

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON GERMANY, Inc.

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Report on Activities, 1960-1961

Ever since the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949, relationships between the United States and Germany have been marked by increasing friendliness and understanding. The past two years, however -- roughly the period covered by this report -- have witnessed a growing complication in these relationships. Among the various events which focused world attention on Germany and, in some cases, led to misunderstandings between our two countries, was the reawakening of American fears of anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism in Germany -- a fear sparked by the outbreak of Swastika daubings in January, 1960; the controversy during the winter of 1960-61 over the U.S. balance of payments; the Eichmann trial; the German elections and their aftermath; and overshadowing all these events, the Berlin crisis in the summer and fall of 1961 and the building of the Berlin Wall. These events and the temporary misunderstandings they engendered between Germany and the United States made the work of the American Council on Germany more essential than ever.

The Second American-German Conference

It was fortunate that the second American-German Conference, which had been a year in the planning, took place when and where it did. The Conference was sponsored jointly by the Council and the Atlantik-Bruecke, and it took place in Washington, D.C., February 16 through 19, 1961 -- at the height of the dollar deficit dispute. The Conference opened with statements by Secretary of State Dean Rusk and German Foreign Minister Heinrich von Brentano. (Herr von Brentano's visit to the United States at that time had been strongly urged by the Council, and he had agreed to come then at our own invitation). Like the first such conference in Bad Godesberg, Germany, in October, 1959, a distinguished group of American and German delegates and observers from both public and private life attended.

The timing of the Conference made it possible for the Germans to meet with leading figures in the new administration, who, conversely, were enabled to become acquainted with many of the key German personalities with whom they would be dealing for the next four years. The main business of the Conference took place in off-the-record panel discussions -- political, economic and educational. These three panels into which the delegates were divided were naturally concerned with pertinent aspects of the problems then troubling American-German relations; and it was obvious that the frank approach of both sides performed a useful service. A detailed report on the work of the Conference as a whole and an analysis of the work of the Political Panel is now available to all Council members and others who are interested.

The Growth of Anti-German Feeling in the U.S.

By and large, American reaction to the greatly publicized outbreak of Swastika daubings was a healthy one. All the great American Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and the American Jewish Congress endorsed the actions taken by the German government to deal with the culprits. They attributed the outbreaks, as well as the similar ones which occurred all over the United States during the same period, to juvenile delinquents and a few cranks, rather than to any organized anti-Semitism. The American