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THE GERMAN JEWISH COMMUNITY: BETWEEN ADJUSTMENT AND AMBIVALENCE

Alan Mittleman

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The Third Largest Jewish Community in Western Europe

The Jewish community in Germany is now the third largest Jewish community in Western Europe. Owing to a massive influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union, the official community has doubled in the past six years. This startling development, coupled with the reunification of Germany and its emergence as not only a major economic but also a major political power, has thrown everything about the community into question. While the most basic issues of identity and integration (What does it mean to live as a Jewish citizen in the land of the Holocaust?) have never been absent from the post-war Jewish experience in Germany, they are surfacing today in an intensive way. While the community has long stopped thinking of itself as sitting on "packed bags," it has not really dared to dream of itself as more than peripheral to the great centers of Jewish life. This self-appraisal appears to be changing as an increasing Jewish population in an increasingly "normal" and well-respected

country inspires greater confidence in the community's future.

What sort of future shall it have? Is a normal acceptance of, or adjustment to, the host society possible, or is ambivalence the lot of Jews in Germany? This is the basic issue contested by Germany's Jews today. Here we will explore the Jewish community at present emerging in Germany, focusing first on the significant demographic changes brought on by the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union, and on their special problems of adjustment and accommodation. We will then analyze the current self-perception of the community and suggest that although significant voices are calling for a "normalized" German-Jewish identity, formidable obstacles still stand in the way.

Demographic Factors

In 1982, the Jewish community of the old Bundesrepublik was comprised of 28,374 members dispersed over 66 organized local communities

Daniel J. Elazar, Editor and Publisher; Zvi R. Marom, Associate Editor; Mark Ami-El, Managing Editor. 13 Tel-Hait., Jerusalem, Israel; Tel. 02-5619281, Fax. 02-5619112, Internet: elazar@vms.huji.ac.il. In U.S.A.: 1616 Walnut St., Suite 507, Philadelphia, PA 19103; Tel. (215) 204-1459, Fax. (215) 204-7784. © Copyright. All rights reserved. ISSN: 0334-4096.

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(Gemeinden). Of these, half contained less than 100 persons and one-third had fewer than 50. Twenty-six Gemeinden contained 100-400 members. Only eight had more substantial numbers: Berlin, the largest, had 6,500, Frankfurt had 5,000, and Munich had 4,000. The Jewish community experienced a slight decline during the decade of the 1980s. By 1989, total membership amounted to 27,552. At least eight communities ceased to exist entirely. With unification in 1990, the downward trend was marginally reversed with the addition of seven communities from the old German Democratic Republic (GDR) and their c.400 official members. But this development paled in demographic significance in comparison to what lay ahead: the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union.

First a word on terminology. Germany is not, its spokesmen often say, an "immigration country." That is to say, although Germany had (and still has, to a certain extent) generous provisions for refugees and asylum seekers, as well as a large population of "guest workers" and their by now multi-generational families, the country does not encourage immigration. German citizenship is still defined, in part, by the *ius sanguinis*: children with at least one parent who is a German national become citizens at birth. Furthermore, the German Basic Law provides citizenship for people of German ancestry regardless of their place of birth. Thus, the so-called *Aussiedler*, the descendants of German settlers in Russia, can enter the country on a fast track to citizenship if they speak German and have maintained some form of German identity.

On the other hand, the *ius sanguinis* is not the sole criterion. One can be considered for citizenship under certain other circumstances: residence in the country for eight years, working ability in the language, no serious criminal record, and gainful employment are all necessary. German citizenship law is therefore similar to U.S. or Israeli law, a mix of consanguinary and naturalization provisions. (There are, in addition, over 7.3 million resident non-citizens in Germany, i.e., 9 percent of the population, including guest workers, refugees, and asylum seekers. Of these, the large body of Turkish guest workers are the best candidates for eventual citizenship. Few actually have become citizens, however, because present German law by and large rejects dual citizenship and Turks are understandably loathe to give up their Turkish nationality. Some 1.7 million refugees and asylum seekers are not on a track toward citizenship.)

Easy for a Jew to Settle in Germany

Unlike refugees, asylum seekers and guest workers, Jews from the former Soviet Union are in a privileged position. Other than the *Aussiedler*, they are the only group who come into the country under a special quota. In one of history's more bizarre ironies, it is now the case that, unless one is a German, the surest way to become a German citizen is to be a Jew. The decision to allow Jews to immigrate to newly reunified Germany was made in 1990. Chancellor Helmut Kohl offered to the then president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Heinz Galinski, that Germany would allow the immigration of Jews fleeing the disintegrating Soviet Union. Kohl's promise appeared to be both a humanitarian gesture and the expression of a hope that the Jewish community could be rebuilt. Although the implementation of this gesture has not been without protest and attempted modification on the German side, it has gone forward. While Jewish settlement is directed toward each of the federal states according to a distribution quota (as is the case with refugees), there is no overall limit on the number of entry visas made available. Furthermore, unlike other "refugee" groups, the ostensible reason for emigration, that is, persecution, is not entirely relevant. Jews have become de facto immigrants.

As of March 1997, German consulates in the former Soviet Union have granted 131,000 persons refugee status. Some 59,500 have actually emigrated to Germany and 38,000 have been accepted as members of the Jewish community. Approximately 700 Jews enter the country per month. According to the Central Council's estimate, another 60,000 may actually emigrate in the next seven to ten years. The discrepancy between the number of immigrants and the number of new members of the community has several causes. First, not all of the immigrants are Jewish. An unknown (or undisclosed) number are fraudulent Jews. It is this group that has irritated the bureaucracy, let alone the public and the Jewish community. Tensions have arisen between the Foreign Ministry and the Jewish community over how this problem ought to be handled. Understandably, the Central Council thinks that the level of fraud and abuse is low. German officialdom and the media, however, find the level high and worrisome.

As of 1995, the Jewish community had accepted about two-thirds of the immigrants into the Gemeinden. Today, the rate of acceptance appears to be somewhat less. Clearly, the perception that thousands of immi-

grants and would-be immigrants are abusing the system has grown into a major concern for Jewish authorities. Against frequent media investigations and repeated official calls for reexamining the policy, the Central Council has had to walk a delicate line. On the one hand, the chairman of the Council, Ignatz Bubis, has had to deplore abuse and condemn those who enter Germany on a fraudulent "Jewish ticket." He has also had to quiet concerns that Germany will be deluged with hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees. Additionally, he has had to mollify Israeli and other Jewish opinion which finds immigration to Germany misguided. On the other hand, he has sometimes had to push the German government hard to continue the present arrangement. The Jewish community is not afraid to imply that it would appear unseemly to revise the policy.

A second reason for the discrepancy between the number of immigrants in toto and the number who become community members is intermarriage. The German consulates will not break up families and therefore grant visas to both Jewish and non-Jewish family members. Once in Germany, non-Jews (as well as *halakhically* non-Jewish "Jews") are not permitted to join the community as the *Gemeinden* determine Jewish status according to Jewish law. The problem of non-Jewish family members (and non-Jewish Jews) is reminiscent of the same phenomenon, albeit on a larger scale, in Israel.

Third, there is the problem of alienation among Jewish immigrants. Having been raised with no positive or meaningful Jewish identity, many find it difficult to relate to the Jewish community as other than a provider of services to assist them with the very difficult problems of finding employment and becoming acculturated to German society.

This writer's experience might prove somewhat illustrative. During a research stay in Bonn in 1994, I was impressed by the palpable changes in the capital's small Jewish community. At least a dozen "Russians" came regularly to Shabbat morning services, filling back seats that were normally empty in previous years. On the other hand, the majority of these people seemed completely uninterested in the service despite the fact that Russian-language translations of the prayers and Torah readings had been provided for them. One wonders how often this scene is repeated all over the country. Of course there is, one assumes, something positive in the mere fact that they come to the synagogue. It is also the case, however, that many immigrants do not even present themselves to the communi-

ty. They are either so remote from things Jewish, or so intimidated at having to go through a further investigation of whether they are Jewish by *halakhic* standards, that they avoid the community altogether.

This last issue goes to the Jewish identity of the immigrants, to their relationship with Judaism and to the existing German Jewish population. To what extent will the immigrants be integrated into the existing social and cultural system? To what extent will they maintain a "Russian" subculture? Will they then challenge the existing status quo and reshape the community by sheer force of numbers, or will they remain aloof from the established communities in their own "ethnic ghettos"? However these questions are decided, the future of Jewish life in Germany depends on the outcome of their resolution.

The Immigrant Population and the Organized Community

Jewish immigrants choose Germany in part because they cannot get into the United States and have, for various reasons, rejected Israel as an option. The rejection of Israel as a destination may be based on reports of a relative's difficulties, fear of the unsettled security situation, marginal Jewish identification, or anxiety about Israel's "oriental" foreignness. The theme of being European, of imagining that one will be at home in the landscape and the weather — even if the language and the social system are still foreign — surfaces often in the narratives of the immigrants. The immigrants typically have concerns about German anti-Semitism, particularly radical right extremism, but they also come from countries such as Russia and Ukraine where their experiences of anti-Semitism have been substantial. Germany, by comparison, seems a model of political stability and social civility. The perception of Germany as an affluent and stable country offsets the negative weight of the past and the problematic aspects of the present.

The vast majority of the immigrants are well educated. 71.2 percent have a university education. 35 percent were trained as engineers or natural scientists; 21 percent were doctors, teachers, and artists. The high level of training is a double-edged sword, however. Soviet credentials are often inadequate in Germany, a country with a rigorous system of apprenticeship in industry and trades, as well as stringent academic requirements for the liberal professions. Thus, as of a 1996 study, only 14 percent had found full or part-time paid employment. Over 27 percent were unemployed, 28 percent were involved in lan-

guage study, and 11 percent were retraining. The high level of unemployment in Germany, as well as a system that seems to discourage innovation and entrepreneurship, no doubt exacerbates this problem. Despite the enormous difficulties of adjusting to a new society, however, a majority of Jewish immigrants are satisfied with their choice. 52 percent found their present situation better, 27 percent found it mixed, and 11 percent found it worse than in the FSU.

It is too early to tell whether the recent immigrants will articulate a "Russian" subculture or fully integrate into the older community. The tendency will probably be toward integration. Unlike the U.S. or Israel, Germany is not a multicultural or polyglot society. While large foreign populations (such as Turks) exist, they do not present an attractive model to Jews for, unlike other foreigners, Jews have come from a highly industrialized and urban society, and have a high level of education. They are disposed toward assimilation, especially for economic reasons. As most of them were, by Soviet standards, "middle class," it is this status which they hope to achieve. That requires, in turn, full mastery of the language, especially in the technical domains requisite to their professions. While Russian will be retained as a language of home and family, the development of a Russian culture is probably a luxury that the sheer pressure of survival will not allow for. On the other hand, if unemployment remains high and the immigrants are not, perhaps for reasons beyond their control, economically integrated into the mainstream, a degree of separatism can be expected. At any rate, the young children or German-born children of these immigrants will experience a normal socialization.

The degree to which the new immigrants will integrate successfully into the older *Gemeinden* is also dependent upon geography. To the extent that they are settled in the old Federal Republic or Berlin, the tendency will be to adapt themselves to the prevailing norms. In fact, a substantial assimilation by Soviet Jews to West German society has already taken place. Several thousand Soviet Jews had settled in Berlin during the detente period of the late 1970s and are by now quite well-integrated into the overall Jewish population. They, together with the arrivals of the past seven years, now constitute two-thirds of the 10,500 Jewish inhabitants of Berlin. (This earlier, successfully assimilated group may provide a model for the recent arrivals.) Nonetheless, that *Gemeinde*, despite a recent change at the top, still reflects the traditional Western pattern of community leadership and Jewish religious

expression. Where the most recent arrivals form an absolute majority, as in the cities of the five new federal states, the possibility exists (assuming these communities survive) for a new style of Jewishness to emerge. It is already clear that the eastern communities (such as Potsdam, Dresden, and Leipzig) represent a real break with the *Gemeinden* of the GDR period. This is explained in part by the general discrediting of the GDR and its institutions, in part by the domination of the new arrivals who have no ties with the German Jewish life of the previous four decades. There is no necessity for them to now replicate the pattern of superficial Orthodoxy that has prevailed in the West for decades. What their Jewishness will look like, however, cannot be predicted.

Despite the numerical majority of Jews from the former Soviet Union in centers such as Berlin, they have not yet succeeded in moving into the leadership of the *Gemeinden*. In the last Berlin *Gemeinde* election (June 1997), it was expected that the recent immigrants would have a significant effect on the vote. About one-half of the 56 candidates for communal leadership had Russian background. Surprisingly, however, no Soviet Jew made it onto the governing board of the *Gemeinde*. The two main Berlin newspapers expressed their surprise at this outcome in their headlines. It appears then that, as of this writing, the new immigrants, at least in the old Federal Republic, have not yet acquired the political clout which their numbers entitle them to hold. However, their potential to shape the institutions of the community, and hence its future, is clear.

German Jewish Voices

The Berlin election did not signal the political ascendancy of the Soviet Jewish immigrants. It did, however, signal the rise of the post-Holocaust generation into the leadership of the *Gemeinde*, if not yet the leadership of the community as a whole. The new president of the Berlin *Gemeinde* is the historian, Andreas Nachama. At 45, Nachama is the first leader of the *Gemeinde* without direct personal experience of Nazism. (Although as son of survivor and chief cantor Estrongo Nachama, and director of a Holocaust-related museum, Topography of Terror, he has been as involved with the Holocaust as a member of his generation could be.) This change of generations indicates, in part, the increasing normalization of the community: Jewish leadership, like German political leadership in general, is in the hands of the post-war generation. Those in their 70s and 80s are no longer the custodians

of the community.

With this shift toward a generation born in Germany and less tormented both by memory and conscience, we can expect the emergence of a more "at home" and "well-adjusted" community. "At home" means that the community, albeit incrementally, is moving away from ambivalence about its very existence and defensiveness vis-a-vis Israel and the rest of the diaspora. Although the community had ceased, for the most part, to sit on the famous *gepackte Koffer* (packed suitcases), it remained of divided mind about remaining in Germany. This is evident from the work of German Jewish writers such as Raphael Seligmann and Barbara Honigmann, who represent the second generation, the children of survivors raised in Germany. These and other writers cope with anger, shame, impotence, and perplexity vis-a-vis their parents' tragedies and choices. They live in Germany but are not at home in it. In Honigmann's case, her extreme ambivalence led her to physically leave Germany and settle in Strassbourg, taking up the life of an Orthodox Jew with the Rhein at her back. Close enough to be (voluntarily) haunted by her former Fatherland, yet far enough away to lead a more "normal" Jewish life than Germany allows. Seligmann, by contrast, continues to live in Germany, struggling to work out a credible form of Jewishness that is not based on self-abnegation. These writers cannot be said to be at home in Germany. Yet although they are representative of their generation, they are not the only representatives of their generation. Furthermore, the ambivalence they represent is not experienced only by Jews living in Germany. One can as easily find highly ambivalent narratives of Jewish life in France, a country with a much stronger Jewish community. There is another voice emerging in Germany calling, if not for reconciliation between German and Jew, then for reconciliation between Jews living in Germany and Germany. This is the voice of Jews who would be at home in the country and imagine themselves, with all the appropriate qualifications, to be Germans.

One of the strongest representatives of this voice is the most public representative of the community as such, Ignatz Bubis. Bubis is not a member of the second generation. He is a 70-year old labor camp survivor, born in Breslau into a family recently arrived from Poland. With the Nazi seizure of power, the family moved back to Poland where he was raised. Although he did not experience the full horror of Auschwitz like his predecessor Galinski, he was interned in a camp and lost his family. Bubis has taken a remarkably different tack from Galinski. Galinski

positioned himself as a voice of remembrance, which often took on, however, a tone of scolding. Bubis, as a public Jewish spokesman, must also constantly invoke the abiding presence of the past and its dead. His style, however, is also to celebrate German democracy and its achievements, and he has done this without sacrificing Jewish interests, even to the point of confrontational actions. Bubis projects confidence in Germany's democratic order and the place of Jews within it. He does not view "Germans" and "Jews" as hypostatic entities locked into a victimizer/victim dichotomy, but as dynamic partners in an evolving Europe. This sort of talk has made him very popular with the German public, and political and media elites, so much so that his name was mooted as a possible presidential candidate several years ago. Another effect of Bubis' robust endorsement of Germany as a stable, generous, and civil society has been a reopening of what it means to be Jewish in Germany today.

Revealingly, Bubis entitled his autobiography *Ich bin deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (I am a German Citizen of the Jewish Faith). The term "deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens" is taken from the name of the main organization of Jews in pre-war Germany, the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (founded 1893). It does not appear to be Bubis' intention to try to resuscitate the pre-war German-Jewish identity embodied in the name and ethos of that organization. The German Jew of the *mentalite* of an Albert Ballin or a Walther Rathenau can only inhabit the history books. German Jews fully shared in the nationalism of Imperial Germany and its chauvinist conviction of German cultural superiority. That can never be reborn among Jews. But there is also little chance that it can be reborn among Germans. For all of the talk of a rebirth of nationalism or, more minimally, of national reassertiveness among Germans during the Kohl years, they remain the most convinced Europeanists. And even as the memory of the Hitler period slowly dims, at least as a personal experience, the consequences of unbridled nationalism are still vivid. The genocidal demise of Yugoslavia affords a handy example.

Bubis' reassertion of a specifically German-Jewish identity appears to fall in line with the mainstream conservative view of what it is to be German: *Verfassungspatriotismus*, that is, patriotism vis-a-vis the constitution. To be German is to be a speaker of a language and a participant in a culture as well as a citizen of a political society defined by the Basic Law. Patriotism means, in this context, loyalty to the Basic

Law and, one suspects, pride in the achievements of the society to resurrect itself into a credible member of the family of nations by living up to its constitutional ideals. Thus, to be a German Jew means to be a Jewish citizen who shares in these ideals and who is an equal member, under law, of this society. The term represents the undoing of the old nationalism and its transformation into a citizenship-based identity. This is by no means an easy transformation, nor is it uncontested by more conservative and more genuinely nationalistic segments of the German right. It is also the case that any talk of patriotism, however tied to the constitutional tradition, raises the hackles of much of the German left. Nonetheless, the contested field of what it means to be a German today is the place where Jews are working out what it means to be a Jew in Germany today. Indeed, the very term "Jew in Germany" may be replaced by "German Jew," if the Bubis view prevails.

An insistent and forceful formulation of the need for a patriotic German Jewishness has been articulated by a second-generation writer, Michael Wolffsohn, a professor of history at the University of the Armed Forces in Munich. Born in Israel of German-Jewish parents in 1947, he returned with his family to Germany in 1954. Although he returned to Israel and served in the Israel Defense Forces, he made the decision to live in Germany because that is where he feels himself most at home. Germany was, in his words, "my native soil, my nature — my nation." Wolffsohn distinguishes between the old, invidious "outwardly directed nationalism" and an inwardly directed nationalism. An outwardly directed nationalism is aimed against the identity of others. An inwardly directed nationalism, by contrast, "is something quite natural...a reflection of something on the inside, within the soul." In his case, this nationalism is simply reflective of who he is, of where he feels himself at home, of where he believes himself to belong. This "nationalism," however, is elevated from an accident of birth to a moral desideratum by an obligation Wolffsohn intuitively feels to love and care for what is natural to one. This transition from "to live" (in a place) to "to love" (where one lives) expresses itself in patriotism: "Patriotism means identifying with what is worth loving and living for in a country, or striving to make that country worth loving and living in because it is one's own country." Wolffsohn understands it as his peculiar mission to encourage this inwardly directed nationalism among non-Jewish Germans. The Germans, on account of their history, are an "injured nation." Only one above reproach in these matters, namely the Jew, can help heal the

Germans. Only by cultivating this somewhat more emotive version of constitutional patriotism can the Germans fight the primordial temptation of outwardly directed, radical nationalism on their right.

Wolffsohn has gone much farther than Bubis and most other Jews are willing to go. His sharply critical manner, as much as the substance of his views, has won him much condemnation in Jewish circles and much praise from Germans. He has also, like other publicly identified Jews, encountered a good deal of crude anti-Semitism. An irony of his position is that, while it offers an almost utopian degree of normalcy for Jews, it also positions Jews in a most abnormal way: as saviors of the German psyche. It makes German national health in a way conditional on the therapy that Jews can apply. If Jews who live in Germany can love it, then surely the Germans have permission to do so.

The alternative voice of positions such as Wolffsohn's or even Bubis's is, in this writer's judgment, still too robust for the present circumstances. The voice of ambivalence may still have the right to speak more loudly, for it addresses the social reality. The reality is that the Jewish community, even though it has doubled in size and has higher visibility, is still minuscule in a nation of over 80 million people. The vast majority of Germans has never met a Jew (or has never been aware of meeting a Jew). Jews remain exotic. The subject of Jews remains fraught. Even with good will, a German's abysmal ignorance of Jews as other than Hitler's victims clouds his potential interactions with Jews. Beyond the intellectual lacuna, Germans are full of emotional ambivalences such as: a felt need for atonement, an anger at having to feel a need for atonement, the need to defend themselves against possible accusers for something they have never done, the desire to convince themselves that a line has been drawn under the past, the resentment at Jews for keeping the past alive. Although knowledge of the Holocaust is widespread and deeply entrenched in the educational system, the ability to think about and relate to Jews in an unburdened, normal way is exceedingly rare. For this, Jews are needed. But Jews remain rare in Germany and such Jews as are there shun the role of therapist to the nation. The founding generation lived to a large extent in self-imposed isolation, articulating a self-sufficient network of Jewish religious and social organizations within which one could live a credible Jewish life. This had the effect of creating a Jewish subculture that could minimize the need for dependence on the German world at large. The successor generations, no longer fearful of the German world outside the institutional

framework, have their own reason to avoid painful emotional entanglements. One theme that emerges in their narratives is that, as a result of their own search for Jewish authenticity, they do not want to be caught in the images, expectations, and needs of the Germans. They do not want to have to correspond to anyone's stereotypes. They do want to seek their own normalcy. It is degrading to be put into a box of characteristics not one's own by anti-Semites. But it is equally degrading (although not perhaps as scary) to have to live up to the romanticized expectations of the philosemite. The alternative is often blindness: not being seen as a Jew at all. This would be the better course were it not for the fact that it does not solve everyone's problem of uneasiness with the burdened relationship.

This "burdened relationship" is sustained by a mutual ambivalence toward the other that neither the passage of time nor the increasing confidence of Jews in their own community and of Germans in their democracy has been able to allay. Jewish ambivalence takes very concrete form. At present the community is riven by controversies. There is an ongoing argument, which can only grow in the coming years, over whether the Gemeinden should be religiously pluralistic. The vast majority of Gemeinden, although not served by rabbis, have outwardly Orthodox services. The vast majority of Jews in Germany, increasingly so given the immigrants from the FSU, are non-Orthodox. Up until now, Liberal Jews might visit services at American army bases. But with the decline of the American military presence, this is no longer an option. Independent "*havurah*"-type groups have developed in some communities (one with a female rabbi), but these lack official recognition from the Gemeinden. In a way, those liberals who want more pluralistic, American-style religious institutions are making the implicit claim: "This is where we live; this is where we are at home. Let us have institutions that reflect our values." The establishment, by insisting on the continuity of the original post-war constitution, suspends Jews in a time and a framework no longer their own. One might read the establishment position as a crystallization of fundamental ambivalence.

Continuity or a New Start

The post-war arrangement of the *Einheitsgemeinde*, or unified community, militates also against increasing religiosity on the right. The Orthodoxy of the Gemeinden is moderate and, as suggested, more a matter of style (familiar to the East European survivors who built the community after the war) than substance. But in

the last decade, a more self-conscious Orthodoxy has also emerged in Germany. Incredible though it sounds, the separatist Orthodoxy of Samson Raphael Hirsch, which split the Gemeinde structure of Imperial Germany in 1876, has returned to split the Berlin Gemeinde. A decade ago, heirs to Berlin's separatist congregation, Adass Yisroel, were given back the property confiscated by the Nazis by the then leader of the GDR, Erich Honecker. In the 1980s Honecker sought better ties with the U.S. and embarked on a number of self-serving ventures to curry its favor through favoring the East Berlin Jewish community. After the fall of the GDR, the East Berlin Gemeinde dissolved itself and merged with the West Berlin Gemeinde. The separatist congregation, however, wanted to maintain its complete institutional independence. This was absolutely rejected by the Gemeinde. Although the Berlin Senate was disposed to grant Adass Yisroel its independence, it acceded to the wishes of Heinz Galinski and the Gemeinde and deprived it of its right to exist.

At issue here is a fundamental matter of self-definition. The head of Adass Yisroel is an octogenarian who, in his youth, served on the board of Adass Yisroel before its destruction. He has a direct claim, as the last surviving member of the Vorstand, to represent, if not legally, at least spiritually, the will of the organization to endure. Adass Yisroel asked the Berlin Senate to recognize this claim of continuity as the ground of its right to exist. The Gemeinde, however, does not understand itself as a continuation of the pre-war Berlin Gemeinde, but as a "new," that is, post-war institution. After the war, Germans spoke of "*Stunde null*," the zero hour after which everything began anew. This was, in large measure, an attempt to distance themselves from the "Nazi dictatorship" and the encumbering guilt and shame. (Of course, the West Germans, unlike the GDR, also acknowledged responsibility, undertook reparations negotiations with Israel, and continued, however fitfully, the denazification process begun by the Allies. On the level of discourse, "*Stunde null*" was counterposed to a reaching back to the Weimar Republic and seeing the Bonn Republic as its continuation.) At any rate, the Jewish community, in no way disposed to see itself as a continuation of the German Jewish past, which was in any case foreign to the East European core of the community, declared its own zero hour.

The scandal of Adass Yisroel is that it *does* see itself as a direct continuation of a pre-war institution. By a stroke of political fortune, the Berlin Senate, which ought to have had a vested interest in encourag-

ing that sort of identification with the city and its history, was forced, out of deference to the Gemeinde, to tell Jews that they have no right to see themselves as rooted in Berlin's Jewish past! Once again, ambivalence over what it means to be a Jew in Germany speaks louder than the voice of relaxing the tension.

Berlin is also the scene of controversy regarding a proposed Jewish museum. Already in the 1960s, Galinski had opposed the idea of an autonomous Jewish museum. He feared that such a museum would represent a ghettoization of the Jewish experience. Preferable would be a museum integrated into a museum of the history of Berlin. No visitor should be able to encounter the history of Berlin without encountering the Jewish presence, Galinski maintained. The Berlin Senate took the same position and planned a major Jewish museum within the structure of the Museum of the City of Berlin. The Jewish community, however, under Galinski's successor, Jerzy Kanal, changed its position and argued for a fully autonomous Jewish museum. Direct confrontation in the summer of 1997 led to a breakdown of negotiations between the city and the Gemeinde, and the resignation of the director of the museum.

It is especially difficult in this case to separate the complexities of local politics and the passions of personalities from the substantive issues. At stake seems to be how Berlin's Jews (then and, implicitly, now) are to be represented. What is the appropriate balance between their Jewishness and their Germanness? Were they Berliner first and foremost or Jews or Jewish Berliner? As if the identity politics of the present are not hard enough to negotiate, contesting parties must try to negotiate the identity politics of the past in light of the ambivalences of the present. And who is, after all; to decide — Jews themselves or the city's cultural ministry which is actually paying for the project? To

whom do the bygone German Jews belong? The *Museumstreit* resists analysis in terms of a party of ambivalence vs. a party of adjustment. All sides in the controversy seem to be uninhibitedly asserting their rights of ownership over the Jewish past.

Perhaps this controversy is a sign of things to come. A Germany aware of its sins, and increasingly uninhibited about connecting itself to its history, will claim the Jewish portion of its past as its own, sometimes freeing and enabling it, sometimes annexing it. A Jewish community, increasingly aware that it is in this country for the long haul, will speak out without inhibitions, as befits citizens of a free society. Germans, increasingly distanced from the past with the deaths of the last members of the generation bearing direct personal guilt and responsibility, will treat the Jews not (one hopes) crassly or stupidly, but ordinarily, that is, with the ordinary consideration and civility that one owes another member of one's society. And Jews, who want both memory and normalcy, will accept a somewhat lessened role in the symbolic economy of German culture. Although events have not yet reached this juncture, this unheroic but realistic outcome is one prospect for Jews on German soil.

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Alan Mittleman is a Fellow of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and Professor of Religion at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA. His most recent book is *The Politics of Torah: The Jewish Political Tradition and the Founding of Agudat Israel* (State University of New York Press, 1996). This *Jerusalem Letter* is based on his chapter in the forthcoming book, *European Jewry: Between America and Israel — Jewish Centers and Peripheries 50 Years after World War II*, edited by Ilan Troen.