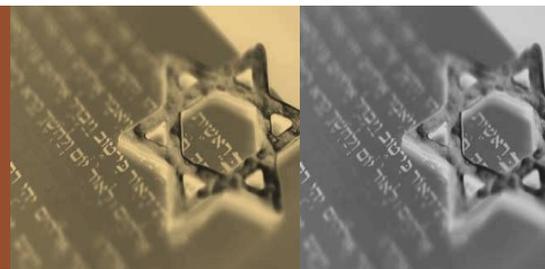


CHAPTER THIRTEEN: COMMUNITY NUMBER SIX THE JEWS OF GERMANY



Germany boasts the fastest growing Jewish community in the world. If someone had suggested that as a possibility even twenty years ago, it would have been dismissed as too ridiculous for words. But times have changed, and in the one European country where it seemed certain that no Jew would willingly live a generation after the Holocaust, there are now anything between 100,000 and 180,000 Jews (depending on the criteria for counting the numbers). It is a phenomenon that raises many questions. Let us address them now.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN GERMANY

1. Who are the Jews in the national community? Where did they come from? How many are there? What is their geographical distribution inside the country?

After the fall of Communism and the Berlin wall in 1989 a wave of Jewish immigrants together with their non-Jewish family members from the Former Soviet Union decided to settle down in newly unified Germany. Negotiations between the German Government and the umbrella organization of Jews in Germany, the “Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland” (“Central Council of Jews in Germany”) led to a special immigration status for Jews from Eastern Europe. It seemed now to be a duty for Germany to take in Jews fleeing anti-Semitism and economic misery. This law makes it easy for Eastern European Jews to immigrate to Germany because they receive upon arrival a permanent residence status and work rights. They can also immediately become German citizens. However, since Germany is no longer as prosperous a country as it used to be, many of the immigrants have to face problems such as unemployment and therefore depend on social welfare. Partly as a result of these conditions, discussions have taken place since late 2004 about the revoking of the automatic clause for citizenship.

The largest community is that of Berlin (approx. 12,000), followed by Munich and Bavaria (around 9,000) and Frankfurt (7,000). Hamburg and Cologne have each around 5,000 members. These are the largest urban communities.

It is clear that without the arrival of Jews from the FSU, Germany would neither be the third largest Jewish community in Western Europe nor the fastest growing Jewish community in Europe. We can talk of approximately 100,000 German Jews in the community: however, in truth, we should add to this between 50,000 and 80,000 unaffiliated Jews who do not belong to the community.

The overwhelming majority of today’s Jewry in Germany – whether affiliated or not – arrived from Russia and the Ukraine. They brought new life to the aging Jewish communities. Jewish life in the former East Germany was reanimated after 40 years of Communist oppression. Nevertheless, compared to the communities in the former West Germany, the communities in East Germany are still tiny today.



In many communities over 70% of the Jews are native Russian speakers. The pre-war German Jews who stayed after the Holocaust or came back after the war, have nearly all vanished.

83 Jewish communities – many of them really small – are spread throughout Germany. In addition to the communities there are several thousand Israelis living in Germany, one important Israeli “community” is in Berlin, the other one in Frankfurt.

Germany has a total population of 87 million; the Jews are a very small minority and only make up a percentage of around 0.1 % - in comparison to the Moslem congregations in Germany, for example, which contain more than 3.200.000 people.

2. How can they be defined economically? What are their professions and occupations?

Jews in Germany played throughout the centuries an outstanding role as traders and bankers in the commercial life of the country, in the main, because until the mid-19th century they were excluded from many professions.

After emancipation in 1871, the formerly forbidden professions opened up to them and they entered almost all the professions, succeeding notably in fields like law, medicine, academia and journalism. Since many young Jews at this time wanted to escape what they saw as the stigma of being a “trade Jew” they chose a profession to show that they were part of German society and could contribute to it. Many Jews decided not to belong to a large professional firm since they feared anti-Semitism and therefore chose to be independent.

Others stayed in trade, succeeding greatly, and pioneering many innovations in German trade and economic practice. But besides the academics, artists, journalists and doctors etc. there was a huge number of employees and craftsmen. Many of the German Jews were ordinary people who earned their livelihood through a small grocery or a haberdasher shop or the like.

After the Holocaust, many of the Jews who stayed in West Germany opened their own independent small shops or cafes. They were on the whole unwilling initially to work under German supervision – they had known too much in the work camps or as slave labour. Again they were choosing the way of independence. Today the situation is different. Jews in Germany are investing much in a proper education for their children, putting much emphasis especially on languages, seeing these as the key to a successful life anywhere in the world.

Among the Russian immigrants, more than 60% have a university degree, many of them as engineers, teachers and musicians.



3. What is the religious orientation of the Jewish community?

In Germany, Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism (under a different name) and also Modern Orthodoxy were all born and a variety of religious streams already existed in the late 19th century.

Prior to 1933, most Jews in Germany found their place somewhere between Conservative and Reform Judaism. After the Holocaust almost all Jews were non-Orthodox, but the central Jewish communal organization, the organization of the Central Council of Jews saw itself as a traditional framework (representing a liberal brand of modern Orthodoxy). The task of the communities in these years was to create a home for the surviving Jews within the outer non-Jewish world. They provided a base of Jewish ritual but more importantly, they tried to address the various needs of the survivors and their children, trying to start new lives and to live a “normal” life in Germany.

In January 2003 a milestone agreement between the Jews and the German state attempted to change radically the status of German Judaism. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder signed an agreement with the Central Council of Jews which gave Judaism the same legal status in Germany as the Roman Catholic and Lutheran-Protestant churches. According to this agreement the German government is committed to support and preserve the Jewish cultural heritage. Chancellor Schroeder mentioned that this agreement should be seen as a sign of a revival of Jewish life in Germany nearly 60 years after the Holocaust.

Among other things the Central Council of Jews received money for welfare, showing the government's commitment to helping the new immigrants who need help in building up a new life. However up until 2004, the Central Council of Jews (representing, as previously mentioned, a traditional kind of liberal modern Orthodoxy) was unwilling to include other streams of Judaism other than its own. Liberal and progressive Jews were excluded. Only after some angry debates it accepted the “Union of Progressive Jews” and its liberal congregations as members and was willing to share the governmental money.

It is important to remember, however, that in Germany, the concept of community is much wider than one of religious definition. A survey in the community in Berlin in 2002 showed some interesting results which can serve as a general illustration for the situation in the rest of Germany.

Many of the Jews today – keeping in mind the immigrants from the FSU – were raised in non-religious families ignorant of the Jewish tradition. As a result many seminars and lectures are organized for the adult immigrants to learn something about Jewish religion and culture; for the most part, however, it is the children who bring Jewish holidays and some tradition with them into the homes.

Most of the Jews in Germany today identify as Jews but their Judaism can be very secular. In the opinion poll in the Berlin community 29 % stated they would define themselves as liberal, 14 % as conservative-traditional, 16 % reform orientated, 8 % said they are Orthodox and 12 percent identified as atheists. 16 % didn't know what to say about the meaning of religion for them. Young people are more open to religion, as they are in search for something stable in their own Jewish identity, which is not limited to culture and history.



Circumcision has no value for nearly half of the new immigrants, and even a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is only of interest to two thirds of the adult community members. There is a clear generation gap because the younger generation is once again on the more traditional side. They cling to the traditions and want to have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah even if the parents do not see any sense in it.

The elder immigrants and community members tend to be more suspicious towards the gentile surroundings and to fear to live their Judaism openly; their experience in Russia has taught them the potential price of living a Jewish life.

Only about a third or less of all members go regularly to the synagogue. Many Jews are “Three-times-a-year-Jews”. Another reason for this non-religious life of Jews in Germany today – besides the lack of knowledge and the fear of Anti-Semitism – might be the absence of a more modern Judaism in some of the Jewish communities. Until recently, there was only one female Rabbi and she recently retired. Demand for female Rabbis and female Cantors and egalitarian services is evident in the large cities.

Certain aspects of traditional Jewish life are hard to live in Germany. A good example is Kashrut. There are very few kosher shops in Germany. Thus Jewish life demands compromises – although in the past few years a much better Jewish infrastructure has developed, compared to the situation in the 1980s.

4. What Jewish educational and cultural life is there in the community?

Before the war there were more than 160 Jewish schools of various kinds in Germany. Today there are six Jewish primary schools – in Berlin, Duesseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Cologne and Munich. In 1993 a Jewish High School in Berlin was opened for the first time since W.W. II, and today, more than 300 students attend the school. Most of them come from families which migrated from Eastern Europe after 1990, and this tends to be the situation in the other schools as well.

The Jewish schools have to respond to this situation and so they offer classes in Russian for those who don't want to loose their roots. In addition, they hold special classes for those who have difficulties with the German language.

The Education ministries recognise all those schools and they are also open to non-Jewish children. In Berlin around 40% of the High School students are non-Jewish. Some of these are children who come from mixed marriages and are not Jewish by Halacha. Others have no direct Jewish connection but their parents have been attracted by the intimate atmosphere in the schools and the fact that there is a lot of individual support for children. The teachers don't have to be Jewish; in Berlin only a third of the staff are Jews.

The Jewish schools are financed by the local municipalities although they are run by the Jewish communities. The curricula are similar to the public schools. But general history includes an emphasis on Jewish history, and additional classes in Jewish Religion and Hebrew language are compulsory for all students, whether Jewish or not.



For those who finished school and who want to study something connected to Jewish history and culture there are several Universities which teach Jewish Studies. But, interesting, most of the students in those faculties are non-Jewish. The Mendelssohn Center of Potsdam University is one of the most famous and active departments of Jewish Studies in Germany. In Heidelberg there is a special, autonomous School of Jewish Studies that offers academic degrees, and a liberal rabbinical seminar has opened in Berlin.

From the post-Holocaust years we have had a network of kindergartens operating in West Germany. In Western Germany the youngsters in the larger communities like Munich, Frankfurt and Cologne or Berlin had the chance to go to a youth center of the kind which were, and are today, still mainly connected to the Zionist Organization of Germany. As a result, it is normally Shlichim from Israel who educate the youth. In East Germany, there were neither Jewish schools, nor Jewish youth centers nor any Zionist activities. In today's Germany, Jewish kids have the chance to spend their holidays in summer camp or to go on trips with the Zionist Organization to France, Italy, Israel etc.

If we examine Jewish culture, and start with Jewish periodicals there are various journals and one newspaper. The "Juedische Allgemeine" is published in Berlin and belongs to the Central Council. Over the past five years this paper has changed from a fairly uncontroversial and boring newspaper into a sharp, well-written and controversial weekly paper. Most of the communities have their own journals, which discuss some wider issues but are largely printed to inform the local community about community activities, cultural events, and exhibits.

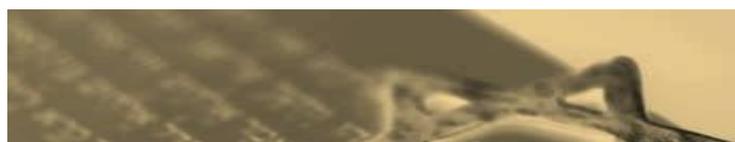
In Berlin the monthly paper "Juedische Korrespondenz" appears in German and in Russian. The "Frankfurter Juedische Nachrichten", published several times a year, has been known over the decades for its intellectual focus.

The "Tribuene", is also situated in Frankfurt, since it started publication in 1961 and tries above all to create awareness about Jewish topics and Israel. There are many journalists and authors as well as filmmakers and other artists who have Jewish roots but do not necessarily deal with their Judaism or with Jewish topics. Whether or not they are part of the Jewish cultural scene is a matter for debate.

There are more than 30 museums which have sections dealing with Judaism and Jewish history on a regional basis. The Jewish Museum in Frankfurt, which was opened in 1988 as the first of its kind in Germany after the war, is outstanding, but currently more famous is the Jewish Museum in Berlin, which opened to the public in 2001.

5. What is the situation of assimilation and intermarriage in the community?

The intermarriage rate in Germany is one of the highest in the Jewish Diaspora. In the above mentioned survey in the Jewish Community in Berlin more than 50% of the respondents expressed a strong wish for their children to marry someone Jewish. With regards to this question, it is worth noting that there was almost no difference between Jews from the former Soviet Union and those who were raised in Germany. Around 20% had no interest in the question of what religion a future partner of their children would practice.



Assimilation is a widely discussed and complex topic. Assimilation was once the ideal of many German Jews. However, it was felt to have been shown to be an illusion in the Holocaust and that realization echoes in the community till today.

Assimilation is not seen as the way forward for the majority of Jews in Germany. They do not tend to see Germany as their mother country, but many Jews do have strong positive feelings for the cities they live in. Many of the Jews in Frankfurt or Berlin or Duesseldorf define themselves as belonging in these cities. They are, as mentioned previously, German citizens but the overwhelming majority are not "German patriots". They often feel a kind of multi-faceted identity that leaves them in an in-between position in terms of their Jewishness and their "German-ness". They have a *mélange* of identities. Perhaps the unification of Europe gives them at last the chance to shape a new identity – as European Jews.

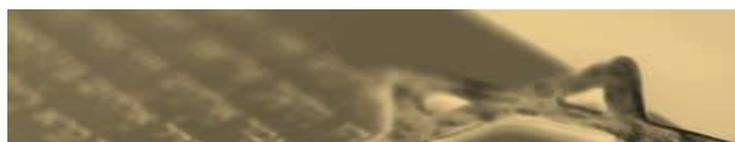
6. Are there any major historical circumstances that affected the inflow or outflow of Jews to and from the community?

Out of the 560,000 Jews in Germany on the eve of the Holocaust only about 12,000 survived the war in Germany itself. After 1945 several thousands emigrated, unwilling to stay in the country of murder and persecution. Only around 11,000 Jews returned – and many of them left again because of the hatred they still had to face and because of the self-pity many Germans showed after the defeat of their country.

In the mid-1950s around 15,000 Jews lived in Germany and in Communist East Germany only about 600 Jews were listed as members of the communities. In East Germany, it is worth mentioning the fact that there were Jews who left the country but virtually no immigration of Jews.

In Western Germany there were several subsequent waves of Jewish immigration, following persecutions and political developments in Eastern Europe. After 1956 Jews from Hungary came as immigrants; in 1968 it were Jews from Czechoslovakia who arrived. Both groups came west after the failure of the respective revolutions in the two countries. In the mid 1960s around 6,000 German Jews came back in order to benefit from the strict laws for receiving reparations money. But there was also a steady trickle of emigration, so immigration and emigration balanced each other out and the number of Jews remained stable at between 25,000 and 30,000 up until the late 1980's. However, it must be mentioned that it was largely young people who emigrated, leaving Germany, while older people tended to dominate among the immigrants

Thus, in Western Germany, where more Jews lived, the usual demographic pyramid was turned upside down. There was a huge base of old people, a layer of middle-aged people and, only a relatively small number of children. Immigration since 1990 has created a more normal demographic spread for the Jewish people. There are now many more children and young people in the Jewish communities. It seems that the aging process of the communities has come to an end.



7. Are there welfare problems within the Jewish community? Are there welfare organisations within the community?

The “Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle” (ZWST), the “Central Office of Welfare” of the Jews in Germany was founded in 1951. Its aims were, and continue to be, the helping of Jews in need and the care of old people and youth and children. This doesn't mean only financial support. The ZWST tries to help in cases of drug or alcohol abuse or delinquency.

The immigrants from the FSU are the largest group the ZWST has to deal with – and they need not only welfare but also psychological support as many of them cannot work in their profession in Germany and have to face a loss of status. The ZWST helps them also with language classes and courses in religion. There is an attempt to assist in integrating the immigrants and to lead them towards a greater Jewish involvement as well as to assist them building up a new life and to feel more at home in Germany.

8. What is the feeling of physical security of the Jewish community? Has there been and is there today a problem of anti-Semitism?

If there were those who hoped that anti-Semitism would disappear in a wave of national remorse after the Holocaust, this is not what happened. However, in recent years, there has been a strong overt resurgence of the phenomenon. What is new in the new millennium is the blunt and open expression of anti-Semitism and the fraternization between left wing and right wing, liberal and conservative streams. Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism continue to spread in German society.

In 2002, as the neo-liberal FDP Party maligned Israel, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and German Jewish leader Michel Friedman, anti-Semitism became an issue for the first time in a post-war German election campaign. In April 2002, the Sigmund Freud Institute in Frankfurt am Main and the University of Leipzig confirmed the new rise of anti-Semitism. In their joint study, 20% of the respondents agreed that “Jews are to blame for the major conflicts in the world” and another 26% shared this opinion to some extent. Studies from 2003 now estimate overt anti-Semitism at around 23%, and covert anti-Semitism as existing among 30%-40% of the German public.

Germany as a society appears to be in a process of developing strong anti-American and anti-Israeli attitudes and, in addition, of revising their attitude toward the history of W.W. II, emphasising the perspective of Germany as the great victim of the war. We should not be surprised to see less emphasis on the Holocaust in forthcoming years. Although there is Holocaust education in schools and a huge variety of memorial sites etc. the prevalence of such things seems not to prevent people from developing anti-Semitic attitudes.

9. What are the major problems on the agenda of the Jewish community?

The major problem the Jewish communities in Germany have to face is the “new” Anti-Semitism. Other issues on the community agenda such as social welfare for the immigrants and questions regarding the future self-definition of Jews in Germany are secondary to the question of if and how anti-Semitism – which is a European problem – can be fought.



In addition, however, there is much need of change in the internal structure of the community. Community celebrations often seem old-fashioned, directed and dominated by the older community representatives. A fresh wind of young and progressive ideas must be brought into many communities to hold them together, and to encourage more creativity and active involvement among members who are involved in the community's life and activities.

10. What are the demographic trends within the community? Can anything be said about the future of the community?

Those Jews who stayed in Germany immediately after the Holocaust were certainly not living there wholeheartedly. But attitudes changed and in 1986, as a new community center was opened, the architect, Salomon Korn, stated: "Those who buy a house want to stay!" Doubts were slowly put aside in the 1980s as Holocaust remembrance and educational work in schools were common and the first Jewish Museums were established. The Jewish community showed more self-confidence towards Gentiles and its representatives were increasingly active in politics and public life. Above all, the new post-war generation demanded a less obsequious and more assertive role vis-a-vis the German establishment.

There seems to be no question that the Jewish community in Germany is established and is here to stay. They are there like Jews in France or Argentina or any other large community, who might encounter difficulties but who represent a strong presence in the country. However, the quality of the future they will face depends not only on the way the surrounding population behaves towards the Jews but also on how the Jews themselves react to the situation that they face.

11. What is the general contribution of the community to Germany as a whole?

The glorious German-Jewish relationship from the time of Jewish emancipation in the mid 19th century up until 1933 was in reality often a one-sided love – the Jews loved Germany whereas Germany on the whole only felt an often reluctant preparedness to tolerate the Jews.

Nevertheless the relationship created great contributions to German society on the part of Jews in terms of culture, society, economic and politics. German Jews showed their devotion to Germany not only in their patriotic identification with the country but through their attempts to contribute whatever they could to the country – as lawyers, intellectuals, doctors, painters, musicians, journalists, academics and many other professions.

There are many important names that represent this contribution such as the poet Heinrich Heine (considered by many to be the greatest of all German poets), the writer and liberal political thinker Ludwig Boerne and the composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy or those great names of the early 20th century like the painter Max Liebermann (the leader of the German impressionist school), the writers and poets Kurt Tucholsky and Else Lasker-Schueler, the philosopher Martin Buber and the political leader Walter Rathenau. Even whole styles such as the world-famous architectural style named Bauhaus were deeply connected with Jewish architects. Jews in Germany were also active



in welfare and other forms of Tzedaka and founded numerous foundations, and helped to develop the academic infrastructure of Universities and other important institutions. They have made a contribution over and above their relatively limited numbers. However, many Germans were not grateful for this contribution. There was a nationalistic fear that German culture or economics would be taken over by Jews. The consequence, after the rise of Nazism, was the expulsion of Jews from cultural, economic and social life and later on their physical extermination.

After W.W. II a Jewish culture in Germany did not exist any longer and the contribution of the survivors to the two separate German States (prior to 1990) or to today's unified Germany cannot be compared to the era before the Holocaust.

Immediately after the Holocaust some survivors or émigrés who came back were involved in politics – in both the GDR and West Germany. Most of these tried to hide or to play down their Jewish background. It took up to the mid 1980s before authors, actors or other celebrities started to reveal their Jewishness. The whole subject has since become much more open. But the subject is by no means normal. Those Jews who are cultural figures and every other Jew who contributes as a manager, economist, politician or something else to German culture and society, cannot but feel that their status is under careful scrutiny since it is clear that the relationship between Germans and Jews cannot be defined as “normal” only 60 years after the Holocaust.

12. What is the relationship with Israel in the Jewish community of Germany?

German Jewry in the early 20th century was not very interested in Zionism. There were only a relatively small number of members in the Zionist movement. This situation only changed on the eve of 1933. Many young Jews started to join the Zionist movement; everyday life in school and in the streets was becoming unbearable and the Zionist movement was the only movement that appeared to have a clear direction and a perspective concerning the future. Movements which still build their self-definition on a German-Jewish symbiosis lost members.

After the war, many of the inmates of the Displaced Persons Camps waiting to leave for Palestine, saw in David Ben-Gurion the virtual incarnation of the Messiah when he came to visit them. Many D.Ps focused now on a new start in Eretz Israel and even tried to get “illegally” into the country. No borders and no British Policy could stop them. Many of those who went to the west were still strongly Zionist, but they feared the climate in the Land of Israel or the possibility of violence. Those who stayed in West Germany were often involved in collecting money within their communities for Israel. They tried to help and support Israel in many ways, but they often feared that this could be interpreted by the non-Jewish society as being disloyal towards Germany. Therefore they felt they had to be careful not to show their support for Israel too publicly. Those Jews who stayed in the GDR, in East Germany, on the other hand, could not show any devotion or even a friendly attitude towards Israel as anti-Zionism was the official or semi-official policy of the GDR – at least after 1967.

The Jews who currently live in Germany understand the importance of the idea of a Jewish state. Many of the older people have gone through one of the camps and the



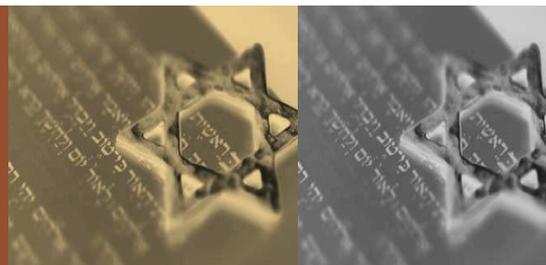
younger ones still live with memories of anti-Semitism in the FSU. However, for many there is a feeling of walking a tightrope, as they try and show loyalty to Germany while supporting Israel. Germany does not have a long experience with multicultural societies. Therefore those Jews who openly support Israel, are often called disloyal to Germany as are those many young Turks living in Germany who are also linked to another country.

After 1982, following the Israeli war with Lebanon, many young Jews started to question the "my country right or wrong" mentality that had characterized the older generation. From that time onwards, till today, support for the Israeli left has grown extremely strong among young German Jews.

These days, there is only a trickle of those making Aliyah. However, between 1948 and 1995 more than 17,000 Jews emigrated from Germany to Israel. Many Israelis have, however, relocated in Germany.



Introducing Jewish voices from Germany



Dalek is a survivor of the Holocaust. He came originally from Poland and was 11 years old when he arrived in a DP-Camp near Frankfurt/Main. After the camp was closed, he moved to Frankfurt with his elder sister and her husband who had also survived.

"I have lived in Frankfurt now for more than 60 years. I don't miss Poland. I spent my childhood there. Then I was in a Ghetto and afterwards I was hidden in a monastery. My sister also survived and she found me after liberation and took me with her. Then we came to the DP-Camp, but because I was so ill we couldn't get a visa for the USA or for immigration to what was then known as Palestine. They were afraid to go on an illegal ship with me to Palestine because I was so sick. So we stayed in Germany and moved to Frankfurt. They had a baby and we lived as a family. I grew up with a strong bond to the new Jewish community of the town. The members on the whole were also survivors from Eastern Europe. We didn't have such friendly contacts in the beginning with the German-born Jews there but the situation improved over the years. My sister and her husband had a small clothing shop and after some years they managed to enlarge it. They were not wealthy but they made a living. I had some friends in the community, a few classmates whom I met at school. I was older than them because I had missed some classes during the Holocaust. I felt a bit like an outsider. I dreamed of living in Israel, but then I attended university and was involved in the student movement. It was wonderful – to be part of something. I became disillusioned after a while because of the anti-Israeli attitudes but we still keep contact with some old friends from those days.

I also met my wife at university, she is Jewish as well, but born after the War. We have three children and we sent them to Israel to visit the country. Out of the three, one stayed. He works at the Technion in Haifa. We never made Aliyah. Sometimes we regret it but on the other hand Frankfurt is a good place to live. If Germany was the place to be stranded, Frankfurt was not the worst possible place to be. Many foreigners live here and people are used to a mix of people in their neighborhood. We don't see Germany as our home, but we do see Frankfurt in those terms. Anyway, when the kids were young we didn't travel to Israel very often, we just didn't have the money. Later on we had to think about our jobs – I was at university, teaching psychology, my wife was in journalism. But we never stopped our support for Israel and we are with Israel, heart and soul. What can I say? Was it wrong staying in Germany? I don't know. It happened and we did the best we could out of the situation. There are those who say that Jews should never live in Germany after what was done to us. But



perhaps it's just as well that there was new Jewish life in Germany after the War – if not, Hitler would have won. But we are here!"

David is Dalek's grandson. He is 17 and will go to Israel for at least a year after he has finished school.

"I love grandpa. He is a funny man with a good sense of humor – although he is a survivor. He can make funny faces and I remember as a small child I giggled every time. He almost never tells us anything about his childhood under Nazi rule. We have only a small family.

I had a normal childhood and from the beginning I have felt pretty at home here. I never attended the Jewish school we have here but I learned about Jewish religion in special classes outside my public school. I had a Bar Mitzva and my family traveled to Israel several times. I feel at home in Frankfurt and I feel pretty good in Germany. There have been some incidents, of course. A swastika here and there, a whisper "You Jew!" – those kind of things. But it was never too serious. And I play soccer with my classmates, we go out together, we look at the same girls. We go to parties and all the normal things. Apart from that, I often go to the Jewish Community Centre and hang around with others at my age. There are some nice girls there, too. I am not religious. I am Jewish by culture and history, by the fate Jews share. But religion is not important for me – I love holidays like Chanukka, but I don't go to synagogue much.

I don't think it's too important if I marry a Jewish girl or not. At least it doesn't matter to me but I guess it will to my parents. We'll see, first I want to have some fun.

What will happen after I study? I don't know. Perhaps I'll stay, perhaps I'll go to the USA, or perhaps I'll spend some time in Israel. Who knows? Berlin is a buzzing city which I like, I would like to live there if I could. But this is so far away. I don't know what will happen. Yes, Berlin would be great. And there is a young, urban, pluralistic, liberal Jewish life too. That would be great. This is my way of being a Jew – a modern European Jew whose future is not bound to one country but who can feel at home in the whole of Europe and who will feel, probably forever, some kind of a tie to Israel."

