

Israeli ambassador Shimon Stein and AJC executive director David A. Harris discuss relations between Germany and Israel with AJC leaders in Berlin.



Spurring discussion in Germany

AJC's Lawrence & Lee Ramer Center for German-Jewish Relations in Berlin hosted major conferences in recent months in the broad arena of promoting tolerance and has initiated a program to bring AJC's curriculum for tolerance education to Germany. And in February, AJC leaders visited Berlin in order to forward vital German-Israeli understanding.

While there is little question that Germany has a stable democracy, the rise in right-wing extremist incidents, especially in eastern Germany, is of concern. AJC's Berlin Office held a three-day conference on Challenges to Democracy in United Germany along with the Ebert Foundation last fall, initiating an extensive discussion with German educational organizations and independent academic experts. The conference was followed by a fact-finding mission to see grass-roots initiatives that deal with right-wing extremism on a daily basis.

In mid-December, AJC convened the first broad-based discussion on goals for a major new German initiative called the Future Fund, created

from part of the Forced and Slave Labor Fund. The fund's mandate is to enhance education for the future based on lessons of the past. But just how this should be realized remains contentious. AJC brought together the relevant players for the first round of debate.

In these areas, AJC has a vital role in spurring discussion about the strategies for tackling difficult new issues. The respect AJC has garnered—from the highest levels of German government to the leaders of local grass-roots initiatives—allows us to influence the debate, encouraging constructive involvement and inserting fresh ideas.

AJC has also responded to Chancellor Schroeder's expressed interest this fall in working together to increase the effectiveness of tolerance education in Germany by meeting over the last several months with educational experts to adapt parts of AJC's Hands Across Campus education initiative to the German curriculum. The reaction thus far has been very positive.

AJC's promotion of democracy and respect of civil rights for all remains among its central tenets. These goals have rarely been more important—and embattled—than they are at the present moment. Even as democracy spreads to countries that have never seen it before, a backlash of fundamentalism and extremism makes its presence felt in almost every nation on the globe, and is tolerated by many who do not realize its power or the ideology that feeds it.

Worldwide, AJC engages in the struggle to aid those forces that advocate respect for difference and that believe in the power of open minds to open hearts.

These next pages are dedicated to some of AJC's many activities in the vital arena of advancing understanding between people.

Promoting Tolerance Worldwide



AJC leaders and staff gathered with German experts in Berlin to discuss initiatives to counter right-wing extremism.