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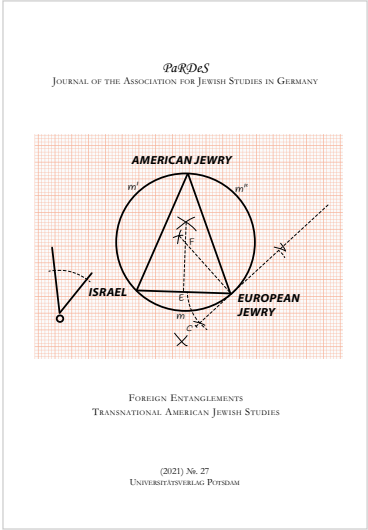

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Jewish-Christian Dialogue and American Visions of the Postwar World

by Jessica Cooperman

Abstract

American occupying forces made the promotion of Jewish-Christian dialogue part of their plans for postwar German reconstruction. They sought to export American models of Jewish-Christian cooperation to Germany, while simultaneously validating and valorizing claims about the connection between democracy and tri-faith religious pluralism in the United States. The small size of the Jewish population in Germany meant that Jews did not set the terms of these discussions, and evidence shows that both German and American Jews expressed skepticism about participating in dialogue in the years immediately following the Holocaust. But opting out would have meant that discussions in Germany about the Judeo-Christian tradition that the American government advanced as the centerpiece of postwar democratic reconstruction would take place without a Jewish contribution. American Jewish leaders, present in Germany and in the US, therefore decided to opt in, not because they supported the project, but because it seemed far riskier to be left out.

1. Introduction

In January 1949, Rabbi Simon Kramer, stationed in US-occupied Germany as Jewish liaison representative to the Religious Affairs Branch of the Office of Military Government, sent a letter to Rabbi Hirsch Freund, executive director of the Synagogue Council of America.[1] "My Dear Rabbi Freund," Kramer wrote:

[1] The Synagogue Council of America was founded in 1926 to promote cooperation and collaboration between the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox branches of American Judaism. Its work focused on the protection of church-state separation in the US, preserving and repatriating Jewish sacred objects after World War II, and the promotion of civil rights and Black-

> "It will interest the Synagogue Council to know that the United States Military Government is making arrangements to send selected German representatives to the United States as part of a large scale plan of restoration and cultural exchange. […] There will be a large delegation of Catholics, an equal number of Protestants, some under the auspices of the National Conference of Christians and Jews […] and some Jews under the auspices of Jewish organizations."

Kramer expressed his hope that the Synagogue Council would take responsibility for sponsoring and organizing the visits of these German Jews. He reassured his colleague that all expenses would be covered by the government. The sponsoring agency would only have to work with the Religious Affairs Branch to plan and implement visitors' itineraries. "The entire purpose" of these visits, Kramer explained, "is to help in the process of the rebuilding and the reorientation of the various elements of the German population for life in a Democratic [sic] Germany." Perhaps anticipating a question from Rabbi Freund, Kramer added, "Do not ask me about the worthwhileness of the entire matter. Suffice it to say the Military Government is doing it, and I do not want to see the Jewish group left out."[2]

Kramer served in an American military government that saw the construction of a tri-faith model of religious dialogue, one in which Protestants, Catholics, and Jews all participated together, as a crucial component of the postwar re-education of German society. The Religious Affairs Branch, a subsidiary of the Division of Education and Cultural Relations, played a relatively small part in the massive administrative system that the United States and its wartime allies put in place to rebuild and denazify Germany in the late 1940s, but it played a significant role in exporting American models of tri-faith cooperation and Jewish-Christian dialogue to Germany. Even more significantly, it helped to validate and valorize American ideas about the connections between democracy and tri-faith religious pluralism in the United States.

Kramer's skepticism reflected the uncertain future of Jews in Germany. Following the war, the United States estimated that only "156,705 'Persons

Jewish relations. The organization disbanded in 1994. See the Synagogue Council of America papers in the collections of the American Jewish Historical Society (hereafter AJHS), New York, accessed October 10, 2021, https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/3/resources/13248.

2 Rabbi Simon Kramer, Nurnberg, to Rabbi Hirsch Freund, New York, January 6, 1949, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 12.

professing Jewish faith' [...] [resided] in the four zones and Greater-Berlin, plus an additional 112,013 Jews in DP camps."[3] Eastern European Jews, displaced by the Holocaust, and unable or unwilling to return to their prewar homes, comprised the majority of these populations. By 1950, the Jewish population of West Germany fell to only 21,974 people as both eastern European and German Jews left Germany to settle elsewhere, particularly in the newly established State of Israel.[4] This rapid decline in numbers seemingly confirmed the opinion of most American Jewish agencies, as well as of the World Jewish Congress, that following the Holocaust, Jews should not live on "the blood-stained soil of Germany."[5] But Kramer's comments also reflected his reasonable understanding that once an institution as powerful as the US government adopts a particular strategy or position, risks accrued to those either left out or refusing to participate. Jewish leaders, skeptical or no, wanted to be sure they had a place in postwar conversations about religion and the structures of democracy.

2. Religion, Democracy, and Re-education of West Germany

In the postwar period, the US government embraced the idea that the "Judeo-Christian tradition" could serve as an antidote to what it saw as the dangerous political ideologies that had led the world to war. In place of conflict, American officials sought to spread a commitment to what future secretary of state John Foster Dulles described as "common standards of knowledge and morality," in the "Six Pillars of Peace" that he and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America presented to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in 1943, as the basis for postwar international cooperation. Dulles argued that this framework for peace had universal value, declaring: "[t]hese six pillars of

3 Beryl McClaskey, *The History of the U.S. Policy and Program in the Field of Religious Affairs Under the Office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany* (Historical Division, Office of the Executive Secretary, Office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, 1951), Table I, 101.

4 Andrea A. Sinn, "We Have the Right to Exist Here: Jewish Politics and the Challenges of *Wiedergutmachung* in Post-Holocaust Germany," in *Rebuilding Jewish Life in Germany,* eds. Jay Howard Geller and Michael Meng (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020), 30–47, here 30.

5 See Jay Howard Geller, "The Politics of Jewish Representation in Early Germany," in *Rebuilding Jewish Life in Germany,* eds. Jay Howard Geller and Michael Meng (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020), 14–29, here, 16.

peace are derived from moral beliefs common to all religions and can equally be espoused by Protestants, Catholics and Jews – indeed by all men who have an enlightened view of self-interest."[6]

American religious and political leaders embraced the idea of a "Judeo-Christian tradition," which offered protection against secular political ideologies that theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr argued "had rushed into the vacuum created by Christianity's abdication between the wars, claiming to offer 'ultimate answers to the ultimate issues of human existence.'"[7] American officials reasoned that to help Germany recover from Nazism, and to inoculate Germans against the allure of Communism, Judeo-Christian religious values had to be part of their plans for postwar reconstruction.

Even before the end of the war, American policies included religious re-education as part of the blueprint for rebuilding a democratic Germany. General Eisenhower's Supreme Military Headquarters, focused on planning the military invasion of Europe, "contained a very small subsection for education and religious affairs which contributed plans for education policy to an overall field manual intended for the Supreme Commander and his troops."[8] When the Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS), under the command of General Lucius Clay, was established in October 1945 to administer the US zone of occupation in Germany, the Religious Affairs Bureau became a branch of the Education and Cultural Relations Division. When direction of the American occupation transferred from the military to the State Department in 1949, the Religious Affairs Branch became part of the staff of the High Commission for Germany (HICOG).

Both OMGUS and HICOG instructed Religious Affairs personnel to oversee the denazification of German church bodies and the elimination of religious restrictions against Jews. The purview of their work, however, was limited to those areas of church life deemed to be secular in nature, primarily monitoring the people involved with, and the publications issued by, religious institutions. They were expected to review, and if necessary to censor materials that either promoted Nazism or challenged Allied regulations, but policies

6 "Churchmen Detail 'Pillars of Peace,'" *New York Times,* March 19, 1943, 10.

7 Quote from K. Healan Gaston, *Imagining Judeo-Christian America: Religion, Secularism, and the Redefinition of Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 142.

8 James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 16.

enjoined them to "permit and protect freedom of religious belief and worship" in their respective zones.[9] Direction of "the constitutions, rituals or internal relationships of purely ecclesiastical bodies" was to be left to "German churchmen."[10]

American officials firmly believed that if Nazi leadership within the churches could be removed, traditional religious structures would provide a stabilizing force in society and a bulwark against both fascist and Communist influences.[11] Guiding principles for the work in religious affairs stated that:

> "[R]eligious institutions are recognized as a significant element in the social structure of Germany and shall be given commensurate consideration in the program of re-education and reorientation conducted for the building of a peaceful and democratic Germany."[12]

OMGUS policies instructed Religious Affairs personnel to avoid direct intervention in religious practices and to promote contact with religious groups in other countries, in order to provide "a new stimulus toward democratization," and to urge "democratic cooperation among the respective religious groups toward the realization of a peaceful Germany and toward the achievement of that toleration between diverse cultural and racial groups which is the basis of national and international tranquility."[13]

The conviction that internal decisions of the churches should be led by "German churchmen" reflected a particular understanding of the actions of church leaders, particularly Protestant church leaders, under Nazism. The Americans knew that many Protestant clergy members had supported Nazism and joined the racist and nationalist German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*) movement in the 1930s and throughout the war. They perceived this, however, as an aberration and believed that the majority of Christian leaders sided with the Confessing Church (*Bekennende Kirche*) in opposing Nazism. Stewart W.

9 Draft Directive No. 12 of the US Delegation to European Advisory Commission (EAC), November 24, 1944, National Archives (hereafter NA), College Park, Maryland, RG260.4.11 (Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division), Box 165, Folder "Religious Affairs Policy," 1.

10 Draft Directive to EAC, November 24, 1944.

11 See Marshall Knappen, *And Call It Peace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947).

12 Revision of Title 8, Part 1, GENERAL, Section B: General Policies for Religious Affairs, NA, RG260.4.11 (Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division), Box 165, Folder "Religious Affairs Policy, 1945," 8–110.

13 Draft Directive to EAC, U.S. Delegation, EAC. November 24, 1944, 1.

Herman of the World Council of Churches, assured his American readers in 1946 that after the war "the Evangelical [or Protestant] Church in Germany [...] wasted no time in ridding itself of ecclesiastical officers who were maintained in power by the Nazi State."[14] Indeed, he explained, after travelling through Germany on behalf of the World Council, he could report with confidence that "it was common knowledge that the church had never been in sympathy with the German War [sic] of conquest."[15] Herman's account, at best, displays naiveté about the far more complicated reality of Protestant and Catholic complicity during the war, but it served the interests of postwar clergy to burnish their image as moral opponents of Nazism, and present themselves as appropriate leaders to facilitate the social, political, and spiritual rehabilitation of Germany.[16] American officials found it equally convenient to believe that German churches were now led by anti-Nazi Christians, prepared to embrace and spread the gospel of democracy.

3. Democracy and Jewish-Christian Dialogue

The promotion of Jewish-Christian dialogue as a tool for building German commitments to democracy emerged as a goal for the Religious Affairs Branch sometime in 1946, when General Clay agreed to allow "each of the three religious faiths in the United States – Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish – to send one liaison representative to the U.S. Zone to assist church leaders in German spiritual rehabilitation."[17] Liaison representatives offered advantages to the chronically understaffed Religious Affairs Branch: they had no official position within the military government but increased available manpower by serving as advisors and informants. Even better, rather than drawing on military budgets, sponsoring American institutions – the Catholic

14 Stewart W. Herman, *The Rebirth of the German Church* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), 14.

15 Herman, *Rebirth of the German Church,* 98.

16 On Protestant Churches in postwar Germany, see Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2004). On the German Christian movement, see Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

17 McClaskey, *History of the U.S. Policy,* 21. On the promotion of dialogue groups, see Steven M. Schroeder, *To Forget It All and Begin Anew: Reconciliation in Occupied Germany, 1944–1954* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 69–95; Noah B. Strote, "Sources of Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Early Cold War Germany," in *Is there a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective,* eds. Emmanuel Nathan and Anya Topolski (Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 75–100.

Church, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and the Synagogue Council of America – paid liaisons' salaries. By 1948 the World Council of Churches and the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) had also sent liaisons to Germany.[18] The liaisons were charged with assisting German religious bodies to engage "in every way with the heavy task now confronting them, particularly with reference to the problems of spiritual and moral education and reconstruction." They were additionally "expected to give particular attention to re-establishing relations between the churches of Germany and the religious resources of the United States."[19]

The National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) and its president, Presbyterian minister Everett R. Clinchy, took a leading role in efforts to make Jewish-Christian dialogue an integral part of the United States' postwar mission in Germany. The organization had emerged from early-20th-century Protestant "goodwill" efforts to proselytize to Jews, but throughout the 1930s and 40s, under Clinchy's leadership, it managed to bring together Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders, and move into broad public view by advocating for acceptance of a tri-faith model of American religious pluralism.[20] During the war, Clinchy spearheaded the establishment of the ICCJ, and in the years immediately following the war, he served as the president of both organizations. Carl Zietlow, a Methodist pastor from Minnesota, served as the ICCJ's liaison in Germany. Funding for his position, as well as for the establishment of local councils of Christians and Jews in Germany, came from the American NCCJ, with additional support provided by the US military government.[21]

In early 1949, Zietlow reported that he had overseen the establishment of four American-style councils for promoting Jewish-Christian understanding,

18 McClaskey indicates that the World Council of Churches sent a representative in 1947 and the NCCJ in 1948: *History of the U.S. Policy*, 21. Schroeder claims that the National Council of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) had a liaison in Germany in 1946: *To Forget It All*, 86. But this seems uncertain. Correspondence between NCCJ president Everett Clinchy and General Clay indicates that approval for an NCCJ liaison was given not later than August 1947. Letter from Everett R. Clinchy, New York, to General Lucius Clay, Germany, August 16, 1947, NA, RG260.4.11(Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division), Box 163, File "Liaison Representative from [form or from?] the International Council of Christians and Jews."

19 McClaskey, *History of the U.S. Policy*, 23.

20 On the history of the NCCJ, see Benny Kraut, "Towards the Establishment of the National Conference of Christians and Jews: The Tenuous Road to Religious Goodwill in the 1920s," *American Jewish History* 77 (March 1988): 388–412.

21 On the ICCJ, see Ruth Weyl and William Simpson, *The Story of the International Council of Christians and Jews* (Heppenheim: The International Council of Christians and Jews, 1995).

one in Munich, and others in Stuttgart, Frankfurt, and Wiesbaden. He described this accomplishment in his March report, explaining that "[t]hese Councils, composed of Protestants, Catholics and Jews, exist for the purpose of promoting tolerance, understanding, mutual respect and good will among peoples of different religions, races, and cultural backgrounds." He had undertaken this work, he noted, at the invitation of the military government "because it was felt that the problem of reducing interfaith and intergroup tensions was an educational one, and could be solved only be an educational program similar to that conducted by the National Conference of Christians and Jews in America."[22]

To help explain the value of American-style interfaith cooperation to his German audience, Zietlow reported that he had hired Dr. Knud Knudsen, a book publisher from Berlin, to work on translations of NCCJ publications, in particular Sterling Brown's *Primer on Intergroup Relations.*[23] Brown's guide framed tri-faith religious pluralism as one of the central pillars of American democracy. As he described it, "from the first, America was something more than a one-group, one-culture nation. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews came here to seek religious freedom and economic betterment." Through this unique partnership between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, Brown argued, the establishment of the United States, ushered in a "world revolution in human relationship." The idea of democracy had its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Brown explained, but with the American Revolution, the "Founding Fathers" managed to take that tradition and create "something new under the sun."[24]

Brown's description of American history projected an image of shared values and a celebration of tri-faith religious pluralism. According to him, religious prejudices reflected a failure to understand the true nature of American

22 Annual report, March 31, 1949. NA, RG260.4.11 (Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Box 162, Folder "Interfaith Relations."

23 Brown worked as the NCCJ's director of publications during the war, then as assistant to Clinchy, NCCJ general director, and executive vice president, and in 1965 succeeded Dr. Lewis Webster Jones as the NCCJ's third president. On Brown, see "Interfaith Group Elects President," *New York Times,* April 8, 1965, 37; "President Emeritus of NCCJ Dies at 76," *The Oklahoman,* December 19, 1984; "Dr. Sterling Brown Named National Conference Chief," *Lubbock Avalanche,* April 7, 1965, 47.

24 Sterling W. Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations* (New York: National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1949), 9–10.

democracy. The work of the NCCJ, Brown argued, was to protect and promote democracy by breaking down the artificial barriers and hostilities that some Americans erroneously chose to erect between religious groups:

> "Protestants Catholics, and Jews in America practice 'religious isolationism' to a considerable extent. […] Ignorance, which is one of the bases of this group antagonism, continues to beget social, economic, religious, and racial discriminations which are contrary to the Judeo-Christian tradition, to scientific knowledge, and to democratic ideal living."[25]

American Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, Brown asserted, failed to live up to the promise of the American Revolution when they remained separated from each other. So long as they persisted in staying trapped within their respective cultural boxes, they cut themselves off from democracy, modern ideas, and even from their own shared religious values. The NCCJ strove, therefore, to keep the spirit of the American Revolution alive. As Brown wrote, "[t]he struggle for better intergroup relations exists as a continuing phase of the American Revolution." The present moment, he insisted, demanded redoubled efforts at promoting proper interfaith relations after "[h]aving won World War II with the help of Allied Nations, against the greatest counter-revolution American democracy has ever faced."[26] While Zietlow planned to use Brown's *Primer* to educate Germans about democracy, the text reveals ways that Brown and the NCCJ simultaneously used the example of Germany to educate Americans. Throughout his narrative, he poses fascism as a warning to those who fail to heed the NCCJ's call for dialogue and insist instead on "cultural isolation," which he described as "a bad habit with fascist implications."[27] Brown noted that cultural diversity also demanded respect, as without it one would be faced with what he described as "cultural monism," another sign of looming fascism.[28]

[25] Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations,* 15.
[26] Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations,* 12.
[27] Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations,* 21.
[28] Brown, *Primer in Intergroup Relations,* 23.

4. The Place of Jews in Jewish-Christian Dialogue

In order to successfully import the tri-faith American model that they described as necessary to true democracy, Zietlow and the NCCJ sought Jewish participation in the interfaith programs it established in Germany, but disparity in numbers made this difficult. By HICOG's estimates, the Jewish population of all four zones of occupation represented only 0.2% of the total German population, while Protestants comprised 59.7% and Catholics 35%.[29] Most of the Jews in Germany, moreover, came originally from eastern Europe, where they tended to define Jewishness either in terms of religious orthodoxy, or as an ethnic, cultural, or national identity, rather than as a faith tradition akin to Christianity, which was more common among German and American Jews. And of course, all of the European Jews living in Germany after the war had survived the Holocaust but had lost much, if not all, of what defined their prewar lives. Many of them had come to the American zone in the hope of leaving Germany as soon as possible and settling in either the United States or Israel. Regardless of American policies focused on promoting democracy, reestablishing their own lives must have seemed far more pressing than engaging in dialogue with German Christians.[30]

Throughout the spring of 1949, Zietlow submitted upbeat reports touting his accomplishments, but these reports unintentionally bore witness to additional difficulties in exporting American models of Jewish-Christian dialogue to postwar Germany. Referring to a recent interfaith conference, Zietlow wrote that all of those present had been "first rate German leaders," and that "[t]here was a wonderful spirit of give and take, such that […] [o]ne was not conscious of who was Protestant, Catholic, or Jew." Discussions of religious education programs revealed, however, that in all existing Protestant and Catholic curricula "there is no reference to the religious development of Judaism since 70 A.D." Reflecting on the accomplishments of the meeting, moreover, Zietlow commented on the

[29] McClaskey, *The History of the U.S. Policy,* Table I, 101, Table VIII, 107.

[30] On Jews in postwar Germany, see Jay Howard Geller, *Jewish Life in post-Holocaust Germany, 1945–1953* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Atina Grossman, *Jews, Germans and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

> "agreement among the Christians that the problem of antisemitism and of Christian-Jewish relationships would still be a problem in Germany which the churches must be concerned with even though there were no Jews remaining. The problem is one that has to do with the recognition of the dignity and worth of the human being which is far deeper than antisemitism."[31]

Zietlow seemed pleased with the outcome of the conference, but his report revealed that Protestant and Catholic participants knew next to nothing about post-biblical Judaism, and felt little need to discuss the many ways that Christian and Jewish experiences of the of the previous 15 years had differed quite profoundly. Moreover, they seemed agreed that discussions of "the Christian-Jewish relationship" did not really require Jewish participation.

Even in the United States, the NCCJ sought to advance discussion of the relationship between Christians and Jews, but did not necessarily perceive a need to include Jews in these conversations. As Everett Clinchy explained in a 1945 essay on the threat that Nazism posed to American values:

> "Hitler discerned that an attack on the democratic revolution called for the annihilation of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the destruction of all the values, the morals, and inspiration which were its source. Therefore, Hitler opposed the Jews – and yet not so much the Jews as the ideas of Judaism; but not so much the ideas of Judaism as the Christians who made those ideas potent; and not so much Christians as the standards, the disciplines, and the sanctities of Christianity."[32]

In Clinchy's analysis, Hitler aimed his attacks primarily against Christianity. Programs to promote Jewish-Christian dialogue therefore served first and foremost to protect Christianity and democracy rather than to protect Jews, per se. As Clinchy clarified, "Hitler's unerring cunning: to destroy the Jews and Judaism as the first step to the annihilation of Christians and Christianity."[33] Clinchy's formulation of the relationship between democracy and the Judeo-Christian tradition helps to clarify why the NCCJ placed such value on the creation of councils of Christians and Jews in US-occupied Germany.

31 Carl Zietlow, Activity Report for April, May, and June 1949, presented July, 1949, NA, RG260.4.11 (Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division), Box 162, Folder "National Conference of Christians and Jews," 4–5.

32 Everett R. Clinchy, "The Right to Be Different," in *Religion and Our Racial Tensions*, ed. Dean Willard L. Sperry (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), 28–39, here 31.

33 Clinchy, "The Right to Be Different," 35.

Jews in the American zone, however, found themselves in an uncomfortable position within these US government-sponsored programs to promote interfaith dialogue and engagement.

5. International Experts and American Models

The exchange program that prompted Rabbi Kramer's letter to Rabbi Freund at the Synagogue Council of America represented another facet of the work of the Religious Affairs Branch. In addition to working with religious communities, the Religious Affairs Branch also sponsored opportunities for German "experts" to visit the United States on the assumption that if they were immersed in the American milieu, these German visitors would come to appreciate the superiority of American social and political systems. Inspired by what they had seen and learned, visitors could then return to Germany and reconstruct their own communities along the American lines.

The Synagogue Council agreed to become the sponsor for German Jewish visitors and to help arrange itineraries supporting the goals of the program. Records for a handful of German Jewish "expert consultants" exist within files on the activities of the Synagogue Council. They offer limited biographical information and descriptions of the itineraries planned for each of their visits. The schedule of Jean Mandel, a leatherwares merchant born in Fürth, focused on teacher training, the administration of Jewish schools, and the influence of parents and home on Jewish education. That of Josef Warscher, a bookkeeper born in Poland but educated and employed, before and after the war, in Stuttgart, focused on issues related to Jews as citizens, with projected visits to national Jewish organizations and the offices of the NCCJ, in order to learn about American Jews' "interrelation with other religious groups in general community scene." Rabbi Wilhelm Weinberg, born in Austria and serving as the chief rabbi of Hesse, had a schedule focused on Jewish religious education. Plans for Ernst Landau, a journalist from Vienna, who had emigrated to Belgium before his arrest in 1941, included visits to synagogue centers and Young Men's Christian Associations in order to learn about the best ways to run youth activities. Rabbi Aaron Ohrenstein, born in Berlin and educated through gymnasium in Poland before attending the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau and earning a Ph.D. in Prague, served as a rabbi and teacher in Berlin until 1939. Now, as chief rabbi of Bavaria, Ohrenstein's schedule focused on the proper workings of the synagogue, the relationship

between the American Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform movements, as well as "the relation of the synagogue to the local churches and the interfaith movement."[34] Leopold Goldschmidt and Dr. Hugo Nothman's records describe only their educations at "University" and at the seminary at Breslau, respectively, and Goldschmidt's career as a journalist. In all these cases, records offer little information about the selection of these men as representative experts, or about their interest in importing American ideas about tri-faith religious pluralism to Germany.

In his official report to the Synagogue Council, Rabbi Kramer parroted the military government's language about these visits, describing them as giving visitors "the opportunity of learning the general democratic background of American living so that when they return to Germany they will be able to bring the ideals of democracy and the practice of American democratic life into the various fields of their interest in Germany."[35] During their visits, however, the Jews selected as experts displayed a good deal of skepticism about the value this project for stabilizing democracy in Germany. At a ceremony during his visit, Jean Mandel presented Synagogue Council President Robert Gordis with three surviving Torah scrolls from Fürth, explaining that "(b)ecause the German people have not done anything to rehabilitate themselves after their crimes against humanity, we firmly believe that in *Eretz Yisrael* and in the United States of America these Torahs will find the right home." Ernst Landau applauded American efforts to "re-educat[e] the Germans to a peaceful and democratic world," but assured his audience that few Jews wanted to live there, while Rabbi Ohrenstein explained that he saw no future for a new community in Germany.[36]

In a 1950 radio interview, Rabbi Kramer told American listeners that "a great many Germans are trying to better the relationships between Jews and non-Jews," but lamented the limited number of participants in conversations between Jews and Christians. In private reports to the Synagogue Council he

[34] German Experts to the USA – Jewish, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 12–13; Projects No. 246, 247, 248, 249, and 250, 5077, E-5077, AJHS, I-68, Box 23, Folder 13.

[35] Rabbi Simon Kramer, undated report to the Synagogue Council of America, likely 1949, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 14.

[36] Speeches by Jean Mandel, Ernest Landau, and Dr. Aaron Ohrenstein, undated, all presumably from 1949, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 13.

offered more critical comments. Like the "expert" visitors to the United States, Kramer explained that he did not think that many Jews would remain in Germany and expected that "those that will be left will be mainly the aged and the sick who cannot get out." Rather than the sort of upbeat assessment of the future of interfaith relations offered by Zietlow, who celebrated the lack of distinctions between Protestants, Catholics and Jews in his interfaith councils, Kramer described the unexpected risks of interfaith equality.[37] As the military government sought to equalize the treatment of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in the name of democracy, he warned "Jews are beginning to feel pinched and the German population is becoming more and more arrogant and openly discriminatory and anti-semitic."[38]

Neither Kramer nor the Jewish experts whose trips he helped to organize expressed much confidence in the reconstructive or regenerative powers of religious pluralism or interfaith dialogue, but Kramer did express concern about Jews being left out of these conversations. In a report to the Synagogue Council, Kramer argued that "[a] good deal of the interfaith movement in Europe is concerned, certainly motivated by the possibility of missionizing among Jews."[39] In a letter from August 1948, he urged the Synagogue Council to take the lead in organizing a national or even international organization to observe and represent Jewish interests at the International Council of Christians and Jews and upcoming international church conferences. Otherwise, he noted, "I am afraid that we will have to leave the Goyim to themselves."[40]

Kramer and the Synagogue Council had reason to suspect that at least some of those involved in promoting interfaith work would have happily proceeded without Jewish representation or engagement with Jews. They knew, moreover, that as a small minority, Jews could not set the terms of discussions about Christian-Jewish relations in Germany or elsewhere, and they expressed skepticism about what interfaith projects like those proposed by the NCCJ or ICCJ might accomplish. Opting out, however, meant that Christians

37 For Zietlow's comments, see Annual report, March 31, 1949.

38 Liaison Representative, Education Cultural Relations, Religious Affairs OMGUC, appointed by SCA, undated report, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 15.

39 Rabbi Simon Kramer, Paris, to the Synagogue Council of America, New York, August 16, 1948, AJHS, I-68 (Synagogue Council of America Papers), Box 23, Folder 14.

40 Kramer to Synagogue Council of America, August 16, 1948.

alone would define the "Judeo-Christian tradition" that the American government advanced as the centerpiece of postwar democracy, and that must have seemed like a risk not worth taking.