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Resolving a Tension

Kenneth Yale Rosenzweig

University of Dayton, krosenzweig1@udayton.edu

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much of the music was sad, in a minor key, and slow. At my suggestion, we added four Jewish folk-song arrangements to the program. Our audience response was wonderful, and everywhere we went I could hear people humming or singing along with the folk songs, bittersweet reminders of a time past.

—Eric Street

[Eric Street is an associate professor of music.]

Resolving a tension

I went to Augsburg, Germany, this summer for an accounting research project and for a broader purpose — to get to know contemporary Germans and to learn how they think, especially about the Jewish people.

I have always felt a tension between my feelings about Germany and those about being Jewish.

In high school and college in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as I studied the German language, I developed a great respect for German culture.

Yet, brought up with an extensive Jewish education, I understand how many American Jews visiting Europe resist even traveling to Germany, feeling such visits show disrespect for those murdered in the Holocaust.

So I went to Augsburg to resolve the conflict between two fundamental influences on my life. While there I met with many of my former UD MBA exchange students and other Germans. Not only were they hospitable and friendly, but they also left me with the impression that most Germans are very sensitive to issues of the Holocaust and German responsibility. Study of the Holocaust is extensively integrated into the German education system.

Yet, because there are so few Jews in Germany, most Ger-

mans do not know any.

I attended services with Augsburg's small Jewish population in a beautiful synagogue, destroyed during the Nazi period but restored after the war by the German government.

Germans and Jews are pursuing dialogue and reconciliation. Germans are perhaps motivated by, in addition to remorse, a feeling that reconciliation is needed for Germany to be ac-

cepted as a full member in the community of democratic nations.

Whatever the motivation, they have created a number of

groups that foster good Jewish-Christian relations.

Jews are also motivated by a combination of the moral and the practical.

Reconciliation with Germans is fully consistent with, if not mandated by, fundamental liberal Jewish values. Since the Enlightenment, Jews have worked with movements — such as the American civil rights movement — to create a society where all are treated equally, regardless of race or background.

On the practical side, the Jewish people, fewer than 1 percent of the world's population, have survived by alliances with more powerful groups — and Germany with its economic power is destined to play an extremely influential global role in the 21st century.

I believe it is important for Jews to attempt to overcome their anti-German bias. Although strong feelings are understandable in the light of history, the vast majority of today's Germans were not yet born during the Nazi period.

They may be very reluctant to be blamed for sins they did not commit.

Nevertheless, the dialogue of Germans and Jews must take place with full knowledge of the horrors of the past and in respect for a people one-third of whom were murdered by the Nazi government. Of particular concern are recent neo-Nazi activities. Fortunately, most Germans stand united against such dangers.

As a member of the Dayton Christian Jewish Dialogue, I have seen Christian members grapple, to a surprising extent, with the past sins of Christians against Jews and to take responsibility as

Christians for those sins. Such group introspection should be a model for those who live in a pluralistic society. Jews should similarly examine the fairness of their own fundamental attitudes toward other groups, including Germans.

In pursuing dialogue, Germans and Jews must deal with the question of corporate guilt vs. individual responsibility.

Germans, even those born after Nazism, must deal with the question of national responsibility for the horrible acts of the Holocaust. Jews must deal with the question of whether Germans who were not involved in the Holocaust are to be blamed for it.

Both must compare the corporate guilt historically placed on Jews and the corporate guilt placed on all Germans.

We should all avoid the evil of painting all members of any group with preconceived characteristics.

—Kenneth Rosenzweig

[The author is an associate professor of accounting.]

