EXCHANGE PROGRAM FOR FUTURE LEADERS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

AND OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

This program has been designed to provide young leaders of the American Jewish community with an objective view of the "New Germany" and a representative non-Jewish group from the Federal Republic of Germany with insights into the American Jewish community's position in the United States in order to develop an understanding of each other's cultural, socio-economic and political life.

The first group of young American Jews visited West Germany last June as participants in a program developed by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation focusing on bringing an awareness through personal knowledge and experience of the thirty year history and accomplishments of the German Federal Republic. The group represented a variety of professional fields - communications, education, business, law, political science, art, etc. They visited Berlin, identified with the German past and illustrative of the present day division of Germany; Bonn, representative of today's Germany, its political scene, legal and constitutional structures; and Munich, a modern German city with an active cultural and university life. Meetings with peer groups, field trips, seminars, sightseeing, cultural events was the format.

The American Jewish Committee will host the visit of the German group to the United States in the Spring of 1981. The program is planned to provide a perspective of the American Jewish community, the largest in the world and its contribution to the social and political life of the United States, its history and its future. The position of American Jewry is historically unprecedented, flourishing in an atmosphere of religious and cultural pluralism.

Present plans call for the program to be initiated with a briefing session in Bonn a month before the group's departure for the United States. In New York, the first city the participants are to visit, a clarification session and seminars will be held at the American Jewish Committee's national headquarters to provide orientation on the multifaceted nature of the Jewish community, its characteristics, major institutions and patterns of life. These seminars will deal with religious, cultural and educational institutions, community relations, philanthropic and social welfare activities and organizations. They will be conducted by specialists in the various fields and provide an understanding of how the American Jewish community has contributed to building American society and how, in turn, this community has been shaped by America's social, economic and intellectual challenges. Selected memoirs of leaders in various fields will be used from the Committee's Oral History Library, a record of the American Jewish experience in the Twentieth Century.

Field trips, sightseeing, cultural events, home hospitality and free time is planned as well for the cities to be visited - New York, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles. If time permits, a trip to San Francisco will be included. Emphasis throughout the visit is placed on contacts with the American Jewish group who visited Germany in June for an exchange of experiences and views.

The program is planned to provide insights into such matters as:

1. The distinctive American phenomenon of the development of denominational sects with Judaism. Visits to major Reform, Orthodox and Conservative institutions as well as to the Chasidic community will be made.
2. American Jewish communal and philanthropic history, the establishment of the first school of Social Work under Jewish auspices, the development of the federations of Jewish charities structure and how they affected the initiation of community chests and the United Way movement, training programs for the Jewish communal service will be covered. Special stress will be placed on the German-Jewish contributions to these developments as well as to the general American society.

3. Development of cultural and educational institutions with a visit for example, to the Jewish Museum in New York.

4. The immigrant experience covering the American-German Refugee experience and the new immigrants, i.e. Soviet Jews, with meetings with representatives of each group.

5. Past and current American Jewish contributions to the trade union movement with discussions with rank and file membership and with leadership of organized labor.

6. American Jews in political life and meetings with American Jewish legislators in Washington, D.C.

7. Jews in rural America with a stop over in a small agricultural community.


Stress in all these visits, lectures and discussions will be on viewing the United States as a democratic pluralistic society using the Jewish experience as a microcosm of the way in which ethnic groups have flourished in America.

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