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An uneven internationalism? West German youth and organised travel to Israel, c.1958–c.1967

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ABSTRACT

This article shows that organised youth mobility programmes from West Germany to Israel in the late 1950s and 1960s were a testing ground for the internationalist visions of federal state institutions, diverse organisers and various young visitors. Such programmes largely helped reproduce an uneven internationalism, which prioritised contact between West Germans and Israeli Jews, while sidelining Arabs living in Israel and stereotyping them through an Orientalist lens. However, the way in which West German subjects framed such programmes was far from fixed. Shifting Cold War dynamics led Christian Democratic youth organisations in particular to develop contacts with Arabs in the Middle East even before the Six-Day War of 1967. Moreover, some participants began to think, albeit in a fragmented manner, about the context in which the Holocaust had emerged or about individual guilt. The article adds to the emerging literature on internationalism, which explores both its benevolent aspects and its blind spots. Moreover, in studying a broad array of youth subjects – including the secular left, Protestant youth and young Christian Democrats – the article helps enrich the study of internationalism and youth in West Germany both in relation to and beyond the New Left.

KEYWORDS

Youth; travel; internationalism; Germany; Israel

A survey on West German youth mobility to Israel in the 1960s claimed that in such programmes, 'Israel appeared as a land of superlatives with which [German] participants developed an almost unfettered identification'.[1] I probe and contextualise such statements by examining organised youth programmes that resonated with wider efforts to forge ties between the two countries.[2] The 1950s and 1960s were an era in which the travel of young West Germans – both organised and informal – proliferated, forming

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[1]M. Baethge, H. v. Gizycki, H. Skowronek and W. Strzelewicz, *Jugendreisen nach Israel* (Munich, 1972), 17.

[2]On the contact between the political elites in West Germany and Israel, see L. Gardner Feldman, *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation: From enmity to amity* (London 2012); C. Fink, '*Ostpolitik* and West German–Israeli Relations' in C. Fink and B. Schaefer (eds), *Ostpolitik, 1969–1974: European and global responses* (Cambridge/New York, 2009), 182–205; J. Hestermann, *Inszenierte Versöhnung: Reisediplomatie und die deutsch-israelischen Beziehungen von 1957 bis 1984* (Frankfurt am Main, 2016); M.A. Weingardt, *Deutsche Israel- und Nahost-Politik: Die Geschichte einer Gratwanderung seit 1949* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002); L. de Vita, *Israelpolitik: German–Israeli Relations, 1949–1969* (Manchester, 2020).

part of a wider 'Western' phenomenon.[3] Focusing on youth travel to Israel, the article explores a range of activities, including shorter trips and exchange programmes as well as longer stays to perform voluntary work. It concentrates on West German sojourns in Israel, as initiatives involving young Israelis staying in West Germany were rare until the mid-1960s.[4]

Overall, the article explores the link between organised travel from West Germany to Israel and the internationalist perceptions and practices of young West Germans. It focuses on the period from c. 1958 up to and including the Six-Day War of 1967 (in the aftermath of which the key elements of such travel began to change). It was in 1958 that some West German organisations that ran journeys to Israel launched their programmes for the first time, and that *Aktion Sühnezeichen* (Action Reconciliation Service) – which became one of the most important of these groups – was set up. The article examines three interrelated questions: what were the goals of West German organisers and participants, and how did their aims relate to the contact between West Germans, Israeli Jews and Arabs living in territories controlled by Israel?[5] How did the Holocaust's growing role in West German and Israeli debates from the 1960s affect the internationalism of people who engaged in such youth mobility?

My main argument is that West German youth mobility to Israel largely tracked and helped shape an uneven internationalist connectivity: it was oriented towards contact between young West Germans and Israeli Jews, while mostly avoiding interaction with Israeli Arabs. I construe internationalism as the empathy, or even sympathy, of young West Germans vis-à-vis subjects living in Israel, which in some cases resulted in practical support through volunteering. However, such forms of internationalist practice bore traces of Orientalist assumptions, which not only explains the scarcity of contacts between West German visitors and Arabs, but which also manifested itself in prejudice towards descendants of Jewish communities in Asia and North Africa. In employing the concept of Orientalism, I do not argue that organisers and visitors engaged in a systematic knowledge production that had a long history in and beyond Germany.[6] Instead, I use the term to highlight the protagonists' apparent acceptance of a 'Europe'–'Orient' dichotomy, as well as the stereotyping that this entailed.

[3]A. Schildt, 'Across the border: West German youth travel to Western Europe' in A. Schildt and D. Siegfried (eds), *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth cultures in changing European societies, 1960–1980* (New York, 2006), 149–60. See also R.I. Jobs, *Backpack Ambassadors: How youth travel integrated Europe* (Chicago, IL, 2007).

[4]I. Haase, 'Deutsch-Israelischer Jugendaustausch' in Deutsch-Israelischer Arbeitskreis für Frieden im Nahen Osten (ed.), *20 Jahre Deutsch-Israelische Beziehungen* (Berlin, 1985), 87.

[5]When discussing the Arabs living in territories controlled by Israel, this article refers to them as Israeli Arabs before 1967 and as Palestinian Arabs subsequently. Relevant scholarship has shown that these were the dominant national identities among them before and after 1967. See I. Peleg and D. Waxman, *Israel's Palestinians: The conflict within* (Cambridge, 2011), 2–3 (note 4) and 26–29.

[6]S.L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, race, and scholarship* (Cambridge, 2009). For the broader context, see E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978).

This article nuances prior research that has considered West German youth mobility to Israel and that has largely concentrated on contact between young West Germans and Israeli Jews.[7] Such work has revealed moments of friction as well as benevolent elements of their interactions, including visions of atonement among West German participants. However, existing studies have tended to neglect the interaction (or lack thereof) between young West Germans and Arabs in Israel.[8] In terms of ideology and religion, the article covers a spectrum of youth organisations. This approach builds on work that acknowledges the diversity of youth-based activism in the 1960s, which in turn complements important research on the New Left and its transnational links.[9]

In taking an aporetic approach, the article also contributes to the wider literature on internationalism, both in the field of youth and more generally. Work by Jessica Reinisch, Madeleine Herren and – with a specific focus on students – Daniel Laqua has recently challenged the dominant image of internationalism in scholarship as a liberal and quintessentially positive endeavour.[10] Similarly, in showing how Orientalist, 'race'-related perceptions circumscribed the mobility and, concomitantly, internationalist ties in question, the article echoes the recent work of Richard Jobs and David Pomfret, who argue that transnational youth mobility and activism were not impervious to social and cultural hierarchies.[11]

The article proceeds in three steps: it initially discusses the beginnings of organised travel programmes to Israel as well as the pioneering role of some civil society associations in developing them. The subsequent three sections investigate the attitudes of West German organisers and participants

[7]S. Heil, *Young Ambassadors: Youth exchange and the special relationship between Germany and the state of Israel* (Baden Baden, 2011); C. Wienand, 'From atonement to peace? Aktion Sühnezeichen, German–Israeli Relations and the role of youth in reconciliation discourse and practice' in B. Schwelling (ed.), *Reconciliation, Civil Society, and the Politics of Memory* (Bielefeld, 2014), 201–36; J. Hestermann, 'Atonement or self-experience? On the motivations of the first generation of volunteers of Action Reconciliation for Peace' in Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (ed.), *Working Papers: European Forum at the Hebrew University* (Jerusalem 2014), 1–55; J. Huener, 'Antifascist pilgrimage and rehabilitation at Auschwitz: the political tourism of *Aktion Sühnezeichen* and *Sozialistische Jugend*', *German Studies Review*, 24, 3 (2001), 513–32.

[8]Martin Kloke briefly mentions left-wing subjects' lack of interest vis-à-vis Arabs in Israel before 1967, without elaborating on the causes of this attitude: M.W. Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke: Zur Geschichte eines schwierigen Verhältnisses* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 48 and 54.

[9]A. von der Goltz, *The Other '68ers: Student protest and Christian Democracy in West Germany* (Oxford, 2021), especially chapter 4. On the transnational contacts of West German students, see M. Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student protest in West Germany and the United States in the global sixties* (Princeton, NJ, 2011); T. Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The anti-authoritarian revolt, 1962–1978* (Cambridge, 2013); D. Siegfried, *Time Is on My Side: Konsum und Politik in der westdeutschen Jugendkultur der 60er Jahre* (Göttingen, 2006). On West German New Left campaigns in favour of Palestinian Arabs, especially around 1969, see Q. Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World politics in sixties West Germany* (Durham, NC, 2012), 40 and 207.

[10]M. Herren, 'Fascist internationalism' in G. Sluga and P. Clavin (eds), *Internationalisms: A twentieth-century history* (Cambridge 2017), 191–212; J. Reinisch, 'Agents of internationalism', *Contemporary European History*, 25, 2 (2016), 195–205; D. Laqua, 'Activism in the "Students' League of Nations": international student politics and the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants, 1919–1939', *The English Historical Review*, 132, 556 (2017), 605–37; D. Laqua, 'Student activists and international cooperation in a changing world, 1919–60' in J. Reinisch and D. Brydan (eds), *Internationalists in European History: Rethinking the twentieth century* (London, 2021), 161–81.

[11]R.I. Jobs and D.M. Pomfret, *Transnational Histories of Youth in the Twentieth Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke 2015), 10–11.

towards Israeli Jews. The final section explores the attitudes of such organisers and visitors towards Arabs.

Civil society groups: the protagonists

During the 1960s, West German scholars, policymakers and civil society groups evinced a keen interest in developing transcultural contacts through journeys abroad, setting up programmes to promote *Völkerverständigung* (understanding among the nations).[12] Such programmes were usually conceived as elements of *internationale Jugendarbeit* (international youth welfare work) – that is, extracurricular, mostly voluntary activities that aimed to educate young people and involved stays outside West Germany. In comparison to other 'Western' states, West Germany stood out because the legacies of war and dictatorship had given rise to substantial sociological and pedagogical research on cross-border mobility programmes.[13] West Germany combined top-down and grassroots approaches to the implementation of mobility programmes. Civil society associations organised them, while state bodies usually offered financial support and, sometimes, coordinated them.[14]

France was a key destination for such trips. The introduction of the Franco–German Youth Office (FGYO) in 1963 substantially increased contact between these two countries. The FGYO has been a bilateral entity, independent of either state, but initiated at the governmental level and receiving generous funding by both states.[15] By 1968, this body had facilitated the encounter of West German and French youth through over 35,000 programmes.[16] In this period, West German state authorities liaised with other countries, such as the UK, with a view to standardising youth travel or youth exchange programmes and supporting them more effectively.[17]

Organised youth travel from West Germany to Israel also intensified in the 1960s. Between 1961 and 1963, the number of West German youth groups to visit Israel rose from 60 to over 200.[18] In 1965, the overall number of German participants in organised visits to Israel amounted to around 15,000, many of them young.[19] There is no comprehensive data on the social

[12]S. Levsen, 'Kontrollierte Grenzüberschreitungen: Jugendreisen als Friedenserziehung nach 1945: Konzepte und Ambivalenzen in deutsch–französischer Perspektive' in T. Kössler and A.J. Schwitanski (eds), *Frieden lernen: Friedenspädagogik und Erziehung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Essen 2014), 197.
[13]*ibid*.
[14]Schildt, *op. cit*., 150 and 154.
[15]*ibid*., 154; Jobs, *op. cit*., 83.
[16]Jobs, *op. cit*.
[17]See, for example, The National Archives, London, BW 32/66: British-German Youth Exchanges, Joint Meeting 15 and 16 November 1965.
[18]ConAct, Koordinierungszentrum Deutsch–Israelischer Jugendaustausch, *Deutsch–Israelischer Jugendaustausch in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Wittenberg, 2014), 2.
[19]Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin (hereafter PA AA), B94-EA, folder 325: 'Reisen deutscher Jugendgruppen nach Israel', 3 October 1966.

background of young West German participants. However, a survey covering the era between 1961 and 1968, which I further address in the next section, offers some indication: it shows that most participants were male, civil servants (*Beamte*), employees of private companies (*Angestellte*), high-school students, university students and apprentices aged between 19 and 25.[20] The average duration of their trips to Israel was between two and five weeks. West German visitors usually flew from West Germany to Tel Aviv.[21] During the 1960s, the West German federal institutions also became involved in organised youth travel programmes to Israel. The Federal Foreign Office financed various independently organised programmes during the 1960s if they entailed contact with groups of Israelis.[22] In 1969, the West German government offered youth mobility programmes involving West Germans and Israelis 1.116 million marks as part of a federal budget for youth activities.[23]

Yet, in contrast to their approach to youth programmes with France, West German state institutions did not directly seek to work with Israeli partners for the coordination of joint youth programmes before 1969. Such reticence was the outcome of the ambiguous West German policy towards Israel, especially until 1965. The Hallstein 'Doctrine' treated West Germany as the only legitimate German state.[24] It resonated with the dominant perception in Western international law in the early post-war decades that 'only one government should represent one nationality'.[25] West Germany launched a global campaign in the 1950s and 1960s to isolate East Germany. As a result, between 1949 and 1965, the West German Christian Democrat chancellors Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard vacillated between the aim to pursue *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the Nazi past), which presupposed close contact with Israel, and efforts not to alienate the Arab countries, who in turn might retaliate by recognising East Germany.[26] In 1953, West Germany sought to juggle these competing priorities through the *Wiedergutmachung*, agreeing to pay reparations to direct Holocaust survivors and individuals who had worked in forced labour camps.[27] However, the West German government only established official diplomatic ties with Israel in 1965, when it began to distance itself from the

[20]Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 44.
[21]*ibid*., 14.
[22]PA AA, B94-EA, folder 396: Ministry of Family and Youth, letter to the Pedagogical Academy of Oldenburg with the title 'Finanzhilfe für eine Israel-Exkursion', 21 July 1964.
[23]Haase, *op. cit*., 108.
[24]I place this term in quotation marks because, contrary to common perception, it was not a formal doctrine: W.G. Gray, *Germany's Cold War: The global campaign to isolate East Germany* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), 5–6.
[25]Weingardt, *op. cit*., 171–79; S. Gehrig, 'Dividing the Indivisible: Cold War sovereignty, national division, and the German Question at the United Nations', *Central European History*, 55, 1 (2022), 70–89.
[26]Gray, *op. cit*., 180–82; J. Herf, 'Multiple restorations: German political traditions and the interpretations of Nazism, 1945–1946', *Central European History*, 26, 1 (1993), 21–55, here 47.
[27]See, for instance, C. Goschler, *Wiedergutmachung: Westdeutschland und die Verfolgten des Nationalsozialismus 1945–1954* (Munich, 1992).

Hallstein 'Doctrine'.[28] Ten Arab states responded by proclaiming a break with West Germany – without, however, recognising East Germany.[29] The mid-to-late 1960s witnessed the emergence of debates concerning the normalisation of its relations with its communist neighbours and ending the global rivalry with East Germany. From 1969, the West German government actively pursued its *Ostpolitik* under the leadership of Social Democrat chancellor Willy Brandt.

At a time when diplomatic issues limited the amount of state involvement in West German youth mobility programmes to Israel, civil society groups took on a major role in leading them.[30] The pioneers of such ventures were usually, albeit not exclusively, either secular left-wing or Protestant associations.[31] In the late 1950s, Protestant civil society organisations began to arrange excursions to biblical sites in Israel, with pioneering efforts by the Travel Office of the Protestant *Christliche Verein Junger Männer* (Christian Association of Young Men, CVJM), the West German branch of the YMCA. The first CVJM trip that was exclusively focused on Israel took place in 1958.[32] Shortly afterwards, the *Aktion Sühnezeichen* began to recruit young West Germans who volunteered to work in Israel. Founded in 1958 by Protestant church official Lothar Kreyssig, *Aktion Sühnezeichen* had strong links to Protestant circles without being a church organisation.[33] It was also influenced by the left-wing Protestant ideas of theologian Helmut Gollwitzer.[34] The first organised visit to Israel of volunteers recruited by *Aktion Sühnezeichen* took place in 1961, as discussed in the next section.[35] The Christian DACA (*Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Aufbaulager*, German Association of Christian Construction Camps) also ran a visit to Israel in 1961, led by Protestant student pastor Rudolf Weckerling.[36]

Meanwhile, secular organisations also began to arrange visits to Israel. A case in point was the *Sozialistische Jugend Deutschlands – Die Falken* (Socialist Youth of Germany – Falcons, hereafter Falcons), which leaned towards the Social Democratic Party. The Falcons participated in the

[28]Weingardt, *op. cit*., 177–78.
[29]Gray, *op. cit*., 181–82.
[30]By contrast, the two main commercial youth travel agencies in West Germany, twen-tours and Club 28, did not run excursions to Israel during the 1950s and 1960s.
[31]For the role of such groups in Franco-German youth progammes, see Jobs, *op. cit*., 66.
[32]Christian Association of Young Men [CVJM] Archive, Kassel: Bericht über die Arbeit des CVJM-Reisedienstes, 29 April 1958, 2.
[33]C. Wienand, 'Reverberations of a disturbing past: reconciliation activities of young West Germans in the 1960s and 1970s' in S. Bird, M. Fulbrook, J. Wagner and C. Wienand (eds), *Reverberations of Nazi Violence in Germany and Beyond: Disturbing Pasts* (London, 2016), 216.
[34]J. Becke, 'German guilt and Hebrew redemption: *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste* and the legacy of left-wing Protestant Philozionism' in I. Aue-Ben David, A. Elyada, M. Sluhovsky and C. Wiese (eds), *Jews and Protestants: From the reformation to the present* (Berlin, 2021), 241–45.
[35]Wienand, 'From atonement', *op. cit*., 205; see R. Weckerling (ed.), *Le Chaim-Zum Leben: Eine Reise nach Israel: Junge Deutsche berichten* (Berlin, 1962).
[36]See Weckerling, *op. cit*.

international camp of the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY), a federation of social democratic and socialist youth organisations, in Israel in 1965.[37] Throughout the 1960s, the Falcons organised visits to Israel for their leadership and members.[38] The *Deutsch-Israelische Studiengruppen* (German–Israeli Study Groups, DIS) were another organisation to run such trips, at least from the mid-1960s onwards.[39] The Study Groups had formed a federal association in May 1961.[40] They were officially apolitical but dominated by members who had personal connections to the New Left, especially the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (Socialist German Student League, SDS).[41] Having been aligned with the Social Democratic Party until 1961, the SDS became the leading voice of the New Left in the 1960s. It was also the first West German national student organisation to officially demand reconciliation with Israel, from 1951.[42] In the early 1960s, the Study Groups sought to fight against both anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Until the late 1960s, they were staunchly pro-Israel and advocated the official recognition of Israel by the West German state. In 1966, the Study Groups participated in creating the *Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft* (German–Israeli Society, DIG) as a forum for German–Israeli contacts.[43] Youth mobility programmes to Israel have remained high on DIG's agenda ever since its creation.[44] At the end of that decade, however, anti-Zionism, or even anti-Semitic patterns, gained traction in the Study Groups, whereas the German–Israeli Society continued to promote close ties between West Germany and Israel.[45]

Non-left-wing youth associations also organised travel to Israel, at least from 1965. These included the *Ring Christlich-Demokratischer Studenten*

[37]Archiv der Arbeiterjugendbewegung (hereafter AAJB), Oer-Erkenschwick, SJD BV 20 0048: letter to all participants in the IUSY Camp in 1965 and all local groups of the Falcons. This undated letter describes the activities of the participants (including the West German ones) of a camp that ran from 5 to 15 July 1965 in the Carmel mountain region.

[38]See, for example, the material in AAJB: 'Israel-Delegation', *Junge Gemeinschaft*, 5, 1961 (featured in Artikelbibliographie,HT ZA 82 1961); 'Israelis waren zurückhaltend: Duisburger reisten mit "Falken"-Delegation', *Neue Ruhr-Zeitung*, 4 April 1964 (featured in AAJB ZASS 1964); 'Falken reisen nach Israel', *Hessische Allgemeine*, 15 October 1968. *Junge Gemeinschaft* was the Falcons' national paper.

[39]PA AA, B94-EA, folder 396: BDIS [Federal Association of the German–Israeli Study Groups], letter to the Federal Foreign Office, 9 March 1965.

[40]Kloke, *op. cit*., 55.

[41]On the history of the German–Israeli Study Groups, see Kloke, *op. cit*., 53.

[42]*ibid*., 53.

[43]See the newsletter of the DIG, available in the Archive of the Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft.

[44]*Jugend und Jugendarbeit in Israel* (Bonn, 1982), 32–33. This booklet was published by the *Fachstelle für Internationale Jugendarbeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland e.V*. (IJAB, International Youth Service [or Welfare Work] of the Federal Republic of Germany). The IJAB worked on behalf of the Ministry for Youth, Family and Health and coordinated the activity of numerous civil society groups in West Germany that offered opportunities for voluntary work abroad. Thus, IJAB reports contain information on the aims of key organisations involved in youth mobility programmes from West Germany to Israel since the 1960s.

[45]On anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism and the New Left, see W. Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg, 2005) and K. Andresen, 'Linker Antisemitismus – Wandlungen in der Alternativbewegung', in S. Reichardt and D. Siegfried (eds), *Das Alternative Milieu: Antibürgerlicher Lebensstil und linke Politik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Europa 1968–1983* (Göttingen 2010), 146–68.

(Association of Christian Democratic Students, RCDS) and the *Junge Union* (Young Union, JU), the youth branch of West Germany's Christian Democratic party. The RCDS was one of the strongest student organisations in West Germany in the late 1960s: it won approximately a quarter of all seats in student parliaments across West Germany in 1969–1970, being the most successful youth political group in that year.[46] The Young Union had around 85,000 members in 1963 and circa 117,000 in 1969.[47]

Beyond secular left-wing, Protestant and Christian Democrat groups, high schools and universities – for instance the Department of Education at the University of Göttingen – also ran mobility programmes to Israel.[48] Some umbrella organisations pursued mobility schemes as well. A pioneering initiative came from the *Bayerischer Jugendring* (Bavarian Youth Council), the consortium of youth associations across Bavaria. In 1958, the Council decided to address the 'German past', launching youth exchange programmes with Israel in 1960.[49] Young trade unionists were also among the organisers.[50] Thus, a range of different actors helped to ensure that West German youth mobility to Israel attained a significant scale.

Abhorrence at the Nazis

As trendsetters concerning travel to Israel – at least in comparison to state institutions – many organisers and visitors felt motivated to engage in such programmes due to their disdain for the deeds of the Nazis. Published in 1972, the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey offers a launching pad for considering the motivations of individuals who participated in such youth mobility programmes.[51] The authors – a psychologist, two sociologists and a pedagogist – drew on interviews that they had conducted between 1966 and 1968. They also used travel reports by the organisers of such programmes, covering the period from 1961 to 1966. Internationalism figured prominently in the motivations cited in the interviews: 96% of the young visitors who had contributed to the survey mentioned that they wanted to get to know the country and the people of Israel, while 73% expected an experience that would help them better assess their relationship

[46]A. von der Goltz, 'A polarised generation? Conservative students and West Germany's "1968"' in A. von der Goltz (ed.), *'Talkin' 'Bout My Generation': Conflicts of generation building and Europe's '1968'* (Göttingen, 2011), 195–215, here 201.
[47]Archiv für Christlich-Demokratische Politik (hereafter ACDP), Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Bonn: 'Statistischer Geschäftsbericht, from 14. October 2016 to 5. October 2017'; H. Bilstein, H. Hohlbein, H.-U. Klose, *Jungsozialisten – Junge Union – Jungdemokraten: Die Nachwuchsorganisationen der Parteien in der Bundesrepublik* (Opladen, 1972), 42.
[48]Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 42.
[49]Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend, *Informationsdienst*, 13 February 1960, 20.
[50]Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 42.
[51]*ibid*., 15–17.

as Germans to the Jews.[52] The religious or political affiliations of particular groups of young visitors did not seem to generate manifestly different responses. However, university and high school (*Oberschule*) students were keener on contacts with Israeli Jews than elementary school (*Volksschule*) pupils.[53] The travel reports on which the survey drew yielded similar results and further stressed the significance of youth as a group that had a 'mission' to put the Nazi past behind them and build bridges with Israel and particularly the Jews living there.[54] Overall, the young West Germans who participated in organised travel to or voluntary work in Israel were part of a self-selected sample that was more favourable to Israel than the West German public more broadly.[55] Opinion polls suggest that only 17% of the sample of the West German population surveyed favoured 'as close as possible' ties between West Germany and Israel in August 1963 (although this figure rose to 24% in October/November 1968).[56]

Such motivations to visit Israel also reflected the aims of some organisers. Setting oneself apart from the Nazi past was a key objective for many of them.[57] In the 1950s, several left-wing publications went further and described Israel as a 'pioneering anti-colonial state', ignoring its involvement in the Suez crisis.[58] For *Aktion Sühnezeichen*, offering voluntary work in Israel as a means of atoning for Nazi crimes was a prominent theme. *Aktion Sühnezeichen* officials (who did not necessarily identify as young) and young volunteers particularly considered how to link atonement, reconciliation between West Germans and Israelis, and the significance of youth.[59] *Aktion Sühnezeichen* activities were premised on the Christian perception of the 'representative atonement' of young people for the guilt of their parent generation.[60]

This emphasis on atonement through organised mobility emerged in an era when the main approaches to the Holocaust in West Germany, despite variations and transformations, largely failed to reflect on its history. As historian Mary Fulbrook aptly remarks, the 1950s and 1960s witnessed a

[52] *ibid*., 92–93.
[53] *ibid*., 109.
[54] *ibid*., 15–17. It is unclear whether young participants, the organisers or both elaborated on such motivations in the travel reports.
[55] *ibid*., 15–17.
[56] E. Noelle and E.P. Neumann (eds), *Jahrbuch der Öffentlichen Meinung 1968–1973* (Allensbach/Bonn, 1974), 533. Still, the poll does not show whether the remaining proportion of the population was in favour of looser ties or no contact whatsoever.
[57] Kloke, *op. cit*., 46–49.
[58] *ibid*., 47–48.
[59] Wienand, 'From atonement', *op. cit*., 201–35. Historian and psychologist Anton Legerer argues that the concepts of 'reconciliation' and 'atonement' were not clearly conceptualised in the texts of *Aktion Sühnezeichen*: A. Legerer, *Tatort: Versöhnung. Aktion Sühnezeichen in der BRD und in der DDR und Gedenkdienste in Österreich* (Leipzig, 2011), 54. Wienand reasons that this lack of clarity facilitated debates within Aktion Sühnezeichen around them. Wienand, 'From atonement', *op. cit*., 219.
[60] *ibid*., 232. See also Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin (hereafter EZA) 97/396, Diary entry of the group Israel IV, 2 February 1965. Also quoted in C. Wienand, 'From atonement', *op. cit*., 220.

co-existence of 'public pieties' and 'private traumas' and silences. Public expressions of moral responsibility for the Nazi atrocities were repeated in West Germany.[61] Breaking with the Nazi past also contributed to an attitude of self-restraint in the cultural diplomacy of West Germany in the Adenauer era (1949–1963) as well as the aforementioned *Wiedergutmachung*.[62] However, such expressions of public piety usually lacked concrete references to the Nazi deeds.[63] Similarly, 'self-defensive accounts' were manifest among West Germans in the post-war years: several individuals distanced themselves from the Holocaust by claiming that 'we never knew anything about it'.[64] Even Germans who had worked at extermination camps asserted that they had not known and/or would have not been able to do anything in any case.[65] Such an evasion co-existed with lingering anti-Semitism, even among some young West Germans. A survey collecting views of 13- and 14-year-old pupils, published in 1959, showed that around half of them preferred Jews to live in Israel than in Germany.[66]

This culture of evasion did not go unquestioned. Prominent left-liberal intellectuals, such as Heinrich Böll, had already spoken publicly about Nazi atrocities in the 1950s, explicitly addressing the Holocaust. A growing chorus of voices addressed National Socialism and the Holocaust in the 1960s. This shift occurred particularly in relation to trials concerning Holocaust-related crimes: namely, in the aftermath of the trial of the key Holocaust perpetrator Adolf Eichmann (1961) and in the context of the Auschwitz Trials in Frankfurt (1963–1965). Young West Germans were not necessarily impervious to anti-Semitism, and popular youth magazines such as *Twen* challenged their parent generation's role under National Socialism.[67] Moreover, especially from 1967 onwards, New Left students construed Vietnam as 'a present representation of Auschwitz' and confronted 'their parents with the past'.[68] Still, in doing so, they employed National Socialism and the Holocaust as metaphors for the political and cultural conflicts of the 1960s, rather than undertaking an empirical reconstruction of the historical

[61]M. Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1999), 166–76; M. Fulbrook, *Reckonings: Legacies of Nazi persecution and the quest for justice* (Oxford, 2018).
[62]J. Paulmann, 'Representation without emulation: German cultural diplomacy in search of integration and self-assurance during the Adenauer era', *German Politics & Society*, 25, 2 (2007), 168–200.
[63]Fulbrook, *German National Identity, op. cit*., 166–67. See also A. Bauerkämper, *Das umstrittene Gedächtnis: Die Erinnerung an Nationalsozialismus, Faschismus und Krieg in Europa seit 1945* (Paderborn, 2012), 209. Herf argues that there was some limited public reflection on the history of the Holocaust that contrasted with this culture of evasion: Herf, *op. cit*., 21–55.
[64]Fulbrook, *Reckonings, op. cit*., 404–23.
[65]*ibid*.
[66]Survey cited in Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 53.
[67]Siegfried, *op. cit*., 178–80. On the engagement with the Nazi past in TV shows in West Germany, see W. Kansteiner, 'Nazis, viewers and statistics: television history, television audience research and collective memory in West Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39, 4 (2004), 575–98.
[68]W. Mausbach, 'Auschwitz and Vietnam: West German protest against America's war during the 1960s' in A.W. Daum, L.C. Gardner and W. Mausbach (eds), *America, the Vietnam War, and the World: Comparative and international perspectives* (New York, 2003), 296.

phenomenon of the Holocaust.[69] Similarly, as Christina von Hodenberg shows, around 1968 West German youth blamed an abstract father figure or members of their parent generation for the years of Nazi rule, but seldom questioned the involvement of their own parents.[70]

Meanwhile, from the early 1960s onwards, reflection on the Holocaust became a core component of the prevalent Israeli national identity. In the 1950s, acts of commemorating the Holocaust in Israel were sparse and history textbooks only referred to the Jewish ghetto uprisings. The official discourse in Israel focused on victors, not victims, and even treated Holocaust survivors with suspicion as potential collaborators of the Nazis.[71] Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the Eichmann trial and, later on, the Six-Day War of 1967, the Holocaust began to figure prominently in Israeli political culture.[72] Sociologists Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider assert that 'it became a symbol for existential fears and the necessity to construct and maintain a strong military state'.[73] As historian and cultural studies scholar Idith Zertal argues, the Holocaust largely functioned as a metaphor for contemporary issues: it signified that the Jews would never be defenceless again, especially in the context of wars against Arab countries.[74] However, it was not atypical in the same period for Holocaust survivors to publicly reflect on their memories and on the complicity of non-Jewish Germans in relation to the Holocaust.[75]

The concerns of Holocaust survivors did not always match the priorities of West German organisers and visitors to Israel between the late 1950s and the late 1960s. These West German guests did not escape the unreflective approach that tended to characterise West German attitudes to the Holocaust. Despite the interest of some organisers and participants in distancing themselves from Germany's Nazi past, any engagement with the Holocaust during the visits to Israel was along the lines of a continuum between evasion and reflection.

A varying degree of reflection on the Holocaust is evident in the aims of the organisers whom the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey considered, as indicated by the travel reports upon which the survey rested. The reports came from different sources, for example school groups from Cologne, the German–Israeli Study Group of Munich, the Catholic Youth of Hamburg, the Protestant Youth of Nordhorn and the Trade Union Youth of Hannover. The survey does not specify the aims that each organiser it

[69]See, for instance, Siegfried, *op. cit*., 180.
[70]C. von Hodenberg, *Das andere Achtundsechzig: Gesellschaftsgeschichte einer Revolte* (Munich, 2018), 45–76.
[71]I. Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge, 2005), 5–6 and 94.
[72]*ibid*., 182–84.
[73]D. Levy and N. Sznaider, 'Memory unbound: the Holocaust and the formation of cosmopolitan memory', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5, 1 (2002), 87–106, here 96.
[74]Zertal, *op. cit*., 96; H. Marcuse, 'The revival of Holocaust awareness in West Germany, Israel, and the United States' in C. Fink, P. Gassert and D. Junker (eds), *1968: The world transformed* (Cambridge, 1998), 431–44.
[75]See, for instance, the reflection of a Holocaust survivor mentioned in Weckerling, *op. cit*., 113.

studied attached to travel to Israel. However, while such programmes usually entailed visits to Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to the Holocaust victims, the organisers diverged concerning the significance they attached to the history of the Holocaust in the preparatory material they offered to young participants.[76] Moreover, the interviews for the survey show that some participants made more frequent and specific references to readings about National Socialism and anti-Semitism with which they engaged as part of their training for travel to Israel.[77] The surveyors argued that such a variance reflected the differing level of preparation among those groups.[78]

In line with the survey's findings, the material provided by some organisers to potential participants sidelined the history of the Holocaust. Quite tellingly, the brochures of the CVJM Travel Office in the early 1960s did not touch upon it. These documents explained the CVJM's aim as introducing young West Germans to significant Christian sites, rather than the promotion of German atonement for Nazi crimes against the Jews.[79] By contrast, the Falcons and *Aktion Sühnezeichen* engaged more directly with the Holocaust. However, as Huener aptly remarks, the two organisations both expanded and limited the 'scope of their commemoration of Nazism's victims'.[80] Huener shows that, while organising visits to Auschwitz in Poland, these groups aimed to evoke memories of Nazi Germany's crimes as a 'weapon' for contemporary political debates. In seeking continuities between Nazi and West Germany, they tended to focus on the latter, paying limited attention to the racial ideology of the former.[81] Similarly, the Falcons' Israel programmes were marked by a mixture of references to the past and to contemporary affairs. There was a discrepancy between preliminary reading before the journey, which considered the history of the Holocaust, and activities in Israel itself, which focused on contemporary political issues. Some preparatory texts explored the characteristics of fascist anti-Semitism, for instance the German translation of a book by the Anglican clergyman, historian and activist James Parkes.[82] His study analysed the psychological and historical dimensions of anti-Semitism and considered anti-Semitism in Germany under the Nazis.[83] However, the seminars that the Falcons attended in Israel focused on

[76]Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 15, 107–09.
[77]*ibid*.
[78]The survey did not specify the titles of readings that the interviewees mentioned.
[79]See 'Sommer 1959'; CVJM-Reisedienst, 'Sommer 1960', 'Die Welt entdecken . . . ', 1961. CVJM brochures for the period from 1962 onwards have proved difficult to access.
[80]Huener, *op. cit*., 514.
[81]*ibid*., 516, 527.
[82]See, for instance, AAJB, SJD BV 20 0048: 'Literatur zum Thema Israel', which included preparatory reading that the Falcons suggested for the West German participants in a IUSY camp in Israel, 1965.
[83]J. Parkes, *An Enemy of the People: Antisemitism* (Harmondsworth, 1945).

contemporary issues, such as trade-union activity in Israel and the various forms of settlement in Israel, such as the *kibbutzim*.[84]

Despite the varying significance that organisers attached to the history of the Holocaust, participants were mostly indifferent towards it. At least the visitors that the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey interviewed did not display any significant improvement in their knowledge of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany during and because of their visit to Israel. Although this self-selecting group was less anti-Semitic than most West Germans, these visitors largely skipped any further reflection on the history of the Holocaust, namely why and how the Holocaust transpired.[85] The travel reports used by the survey demonstrate the similarly de-historicised approach of West German visitors to Israel. These documents captured not only the aims of the organisers, but also the dominant assumptions of the individuals involved: organisers and visitors used a language teeming with anthropomorphic metaphors and ahistorical categories to describe the Holocaust in their reports.[86] Simultaneously, these documents made no reference to the social and political conditions that led to the Holocaust. Crucially, one of the documents depicted the deeds of the Nazis as a 'reflection of bedevilment'.[87] According to the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey, such language was in line with the dominant approach to history as taught to young West Germans at school at the time.[88] Moreover, this de-historicised approach of West German visitors to the Holocaust resembled tendencies that were visible in West German youth magazines during the 1960s. It is unclear, though, whether these visitors to Israel were influenced by those outlets, as they did not cite them in the available travel reports and autobiographies.

The age-related perceptions of West German participants both facilitated and circumscribed their contact with Israeli Jews and, in this vein, their attitudes to the Holocaust. On the one hand, many German visitors attached a specific 'mission' to their age group to forge close ties with Israeli Jews, as already mentioned. On the other, most visitors felt *Belastung* [burden] for the atrocities of the Nazis against the Jews but did not hold an individual *Mitschuld* [share of the blame] for them. Since some of the participants had not been born or had been children during Nazi rule, they claimed they had neither been aware of nor had any agency in the perpetration of the Holocaust.[89] This mixture of emotions made participants largely

[84]AAJB, SJD BV 20 0048: 'Veranstaltungen- Vorträge im Rahmen des IUYS-Kongresses 'Karmel 65'.
[85]Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 102–03.
[86]On visits to Yad Vashem, see Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 19.
[87]Cited in *ibid*., 20.
[88]*ibid*.
[89]*ibid*., 94, 102.

unwilling to delve into the social and political factors that led to the Holocaust under the Nazis.[90] Rather, they preferred to forge friendly bonds with Israeli Jews, including Holocaust survivors, without necessarily historicising the experience of the latter. This is illustrated by the interviews for the 'Youth Travel to Israel' report: in the spontaneous answers that visitors gave about their expectations, they particularly stressed interpersonal contact with Jews.[91] This attitude subsequently framed their contact with Jews in Israel.

Fragments of reflection on the history of the Holocaust

An abstract approach to the Holocaust was not without exceptions, however. The experience of being in Israel and interacting with Holocaust survivors influenced some participants in developing fragmentary reflections on the history of the Holocaust, and a sense of individual guilt: for the Holocaust itself, but sometimes also for being in Israel and in the presence of survivors. Autobiographical sources containing the voices of individual or small groups of visitors illustrate such cases.

The diary of Gerda Schulz offers an excellent opportunity for a micro-historical analysis that illuminates personal agency, as it contains a detailed description of her stay in Israel.[92] It is not clear whether Schulz wrote her diary after being asked by the organisers to recount her experience and/or knowing from the outset that her recollections would be made public. In any case, she used interchangeably a first-person-plural and a first-person-singular narration. In this vein, she showed that she was not just part of a group, but that she also engaged individually in discussions with Israeli Jews and reflected on them. Her entries referred to her participation in a programme organised by the Bavarian Youth Council in 1962. Schulz spent several weeks in Israel. Throughout her travel, the Holocaust appears to have been omnipresent in her discussions with Israeli Jews, including Holocaust survivors.[93] Schulz found herself 'at the intersection of different sets of roles and expectations'.[94] Such expectations related to the ways in which the Holocaust was discussed in West Germany and among Holocaust survivors in Israel. As a result, her diary includes what one might label 'fragments': some limited reflection on the social and political context of the Holocaust, which sometimes deviated from the dominant ways in which the

[90] *ibid*., 19–21, 102.
[91] *ibid*., 92.
[92] G. Schulz, 'Deutsche Mädchen in Israel' in *Jahrbuch für Jugendreisen und internationalen Jugendaustausch* (Bonn, 1963), 203–19. On the potential of micro-historical approaches to address individual agency, see B. Struck, K. Ferris and J. Revel, 'Size matters: scales and spaces in transnational and comparative history', *The International History Review*, 33, 4 (2011), 573–84.
[93] Schulz, *op. cit*., 203–04.
[94] M. Fulbrook and U. Rublack, 'In relation: the "social self" and ego-documents', *German History* 28, 3 (2010), 268.

latter was discussed in West Germany and among most West German visitors. These references were fragments in the sense that they did not become incorporated into a clearly articulated narrative about the history of the Holocaust and its political and social dimensions. Nevertheless, in contrast to the fragments that Lutz Niethammer has analysed in his research on memories and everyday life in the Ruhr Valley during the 1950s, Schulz's fragments were not the outcome of feelings of shame or guilt for the Holocaust. Indeed, these were emotions that Schulz did not articulate in her account.[95]

Schulz's diary largely attests to the dominant tendency that the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey delineated, namely knowing about the individual suffering of Israeli Jews without exploring the social and political factors that shaped the Holocaust. After she set foot in Israel, Schulz met a young Jew whose father had been taken to a concentration camp and developed mental illness. Schulz noted in her diary that the father 'hoped that the kid has not inherited anything from this', without elaborating on what this might have been or what her stance towards it was.[96] Schulz also met with a Mr Gutfeld, who had lived in Königsberg and experienced anti-Semitism after 1933. Schulz mentioned that his family was affluent, and that he managed to migrate to Israel.[97] She made no further reference to how his experience compared to that of other Jews.

However, there are a few fragments in which Schulz showed the beginnings of a more historicised approach to the Holocaust. In those fragments, she displayed the tension between different sets of expectations more clearly. In particular, the pressing demand of some Israeli Jews to visit Germans to discuss the latter's stance on fascism made Schulz move beyond a narrative that focused on the individual suffering of the specific Jews she met. In this vein, Schulz met Michael and Gadi, whom she described as around 30 years old and with a keen interest in politics. She discussed with them what would happen if a second Hitler assumed power in Germany.[98] This hypothetical question both historicised and de-historicised her framing of the Holocaust: Schulz briefly commented that during the Third Reich most people 'closed their eyes'.[99] However, while opening up a discussion about popular attitudes to the Nazis, she quickly switched to essentialising and ahistorical statements about the history of Germans, such as that it is 'against the[ir] nature' to 'take to the streets' and 'protest'.[100]

[95]L. Niethammer, '"Normalization" in the West: traces of memory leading back into the 1950s' in H. Schissler (ed.), *The Miracle Years: A cultural history of West Germany, 1949–1968* (Princeton, NJ, 2001), 237–65.
[96]Schulz, *op. cit.*, 210.
[97]*ibid.*, 215.
[98]*ibid.*, 217.
[99]*ibid.*
[100]*ibid.*

Meanwhile, the autobiographical documents of *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers were also ambiguous in terms of concrete historical reflection and attitudes to guilt about the Holocaust. Some volunteers discussed the Holocaust with Israeli Jews and even made self-critical remarks on gaps in their knowledge.[101] Some of those stories appear in the book entitled … *Und gruben Brunnen in der Wüste* [… *And Dug Wells in the Desert*], which was edited by four volunteers who found themselves in Israel for the first time through projects sponsored by *Aktion Sühnezeichen*. These stories are not a representative sample of what *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers believed in general; rather, they mirrored the perceptions of their specific narrators.[102] In … *Und gruben Brunnen in der Wüste*, volunteers depicted these projects as a personal turning point, as their knowledge of the history of the concentration camps and the Nazi terror against the Jews had hitherto been 'sketchy'.[103] Concomitantly, they criticised the gaps in coverage of the 1930s and 1940s in West German schools.[104] Nevertheless, other *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers focused on the present: they addressed the significance of the Holocaust, aiming to atone for it and, thus, establish ties with Jews living in Israel in the 1960s.[105] There were also *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers who mixed their exploration of the Holocaust with ahistorical perceptions of the battle between 'evil' and 'good'. A testament to the latter is what some *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers in Israel in 1962 maintained: everyone who professed to 'follow Jesus' and lived in Nazi Germany, regardless of their age, was guilty of not intervening to stop the Nazi deeds.[106]

Similarly, feelings of individual guilt varied among *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers. For some, atonement stemming from their religious faith meant that they did not feel that age absolved them of individual guilt for the Holocaust. Quite tellingly, when an Israeli student group asked such a volunteer in 1964 about his motivation, he replied: 'I have to take over the guilt of the fathers […]. Guilt demands atonement and I have to go to the people and tell them how sorry I am about what has happened'.[107] However, in line with the dominant tendency that the survey 'Youth Travel to Israel' describes, other volunteers felt that there was no need to atone for deeds for

[101]See, for example, the comments of Eva Nessler, born in 1947 and *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteer in Israel in 1966 and 1967, as featured in O. Schenk, R. Schenk, U. Nessler and E. Nessler (eds), … *Und gruben Brunnen in der Wüste* (Darmstadt, 1975), 9.
[102]Schenk et al., *op. cit*., especially 8–9.
[103]*ibid*., 8–9.
[104]J. Böhme, 'Die Arbeit der "Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienste" in Israel–Geschichte und Entwicklung', in *Deutsch–Israelischer Arbeitskreis für Frieden* (ed.), *op. cit*., 137–50, here 139. This text was published in 1985, however, and definitely authored in the 1980s. Thus, the author may have projected into the 1960s the attitudes towards the history of the Holocaust of young West Germans who visited Israel in the 1980s.
[105]For instance, Schenk et al., *op. cit*., 13.
[106]Hestermann, 'Atonement or self-experience?', 20.
[107]Diary entry of the group Israel IV, 2 February 1965, EZA 97/396. Also quoted in C. Wienand, 'From Atonement', *op. cit*., 220.

which they had not been responsible themselves. For instance, a volunteer argued after her return from Israel in 1970–1971 that she and her co-volunteers could not atone for something for which 'they did not feel responsible'.[108] However, available sources do not indicate whether those volunteers who took on the guilt of the parent generations were more prone to reflect on the history of the Holocaust.

Greater deviation from the tendency of most German visitors to de-historicise the individual suffering of the Holocaust survivors they met appears in a book edited by Protestant student pastor Rudolf Weckerling. The publication features the travel report of a group of 31 young Christian West Germans who had participated in a DACA-organised trip in 1961. Apart from Weckerling, born in 1911, and a secretary, born in 1923, all other participants were between 21 and 32 years old.[109] While the report was presented as coming from the group of 31 young West German participants and thus foregrounding their voices, it is filtered through the perspective of Weckerling, who had accompanied the group and edited the text. A story attributed to one of the group referred to this young German's discussion with Bep, an Israeli Jew and Holocaust survivor. Bep did not criticise those non-Jewish Germans who had taken a 'wait and see' approach towards the Nazi regime and the perpetration of the Holocaust, but argued that a person could betray 'his [sic] ideals', when one's life was at stake.[110] The young German reflected on Bep's attitude, suggesting that Germans should wait for Holocaust survivors like Bep to extend their hands to them. Until this happened, he added, Germans should reflect on what they had done wrong [in the case of the Holocaust] and they should not forget about their 'guilt'. Yet the thoughts of this young man remained a mere fragment, as, similar to Schulz's diary, they did not morph into a comprehensive narrative about the reasons that led to the Holocaust.

Overall, the social and political background of visitors who developed fragments of reflection on the history of the Holocaust is difficult to pin down. The 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey does not indicate whether the few voices belonging to German visitors to Israel who reflected on the socio-political parameters of the Holocaust stemmed from specific backgrounds in terms of age, education, social class and faith. Still, some of them, as available autobiographies show, were part of Protestant groups or groups led by a Protestant pastor, and their perception of religious faith shaped their notion of individual guilt for the Holocaust as well. In any case, such voices were a minority among the visitors. By contrast, participants mostly reflected on contemporary issues in Israel, to which I will now turn.

[108]Quoted according to report Lutz M., 13/72, EZA 97/391 and in Wienand, 'From Atonement', *op. cit.*, 229.
[109]Weckerling, *op. cit.*, 176.
[110]*ibid.*, 115–18.

Focus on contemporary matters: the *kibbutzim*

Most West German visitors did not enhance their knowledge of the history of the Holocaust during their stay in Israel. However, the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey demonstrated that they improved their comprehension of Israel's history and increased their interest in Israeli political issues.[111] The programmes of the various organisers provided visitors with opportunities to support the State of Israel in the present, upholding its right to exist.

A core component of such opportunities was the work that volunteers undertook in *kibbutzim* – communities whose activity was mainly linked with agriculture.[112] The kibbutzim were a reference point for Zionist discourse, which portrayed them as an ideal context for the education of young Israelis.[113] Kibbutzim dated back to 1909. After Israel's foundation in 1948, however, they significantly expanded, attracting numerous Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe. Young West Germans began to visit kibbutzim in the early 1960s: for instance, from 1961 onwards, *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers visited kibbutzim such as Urim (near the Gaza Strip) and Bachan (in central Israel).[114] Similarly, the activities of the International Union of Socialist Youth camp in Israel in 1965, in which the Falcons participated, entailed a visit to the kibbutz in Degania.[115]

Kibbutzim stays were aimed at and, according to existing autobiographical sources, were experienced as, tangible forms of socialising with Israelis. Reconciliation was enacted through the active participation of West German visitors in routine everyday activities. These included a share of the hard work, such as farm labour or helping clean the buildings. Quite tellingly, Schulz's diary entry for 5 May 1963 records her working at the henhouse at 5 o'clock in the morning in kibbutz Nir Eliyahu, north of Tel Aviv, where she stayed. While cleaning eggs, she discussed music with a kibbutznik.[116] Community building between visitors and the Israeli Jews in the kibbutzim also transpired in the context of communal celebrations. These could be rituals linked to Israel's creation: Schulz recounted rituals during Israel's Independence Day, such as children dancing while she was observing them.[117] However, from the outset the interaction with Jews living in the kibbutzim was not smooth for visiting Germans: Schulz narrated that she found it difficult to mingle with Israeli Jews there.[118] Nevertheless, in the end, she noted warm relationships with many Jews

[111]Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 103.
[112]*ibid*., 97.
[113]For a succinct account of the history of the kibbutzim, see M.E. Spiro, 'Utopia and its discontents: the kibbutz and its historical vicissitudes', *American Anthropologist*, 106, 3 (2004), 556–68.
[114]Böhme, *op. cit*., 138–40.
[115]AAJB, SJD BV 20: *IUSY Rundschreiben Nr. 6* (1965).
[116]Schulz, *op. cit*., 210.
[117]*ibid*., 211.
[118]*ibid*., 205, 219.

living in Nir Eliyahu.[119] Schulz empathised with the initial reticence of the Jews in Nir Eliyahu to interact with her, as some had experienced very difficult situations in the past, implying that these were because of Germans.[120]

Autobiographical documents and the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey show that participation in the social life of these communities vindicated visitors' perception of Israeli Jews as subjects who worked assiduously, selflessly and in a disciplined manner to construct Israel. While available autobiographies do not employ the term 'New Jew', such qualities echoed the definition in Israel of the 'new, modern, tough, young, active, outgoing Jew against the diasporic pale, intellectual Jew locked in his [sic] ghetto . . . '.[121] In portraying the kibbutzim as a synecdoche for the qualities they assigned to Israeli Jews, young West German visitors tended to reproduce a romanticised representation of such communities. For instance, Schulz referred to the 'hard work' of these Jews.[122] The reports on which the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey was based yielded similar results, such as visiting Germans labelling the Jews in the kibbutzim as having 'impeccable manners'.[123]

Despite idealising the kibbutzim, West German visitors sometimes raised concerns about these communities. Some *Aktion Sühnezeichen* visitors had expected the Jews who lived in the kibbutzim to be attached to socialism but found them more 'pragmatic' than they would have liked.[124] However, none of the autobiographical sources that I have found went so far as to challenge an idealising representation of the kibbutzim as communities of 'pioneering' and 'hard-working' people. Similarly, the reports on which the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey was based show that organisers and visitors did not challenge the social and work conditions in the kibbutzim.[125]

In idealising the kibbutzim, as the authors of the 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey aptly remarked, visiting West Germans did not elaborate on the fact that only 3–5% of the Israeli population lived there and that their communal spirit did not echo the way of life in large Israeli cities.[126] What further aggravated a skewed experience of young West Germans in Israel was that they were allowed access to only 17 kibbutzim in 1967, which rose to 26 by 1969, according to the West German embassy of Tel Aviv.[127] Overall, such romanticisation seemed most prominent among young West Germans who

[119] *ibid*.
[120] *ibid*., 219.
[121] J. Bourdon, 'The export of Zionism? Global images of Israel in the 1960s', in T. Chaplin and J.E. Mooney (eds), *The Global 1960s: Convention, contest, and counterculture* (Abingdon, 2018), 236–54, here 238.
[122] Schulz, *op. cit*., 206.
[123] Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 23.
[124] Schenk et al., *op. cit*., 11.
[125] Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 23.
[126] *ibid*., 21–23.
[127] Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, B189 1938: Embassy of West Germany in Tel Aviv, 'Deutsche Jugendgruppen in den Kibbuzim', 1969 (sent to the West German Foreign Office).

participated in programmes that did not include preparatory seminars on the significance of the kibbutzim in Israel.[128]

The fact that numerous kibbutzim were not open to German visitors points to a broader complexity. While West German organisers sought Israeli partners, this proved to be a serious challenge to them: very few Israeli organisations were ready to collaborate with German subjects at that point. The *Mapai* – the dominant centre-left party of Israel at the time – and the *Histadrut* – the national trade union confederation – were exceptions.[129] As a result, visits to these organisations' headquarters and to the kibbutzim associated with them featured in several programmes. At the same time, there were initially complications in the contact even between *Mapai* and the Falcons.[130] The interaction between young West Germans and groups of Israeli Jews who were sceptical, if not hostile, to Germans, such as the Haredi Jews, was even more difficult.[131]

West German visitors and Arabs

Between the late 1950s and the late 1960s, West German organisers and participants developed a strong attachment to Israeli Jews, but displayed meagre interest in Israeli Arabs. Young West Germans rarely visited locations that Arabs inhabited in Israel. For instance, the preparatory material provided by the Falcons is a case in point as it contained limited reference to the Arabs and largely ignored Arab voices. Travel reports referred to a Falcons' visit to Nazareth, where part of the population is Arab. However, there was no mention of any intention by the young Germans to contact the Arabs there.[132] Overall, young West Germans hardly ever interacted with the cultural or political associations of Israeli Arabs. Moreover, in this period, young West Germans mostly approached events that were of significance to Arabs in Israel (and the Middle East more broadly) from the perspective of Israeli Jews. The Palestine War of 1947–1949 was a case in point. This war marked both the creation of Israel and the refugeedom of numerous Arabs from Israel-controlled territories. While in Israel, young West Germans attended seminars about the war and Arab refugees, yet these sessions were delivered by Israeli scholars or personnel of the Israeli Defence Forces.[133]

[128]*ibid.*
[129]Haase, *op. cit.*, 88, 97. See also AAJB, SJD BV 20 0048: Report on the Falcons' collaborative activities with Mapai and Histadrut, 1965.
[130]'Israelis waren zurückhaltend', *op. cit.*
[131]Haase, *op. cit.*, 88.
[132]On preparatory reading, see 'Literatur zum Thema Israel', *op. cit*. For Falcons' reports, see, for instance, *IUSY Rundschreiben Nr. 6, op. cit*. and letter to all participants in the IUSY Camp in 1965, *op. cit.*
[133]AAJB, ZA 162, 1965: booklet by D. Fricke and M. Fricke, *Israel* (Frankfurt am Main, 1965). This may have also transpired, however, because, until the 1990s, the personal memories of Israeli Arabs pertaining to that war had

The minimal contact between young West Germans and Israeli Arabs derived from a confluence of factors. Crucially, the Israeli partners of West German organisers were keen on prioritising contact with Israeli Jews and viewed any potential engagement of German visitors with Arabs as a possible intrusion on Israeli domestic affairs.[134] The perceptions that shaped the aims of the West German organisers and the participants' motivations – especially the aim to atone for Nazi crimes against the Jews or to visit biblical locations – further contributed to this limited contact.[135] Moreover, neither the Falcons nor *Aktion Sühnezeichen* shared West German diplomatic concerns about the isolation of the East German state.[136] As such, their reports did not consider the question of whether closer ties with Israel might anger Arab subjects and push them towards the German Democratic Republic.

The uneven internationalism of West German organisers and visitors built upon Orientalist stereotypes, which formed part of a resilient racialisation in West Germany. The language of 'race' largely vanished in public discourse in West and East Germany, being linked to the undiluted racism of National Socialism, from which both West and East Germany wanted to distance themselves. However, in both German states, ideologies and behaviours 'that look an awful lot like racism' persisted and reinforced racialising ascriptions based on biology and culture.[137]

The Orientalist bias of organisers and visitors to Israel was built partially on cultural racism relating to religious difference. Such racism inflected public perceptions of various Muslim groups in West Germany, including students and workers, as being quintessentially different from (Christian) Germans. Negative approaches towards Muslims had been present already in the 1960s in West Germany and hardened from the 1970s on.[138] In the case of West German visitors to Israel, their Orientalist stereotypes dwelt on both religion and the purported geographical origin of ethnic and national groups living in Israel. In referring to Arabs, travel reports and autobiographies usually added that, in religious terms, they were largely Muslim.

not morphed into a public discourse: U. Koldas, 'The Nakba in Palestinian memory in Israel', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 47, 6 (2011), 947–59.

[134]Haase, *op. cit*., 102.

[135]Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 15–17.

[136]C. Lepp, *Tabu der Einheit? Die Ost-West Gemeinschaft der evangelischen Christen und die deutsche Teilung* (1945–1969) (Göttingen, 2005), 454; H. Eppe, *Kleine Chronik der Arbeiterjugendverbände*, 1945–1985 (Bonn, 1987), 37.

[137]R. Chin and H. Fehrenbach, 'Introduction: What's race got to do with it? Post-War German history in context' in R. Chin, H. Fehrenbach, G. Eley and A. Grossmann (eds), *After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2009), 1–29, particularly 3.

[138]On tendencies in the 1960s, see J. Woesthoff, '"When I marry a Mohammedan": migration and the challenges of interethnic marriages in post-war Germany', *Contemporary European History*, 22, 2 (2013), 199–231. On changes from the 1970s onwards, see T. Mittmann, 'Säkularisierungsvorstellungen und religiöse Identitätsstiftung im Migrationsdiskurs: Die kirchliche Wahrnehmung "des Islams" in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland seit den 1960er Jahren', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 51 (2011), 267–89; E. Erdem and M. Mattes, 'Gendered policies – gendered patterns: female labour migration from Turkey to Germany from the 1960s to the 1990s' in R. Ohliger, K. Schönwälder and T. Triadafilopoulos (eds), *European Encounters: Migrants, migration and European societies since 1945* (Aldershot, 2003), 167–85.

However, these sources did not necessarily equate 'Oriental' with Islam. Crucially, the German–Israeli Study Group report also referred to a minority of Christian Arabs, whose behaviour was not distinguished from that of their Muslim compatriots.[139] The same report, as well as autobiographies of *Aktion Sühnezeichen* visitors, also maintained that the Mizrahi Jews, who emanated from Asian and North African countries, differed culturally from Jews with European backgrounds. The Study Group report went so far as to argue that Jews from Europe, who 'defined' life in Israel, were the 'rational' ones, in contrast to the Mizrahis.[140]

The bulk of Orientalist references in travel reports and autobiographies, however, addressed the Arabs, both Muslim and Christian. A key stereotype attached to them was that of 'Oriental irrationality'. A case in point were the mobility programmes organised by the New Left-leaning German–Israeli Study Groups. Some sections of the Study Groups embraced negative stereotypes of Muslim and Christian Arabs. For instance, in 1968 the report of a trip by groups from Siegen and Kettwig contrasted 'developed' Jews with supposedly 'irrational' Arabs living in Israel.[141] Such representations echoed earlier perceptions, such as those of Western travellers to Mandatory Palestine in the interwar years, who cast the Arabs as 'backwards'.[142] The report concluded that Jews had the potential to help spread 'European manners' among Arabs and had been doing so since the creation of Israel in 1948.[143] Thus, while existing evidence does not show how widespread Orientalism was within the New Left, it does appear to have influenced some groups involving New Left advocates.

Another stereotype that circulated widely among various West German visitors was that of the purported 'aggressiveness' of the Arabs (regardless of religion). While texts on organised travel to Israel did not compare Arabs in the Middle East to Muslims in West Germany, the label of 'aggressiveness' echoed a perception that was already widespread in West Germany during the 1960s of Muslims as being inherently 'violent'.[144] The 'Youth Travel to Israel' survey concluded that the visits reinforced a 'one-sided' approach to the conflicts in the Middle East. The report argued that young West German visitors tended to venerate the Israeli Defence Forces as protecting Israel from '40 million enemy Arabs' surrounding Israel.[145] In similar terms,

[139]PA AA, B94-EA, folder 396: 'Über die Beziehungen zwischen Arabern und Juden in Israel, gewonnen aus den Erfahrungen der Studienfahrt der DIS Kettwig und der DIS Siegen im Frühjahr 1968' [report apparently authored by the organisers].
[140]*ibid*.
[141]'Über die Beziehungen', *op. cit*. The issue of whether DIS Kettwig and DIS Siegen deviated from the shift of other DIS groups to anti-Zionism in this period requires further study.
[142]Bourdon, *op. cit*., 238. In the interwar years, the areas that formed part of Israel in 1948 were administered by Britain and belonged to the Palestine Mandate.
[143]'Über die Beziehungen', *op. cit*.
[144]Woesthoff, *op. cit*., 199–231, especially 209.
[145]Baethge et al., *op. cit*., 18.

diaries of *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers in Israel portrayed the Israeli Jews as 'benevolent', in contrast to the 'aggressive' Arabs of Israel's neighbouring countries.[146] Although available sources do not indicate whether youth programmes to Israel created such views among young West Germans, they definitely reinforced Orientalist stereotypes at the expense of Muslim Arabs.

The dichotomy between 'benevolent Israeli Jews' and 'aggressive Arabs' was also evident in the references made in several documents to the Six-Day War of 1967, which pitted Israel against Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, resulting in Israel's victory and its seizure of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. Crucially, a report of the Falcons on the Six-Day War portrayed Israel as encircled by 'enemies'.[147] Similarly, the diary of *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers who offered to work in kibbutz Bachan during the Six-Day War compared it to the Vietnam War and described it as eye-opening: 'What we saw dwarfs Vietnam [War]' as 'Israel fought against an enormous superpower of hating Arabs'.[148] In this sense, West German visitors differed from other Western European subjects who had sympathised with Israel but began to view the latter as an 'occupier' in the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day War.[149]

Before the Six-Day War, however, the attitude of some West German organisers towards Arabs was at times complicated by the Cold War developments analysed above. A case in point were the Christian Democrat youth organisations in West Germany who sought to develop contacts with Arabs in the Middle East, including those residing in Israel, while also forging ties with Israeli Jewish subjects. Even before the Six-Day War, the RCDS and the Young Union were motivated by Cold War developments in approaching Arab subjects: they were alarmed by the close contact between Arab countries and the East German regime and the concomitant deterioration of West German–Arab relations around 1965, when 10 Arab countries severed their ties with West Germany.[150] In reaching out to Arabs, these Christian Democrat organisations clearly distanced themselves from other organisers in this period who depicted Arabs as 'quintessentially aggressive'. Nevertheless, they did not entirely avoid Orientalist stereotypes: one of them characterised Syria as a socialist regime with 'Oriental' characteristics, without elaborating on these or clarifying how they differed from 'Western' characteristics.[151]

[146]Schenk et al., *op. cit*., 18.
[147]Letter of an *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteer as quoted in Schenk et al., *op. cit*., 16.
[148]EZA 97/728: Sondertagebuch der Israel-Gruppen IX und X. Abschrift vom 28.6.1967. This is a diary that the *Aktion Sühnezeichen* volunteers had to write as a report on their activities.
[149]Bourdon, *op. cit*., 244.
[150]Fink, *op. cit*., 182.
[151]Sachbericht: Internationale Jugendbegegnung der Jungen Union Deutschlands im Nahen Osten (26 August–1 September 1970).

To help mend the relationship between West Germany and Arab subjects, RCDS and Young Union sections sent several delegations to Middle Eastern countries. Such delegations engaged in multilateral talks with organisations of Arabs from Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, at least from 1965 onwards and continuing after the war of 1967. These included representatives of Arabs who had fled the territories that Israel controlled from 1948 onwards and who lived in refugee camps in neighbouring countries.[152] Some of these representatives belonged to the left-wing Palestinian Liberation Front, one of the constituent members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) led by Yasser Arafat. In 1965, RCDS delegates held talks with the Ba'ath regime in Syria, whose orientation was pan-Arab and socialist.[153] Similarly, both a Rhineland delegation of the Young Union in 1967 and a federal one in 1970 met with representatives of the Jordanian regime and with Lebanese Christian and Muslim organisations.[154] The Rhineland regional branch of the Young Union was the second largest in terms of membership in 1968, second only to that of Bavaria (22,284 and 28,983 members, respectively).[155] The fact that Christian Democrats did not shy away from contacting political subjects that were ideologically closer to the Eastern Bloc testifies to the paradoxical impact of Cold War on internationalism, as analysed by Sandrine Kott.[156] While Cold War politics could hamper international cooperation among subjects from different ideological camps, it could also help create a space of debate, as was the case between Christian Democrat German and socialist Arab organisations.

Conclusions

Youth mobility programmes from West Germany to Israel emerged in the late 1950s and gained in popularity from the 1960s onwards. Such travel to Israel was a testing ground for the internationalist visions of diverse organisers – including the secular left, Protestant, and Christian Democratic groups analysed here – as well as for their young visitors. However, these programmes largely reproduced an uneven internationalism, which prioritised contact between West Germans and Israeli Jews, while sidelining Arabs living in Israel. In illuminating this condition, this article adds to the emerging literature on internationalism that explores both its benevolent aspects and its blind spots, particularly its link to Orientalism. This uneven internationalism occurred due to the prevalent reason why

[152]ACDP, JU-ACDP, 04–007–150–1: Bericht über die Studienfahrt der Jungen Union des Rheinlandes in den Nahen Osten vom 13. bis 28. Mai 1967.
[153]ACDP, JU-ACDP, 04–006–055/4: Programm vom 29.7–21.8.1965.
[154]ACDP, JU-ACDP, 04–007–150–1: Bericht über die Studienfahrt, *op. cit.*; Sachbericht, *op. cit.*
[155]Bilstein et al., *op. cit.*, 42.
[156]S. Kott, 'Cold War internationalism' in Sluga and Clavin (eds), *op. cit.*, 340–62. See also S. Kott, *Organiser le monde: Une autre histoire de la guerre froide* (Paris, 2021).

organisers and visitors favoured journeys to Israel: to establish close ties with Jews in order to leave behind the Nazi past. It was also affected by the Orientalist stereotypes that circulated among some organisers and visitors, and was favoured by Israeli authorities. Meanwhile, West German federal state institutions took a backseat, financing youth travel to Israel but not playing a significant role in shaping the agenda. West Germany's Cold War priorities meant that it only established official ties with Israel in 1965. In this sense, organised travel to Israel was distinctive from West German youth programmes with other countries, especially France, which in this period gained momentum as a means of promoting international ties.

The age-related self-perception of most visitors shaped key tenets of the uneven contact of young West Germans with Israeli Jews. West German visitors largely assigned their age group a 'mission' to establish strong ties with Israeli Jews, which fed into their substantial engagement with social life in the kibbutzim. Moreover, most visitors empathised with the suffering of individual Jews under the Nazis although they did not situate this interaction within its social and political context. They felt no individual guilt for the Holocaust, having been too young when it transpired. In this way, they reflected the visible tendency among West German youth in the 1960s to approach the Holocaust in a de-historicised manner.

The tenets of this uneven internationalism were not left unchallenged, however. This article has demonstrated that the programmes were a testing ground, which also related to the aims that various subjects attached to travel to Israel and the experience of participants. In contacting Holocaust survivors, some visitors differentiated themselves from other participants: they began to think, albeit in a fragmented manner, about the context in which the Holocaust had emerged and/or about their individual guilt, sometimes motivated by their perceptions of religious faith. Meanwhile, the Cold War was a crucial factor in differentiating organisers' aims. Key organisers, including the secular left Falcons and Protestant *Aktion Sühnezeichen*, did not endorse West Germany's campaign against East Germany. Moreover, to forestall contact between Arabs and East Germany, Christian Democrat organisers of travel from West Germany to Israel aimed to reach out to both Israeli Jews and Arabs in Israel and the Middle East in general.

It was mostly in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, however – and particularly during the 1970s – that young West Germans reached out further to Arabs living in Israeli territories. Moreover, the 1970s witnessed the growing involvement of the West German state in standardising organised youth exchanges between West Germany and Israel, also encouraging more contact with Arabs in Israel.[157] The unfolding of such contact between

[157]Haase, *op. cit.*, 99–104.

West Germans, Jews and Arabs in Israel offers scope for further investigation.

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