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The CV's Role in the Development of a Jewish Sphere in Germany

In dem vorliegenden Artikel wird die Rolle des Centralvereins bei der Ausformung der ‚jüdischen Sphäre‘ von seiner Gründung bis in das Jahr 1933 beschrieben. Verschiedene Phasen der Entwicklungsgeschichte werden identifiziert und untersucht: die Zeit des Kaiserreichs, der Weimarer Republik und der letzten Jahre Weimars. Diskutiert werden sowohl die Anlässe für die Etablierung einer jüdischen Sphäre als auch die Gründe für das Mitwirken des Centralvereins. So war für den C. V. das Bestreben, die jüdische Öffentlichkeit – hier insbesondere die Jugend – im ‚richtigen‘ Bereich des sozialen und ideologischen Gefüges verortet zu wissen, der wichtigste Handlungsansatz. Diese Entwicklungen geschahen in einer Atmosphäre der anwachsenden Konkurrenz, innerhalb und außerhalb der jüdischen Gesellschaft.

This article will describe the role the CV played from its founding until 1933 in the development of the Jewish sphere. Different periods will be examined: the Kaiserreich, the Weimar period, and the last years of the Weimar Republic. It will discuss the causes for the growth of the Jewish sphere and the reasons behind the CV's involvement in it, mainly the attempt to keep the Jewish public – and especially the youth – within the ‘right’ kind of social and ideological framework, in the face of growing competition from other groups, both within and outside of Jewish society.

The Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (CV) was an organization devoted to advancing the integration of Jews within German society,¹ and was much criticized for this by its ideological opponents. But in fact it was a major agent in creating and advancing the growing Jewish sphere in Germany. It created or supported many organizations in various fields which were uniquely Jewish. In this article we intend to describe and explain this phenomenon.

The CV and the Rise of a German-Jewish Organizational Sphere

The founders and leaders of the CV were Jews who were well integrated into German society and had a clear awareness of the developments within it. They felt that they were leading German Jewry in line with these developments as an integral part of that society.²

¹ The major study of the CV is Barkai, Avraham: „Wehr Dich!“ Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (C.V.) 1893–1938, München 2002. On the debates regarding self-identity see Dietrich, Christian: Verweigerter Anerkennung. Selbstbestimmungsdebatten im „Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens“ vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg, Berlin 2014.

² This is widely discussed in Borut, Jacob: „A New Spirit among our Brethren in Ashkenaz“. The Change in Direction of German Jewry at the End of the 19th Century, Jerusalem 1999 (Hebrew). And see in short Borut, Jacob: Jewish Politics and generational change in Wilhelmine Germany, in: Roseman, Mark (ed.): Generations in Conflict. Youth revolt and generation formation in Germany 1770–1968, Cambridge 1995, pp. 105–120, and Borut, Jacob: The 1890's as a Turning Point in German Jewish History, in: Aschkenas 18/19 (2010), 1, pp. 41–58.

The establishment of the CV was the most telling manifestation of a major development that took place in the 1890's: a widespread process of the formation of specifically Jewish groups. This was described by a leading scholar as a "Jewish organizational renaissance".³ These organizations were not intended to form an insular sphere that would embrace all areas of life as had existed in the ghetto era. Nonetheless, they did enclose many aspects of Jewish life. The Jews did not renounce the German component of their identity and their wish to integrate into German society, but their attitude toward the Jewish component of their identity was becoming stronger and more visible.⁴

This corresponds to a major development which took place in Germany of the 1890's: rising particularism, which could be observed in both the social and the political spheres (for example, in the behavior of individual states in the Bundesrat⁵). This was a new trend, as through most of the 19th century, the "nation and national unity" were the "decisive factors of the time".⁶ The emphasis on national unity was a major factor in the politics of Otto von Bismarck. After his withdrawal from politics and a generation after German unity was achieved, sectors within German society began emphasizing their particularistic interests and needs (as was also evident by the rise of pressure groups for various sectors) and creating their own particularistic organizational networks.

A striking manifestation of this tendency was the development of several large 'sozialmoralische Milieus' within German society.⁷ Three main milieus that experienced major developments in the 1890's were the Socialists, the Catholics and the Poles.⁸

The Jewish sphere was composed of several Jewish organizations, the most important of which were the CV and the growing network of societies for Jewish History and Literature (Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur) that dealt with the exclusive cultural and historical heritage of the Jews.⁹ Over the years, other Jewish groups joined them, such as sports clubs, student fraternities and a whole gamut of Jewish Vereine (associations). In 1903, The *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* wrote about "hundreds of organizations" (hunderte von Vereine) that were founded in the recent years.¹⁰

The leaders of the CV did not intend to establish a separate sphere that would encompass all aspects of life. They explicitly stated that they supported the establishment

³ Pulzer, Peter: *Jews and the German State. The Political History of a Minority, 1848–1933*, London 1992, p. 13. Another major manifestation of this trend was the growth of a network of associations that dealt with the exclusive cultural and historical heritage of the Jews. See Borut, Jacob: *Vereine für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur at the End of the 19th Century*, in: Leo Baeck Institute Year Book 41 (1996), pp. 89–114.

⁴ For lack of space I will not enter into a methodological discussion about the many possible terms referring to the Jewish set of organizations. In this article I use the term "sphere", which was widely used by the Jewish contemporaries.

⁵ Rauh, Manfred: *Föderalismus und Parlamentarismus im Wilhelminischen Reich*, Düsseldorf 1973, pp. 130–131, 137; Röhl, John: *Germany Without Bismarck. The Crisis of Government in the Second Reich, 1890–1900*, Berkeley 1967, p. 95.

⁶ Nipperdey, Thomas: *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte*, München 1986, p. 207.

⁷ The concept was created by M. Rainer Lepsius. See *Parteien- und Sozialstruktur. Zum Problem der Demokratisierung der deutschen Gesellschaft*, in: Lepsius, M. Rainer: *Demokratie in Deutschland. Soziologisch-historische Konstellationsanalysen. Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, Göttingen 1993, pp. 25–50. Also see Hübinger, Gangolf: „Sozialmoralisches Milieu“. Ein Grundbegriff der deutschen Geschichte, in: Sigmund, Steffen/Gert Albert/Bienfait, Agathe/Stachura, Mateusz (eds.): *Soziale Konstellation und historische Perspektive*, Wiesbaden 2008, pp. 207–227.

⁸ This is widely discussed in Borut, "A New Spirit", 1999, pp. 114–136. Also see in short with many sources listed: Borut, *Jewish Politics and Generational Change*, 1995, pp. 112–114, and Borut, *The 1890's as a Turning Point*, 2010, pp. 52–54.

⁹ See Borut, *Vereine für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur*, 1996.

¹⁰ *Unsere Geselligkeit*, in: *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 67, 13, 27.3.1903, pp. 145–146, here p. 145.

of Jewish associations only in areas where Jews were discriminated against, but opposed their establishment in areas where they enjoyed equality.¹¹ For this reason, the CV opposed the founding of Jewish sports clubs, for example.¹²

The Jewish sphere was not a single network of Jewish organizations. It was split between different movements; mainly the Zionists, the Liberals and the dissident Orthodoxy (Austrittsorthodoxie). Each movement formed its own organizations. Particularly important in this context was the rise of Zionism as a movement challenging the accepted value system of German Jewry and the Jewish leadership, both at the national and the community level. Zionism, claiming that the Jews are a separate nation, explicitly aspired to expand the network of Jewish organizations as much as possible, and began to act in this direction. The Orthodox Jews also had such aspirations. The fear of Zionist influence motivated the Liberal Jews to establish their own organizations in order to compete with the Zionists, and they reached a scale they had not originally intended. The youth organizations are a good example of this, since their establishment, expansion and support stemmed mainly from the competition between the various movements and the fear of their leaders that if they did not act, their rivals would gain control of the youth. To a certain extent, this was also true of student organizations.¹³

At the same time, it is possible to identify certain areas that were not of much interest to the new organizational leadership. In these areas, the most prominent being women's rights, Jewish craftsmen, and to a certain extent sports, the dynamic was that of a bottom up awakening by local activists who formed local and then national organizations. These organizations tended to be neutral and not explicitly identify with one of the existing movements.¹⁴

The CV tried to find a balance between those calling for an autonomous Jewish sphere and those opposing any organization exclusively for Jews. An example of its stance can be seen regarding Jewish nurses. In 1902, the CV's organ, *Im deutschen Reich*, published a review of a book written by a Jewish doctor from Stuttgart in 1901 in which he proposed the establishment of Jewish nurses' associations (jüdische Schwesternschaften). The information on the growth of this profession by providing nurse's training for young Jewish women in more and more frameworks, and creating nursing services for Jews (useful for those eating Koscher food, according to the author), is reported on approvingly. However, the main idea of the book, the founding of nurses' associations, was criticized, because Jewish nurses should work alongside Christian nurses, thereby contributing to the struggle against antisemitism.¹⁵ In a similar manner, the CV strongly

¹¹ See, for example, *Im deutschen Reich* 9 (1903), 10 (October 1903), p. 606.

¹² The founders of the first Zionist Turnverein (gymnastics club) declared that they wanted to be in a Jewish club in order to strengthen the declining Jewish self-awareness and feeling of belonging (Zusammengehörigkeit). See Reinharz, Jehuda (ed.): *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus 1882–1933*, Tübingen 1981, p. 55. On the founding of Jewish sports clubs in the years 1902–1903 and the Jewish-Liberal opposition to it see *Jüdisches Volksblatt* (Breslau), 8, 32, 8.8.1902, p. 302; 8, 38, 19.9.1902, p. 363 and 8, 47, 21.11.1902, p. 446.

¹³ See Lamberti, Marjori: *From Coexistence to Conflict – Zionism and the Jewish Community in Germany 1897–1914*, in: *Leo Baeck institute Year Book* 27 (1982), pp. 53–86, here pp. 62–64 (student organizations), pp. 65–69 and p. 71 (youth groups).

¹⁴ On the women see Kaplan, Marion: *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany. The Campaigns of the Jüdischer Frauenbund, 1904–1938*, Westport, Conn., 1979, pp. 20–23.

¹⁵ *Im Deutschen Reich* 8, 1 (January 1902), pp. 60–63, regarding the book: Feldmann, Gustav: *Jüdische Krankenpflegerinnen*, Kassel 1902. For the author's reply to the criticism see *Im Deutschen Reich* 8, 2 (February 1902), pp. 85–90.

supported including Jewish religious instruction in religious education in public schools, but vehemently objected to separate Jewish schools.¹⁶

The CV also objected to founding Jewish professional associations. A letter to the editor from Hamburg on the subject published in *Im deutschen Reich*, received the following answer: „Von Gründung jüdischer kaufmännischer Berufsvereine können wir nur dringendst abraten. Die wirtschaftlichen Interessen der jüdischen jungen Kaufleute werden in den bestehenden paritätischen Verbänden ausreichend gewahrt. Wozu also die neue Gründung? [We strongly advise against the founding of Jewish professional trade organizations. The economic interests of young Jewish tradespeople are sufficiently protected in the existing organizations so why bother founding something new?]¹⁷

The Weimar Period

Against the background of a regime much more tolerant of particularism than before,¹⁸ during the Weimar period the network of Jewish organizations encompassed a much larger dimension than before – both in terms of the numbers of participants and in the areas involved. The best example of this is the fact that Jews who strongly opposed the segregation of German Jews and advocated the fullest possible integration into the German homeland were now, paradoxically, setting up Jewish organizations to promote their goals. Such was Max Naumann's Bund Nationaldeutscher Juden. The Union of Jewish Front Soldiers is another example of a large organization which included many people who would not have joined a specifically Jewish organization before the Weimar period.

This increase in Jewish organizational activities was spurred by the massive increase in antisemitism during that period. Jews were driven out of German clubs and associations, and therefore founded organizations which would accept them. These did not have to be strictly Jewish; in some cases they founded societies that declared themselves open to all. However, in actuality, almost all of their members were Jews. These open associations were founded especially in those areas in which the German association had adopted the racist Aryan paragraph forbidding or limiting Jewish membership.

One such case were the Alpine Associations (Alpenvereine). From the end of the 19th century, and particularly after the First World War, many branches, especially in Austria, adopted the Aryan paragraph. This led to the founding in 1921 of a branch called Donauland in Vienna, which became a haven for Jewish members ousted from the antisemitic branches, and also for non-Jews who objected to the racism of their branches. In 1924, the head organization of the Alpine Associations, the Deutsch-Österreichische Alpenverein, decided to accept the demands of the racist branches and ousted the Donauland from its ranks.¹⁹ As antisemitic and racist views began to prevail in the German branches as well, the Jewish members were faced with a dilemma how to react.

¹⁶ See the sources in Barkai, „Wehr Dich!“, 2002, pp. 40–42 (Kaiserreich period), pp. 175–176 (Weimar period), and the detailed discussion of articles in the *Im deutschen Reich* in Dietrich, *Verweigerte Anerkennung*, 2014, pp. 147–153, 158.

¹⁷ *Im Deutschen Reich* 18 (1912), 1 (January 1912), p. 58. Translation by Margi Schellenberg.

¹⁸ On political spheres in Germany during that period see Lehnert, Detlef/Megerle Klaus (eds.): *Politische Teilkulturen zwischen Integration und Polarisierung. Zur politischen Kultur in der Weimarer Republik*, Opladen 1990.

The CV was not directly involved in the process, but followed it closely, receiving reports from its members in various towns about the local developments, and expressing its opinion when asked. Their opinion was clear: Jews should not retreat from the various chapters as long as the chapter did not officially accept a racist stance. They should stay on and fight the antisemites from within. However, when a chapter did adopt a racist guideline – either the Aryan paragraph or a limit on the number of Jews allowed – then the Jews must withdraw.²⁰ Such was the case in Berlin: the local chapter adopted a limit, and the CV provided assistance to the Jewish members who in May 1925 founded a new group in response: the Deutsche Alpenverein Berlin.²¹

One developing area focused on youth organizations. Organized activities of German Jewish youth organizations began before the First World War, and, as we noted, were motivated primarily by the struggle between the CV and the Zionists for recruiting supporters.²² After the First World War, these activities intensified.²³ In 1921, the CV, initially opposed to the idea of specifically Jewish youth organizations, decided to support youth organizations whose position conformed to its ideology. It published a 'Kommentar' to explain this decision, from which it was clear that among other things, this step was intended to combat Zionist activity among the youth.²⁴ In 1925, the CV *Zeitung* began publishing a youth supplement called *Von deutsch-jüdischer Jugend*.

The CV leadership openly expressed the opinion that the activity of the organization should include positive Jewish content.²⁵ This was necessary to attract the youth, but had wider implications regarding the activities of the organization in the near future.

The Last Years of Weimar Germany

Precisely at the time of the major economic crisis at the end of the 1920's and the early 1930's, when the financial possibilities of the Jewish communities and individual Jews were on a sharp decline, there was a great burst of activities in Jewish associations, and in Jewish life in general.

It could be expected that the financial shortcomings would lead to a slump in the activities of Jewish organizations. In fact, the exact opposite was true. Not only did the amount of activities not decline in number, but rather rose dramatically. This can be demonstrated by an analysis of the local reports in the most widely distributed Jewish paper, the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*. Among the nationwide Jewish papers, this paper had

¹⁹ Achrainner, Martin: „So, jetzt sind wir ganz unter uns!“ Antisemitismus im Alpenverein, in: Loewy, Hanno/Milchram, Gerhard (eds.): „Hast Du meine Alpen gesehen?“ Eine jüdische Beziehungsgeschichte. Katalog zur gleichnamigen Ausstellung im Jüdischen Museum Hohenems (26.4.–4.10.2009), im Jüdischen Museum Wien (16.12.2009–15.3.2010) und im Alpinen Museum des DAV in München (März 2010–Februar 2011), pp. 288–317.

²⁰ The CV had a special file on the subject, showing their interest. CV Archiv (in the OSOBI archive in Moskow), Fond 721, Delo 2256, copy in the CAHJP, film 2.710. On the principal stand of the CV see frames 1655, 1865.

²¹ See CAHJP, film 2.710, frames 1646–1664, 1675–1708, 1745–1771, 1774–1813, 1817–1849, 1863–1864, 1924–1935.

²² Jewish youth organizations in Germany have been widely treated in modern research. See Hetkamp, Jutta: Die jüdische Jugendbewegung in Deutschland von 1913–1933, Münster 1994; Klönne, Irmgard: Deutsch, Jüdisch, Bündisch. Erinnerung an die aus Deutschland vertriebene jüdische Jugendbewegung, Witzhausen 1993; Hotam, Yotam (ed.): Deutsch-jüdische Jugend im „Zeitalter der Jugend“, Göttingen, 2009. On specific movements see the many articles, mainly by Chaim Schatzker, published in the Leo Baeck Institute Year Book.

²³ For the CV activities among youth in the years 1918–1925 see Barkai, „Wehr Dich!“, 2002, pp. 142–149.

²⁴ Barkai, „Wehr Dich!“, 2002, pp. 142–143.

²⁵ See quotes in Barkai, „Wehr Dich!“, 2002, pp. 145, 148.

dedicated the most space to local reporting. The analysis is based on a survey of the local reporting sections in November, December and January – the winter months, when the bulk of activities took place (in the summer, the potential participants went on vacation, and the activities were greatly reduced). The survey counted reports about activities – lectures, meetings or parties (Feiern) of Jewish associations or of the local Jewish community.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Number of Copies in that Month</u>	<u>Number of Reports</u>	<u>Average of Reports per Copy</u>
November 1926	4	25	6.25
December 1926	5	35	7
January 1927	4	38	9.5
Total 1926/27	14	98	7
November 1929	4	82	20.5
December 1929	4	109	25.2
January 1930	5	76	15.2
Total 1929/30	13	267	20.5
November 1932	4	67*	16.75
December 1932	5	168	33.6
January 1933	4	150	37.5
Total 1931/32	13	385	29.62

Chart 1: *Israelitisches Familienblatt* - reports about activities of Jewish associations and communities.

*This is a relatively small amount of events in this month, compared with the following months and with November 1929. In November 1929 many places reported on the beginning of the Winterarbeit of the associations, while in 1932, such reports on the beginning of the Winterarbeit were sent in December, while in November many associations still continued their summer break. The reason for this might be financial difficulties that delayed the activities.

The large increase seen in the table also manifested itself in the number of localities which reported Jewish activities. Each edition of the *Familienblatt* in December 1932 included reports from 23 to 26 localities. In comparison: the edition from November 18, 1926 contained reports from only three localities. In fact, the amount of Jewish activities was even greater than what was reported in the *Familienblatt*. In Regensburg, for example, there was lively activity of Jewish associations – a Verein für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur was founded in 1928, there were local branches of the CV and Reichsbund jüdischer Fronstsoldaten, a Frauenverein, a Zionist association, a Jewish social association called Phönix, various youth organizations, and even a Talmud-study group

opened in 1929 by the local Rabbi.²⁶ However, almost no reports on their activities were published in the *Israelitisches Familienblatt*.

Besides, a nationwide paper such as the *Familienblatt* could not include reports on all local Jewish activities. In the last months of the Weimar Republic in Hamburg, for example, the activities of about 15–20 Jewish organizations were reported weekly in the local Jewish papers.²⁷ The *Familienblatt* simply did not have enough room to accommodate that amount of reporting from all over Germany.

The economic crisis and the troublesome financial situation of the Jewish communities and organizations should have led to a decline in the activities, as happened in countless associations across Germany. However, this did not happen within the Jewish sphere. As the table shows, the activities not only expanded, but expanded significantly.

To understand this paradox, one should look into the social influence of the economic crisis of 1928/1929. Usually, changes within German Jewry that concern a withdrawal from the surrounding society and a strengthening of the inner-Jewish realm have been attributed to the rise of antisemitism. While this was also true for this period, it certainly was not the only reason, since the organizational changes began in the larger Jewish communities that were in towns where antisemitism was not strong enough to force a social seclusion of Jews.

A major social influence of the economic crisis was its severe effect on Jewish family life. The major problem documented by various contemporary sources was a breakdown in parental authority, especially that of the fathers. The father who could no longer support his family not only stopped being a role model, but also completely lost his status before his descendants.

This led to an increase in the generation gap which had become noticeable in Germany already at the beginning of the 20th century (as seen in the spread of youth movements such as the *Wandervögel*), and was intensified after World War I. In a 1931 lecture on *Strukturwandlungen der jüdischen Familie*, Hans Goslar stated that “Noch niemals in der Geschichte der Juden hat eine so tiefe Kluft zwischen den Generationen bestanden wie heute. [In all of Jewish history there has never been as large a gap between the generations as there is today.]”²⁸ A similar opinion was expressed in a memorandum prepared by the Reichsausschuß der jüdischen Jugendverbände in July 1932. It stated that the family ties of the younger generation are in danger, because these ties do not help them in their times of trouble, and they are looking for connections to forces that are outside of the circles within which they had stayed so far.²⁹

Those outside forces also aroused the concern of CV leader Ludwig Holländer, who stated early in 1929: “Die Jugend, die an allen Idealen verzweifelte, begann jedes seelische Gleichgewicht zu verlieren. Und den falschen Propheten der Politik folgten falsche Propheten der Wirtschaft. [Not believing in any ideals, the youth began to lose all of their

²⁶ Wittmer, Siegfried: *Regensburger Juden: jüdisches Leben von 1519 bis 1990*, Regensburg 1996.

²⁷ “Hamburg”, in: Pinkas Hakehillot [Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities] Germany – North-West Germany, Jerusalem 2007, vol. 1, pp. 531–588, here p. 565 (Hebrew). On the increase in the activity of Jewish organizations in the town towards the end of the Republic see p. 564.

²⁸ *CV Zeitung* 10, 45, 6.11.1931, p. 522. Translation by Margi Schellenberg.

²⁹ “Jüdische Jugendverbände in Krise”, CV Archive, CAHJP, Microfilm HM2\8695, frames 1429–1432, here 1430–1431, 1429

mental balance. The false prophets in politics were followed by the false prophets in economics.]”³⁰ This was a clear allusion to the communists.

Indeed, communism had a tremendous appeal to the youth, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, especially for victims of the economic crisis.³¹ The Jewish press referred to the growing shift of Jewish youth towards this movement, and the phenomenon was common enough to get its own designation: “Red Assimilation”(rote Assimilation). In 1931, Red Assimilation was described as a commonly accepted term.³²

Jewish activists from various circles were deeply worried by this situation, and sought counter activities to stop the erosion among the Jewish youth. The Jewish communal leadership also wanted to put a stop to this. There was therefore an increase in Jewish activities, some of which were initiated by the communal leadership and some by other activists, such as leaders of youth organizations, who were supported by the communities.

Thus, the Liberal leadership had to deviate from its fundamental ideological stance and take on more and more roles in the realms of social life and leisure activities for the Jewish public. In fact, this leadership promoted and reinforced the development of a separate Jewish sphere, in which Jewish social and cultural life existed in frameworks separate from German society.

This is remarkable because at the beginning of the Weimar period, it was the Zionist minority within the communal leadership organs that called for an increase in the scope of communal activities, and their demands were rejected out of hand by the Liberal leadership, who stood for an assimilation of the Jews in the social and association life of the surrounding society. This was also the standpoint of the CV, as we have seen. It did support the expansion of Jewish associations, but it opposed a wide Jewish inner sphere that would appear as a “mental Ghetto” (geistiges Ghetto). This great discrepancy between the aims and aspirations of Liberals and Zionists was being continually emphasized by their leaders at the time.³³

However, the reality was more complicated. Research shows that a substantial increase in the scope of activities within the Jewish fold took place in the Weimar period with the active participation of Liberal leaders and Rabbis. Liberal Jews, specifically community leaders who feared for the future of German Jewry, undertook an active policy aimed at innovating and revitalizing Jewish life. In this realm, the gap between Zionists and Liberals had narrowed, and Liberals expanded the scope of activities of the Jewish community.³⁴

³⁰ „Chronika”, C.V. Zeitung 8, 1, 4.1.1929, p. 1. Translation by Margi Schellenberg.

³¹ Fischer, Conan J.: Unemployment and Left-Wing Radicalism in Weimar Germany, 1930–1933, in: Stachura, Peter B. (ed.): Unemployment and the Great Depression in Weimar Germany, London 1986, pp. 209–225; Falter, Jürgen W.: Unemployment and the Radicalization of the German Electorate 1928–1933: An Aggregate Data Analysis with Special Emphasis on the Rise of National Socialism, in: Stachura (ed.), Unemployment, pp. 187–208.

³² Raphael, J. (Beckum): ‘Rote’ und ‘Weiße’ Assimilation, in: Israelitisches Familienblatt 31, 47, 19.11.1931, 1st–2nd pages [note: that special type of page numbering is used when the pages in a volume were not given numbers in the original. YB].

³³ Such expressions are far too numerous to be sighted here. I dealt extensively with this topic in my article ‘Verjudung des Judentums’: Was there a Zionist Subculture in Weimar Germany?, in: Penslar, Derek (ed.): In Search of Jewish Community: Collective Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria 1918–1932, Bloomington, Indiana & Indianapolis 1998, pp. 92–114.

³⁴ Brenner, Michael: The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany, New Haven 1996 (the book aroused some opposition, which dealt mainly with the scope within Jewish society of the phenomena Brenner described, and if those had involved the majority of German Jews or not. This does not contradict the point made in this article); Volkov, Shulamit: Die

Two poles existed within the CV whose positions were radicalized – in part by growing antisemitism. There were those who desired “die Aufgabe jedes jüdischen ‘Separatismus’ – gleichviel ob auf dem Gebiete der Schule, der sportlichen Betätigung oder wo sonst immer – und stärkere Bindung an die deutschen Volksgenossen. [The end of all Jewish ‘separatism’—regardless of relating to school, sports activities or wherever else—and a stronger connection to their ethnic German comrades.]” On the other hand, there were circles who wanted a “verstärkte jüdische Solidarität [strengthened Jewish solidarity]”.³⁵

In spite of the criticism from some Jewish-Liberal circles, the economic crisis led Liberal communal leaders to initiate the formation of comprehensive organizational systems within their communities (especially in realms that could attract the youth),³⁶ which resembled the Zionist aim of a “national community” (Volksgemeinde). This was done in spite of the sharp confrontations the Liberals had had with Zionists and Zionism within the communities.

An example of this can be seen in the establishment of Jewish youth and community centers throughout Germany. The initiatives came from various sources, but without the support of the local Liberal leadership, specifically the communal leaders, there would have been no economic basis for their establishment.

In 1928, the CV Zeitung published in its youth supplement an article about the Jugendheim. It claimed that “Man kann heute von einer **Jugend- und Gemeindeheimbewegung** sprechen. [We can say that today there is a **Youth and Community Center movement**.]”³⁷ The author described the motives for their formation, summing up that at the root of the various motives lies one basic assumption, namely the recognition of the danger to the future of the Jewish youth in the large cities resulting from the breakdown (Ausfall) of family relationships, which was a “determining factor in today’s Jewish life” (bestimmende Tatsache des heutigen jüdischen Lebens).

He went on to claim that although the big cities contained large Jewish populations, these were merely “collections of individuals” (Anhäufungen einzelner Menschen), lacking any sense of solidarity (Zusammengehörigkeitsbewußtsein). There is no religious or communal spirit, or even participation in the lives of one’s neighbors. The author called it ‘Atomisierung’, and also noted the lack of “Einsatzmitteln, wie es in Arbeitergegenden das proletarische Bewußtsein darstellen [resources like the proletarian spirit in working-class neighborhoods]” (thus taking the Socialist/Communist sphere as a model).

The solution: “Einrichtungen, die als Zentren eines neuen jüdischen Gemeinde- und Jugendlebens wirken könnte. [Institutions that can serve as centers for a new Jewish youth and community life.]” These were the Jugendheime (youth centers), which the author wholeheartedly supported. This was the solution adopted by the leaders of Jewish

Erfindung einer Tradition: Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums in Deutschland, in: Historische Zeitschrift 253 (1991), pp. 603–628; Volkov, Shulamit: Jews and Judaism in the Age of Emancipation: Unity and Variety, in: Beck, Wolfgang (ed.): The Jews in European History: Seven Lectures, Cincinnati 1994, pp. 73–93; Gillerman, Sharon: Germans into Jews. Remaking the Jewish Social Body in the Weimar Republic (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture), Stanford 2009.

³⁵ Barkai, “Wehr Dich!”, 2002, pp. 250–251. Translation by Margi Schellenberg.

³⁶ See Brenner, Renaissance, 1996, pp. 49ff; For specific examples see Jüdische Rundschau 35, 11, 7.2.1930, p. 75; Kölner Jüdisches Wochenblatt 8, 6, 7.2.1930, p. 2.

³⁷ Graupe, Heinz: Das jüdische Jugendheim, Von deutsch-jüdischer Jugend. Beilage der CV Zeitung 4, 12, 21.12.1928, p. 40. Emphasis in original. Translation by Margi Schellenberg.

communities and organizations, and the establishment of community and youth centers spread throughout Germany.

The CV was also active in this field. Its Reichsjugendausschuß founded an Angestelltenheim in Berlin located in Magazinstr. 17, in the poor Jewish area in the eastern part of the city. Its opening on November 17, 1931 was announced in a large headline in the *CV Zeitung*. It was open between 2 pm and 11 pm, and was intended both for the unemployed and the employed.³⁸ As of December 1931, the CV in Königsberg opened its youth center for three days a week to all members of the community. Visitors were given the opportunity to read Jewish and general newspapers, and to engage in Jewish affairs in the framework of regular organized activities such as tea parties (Teeabende).³⁹ The purpose was for the home to be “eine Sammelstätte jüdischen Lebens... die im Sinne unserer deutsch-jüdischen Tendenz zu halten und auszubauen... ist [a clearinghouse of Jewish life to be maintained and developed according to our German-Jewish proclivity]“.⁴⁰

As a result of the economic crisis and its effects, the CV increased its activity among the youth. In 1928 it established the CV Jugendausschuß (youth committee). The importance attributed to youth work can be deduced from the fact that it was included in the “Nine Theses” written by Ludwig Holländer, which were unanimously accepted at the General Assembly in 1928 as the organization's Grundsatzklärung (mission statement).⁴¹

Led by Alfred Hirschberg – the Jugendreferent (youth coordinator) of the CV's leadership, in 1932 the CV began recruiting members for its own youth organization – the CV-Jugendarbeitsgemeinschaft.⁴² Hirschberg expressed his views on what the organization hoped to do and its aims in a Jugendtagung (youth congress) that the CV administration had organized adjacent to the organization's Hauptversammlung (annual general meeting) for 1928. He submitted a draft resolution to the conference which stated: “Die Jugend wolle sich nicht auf den rein negativen Abwehrkampf beschränken, sondern verlange eine jüdische Wirklichkeit, die den ganzen Menschen durchdringen müsse und zur Verantwortung vor [sic!] alle Juden führen sole. [The youth do not want to limit itself to purely negative defense activities, but demand a Jewish reality that pervades the whole person and leads to a feeling of responsibility for all Jews.]“⁴³

Hirschberg understood that in order to recruit the youth, they needed to be offered positive activities and a “Jewish reality” in which they will identify with Judaism, and presented with a demand for a full identification, which pervades one's entire personality. He believed that the alternatives he was struggling against, such as communism, were successful when they demanded that the youth fully identify themselves with a new, complete set of values that encompassed all areas of life because this demand was accepted by idealistic adolescents. In order to recruit young people of this type, they must

³⁸ CV Zeitung 10, 43, 23.10.1931, p. 503 and CV Zeitung 10, 47, 20.11.1931, p. 533.

³⁹ Israelitisches Familienblatt 33, 52, 24.12.1931, 3rd Page.

⁴⁰ CV Zeitung 11, 12, 18.3.1932, p. 112 (written on the occasion of a Bunte Abend attended by some 150 people). Translation by Margi Schellenberg.

⁴¹ Barkai, “Wehr Dich!”, 2002, p. 221. On the ‘Nine Theses’ see there, pp. 219–221.

⁴² See CV Zeitung 11, 7, 12.2.1932, p. 55, on a ‘Werbenachmittag’ of the Groß-Berlin branch. For activities in other parts of Germany see CV Zeitung 11, 21, 20.5.1932, pp. 208–210; CV Zeitung 11, 25, 17.6.1932, p. 256.

⁴³ CV Zeitung 7, 7, 17.2.1928, p. 105. Quoted (with a mistaken date) in Barkai, “Wehr Dich!”, 2002, p. 168. Translation by Margi Schellenberg.

be presented with comprehensive demands and an alternative reality. But here this would be a Jewish reality, not a revolutionary world. If they identify with this Jewish reality and its values, they will come to identify with the value system that exists among the CV and its supporters - the 'obvious' connection of Germanness and Jewishness (Deutschtum and Judentum).

Suggestions for creating a "Jewish environment" for the youth were brought up in a major meeting on youth organized by the CV in January 1932. Ernst Plaut of Essen, a key activist in the Jugendarbeit of the CV, spoke about the practical work among the "proletarianized youth" (proletarisierten Jugendliche) – a group highly susceptible to 'Red Assimilation'. The focus of the work within this group should be on creating a feeling that there is a community (Gemeinschaft) working for them.⁴⁴ Another speaker at this meeting, Fritz Schwarzschild, said that the way to fight the urgent sense of Jewish distress is only by creating a "geschlossene[s] jüdische[s] Milieu [closed Jewish environment]."⁴⁵

It is noteworthy that the CV, the organization that fought for the integration of the Jews in the surrounding society and conducted a bitter struggle against the Zionists' separatist tendencies, raised such proposals. The difference between this trend and the classical thinking of the CV was noted by the author of an article on the younger generation of the CV, who wrote that "In einer Zeit, in der die religiösen Werte nicht mehr als die primären gelten, verschiebt sich leicht die Betonung jüdischer Eigenart vom religiösen auf das kulturelle und gesellschaftliche Gebiet. Man glaubt dann in einer besonderen kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Seinsweise inmitten der nichtjüdischen Umwelt die besondere jüdische Eigenart zu finden und sucht sie nach Kräften zu fördern. [At a time when religious values are no longer considered to be essential, the emphasis of Jewishness shifts slightly from religion to culture and society. The special Jewish characteristic is thought to be found in a particular cultural and social manner in the midst of a non-Jewish environment and every effort is made to further this.]"⁴⁶

This situation, which the author described as a "neue Form des Bekennens zum Judentum [a new form of avowing Judaism]", could be caused either by a real inner sense of the uniqueness of Judaism, or "ein Sichzurückgestoßen Fühlen [a feeling of being rejected]" stemming from an anti-Jewish environment, led to the desire to establish Jewish groups and to a "spezifisch jüdische[s] Milieu [specifically Jewish environment]" – and this aspiration also existed in the CV. The author of this article opposed that aspiration, warning that it might undermine the "tragende Idee [fundamental principle]" of the CV for emancipation and integration into German society.

It is striking that Liberal Jewish leaders had the desire to encompass all walks of life in organizations, just like what the Socialists and Communists offered. This was what the Zionists wanted, the ideological opponents of the CV. Although many voices in the CV did not support this wish, the fact that it was forcefully expressed by leading members speaks volumes.

⁴⁴ Protokoll der Reichsjugend-Konferenz am 31. Januar 1932 in Berlin, Logenhaus, Emser-Strasse 12, CV Archive, CAHJP, Microfilm HM2/8695, p. 5, frame 1563.

⁴⁵ CAHJP, Microfilm HM2/8695, p. [18], fr. 1576.

⁴⁶ Herzfeld, Hans: "Politische Zielsetzung der jungen C.V.-Generation", in: CV Zeitung 10, 24, 12.6.1931, pp. 304–305, here p. 304 (also for all following quotations). Translation by Margi Schellenberg.

The CV formed a few youth groups (Jugendgruppen), for example in Karlsruhe in May 1931.⁴⁷ However, by the end of 1931 at the latest, the organization reached the conclusion (shared by most activists in the field) that it would be preferable to operate through political and religiously neutral youth organizations that attract a larger public.

At the aforementioned youth meeting of January 1932, Ernst Plaut of Essen spoke about the good and flawless work of the CV with the neutral youth organizations. He called for not interfering with the activities of these neutral groups in small towns, a call apparently aimed at liberal activists who sought to increase liberal activity among the Jews in the provinces.⁴⁸

The interest in an expanding Jewish sphere was not limited to youth work. For example, the *CV Zeitung* also called for the formation of a Forschungsstelle für jüdische Wirtschaftsfragen (Research Center for Jewish Economic Issues). And it was very happy to report on the progress of the plans to establish this center (presented as the need of the hour), and to take credit for bringing up the idea.⁴⁹

The Jewish sphere was indeed greatly expanding. The *jüdisches Jahrbuch* of 1932 listed more than 300 (!) Jewish organizations and institutions in Berlin alone. The CVZ proudly stated in that context: “Die mannigfachen Einrichtungen und Organisationen in der größten jüdischen Gemeinde Deutschlands sind so zahlreich, das Leben in ihr entsprechend rege, daß ein gut orientierender Führer in Form eines Handbuchs dringendes Bedürfnis ist. [The number of the diverse institutions and organizations in the largest Jewish community in Germany is so great, the life within so vibrant, that a good orienting guide in the form of a handbook is urgently necessary.]”⁵⁰

Indeed, a few years later, a full, all-encompassing Jewish sphere did develop in a short time, after the Nazis rose to power. It was not the choice of German Jewry – they were forced into it. However, they managed to build this sphere successfully and quickly because of the solid foundations laid – also with the help of the CV – in the years beforehand.

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⁴⁷ *CV Zeitung* 10, 19, 8.5.1931, p. 239

⁴⁸ Protokoll der Reichsjugend-Konferenz am 31. Januar 1932, CAHJP, Microfilm HM2/8695, p. 5, frame 1563.

⁴⁹ See for example *CV Zeitung* 10, 51, 18.12.1931, p. 583.

⁵⁰ *CV Zeitung* 11, 53, 30.12.1932, p. 542. Translation by Margi Schellenberg.

Nations" during the Third Reich. Currently engaged in research on the free-time activities of Jews in Nazi Germany, especially after 1938, and (with Professor Otto Dov Kulka) in preparation of a volume of Reichsvereinigung documents. Among his books are: "A new Spirit among our Brethren in Ashkenas:" The Change in Direction of German Jewry at the End of the 19th Century" (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1999, in Hebrew); "Wehrt Euch!: " The Founding of the "Central Verein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens" (The Dinur Center, Jerusalem, 1996, in Hebrew); Jewish Religious Practice under Nazi Rule (1933-1938) and its Reflection in the German-Jewish Press (Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 2017, in Hebrew). He was co-editor, with Oded Heilbronner, of the book German Anti-Semitism Reconsidered (Am-Oved/Ofakim, Tel Aviv, 2000, in Hebrew); and with Daniel Fraenkel, of the Lexikon der gerechten unter den Völkern: Deutsche und Österreicher (Yad Vashem/Wallstein, Jerusalem and Göttingen, 2005, in German).