

# Anti-Semitism Still Haunts Germany

By Stephen Evans BBC News, Berlin

What on Earth does the Jewish community in Germany **1) OMG! There are still Jews in Germany?!?** make of the flurry of headlines this week that described substantial anti-Semitism, and how have they reacted to plans to publish extracts from *Mein Kampf*? **2) What is this? It seems to be the title of something because it's in italics. I'm assuming also it's German.**

Here, they live in the land that produced the Holocaust, and a rigorous academic study indicates that one in five Germans has at least a "latent" antipathy towards Jews. **3) What does "antipathy" mean? I know "anti" means against, so I'm guessing it means something anti-Jewish.**

Separately, a British publisher planned to put extracts from Hitler's manifesto **4) Oh, I think this is that Mein Kampf thing. It's using some of the same words ("extracts" and "publish"). I'm not sure what a manifesto is, though.** on news stands and only held back as a court in Bavaria got involved.

You would expect loud and righteous outrage - but you would be wrong. Certainly, some groups have voiced anger but they have often been outside Germany. **5) This paragraph doesn't make sense. Outrage at what?**

In the country itself there is a more measured tone. Behind the headlines there are nuances **6) What is a "nuance"?** and complexities.

It should be said that Germany has a growing Jewish population, arguably the fastest growing Jewish population in Europe. **7) That's absolutely incredible! Jews are going back to Germany?! Where are they coming from?**

Many of the immigrants are from Russia but many are from Israel - people who have come to live in the land of their fathers, people who have come to live in the land that expelled their fathers to their deaths.

These people know the history - how could they not? - but they also live lives and make livings.

As Rafael Seligmann **8) I'll bet this guy has something to do with Jewish culture in Germany.** told the BBC: "It's important to have a positive identity - not just to say 'my uncle was murdered'."



German Jews say there is more to their identity than the Holocaust

He has just published a new Jewish newspaper in Berlin, *Jewish Voice from Germany*. **9) Ah! I was right!**

"People feel it's not enough to have a 'Holocaust identity'. **10) What would a "Holocaust identity" be?** We are trying to show that the Jewish identity is broader," said Mr Seligmann. "It's about culture and history and politics."

## 'Hopeful future'

So what did he make of the research indicating that 20% of Germans harbour some anti-Semitism?

**11) Monitor comprehension/ fix-up/infer**

"That indicates that 80% don't," he said. "You have to be positive".

There has been much concern in Germany over the recent resurgence of the far right. **12) Monitor comprehension/ fix-up/infer**

Mr Seligmann's view is that the past, of course, was terrible and should be remembered and learnt from, but that the present and future remained hopeful.

Nor have Jewish groups in Germany been utterly damning of the proposed publication of extracts from *Mein Kampf* - suspicious, certainly, but not always outraged. **13) Comment on text**

The head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Dieter Graumann, said: "Of course, it would be better if it were not published. But if it has to be published, it must be accompanied by historians' commentary."

In the end, the publishers pulled back because a court in Bavaria is yet to make a full decision.

Publishing *Mein Kampf* is not illegal, **14) Question what is happening in the text** but the government of Bavaria owns the copyright and it had indicated its opposition.

And those uneasy about publication seem to recognise that the British publisher did not have an anti-Semitic agenda - he said the extracts would reveal the "poor-quality and confused work of a totally twisted mind".

Attitudes to Jews in Germany obviously have a

**As times get harder, it seems, Germans look for others to be angry at"**

big importance, but those who study racism put them into a wider context. There is enmity – and a lack of enmity – **15) Monitor comprehension/fix-up/infer** towards many groups.

Last year the University of Bielefeld published the results of a survey across Europe which looked at attitudes not just towards Jews but Muslims and other victims of what it called "group-focused enmity". **16) Monitor comprehension/fix-up/infer**

It concluded: "Group-focused enmity is widespread in Europe. It is weakest in the Netherlands and strongest in Poland and Hungary."

#### **17) Comment on text**

On anti-Semitism, the researchers said it was strongest in Poland and Hungary. "In Portugal, followed closely by Germany, anti-Semitism is significantly more prominent **18) Monitor comprehension/fix-up/infer** than in the other western European countries.

"In Italy and France anti-Semitic attitudes as a whole are less widespread than the European average, while the extent of anti-Semitism is least in Great Britain and the Netherlands."

#### **Economic tensions 19) Monitor comprehension/fix-up/infer**

Putting it bluntly, there is widespread – but not majority – feeling against immigrants and Muslims across Europe, with only minor differences between countries. Anti-Semitism, however, rises broadly from west to east in Europe, with the exception of Portugal where it is relatively high.

And prejudice seems to be getting worse. Sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer of the University of Bielefeld blames harder economic times.

For the last 10 years, he has researched attitudes and published results annually in a book entitled German Conditions.

The method is to put a series of statements to 2,000 people: "To preserve law and order, we have to crack down on outsiders and troublemakers"; "I sometimes feel like a stranger in my own country, because of the many Muslims in Germany"; "Many Jews are trying to use Germany's Nazi past to



*There has been much concern in Germany over the recent resurgence of the far right*

secure benefits today and make the Germans pay for it."

He concludes in the latest one that xenophobia is on the rise "especially after the [economic] crisis that began in 2008".

He says, too, that it is not just antagonism towards foreigners - or those perceived to be foreigners.

There is also what he calls "group-specific misanthropy", which may be antagonism towards Jews or Muslims or any other ethnic group but also towards, say, the long-term unemployed.

This "group-specific misanthropy" has not risen against homosexuals and women in Germany but has against the long-term unemployed as well as against ethnic minorities.

As times get harder, it seems, Germans look for others to be angry at.

In this, they are no doubt not alone.

But there is one way in which German attitudes are very different from those in some other countries.

In immigrant countries like Britain and the United States the definition of national identity is not as tied up with ethnicity.

In an island nation, with more than 1,000 years of immigration, identifying who exactly descends from whom is much harder.

Until recently the definition of German citizenship was tied to the "blood line" - you were a German if your parents were German.

The law was only changed when the presence of large numbers of people of Turkish origin and German birth made that untenable - for how many generations could people live in a country without being granted citizenship because their parents were not citizens?

But a racial awareness does seem to remain among many ordinary Germans.

Author Thilo Sarrazin published a best-selling book called *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab* (*Germany Abolishes Itself*).

He talked of a "Jewish gene", though associating it with success.

It is a way of seeing the world which would seem odd in many other countries.



*Author Thilo Sarrazin caused controversy with his book, Germany Abolishes Itself.*