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Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung-
American Jewish Committee Exchange

This memorandum sets down my personal reflections concerning the exchange with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in June and July of 1982. As such reflections will vary from participant to participant, the purpose of this memorandum is merely to state those items which were of particular interest to me or made a particular impression on me and not to attempt to summarize the trip or its effect on most of the participants. It is divided into four areas: Current conditions in Germany, German perceptions of Jews, German perceptions of the United States and General Reflections on the programmatic elements of the trip.

CURRENT SITUATION IN GERMANY

Because of the nature of our exchange, our political contact with groups other than the CDU was necessarily limited. I was surprised at the extent to which both the foreign and domestic policy of the CDU resembles that of the Republican party of the United States: it favors less government involvement in the private sector, cutting all but the poor off from the welfare state, attempting to reduce inflation and oil dependence and development of nuclear resources and a strong defense with a view to ultimately obtaining disarmament. Unlike the Reagan administration, however, the CDU appears to have a more sophisticated understanding of macro-economics and in particular appreciates that the defect of supply-side economics in a post-inflationary economy is that consumers will use added revenue to reduce debt rather than to increase spending. Everyone we spoke to tended to discount the importance of the Green Alternative Party, saying that it was a diverse and small political movement; however, as discussed below with respect to German youth, there are disturb-

cultural tradition tend to be deemphasized in modern West German culture. Youth consequently grow up without a strong sense of identification. This, coupled with the unemployment problem, the lack of a long democratic tradition and a tendency in German thinking to pursue ideas in depth and to their extremes all contributes to the possibility of a radicalization of a portion of the German student population. This is clearly something which people in Germany are well aware of and are closely watching.

GERMAN PERCEPTIONS OF JEWS

It is difficult to imagine anyone getting a warmer reception than our group received or being taken to so many places which we never thought we would enter. Clearly no one who is Jewish who visits Germany should have any hesitancy at all to admit that he's Jewish and in fact will be more warmly received if he does. German attitudes towards Israel are also very strong, although a few politicians admitted to us that they were having trouble justifying Israeli actions in Lebanon.

German youth is not particularly aware of the Nazi period. It is not treated in great depth in their school curriculum (it is required but apparently there is little attempt to make sure that it is taught and some of the students we spoke to indicated that they had not studied it at all). People are somewhat defensive about the success which the series Holocaust had in Germany and account for it in part by the fact that German television does not present dramatizations of events of the Nazi period but only documentaries. Some of the people in our group sensed a feeling of distance by older Germans of the Nazi period and felt that they referred to it in catch words which tended to mark a separation in their minds between themselves and what went on. I didn't perceive this myself, but there may be some truth to it.

Regrettably, the remaining Jewish population in Germany is small, old and angry. They do not present German youth with a particularly accurate picture of what most Jews are like. About half of the Jews in Germany today are immigrants from Eastern Europe.

GERMAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

Germany continues to be probably the United States' strongest ally, although Germans have an interesting love-hate relationship with American culture. They admire America very much and many of the Germans we spoke to would love to live in America, particularly in San Francisco. At the same time, however, they