

FIRST INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN YOUNG GERMANS AND YOUNG AMERICAN-JEWISH LEADERS

On May 25, 2004, the GHI hosted a meeting of the First International Dialogue between Young German and Young American-Jewish Leaders. This important dialogue was initiated by Simon Nauerz, a young German currently working for the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in Washington, DC. Coming to the United States as a member of Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace), Nauerz developed the idea of establishing a forum where young Germans temporarily living in the United States and young American Jews could get into contact with each other. This forum was intended to provide the third generation after the Holocaust with a unique opportunity to learn more about "the other side," and eventually develop a better understanding of each other.

The idea was well received by Jeffrey M. Peck, visiting professor at Georgetown University, Gregory Kaplan, director of programming and development at the SITE Institute, and Simone Lässig, research fellow at the GHI. All three agreed that the German-American discussion group should play an integral role in a larger platform for German-Jewish encounters in the spring of 2004 in Washington, DC. The idea was enthusiastically embraced and supported by the German Historical Institute, the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, and the German Embassy. A reception at the German Embassy, where Jeffrey M. Peck launched his publication "The Jewish Voice in Transatlantic Relations," and a roundtable discussion at the GHI entitled "Beyond Anti-Semitism and Philo-Semitism: Searching for Normality in German-Jewish Relations" were the other two major events of this German-Jewish encounter.

Simon Nauerz, who was actively supported by Rebecca Wolf, a young Jewish-American currently working for Avodah (the Jewish Service Corps), put together a group of twenty motivated young people affiliated with such diverse institutions as the American Jewish Committee, the German Embassy, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Jewish Youth Philanthropy Institute, the German School, the Goethe Institute, and the German Historical Institute. This discussion-group met three times over the course of two months and discussed topics such as "German-Jewish History: How Does the Younger Generation Deal with the Holocaust," "Anti-Semitism in Germany: How Real Are the Problems Today," and "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Do American and German Views Collide?" During their various discussions, the group was assisted by David Bernstein, director of AJC's Washington

chapter, Gregory Kaplan, and Wolfgang Koydl, chief correspondent of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in the United States. For a large majority of the young participants, this discussion group was their first encounter with the other side and therefore was a unique opportunity to learn and benefit from each other. At the end, after enormously fruitful and lengthy discussions, perceptions of each other had either changed or been reinforced. The benefit for everyone was undeniable, and all agreed on the importance of continuing the dialogue between young Germans and young Jewish Americans.

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