

**BETWEEN FÜRTH AND TELAVIV: SOJOURNER MENTALITY
AND FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS OF FORMER JEWISH
DISPLACED PERSONS IN GERMANY**

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It might be argued that what came to constitute the West German Jewish community before the Russian Jewish influx since the 1980s was also one of the very first groups of ethnically distinct immigrants to settle in Germany from Eastern Europe after 1945. These Jews show some characteristics that make them markedly different from Jewish immigrants in other contexts, and markedly different also from other immigrant groups to Germany.

Among these characteristics are, first, an extreme rags-to-riches mobility from utter poverty in the postwar displaced persons camps to substantial, even great personal wealth of many of these individuals today; second, a notable proclivity of a segment of this community, past or present, to work in socially disapproved economic spheres, especially prostitution, gambling, and real estate; third, an inordinate reluctance to get involved with the surrounding German society and culture which is unusual for individuals in high income brackets, and particularly atypical for Jews in general; and likewise, fourthly, lacking involvement in Jewish communal affairs, combined with an extraordinarily affective orientation towards Israel.

It is my contention that these characteristics can be successfully explained if we view this group as **sojourners**, as a particular type of strangers with a peculiar mentality. This is understood best if we take a look at Simmel's celebrated essay on the stranger. Georg Simmel spoke of the stranger as a "unity of two determinations": that of **wandering**, being detached from space, and that of being fixed in a particular space: Simmel's stranger, in this often quoted definition, "comes today and stays tomorrow ...who although he has not moved on also has not fully overcome the detachment of coming and going" (1971:143). Simmel's stranger therefore represents the unity of nearness and distance, he is an "element of the group"—even more, he is its constitutive element just as the poor for example or as "sundry 'inner enemies'" are elements of the group; the stranger is in the group and yet is constituted by exclusion and opposition.

In this essay, however, Simmel begins by bracketing the case of the stranger as wanderer or temporary sojourner, the type of stranger who comes today and **leaves** tomorrow; or, as I will try to show, a type of stranger who comes today and **intends** to leave tomorrow. The sojourner, then, shares some features with the stranger as discussed by Simmel and he is different in other respects: he has not only not overcome the "detachment of coming and going," but his

membership in the group as such is questionable, and he is not its constitutive element. I would argue that the sojourner phenomenon suggests that Simmel has constructed the conception of the stranger deceptively simply; it would need to be substantially reworked and differentiated, a project which however is not being attempted here.

Discussions of the sojourner can be found even in the older sociological literature. Sombart's image of the Jews, for example, contains, implicitly, a notion of the sojourner; unlike Simmel, Sombart did not see the Jews as being rooted in any diaspora society, and rather considered them as strangers who come today and leave tomorrow. In this context, Sombart relates an episode in which the Jews appear without sensibility for their surrounding environment. One day, he notes, a Jewish student came to him in Breslau from Eastern Siberia, for the sole purpose of studying the works of Karl Marx with him.

It took him three weeks for this long journey, and already on the day following his arrival, he visited me and asked me for one of Marx's writings. A few days later, he returned, spoke to me about what he had read, returned the book and took a new one. This went on for a few months. Then he returned to his eastern Siberian village. He had not taken notice of his environment, not met anyone, did not take walks at all, hardly knew where he had been staying. He passed through the world of Breslau without seeing it, just as he had gone through his previous world, and how in future years he will go through the world without having any sense of it, only with Marx in his head. A typical case? I do think so. (317/246)

The phenomenon of the sojourner, as distinct from that of Simmel's stranger or Park's marginal man, was first discussed in an essay by Paul C. P. Siu (1952), a student of Robert Park who was well familiar with Simmel's original essay. Siu who had studied Chinese laundrymen in Chicago, argues that the essential characteristic of the sojourner is that "he clings to the culture of his own ethnic group"—he does not become bicultural as Park's marginal man—and "[p]sychologically he is unwilling to organise himself as a permanent resident in the country of his sojourn."(1952:34) The sojourner, according to Siu, is ethnocentric, he tends to be isolated, cannot be assimilated, his goal is "to do a job and to do it in the shortest possible time"(35). Moreover, he has "no desire for full participation in the community life of his adopted land"; he thinks of himself as an outsider and feels content as a spectator in many of the community affairs." His "activities in the community are symbiotic rather than social."(36)

The psychological predisposition that Siu describes for the Chinese sojourners has also been noted by Nathan Urieli (1994) for the case of Israeli immigrants to Chicago who claim to have left Israel for strictly economic, short term advantages. Israeli immigrants to the U.S., as so called “permanent sojourners” have to contend with Israeli disapproval of having emigrated from Israel; they “wish to be considered as Israelis who temporarily live abroad, and they express high sensitivity towards being stigmatized as *yordim*.”¹ For Urieli, these sojourners are characterised by “rhetorical ethnicity,” a form of ethnicity which does not lead to elaborate institutional structures. As Urieli puts it, it

involves a strong commitment to the country of origin at the symbolic level, but with almost no manifestations of ethnicity in terms of community activities, membership in ethnic organisations or ethnic neighbourhoods. (441)

The present analysis attempts to show that, with some modification, the same features can be identified for the case of the former Jewish displaced persons in Germany who until 1989 were the numerically strongest element within contemporary German Jewry and still today represent its political and social backbone.

The Jewish Displaced Persons In Germany

After the defeat of Nazism, Jewish survivors of the concentration camps and others who survived in hiding or in the forests of Eastern Europe eventually arrived in the western occupied zones of Germany where they were housed in displaced persons’ camps such as Belsen and Zeilsheim in northern and central western Germany or Landsberg and Föhrenwald in the south. Their numbers swelled after a new wave of anti-Semitic pogroms especially in Poland in 1946. This group which saw itself as the *She’erit Hapletah*, the “remnant of the saved”² and as such quickly developed a rich Jewish and Zionist oriented culture in the camps, nevertheless considered its stay there as in a waiting room (Königseder and Wetzel, 1995) and as on “cursed soil”: the survivors were hoping to reach either Palestine or North America in the shortest possible time in order to start a new life. Most indeed succeeded. Of an estimated 250,000 refugees, only about 15,000 to 20,000 eventually remained in Germany, largely against their intention. Some of them remained for health reasons, others had married Germans, but the majority of these found themselves ever more integrated in the German economy. Attempts by many especially in the 1950s to try to start a new life in Israel or the United States failed and they usually returned to West Germany to resume their business ventures or professional

career. All of this notwithstanding, they never considered Germany as their home, they “sat on packed suitcases”—these suitcases often actually existed—and largely remained socially aloof from their environment, with Israel as their imaginary home.

The following case study of three brothers and their families demonstrates, I believe, a number of characteristics typical for true sojourners: (1) the life of these eastern European Jews in Germany focused almost entirely around their attempt to earn as much money as quickly as possible; (2) they remained socially and politically aloof from their German environment; (3) they invested little if any energy and money in German Jewish communal infrastructure and as such can indeed be seen as “rhetorical ethnics”; (4) they are intensely family oriented and (5) their attachment to their “homeland”—an imaginary homeland, to be sure, since they never lived there—is not merely rhetorical: it is strong enough that four out of nine of their children decided to emigrate to Israel.

Three Brothers

The three Mincz brothers whose families I will sketch in the following pages survived the Shoah together with one sister in various camps; four other siblings—two younger brothers and two sisters—perished. The surviving four came to Germany, lived in the DP camp of Landsberg/Bavaria for a short while before they began their later career. Their parents and grandparents had lived in Olkusz, a mid-sized town in Upper Silesia. Their father Jacob Mincz and his wife Miriam were successful and respected business people in town, but the problems began when a ghetto and a *Judenrat* were set up in Olkusz; later that *Judenrat* placed Jacob Mincz at the top of its list to be deported; as a member of the Jewish establishment, he was expected to join the *Judenrat* but had refused because he did not want to collaborate with the Germans; in retaliation, he was one of the first to be deported, together with the poorest Jews in the town.

These four siblings then survived first through a long odyssey of flight and in hiding, and later with luck and partly some connections in labor, not extermination camps such as Blechhammer in Upper Silesia, not Majdanek or Auschwitz. At the end of the war, they, too, were sent on the death marches and by sheer coincidence, the three brothers found each other again in Buchenwald; their sister survived in Groß-Rosen concentration camp. After the defeat of Nazi Germany, Albert, Ignaz and Jurek went to Landsberg where they were united with their surviving sister Gertrud. Gertrud married a fellow survivor, Leon Liebermann, whom she had met in Landsberg and soon thereafter left with him for the United States where he had relatives who had sponsored him. Of the remaining three brothers, Albert, the eldest, left the Landsberg camp after some

months in early 1946 in order to try his luck at a variety of business ventures in and around the city of Fürth near Nürnberg. Early on, he also had plans to emigrate to the United States; however, he could not get a visa, apparently because he was caught in black market activities and for the Americans therefore had a criminal record. The other two brothers left Landsberg shortly thereafter and joined their eldest brother, who was clearly also the strongest figure, if not an *Ersatz* father, in business. Much of this economic activity at first originated with the U.S. army: the Mincz's bought from them, often in auctions, and then went to sell to the Germans, especially used cars and furniture. They also started a hotel. But the furniture business grew in leaps and bounds, and by 1970 at their pinnacle, they had expanded to over 80 stores all over West Germany; these stores operated according to the cash and carry principle, with many stores open only one day per week. *Fürther Möbel* was a name quite well known in Southern Germany especially.

In terms of their personal lives, Albert met Eva Piffko from Zurich who was visiting friends in Fürth and he then married her in 1952. In comparison to other DPs his age, this was a fairly late marriage since many other survivors married and had children within the first year(s) of their lives as DPs. It appears that for all three brothers, setting up a solid material base first was more important—or their business activities were so all-consuming that there was no time for family. Ignaz, who had tried to emigrate to the United States and lived there for almost a year in Brooklyn, returned and was the next to marry, in 1956, a woman from Switzerland as well but no relation, and Jurek married an Auschwitz survivor, Raina Zisman, in 1959. Yet once married, Albert in particular showed the typical case of a DP who was virtually obsessed with his family and showered his children with the most effusive love. As his daughter Miriam put it,

... and for [my father] the children were—the absolute, the apple of the eye, well the children were more important than his own life, and to build an existence for them and to experience a beautiful life that really was his *raison d'être*. That was for him the most important thing, the children. And I have that, by the way, that story with the children, that must be a Holocaust thing, because at some point I was with Jurek on a plane, some way to some birth of one of his grandchildren, and there we spoke about this, and there he said: For us—you don't understand that—these children are *Wunderkinder* [prodigies], that we, when we were in the camp, if anyone would have told us there, you will get out of here and will have kids, and perhaps grandchildren, that we would never have believed. Well this, that once more that could be

experienced that one had one's own kids, and these kids would have kids again, and perhaps even these kids in Israel to—this was a total wishful dreamy illusion. And therefore this business with the children. So the children are much more important than the wife. The children are—this is a totally obsessive- a totally crazy obsessive love (*Affenliebe*), this love to the children. And with my father, that was totally madly strong, it was an all inclusive, total love to the children. He would have done anything for his children, in fact he did. (Miriam, p. 14)

Gaby, the youngest sibling, shares this view:

Well, we have a very close family life. A close family life and a very loving family life. For my father, the family meant everything, my father almost loved his children too much already. So my father simply tried to give his children only what he himself through the war and the concentration camp did not have, to make good for it. And I as the youngest member, and between myself and - between me and my oldest siblings there is a difference of in part twelve and sixteen years. And so I was the baby (*Nesthäkchen*) and really got pretty spoiled... Well, and this is really still today like that. So my mother tries really hard to hold the family together and we really have a pretty close relationship to our mother...(Gaby, 10)

Of Herman's five children, four were born in short sequence, and the last one, Gaby, followed 16 years after the first born, Miriam, and twelve years after Chaim who was fourth in line. Of the other two brothers, Ignaz had one daughter, Naomi, born in 1957, and Jurek and his wife had two children born within two years after they had married. Although these families were much smaller, the ties between parents and children were similarly intensive as in the case of Albert. Nevertheless, in the long run, the brothers' intensive involvement with their families put a strain on their relationship as brothers. This was undoubtedly aggravated by the fact that there was no integrative family environment through other siblings and most of all, through parents who could have held the relationship together. The three brothers therefore were pulled apart not in the least by the competing demands of their wives, and some blame Fela, Ignaz's wife, especially for being the main instigator of trouble. Not that they did not try to reconcile their differences. Attempts were made, for example to have the three fathers-in-law mediate in the conflict, but to no avail; in the end, they even had to take out their differences in the courts.

These conflicts first led to Ignaz (in 1975) and then Jurek (1978) leaving *Fürther Möbel*, but since Albert had to pay out his brothers, extremely high interest rates in the 1980s and Albert's own deteriorating health eventually put the firm into bankruptcy in 1984. One year later, Albert died of cancer, and his children put a large part of the blame for his death on their uncles.

The Social Context

I would argue that the conflict between the brothers and the downfall of *Fürther Möbel* can be explained in part by three structural characteristics that directly or indirectly have to do with the effects of the Shoah and their sojourner status: first, the Mincz brothers lacked the wider integrative family context on account of the genocide. Without siblings, parents or relatives they constituted three nucleated islands onto themselves; second, as sojourners, they lacked significant ties to other Jews both in Fürth and later in Munich where some family members eventually had begun to gravitate to. As sojourners, thirdly, they also lacked viable social and political ties to the surrounding German society. As Chaim put it,

My father had absolute integrity. Really beyond any suspicion to do any crooked things. He was absolutely honest, absolutely correct, a correct businessman and very successful, but, whether he liked it or not, from a particular point of success, in order to progress, you simply need a certain protection at the higher level, something that would also have to do a lot with politics. And my father never advanced to that, he was simply always the Jew. (Chaim, 5)

The consequences of their social isolation became apparent especially at the time of the firm's bankruptcy when the media and the press launched into a campaign accusing the Minczes of a fictitious business failure in order to pocket their employees' social benefits plan funds; an accusation which, after house searches and a subsequent trial, turned out to have been unfounded. There were no friends to rely on either in the Jewish community which in Fürth was weak in any case, or in the wider German context. They were pretty much left to fend for themselves.

From the sojourner point of view, and in light of the particular sentiments of concentration camp survivors, their lack of ties to the surrounding German world was understandable; but why were they so poorly linked to the community of their fellow Jews? Here, an important role might have been the feeling of betrayal felt by Albert about the Jewish leadership in his native

Olkusz which was responsible for putting his father on the first transport. As Miriam put it

...there was also some kind of a conflictual situation for my father, he had a very, very big disappointment concerning the Jews. That is, when the Germans came into this town of Olkusz, my father's father was the first to be asked to go into the *Judenrat*, because from the respectable families, they were of course the first to form the *Judenrat*. My grandfather resisted that with all his strength, so he was not in the *Judenrat* and said, with the Germans he would not - not cooperate. That is how he saw it then. And on the first transport that was sent to the camps—it was normal, and that's the way it was, from the poorer families, that is, from the bottom up, not from the top down, that is from the poorer families and the simple families, they were taken on the first transport, and on that first transport then my father (real grandfather) somehow was right part of that, somehow as revenge [...] that my grandfather did not want to participate in the *Judenrat*, and it was a bitterness about that which my father carried with him his whole life, that he had been betrayed by Jews. There was then somewhere an incredible bitterness towards Jews. He also experienced a fair bit in the camps concerning the Jews, it really was not all rosy. (Miriam 13)

The Jewish Community

Yet if we look beyond the Mincz family, we find that the lack of involvement in community affairs, certainly a cause of the poverty of intra-Jewish ties, extends to a much larger section of the *Jüdischen Gemeinden*. We have here the seemingly contradictory phenomenon of a Jewish population with a very strong Jewish identity who nevertheless show rather little interest in their community. I believe this can only be explained by their mentality as sojourners, of a group of people who were not planning to make Germany—and its Jewish community—their home. A striking illustration of this general lack of interest in developing the community is the following story told by Jurek:

Jurek Mincz: There was also a Russian Jew, a young man alone, 21 years old. And in this club room [in the Jewish community centre of Fürth, YMB] he slept on the floor for over a year.

Raina Mincz: Because the *Gemeinde* was not able to provide him with an apartment.... Can you imagine that? (...) I have a newspaper article, where he slept on the floor. (...) There was a picture of him in the

Fürther Zeitung, not with his face but with his back, and it described his life, from Russia, landed in Fürth, in the *Kultusgemeinde*...

And the synagogue alone has x number of rooms, and Mr. S [a Jewish leader, YMB] could not give him any, and so he had to live in that room where they smoked and did God knows what....

J: I managed, at any rate, in a house where I have apartments, a woman died, an older woman, is a two room apartment, subsidised housing, so I gave that to the young man, and starting the first of September he'll have an apartment. (Jurek, II/18)

In other words, instead of doing all he could to accommodate a newcomer to the community, also as a means to perhaps attract other Russian Jews to Fürth in order to rejuvenate the community, the leader of the community discouraged that potential, and there were no voices there strong enough to challenge him. The fruitless opposition by the Mincz brothers over many years to the dictatorial Mr. S., leader of the community, proves this point. Indeed, this authoritarian structure of many Jewish communities in Germany must be attributed in large part to the low level of community involvement and participation which in a voluntary organisation would tend toward democratic decision making: it is not a question of size alone that makes a community thrive or inversely, to be paralysed. Only in recent years can we discern a marked change to more open structures—a change that goes hand in hand with an ever weaker sojourner mentality in the second generation.

On the other hand, while they were not significantly involved in Jewish community affairs, they did use the community as a service. Although not particularly observant, they did go to synagogue on the High Holidays, their children did get Jewish religious instruction in place of Catholic and Protestant classes in school, and most of all, the Zionist Youth Organisation (ZJD) provided a means to foster a Jewish identity with a strong Zionist orientation. In this sense, the German Jewish community is markedly different from North American Jewry where the emphasis in Jewish education runs along religious/cultural lines and less along lines of Zionism. Indeed, I would hypothesise that of all of the European Jewish communities with the exception of Austria, postwar (West) German Jewry was, and still is, the most Zionist oriented community in Europe which cannot be understood without the sojourner mentality of its Eastern Jewish component.

Sojourner Mentality and the Second Generation

In the Mincz family, this Zionist orientation together with the sojourner mentality had tangible consequences. Most Jewish children in Fürth were

organised in the ZJD (Zionist Youth organisation) with regular meetings in the community centre and various summer programs, especially summer youth camps (*machanot*) in the Alps and elsewhere. This in turn served as an ideal preparation for the childrens' *aliyah* (emigration) to Israel. Chaim, for example, who however says that in Germany he "never had Jewish friends," entered the ZJD at around age fifteen and was very active there as a *madrich* (youth leader) in the summer and winter *machanot* (youth camps). Soon thereafter, around age seventeen, and through a Zionist organisation again, he came to Israel for a two year stay (Chaim,16). Miriam as well attributes her Zionist commitment in part at least to the Zionist youth organisation.

Miriam: Well then I came to Israel that was - that is, I was in Israel before, but I wanted to go to Israel after *Abitur*, that was my plan very early on already, with fourteen, fifteen, even before I was in Israel I knew that I wanted to emigrate to Israel, so I was the Zionist pioneer in our family so to speak. That was for various reasons, first because at home we basically had a Zionist education from my father, and second, we were also organised in the Zionist Youth.... (p.2)

Q: What influence did the ZJD have exactly?

Miriam: I can only speak for myself. Well, I believe that was a very good framework and that—for me that was certainly a support and it also helped somewhere solve our identity problems somehow. Well I identified with that incredibly much. It gave me an emotional charge, so I believe that in our time this really influenced us a lot. (Miriam, 16)

Of the nine children, four eventually did make *aliyah*, and it is significant that these four are to be found among the older six, whereas the younger three children remained in Germany. I would argue that when Miriam, for example, grew up—she was in Gymnasium at the time of the Eichmann trial in Israel and of some major Nazi trials in Germany, the Six Day War and the anti-Israeli turn in the German student movement—the political atmosphere was entirely different from the respective period in Mark's, Lilian's, or Gaby's time: they could value their materially comfortable existence and they experienced a new sympathetic attention to Jews and an explosion of remembrance of the Holocaust in German society which is also clearly reflected in their attitude:

I often asked myself the question why we are here in Germany of all places. Of course also in consideration of the past. How can somebody who was persecuted in the Third Reich or who suffered so much under the Germans, decide to stay in Germany. I asked myself this question

because inside me there was a problem of comprehension, it was schizoid from reasoning, although here we had it here anything but bad. So my question did not come out of suffering (Not) but simply out of a mental schizophrenia. I mean we grew up magnificently, we had...neither financial problems nor did we have a bad adolescence, that is we grew up like in paradise, one has to say that too, and put this into the equation. And Germany also isn't a country where in the country anyways, from the viewpoint of politics, one would suffer. (Gaby, 13)

Mark, who in contrast to Gaby was very much involved with the ZJD nevertheless found that he was "more tied to Germany than my brother"; (Jonathan had moved to Israel):

M: Well, I was always more here psychologically (*innerlich*) than my siblings, I always had far more contact here and something in me is at home here. (Mark,7)...

Q: But at the same time, you live here, as a Jew in Germany...is that or is that not a problem?...

M:Of course it is a problem.

Q: I am thinking of Ezer Weizman's speech

M: Well I don't have the feeling that someone can dictate whether I am allowed to live here or not...

So I certainly do not live unconflicted in Germany, I think all of what I said makes that clear.

Q: Is that then something like "foreign in their own land" or not?

M: Hm. I would turn this totally the other way. At home in a foreign land. (Mark, 29)³

At the same time, they feel a certain measure of estrangement from Israel. Mark only hints at that; he was in a *kibbutz* with his non-Jewish girlfriend, it was "a very difficult time, that is, at that time was the war in Lebanon-" and he wanted to be different from his brother who had made *aliyah*. (Mark, 7) Gaby put it like this:

Gaby: Don't ask me now whether I would live in Israel, would want to

Q.:Yes, but?

G: Because I absolutely would not.

Q: Why not? Too hot?

G: No, because I cannot stand the people there

Q: But why?

G: Because for me, they are all idiots

Q: How so?

G: In Israel it is like they are all unfriendly, everybody thinks he is the president of all the countries of the world, and there is no service in the original sense, one cannot subordinate oneself, they have no culture, no politeness, no friendliness, and nothing of what makes a life worth living. (Gaby,16)

Nevertheless, even among those children who decided to stay in Germany the sojourner mentality has by no means been overcome. This is most apparent in the family status of all children: while Miriam, Chaim, Naomi and Jonathan—the children who made *aliyah*—all married and have children, of the five who remained in Germany, only Lilian married and has children. It is telling, however, that she married within the closest perimeter of the family, so close that it was described as virtual incest by some family members. She married her uncle's closest friend's son, a man with whom Albert was in concentration camp and who is also close to her father Jurek. We could interpret that as a way of replicating her parents' position and essentially reaffirming her status in the sojourner community. Naomi is a special case: she returned to Germany in the course of her disintegrating marriage to Mark Kaplan. She now lives in Hamburg with her son and on occasion sees Mark Mincz who lives there as well and works as an architect.

It is important to see, however, that the sojourner status alone did not determine this difference. The number of eligible Jewish marriage partners in Germany is limited, as Gaby explains:

Q: There are only a few [Jewish] people left, right?

Gaby: No, years ago there was talk of seventy-two Jews in Fürth, but that must be already ten years ago, I was still in school, and since then it has always been that the older people died and nothing came from below, that is, the youth partly went to Munich, partly I had a girlfriend; my first great love was also a Jewish girl from Fürth, that was an absolute phenomenon, because, because same age and then also compatible emotionally, like two drops of water in the sea, right, but she in the meantime is happily married in New York. So nothing really is keeping anybody here, the active youngsters leave and the old ones die off, so at some point it is all finished. (Gaby,11)

Chaim is more specific:

Q: Do you think [that your brothers are not married] has to do with the fact that they cannot find Jewish women, or not?

Chaim: (a) I believe that it has to do with the fact that they cannot find Jewish women because the Jewish women who sojourn (*aufhalten*) in Germany, are basically a catastrophe. To bring a woman from Israel to Germany usually fails because you tear them out of their acceptedness, you plant them in a totally new, alien environment, then one has a job and they work, I don't know, twelve, thirteen hours per day, one barely sees the woman and who does she have contact with? (Chaim, 12)

Naomi as well, who at age thirty-nine is still being supported financially by her father, has studied Judaics at Hamburg University and now works as a freelance translator in Hamburg, has not found another eligible Jewish partner. More perhaps than the others who remained in Germany, she feels especially deeply alienated from her German environment and probably sees herself doubly as a sojourner in Germany: first, as a Jew like her parents and cousins, and second as an Israeli whose aliyah essentially was a failed project. She dreams of returning there to live, travels to Israel often, has a large collection of Israeli music and video cassettes and cultivates friendships in a mostly Israeli and North American oriented environment.

It is telling in this regard that Mark and Andreas, those in the second generation who live with German partners, would not object to starting a family—but their partners are not interested in converting to Judaism, and as long as they do not convert, they do not see themselves in a position—or at least are not quite ready—to start a family.

Q: Any thoughts of marrying, having children and so on?

Mark: Yes, there is the wish....Yes, well I mean that is of course more difficult in the moment where I live with a non-Jewish woman and to reconcile this with the demands of family and also one's own needs, that is more difficult, right....So the question then how do you do that, and that is in America surely much easier than here, I think it is also not that unusual, I don't know, that the wife simply is not Jewish and the man is Jewish and the children are being raised Jewish, in the spectrum of American Judaism this is surely a little more common than here, no...

Q: Really?

M: Yes, so here, I don't know, normally at least the woman has to convert and it always then also -

Q: And your girlfriend would do that or not?

M: No ...

Q: Ok, but would she be opposed if your kids were brought up Jewish?

M: No

Q: She wouldn't be opposed

M: No. Hm. So we have to, have somehow to find a form for that, and that is not so easy. (Mark,25)

Conclusion

In short, what in the DP generation was still being considered the “land of Amalek” or the “cursed German soil,” and is being articulated in the framework of a sojourners mentality has been transformed in the second generation in a rather varied pattern of responses. Miriam, the “eldest born of the eldest brother” (Miriam, 1) never felt at home in Germany and left right after *Abitur*; it is noteworthy, nevertheless, that she sells German books and prints in Jerusalem and thus does maintain cultural ties to the land in which she was born and raised; Andreas and Benjamin, management consultant and physician, both in Munich, studied in Germany and stayed there; while Andreas seems to have accepted his German environment, Benjamin seems more of an escapist, described as a happy go lucky hippie type motor cyclist who lives, in his sister Miriam's judgement in a “dream world.” Chaim, who had begun to settle in Fürth and who had set up a fitness studio there, eventually settled in Israel, a move that was facilitated by three factors: first, his earlier stay there, second his meeting an Israeli woman and third his problems with the law in Germany—likely a consequence of being a son of survivors. Naomi, in turn, followed in Miriam's footsteps, left for Israel after *Abitur*, married there and had a child there; she returned to Germany in the course of a separation from her Israeli husband but has remained in an Israeli dream world in Germany, without a clearly defined professional career; Jonathan as well seems to have been committed early to leave for Israel which he did following his *Abitur*, but it is perhaps not an accident entirely that he married a woman whose father was from Austria and who is a scholar of German Jewry in Israel. The three youngest cousins: Jonathan's brother Mark and his sister Lilian and their cousin Gaby all settled firmly in Germany: Lilian in a ghettoised milieu closely resembling that of her parents; Mark trying to be reflective of the holocaust and defining his very own idiosyncratic Jewish identity, and Gaby, perhaps following most closely in his fathers footsteps by being totally involved in his work in order not to have to think about his Jewish existence in Germany.

In light of the current discussions about Jews in Germany and German Jews, Jews as temporary sojourners or as firmly settled in Germany, the case of the Mincz family suggests that the period of sitting on packed suitcases has come to an end and that for Jews in the second generation, living in Germany has indeed become, as Mark had put it, being “at home in a foreign land.”⁴

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Notes

- ¹. Yordim means “those who descend”, derogatory term for emigrants from Israel.
- ². The term was taken from a passage in the bible (Haggai 1, 12). It describes those who returned from the biblical exile to Jerusalem.
- ³. “Foreign in their own land” refers to the title of a book by Broder and Lang (1979).
- ⁴. It is becoming ever more apparent that among the younger generation, a fundamental transformation in the orientations of German Jewry is taking place, towards a substantial affirmation of Jewish life in Germany. I have dealt with this recently in my discussion of the biographical account of a young Jewish woman in Berlin (Bodemann, “Öffentliche Körperschaft”). The first author, to my knowledge, to have taken this position is Sander Gilman; see to this the introduction in Gilman and Remmler (1994). In my own book (Bodemann, *Gedächtnistheater*, 55 and passim) I had still taken a more ambivalent stand, but recent evidence, statements from younger German Jews, Russian and non-Russian, confirms this new Jewish assertiveness. (See to this Bodemann, 1997).