



“Kvatch mit Sauze”. Observations of Jewish Emigrants on the Past and Present

by

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1) How this Project originated

“He who has not lived through those times should not talk about them.”

This sentence is often heard during conversations with members of the older generations in Germany when the Nazi period is discussed. Although its intention is to prevent further questioning, it does contain a particle of truth: Nobody can better convey what really happened than an eyewitness, who is prepared to provide information on his experiences honestly and without reservations.

On the theme National Socialism and its central ideology, anti-Semitism, it is extremely difficult to ascertain the first hand views of both sides, because, as a result of persecution and murder, the vast majority of the victims no longer live around the corner in the Gunther- or Campestraße, but in Chicago, Tel Aviv and Melbourne. Those who manage to establish contact with these people and their families and can create a relationship based on frankness and mutual trust, will experience a new dimension, not only in respect of the historical value of their memories, but also their views on the present and life in general.

And, as it were, as a free extra, one can gain friendships with extra-ordinarily clever, warm-hearted and, in spite of everything, witty people, if one does not consider emigrants solely as walking collections of information for use as source material. In this respect the shadow of the past never disappears completely, which is not intended by either side, but it no longer affects mutual recognition as individuals with strengths and weaknesses.

At this point I want to thank the former *Nürnbergers*, *Fürthers* and *Münchners* for becoming my second family. I consider myself extremely fortunate that, because of the newly won relationships, I must be the Nuremberg woman with most uncles, aunts and cousins around the world.

Already a long time before the German-American Institute on the occasion of the “Week of Fraternity” offered me this opportunity, my partner and I had the idea to address the central issues, which continually came to the surface in letters, emails and conversations, by means of anonymous questionnaires. This appeared to us as the ideal method to overcome the problems involved in publishing private correspondence, as well as facilitate the comparison of different testimonies, through the inevitable standardisation used with questionnaires. Thus evolved a four-part form with personal details, questions addressed to all participants, as well as separate parts for generations of emigrants and that of their descendants, already born in their new countries. Our doubts whether they were at all interested in replying, were quickly answered: Out of 57 questionnaires sent out, 36 were returned completed, the majority within four

weeks. This fabulous response of 63% confirmed our hopes that the task of reproducing the pure thoughts of the participants had been understood.

I will now turn to the result of this Survey, some of which proved surprising for us too.

2) General information on the Survey and the participants

First, the composition of the participants: Altogether 11 women and 25 men took part in the Survey. Of these 22 (6 women and 16 men) belong to the generation born in Germany, leaving 14 people (9 men and 5 women) born in their present countries of residence.

Of the 22 seniors the vast majority (15) were born in Nuremberg and Fürth. The remainder consist of people from Munich (3) and one each from Berlin, Mannheim and Landau (Palatine). One woman from Vienna was quickly accepted, because she married a proper *Nürnberger* and thus became an ‘honorary citizen’. Finally, the present countries of residence of the participants: 28 live in the USA, two each in Israel, Great Britain and Canada and one each in France and Italy. In view of this the results described below cannot be considered as representative of all emigrants or their families, especially as almost all participants belong to the upper middle class, with a high percentage of present or former academics or professionals. Equally untypical must be the fact that 86% or 31 people visited Germany (including Nuremberg) after 1945. Only two indicated that they had never visited Germany and three did not answer this question. At the same time it is imperative to consider that the mere presence of contact with Germany by our friends distinguishes them from other former German-Jewish families.

This ‘methodical weakness’ is, however, offset, and in my view balanced, by the following fact: A project with questions which evoke terrible memories, especially for the four survivors of concentration camps among the participants, as well as people orphaned as children by the Holocaust, can only be successfully concluded, if questioners and questioned can establish mutual trust. It is difficult to imagine a statistically representative grouping in view of the topics involved, especially when the interviewers are non-Jewish Germans. However, sincere consideration is given to widen the database by addressing selected people in Germany and abroad.

3) The generation of emigrants

Before we analyse the replies of the people described as “Seniors” the date of their emigration or rather their expulsion needs to be considered.

Only six of the total of 22 questioned left Hitler’s area of influence before the so-called “Kristallnacht”. Thus a majority of 73% of the participants witnessed dangerously closely this brutal turning point in the Nazi policies of deprivation of rights and expulsion, leading to the destruction of the Jews in occupied Europe.

So the first question addressed to this generation, probing the main difficulties experienced in integrating in their new countries, produced an unexpected result. Nearly a third (29%) stated that they encountered no problems. If they had to overcome obstacles, they were - in their subjective opinions - caused primarily by language problems or loss of family and friends (18% each), followed by lack of money (14%), difficulties in finding work (11%) and housing (7%).

How does one, however, explain the high proportion of those who, in their own estimation, did not encounter problems with their integration into a hitherto unknown society? I think one must assume that their experiences in Nazi Germany made their adaptation to their new environment relatively easy. In spite of the obstacles met in the process of emigrating, they found a society, which - in contrast to Hitler's Reich did not deny them the right to exist. At the same time one has to consider that those questioned belonged predominantly to the second generation of the German-Jewish forced emigration, i.e. they came to the "New World" as children or youngsters. If one had the possibility to question not those born mostly in the twenties, but their parents, the evaluation of their difficulties in adapting would present a different picture. Insight into this problem is provided by the reply of an *ex-Nürnberger*:

"As I was only 11 years old when I arrived in the United States it was very easy for me to integrate into American society and customs. However it was very difficult for my parents and even though they were able to make a life for their family, they never completely adjusted. As a child I did not understand and resented their change and morose outlook on life. This created a rift between us which never went away."

With this background, the absence of unbridgeable obstacles must not be seen as a late idealisation, but as a different conception by children and parents. This generation problem will also play a not inconsiderable role in relation to the descendants of immigrants.

The question, whether an immigrant of today would find it easier or harder to find his place in his new country, is affected in the first place by "interior politics". A clear majority (53%) feels that this has improved considerably by greater tolerance and more intensive care of immigrants, incidentally not only in the USA, but equally in Canada and Great Britain. 23.5% point to either individual circumstances on the part of the immigrant, such as country of origin or education, or do not see any change in the situation.

With an undertaking, which aims at gathering knowledge of the emigration forced by the Nazis on a group of people hitherto fully active in economic and spiritual life, it is inevitable to ask two questions: What is the contribution of these men and women to the development of their new countries and the loss to the country which denied them first their civil rights and then their human existence?

Even in the estimation of those directly concerned, the principal thought is best described by the term "brain drain": 42% of replies see the greatest contribution of the "new citizens" in the intellectual field of arts and sciences, as many as 57% consider the loss of this creative potential as the greatest loss for Germany. However, the analogies end with the point made by one of the participants:

"[The most important contribution made by the Jewish immigration to the United States was] to show the world that tolerance and freedom to do what you want pay tremendous benefits to society."

The following new contributions to society of the work ethic (19%), ambition and the will to integrate completely (11% each), reflect indeed the internal aspects of the question, contrary to the statements which can be summarised in addition to the "brain drain", as the greatest loss for the old country under the heading "reputation". Ten replies or 36%, including all concentration camp survivors, believe that the good name of Germany as a humane nation was lost or at best permanently damaged through the expulsions and the Holocaust. Even for present-day Germans this not very complimentary picture has to be seen in context with other results of the Survey.

Without anticipating these, I can say already at this point that the accusation of collective guilt is not made. The design of the questionnaire aimed at the view of Germany from abroad, deliberately to bring it to a head. If I can come to a conclusion from this project, which could lead to a constructive dialogue, it must be, in spite of all scepticism, the undoubted readiness to differentiate between the past, the presence and the consequently effective factors.

Let us now turn to a field, which has special significance with the location of my lecture. The participants were asked which developments in their new countries were outstanding since their arrival in the thirties and forties of the twentieth century. In evaluating the replies we confined ourselves to the citizens of the USA. Altogether the majority found their country's development over the last 60 years or so positive. Only occasionally mention is made of such aspects as the drugs problem, the increasing polarisation of society into the very rich and the very poor, or the social and health insurance system, which is still not up to European standards. Among the positive factors stands out the aspect, within America, of the achievements of the Civil Rights Movement since the sixties: 19% see most progress in the endeavours to achieve equal rights for all races and both sexes. As conscientious citizens they do not regard this process as completed and they also include the negative effects of the 11th September 2001.

In the area of foreign policy 17% approve the growing involvement of the United States, especially the leading role assumed since the demise of the Soviet Union - with all its good and bad points. If we as Europeans evaluate this process differently, it cannot alter the facts.

Of additional importance to the Americans is the progress made in social insurance (17%), the growing tolerance of society (11%) and the improved standard of living of the population (8%). In the absence of a differently constructed control group no opinion can be offered here as to how far these views are mirrored in the mainstream US population or whether they are specific to the surveyed German-Jewish immigrants. To judge by the reaction to the election of the present American president, the majority of those questioned clearly belong to the liberal-democratic camp. As a bonus I was able to enlarge my English vocabulary by the term "dim bulb" in connection to one particular politician.

Before we come to the children of former *Nürnbergers*, *Fürthers*, *Münchners*, etc. I want to consider the replies to the question about the views of their children by the parents. It was as follows: "Do you believe that your children and grandchildren differ in their attitude or values from their mates because of their family's biographical background?"

A clear majority of 10 replies or 53% (three of those questioned have no children) denied this, some with regrets, partly without evaluating the fact of any significant difference from their contemporaries. 16% felt in no position to answer the question decisively. 31% perceive a decided difference in the conduct / demeanour of their children as a result of their family background. A representative answer is offered by one of the participants, who also found similar observations on the part of friends with a corresponding background:

"[Our children] are more aware of their background and feel certain obligations to their families and to society because of their situation. Some kids are very protective of their parents (ours aren't particularly!) They put up with some parental behaviors that others their age would not. They're very family oriented, and recognize how scattered their extended families are. They know they do some things differently."

4) The Descendants

In one respect there is no difference between parents and children of former German-Jewish families and their counterparts living between Pegnitz and Brahmaputra rivers: especially in the varied evaluation of the results of education, there are different opinions. The Survey clearly indicates this in the reciprocal question to the children, whether they themselves can discern differences with their contemporaries: 13 out of the 14 questioned feel affected by their origins, only one denies this decidedly. Even allowing for the greater readiness to cooperate on the part of those who have a bearing to their origins, than those who give this aspect no importance, is the self-assessment of those concerned regarding their part in their age group more realistic than the judgement of their parents. The extent of the effect of parental biographies on their own lives is considered massive by 54%, the rest does not give a precise opinion or believes it is rather minimal.

One example is provided by the following reply naming the immediate consequence of an awareness of a constantly present danger, also for those born in the new countries:

“I’ve been brought up in constant fear that one day we might need to escape. My father always pretended our passports to be in perfect condition in order to be ready to leave right away. None of my Italian friends ever felt this way.”

A US citizen describes this more subtly and, at the same time, the effect of multi-faceted influence:

“As a first generation American and child of refugees, I definitely have different sensibilities than many Americans whose families have been here longer. I am more aware of roots generally and the impact that those roots have on how one views the world. I also take my being here less for granted, both because my parents were lucky to be able to leave Europe and because they decided to come to the USA rather than stay in Palestine / Israel (where I think I would have had a much harder life).”

From these observations arises the compelling question, how far those affected feel that their special consciousness is due to the educational endeavours of their parents and, if so, how the contents of this education differed from their contemporaries. All participants mention here peculiarities connected to the biography of their parents. In this the topics of integration, tolerance and behaviour are prominent, with 17% each. The stress on total integration combined with an attempt to shut out the German part of the family background. A good example of this is the following self-mocking description of the intentions and results of education:

*“I know there was an intention to **avoid** a ‘German’ feeling as I grew up, i.e., my grandmother’s efforts to teach me German were blocked. There was instead an effort / intention to assimilate into US society. Despite these intentions, certain German values / ideas were clearly passed along - taking life and oneself (too) seriously.”*

Whilst at this point the intentions and the actual results of the educational endeavours on the part of the parents differed somewhat, we can not ascertain such an ambivalence in passing on basic values such as tolerance and love of freedom. In contrast, the evaluation of behaviour as a purpose of education is quite different. The stress put on this appears to have led to conflicts and has affected the descendants of immigrants in a negative way, at least during certain periods of their development.

I consider it appropriate to introduce here the replies to one question addressed to both generations and which has resulted in some irritation by a few of those questioned. The partici-

pants were asked to determine, on a scale of +5 to -5 their subjective values of a number of terms. The items quoted were - in alphabetical order - Conscientiousness, Freedom, Order, Patriotism, Politeness, Punctuality, Reliability, Tidiness, Tolerance.

It became clear to us that this question, offered in complete innocence, was quite frequently considered to be a quasi test of their consciences. The offered mixture of so-called “typically German” and “typically American” virtues and values was not intended to ascertain German trace elements in their personality, but to identify the continued educational ideals and the way they were influenced by the radical break of their forced emigration and its effect on the next generation.

In this connection it was assumed that the code of values of the grandparents prior to 1933 did not significantly differ from that of their non-Jewish environment. Once again the researcher is confronted by the problem that that generation can no longer be questioned. One has to start, therefore, from the result more than sixty years later, of the changes in value judgements across generations. I consider the following evaluation entirely significant: If the baseline for the really important values is put at +2.5%, freedom is by a long way top of the list for both seniors and their descendants (+4.2% respectively +3.4%) The position with regard to the next important issues differ between the generations: Whilst the immigrants prefer reliability to tolerance (+3.8% resp. +3.6), the reverse is the case for those born in the new country (+2.7% resp. +2.9%). After these items the younger adults give the subjective importance of the remaining categories a limited importance, whilst the older generation displays a more far-reaching attitude. They include punctuality (+3.3%) and politeness (+2.8%) in their selection.

One of the tasks of this continuing project will be to find control groups in the USA and in Germany in order to establish proper comparisons. Initially only a plausible theory can be offered: Specifically with people who have had drastic experiences, such as discrimination, expulsion and the rebuilding of their lives in a foreign country, the inherited ideals had to pass a severe test of time, so as not to be discarded. The really important principles established during their lifetime are passed on, taking into account the increasing influence of their environment.

After this somewhat abstract excursion let us now come back to the people themselves. From the so far reported testimonies of the second (really the third) generation the impression could arise that they grew up in a rather depressing atmosphere. This is clearly contradicted by the replies to the question whether they considered their background and its awareness as a disadvantage or an enrichment of their future lives: decisive 71% stated that their heritage is an enrichment! Of the remaining four persons only two describe their origin as a burden, the others are ambivalent or think that their difficulties were overcome when they reached grownup status.

An especially clever acknowledgement by the “second generation” of their heritage can be seen on the Internet: the “Fessler Friedmann Dictionary of English as a Second Language” offers insight into the vestiges, which these families’ history has preserved in the terminology used by their members. Words like *“to flutch”* (*“To cut in front or dart in. If you are running to make the Federal Express drop-of deadline, you might say, ‘I flutched in the door just before they locked it.’”*) and its derivative noun *“flutchnik”* (*“A small piece of unidentified flotsam.”*), or phrases such as *“Do I have it necessary”* (*“Literal translation from German ‘hab ich das nötig’. Used like ‘do I have to put up with this’ or ‘do I really need this’.”*) persisted in American surroundings because of their unbeatable meanings and sound quality and, in this way, continue a very individual and positive inheritance. By the way, the title of this lecture was cribbed from this dictionary (with permission of the authors: *“Kvatch = not true, bullshit. [...] Susi Fessler says ‘kvatch mit sauze’.”*).

5) How do they see us, how do they see themselves?

To ascertain the present attitude towards Nuremberg and the other towns of origin of those questioned, and also Germany, we made use of the questions on association. Following the method of multiple choice, several alternative selections were offered, but there was also space for individual comments. The most often chosen association was with the place (country) of birth of grandparents, parents or the respondents themselves (41%). In second place came the thought that it was Germans who murdered members of their families. Altogether 25% of replies contained this aspect, whereby this is more important to the second generation than to the immigrants (29% to 23%). What conclusions can we as non-Jewish Germans come to from the fact that a quarter of the former German-Jewish families associate the Holocaust with words like “Nürnberg” or “Deutschland”? At the end of my talk I hope to deal with the latter’s views as to what represents an adequate approach to this our recent past. For now only this: Presumably both Martin Walser and Daniel Goldhagen were irritated by these proposals, because they do not fit in with the hermetic world view of either of them.

The idea to offer the third most frequently mentioned item, “Betrayal”, came from the impression gathered from correspondence and conversation with those concerned. Our friends and acquaintances feel to a not inconsiderable extent (15% to be exact) to have been deprived of their youth, their education or, with hindsight, of the just rewards of their families for the way their grandfathers and fathers fought enthusiastically for Germany in the First World War or their contributions to the general community as charitable donors or patrons. Here, too, it is remarkable that this betrayal is more important to the descendants than their parents (17% compared to 14%). The feeling of hatred, when thinking of Nuremberg, Fürth, Munich or Germany, affects only 8%, which is really an encouragingly low percentage, if one considers the misfortunes covered by these somewhat cold numbers.

Individual emotions expressed in the replies cannot easily be analysed quantitatively. There are strong positive as well as negative emotions, examples of mourning for the loss of persons and places of personal memories or attempts to rationalise experiences. I want to end this chapter with two quotations which, without being representative, do illuminate the feelings and thoughts provoked by the word “Nürnberg”.

“When I hear the word ‘Nürnberg’ I think of it as my place of birth and early life, place of birth of my parents, I think of ‘Lebkuchen’ [ginger bread] and a privileged life and being excluded from most things as a Jew. Complex!”

The second quotation does not come from a *Nürnberger*. Just the same, the name of this town evokes a whole stream of impressions:

“Dürer, Streicher, overly regulated crafts, a lot of good and bad history. Admiration for courageous and determined efforts to face the dark past. A big step in the right direction. I am sorry I did not see Streicher hanging! Viva Nürnberg!”

The question about the causes of National Socialism brings me back to the problem addressed earlier to learn a little about the times before and after 1933, from the point of view of the victims and their descendants. With 33% the largest group recognises the economic crises of the Weimar Republic as the most important cause. This causal connection is determined even clearer in the judgement of the second generation than in that of those who personally experienced the coming disaster, even if only as children (41% to 30%). Irrespective of age, 23% consider that virulent anti-Semitism in Germany played a major part, whereby frequently the role of the churches is mentioned. 16% each see excessive nationalism and the loss of the First World War respectively as the roots of this evil. In this the seniors give more weight to

these factors than their children (19% to 12%). Finally 12% refer to a specifically German mentality, which is evidenced by a readiness to obey orders unquestioningly.

In order to learn something about the further effects of not time-specific factors, the participants were then asked the basic question of German post-war history:

“After an empire, World War I, the intermezzo of Weimar Republic, Nazism, the Holocaust and World War II, since 1949 West Germany (since 1990 all of Germany) is a democratic state modeled after the example of the Western Allies. Do you believe that both the country and its inhabitants went through a fundamental change in the decades after the war or are they basically still the same?”

The extensive assessment of the replies to this question alone could provide sufficient material for a further lecture. The importance given to this point by those questioned is quite evident by the fact that only a minority offered an opinion without some explanations. For this reason to quantify the replies would not do justice to the complexity of this topic and is, therefore, omitted. That much is clear: in the view of the majority this question cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”. Four original quotations shall suffice, which encompass the extreme positions, as well as the majority of replies.

A rather pessimistic judgement is provided by a representative of the second generation:

“I think that while an individual may change (and be changed), a country and its inhabitants do not fundamentally change.”

Equally, not without reservations, but in a more confident manner, another voice of the descendants from the USA:

“I think most Germans have undergone a fundamental change. At a minimum, Germany has taken a long, close, hard look at itself and the Holocaust and has confronted its dark past. One cannot say the same for Austria, Switzerland, or France.”

The last word shall belong to two representatives of those expelled from Nuremberg. Here, too, appears the motive of a contrast between individual and community. Possibly the way we posed the question based on the difference between country and people is due to “typically German” false reasoning?

“I think that the post World War II generations went through a fundamental change due to the openness in their education (contrary to Japan), the example of the lifestyles by the Western Allies and their aid resulting in a remarkable economic recovery. The onset of the information age in which Germany took a full part which resulted in a steady and fast change in the younger population forever. However, I still fear that the older generations excuses of ‘We did not know’ or ‘There is nothing we could do’ and blaming the victims may influence the thinking of the younger generations.”

“I think it’s too soon to tell! I think there are many people, in your age group and younger, who have certainly accepted this new way of looking at the world. I am not sure the old people have, though I’m sure some of them have. And I think some of the younger skinhead types, who are economically and educationally on the fringes, could revert to the old way of thinking in a heart beat. They really need to be educated. We have them here as well.”

The doubts about the ability of people to learn from history are not confined to the Germans. This becomes clear in the reaction to questions concerning the events of September 11, 2001. The attacks still affect the USA and its people much more than Germany, perhaps even

Europe, where they have not exactly been forgotten, but have taken a back seat in our memories in face of the flood of daily news items. When asked for their thoughts and feelings when they learned of the terror attacks, most participants offered horror, shock, worry about friends and family, sadness and sympathy with the victims. A former female *Nürnbergers*' incredible *"I must be dreaming! This can't happen in America!"* reflects the spontaneous reaction of most of her fellow citizens. After the first shock they soon expressed reactions based on their biographies: *"[I felt] fear relating back to Germany 1938"*.

Many immediately saw a connection of the attacks with the USA's support of Israel and feared a deterioration of this relationship. At the same time they expressed the hope that, now that the United States have experienced terror themselves, the understanding of Israel's situation would grow.

In my view this thousand-fold murder was motivated by a fanatical will physically to destroy masses of people belonging to a certain social group, who had become the hated enemy quite independent of individual guilt, age or sex. In the view of the murderers it is irrelevant whose enemy, whether, as 60 years ago, the Aryan race's or Islam's.

For this reason recipients of the questionnaire were asked their opinion, whether in view of 9/11 humanity has learned the lesson of the Holocaust. The replies were unequivocal: 63% have grave doubts or deny this, with the younger generation showing greater optimism (60% to 40%) than their parents (64% to 22%). 14% see no connection between the two historical events. Here, too, one person of the first generation offers a view, both laconic and to the point, which reflects the basic tenor of the replies: *"Mankind will never learn and was never any better, just now we have better technology to do worse things."*

But back to the views of Germany and their present countries. It was never intended to quantify the replies to the following group of questions, in view of the anticipated multiplicity of replies. We asked for a description of the main differences perceived by those questioned between their present countries and Germany. At the same time we hoped to gain an impression of their views of their present countries from the inside and the Federal Republic of Germany from outside.

Our correspondents in Italy and Great Britain felt the biggest difference was the attitude towards foreigners and the long tradition of tolerance towards minorities, whereby our British friend presupposes a tendency towards a general equalisation of life style. The reply of the French representative raises again the motive of the different treatment of the past:

"The FRG, in any case the old federal states [in former Western Germany], have acknowledged the Nazi period and accepted it as its history, but France has not yet come to terms with the Vichy Episode. Another question is whether one can compare Gallics and Germans."

Leaving Europe, the opinions of Israelis are of interest. Regrettably only one of the two participants offered an opinion. His reply reflects not least the growing internal and external dangers of his country:

"My country has to exercise democracy under a constant state of war and while defending itself against terror and aggression every day."

Whilst our Canadian correspondent no longer sees any difference between his country and Germany, the statements of the USA citizens stress - like a constant thread - the plurality of American society in contrast to Germany:

“Germany has a core population which is German and whose ancestors have been German for centuries. The US, (except for the native Americans who are great minority and unfortunately on the fringes,) is an immigrant country. In any group, the ancestors, the parents, or the people themselves come from many, many different countries. This creates an acceptance in the heart which I think might be difficult for the average German. Also, Americans never ‘obey orders’. They question everything and feel free at any stage to ask endlessly more questions and rebel. I think we are way ahead with freedom and tolerance.”

in spite of pride in the long democratic tradition of the country and the transparent social structure, where achievement of the individual is uppermost and not his perceived social standing, there are no pronouncements which could be described as a mere waving of the star-spangled banner. This is not surprising, as patriotism, in the items discussed earlier, of values and virtues occupies the last but one place with +1.7%, the younger generation even less (1.2%). Criticism of their own society, which incidentally results in plus points for Germany, is the still underdeveloped social security. There are even expressions like these, which criticise American history and make comparisons with the more recent German past:

“Although there are too many people in the U.S. who wish to ignore our country's dark history regarding our oppression of blacks, native Americans, women, and other minorities - and although much still needs to be done to correct our failings in this regard - I cannot envision a time here when slavery will return or when women will once again be deprived of their rights as human beings. I cannot state with any confidence however, that a major manifestation of anti-Semitism will not return to Germany.”

At this point intrudes the issue of self-identification of those questioned. They were asked to place in order of their value judgement the qualities “Being Jewish”, “Being a citizen of my country”, “Being of German origin”, and “Being human”. Seven each out of 31 replies or 22.6% chose the combination Human being - Citizen - Jew - German origin or Human being - Jew - Citizen - German origin. For 16% their Jewishness comes before their humanity, their citizenship or their origin, 13% describe themselves as Citizens first, then as human beings, Jews and of German origin. Even considering the remaining combinations, there is only one case where the German origin achieves second place, with 74.2% it comes last. Let me therefore state quite clearly: There is no Nuremberg or Germany nostalgia, because there is no cause for it, especially in the second generation.

We did not realise it, but the replies clearly indicated that the following questions came very near the pain barrier of those questioned. The double question when in their country and in Germany the first Jewish head of state was to be elected, caused slight irritation with the US citizens, because of the not quite politically correct connection between religion and public office. However, the harmlessly appearing question, whether those of German origin are supposed to play a special role in the relations of their country to Germany because of their unique knowledge and ability, produced the widest divergence of the whole survey.

Back to the correct sequence: the concrete forecasts of the election of a Jewish head of state in the USA and Canada varied from “at any time” to “in 100 years”. The United Kingdom can in Israeli successfully point to a Prime Minister with a Jewish background. The more optimistic of American respondents frequently refer to the candidature of Senator Lieberman for the Vice Presidency. 36%, a clear majority, however inflicted a strong rebuff to this question. The rhetoric spectrum of answers ranged from a polite counter question from France: “Is it desirable?” to the ironic “Some things one should leave in the hands of God and the voters!”, to a verbal knock-down “This is completely unimportant”.

What lessons can we learn from this? First, that the questioners do not adequately understand the domestic sensitivities of the USA, where religion is considered as a strictly private matter. Second, that even a Jewish US citizen would prefer a competent non-Jewish president to an incapable fellow Jew, an interesting concept, whose transfer to the State of Bavaria with its 'one party governmental system' would be beneficial.

As unpredictable as such a development appears for the USA, the clearer seems to be the opinion on the chances of Jewish candidates for the highest offices in the Federal Republic of Germany: 45% of respondents, irrespective of their age, think they could not possibly be successful. Only 10% can visualise this in the near future, but 29% consider it at least an option for the future, the rest also considers this question to be irrelevant. The prognosis of a former *Fürther* demonstrates, with all reservations, great confidence in our democracy. It remains to be seen whether it will ever come to pass:

"In about 100 years, but there is always an outside chance that some clever Turkish politician from Fürth or some smart Jewish woman from Nuremberg makes it."

The replies to the last question of this body of questioning are both the most surprising and the most informative. To the earlier mentioned problem, whether members of former German-Jewish families should play a special part in the relations between their countries and Germany, 43% adopted a decidedly rejecting attitude. 37% were in favour and 20% again expressed their displeasure with the question. As the wording of the question clearly referred to the "special knowledge and skills" of the members of the group, the clear rejection of this concept is surprising. Whether in the interest of their own country or of a business enterprise, why should people with a special familiar background not put their acquired knowledge to good use? Even more irritating proves a separate evaluation of the two age groups: With the seniors the majorities are more pronounced (46% against, only 27% in favour). All opposing remarks come from their ranks. The members of the second generation are, quite in contrast, decidedly of the opposite opinion: 62% are in favour of such a commitment, only 38% are against.

Such a small statistical base - only 30 participants expressed an opinion on this question - mitigates against final conclusions, but we can ascertain here the answer to a key question, whether the German-Jewish emigrants and their families still consider themselves a homogeneous group. In my view this is definitely not the case because the question aimed at a common group awareness (presidency and a role in foreign relations) constantly produced controversial results. The self-definitions, too, do not show a unified pattern. Concretely the replies only show that the younger generation is probably readier to balance advantages and disadvantages of the given alternatives and thus to arrive at a decision. The rejection by the emigrant generation must, therefore, indicate the presence of other factors.

My conclusion is that the only potentially successful way to further contacts with former *Nürnbergers*, *Fürthers* and *Münchners* and their descendants has to be an individual approach. A transfiguration, mystification or "musealisation" of the common, supposedly unscathed, past is fruitless. Here, as certainly also with a view to the Holocaust we have to strive for truth as a basis for the future. Everyone of us is called upon to win back trust through our own behaviour. I am not talking about apparently clumsy gestures of reconciliation, but plead for an unreserved and open coming together, so that behind the veil of history people again become visible as individuals.

We pursue this aim also by means of the Internet project *rijo*, where we realise, in cooperation with emigrants, research projects and source material of Jewish history and make these available to all those interested, in at least two languages, English and German. We

simply enjoy working with people who, often at an advanced age, have thrown themselves enthusiastically into the world of Internet to still their thirst for knowledge and who are willing to share their knowledge with us. At the same time we convey this knowledge to where it is urgently needed: to Germany and to the children and children's children of the families who were driven from here over 60 years ago. Believe me, the good feeling one experiences with this more than compensates for the bags under ones eyes one sees when looking in the mirror the morning after.

Concluding my lecture I would like to touch upon the proposals mentioned previously, as to the form of the often raised German "memory traits" as seen from the point of view of those questioned.

The first question intends to ascertain the differing preferences in current thinking, but also political measures, which acquire a special meaning in this connection. Again a number of bullet points were offered for selection, but there was also space for individual observations. The result, with 34% of replies, was clearly in favour of an appropriate form of education and instruction of school pupils, whereby these should acquire their knowledge first hand, i.e. in contact and conversation with eyewitnesses. 19% of those questioned demanded a more determined battle against Neo-Nazism as the most adequate way to honour the memory of the victims. Ten times or 18% consider exchange visits of Jewish and non-Jewish youth groups as a proper medium to foster remembrance. 12% each favour political measures of stronger support of Israel by Germany and the wish for a Holocaust museum. Incidentally those who ask for support for Israel do not include any Israelis. One result, which perhaps is worth noting by the decision-makers in far away Berlin is the widespread indifference towards the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin. Only three of those questioned (5%) were in favour of this much debated project and one of them qualified this immediately:

"To salve conscience: forget it."

One woman offered her opinion on the Berlin project with decided clarity:

"Not that one, please!"

What is wanted are not monuments and celebratory events, but conveyance of knowledge, a convincing policy and the establishment of direct contacts between young people in the hope to influence the future. This also is evident from the observations on this topic by one survivor of the concentration camps Auschwitz and Dachau:

*"Whatever it takes - so the Holocaust will not be forgotten. And **never again** will really be, never again."*

The final words of my lecture shall be dedicated to those, who made it possible through their friendship and co-operation. With the intention of doing this for them I posed the question what they would like to tell a German audience or what they would like to ask them. They are addressed to us all, as is the one by a former *Nürnberger*, which I want to present to you:

"The question which will forever burn in my mind is, how could a country made up of reasonably educated, religious and particularly family oriented people allow their country to be taken over by the dregs of their society? What created the hatred of Jews which resulted in conditions which the population condoned the robbing, torture and killing of even the smallest Jewish child. They were the neighbors, friends, employers, employees and loyal fellow citizens that never harmed their country. I know this, because I was one of those innocent children that as a young boy loved my home, neighborhood and city and the people that I was in contact with."

I would like you to know that even though my grandmothers and other members of my family were murdered, even though my immediate family was only able to flee after being robbed of all their belongings, even though these events changed the personality and health of my parents and older brother forever, I do not hate Germany and its citizens of today. I have visited Germany numerous times with my wife and you are the same as us, the same as our children and as our grandchildren and we are the same as you and I hope you will never forget this."

Other replies to this question were:

"Nothing."

"Don't forget your past!"

"Rock and Roll is universal."

"Think tolerance and peace!"

"I wouldn't like to address a German crowd."

"Do not erase, but remember the Holocaust!"

"Congratulations that you got rid of such a pest like me, a Jew!"

"I would like to ask them how they believe the Holocaust was allowed to happen."

"I don't feel any particular need for a dialogue with Germans."

"Why does there seem to be an inherent need for German's to subjugate someone?"

"How do they feel about Jewish people?"

"I would like to tell them don't try to wipe off the past so easily, nothing is forgotten for the victims' surviving families."

"I'd probably want to tell them about Israel today - the reality of our life and struggle here as we see it, not as seen on the CNN."

"Learn to think for yourselves! Germany in its arrogance has lost 2 major wars and got wiped out twice. Learn from history!"

"How came you looked the other way on Nov. 9th 1938 and there after when one family after another disappeared?"

"Judging from the many letters and calls I have received from friends in Landau, I would say let's face 'it'! together!"

"Support prosperous and safe Israel, Europe owes it to the Jews. Many Europeans helped the Nazis."

"Talk about tolerance - comparative German history. - Freedom of speech. - Acceptance of foreigners - Community of man + differences."

"Can there ever be a time, when everybody is of same value, can have the same aims and ambitions?"

“I don't think that I would have the courage to say what is on my mind, but if I did, I would like to ask them how they would feel if they would have lost everything that was dear to them at the age of 11, including their parents.”

“Nothing else than in any other assembly - by the way I never felt the urge to do so. Today, i.e. since 20 years or so, I consider the Germans to be ordinary people and hope they neither feel superior nor inferior and not at all guilty for their ancestors.”

“If I would address a German crowd I would tell them to ask me about the Holocaust. I would ask them if they ever ask their parents or grandparents what they knew about it when it happened and what they did about it.”

“I am not presumptuous enough to think I would have anything valuable to say - perhaps something about the universality of man.”

“I would like to discuss with a German crowd the extent to which it was ordinary Germans who made the Holocaust possible. I am curious to what extent ordinary Germans today believe that it was ordinary Germans who made the Holocaust possible.”

“I think that I would tell them my father's family loved Germany. They were beautiful moral people whose families fought proudly for Germany in WW1. My father returned to Germany for three visits much later in his life because he still loved the country and did not hold the youth responsible for the prior generation's misdeeds. He still encountered anti-Semitism 26 years after the war. I also experienced anti-Semitism when I visited Germany 39 years after the war.”

“Jesus was a practicing Jew. He loved his religion and died a Jew. Even the notion of a savior is a very Jewish belief. Germans and Christians should learn more about history and the shallow reasons for anti-Semitism. There is absolutely no reason to hate the Jews. The first Christians were Jews. Without them, there would be no Christian religion. The main reason for hatred of Jews was that other religions wanted power, not because the Jews ever did something terrible.”

Susanne Rieger

This is the text of a lecture given on March 7, 2002, in Nuremberg's German-American Institute.

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