine other Jewish Americans. I left for Germany on June 18th not only unsure of what I would find but unsure of whether it was worthwhile to participate. I came back on June 29<sup>th</sup> in great measure transformed. How did that happen? There were four critical moments in the transformation, one of them very personal.

The first Friday night in Germany, we went to services at the Westend Synagogue in Frankfurt. The sanctuary was beautiful. At the back, there was an imposing organ with its pipes rising on the wall. But this was an orthodox service and organ music is never part of the orthodox tradition. Why was it there? Prior to 1938, when the interior of the temple was completely destroyed, this was not an orthodox temple but rather the progressivereform temple, now rebuilt exactly as it was prior to being destroyed. In an amazing coincidence, this turned out to be the same temple that my mother, a progressive-reform Jew, attended when she

lived in Frankfurt. At that moment I felt connected with her in a very special way. And, I knew she would have been so very impressed with the beauty of the service and the vitality of the congregation.

Part of the reason for the vitality present in the Westend Synagogue is because of the large increase in the Jewish population in Germany. What had been approximately 30,000 Jews in 1990 has risen to over 100,000 with the new population coming primarily from the former Soviet Union. As a result new Jewish communities have developed and existing Jewish communities have been revitalized. As an example, we visited the new synagogue in Chemnitz, formerly Karl Marx City, a picture of which appeared in Newsday on June 4, 2002. The congregation had 12 members in 1990 and has over 500 today. The building was beautiful, but the people even more so. And what better sign can there be than a vital and growing Jewish community receiving full support from Germany. As Boris (who came from Russia five years ago) said to me as we were sitting in the Chemnitz Synagogue, life is so much better for him and other members of the community since coming to Germany, and they view the years ahead with real optimism. On my second visit to a synagogue during this trip, I was again visibly moved.

Just prior to visiting Chemnitz, we visited Aufsess, a small rural town. There we met with two local teachers and the Baron of the village. All three talked about the Jewish life that was part of this community until 1937. In this context, it was natural for me and the group to ask the Baron, a person who appeared to be in his late 50's, what his parents did during the World War II period. The answer was direct. The Baron's father was part of the Nazi regime and was ultimately sentenced to three years in jail for war crimes. Listening to the Baron talk with pride about the Jewish life that once existed in this community, and also listening to him speak with remorse about the acts of his father and others made it clear that just as generations had changed, attitudes and beliefs had changed as well.

But not everyone's attitude has changed. Jürgen Möllemann, a high ranking member of the Free Democratic Party (an important player in a possible coalition government in Germany) made some highly anti-Semitic statements recently, and he continues to hold his position of importance in the FDP. His statements were deeply troubling and we spent considerable time talking about him, especially with politicians at

all levels, including members of the German Parliament from the Social Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Free Democratic Party as well as the Green Party. Almost surprisingly, based on these many conversations, his comments faded somewhat into the background and I left reassured that anti-Semitism was not a major factor in today's Germany.

If my parents were alive today, and could once again visit Germany, what would they say? Without any question, they would continue to say that we should never forget and never forgive the enormity of what happened. But they would love participating, as I did, in the revitalized Jewish life in Frankfurt, Chemnitz or Berlin and love seeing the recognition of the Jewish contribution to German life. More than 60 years after they were forced to flee for their lives, they would, in my opinion, feel comfortable in Germany. And I had never believed that either they or I would feel that way.

### Darryl Maslia (2003)

In late spring 2003, I received a telephone call from Sherry Frank, Executive Director of the Atlanta Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, asking me if I wanted to go to Germany. At the time, she had few details but I did express my interest and encouraged Sherry to come back to me with more details. So, at an extremely busy time in my life, I found the time to take an incredible journey to Germany and spend close to two weeks participating in the 2003 AJC/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Exchange Program.

My experience in Germany truly was an incredible time in my life that I will always treasure. I certainly enjoyed learning more about my Jewish heritage throughout Germany, and I felt extremely welcome in Germany thanks to our hosts and speakers. They all certainly went out of their way to deliver a learning experience personalized to our special group. In addition, I was able to build new friendships from this trip, and I also rekindled some previous friendships.

While I still believe the Jewish people have some work to do in building Jewish-German relations, I feel we were able to learn from our hosts and speakers, and we also had the great opportunity to share our own personal views.

Thank you for the wonderful experience!

## Jay Price (2004)

I had been to Germany several times before on business and it was always a strange feeling for me. Much of my apprehension was based on my own ignorance and prejudice. I wondered, How did Germans today feel about Jews? Did they feel accountability for the Holocaust? Could a Jewish community thrive again in Germany? Would there be enough Jews who would be willing to give it a chance?

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung-sponsored trip served, foremost, to educate me about the German people, including the growing Jewish communities, their views of the past and the current struggles. For me, the telltale sign of the impact of the Germany visit is the number of times this past year I have referred back to the trip, primarily through a story.

Meeting with the newspaper editors, the German statesmen, and heads of political organizations was highly informative and provided a strong context for understanding German attitudes about the U.S., the war in Iraq, Israel, immigration of Jews to Germany, etc. However, it was the German people we met and their candid views of Germany's troubled history that had the most impact on me. I will share a few of those stories that illustrate people who acknowledge the past and are willing to confront it.

After visiting one of the German government buildings, our German guide took me aside to show me a plaque dedicated to two Jewish industrialists who funded the construction of this magnificent building. She had tears in her eyes as she noted the irony that both were killed in the Holocaust.

We visited the Walther von Rathenau Oberschule, one of three German schools which are using AJC's Hands Across the Campus program. Teachers were trained in the U.S. We met with students and teachers who were enthusiastic about the program and were beginning to challenge other students when they sensed discrimination or bigotry.

I experienced my first visit to a concentration camp. As expected, I found the buildings, rooms, pictures, and statistics to be overwhelming and very emotional. However, I had the opportunity to talk separately with the non-Jewish guide who had been doing these tours for many years, and she emotionally shared her background and why she conducts the tours. Her husband was from the city closest to the concentration camp.

Finally, we had dinner one night with a young German couple who had been to the United States as part of the AJC visit. They were very warm and hospitable people. During the evening, when we were all sharing our newfound knowledge and perceptions about the other country, the man asked us what it felt like to be an American Jew and come to Germany. After we answered, he simply commented that if he were Jewish, he doesn't think he could ever come to Germany.

As always, the other highlight of the trip was being with the lay and professional leaders of AJC. I am continually amazed at the intellect, compassion, insight, and humor brought by the people who are so passionately involved in AJC. They helped make the trip a very special experience.

## Sohier D. Marks (2005)

I had been to Germany on business before, but the invitation to visit again under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee / Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung was special. Where my prior relations had been cordial and businesslike, this promised to be a fresh look at the German environment both social and political. This would be a chance to explore other facets of the German nation and their attitudes toward the Jewish people. I was not disappointed.

The overriding impression that I received was that “never again” permeated the dialogue of this generation. No, they were not guilty – as might have been their fathers and grandfathers – for the horrors of the Holocaust but that they were now responsible to see that it would never happen again. There was also the unsaid interest in bringing back to Germany the Jewish presence that had been shattered. There was a continuous stream of sights and sounds but a few have deeply imbedded themselves in my memory.

In Frankfurt, we visited the Holocaust museum. It was not grand nor was it maudlin. It was the depiction of the life of one family. A dinner table set for the Shabbat meal. The candles, the wine, the prayer book, the kippah. A Jewish home, just like yours and mine. The pictures and the stories of their travail and suffering were very personal and felt very real. Stories of their having to list all their assets, and turn them over to the state. The keys that had to be turned over to the authorities so that their apartment could be given to another. “Jew Auctions” were held where these assets were sold for a song. All these were personal and hit very hard. One family multiplied by six million!!

“And there was no one left to say Kaddish for me”.

The visit to the Nuremburg Cemetery and chapel brought home to me the great disparity between the attitudes of the Jewish people and their attempt to integrate into their homeland – Germany. Here were impressive headstones at the graves of men who had died while fighting for Germany in the First World War. Here was proof of the dedication of this people to the country they called their fatherland. At the end of a walk, there was an obelisk and four panels with 185 names of Jewish servicemen who had also died for their country. But, now there was a hole cut into this obelisk into which was placed a scroll listing the thousands of Jews of Nuremburg who had been murdered solely because they were Jews. What a sad contrast!

At the chapel, church stairs carved from Jewish grave stones were mounted on the wall. Stairs which had been rescued from a church stairwell – a picture of earlier German desecration of Jews and things Jewish. What a difference this showed to the founding of the Reform movement in Germany in the early 19th Century as the Jews tried so hard to integrate into German society at the beginning of the enlightenment that they

were willing to bend their religious beliefs. What a failure!! But this had been somewhat alleviated when the very special Torah finials that had been taken during the Holocaust were returned by a grandchild of the person who had bought them at a “Jew Auction”.

But bringing the Jewish presence back to Germany was a hopeful sight. We were blessed to be able to participate in the Bat Mitzvah of a newly arrived Jewish girl who had been returned to Germany with her family from Russia and was now being integrated into German society while retaining her heritage. The service in a restored synagogue gave credence to the German government program to bring Jews back into German life and German society.

In summation, I believe that this generation of the German people does not feel guilty about what their fathers and grandfathers did some 60 years ago but that they are indeed now responsible to see that it should never happen again. Thus we applaud their support for the State of Israel and their interest in bringing Jews back into their society.

My sincere thanks to both the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee for having given me the opportunity to be part of this meaningful program. May the collaboration continue to thrive and prosper.

## Ellen Palestrant (2005)

Historic responsibility was a term we would hear frequently during the intensive, eleven-day-period of the AJC-KAS Exchange Program. I was enthralled continually by the potency of that concept, and by the depth of the dialogue between the members of AJC, KAS, and the other impressive, politically-savvy individuals and groups we encountered. How hard it must be to represent the perpetrator, I kept thinking. More difficult, in many ways, than representing the victim. I also thought about the courage it takes to talk candidly about the past and not flinch from examining it.

Traveling from Frankfurt, to Nuremberg, Fuerth, Erfurt, Weimar, and finally to Berlin, through Germany’s cultural glory and the unfathomable

sadism of its past, was a journey of discovery – and one of recovery. As members of the AJC, representing America and Jewish people, sadness, not anger, prevailed in our emotions; as members of KAS, representing Germany, honesty and self-awareness prevailed in theirs. Together we bonded into a palpable We as we took stock of the past and the present, and exchanged points of view.

We know there is still anti-Semitism in Germany, but there are also many Germans who have taken historic responsibility seriously, and whose depth of caring has translated into deeds. “The acknowledgment of a moral responsibility by the German people,” and the “reconciliation with Israel and the entire Jewish people,” Konrad Adenauer had said, was of utmost importance to him, and we were gratified to find that many of the thoughtful people we met still share his vision today.

### Lawrence M. Adelman (2006)

The Exchange opened my eyes to the work AJC did in the world, the issues the Jews in Germany face and the tremendous effort the German government has made to combat Anti-Semitism. Attending a Bat Mitzvah on the Sabbath in a synagogue in Berlin near the end of our trip was something I will never forget. I never had the exposure to local, state and national government leaders that this trip provided. Clearly the reason was due to the respect they have for AJC and its work. The trip opened my eyes to the important role AJC played in our communities, the US and the world and how well it is respected. I knew I wanted to be a part of this. The American Jewish Committee was the right place for me to channel my efforts now and, hopefully, for many years to come.

It was a life-changing experience that I can never totally articulate but that has energized me to grow with AJC. I have increased my annual contribution and my activity with AJC. I am now President of the Chicago Regional Office and on the Board of Governors. I directly relate my growth with having the honor to participate in the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Exchange. It showed me what can be done and energized me to be part of it.

### Eric S. Cantor (2006)

As a participant in the recent American Jewish Committee/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung exchange program, I read with heightened interest two articles appearing in the November 3, 2006 issue of the Jewish weekly *Forward*. The first involved the dedication of the new synagogue on what will become part of the larger “Jakobplatz Jewish Center” currently under construction in Munich. With the city’s Jewish population swelling in size as a result of FSU immigration to close to its prewar size of 9,000, the need for larger institutional space is apparent. The renewal of such a community is just what we witnessed during our recent trip – in Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Dresden and Berlin. It left me with a strong sense of optimism about the future of Jewish life in Germany. But contemporary German society is not free of the scourge of anti-Semitism as the second article detailed.

Recent victories by the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party in regional elections along with anti-Semitic incidents at soccer games highlight but one of the challenges faced by contemporary German society.

So which Germany should I describe in discussions of my trip? The answer, undoubtedly, is both. The country I encountered and the people with whom I had the pleasure to interact represented the best of Germany today. I’ve shared my impressions of the moral burden and responsibilities accepted by the German people. I relate my surprise at learning of the word “Reichspogromnacht” used to describe the events of November 9, 1938 – instead of the euphemism “Kristallnacht.” I describe the museums, memorials and monuments throughout the country dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Shoah. And, I inform people of the strong relationship established by two brave men, Konrad Adenauer and David Ben-Gurion, between Germany and the newly formed State of Israel. I emphasize the importance of this unique relationship, which has grown stronger over the years, and has resulted in the Israeli view that Germany is Israel’s best friend in Europe. I discuss the challenges faced by the Jewish Community of Germany as it absorbs tens of thou-

sands of FSU immigrants into its existing institutions – giving Germany the second largest Jewish population in Europe. Inevitably, people ask about anti-Semitism in Germany and I must tell them that it exists. At the same time, I tell them of strong laws outlawing its public expression. And I tell them that Germans feel very strongly about this issue and that their sincerity is apparent. I conclude by suggesting that a new Germany exists today and that we can't continue to "hold the (German) children responsible for the sins of their fathers."

It was indeed a privilege to be invited to join the twenty-six year old dialogue between the AJC and KAS. Thank you for affording me such a wonderful opportunity. I'd also like to acknowledge the thoughtful leadership displayed by two outstanding KAS staff members, Ingrid Garwels and Sabina Woelkner. Their attention to detail, level of sensitivity, and dedication to dialogue remained apparent throughout the program, contributing significantly to the success of our trip.

### Amy B. Folbe (2007)

In 1982 I lived with a German family in Berlin as part of an exchange program. At that time, my German host family wanted desperately to introduce me to a Berlin Jew. There was almost no opportunity. Not so at all when I traveled to Berlin as part of an extraordinary group of men and women who took part in the 2007 AJC/Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung trip. I was able to share with them the giddy feelings I experienced when witnessing the astounding growth of a Jewish presence in Berlin from so many different perspectives. During the several days we spent in Berlin, among other treasured experiences, we saw a close community of Jews enjoying a Bat Mitzvah in an active synagogue, visited intellectual and educational centers devoted to studying Jewish topics, toured passionate and creative Holocaust memorials, met with German professionals and politicians all of whom showed a sensitivity to Jewish issues, and spent quality time with Jews who have chosen to make their homes in Berlin. It was an honor to relish in Berlin's Jewish past and present with intellectually curious and self-aware individuals from across the country; I cherish our shared bond.

### Alex Gerson (2007)

Who would have imagined right after WW II, when most Germany Jewry disappeared, that there would be approx. 200,000 Jews living currently in Germany.

What made the AJC-KAS Exchange the most important Jewish experience of my adult life were the conversations I had with people like Arno Hamburger in Nuremberg, Jutta Dick in Halberstadt, Stephan Kramer in Berlin and others. These people are all involved in the monumental task of re-creating Jewish life in Germany. Arno is a Holocaust survivor and leader of his community that went from 7,500 Jews pre-WW2 to 250 after and now with the influx of Former Soviet Union (FSU) immigrants there are 2,700 Jews living in Nuremberg. Jutta teaches Judaism to the kids of the 30 FSU families living in Halberstadt in what used to be East Germany before the reunification. Stephan is the General Secretary of the Central Council of Jews in Germany and deals with the issues inherent in providing meaningful Jewish life to 180,000 FSU Jews that immigrated to Germany in the last 10-20 years.

We spend a lot of time in the USA thinking about attaining Jewish Continuity and I hope we will find answers in the way that the German Jewish Community leaders are re-creating Jewish life over there.

### Sherry A. Weinman (2007)

There is no single sight or experience from my Adenauer Exchange trip that captures the effect the program has had, and continues to have on my life. Not the museums of Jewish and Holocaust history; not the headstones in the Jewish cemeteries or the artistic and intensively evocative memorials to the Holocaust that can be seen in and all around Berlin; not the visionary governmental buildings and sweeping architecture that symbolizes the rebirth of a troubled nation; not the intense conversations

with survivors, returnees, Russian immigrants, members of the large Turkish community, members of the professional classes and, especially, the brilliantly dedicated non-Jews who devote their lives to studying the Jewish people who once lived throughout Germany and contributed to its history, culture and society. No, there is nothing singular about my Adenauer experience. It is like a multi-paned window that has been opened on a world I thought I knew in some measure, but which I now understand I knew incompletely. It is a window that remains open for further study, insight and understanding. I am beholden to AJC for the opportunity to participate in the Adenauer Exchange program and wish to acknowledge the wisdom of those at AJC who helped create this powerful partnership for peace.

### Leonard Wien (2007)

The trip to Germany in October 2007 opened a door for me through which I have gone and will never be the same. I met Jews who have settled in freedom in Germany. In the place where the Holocaust began I found a government run by men of good will. I found a place where heroism might be defined as bringing Jewish life back to the very country which had tried to destroy it. I saw a raw kind of Jewish existence. Amid a place where Jews were isolated, deported and destroyed a new generation is going about its daily lives. The opportunity to see the resilience of the Jewish people and the ability of the German people to take different paths in one place are amazing.

I am grateful to the American Jewish Committee and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for making this series of trips possible. We can never forget what happened, but we can start a new relationship and enjoy the simple pleasures Germany's rebirth can afford us. The Jews who live in Germany need our help going forward and I sense the German people do as well. When Germany drove off and killed their Jewish citizens everyone lost. The return of a Jewish community in Germany has done something good for Germany and the Jewish people. I thank you and all who are involved in this program for making this possible.

### Allen Hyman (2008)

Our ten day immersion, to help us understand Germany, began with a stay at the Moevenpick Hotel in Hamburg. The reconstruction of the hotel was, for me, a metaphor of the entire experience. The modern building was built upon an old water tower. It was not what you would expect in a hotel. Walking up the steep ramp to get to the registration desk made me feel uneasy. The steel walls were oppressive. The sounds of my steps shattered the welcome. Was I in a hotel or a modern prison?

Ten days in Germany were similarly disquieting. Was I in a modern friendly country, or, was I in a place, temporarily transformed, but with a diabolical past? The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe expressed a comparable sense of disequilibrium. Nothing was quite what it seemed to be. Even Germany's iconic images are of defeat and regret. War memorials are everywhere; but most are to the victors and the victims; few are to the vanquished. Twisted steel sculpture, slanting vertical slabs of concrete in the heart of the city, wrenching facades, churches in ruin as reminders, everywhere symbols of a dark history and forlorn past. What is real and what is imagined? Most impressive was the memorial of the burning books, showing not flaming pages, but empty shelves. My eyes strained, searching through the distortion of thick glass in the pavement, looking for missing volumes. If only Kafka were alive; he could have written the definitive novel of this time and place.

So much of what you see, depends upon the eye of the beholder. Are you a young German, yearning to live a normal life without the burdens of the past; or are you a „survivor“ without a past; or an Oesten, not knowing whether it was better before or now; or a Muslim, not being from here, but no longer from there either, or an American tourist, an interested observer, just passing through?

Germany is Israel's best friend in Europe. Jews from the Soviet Bloc find a welcoming landscape. Synagogues are being built and reconstructed. Even the cemeteries are „alive“ with stories to tell, ranging from the

Portuguese expulsion to the holocaust. Will there be a thriving Jewish Community again in Germany or will time force acceptance, assimilation and eventual annihilation? Are the neo-nazis lurking just ahead to ambush the accommodation of Jews in Germany? No one knows. Vigilance... vigilance... These impressions could only have been gotten because of the outstanding program and staff of the AJC/ADENAUER EXCHANGE and especially from the wonderful camaraderie of the participants. I will be eternally grateful for having been given the opportunity to have this extraordinary experience.

Thank you.

### Jerome Ostrov (2008)

As with any transcendent experience, it is difficult to capsule one's impressions in a few words. But, here goes. First, I have never met a kinder and more competent mission leader than Eugene DuBow. Nor, have I ever met a more competent and informed guide than Heiner Sussebach. Together, they seemed to have a ready command of virtually any topic raised by any member of our group. And, opportunities for questions were plentiful. In a short eight-day span, we managed to navigate our way from the ravages of World War I, through the rise of the Nazi party, to the atrocities that took place in the name of the German people and the memorials that commemorate that most bestial party of history, to the rebuilding of German society after World War II, to the abhorrence of militarism that permeates German society today, to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reconstruction of the former East Germany, to Germany's role in NATO and the EU, to the current day German immigration issues, to the re-emergence of German Jewry, to the difficult path ahead for Jews who have immigrated to Germany from the former Soviet Union, to Germany's unique relationship to Israel and the complicated diplomatic plane on which the relationship is played out, to the complicated and ongoing struggle against Neo-Nazism. In each of these areas, we met thoughtful people, both German and Jewish, and were exposed to challenging ideas offered sincerely and genuinely. This is the meat of the experience – the ideas, controversies, contradictions and connections that surfaced almost by the hour. Add to this picture, the conflicting sensations of being in a place where man's barbarity once

saw no limits, but where, today, one feels completely secure in one's Jewish skin, and you have the indelible ingredients for a truly memorable and impressionable experience.

### Michael Srulovitz (2009)

I have had several life-changing experiences that involved Israel and my Jewish life. The Konrad Adenauer Exchange program that I participated in the summer of 2009 equaled my first visit to Israel with my family in the 80's. For the welfare of Jews around the world especially at this time that they live and grow in lands of their history is of the utmost importance. The significance of the relationship of Germany with Israel and Jewish people in the Diaspora is extremely important on many levels. The Adenauer Exchange educated me and expanded my awareness of that significance. I always think of these three concepts:

THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE PAST, RESPECT FOR THE PRESENT AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

My experience with the Konrad Adenauer Exchange realized all three.

May this Program and the strong relationship of The American Jewish Committee and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung continue for many more generations to come.

When the Chicago Chapter of The American Jewish Committee selected me for the program, I was honored, to say the least. But, I had no idea how much this would enhance my pride for being involved with AJC, the hard work and dedication to their mission by the Berlin office of AJC, my education of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the involvement with the KAS staff, the scope of work being done by the German Government on behalf of the Jewish community in Germany, and my respect for Gene DuBow, Heiner Sussebach, Ingrid Garwels and Deidre Berger. It was a true privilege to be involved with such a high caliber of people and institutions. I want to express my appreciation of friendship and respect that I have for my fellow participants. They made the experience even more special.

As we all navigate life in these difficult times, programs of dialogue like the Adenauer Exchange are even more significant and necessary.

### Ellen und Charles „Casey“ Cogut (2009)

Traveling with an AJC group as part of the KAS exchange program was an experience that could never be duplicated. To our way of thinking, what made the experience so much more than just a nice visit to Germany included: the preparation provided by Eugene DuBow, the extraordinary exposures to people, places, and institutions to which we might not have gained access, and the interesting dialogues, questions, commentaries and history that stimulated our thinking every single day of the journey. Without the skillful translations and added background information supplied by Heiner Sussebach, many of the dialogues would not have had such great depth and color.

I thought the home visit concept was an excellent one, as it added a somewhat less formal dimension to the total cultural exchange. Our hostess, Anne von Fallois, was particularly captivating and we were very disappointed that we were not able to coordinate a reciprocal visit when she came to the US last fall.

Thank you, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and AJC.

### Margot Leberberg (2009)

I was so impressed with the quality of the programs, the people and the relationships that have developed between the AJC and the German government officials. I was honored to be part of the delegation. The current culture of Germans towards the Jewish people exceeded all of my expectations. I thoroughly enjoyed the dinner at Karsten and family's home and was so happy to host four Adenauer exchange folks at my home this past September. My family has developed relationships that I hope continue well into future years. I would be honored to host exchange participants for dinner in the future and be part of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary trip. In fact, my interest in German-Jewish relations has increased to the point where I am now part of the AJC's diplomatic

outreach program for Germany. I look forward to learning and contributing to German-Jewish relations in the future.

### Bernie Goldberg (2009)

I was most impressed with the manner in which people from the Adenauer group arranged the program.

The visits to the various agencies and the presenters were most interesting. What impressed me most was how candid the answers were to some very „tough“ questions asked by the group. At no time did I ever get the feeling that the individuals were evasive or „sugar coating“ their answers. The „highlights“ of the visit for me were the visits to the military academy and meeting and speaking with General Bergmann, the Wannsee House, and seeing the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe. I revisit all of these experiences in my mind often – a most informative and pleasant trip! Thank you Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung! Perhaps I will be fortunate to visit again in the future.

### Buzz Warren (2009)

On the shores of Lake Wannsee outside Berlin sits a lovely villa in a quiet tree lined neighborhood. Upon entering the door, the serenity is quickly transformed into revulsion. In 1942, this was the site of the notorious Nazi conference where the “Final Solution for European Jewry” was determined. None of your prior understanding of the history prepares you for the visceral reaction.

I felt these feelings, in contradiction to others, while attending the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Exchange Program in Germany this summer. I saw the rebirth of the Jewish Community, the democracy and economic powerhouse that is today's Germany. I experienced the unique 30 year bilateral relationship between AJC and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. To be in Germany as a guest of the Foundation was a great opportunity to rededicate myself to the work of forgiveness and continuing to strengthen bridges of understanding between our peoples.

## Nanci Rands (2009)

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. provided an extraordinary program for our 2009 AJC exchange group. For me the indelible etching began in Hamburg... I heard heroic personal stories, often very quiet, presented by Germans who contributed to the post-war lives of many Jews.

In meetings with the military, leadership philosophy and fierce insistence on individual responsibility permeated the presentations. In other meetings, glimpses of governmental concern about security were addressed, often in the context of separation of investigation and enforcement.

Throughout the program there was a fundamental message: Never Again! Government officials, community leaders and informal personal visits all added to that message as did public museums, memorials and continuing historical research.

The Adenauer-AJC Program certainly sharpened my focus on German affairs. It afforded me a more nuanced understanding of Germany's position within the European Union, and very importantly, Germany's relationship with Israel and world-wide Jewry.

I will continue to share my Adenauer experience within the organizations that I serve and in my business and personal associations.

Thank you for the privilege of participating. Congratulations on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this exceptional program!

## Leslie Chatzinoff (2009)

My experience on the Adenauer Exchange Program was nothing short of extraordinary. I was so impressed with every person that we met and was very moved by many of the experiences that were shared with

us in the meetings. I learned so much about politics, education, the Jewish Community, the Military and the wonderful work that the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung does all over the world. I also feel very fortunate to have learned so much about the struggles and stories related to the reunification of Germany and how much has been accomplished in such a short period of time. When I share my experience with colleagues, family and friends, I find that I can't help but emphasize the commitment and dedication that I felt from so many of the people that we met. When the leaders from Germany came to New York, I was happy to host four of them for dinner at our home. It felt like an extension of the program as we were all together sharing our impressions and thoughts on various topics. I am so grateful to the KAS and to AJC for being selected to participate in this very special program.

EXPERIENCES OF  
GERMAN PARTICIPANTS

## INTRODUCTION

*Jens Paulus | Head of Team Europe / North America, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*

Five years ago the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee celebrated "25 years" of their exchange program. It was taken for granted that an anniversary like this, i.e. a quarter of a century marked by dialogue, understanding and trusting cooperation, has to be celebrated.

However, all stakeholders agreed that a ceremony alone would not be adequate. The responsible parties were rather preoccupied with the question: what is the benefit derived from the exchange program after all the years?

You will find the answers on the following pages. Former participants have written down their very personal experiences and impressions. Their reports are instances of unique visits paid to each other. Every visit left its specific mark on each participant. Lars Hänsel who was responsible for the exchange program five years ago and who is currently the head of the foundation's office in Jerusalem prefixed some introductory lines to the first edition of the participants' reports. Another five years have passed with another five visits on either side – we celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of "Adenauer exchange".

There is nothing I can add to the reflections of Lars Hänsel. All that has been added, however, are further reports of the years 2005 through 2009 plus a report about a journey of German and American KAS/AJC alumni to Israel.

## Gisela Behrmann (1982 & 1988)

### **DEBRIEFING ...**

Coming from Europe to the AJC  
 We first were looking for some sleep.  
 Instead of that, we were overwhelmed  
 By hearty welcomes, briefings and drinks.

That never stopped throughout our trip  
 So please forgive me, should I forget  
 To mention all we saw and felt,  
 heard and thought in this new world.

I can sum up no meaning of New York,  
 Where we became familiar with asking and talking  
 About human relations in many fields:  
 Ethnic, religious and social.

Bright speakers gave us the abstracts,  
 And by walking we got them into context.  
 Manhattan – beautiful, mighty, and cold –  
 Lower East Side – poor, orthodox, but creative.

The question that occupied the group  
 In different places on Fifth Avenue  
 Was simply this: how does one succeed  
 In an open society?

We continued our discovery  
 Politically in Washington, D.C.:  
 Are Jews Republicans or Democrats?  
 Nobody knew the answer exactly.

We listened to people, who complained  
That Reagan stopped the social train.  
What might we have felt,  
Living in luxury hotels?

Of course, such generosity  
Expressed true hospitality.  
Its highlights – who would deny this?  
Have been the evenings in private homes.

But let's come back to the issues of our trip.  
We became more familiar with Chicago  
By bussing through the neighborhoods:  
They integrate without losing their essential goods!

Do you remember the „Ethnic Model“?  
The patronage in political life?  
The „Lady“ rejecting all we learned?  
Compare her with Sherry, the fox president!

Yes, that is right, in Beverly Hills  
We hardly knew what to think.  
Imagine, to have Disneyland  
In our country – just for fun!

But the impressions of Beverly Hills  
Are somewhat deeper than I can explain.  
Meet the elders and the younger ones,  
Affected the feeling of everyone.

Besides, we were taught at universities  
That whether the movement of Jews' communities  
Are slight or substantial –  
They succeed!

Dear Bill, dear Dick, and all of you  
Who introduced us to the life of Jews,  
We now must leave your people.  
May all of you be blessed by God!

(1982)

## Beate Neuss (1982 & 1988)

### **EXPERIENCES WITH THE KAS/AJC PROGRAM**

There is no doubt: the 14 days that followed our arrival at New York's JFK airport in the spring of 1982 are among the most formative of my life. Never before had I felt so privileged and grateful that I was a former Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung scholarship holder. Indeed, it was because of my scholarship that I was subsequently invited to participate in the exchange. I also felt enormous gratitude towards the American Jewish Committee and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for their courageous commitment to reconciliation.

Setting aside my observations as a political scientist, I had always realized how serious the consequences of strained relations between citizens of different nations could be for both the political process and for the generations that come of age far removed from the political past. The AJC wished to have young participants born after 1945 – crucially, they were not to have been directly shaped by the period of National Socialism. It took courage to set up such a program and it takes a major commitment from both sides to keep it alive for a quarter of a century. This is yet another reason for me to be thankful, since the exchange program still performs important functions.

This was my first visit to the United States. The impressions were overwhelming: yes, the cars were incredibly big, the skyscrapers of New York City impressively beautiful. Yes, we also stood atop the World Trade Center and looked out at the Big Apple – a memory that came rushing back on September 11, 2001. But this was not what made our impressions so indelible and the trip so valuable. Our group, many of whom had never met any of the only 35,000 Jews living in Germany at the time, visited Jewish communities that were vibrant and completely integrated into the religious and ethnic pluralism of American society. More Jews lived in the United States than in Israel. They had made it – a visit to an exclusive, stylish and very "British" Chicago club and to an

equally elegant golf club in California demonstrated this as clearly as the home hospitalities we were invited to near Central Park and in the Pacific Palisades. All of this was part of an experience that was new to me.

America's Jews are an integral and enriching part of its society. Setting aside the immeasurable suffering that the Holocaust imposed on the victims, what a loss in terms of human potential for Germany to have driven out or killed its Jews! I couldn't help thinking about this while looking at the rich and diverse Jewish culture of the U.S. The program also gave us insight into the life of other ethnic communities that had also preserved their identities while being dedicated Americans. "There is no such thing as a melting pot" was a recurrent theme throughout our trip. What was missing from these examples of the American aphorism "in pluribus unum", however, was the German community. While a considerable percentage of immigrants into the U.S. had been Germans, they had become fully assimilated, which is one of the long-term consequences of the two world wars.

The most impressive and deeply moving emotional experience of the entire trip was our visit to a Jewish social welfare home in Los Angeles that cared for old, frail and poor Jews who had emigrated from Europe and had narrowly escaped Nazi persecutors and the extermination camps. We knew who we were going to talk to and felt anxious and uneasy. But when we started talking, our self-consciousness disappeared. Our Jewish hosts did not blame us, the young generation, for the past. But it was depressing to hear them talk about their younger years, sometimes in German or Yiddish. It was all the more surprising to see how openly they approached us. They showed a keen interest in Europe and their old hometowns. Does the house No. 112 in Munich's Schellingstraße still stand? What about my parents' house on Mozartstraße in Vienna? What does the Stachus in Munich look like nowadays? The enormous extent of war-time destruction seemed to amaze them, because they had such vivid memories of their homeland, albeit frozen in time.

The dining hall was simple, the guests had to clear their own tables. Of course, we cleared away the dishes of our elderly hosts as well. Some who were sitting at our table had tears in their eyes. I was very unsure of what was happening. Had we done something wrong? Had we hurt the

feelings of our Jewish hosts? The riddle was quickly solved. They were not hurt, only touched: never in their lives had they been waited on by Germans. It had been unimaginable for them since 1933 that Germans would lend them a hand. Maybe this event allowed us, the post-war generation, to experience a touch of the exclusion and humiliation that had already been inflicted on German Jews by the National Socialists before the worst harassment even started.

The hostility that many of the members of the organization 'Children of the Second Generation' showed us when we met them was as unexpected as the friendly welcome had been that we had received by the survivors. These younger Jews had avoided any contact with Germans until now, so we were the first Germans they had met. Their parents' wounds had left an imprint on their lives as well, but we often felt that we were being unfairly attacked – a new experience for which I was completely unprepared after I had been to Israel, where I had also talked to survivors. What was alarming was the lack of knowledge about post-war Germany. Again, it was obvious that there is nothing that can replace direct communication, talking to people face-to-face. The home hospitalities offered a wonderful opportunity for getting closer to each other cautiously, exchanging views, talking in a quiet atmosphere and carefully nourishing the tender plant of mutual understanding and the wish to understand.

Physically and mentally, these were exhausting but fascinating weeks. It was very helpful to have program officers like Bill Trosten and Eugene DuBow, who accompanied us throughout the trip, who answered our questions and shared our impressions with a great degree of responsiveness, empathy and warm-heartedness. Very often, we, the participants of only the second exchange trip, felt like icebreakers plying uncharted waters.

Whenever you meet people who have participated in this program, it doesn't take them long to express the view that the days as guests of the AJC have opened up new doors of understanding for them. And there is one other thing that I have learned from the trip: there are processes that can only be catalyzed by people meeting each other and patiently talking and listening to each other. Many of our Jewish partners, who had never thought of travelling to Germany, have now visited our country. Both sides had a chance to reevaluate their prejudices. This is

not only good for German-Jewish reconciliation, but rather it is also an indispensable asset for managing the strained transatlantic relationship.

## Georg Jarzembowski (1983 & 1988)

### **BETTER UNDERSTANDING ON BOTH SIDES THROUGH OPEN DISCUSSIONS**

The exchange program of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee left me with deep impressions of the remaining difficulties in relations between Germans and the American Jews. I am certain, however, that the conversations and discussions have led to a better understanding on both sides.

An important element of the exchange program is meeting the other side in their own cultural milieu. In this way we were able to have a look into the actual reality of the Jewish community in the United States. The hospitality that we experienced in the U.S. was impressive. This was even true throughout some very critical discussions with members of the Second Generation.

The fact that the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has always put together an interesting group of young people with very different professional backgrounds has been very beneficial to the program. In this way, we were able to analyze the official discussions among ourselves from our different perspectives.

This exchange program is still, decades after the Holocaust, of great importance for German-American-Jewish relations and should by all means be continued.

## Hans Werner Dahl (1985)

### **HUMANS FIND THE TRUTH TO BE REASONABLE**

I am writing this short, very personal reflection on the AJC program on November 9, 2004. 15 years ago I was returning to my solitary floor of the Foundation at around 11:00 p.m. after an evening event and knew nothing [about the fall of the Berlin wall, which took place on November 9, 1989]. One last glance at the ZDF news, and the world stood on its head. I have never, since the war, felt so much joy, sympathy, emotion, enthusiasm and anger at the "Gänsefleisch" types, the border patrolmen who checked our trunks as we crossed between West and East Berlin. I had never cried or called out Hallelujah as much as I did that night, and never watched Stereo-Berlin or talked on the phone with my wife as much as I did then.

Some of these feelings and sensations have always been present since Josef Thesing asked me in early 1985 to lead the KAS delegation to the AJC. I quickly got over my hesitation, but my worries whether I would be able to carry out this delicate leadership task remained. They remained until April 14, 1985, when I sat in the bus from Kennedy Airport to the Doral Inn Hotel next to Rita Blume. She sustained us day and night for an unforgettable 14 days. This confidence, this openness, this smoker's voice, this Blume was unique. She wrote to me at Christmas 1986, "Hans, are you anticipating a visit next year?" She was always thinking about the future.

In Washington, everything was about politics and the influence American Jews have in the government and administration. The hottest issue at the time was President Reagan's visit to the Bitburg soldiers' cemetery. At a brunch I heard Mr. Bookbinder saying, more or less, "When the President has a problem he calls me. When I have a problem I am put straight through to the President."

From Chicago, two unusual incidents stick in my mind. One was our group's meeting with the first black mayor, Harold Washington, a very likeable man, who refused to be considered a "representative" of the black community and went on to portrayed the party apparatus of the Democrats, "the machine," as corrupt, discriminatory and racist.

The second was an evening discussion about forgetting and forgiving with Rabbi Kaiman – I hope I remember his name correctly – which made a deep impression on me. In the end I was able to make the wonderful arguer reflect, but was not able to convince him. He was possessed by the truth. Helmut Kohl had given a speech on April 21, 1985 on the occasion of the liberation of the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen. According to Kaiman, it was "the best speech on concentration camps I ever read." The English translation of the speech had been printed in its entirety in the British *Times*, but the *New York Times* had concealed it altogether due to the preferences of its Jewish editors. He condemned the *Times'* breach of journalistic duty to an extent I would have hardly deemed possible.

Through Wolfgang Porzig, our man in Washington at the time, I was able to make this speech known by way of the German Embassy. A particular byproduct of this evening was that an employee of the German Embassy expressed the following about this subject: "Kohl may have held a speech there, but we don't need to spread around all information here." But the disposition of the lady soon changed.

The roughly twenty young scientists under my watch had two unexpectedly emotional encounters during the AJC program in Los Angeles. One was a meeting with senior citizens at Meals for the Elderly at the Israel Levin Center. Most of the old and very old people there were refugees and survivors of the Holocaust. Many suffered from mental disorders and had therefore not managed to reintegrate themselves into society and had lost their professions. Our visit had been announced, and therefore more people were there than usual, about 100. As leader of the group, I gave a short, difficult, but completely non-political speech, and then we distributed ourselves among the various tables to eat with one another. The mood was very reserved at first, but then fragmented German-English questions about our origins and professions began to pop up. Fragments of German and Yiddish poems could be heard, the talking became louder, and the ice had been broken. We were lavished

with thanks for our visit. I, the man from Brussels, sat across from a lovely married couple from Cologne who had survived in Brussels, and now wanted to know about everything, falling back into the old Cologne dialect. Tears come to my eyes to this day when I remember it. And then it was over and, after a round of hugs in the hall, many of the senior citizens accompanied us as far as the bus. A cheerful old gentleman played "Muss I denn, muss I denn zum Städtele hinaus" for us in farewell on the tiniest harmonica I have ever seen. It seemed as if the waving would never end.

There were more evocative moments to come during dinner with the organization Second Generation Holocaust Survivors. While my young group quickly struck up conversations with the other young people, my dinner partner remained firm and didn't want to talk. I avoided the subject of Germans and Jews altogether and learned that she had studied Romance languages and culture, had been to Italy and of course spoke French. Thanks to this coincidence, we spoke French the whole evening. By the end of the two hours she had learned everything about the German-French Treaty of Friendship and how the regular required consultations had created trust and had finally made friends out of two countries who had been archenemies for centuries. The ruse had worked. We embraced heartily in farewell. That was my most satisfying victory. The evening encounters with American Jews in their homes were doubtlessly some of the happiest experiences of the trip. The openness of the Americans, or just the atmosphere with Marcia Lazar and Alan Amos in Chicago, or with Maryanne and Richard "Dick" Weiss, or the Greenbergs in Beverly Hills was wonderful. With the Greenbergs, I met their brother Max Reimann, who had become famous in Hollywood but still spoke in a true Berlin accent, in a pure art deco house that Metro Goldwyn Mayer had built in the 20s for a Jewish film diva. I have never seen anything more beautiful.

This AJC/KAS trip set me to thinking about a lot of things that had always been on my mind: the music of Gustav Mahler, the literature of Heine, the painting of Chagal, and the Yiddish language that had connected all of Eastern Europe culturally and linguistically for centuries. I traveled through Israel for a few weeks and was in Yad Vashem and Auschwitz, and I suffer under the stupidity of many Germans and the narrow-mindedness of the Hohmanns and others.

As the head of Saxony's agency in Brussels I was able, against some resistance, to enlist the Leipziger Synagogue Choir to sing at the 60<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the Belgian Jews in the Yitzhak Rabin Center. It was a great success. Reconciliation is possible when one is willing.

In a Jewish newspaper in Brussels, I recently read a marriage request of an older Jewess: "ou est-il le vrai Mensch pour moi?" Where is he, the true Mensch for me? I was surprised at the use of the German word for human and asked my good French friend Karin Goldfeder about it. Yes, she told me, the true, good man and husband is called "le vrai mensch" among French speaking Jews.

The Jewish people of Europe have retained a word meaning 'good' and 'true' from the language of those who invented the terms unmensch and untermensch and used them to insult, humiliate and exterminate millions of people.

Ingeborg Bachmann was right. Humans find the truth to be reasonable.

## René G. Holzheimer (1986)

### 18 YEARS LATER

"Haven't heard from them in a while," was my first reaction when I received a letter regarding the KAS/AJC anniversary celebration. I was surprised that someone would take the time to ask about the memories of the participants of this exchange program. This led me to occupy myself once more with the goal of the exchange program, reaching a new form of understanding between Jews and Germans.

What stood out for me later during a sabbatical at Harvard University Medical School was the continuity and the sustainability of research.

Shouldn't this also apply to the relationship with the American Jewish Committee? And what role could be played by former participants? The AJC came up with a number of events for this short trip (April 6-19, 1986): New York and the AJC; Washington and Congress with discussions with Congressmen and high-ranking State Department officials (on the

subjects of political influence, coalitions, human rights and civil rights); Chicago and the ethnic characteristics of city politics and cohabitation; Los Angeles and the commitment to the needy, the Holocaust Museum and the media. In addition, we had dinner in private homes almost every evening. Many experiences and discoveries resulted from this contact with the hosts or through the discussions with AJC officials. Some events, such as the dinner with descendants of Holocaust survivors, lead to a spirited exchange of feelings within the group and remain unforgettable. The composition of our group was vital to the absorption and processing of new impressions. As was to be expected, politics and public organizations were particularly strongly represented, and as I remember it, this group was made up of unusually engaged and open minded people. I believe that these circumstances contributed significantly to the success of the trip.

Because I grew up in the United States and was also familiar with it from my time as a student at Stanford University, I was able to devote myself to the human side of the visit without being distracted by the attractions of the American cities. These personal conversations and experiences confirmed for me that this was not just about the past, as understandable as this desire would be, but that a piece of the future was also being built here. Eugene Dubow, at the time the director of the Community Relations Program, and Neil Sandberg, director of the Western Region of the AJC, didn't let these ties be broken. The incidents relating to the war in Iraq, which temporarily led to considerable misunderstandings and discord in the official relationship between the United States and Germany, showed me how important private personal contacts can be.

Some political insights that are still relevant today can be summarized here:

1. Even in the U.S., Jewish organizations (Hyman Bookbinder) do not rely on the political parties to protect their interests. Coalitions are built; "we know we can't walk alone, so we don't walk alone." Support is both given and expected in return; give and take.
2. At the time the Holocaust Museum was one of the most important objectives to keep the world from forgetting.

3. Ethnic groups in the U.S. are involved in other sectors such as human and civil rights. In the U.S., unlike in Germany, lobbying is an accepted means of making sure interests are heard and considered. At the time it was not completely clear where Germany fit into this system.

Surely after almost twenty years my impressions of the time must give way to a more detailed inspection.

Years later this trip still has an impact on my professional work and medical research. I have difficulty drawing a comparison to the current situation, where clinical research in Germany is under pressure from the tensions between economics, bureaucracy, case law and legislation. Also, it cannot be denied that medical research in Germany is suffering from the "brain drain," which began in the 1930s and is now more relevant than ever. I doubt that the suggestions currently brought forth from different sides will do much to resolve this problem. Money is not the main problem.

### Michael Mertes (1986 & 1988)

I had the privilege to go on two trips that were organized as part of the exchange program. These were highly instructive experiences for me that I still benefit from today. I am and will remain grateful to the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee for giving me this opportunity.

What fascinated me most was the diversity and vitality of American-Jewish life. While I had known, in theory, that the idea that American Jewry was a homogeneous community – which is a widespread assumption in Germany and Europe – was false, what I saw with my own eyes exceeded my expectations by far.

In the United States, the principle of the unified Jewish community, which is the model that has established itself, for understandable reasons, in the Federal Republic of Germany, does not apply. For me, this paradigm of a denominational diversity, including orthodox, conservative, liberal (reform) and reconstructionist synagogues was a revelation. Those who do not define their Jewish identity in religious terms, but in cultural-secular ones, can join one of the numerous American-Jewish organiza-

tions whose social and political agendas differ from each other. Of course, all organizations demonstrate solidarity with Israel's vital interests. Apart from this basic consensus, however, there are many different views – ranging from sharp criticism to full agreement – on the day-to-day policies pursued by Israeli governments.

Most American Jews that I met during the exchange program supported the Democratic Party. Of course, I also met some who were members of the Republican Party. The idea some Germans have of the Republican Party being the U.S. equivalent of our CDU/CSU and the Democratic Party that of the SPD, is an inadmissible projection of our German domestic political alignment to U.S. politics. In any case, our American hosts expressed a lot of sympathy for the CDU/CSU, especially an affinity for the economic policy, foreign policy and security policy concepts in the CDU/CSU's political platform. (In the 1990's, the popularity of the German Green Party within the AJC rose sharply. The Greens have, indeed, largely – if not completely – abandoned the anti-American fundamentalism they espoused in the early years of the party's existence and, as we all know from the Bible, one sinner come to repentance is worth 99 righteous men.)

I was deeply impressed by the patriotism of American Jews. Love of freedom and love of one's own country go hand in hand in the United States. Patriotism in the U.S. is not exclusive but inclusive. This is why, as I began to understand, the fact that the large majority of American Jews insist on the strict separation of church and state as demanded by the U.S. Constitution while, at the same time, the American flag flies in many synagogues, is not seen as a contradiction.

It is mainly Hyman Bookbinder, the Washington representative of the AJC, to whom I owe important insights into the ways in which American Jews get involved in the public debate on political issues and the political process itself. The image of a "Jewish lobby" which is widely held in Germany and Europe is wrong simply because it reproduces the stereotype of American Jewry being a homogeneous bloc. The opposite is true: none of the Jewish representatives in the U.S. capital can claim to speak on behalf of the entire American Jewish community. Lobbying for Jewish interests is a competitive, open and public process. Also, the need to build coalitions with other social groups keeps Jewish organizations from focusing too narrowly on their own agendas.

It is one of history's ironies that Erich Honecker believed, back in 1988/89, that the World Jewish Congress could help him get access to the White House and, eventually, help him save the GDR. This move simply reflects the extent to which he himself was caught up in anti-Semitic stereotypes. In its *Statement on German Unification*, adopted at the 84th Annual Meeting on May 17, 1990, the AJC came out in favor of German unity. Many fears that were expressed in this statement have proved to be unfounded. For example, at one point in the text, the question is raised: "Will a united Germany ever again flex its muscles and attack its neighbors as it has done twice in this century alone?" Today, fifteen years later, anxiety about Germany has been replaced by worry for Germany. The problem is no longer German obsession with power, but German unwillingness to use any of its power, especially in the fight against transnational terrorism.

The *Statement on German Unification* demonstrates that the AJC was much better informed about political and social conditions in Germany than many other American-Jewish organizations – possibly one of the positive effects of the exchange program. I noticed this repeatedly in the talks and meetings I had during the program. Thanks to their well above-average knowledge of Germany, back in 1990 AJC members and staff had confidence in the stability of our democratic institutions. They knew that neo-Nazi parties had no chance of getting elected to the German Parliament. They also realized that no country within the European Community (as the EU was still called then) maintained ties to Israel that were as close and as good as those of the Federal Republic. Only very rarely was I confronted with the prejudice that, in Germany, the Holocaust was no longer being actively remembered but was being allowed to fade from public awareness and that German students were not given sufficient information about it.

Getting a first-hand impression of how close and intense the interaction is between Jews and Christians in the United States is among the most important and most beautiful experiences I had during the program. For obvious reasons, it is not (yet) imaginable in Germany to have this form of ecumenical relations. I will never forget sharing sabbath dinners with families and attending services in a synagogue.

I had the privilege of meeting many impressive and wonderful people, some of whom I still count among my friends today. I cannot list all of

them here. I would just like to mention Howard Friedman, Theodore Ellenoff and Bruce Ramer, as representing some of AJC's Presidents. I have very fond memories of Marcia Lazar from Chicago, Mimi Alperin from New York City and of the hosts of various home hospitalities. Of the AJC staff, I would like to mention especially William Trosten, Marc Tanenbaum, Hyman Bookbinder, Eugene DuBow, Andrew Baker, Alan Mittleman and Geri Rozanski. My heartfelt thanks to all of them for helping me have an experience that has enriched my life enormously!

## Johannes von Thadden (1987)

The exchange program of the American Jewish Committee and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has had a lasting effect on my life, in small ways as well as large, and privately as well as professionally.

I pondered for a long time whether I could form the first sentence in a less lofty way, but in the end I decided that the truth should be told the way it is. The exchange program of 1987 was a gift, the rewards of which I still experience to this day.

As a personal example, I have the KAS and the AJC to thank that I met among the participants the priest who baptized my two sons, born in 1989 and 1991. He is still a good friend of mine. There are other former participants with whom I remain friends and whom I thank both for good advice at various points in my life and for good cooperation when our paths have crossed again. Stephan Eisel, for example, is largely to "blame" that much later my professional path led me to be Assistant Secretary General of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in 2003 and to become Director of the CDU in 2004. My image of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung was influenced in a positive way during the exchange, something that was later confirmed while I was an employee. I also have this trip to thank that I found my way back to direct participation in the CDU, the party in which Konrad Adenauer broke new ground by beginning a new relationship to Israel and Jews throughout the world.

Rabbi Alan Mittleman, who accompanied our group throughout the trip, did not just introduce us to the diversity within the AJC, Jewish life in the United States and Jewish beliefs, but also built bridges lasting well be-

yond the two-week trip. From the outset Bill Trosten made it easy for us to feel not just like guests of the AJC but also to feel like welcome new friends who were truly curious about our American hosts. He helped me to lose the fear that we Germans would always be viewed with suspicion no matter where we went. Eugene DuBow, through his pep and enthusiasm for the program, set a contagious example of what people can really accomplish in this world when they set their minds to it. When I met Eugene DuBow again in 2003 at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, not only did he appear unchanged, but he still possessed the same flame of someone who strongly believes in his work.

The home hospitalities of the program made a great impression on me. These people opened their homes to strangers and shared with them their lives, their thoughts and their friends. I still have very vivid memories of these hours and have carried them with me in my life. Because of this experience I later developed my own home hospitality program for young diplomats from Central and Eastern Europe who came to Bonn for education after the fall of the Iron Curtain. In this way the hospitality of the Jewish Americans was transported to other parts of the world.

Does all this belong to the goals of the exchange program? Shouldn't one begin with all the interesting and sometimes perplexing experiences of the trip? Is it ungrateful to the organizers and initiators, both volunteer and professional? I don't think so. I hope that these examples show how vivid the fruits of this exchange program can be. And this is exactly what distinguishes this program.

AJC and KAS have given me a glimpse into the Jewish world of the United States and, at the same time, sharpened my view of Jewish life and fortune everywhere. I was very moved by conversations over lunch with people in a Jewish nursing home in Los Angeles, among them some poor Jews. I was shaken by a conversation with a survivor of Auschwitz, but I was also thankful for the openness and friendliness of this lady and the dignified way she engaged me. The meeting with the group "Second Generation Holocaust Survivors" was a sharp contrast. Although I understand how much the lives of the descendents of the victims of German atrocities have been shaped and burdened with this experience, I found the accusations aimed at us today to be unjust. We are not "second generation perpetrators," but rather people who bare the responsibility for a successful future. Neither during this trip nor during other encoun-

ters with Jews in Germany, the United States or Israel have I ever experienced such direct confrontation. On the contrary, I thank my positive experiences in the AJC group in the United States for many more positive contacts and experiences with other Jews.

My interest in Christian-Jewish dialogue and in German-Jewish-American dialogue was roused during the trip and continues to this day. I was able to indulge this interest later when, thanks to the support of the German Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and several businesses, I was able to invite a group of Jewish-American businessmen to Germany and show them around for a week to give them an impression of Germany today. We also organized home hospitalities and experienced how these private encounters made the deepest impressions.

"The days in the United States were some of the most intense of my life. The initiators of this program can only be congratulated on the idea of this exchange. This trip far exceeded my expectations." These are the first sentences of my thank you letter to the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung after returning to Germany. Today my opinion is even more positive. I hope that in the future many Jewish Americans and Germans will have the good fortune to participate in this program. I wish all the best to those who, through their hard work and dedication, ensure that this program continues.

"I do hope that we will meet again in Germany as well." So ended the first letter I received from Alan Mittleman after the trip, and herein lies the deeper meaning of the efforts of the American Jewish Committee and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

## Regina Görner (1987)

My participation in a trip to the USA at the invitation of the American Jewish Committee in early 1987 is still one of the experiences I look back on most fondly. At the time I was the personal assistant to Rita Süßmuth, Federal Minister for Youth, Family, Women and Health. To this day I still look back with horror on my stuttering whenever I had to make introductions in English. After the trip the language flowed smoothly over my lips, further evidence of the huge number of people we conversed with in the USA.

It was my first time in America. I was curious about the country and the people and eager to escape my strenuous work for a few days. But the trip did not provide time for recuperation. The appointments were too close together, and the tension of the discussions had an impact on me.

I had never dealt with Judaism in particular, but as a historian I of course had my own view of the past and present of German-Jewish and German-American relations. The history of mindsets was one of my focuses during college and subsequently became my research project. The sociology of organizations was also one of my hobbies in the social sciences. The trip's varied program satisfied these interests by confronting us with the different aspects of organized and non-organized Jewish life in the USA.

I came to understand a lot during the trip, not least of which was the carefully selected introduction to Judaism. The fact that I also learned about America from the Jewish perspective also had a certain appeal. Even though the evenings in Jewish households from many different levels of society were only short encounters, they made a lasting impression on me. They were experiences one could never have as a tourist. To this day I have the sense that I was able to see the country at least partly from an inside perspective in a way that I was never able to in later trips.

Only once did I have the chance to say thank you by inviting participants on a return visit into my own home. I pondered for days what I could prepare that would allow visitors who prefer a kosher diet to experience a little bit of German cooking. My solution: *Rheinischer Sauerbraten*, the first I had ever cooked in my life. I invited several friends of mine and it was a long night of intensive discussion with much laughter.

I was especially thankful to the AJC/KAS Program the day I flew to Israel at the head of a DGB delegation whose mission it was to convey the solidarity of German labor unions to the labor union umbrella organization Histadrut during the Gulf War. I thank the trip to the USA and the insights I gained there for the fact that I was later able to assist in relaxing tensions in German-Israeli labor relations.

There was something else I gained from the trip: friendships, which to this day are noticeably stronger than what one would normally associate with travel companions. The many earnest and difficult discussions in the USA caused us to divulge more to each other than one would normally dare to do with fleeting acquaintances. For this reason things could not go on afterwards as if nothing had happened. That alone is reason enough to be thankful for the encounters the KAS/AJC cooperation made possible.

I wish that many other young people could have such an experience. It would also interest me to know whether there are as many people in other groups who have met up again later in as many different capacities. This speaks for the talent of those who assembled our group. My compliments!

### Klaus Mertes SJ (1987)

I took part in the exchange program of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee in early 1987. I had just finished my theology studies in Frankfurt and had been ordained as a priest. The program introduced me to a world totally unknown to me – the United States and American Judaism, New York, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles. When the plane landed in Frankfurt again two weeks later I had gathered a whole world of experiences, encounters and new friendships that have lasted to this day.

The discussions with the representatives of the AJC always returned to the question of the Holocaust and its singularity. There was a controversy among historians at the time in response to an article claiming the Holocaust was simply a reaction to the atrocities committed by Stalin, rather than an original act in itself. This debate was assessed differently by our Jewish hosts than by me. They saw it as a new attempt in Germany to play down the crimes of the Nazis. Here I encountered for the first time the American-Jewish perspective on debates in Germany. The discussions with members of the "second generation" in Los Angeles were also filled with different perspectives and experiences. The question "What did your father do during the war?" sounded different and ominous out of the mouth of a second generation Jew. I will never forget the tension and the subsequent feeling of relief when the encounter went well.

With my theological background, I was familiar with and interested in the question of Jewish-Christian dialogue. It was hard for me to deal with the fact that, with one exception, I found few points of contact for theological discussions among the people I met from the AJC. I noticed this deficit all the more after I attended a Catholic Sunday service in a Washington community, where I encountered for the first time the religiosity and ardency of the Americans. Some other observations, including the television sermons, made me aware for the first time that there is a fundamental difference between the United States and Europe: the U.S. is a religious country. This made the question of the religious identity of the American Jews all the more urgent for me.

I found one clue under the subject of Israel. These discussions were for me perhaps the most interesting and revealing of all the conversations I had with the partners of the AJC. I discovered among these people a true American identity. They were American Jews in the full sense of the word – patriots who loved their country. America has no history of Jewish pogroms or genocide, as we heard again and again. What a difference compared to Europe! At the same time, another question that was raised was, “How can I be Jewish and not live in Israel?” This was a question that the younger generation of the AJC asked more urgently than the older generation. The important insight that I took away from this difficult inner conflict within American Judaism was that Israel will always remain a central part of American politics.

To this day I refer back to the experiences and the impressions gathered from the discussions of the exchange program between the KAS and AJC. In the past 17 years some of the parameters of political consciousness in Europe have changed. During the 1990s genocide in Europe has again become a horrible reality, religion has again become an important subject of politics (even in Europe) and the European impression of Israel has changed due to the radicalization of Israeli politics. Today I would gladly seek out discussions with the same people from the AJC in order to better understand what new perspectives have unfolded for them on these three major topics: the Holocaust, the relationship between religion and politics, and the relationship to Israel.

## Peter-Andreas Brand (1990)

### **STIFTUNG BEGEGNUNGSSTÄTTE GOLLWITZ – A MEETING PLACE FOR JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH YOUTH**

In summer 1990 I was invited to participate in the KAS/AJC program in New York, Washington and Boston. This was the first group of participants from Germany after unification. Thus, we not only met our American hosts from the AJC, but we were also able to meet Germans from the other side of the wall that had been dividing Germany for so long. At the time, we knew little about the problems Germany would have to face in the years to come, be it the drastically underestimated economic crisis of the former GDR, rising unemployment or resurgent xenophobia and anti-Semitism in all parts of the unified Germany.

It was in 1997 when a right-wing extremist party gained some 13 % of the vote in the regional state of Saxony-Anhalt, the state with the smallest foreign population in Germany, purely on the grounds of xenophobic slogans. Having spent some 6 years in England between 1991 and 1997, I felt ashamed when I had to witness a series of violent acts directed at foreigners and Jewish cemeteries and institutions in Germany. Certainly at least partly as a result of my participation in the KAS/AJC program, it was obvious to me that the fight against all appearances of anti-Semitism was as necessary as it has been in the past, probably even more so.

Therefore, together with a number of friends, we established the foundation „Stiftung Begegnungsstätte Gollwitz“ in order to rebuild the old manor-house as a meeting place for Jewish and non-Jewish youth. One of the reasons for the success of extremist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic groups in the new federal states is undoubtedly a lack of perspective, particularly in rural areas. Political groupings that exploit people's frustrations win easy victories in areas where efforts to create jobs have not borne direct fruits and villages decay for a lack of renovation funds.

This realization inspired us to consider renovating one of the many manor houses available in Brandenburg and establishing the meeting center there.

Although much energy is devoted to discussions about memorials, only by creating opportunities for interaction can we fulfil our duty to ensure that the seeds of anti-Semitism and xenophobia do not fall on fertile ground in Germany. It is one of the consequences of the Holocaust that non-Jewish Germans have very little opportunity to meet and interact with Jews in Germany nowadays. The only perceptible sign of Jewish life in Germany today is in the activities of the official representatives of the Jewish community. This may be why, in the past few years, extremists have found it so easy to attract supporters in the new federal states. We, therefore, want to make Jewish life more visible in Germany. The concept of the center we have founded adds a new element to the various existing initiatives devoted to furthering understanding between people of different beliefs or religions.

We envisage school and vocational school classes, youth groups, groups from associations and clubs, as well as teachers and individuals from across Germany participating in week-long seminars. The seminars would involve meeting students from Israel, the United Kingdom and America; Holocaust survivors; German-Jewish adults, youth groups and official representatives of the Jewish community in Germany; and politicians, diplomats and figures from domestic and international public life. In addition, there would be visits to political and religious institutions in Brandenburg and Berlin, particularly the myriad memorials and museums.

We are still in the process of raising the funds for this task, but are hopeful that we will be able to finalize the renovation of the building by 2007.

### Karl-Michael Danzer (1992)

On the afternoon of February 5th, 1992 Dr. Bernhard Vogel of the Thuringian Regional Parliament was elected Minister President of Thuringia. A few days later he asked me if I had ever been to America. I answered, "How? When?" During the GDR this had never been a possibility for me.

"Do you want to go?" was his second question, and I said, "If I had the opportunity, I would love to go to America." "Then you can participate in an information exchange to the U.S. with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee from late April to early May." I was delighted and didn't quite know what to think.

A letter from a representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1992 confirmed the trip to America. The introductory discussion took place on April 26<sup>th</sup> in the hotel at the Kennedy Bridge in Bonn, and on April 27<sup>th</sup> we traveled together to Frankfurt Airport. Flight LH 450 took off at 10:40 am without delay, and at 1:05 pm we landed in Los Angeles. I set foot on American soil with my passport from the former GDR. All of my fellow travelers went through the passport control without a problem. As the immigration official saw my passport, she was astonished. She had never seen one like it before. "Where are you from?" she asked. "I'm from Germany," I answered. This isn't a German passport, translated Dr. Wahlers, who had hurried over. It took about 20 minutes before Dr. Wahlers could clear up all of the confusion. All the other delegates were waiting for me in the airport foyer, where I was heartily greeted by a Rabbi. Afterwards we traveled to the hotel and our first discussion took place that evening.

Our partner in conversation showed great interest on the development of the new East German states. How did it used to be, what had changed, and what would continue to change? At this point I would like to compliment the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung on prudently inviting not only participants from West Germany, but also from the former East Germany as well. What made a great impression on me was the reception at the city hall, where we were given a letter from Mayor Tom Bradley. Unfortunately he was unable to receive us himself because the verdict in the Rodney King case had just been reached. I have never seen such a crowd of reporters before in my life. The policemen had been acquitted, setting off an outcry from angry demonstrators. The verdict was followed shortly by burning streets and demonstrations.

The next morning we flew to New York, seeing the layer of smog hovering over Los Angeles from above. That evening, after our arrival in New York, we visited the Empire State Building. We spent the night in the hotel across from the Waldorf Astoria, where Konrad Adenauer and Ben Gurion met in the 1950s.

Our discussions were accompanied by the Rodney King verdict and they were even partially interrupted for security reasons. After our stay in New York, we continued on to Washington. Unbelievable as it felt at first, I stood in front of the White House and was invited to lunch in the Capitol, and I was and am thankful for the peaceful revolution of 1989.

Many thanks to the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and to Dr. Bernhard Vogel for keeping me in mind. Many thanks to Dr. Wahlers for the support throughout the entire trip – a trip which remains one of my lasting memories.

## Corinna Franz (1995)

### „THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD“

As I had primarily focused on France and German-French relations, the New World was strange to me in more than just the geographical sense. As a doctoral candidate in history focusing on Jewish religion and tradition, I was somewhat familiar with the subject of the exchange, but this knowledge was only from books. I therefore found the personal encounters with Jewish life to be the most important and lasting experiences of the program. The discussions with our hosts returned again and again to the topic of how desirable and, at the same time, how difficult it is to confront the events of the past consciously and impartially.

In the context of this charged and strained contact with one another, I was especially affected by two incidents during the trip. The first took place outside of the official program. On our first day, after returning from Ellis Island and our tour through the Lower East Side, we were given the afternoon off. I made my way to the Guggenheim Museum, but too late. It was already closed when I arrived. Disappointed, I boarded the next bus going south and studied the city map looking for a new destination. An old man detected my origin unerringly and addressed me. My loquacious fellow passenger told me that he had recently been in Bad Harzburg at the invitation of the city. I innocently asked if he had liked it. No, came the brusque answer; he was sorry, but he couldn't understand how anyone could live in Germany. He explained that he had been born in Bad Harzburg and had emigrated with his parents. After the

end of the war he had returned to Germany to work as an interpreter at the Nuremberg War Criminal Tribunals. There, he was unable to endure what he had to see and hear, and he quit after only two weeks. What surprised me the most was the atmosphere of the conversation. In light of such a decisive experience, bitterness and accusation were to be expected. But neither resonated, and my answer came out easily. I made it understood that I regretted his verdict, but rather than attempting to change his opinion, I wanted to respect his view of things. In return, I asked him to understand that Germany was the country in which I had grown up, in which I felt at home and whose language I spoke. My views were immediately accepted. In a relaxed atmosphere of "agreeing to disagree" we exchanged a few more sentences before our short trip together ended. I sat there in the bus and was astounded by how simple German-Jewish encounters could be.

In contrast, an event at the end of our trip had an unpleasant effect on me. After a tour of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, our group met for a discussion with one of the museum employees. The pictures from the past were continuing to affect us, and we stood there in introverted silence. The museum representative took this as an opportunity to mock the German shock which always confronted him on such occasions. Should we have been laughing and joking? In any case, I now found lacking all the respect that was still strong in my memory from the chance encounter in New York.

Both events show how near to and, yet, so far we are from a normal relationship between Germans and Jews. But it could be that this insight is a step in the right direction.

Ellen Presser (1998)

**IN SEARCH OF NORMALCY: A TRIP TO THE USA  
WITH THE KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG**

*(First published in „Illustrierte Neue Welt“ (Vienna), No. 1/2, January / February 1999.)*

“Frauleins,” Krauts and movie villains who speak with a German accent – these clichés no longer color the image of Germans in the American consciousness. But that does not mean that the Nazi past no longer has an effect on the view of Germany in the United States.

For eighteen years the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has worked to counteract these negative associations. In an exchange program with the American Jewish Committee (AJC), eleven representatives from politics, publishing, culture and business were sent on a trip from the seat of government in Washington to the cultural melting pot of New York by way of the provincial metropolis Cleveland. “Dialog and Understanding” was the goal of the nine-day trip, in accordance with Konrad Adenauer’s own demand for “normalcy in relation to the Jewish people.”

This aspiration has meanwhile taken on a paradoxical character. It appears to be easier to take a detour by way of America in order to give Germany a glimpse of Judaism today. Of the 80 million people in Germany, only 70,000 are Jews.<sup>1</sup>

I was the only Jewish member of our group. For many this was their first informal encounter with a Jew, side by side in the airplane, at the breakfast table and on sight-seeing tours. I learned from the daily newspaper *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, which interviewed all the participants in Cleveland, that this was an experience worth mentioning. An employee of the State Department admitted to the journalist, “The first German Jew I ever met in my life was in our group here.” Do I sense here polite reserve, trepidation and deliberate choice of words, or is this my own bias showing through?

What was promised was a “view of America through Jewish eyes.” This was determined by the local organizational team that lead us through the rooms of the American Jewish Committee, the State Department and the Ministry of Agriculture. The air-conditioning is running at full force, as is the densely packed sight-seeing program. Sometimes it is almost too much of a good thing. We are taught in depth about Jewish life in the United States, none of which can be carried over into German proportions. 2.2 % of the American population, some six million people, is of Jewish descent. The Rabbi Andrew Baker, director of the European Department of the AJC, explains that Jewish identity is articulated not just through religious affiliation, but also ethnically, socially or just emotionally. Out of the whole spectrum of Jewish organizations we learn only about the American Jewish Committee. The American Jewish Congress, B’nai B’rith and the Anti-Defamation League are hardly mentioned. But the existence of this variety in America is recognized: “When Ignatz Bubis speaks,” says Baker, “we hear a representative voice for all Jews in Germany.”<sup>2</sup> His colleague Jason Isaacson, responsible for international relations, confirms, “Jews in America are not a monolithic block!” Not in other places either, I want to add, as he continues, “our interests are always American.” Such readiness to identify with the nation has been thoroughly lacking from Jews in Germany since the Nazi era.

Religiously, Jews in America are organized in a variety of synagogues and congregations, all independent from each other. But as Steven Bayme from the New York office of the AJC claims, “the price for our successful life in America is high” because it is accompanied by the loss of Jewish values. “We are a people of the book. The question is, what book.” A rate of mixed marriages of over 50 %, the “December dilemma” of many families between Christmas tree and Chanukah lights, a negative growth rate of 1.8 children per family in the past 35 years and Jews’ lack of knowledge of their own religion depresses the 48-year-old Boston native. His boss David A. Harris deals more with the political discourse. He has faith in cooperation, stating, “The times are working in favor of German-American relations.” But he does not hesitate with criticism: “Germany lets itself be led around by Iran, gambles away Turkey’s accession to the European Union and the German chancellor has so frowned on the negotiations over the compensation payments to the last Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe that he stayed away from the opening of the AJC office in Berlin in February.”

Negative clichés are also discussed, but even better, what is said can also be contradicted and corrected. The atmosphere is restrained but trusting. We are far removed from the classic image of a German travel group with similar opinions on politics and favorite types of beer. Our biographies and attitudes are simply too different. The trip offers a concrete experience of “what it means to live out ethnic identities in a multicultural society.”

Minister of Agriculture Daniel R. Glickman, born in Wichita, Kansas in 1944, claims that his Jewish faith is not a problem at all: “Bill Clinton is truly blind to color and religion.”<sup>3</sup> The oft-cited “Jewish influence” emerges as the result of diligent public relations and intensive lobbying for American interests that may or may not affect Jews.

The Irish, Poles and Italians, as well as the Jews, were considered by Anglo-Saxons to be their own “races” at the time of their immigration, as ridiculous as that may seem. Time changes the assessment of oneself as well as of others. The change of preferred terms from Negro to colored to black and finally to African-American is a good example. “Today,” maintains John Kromikowski, whose name betrays his Polish Catholic origin, “the American identity is pluralistic. Not reduced to Miss Virginia or the Marlboro Man.”

One theory, according to which “immigrants become the most creative, hard-working and innovative members of society,” proves to be true during our visit to the steel industry metropolis of Cleveland. The Belle-faire Jewish Children’s Bureau, which we visited along with a number of other efficient organizations, is the largest public welfare organization in Ohio and the fifth largest in the United States. It has long since ceased to be solely responsible for Cleveland’s 80,000 Jews. Marty Plax, university instructor and local representative of the AJC, is obviously proud to introduce such a flourishing Jewish community. Its founders came to New York through Ellis Island, as did the ancestors of 40 percent of Americans. In addition, every fourth American is of German heritage.

We are all impressed by the overwhelming hospitality and the commitment that holds everything in place. Mixed feelings arose only rarely, such as during the visit to the Holocaust Museum in Washington. The reason is apparent but was not openly mentioned, let alone discussed. As a young historian continuously lamented that one could almost believe

“we Germans have forgotten the past,” a hopeful member of the CDU pointed out that “the Germany of today should not be thrown in with the past.” No one does that. But special empathy is needed to muster understanding for Americans who to this day shy away from buying German products.

- 1| *Due to the immigration of refugees from the CIS states, this number is changing. By Dec. 31, 2003 the Jewish community in Germany had reached 102,742 members.*
- 2| *Ignatz Bubis (1927-1999) was the president of the Central Consistory of Jews in Germany from 1992 to 1999.*
- 3| *Bill Clinton was President of the United States of America from 1993 to 2001.*

## Frank Spengler (1997 & 1998 & 1999)

### AJC GOES LOCAL

Over the course of three years I worked in the main office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung coordinating the collaboration with the AJC. The annual exchange programs were the foundation of this cooperation. They were carried out with great diligence and personal commitment by the many people both directly and indirectly involved.

Two goals of the Germany Program were of paramount importance: our Jewish guests were to receive an authentic impression of the new Germany and be able to carry out detailed discussions with people on all levels. “Mixing the bodies,” as Eugene DuBow used to say.

Arranging meetings with high-ranking figures from politics and society in Bonn, Berlin and the regional capitols was seldom a problem. These representatives portrayed the reconciliation with the German past as both routine and credible. They spoke to the intellect of the Americans, often convincingly. But could they open the hearts of our guests in this manner? Would all arguments sound too perfect to our American friends? Wasn’t much of it a contradiction with their deep-seated preconceptions of the Germans? How did the majority of the German population actually act and think in their own environment, in their cities and villages?

According to the maxim "all politics is local," we wanted to show our guests how Germany was dealing with its past and the reconciliation with the Jewish people on a community level. I chose Frielendorf, my place of residence, and set out to discover the vestiges of Jewish heritage in my community. On the one hand, I was ashamed at how little I knew about how my community had striven to come to terms with the past, but on the other hand, I am proud today of my fellow citizens' many courageous initiatives in light of a difficult challenge.

First the facts had to be collected. Today Frielendorf is part of a large township in northern Hessen. To my great surprise I discovered that before World War Two 10% of the population in the current district of Frielendorf was Jewish. Until 1933 there was even a Jewish school with over 50 children, housed in a school building now occupied by the fire department. The Jewish community was an inherent part of public life. All of this is impressively documented in two substantial volumes that a former classmate of mine composed on behalf of the district administration. I learned more about the Jewish history of the district from my niece, who compiled extensive information on the former Jewish citizens of the district for a confirmation group project entitled "Preservation of History."

There is also a Jewish cemetery a short distance outside of town, still well cared-for despite the fact that the last documented burial was in 1937. The federal state of Hessen even gives a subsidy for the care of the cemetery and ensures that the funds are used correctly. In the middle of this cemetery stands a war memorial: "To our heroes who fell in the World War, 1914-1918," in memory of Jewish soldiers who gave their lives for Germany. Entry to the cemetery is possible at any time except on the Sabbath. The key can be obtained from the local administration. Even today it is often requested by relatives of dead Jewish citizens.

The former synagogue in the center of the city has a special history. It was long ignored as a place of memory, but in 1988, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht, a memorial plaque was hung there. It gives the former house of God and its current occupant, a shop selling curtains and draperies, some of its old honor back. The owner of the shop explained later that the old synagogue door was still in his attic. He couldn't explain why it was still there and hadn't been removed long ago.

But too much of the old Jewish past has already been destroyed and for that reason the little that still exists should be better preserved.

It was anything but easy for the initiators of the 1st annual hour of remembrance of the Kristallnacht to organize such a function. The recently healed wounds of the past threatened to break open again. The event encountered some resistance in the area, but in the end 200 people participated in the memorial service in front of the former synagogue.

These were the basic conditions for the program event entitled "A Half Day of Dialog for AJC Representatives in a Small Hessian Town." The mayor received our American guests in the Town Hall and showed them around his community. He explained the history of almost every house in the center of town, including the Jewish history. During a shared lunch in the "Hunting Room" of the local guesthouse, the guests were still unsure whether they should be more impressed by the Mayor or by the extensive collection of antlers. But this changed quickly as the local politician explained in simple words how the reconciliation with the Jewish people had been approached on a local level, beyond the concerns of the international media.

Surely, according to the mayor, much could have been accomplished in the past few years. There was a now an annual memorial celebration on November 9, organized by the local Christian church, but too few people had been attending. The "Common Word" of the political community of Frielendorf and the church community, compiled on the occasion of the first memorial celebration, is in fact a considerable and credible, if belated, recognition of the wrongs committed. This joint declaration could even enrich some official memorial celebrations for the victims of National Socialism in Berlin.

But the mayor explained that he had been unable to fulfill his intention to restore the old name of the former Jewish avenue because of opposition in the local council and even in his own local SPD chapter. He had even been threatened more than once for not wanting to let the old history rest. But the community would have to do more, especially for the former Jewish citizens. He would therefore attempt to convince the local council to extend an invitation to the few surviving Frielendorf Jews to the 750th anniversary celebration at the community's expense. Some

of them did indeed except the invitation. But that is another story and deserves its own article.

In farewell, the mayor offered a handshake to each of our guests as a personal gesture of reconciliation – a strong, honest and binding handshake, just like those formerly used by the many Jewish cattle dealers to seal their sales. It was warmly received.

## Marianne Kneuer (2000)

### **DUAL EXPERIENCE WITH THE AJC/KAS PROGRAM**

When, in June 2000, I was part of the twentieth German group to travel to the United States on the exchange program, I knew very little about Jewish life in the U.S. I had only read some novels by Jewish authors and had seen orthodox Jews on New York's 42<sup>nd</sup> Street – that was the extent of my knowledge. One of the first insights I gained was that there was no such thing as a homogeneous Jewish community in the U.S. As the AJC team in Washington, DC explained to us, the Jewish community in the U.S. is diverse and includes many different groups and interests. This was also reflected in our discussions with representatives of various Jewish advocacy groups, a sample of the more than 260 such organizations that exist in the U.S. Apart from having the chance to delve into this subject for the first time, I think that for me as a political scientist the Washington part of our trip was particularly instructive, not just because we met high-ranking people at the Congress, the State Department, etc. We also realized that the Jewish community, despite its small share of the U.S. population (about 2.5%), is not just very active politically but also very influential.

Bursting with lots of new information and intellectual insights, we were exposed to a completely different level of Jewish life when we visited the local chapters in Miami and Boca Raton, Florida. Here, we experienced the everyday life of a local Jewish community. Meeting members of the community face-to-face, especially during the home hospitalities, gave us an idea of what it means to be Jewish and how Judaism co-exists with other religions and cultures. I met a mother, for example, who wants her daughters to marry Jewish men, which often turns out to be difficult. At a

community center we saw how Jewish children were educated according to their faith. But we also talked to young adults who no longer wanted to follow the rites as strictly as their parents expect them to.

More and more, we were immersed in a different way of thinking and a different world of emotions. But the effect that this had on me was not just that the initially one-dimensional image of Jewish life became more differentiated. It also seemed to me that the more I learned, the more questions I had and the more I felt the need to keep probing. This became especially obvious during the sabbath festivities, which, to me, were a highlight of all the direct personal impressions we gained. The sabbath ceremony and the subsequent feast organized by the community were very intense experiences. Questions kept cropping up in my mind which were answered by the truly patient rabbi.

Much of what we saw and experienced required some time to be absorbed and digested. This was not only true for our visit to the Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C. The Holocaust memorial in Miami demonstrated that a good, often very simple didactic concept can turn a visit to a memorial that, at first sight, seems to be mainly of architectural interest into a moving and immensely powerful experience: talking to a survivor was an experience that is hard to put into words. Looking back on it, I think that such a face-to-face encounter can leave a more lasting impression than a museum.

After this intense hands-on part of our trip, during which the German participants also had lively debates and discussions among themselves, the program was topped off with a visit to the AJC National Office in New York City. Here, we were all clearly fascinated by David Harris who especially enlightened us with his discussion of the political dimension of the Jewish community in the U.S.

I returned to Germany full of powerful impressions I had only partially digested. But I did not want to leave it at that. I wanted to do something. I also realized after the trip what a wonderful thing this AJC/KAS exchange program really was. I somehow wanted to stay involved. And that is why in the same year, in September 2000, I volunteered to become a program officer accompanying an American AJC group on its trip to Germany. This was a completely different experience, whose implications I undoubtedly underestimated and whose intensity even surpassed

what we had witnessed and learned during our trip to the U.S. Most of the American participants were older, and quite a few, especially among the younger members of the group, were so full of skepticism and resentment that I initially feared that no open communication and interaction could develop.

It was indeed a difficult process for the group to come to terms with the realization of being in Germany. Also, they had to get used to me, just as I had to adjust to them. On the second day of the trip, one of the women in the group suddenly asked me about the history of my family. And I told her. After I had opened up, all the others did, too. The ice had been broken. Every passing day now became an enriching experience, including the talks I had with each individual member of the group, each with their own personal ties to Germany, and a broadening of my mind with regard to Jewish life in today's Germany, which I had known almost as little about as about Jewish life in the U.S. Therefore, the meetings we had with representatives of the Jewish communities in Berlin, Erfurt and Munich were highly instructive for me as well. The most difficult moment for all of us, however, was the trip to Buchenwald. It is not so much the images of the concentration camp itself – which I had seen before – that have stuck in my mind, but rather the images of my friends – and they had become friends by now – confronting this experience and dealing with it emotionally.

The American participants, as individualist and diverse as they might have been, had at that point long become a closely-knit group, a network of people that supported each other, and I had become one of them. After returning to the U.S., the group has stayed very active. Group members have stayed in touch via e-mail and organized annual reunions. They have also kept in touch with me. Thus, the summer of 2000 was a dual, and therefore doubly intense, experience for me. I will always cherish the memory of both these trips, and I have remained committed to the exchange program. Due to the demands of my job, I have only been able to accompany one other AJC group on a trip to Germany, back in 2001, but I have remained in close touch with the project until today.

## Wolfram Hilz (2002)

### **ABOUT HOW REMARKABLE "NORMAL" JEWISH LIFE IS**

"We saw them as we rounded the street corner: concrete roadblocks with police vehicles at each end. The entrance was secured with the most modern high tech barriers. After passing the armed guards we finally reached the entrance. Relief was apparent..."

This scene, which seems like a scene out of a murder mystery or a depiction from one of the many crisis areas of the world, is not from Kabul, Baghdad or Jerusalem. It is my memory of the beginning of a journey "between worlds and cultures." This scene took place in the middle of Europe. To be more exact, these memories are the "perfectly normal" impressions on the way to the hotel in the center of the Jewish community in Frankfurt am Main.

The not-at-all "normal" situation of the Jews in Europe, which presented itself to us in light of the protective measures for Jewish citizens in the year 2002, on the first evening of the KAS/AJC program made the look into Jewish-American life in the following ten days all the more distinct. It was a week and a half that permanently changed my former assessment of the "normality" of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews worldwide.

It would be "normal" if, 60 years after the end of the war and the end of the mass murder of European Jews, we didn't have to worry about the natural right of every person to protected and undisturbed practice of their beliefs. It would also be "normal" if no exchange program between a German foundation and a American-Jewish organization were needed to teach young leaders about the diversity of Jewish life. But our tour from Washington to Boston by way of New York, from the seat of American power to the religious community of the city and the embodiment of multicultural life, was as "abnormal" as the program itself.

While the meetings in the American capital on the work of Jewish lobbying groups and American-Israeli-Jewish interactions were still predominantly business-like – for me as a political scientist the term “business as normal” is fitting – this didn’t apply to the rest of the situation in the slightest. The impressions of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, whose drastic and disturbing portrayal was highly controversial in our mixed group of German Jews and non-Jews, “penetrated my skin,” as they say. Here it was not just the fact of the monstrous murder of the Jews, hard to understand and absorb, that affected me. What affected me even more was the treatment of the Jews that was considered “normal” in the time of my parents and grandparents: the stigmatization, exclusion, insult and open mistreatment of Jews. But the following meeting with the mostly older members of a suburban Jewish community near Boston left a much greater impression. The portrayals of the suffering and the flight from Nazi Germany, paired with the openness and joy these people showed in exchanging experiences and perceptions with us young Germans, was what made this experience unique for me. There was also something remarkable about the meetings with Holocaust survivors and their descendents on American soil, which proceeded in an unspectacular and “normal” way. The personal concerns of the participants was the first priority. It was this “normality” in the conversations, especially in the home hospitalities, which stood in such contrast to what was going on in Germany at the time: the unspeakable Möllemann-Karsli debate and the unbelievable anti-Israeli and openly anti-Jewish flier campaign of the leading FDP politicians in order to gain votes in the Bundestag election.

The contrast could not have been greater between the repulsive developments in Germany and the “normality” with which Jewish life is practiced in the United States and with which the diversity of Jewish cultural heritage is preserved. The impact this impression of the divergence of the possibilities of “normal” Jewish life on either side of the Atlantic must have had on our young Jewish delegation members from the Frankfurt community is more than I can imagine.

I therefore have an ambivalent appraisal of the journey into another Jewish world. On the one hand, I am thankful for the chance to gain personal experience and to have a look into Jewish-American life. On the other hand, I was saddened that we Germans, after the murder and expulsion of the European Jews and the obliteration of a central part of our cultural and societal diversity, are still not able, at the beginning of

the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to make a “normal” life possible for our fellow Jewish citizens.

As long as this sorry situation continues, the cooperation of the KAS and the AJC will remain extremely important in showing young Germans what “normal” can and should be. The central and unspoken mission of us participants is therefore to continue the fight against anti-Semitism and discrimination against minorities, or at least that is what I have interpreted it to be.

### Katharina von Münster (2002)

Transatlantic relations, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and European anti-Semitism were the topics that dominated the discussions between the Germans and the Americans during our trip in May and June 2001. Anti-Semitism was a topic which particularly affected our Jewish-American friends, as they had been following with concern the recent attacks on Jewish citizens and institutions in European countries. They were asking themselves if the Europeans had learned anything from history. But some of the people we spoke with were pleasantly surprised by Germany’s state-sponsored commitment to Jewish communities and institutions.

While I was in the U.S., I was reminded of an event in Berlin which made it clear to me that, although Jewish life is promoted by the German government, the coexistence of different religious and ethnic groups, even in large cities in Germany, is not as commonplace as it is in American cities.

The sight of men wearing *kippot* in America is quite common; in contrast, I once came across a 14-year-old boy in the New Synagogue on Oranienburger Strasse in Berlin who always hid his *kippah* under a baseball cap when out on the street. “Otherwise one of those skinheads would come and bash my head in,” he said.

Acceptance of those easily identifiable as “others” is far from a matter of course, even in multicultural Berlin. And intolerance is not just prevalent among small extreme minorities. We must ask ourselves critically why the tolerant upbringing, so often acclaimed, doesn’t catch on with certain

groups. Anti-Semitism among immigrants of Arabic origin in Europe, for example, does not just feed off of the conflict in the Middle East. Jewish citizens and institutions are not just attacked because they are seen as representatives of Israeli politics. Rather, the influence of traditional European forms of anti-Semitism also plays role. European countries must also ask themselves whether immigrants of Arabic origin are simply projecting their frustration over their marginalization in European society – having been poorly-received and not fully accepted – onto another minority. In this way, attacks of Arabic youth against German and European Jews are also the expression of failed integration policies.

A cliché about the United States, which feeds off of anti-Semitic prejudice, is that Jewish lobbying groups all but determine the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The discussion with pro-Israeli and other Jewish lobbying groups showed us the actual possibilities and limits of the influence of interest groups in America's political system. The perceived pro-Israeli position of the U.S. administration, criticized in many parts of the world, can not solely be explained by the influence of lobbying groups. First of all, Jewish lobbying groups do not campaign exclusively on issues which concern Israel, but also for the domestic interests of broad classes of the population, and Israel-friendly politics are traditionally supported by a broad public. The reasons for this are shared values such as democracy and the shared pioneer experience. Most notably, in the past few years a pro-Israel lobby has been formed out of the growing number of evangelical Christians. This group campaigns along with traditional groups like AIPAC for Israel-friendly policy in the United States. They are particularly successful in campaigning for these interests in Congress. However, groups supporting Israel are not necessarily uniform in their opinions, e.g. with relation to the Israeli government. And Congress and American presidents have often taken positions that are rejected by pro-Israel lobbying groups.

While September 11 doubtless caused an additional emotional proximity to Israel on account of the painful shared experience of terrorism, the transatlantic relations between the United States and Europe in 2002 have been characterized by a growing distance. American politicians and academics confirmed in our discussions that the respective perceptions of one another are determined by the cliché that "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus." It was emphasized repeatedly, however, that one must not allow all the differences in our approaches to

foreign policy to obscure the common values and goals of Americans and Europeans. "We also know that military force alone is not enough to combat terrorism," said an employee of Senator Lieberman. But Europe should not rely solely on America when it comes to confronting military threats, said a German foreign correspondent in a another conversation we had.

All these topics, which we discussed during our trip, have retained their relevance to this day. In this respect I still profit from the discussions that we had with American politicians, academics and also with normal, politically dedicated people.

## Christina Thesing (2002)

While we were in America with the KAS/AJC Program, an intense debate was taking place in Germany. Jürgen W. Möllemann and Michel Friedman were attacking one another in an ongoing and unpleasant debate on the subject of Israel and anti-Semitism. On landing in Washington, none of us had anticipated that our discussions with Americans would so heavily center on how these debates were playing out. We were asked to offer explanations for the growing anti-Semitism in Europe, especially in Germany, and partially-damaged trust had to be rebuilt. Neither we nor the Americans would be satisfied by merely pacifying statements.

It was my first stay in the United States and my introduction to America was very intense from the outset. Ten days of meetings, interesting conversations, discussions and impressions were divided between Washington, D.C., Boston and New York City under the heading of "German-American-Jewish relations."

We were received in Washington, D.C. on May 28, 2002. AJC representative Eric Fusfield, sunshine and oppressive heat awaited us at the airport. Washington, capitol of the United States, symbols of power everywhere one looked, many of which were already familiar from photos, had suddenly become real.

We began our program immediately and met many representatives of different Jewish organizations. "I am lobbying the senate for my organization!" became the phrase of the day. The number and variety of organizations, their goals and the range in their activities impressed us. It seemed that every issue affecting the American-Jewish community had its own organization, and it struck us that none of them concerned themselves with religion or religious questions. The experience that made the biggest impression on me was our meeting with Stuart Eizenstat in Washington and his report on the negotiations over compensation for victims of Nazi forced labor policies.

After much too short a stay we traveled on to Boston. After the very official meetings in Washington, the Boston chapter of the AJC had set its focus on personal encounters. Whether in the synagogue or at a private shabbat dinner on Friday evening, we developed useful contacts and gathered new strength through intensive conversations and friendly encounters. I was moved by the service with the Rabbi Emily Lipof on shabbat morning. In Germany, I had recently had a scholarly discussion with Regina Jones, one of the first female rabbis in Judaism, and we determined that, at last, theory met practice.

With a stunning sunset as our backdrop, we landed at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York. The Big Apple put on its best face! But September 11 still seemed to shadow everything. The Empire State Building radiated red, white and blue, Ground Zero left a noticeable gap between the skyscrapers of the Financial District, and planes flying over Manhattan sent shivers down our spines. In New York the AJC attempted to present as many sides of Jewish-American life as possible in addition to simply showing us New York to make our picture complete. On June 5 we sat exhausted but enriched on a plane bound for Frankfurt Main.

It became clear to us in the USA in a most striking manner why exchange programs like this one exist and must exist in the future. Only personal encounters between people make true trust and understanding possible and help to break down resentments and prejudices.

I wish the KAS and the AJC many more successful years and thank them for this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Thank you – Danke!

## Lars Hänsel & Claudia von Salzen (2003)

The small room in the U.S. Senate was packed, although it was not a domestic issue that was on the agenda, but a European one: anti-Semitism in Europe. In order to debate this issue, the Sub-Committee on European Affairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had come together for a special hearing. The Democratic Senator Joseph Biden had just accused European governments of addressing anti-Semitism only half-heartedly. There were many in the audience who shared this concern: Davis Harris of the American Jewish Committee, for example, who, a little later, was scheduled to speak to the committee on rising anti-Semitism in Europe himself. Or Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League, a Holocaust survivor, who, his voice shaking at times, called on the Europeans to be more determined in confronting anti-Semitism.

We, too, were seated somewhere in this small room. We were a group of nine young Germans, among whom there were staffers of German MPs, young politicians and journalists who were all on an exchange program organized by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the American Jewish Committee. We listened to the statements, and some of us, in a way representing the old Europe, felt that we were being treated a little unfairly. Some of us might have felt like standing up and declaring that not all of us were anti-Semites, that while anti-Semitism was a problem that needed to be taken seriously, it fortunately had no chance of ever being accepted again in our societies. It was, however, the Senators, and not us, who asked questions and made comments. Senator Biden, for example, wanted to know whether the issue of anti-Semitism was discussed at all by European elites. This question was addressed to Edward O'Donnell, Special Envoy for Holocaust issues of the State Department. He replied: "I met a group of young German politicians and journalists today, and the issue came up." He went on to say that Germans were particularly active in this respect. Of course, the group O'Donnell was referring to was us. We had met him during our visit to the State Department. We had assured him and his colleagues that xenophobic and anti-

Semitic offenses were strictly prosecuted in Germany, that making anti-Semitic statements would help no party win elections, because there was a broad consensus in the society against anti-Semitism.

The exchange program between the American Jewish Committee and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has existed for more than 23 years. For the first time, a group had now left a tiny trace in official Washington D.C. Was it a trace that eventually led back to Germany? In a report filed by the German embassy to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the group and its role in the Senate hearing had been mentioned favorably.

We had travelled to the U.S. in order to learn something about Jewish life in the U.S. and about transatlantic relations. "For many of the people you are going to talk to the meetings will be at least as important as for you," predicted Germanist and historian Jeffrey Peck when we had talked to him in Washington D.C. I remember the meeting with young American Jews in Washington D.C., which began with a brief presentation of personal biographies and ended in a heated debate on the Middle East conflict. We kept coming back to this issue throughout our trip. Almost every time it came up, an implicit accusation was directed at the Europeans for not backing Israel strongly enough in this conflict. I remember the families who invited us into their homes and told us after the introduction that we could ask any question we might have, but who were also curious to hear about our personal stories. I remember the old lady who guided us through the Jewish Museum in New York City and spoke fluent German. Telling us about Jewish life seemed to be very important to her. When we asked her about her own background, however, she was no longer that communicative. She came from a small village in Southern Germany and had lived in New York City since 1941. And finally, I remember a lunch we had at a community center in Boca Raton, Florida. The only thing we knew about this appointment beforehand was that we would meet a group of senior citizens. Only in the course of this lunch-time conversation did it emerge that many of them were Holocaust survivors. During the entire trip, no one else asked us questions that were as probing. What about anti-Semitism in Germany? When did you first get into contact with Judaism? What do German students learn about the Holocaust in school? An elderly lady stood up after a while and said that she no longer felt any hatred toward Germany and that our meeting had contributed to this. Another Holocaust survivor said at the end: "You are all our children."

## Manuela Glaab (2005)

### **A LASTING IMPRESSION: THE GERMAN-JEWISH EXCHANGE PROGRAM IN 2005**

Although five years have passed since my trip to the USA as part of the German-Jewish exchange program, I still have lasting memories of the event. In 2005, the 25<sup>th</sup> group of exchange students set off for the eastern seaboard of the United States, led by Dr. Lars Hänsel. As an "anniversary group", we were particularly aware of the tradition of the exchange program. The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the program is now a good reason to look back on that trip once again. We called at Washington, Boston and New York on our tightly packed itinerary. Past, present and future of Jewish life in the USA were the central concept which linked the different elements of the demanding program – a concept which would be inconceivable without two further reference points: the omnipresent Holocaust and the crimes of the Nazis. These atrocities of German history confronted us at many points along our journey, but never more so than at the Holocaust Museum in Washington. The Holocaust dominated our discussions, not only during the official talks but also in our leisure time. Relations with Israel were a third important issue in the debates about transatlantic questions. Many of the group were unaware of the broad spectrum of activities undertaken by the American Jewish Committee and other Jewish organizations in the USA. For most of us, the invitations to join families were a particularly valuable experience, as that „home hospitality“ gave us the opportunity to discuss not only the major concerns of world politics with our hosts, but also aspects of day-to-day life. For me personally, this linked up three different viewpoints to form one coherent whole: the way I see myself as a German, the impressions I had previously acquired in Israel, and the insight into the reality of Jewish life in the USA. Some of us are still in contact and continue to discuss these issues, which proves the lasting effect of the exchange program. I wish the exchange program a successful future and hope that it will have cause to celebrate many more anniversaries!

## Holger Scheerer (2007)

In July 2007, I visited Washington D.C., Miami and New York on the KAS/AJC exchange program together with another 11 participants. Owing to my previous academic work and one year as manager of Germania Judaica e.V., a library in Cologne dealing with the history of German-speaking Jewry, I was – and still am – familiar with the subject of Jewish history in Germany. As a result, I was all the more overwhelmed by the hospitality and openness with which we were received by the AJC in the USA.

The program offered a cleverly balanced mixture of lectures (situation in the Middle East, German-American relations, Jewish life in the USA etc.), guided tours (Holocaust Museum, Leo Baeck Institute etc.) as well as personal meetings. The latter in particular were an enriching experience in every respect. We attended a service at Miami synagogue, followed by a meal in the Jewish community center, a smaller group were invited out privately for a meal in Washington, and at the German Consulate-General in New York we met some young leaders of the AJC. In Miami, we were also introduced to survivors of the Jewish persecution. I was particularly moved by the story of one man who, like my own grandfather, came from Beuthen in Upper Silesia and who left the country with his family in 1939 at the age of 13 (the age of my 2nd eldest son at that time), on the St. Louis, believing he was heading for freedom. However, the ship was forced to return to Europe and he had to disembark in Antwerp. Farmers in Vichy, France, hid him till the end of the war, when he went to the USA. There, he had to earn his US citizenship by taking part in the Korean war. He has lived in Miami since 1954, but his family did not survive the Holocaust.

I am extremely grateful to the KAS for giving me the opportunity to take part in the exchange with the AJC, as it provided me with many new perceptions and allowed me to meet a great number of highly interesting people. I truly felt that this exchange helped to build bridges for the future. My hosts played a decisive part in making that the case. Their

friendliness, openness and lack of prejudice enabled us to overcome our initial apprehension and, despite all our shame at the crimes that Germans had perpetrated against Jews during the Nazi regime, to enter into a real dialog with them.

## Claudia von Selle (2007)

The most memorable moment of my stay was when I heard my name called out during a Shabbat service at the synagogue in Miami and stood up to show myself to the others.

The rabbi's gesture of welcoming the Germans to the Jewish community during the Shabbat service was symbolic of a situation that was repeated on many occasions during our stay. Our hosts welcomed us with open arms, took a keen interest in us and accompanied us on a well organized program. And, of course, America would not be America unless a bit of entertainment was included – and that soon rubbed off on us Germans. Although many of us had maintained an early morning routine of jogging or gym since the start of the trip, our attitude became more relaxed with every day that passed.

By the way – physical exercise was absolutely essential in view of the lavish catering that was guaranteed everywhere we went, no matter how short the event.

Of all our group, I was undoubtedly the person who had had most to do with German-Jewish relations in the course of my previous career, as I had already worked for years as an attorney specializing in the restitution of works of art which had been seized from Jewish families during the National Socialist era. In many cases, the reactions of the other members of the group reminded me of the early days of my own career when I was very self-conscious about the subject. However, almost to my own surprise, the things I experienced in America made a lasting impression on me; it was as if the pieces of a puzzle suddenly fitted together.

Especially compared with the Jewish community in Germany, which is defined to a great extent by conflict about the social aspects and the contents of Jewish life, perhaps because it is still a relatively young

community, it was amazing to experience how open, how public and how influential Jewish life in the USA is. As regards the relationship with Germany, it was repeatedly emphasized that German-Jewish relations cannot be reduced to just the 12 years of National Socialism. Only when these conversations continued could one sense that there is nevertheless still always a certain struggle to achieve a normality that is not yet there, that may never be there because it never can be. That is also apparent from an anecdote I experienced during supper with a Jewish hostess in Washington: it was also a situation that I had already experienced with my Jewish clients on repeated occasions in the past. At the end of the evening, my hostess confided – as if she were telling me a forbidden secret – that she actually liked the music of Richard Wagner very much.

With the American Jews, we experienced what Germany has lost, and what it used to have before the start of the persecution of the Jews: that the Jewish population sees itself first and foremost as American and does not concern itself too much with its faith in the course of day-to-day life – or rather simply practices its religion as a matter of course. As an attorney, there was another loss which I noticed immediately: there was a huge number of lawyers amongst the representatives of the Jewish organizations and those taking part in the program. Before the start of World War II, two thirds of the lawyers in Berlin were of Jewish origin. In response to the frequent question of American attorneys as to why the restitution proceedings in Germany are conducted primarily by non-Jewish attorneys, my answer was always „There are hardly any Jewish attorneys any more,“ a statement that inevitably led to a brief silence, followed by „Oh yes, of course.“

At the end of our stay, we went to New York, where we all responded like little children with endless cries of delight, whether confronted with an enormous meal of hamburgers (our stomachs were meanwhile well trained), a jazz concert at the „blue note“, the breathtaking view from the assembly room of the German Consulate, or the guided tour of the city. Luckily, the people we met were so interesting that we remained bright and alert throughout the innumerable items on the agenda. I have regularly visited the city every since, a fact which can be attributed amongst other things to Carol Strauss of the Leo Baeck Institute.

This is undoubtedly one of the most worthwhile programs I have ever heard of – and so I am all the more grateful that I had the chance to take part.

## Tim Küsters (2007)

*„It is the lives we encounter that make life worth living.“*  
Guy de Maupassant

People who don't know each other set out together to meet other people that they don't know either. For me, it was the meetings with other people that made this exchange program so special. The wide mix of participants with such highly different life histories, careers and ages ensured that we were curious to find out more about the other members of the group even before the flight to the United States.

The diversity of these encounters made them an enriching experience, from the candid and honest talks that gave us an idea of Jewish life in the United States to our actual experience of that life thanks to the hospitality of people who opened up their homes to us. I could only wish that the narrow-minded members of our society could encounter such people who are prepared to open doors to enable meetings that can lead to lasting changes.

It is personal meetings which, in contrast to theoretical knowledge, convey a lasting impression and provide a true opportunity to form an opinion.

This is particularly true of meetings with people who actually witnessed the events at the time. They often build a bridge to the past and help us understand what it was like „in those days“. People who witnessed the Holocaust, the greatest crime in the history of mankind, can attempt to give us an impression of the atrocities they were confronted with daily. That was why meeting survivors of these appalling crimes was for me undoubtedly the most impressive and lasting memory of the trip. It by no means goes without saying that a person who is reminded of his suffering for the rest of his life by a number tattooed on his wrist should be willing to take a group of Germans on a tour of a memorial dedicated to the victims of these appalling crimes. But we were met with not a

word of resentment, no accusations, no concealed rejection, but by openness and friendship. That meeting made a lasting impression on me.

Moreover, I regarded the invitation to attend the celebration of the Shabbat at the Emanue-El synagogue and the integration of our group in the Shabbat service as a wonderful gesture of affinity and friendship. Experiencing the life of the Jewish community in practice in the United States gave me the chance to develop an understanding of the meaning of spirituality in the life of American citizens.

As hosts, the American Jewish Committee could hardly be bettered. Again, it is the people who make things so uniquely special. I found the joy with which the AJC members carry out their tasks within the organization and live their lives in American society truly inspiring. They gave us an authentic picture of the things they do and the efforts they make, and showed us very clearly how important the transatlantic relations are to them, in particular the friendship between the citizens of the United States of America and Germany. This exchange was one part in the overall mosaic of keeping this friendship alive. It reminds me of the African proverb:

„Many small people, who in many small places, do many small things can change the face of the world.“

I felt extraordinarily welcome throughout the entire exchange. I will always look back on these encounters and the whole exchange program with gratitude.

## Olaf Herrmann (2008)

I had the chance to take part in the German – Jewish exchange program in 2008. That opportunity allowed me to acquire an in-depth impression of Jewish faith, Jewish culture and Jewish life. I gained insights not only into the present, but also into the past and the future.

When I was at school, I studied history and the Holocaust intensively and visited places like Buchenwald. But it was not until my trip to the USA that I actually met survivors and was able to speak about these

incomprehensible events with people who had actually witnessed them at the time. Learning facts and figures from books and movies is one thing, hearing about personal experiences at first-hand is something quite different.

We saw the Holocaust Memorial in Florida and visited the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. I will never forget watching young American school kids in that museum – and seeing people confronted with this subject for the first time. I have rarely seen people weeping so wretchedly.

During my trip to the USA, however, I also learned that the present and future are just as important as the past. Over the course of just a few days, we met a great number of interesting people. We experienced the Jewish faith. Most of the people in our group attended a Shabbat service for the first time. Nor will I ever forget the many discussions with members of the Jewish community and the rabbi.

During all these discussions, the people always looked to the future. The focus was usually on security. How will the situation in the Middle East develop? Will there be lasting peace? How should the world community deal with Iran? We also discussed other items which may not be the center of attention compared with the security debate, but which are nevertheless highly important, such as the environment and climate protection.

„Life can only be understood backwards, but it has to be lived forwards,“ said a philosopher once. That sentence describes exactly what I learned on the German-Jewish exchange program.

## Susanne Günther (2008)

*"We are the last.  
Ask us about it.  
We are responsible."  
Hans Sahl*

It took me a long time to decide how to begin my account of the KAS/AJC exchange program. Here are some of the thoughts I had: I like poems by Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger and Else Laske-Schüler, I like the stories written by Lizzie Doron and Lena Gorelik, I read the columns by Henry M. Broder – which sometimes make me chuckle, sometimes cause me to shake my head.

At school, we read The Diary of Anne Frank. We read authors such as Hermann Hesse, Erich Maria Remarque and Kurt Tucholsky, whose books were burned by the Nazis in 1933. We visited Buchenwald, Groß-Rosen, the house where the Wannsee Conference took place and Plötzensee – typical items on the curriculum of a German school pupil.

I then studied political science at university and acquired a more complex understanding of the Middle East, learned more about the complicated relations between the different countries and nations, and attempted to grasp this subject. As an exchange student in the Netherlands, I first had to try to come to terms with what it means to be a „Duitse“ when my fellow students stated what they first associated with Germany: Nazis, World War II, Holocaust. On 4 May, the church bells rang to commemorate those killed in World War II, followed by two minutes' silence. People on the streets stood perfectly still and I was overwhelmed by an awful feeling of shame.

I realized that I knew a great deal about Jewish life – and nevertheless I knew practically nothing. I read Jewish authors, knew about the atrocities of German history, knew the political situation of Israel, but the only thing I knew about Jewish life in actual practice were the police cars that parked in front of the new synagogues in my home town to protect them.

Things changed during my first trip to America: I got to know Jewish life as it was actually lived, celebrated Rosh Hashanah with friends, was invited to a Brit Milah and plunged into the fascinating world of Orthodox Jewry.

The ambivalence of my feelings – fascinated and yet alienated, ashamed and yet delighted, curious and yet anxious – is an apt reflection of German-Jewish relations. Jews are a firm element of political, cultural and religious life in Germany. Germans are brought up to take a responsible attitude towards their history and nevertheless, despite all our efforts, our relationship with Jews is still something special, very sensitive, fragile – and we are nowhere near reaching a natural „togetherness“.

I was very pleased that Prof. Beate Neuss, my doctoral supervisor and Vice-President of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, enabled me to take part in the AJC-KAS exchange program.

The program took place during the presidential election campaign. Jacques D. Berlinerblau, Director of the Jewish Civilization Program of Georgetown University, described his impressions, spoke about the role of the Jewish lobby in America and about aspects which are important for the American-Jewish electorate. Many of the discussions focused on how we should deal with Iran. Generally speaking, foreign policy is an important subject and close attention is paid to America's relations with Israel. However, it was also interesting to note that now, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of American Jews – i.e. first-time and young voters – Israel and its security no longer play an outstanding role, as mindsets have changed in the meantime. The Holocaust, the expulsion of the Jews and the creation of a „save haven“, a country as a place of existential freedom, have been replaced in people's minds by the wish to exert political influence on a local level without being reduced to Jewish history. Experts at the State Department, correspondents, embassy representatives and lobbyists introduced us to the complex and varied relations between the American public and the Jewish lobby. As we reached the different points on our trip – Washington, New York and Miami – we became aware of the regional differences that exist within the Jewish communities in the USA. Attendance at a Shabbat service in Florida was just as exciting as the home hospitality which gave us the chance to exchange ideas with American Jews. The enormous range of opinions and viewpoints was inspirational.

To me, one of the most revealing events was a visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum. During my first visit, I was surprised at the educational design of the exhibition, which to Germans appears to make exaggerated use of media instruments and which also seemed inappropriately noisy owing to the use of film clips and soundbites. As part of the museum's concept, it distributed identification cards which portrayed the fates of individual Jews and, at the end of the tour of the museum, revealed whether or not the person had survived. I found it really upsetting when a class of school kids burst out in hysterical shouts of "I survived, I survived."

However, museum staff explained the reasons for this concept and made it clear to me that such reactions are actually desirable and necessary. Most American school children have no idea at all of Jewish or German history. A visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum is their first contact with the events that happened during and after World War II. Only by experiencing an individual's history themselves can they begin to grasp the incredible atrocities and the suffering of the victims.

Before my second visit to the museum, I was therefore prepared for this. On that occasion, I met Joe, a survivor of the Holocaust and volunteer at the museum. He accompanied me throughout part of my visit, recited German poems, quoted the guards at the concentration camps – and held my hand. He assured me that he was really happy to meet Germans, to pass on his story and to keep memories alive – without accusation. In 2009, I met Joe again when I visited the museum with a group of students from Chemnitz and did exactly what he had hoped for: passed on my memories.

Taking part in the exchange program was an enriching experience for me. The opportunity to exchange ideas, to examine and discuss this subject in detail helped me to understand the highly diverse and complicated web of relations between Germans and Americans in respect of the history of Jewish life.

It only remains for me to hope that many young academics on both sides of the Atlantic will have the chance to take part in the program, as a joint future can only be built on memories of the past.

## Fabian Magerl (2008)

In 2008 I had the honor to be part of the delegation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung that visited the AJC.

Under the perfect organization of our leader, Sabina Wölkner, our group met for a briefing in Berlin the evening before our flight to Washington. Prior to the event, most of us had familiarized ourselves with the long-standing tradition of the KAS/AJC partnership. That, together with the excellent advice given by Dr. Michael Borchard and others, meant that we were well prepared for our 'life-changing experience' – and we were not disappointed.

Right from the start, we were overwhelmed by the cordial and forthcoming hospitality that had not only made a great impression on preceding generations, but that soon broke the ice. The unique success story of the partnership between the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and AJC that had evolved over several decades now took on a face.

And immediately, we were inundated with crucial impressions, always coupled with stimulating discussions. As our visit took place at the time of the presidential election campaign in the United States – the Democrats' decision between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama was heading towards the happy outcome for Obama just at the time of our visit – discussions with American Jews as well as Germans working in the USA were a major source of information for us. Over and above the general discussions that were taking place in Germany, there were two aspects of particular importance, the latter of which is still undoubtedly relevant today. On the one hand, this referred to the significance of religion and its influence on the decision on who to vote for in the United States, a factor which had earned Barack Obama crucial percentage points against John Kerry in 2004, who appeared relatively clumsy where that subject was concerned. The other was the question of how US foreign policy under the leadership of the Democrats would respond to the growing nuclear threat to the continuing existence of the state of Israel posed

by Iran. In our role as Germans, we had a particular obligation to accept our special responsibility – that was something that at least became clear to most of the members of our delegation at this point at the latest.

The trauma of the Shoah as a subject of debate between the survivors, their descendants and young Germans was one that we neither could nor wanted to exclude, even though it is hardly possible to achieve normality in that respect. Nevertheless, the discussions about the darkest hours in the history of our country were frank and stimulating. This also enabled us to move on to comparatively critically viewed issues such as the question of compensation, which is still being discussed.

During the course of the visit, we had sufficient opportunity to experience Jewish culture as a natural part of Jewish life in the United States. The immense cultural influence of Jewish life in New York undoubtedly fascinated each and every one of us. Which of the participants, for example, knew that until very recently, a major Yiddish daily newspaper was published in New York, to which the city of New York owes the Forward Building. Katz' delicatessen impressively corroborates the facets which link Jewish traditions and modern life. It was a unique experience to see the immense diversity of Jewish life in the USA. Especially in view of the fact that the Jewry one experiences in Germany is predominantly conservative, it is very gratifying to encounter this liberal American Jewry.

One outstanding item I should finally like to mention was that in Guy Billauer on behalf of the AJC and Sabina Wölkner for the KAS, our delegation had two leaders who achieved that rare mixture of professionalism and warm-heartedness. We, too, could justly conclude: we arrived as strangers and left as friends.

### Anne von Fallois (2009)

*A life-changing experience:* these or words like these are used by the first groups which took part in the KAS/AJC program when describing their most memorable experiences. And today: what has changed for the visitors from Germany – or how have they themselves changed? Many of them are familiar with the USA, have spent vacations there, attended American schools or colleges, or even worked there; many keep up a worldwide network of contacts, whether in real life or virtually. And some

have already been able to share in the Jewish life that is gradually being restored in Germany.

Can just a few days in the USA really make a difference? Based on my own experience, I can definitely say, yes, they do. And that is due first and foremost to the American Jewish hosts: people who are curious to find out more about their fellow humans and who in turn permit us to be curious about them. People who know a great deal about Germany, Europe and the rest of the world, but still thirst to know more. People with firm viewpoints, but who are willing to explain these attitudes openly. People who can tell many stories, but who have remained faithful to one great story in particular: the story of freedom. Whether in a heated debate about current affairs in Washington, a nostalgic trip around Jewish New York, whether visiting the Constitution Center in Philadelphia or over relaxed talks at the dinner table with the host families – in all these settings, one thing always rang out: their gratitude for the opportunity to practice their own culture, their own faith, their own distinctive traits without fear. And their obligation to defend that achievement wholeheartedly: at home and elsewhere in the world. Obama's health reform, fair educational opportunities, the war against terror, Iran: these are all the subject of controversial arguments in Jewish America. But questioning the politics of their own government (or listening to such questions from the guests from Germany) never means fundamentally doubting America and the underlying concept of America. The deep awareness of freedom, the need to protect that freedom and their obligation to do so was something that really impressed me, the guest from Germany.

It is not without good reason that we Germans have abandoned political pathos. But nevertheless, do we not perhaps take all these things that were given to us after the war and the catastrophe we brought upon ourselves too much for granted, too unemotionally? Do we show enough appreciation for the strength that caused the Berlin Wall to fall twenty years ago? I think it does us good to be touched by people who are particularly sensitive to freedom and the risks that threaten it, by people who have themselves experienced persecution, or who know from their family history what it is to be persecuted and oppressed. No books, no Facebook entries could possibly take the place of a live encounter with such people. And then, at the end of such an eventful time together, if you can call these people your friends, what could possibly strengthen the bonds between the USA and Germany, between Jews and non-Jews more effectively than such a wonderful exchange program?

## Angelika Klein (2009)

When the KAS/AJC exchange program was launched 30 years ago, the world was a different place. One of the moving accounts of an exchange describes the Germans, many of whom had just set foot on American soil for the first time, as feeling "like icebreakers in unfamiliar waters". And what the first guests from overseas must have felt like when they heard German being spoken when they landed at Frankfurt am Main – again, they tried to put these feelings into words.

These days, we are all networked, globalized, cosmopolitan. This is clear from the résumés of most of the group I accompanied to the USA on behalf of the KAS in 2009: a year spent at school or studying in the USA, degrees from Columbia, Georgetown, Harvard, internships and work experience. It goes without saying that their friends and colleagues now also include American Jews, regardless of whether or not they have spent any time in the USA. Many of them now live in Berlin – a city that is currently extremely attractive to the younger generation in particular. A situation which would have been inconceivable thirty years ago is now part and parcel of their ordinary lives.

At the AJC Chapter in Philadelphia we met a couple whose daughter was planning to marry a German. Their future son-in-law comes from Bavaria, and will return there to work after completing his studies in the USA. His fiancée will go with him. Her parents are already familiar with Bavaria, they like the countryside and the people, are enthusiastic about the new branch of the family, the hospitality, the lavish cuisine. But they also talk about times when this would have been inconceivable. What would grandfather have said if he had known that his descendants would grow up in Munich and speak German? We spend a long time talking about grandfather, the trauma of his expulsion, about members of the family who did not survive. The talk is so frank and so personal that it is both relieving and painful at the same time. It reveals a father who stands between the generations – he has already moved on far beyond the grandfather, but has by no means moved nearly as far ahead as his

daughter. A daughter who listens to what he says, very attentively, but in the way one listens to events that one only knows from stories. Stories that concern us, but no longer directly affect us. It shows that for now, history is still making its mark – but its effects are gradually becoming weaker. Those who witnessed events at the time are dying out. Identity is changing.

And it is changing on both sides. David Harris has already seen many German groups come and go. But there was one thing about our group that struck him, something which he had never encountered before, and that was the heterogeneity of the group. He found it remarkable that two of the members came from the east of Germany, one from Turkey, one from Russia and another from Transylvania in Romania. In other words, five of the eleven members, almost half the group, had undergone a different socialization process: One in which the Holocaust and German history had not played any part, or had played a different part. I myself am the member from Romania: history – to me, that was a series of glorious victories and generals, heroes and heroic deeds. History lessons were like listening to fairy stories. „Propaganda“ as my father already aptly called it back then. The Holocaust did not form part of our history lessons. The Holocaust – that was someone else's problem, a German problem. Or a West German problem, to be more precise. General Antonescu and the brutal Greenshirts of the Iron Guard who collaborated with the Nazis were excluded from our history lessons in the same way as deportations and Jewish victims. But in the meantime, these Jewish victims have raised their voices. One of them, Elie Wiesel, was in charge of the investigation committee. Its final report states: „Of all the allies of National Socialist Germany, Romania is responsible for the greatest contribution to the elimination of the Jews, apart from Germany itself.“

But quite apart from Romania, we were – what is worse – Germans. What was it that made us Germans? Our native language? Bach and Goethe? And what about all the others who have meanwhile immigrated to Germany, what about their socialization? Natalia and Ali in our group – does their German passport mean they have a special responsibility? Responsibility for a history that is neither theirs, nor that of their parents or grandparents?

The question becomes increasingly fraught: David Harris believed the fact that half the delegates did not come from the old Federal Republic is

a reflection of present German society. And rightly so. Society is changing. But will German identity change with it? What is the essence of German identity? Is German history a part of German identity – and if so, to what extent? Almost forty percent of children under six in Germany today have a background of migration. What history will they identify with? The self-image of the old West Germany, that was carefully nurtured over the years – how can that be communicated to them? Do we need a new culture of remembrance?

We discussed the matter of identity intensively. What makes us who we are, what defines us? When you meet others, you also meet yourself. How do we define ourselves? What does it mean to be German today – or to be Jewish in 21st-century New York? The trip to the USA not only offered us an excellent program, introduced us to wonderful people, provided impressive and unforgettable hospitality – but also put us in touch with ourselves.

And the journey also showed us that history belongs to all of us. It has to do so, because we live in a country that has accepted responsibility for its history. And that, in turn, obliges us, as citizens of that country, to accept that responsibility, to deliberately regard it and cultivate it as our shared history. This is all the more important today as the binding force of our personal memories and a socialization which we take for granted are gradually beginning to fade. That is when it is all the more important to make sure of one's history, to re-associate oneself with it time and again. This program is an important element – now more than ever – in helping us to do so, because the intensity of personal encounter with our history conveys it the most acutely.

These are experiences for which we have to be grateful. They showed me once again clearly that many things we take for granted are anything but our natural right. I realized that the ideological muzzle imposed by a dictatorship and its uncritical attitude towards history that I myself suffered as part of my biography mean that I personally am obliged to cultivate and cherish these experiences. What's more, they mean it will never be possible for me to be apolitical.

## Lars Hänsel

*Resident Representative in Israel, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*

### **KAS/AJC PROGRAM ON THE THREE-WAY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GERMANY, USA AND ISRAEL**

Having spent 22 years in Communist-ruled East Germany – the German Democratic Republic or GDR – no other land symbolizes freedom to me in quite the same way as the USA. As a Christian, I was not free to practice my religion in the GDR and actually experienced discrimination. Accordingly, it was something very special for me to be permitted to accompany the exchange program with the AJC in the capacity of consultant for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, which supports freedom, democracy, human rights and the concept of social market economy throughout the world. In that position, I accompanied three groups of young decision-makers to the USA and also welcomed the respective return AJC delegations to Germany.

The GDR in which I grew up did not regard Jews as a special group of victims of the Holocaust and had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards them. Right until the very end, the GDR regime refused to make reparation payments, despite the fact that Erich Honecker tried to obtain an invitation to the USA through his contacts to American Jews. For me as a Christian, one of the fundamental conflicts with the GDR system was that I felt a special responsibility both for reconciliation with Jews and, not least, for good relations with Israel.

These matters played a central role for me during the exchange programs, both in the USA and during the visits of the American delegations to Germany. At the Claims Conference, we heard of the difficult negotiations with the GDR. During our visits, particularly to Dresden and Leipzig, we had the chance to discuss the role of the Jews in the GDR as well as the attitude of today's Eastern Germans towards Jews. In the course of these discussions, we were also forced to examine our own attitudes towards racism and anti-Semitism.

Israel came up in these discussions again and again. The Americans we talked to were very interested to hear about the commitment undertaken by Germans – and in particular the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung – in and on behalf of Israel. For the Germans, in turn, it was interesting to see what American Jews now do on behalf of Israel and how they struggle to find the best answers to guarantee the future of Israel in safety and peace, whether within the scope of AIPAC on the one hand or left-wing groups on the other.

Taking a KAS/AJC delegation to Israel was therefore the only logical next step to follow on from the previous program, and this was agreed in 2007 at a meeting between Prof. Bernhard Vogel and David Harris. In 2008, the 60th anniversary of the foundation of Israel, the KAS – whose representative I was in Israel at the time – first organized a joint delegation with the AJC, in which twelve young Americans and Germans visited Israel from August 25 to 31, 2008.

The program focused on the question of what now links the USA, Germany and Israel. This led to discussions on the highly diverse history of the relations between these three countries, in particular their common values and the challenges of the present day. Together with Eran Lerman, Director of the AJC in Israel and meanwhile a close friend, we introduced the program by informing the delegates about the significance of the three-way relationship between Germany, the USA and Israel, not least its importance for Israel: Israel's relations with Germany are the most intensive and important with any other country apart from the USA.

Above all, however, the visit was intended to make the members of the delegation consider the question of Israel together. The agenda consequently included debates and discussions about the history of Israel and about its social, economic and political development since the foundation of the state. The aim was to give the delegates as comprehensive as possible a picture of Israel. One subject was the current status of negotiations between Israel and the neighboring Arab states and Palestinians. The visits on the agenda included numerous discussions of political and social subjects in Jerusalem as well as visits to projects, for instance in Rehovot, Sderot, Sde Boker and in Tel Aviv, to show the delegates that Israel is much more than just a party to the conflict.

The program began with lectures to introduce the participants to the relevant subject matter. For example, Professor Yaakov Bar Siman Tov, Director of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, gave a paper on *Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State*, in which he presented the conflicts resulting from both these aspects. These conflicts refer, for example to differences of opinion between secular and religious Israelis resulting from the dominance of Orthodox Jews in civil matters, such as in questions of marriage and divorce. That subject is also of central importance for Jews in the Diaspora who are planning to move to Israel. There are also problems concerning integration of the Arab minority. Nevertheless, he was optimistic that in future the state of Israel would not only be able to retain its Jewish identity but also be a stable democracy. He emphatically rejected all speculations about a bi-national state, or a state without a Jewish identity: Israel had been created as a home country for Jews from all over the world and therefore had to preserve its Jewish identity. Finally, Prof. Bar Siman Tov explained that the creation of a Palestinian state would actually be in the interests of Israel in order to allow Israel to continue to exist as a democratic nation with a Jewish majority.

Jonathan Adiri, diplomatic advisor of President Shimon Peres at the age of not yet 30, also inspired the delegates. His presentation concentrated on the country's ongoing economic upswing. Although performance was already impressive, it could be substantially improved by means of a more effective public sector. He stated that Israel enjoyed an excellent position in the world market and that a great part of its export and import transactions were already handled with India and China. In particular, Adiri stressed Israel's good performance in the high-tech and R&D sectors and explained that the country was investing above all in „minimization processes“ (such as nanotechnology). He stressed the need to enhance the integration of certain groups of society, such as Orthodox and Arab Israelis, in the labor market to promote economic growth even further.

One wide-ranging subject that greatly concerns both Jewish Americans and Germans is the importance of the Holocaust for the present generation. Katharina von Münster, Director of Action Reconciliation for Peace in Israel, herself an alumna of the KAS/AJC program, arranged for the delegation to meet survivors of the Holocaust and German volunteers. During these highly personal and moving discussions, the delegates

heard the personal history of these survivors and spoke to them about the specific responsibility that this entailed for the present generation. In the course of these discussions, it emerged that many of the American delegates found meeting Germans and talking about the Shoah with them far stranger than the Israeli survivors did. There is still a great deal of communication work to be done regarding German-American-Jewish relations.

At a panel discussion with Peter Fischer, the representative of the German Embassy, Peter Vrooman, the political secretary of the US Embassy, Boris Ruge, head of the Middle East Department of the Foreign Office, and David Witzthum, a well-known Israeli television presenter, the delegates discussed primarily the global challenges that jointly face Germany, the USA and Israel. There was intense discussion of the question as to how we should react to Iran's nuclear armament plans. It became clear that that was currently the greatest threat to Israel. The discussion participants failed to reach a consensus of opinion on the chances of success and the political consequences of a possible military intervention.

In a highly impressive paper, Rachel Korazim, a former employee of the Jewish Agency, explained the influence and effects of the Holocaust on Israeli society. Amongst other things, Ms. Korazim presented the different perceptions of the Holocaust and the divergent reactions of the religious and secular Israeli population.

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the delegation attended a reception by the Ambassador Aviv Shir-On who began his presentation with a brief introduction to the history of Israel and listed Israel's successes in the integration of different groups of immigrants. Aviv Shir-On emphasized Israel's interest in achieving normal contacts and good relations with its moderate and pragmatic Arab neighbors.

At a workshop which was also attended by young Israelis, including a colleague of Knesset member Amira Dotan and a representative of the „Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation“, Holger Haibach, Member of the German Parliament, gave a paper entitled „Joint Values – Joint Challenges“. He discussed primarily the security challenges, but also the challenges resulting from global climate change. Holger Haibach stressed the importance of coexistence, which he believed was the key to a future in peace and security. He described the importance of regional projects,

such as the cooperation between the Israeli region of Gilboa and the neighboring Palestinian region of Jenin. Such regional cooperation, which benefits both sides, is also supported by the KAS.

A paper on the current state of negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian National Authority was given by Issa Kassissieh, adviser to Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas, and Wassim Khazmo, Communications Adviser of the NSU (Negotiation Support Unit). The comprehensive presentation from the Palestinian point of view reflected on the successes, but also on the challenges and remaining difficulties regarding Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Both speakers were comparatively pessimistic with regard to the chances of an agreement in the near future and believed that time was running out for a two-state solution and the creation of a Palestinian state. They explained that the younger generation in particular was discussing the option of a one-state solution in which all Palestinians would demand full citizen's rights from Israel.

At the Cinematheque in Jerusalem, Gili Mendel, Director of the Department of Media and Film Education, provided an introduction to the „I am, you are“ project which she had initiated and in which Arab and Jewish teenagers collaborate every year on a film project about their identities and philosophies. The young participants, aged between 15 and 17, jointly shoot and produce a film under the guidance of a professional. A further highlight of the visit was a full-day excursion to Rehovot and on to the south of the country. Amongst other things, the participants visited the EL-OP company. Its core business is the manufacture, research and development of electro-optical devices. EL-OP was founded in 1937 by a businessman from Dresden and is now one of the leading business enterprises in Israel.

The participants were shown a strategic Gaza observation point near Sderot by an army spokesman and also visited the police station in Sderot. This clearly showed the threat posed by the Qassam rockets stationed in the Gaza Strip, just a few kilometers away. Since the Israeli army withdrew from the Gaza Strip, more than 8000 Qassam rockets have been fired on the neighboring Israeli region. Dalia Yosef, Director of the Sderot Resiliency Center, gave the delegates a vivid idea of the psychological stress resulting from the permanent and unpredictable threat posed by the rockets, especially for children and young people.

The delegates visited the Sde Boker kibbutz, site of the historic meeting of David Ben Gurion and Konrad Adenauer in Israel in 1966. Like Chancellor Merkel in March of this year, the delegates also visited Ben Gurion's grave. The German-Israeli author Chaim Noll gave them an introduction to the history of the kibbutz and explained the development of German-Israeli relations and Germany's current contribution to desert research at Sde Boker. He also told them about his own moving personal history: born the son of an author who had close ties with GDR nomenclature, he moved to West Germany in the 1980s, where he rediscovered his Jewish roots and emigrated to Israel with his family in the 1990s.

Finally, the members of the delegation visited a Beduin project and, in the course of various excursions, learned about the history of Jerusalem and the surrounding area and the city of Tel Aviv. In Tel Aviv, the delegation met a progressive Jewish community and attended the Shabbat service there.

This joint program gave the delegates the opportunity to discuss their recollections about what they had learned, as well as the many impressions and experiences they had shared and which helped them see things from different points of view. This not only raised their understanding for one another, but also led to a new way of thinking: for instance, one American delegate stressed that she had not been aware of the commitment of the EU and Germany in the region and said how important she found it. Nor had she realized how deep and intensive German-Israeli relations were today, which she found impressive considering their history. Above all, the Germans learned about the viewpoints of the American-Jewish Diaspora regarding current developments in Israel. Last but not least, this led to a lively discussion of the US election campaign which was in progress at the time and its importance for Israeli-American or respectively American-German relations.

It was repeatedly suggested that this program should be continued in future, not least in the interests of expanding the network of young executives in Germany, the USA and Israel.

I believe that this unique program in Israel helped to intensify the German-American-Israeli dialog. Many of the topics that had been discussed beforehand during the exchange program and which I myself had also experienced took on a new light following the joint visit to Israel. Not

least, it shed light on the things that link Germany, the USA and Israel today and for the future: values such as freedom, democracy and human rights, which we all join forces to defend.

## APPENDIX

**AMERICAN ALUMNI****1980**

Berger, Jan  
Blume, Rita  
Cohen, Susan B.  
Colvin, Andrew M.  
Fine, Yehuda  
Freed, Debra R.  
Gips, Walter F.  
Gordis, David A.  
Pokross, Nancy C.  
Ring, Ellen  
Rubin, Judith  
Spiegel, Mark A.  
Weinberger, Robert A.  
Wishner, Jane B.  
Yaroslavsky, Zev

**1982**

Abel, David A.  
Baumann, James S.  
Biedermann, Jerry H.  
Bridge, Bobbe J.  
DuBow, Eugene  
Ellenoff, Douglas S.  
Graceman, Ronald F.  
Hirsh, Lisa M.  
Kwalwasser, Marsha H.  
Lazar, Marcia E.  
Levy, J. David  
Lipstadt, Deborah E.  
Mesnekoff, David  
Nemo, Carol B.  
Newmark, Kenneth J.  
Opotowski, Barbara B.  
Petschek, Nancy H.

Sokolow, Bart B.  
Stearn, Harvey  
Swig, Steven L.  
Weiss, Richard L. and Mrs. Weiss

**1983**

Baker, Andrew  
Bridge, Jonathan  
Felsenthal, Jerrold  
Formann, Stephen  
Friedmann, James  
Friedmann, Lesley  
Golden, Roberta  
Jasper, Stuart  
Kohn, Rik  
Levy, Mont  
Links, Robert  
Loeb, Milford II  
Makrauer, George  
Newmann, Bernice  
Rabinowitz, Dayle  
Ramer, Ann  
Ramer, Bruce  
Saunders, Lisa  
Stern, Richard  
Szybad, Peter

**1984**

Blatt, Benjamin Daniel  
Cohen, Howard  
Diner, Hasia  
Follman, Joyce M.  
Friedman, Harry D.  
Greenberg, Bernard  
Haines, Daniel

**1986**

Alschuler, William R.  
Atlas, Martha J.  
Borochoff, Daniel J.  
Gelfand, Julia M.  
Gomberg, Steven P.  
Goodman, Richard C.  
Greenburg, Sharon L.  
Isaacs, Ellen L.  
Kaye, Andrea L.  
Lee, Carl B.  
Lubel, Alan E.  
Parker, Elizabeth D.  
Rosenblum, Joel  
Rozanski, Geri E.  
Signer, Michael A.  
Stone, Harlan S.  
Traum, Judith R.

**1987**

Bloomberg, Jayne C.  
Bloomfield, Sara Jane  
Bogard, Harriet  
Ellenoff, Debra S.  
Hattenbach, Jonathan A.  
Hexter, John B.  
Horwitz, Deborah G.  
Isaacs, Dean O.  
Kichaven, Jeffrey G.  
Lazarus, Eleanor S.  
Lazarus, Stephen S.  
Rackman, Joseph R.  
Scadron, Roger  
Schechter, Sheri G.  
Schocken, Judy A.  
Uten, Nissen E.  
Weiner, Ronald G.  
Weston, Richard A.  
Wishner, Miriam R.

Janowsky, Lewis  
Lerman, Eileen R.  
Levine, Jonathan  
Mesnekoff, Faith  
Reisman, Karen C.  
Rice, Richard J.  
Rosenson, Judith  
Singer, Abraham  
Temel, Charles S.  
Wasserman, Steve  
Wohlauer, Susan  
Wolfson, Lisa R.  
Zilber, Sidney

**1985**

Brodsky, Donald W.  
Burstin, Barbara S.  
Elson, Louis G.  
Freehling, Paul E.  
Galperin, Joyce  
Jaffe, David B.  
Johns, Richard S.E.  
Kest, Barbara E.  
Makovsky, Kenneth D.  
Rosenberg, Robert D.  
Schwartz, William B. III  
Schwartz, Rhea S.  
Siegmann, Fred H.  
Tanner, Karen E.  
Tobolwsky, Emily G.  
Tofel, Jeanne S.  
Turner, Dennis R.  
Weiss, Ronald L.  
Yarnell, Susan

**1988**

Abel, David  
 Follman, Joyce  
 Goodman, Richard  
 Janowsky, Lewis  
 Jasper, Stuart  
 Kest, Barbara  
 Lazar, Marcia  
 Lee, Carl  
 Lerman, Eileen  
 Links, Robert  
 Makovsky, Kenneth  
 Reisman, Karen  
 Rice, Richard  
 Rozanski, Geri E.

**1989**

Alter, Neil  
 Baskes, Julie  
 Foxman, Ronald  
 Gargiulo, Andrea  
 Halpern, Stephen  
 Hyman, David  
 Kremer, Ray Ann  
 Rosenthal, Gary  
 Sorkow, Gayle  
 Weiss, Kenneth

**1990**

Berner, Art  
 Braun, Keith  
 Feinstein, Karen  
 Harwin, Gay  
 Loewy, Jeffrey  
 Reich, Allan  
 Schwartz, David  
 Segal, James

Shrier, Nisha  
 Zimmerman, Rebecca

**1991**

Alexander, Elaine Barron  
 Chandler, Harriette L.  
 DuBow, Eugene  
 Ellenoff, Greg  
 Grossman, Leonard E.  
 Lerner, Nelson Alan  
 Myers, Richard P. Jr.  
 Ries, Jonathan  
 Weinberg, Richard Gabriel  
 Zelinger, Steven Lee

**1992**

Beiner, Stephen  
 Elliot, Bobbie  
 Friedman, James J.  
 Gold, Kenneth  
 Rattner, William  
 Rozanski, Geri E.  
 Segil, Annette  
 Shafton, Marjorie "Midge"  
 White, Helene

**1993**

Algazi, Herman "Hy"  
 DuBow, Eugene  
 Frank, Fred  
 Frenkel, Douglas  
 Isaacson, Steve  
 Kasdon-Sidell, Louisa  
 Leftin, Solomon  
 Osias, David  
 Shafton, Randi  
 Youkilis, John

**1994**

Diener, Debra  
 DuBow, Eugene  
 Dubrof, Cydnee  
 Greenburg, Joel  
 Kahn, Chuck  
 Kenemore, Ellen  
 Pritikin, Daniel  
 Street, Brian  
 Waxman, Robert  
 Zlotky, Jeff

**1995**

Bennett, Dorothy  
 Blum, Michael S.  
 Burstein, Catharine  
 Chick, Laura  
 DuBow, Eugene  
 Ellenhorn, David  
 Hoffman, Carol  
 Rosenthal, Robert  
 Sidran, Marc  
 Teper, Douglas  
 Weinberg, Carroll  
 Weintraub, Howard

**1996**

Arnovitz, Eliot  
 Dubin, Stephen V.  
 Franks, Gerald  
 Handelman, Ronni  
 Levine, Stanley W.  
 Levites, Sol  
 Rom, Barbara  
 Siegel, William D.

**1997**

Davis, Michael M.  
 DuBow, Eugene  
 Furst, Allen S.  
 Golder, Stanley C.  
 Klein, Ron  
 Orkow, Bonnie M.  
 Ravel, Rysia de  
 Shapiro, Cookie  
 Sideman, Richard  
 Spiegel, Dan  
 Weil, Peter

**1998**

Cohen, Brian S.  
 DuBow, Eugene  
 Lichtenberg, Eva  
 Fishell Fuller, Steffen  
 Ginsburg, Lawrence D.  
 Greenberg, Lawrence A.  
 Halpern, Jack  
 Kalish, David J.  
 Kloke, Wendy  
 Patt, Stephen L.  
 Rawicz, Fred  
 Tausend, Frederic C.  
 Vogelfanger, Roslyn

**1999**

Cutler, Lawrence M.  
 Harris, Jules  
 Hertzman, Bernard "Buddy"  
 Huckman, Beverly B.  
 Inlander, David  
 Jaffe, Suzanne D.  
 Levine, Len  
 Mogy, Joel  
 Paine, Jeffrey A.

**2000**

Alperin, Barry  
 Aronson, Paul  
 Beiner, Judith  
 Forman, Judith R.  
 Gilbert, Ann  
 Goldstein, Sharan  
 Lowitz, Shana  
 Mendels, Joseph  
 Plotkin, Bruce  
 Taussig, Stuart  
 Webb, Elliot  
 Weiner, Richard

**2001**

Adelman, Caryn R.  
 Ales, Kathy L.  
 Babat, Marla K.  
 Beerman, Robert  
 Cooper, Andrea  
 Fuerst, Robert  
 Fusfield, Eric  
 Jacobs, Gary N.  
 Kaufman, James D.  
 Levine, Jonathan  
 Reimer, Michael  
 Sherman, Lawrence A.  
 Noble, Cara

**2002**

Amado, Honey K.  
 Berliner, Dr. Herman A.  
 Hexter, David  
 Kessler, Andrew  
 Podolsky, Bonnie  
 Rozanski, Geri E.  
 Schooler, Lonnie

Schnurer, Beatrice  
 Silverstein, Leonard  
 Suvall, Harriet  
 Zimmerman, Stuart

**2003**

Bernstein, Brenda J.  
 Fishbein, Cheryl  
 Fusfield, Eric  
 Hach, Anna B.  
 Maslia, Darryl S.  
 Reiss, Guy A.  
 Stoltz-Loike, Marian  
 Vincent, Jeffrey

**2004**

Gil, Chaya  
 Hytken, Franklin  
 Katz, Betsy  
 Price, Jay  
 Layne, Jonathan  
 Ramer, Gregg  
 Levin, Jack  
 Schatten, Philip  
 O'Neill, Judith  
 Stark, Steven

**2005**

DuBow, Eugene  
 Goldstein, Cliff  
 Gown, Carol  
 Isaacson, John M.  
 Kirsh, Philip  
 Kurlander, Laura  
 Marks, Sohier  
 Palestrant, Ellen  
 Rhodes, Ann

Riddell, Stacey  
 Safdi, Michael  
 Zimmerman, Cary A.

**2006**

DuBow, Eugene  
 Adelman, Lawrence M.  
 Bergman, Marion  
 Bergman, Stanley  
 Cantor, Eric S.  
 Dunie, Moshe  
 Gerson, Nadine  
 Goodman, Joseph  
 Levey, Lewis J.  
 Wandner, Jason

**2007**

DuBow, Eugene  
 Folbe, Amy B.  
 Gerson, Alex  
 Gitlin, Naomi  
 Goldstein, Marcie  
 Schonfeld, Victoriy  
 Sloame, Stuart C.  
 Smith, Ken C.  
 Wien, Leonard A. Jr.  
 Weinman, Sherry  
 Weinstein, Stephen A.

**2008**

DuBow, Eugene  
 Civin, Nancy  
 Guren, Sam  
 Horowitz, Nancy  
 Hyman, Allen  
 Ostrov, Jerry  
 Pulver, David

Rich, Robert  
 Saidoff, Debby

**2009**

DuBow, Eugene  
 Blumenfeld, Paula  
 Bohm, David  
 Chatzinoff, Leslie  
 Gogut, Charles „Casey“ Ingram  
 Cogut, Ellen  
 Goldberg, Bernie  
 Leberberg, Margot  
 Melamed, Alan  
 Rands, Nanci  
 Srulovitz, Michael  
 Warren, Louis „Buzz“ P.

**2010**

DuBow, Eugene  
 Azria, René-Pierre  
 Bennett, Paula  
 Gould, Candy  
 Gould, Leon  
 Lane, Bruce S.  
 Levin, Fredrick S.  
 Mardell, Fred  
 Meyer, Anthony E.  
 Pimley, Kim  
 Pincus, Claudio  
 Saidoff, Naty  
 Steiner, Carlyn  
 White, Eleanor  
 Zachariah, Allan J.

## PROFILE KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG (KAS)

The *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung* (KAS) bears the name of the first German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, who presided from 1949 to 1963. After the horrors of the Holocaust and the Second World War, Adenauer was driven by his Christian and democratic convictions to reconcile the German people with their European neighbors, the USA, and Israel. In the wake of the resistance to the Nazi regime, he became one of the founding fathers of a united Europe. Out of the debris and misery of the Third Reich, he and Ludwig Erhard ushered in the free-market economy and prosperity for all. Konrad Adenauer was the chair of the Christian Democratic Union political party, a collection of Catholic and Protestant Christians united behind the goals of rebuilding Germany, reunification, and reintroducing Germany to the family of nations.

The KAS is a German political foundation and an internationally active non-governmental organization. 70 international offices are actively engaged in political education in 120 countries. For more than 50 years, the KAS has contributed to the development of democracy and constitutional states both in Germany and throughout the world. The KAS aims to foster economic development and understanding among nations.

Konrad Adenauer and his principles inform the foundation's guidelines, mission, and responsibilities. The foundation promotes a Christian view of humanity.

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<http://www.kas.de>.

## PROFILE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

The *American Jewish Committee* was established in 1906 by a small group of American Jews deeply concerned about pogroms aimed at the Jewish population of Russia. The group determined that the best way to protect Jews in Russia and other countries would be to work towards a world in which all peoples are accorded respect and dignity.

Almost 100 years later, that founding mission continues to guide AJC's efforts to promote pluralistic and democratic societies where all minorities are protected. In addition to its New York headquarters and Office of Government & International Affairs in Washington, AJC today operates 33 U.S. offices and 8 international posts. We are an international think tank and advocacy organization that attempts to identify trends and problems early – and take action. Our key areas of focus are:

- Combating anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry;
- Promoting pluralism and shared civic values;
- Protecting human rights and combating abuses;
- Asserting Israel's right to exist in peace and security with its neighbors;
- Safeguarding and strengthening Jewish life.

The breadth of our interests and the manner in which we pursue them differentiate AJC from other organizations and contribute to our success. We work in a deliberate and diplomatic manner that gains trust, earns access, and, most importantly, produces results.

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for German-Jewish Relations  
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