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## 9

## The German-Jewish Community of Washington Heights

The German-Jewish community of Washington Heights in New York City was by far the largest settlement of refugees from Nazi Germany in the United States. Only in that section of Upper Manhattan could one find a neighborhood with a German-Jewish character, a well-developed immigrant culture and a network of immigrant institutions. A person in search of German refugee life "on the streets" would have to direct their attention to Washington Heights. Yet Washington Heights was not really representative of the refugee wave of immigration as a whole. It represented one pole of a heterogeneous and complex German-Jewish immigrant spectrum. The other pole of that spectrum, one about which a great deal has been written, was made up of the distinguished intellectual émigrés who fled Nazi Germany and had much influence on American intellectual life.<sup>1</sup> Neither this relatively small group of

<sup>1</sup>The following are only a few of the best known works on the refugee intellectuals. Note the characteristic titles of many of them:

Donald Peterson Kent, *The Refugee Intellectual. The Americanization of the Immigrants of 1933 - 1941*, New York 1953; Laura Fermi, *Illustrious Immigrants. The Intellectual Migration from Europe 1930 - 1941*, Chicago [1968]; Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (eds.), *The Intellectual Migration, Europe and America 1930 - 1960*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1969; Jarrell C. Jackman & Carla M. Borden (eds.), *The Muses Flee Hitler. Cultural Transfer and Adaptation 1930 - 1945*, Washington, D.C. 1983; Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise*, New York 1983. By comparison relatively little has been written about the "non-intellectuals". Most thorough of these is Maurice Davie et. al., *Refugees in America*, New York - London 1947. The best article on the Washington Heights community is still Ernest Stock's evocative 'Washington Heights' "Fourth Reich", *Commentary* (June 1951), pp. 581-588. A first attempt to come to grips with the sociology of the non-elite refugees is Herbert Strauss, 'Zur sozialen und organisatorischen Akkulturation deutsch-jüdischer Einwanderer der NS-Zeit in den USA', in,

luminaries, nor the much more numerous residents of Washington Heights, were typical; yet each of the two poles represented a self-selection of certain elements within German Jewry. An analysis of the community least like the elite intellectuals will help highlight the range of the German-Jewish immigration.

The very existence of a German-Jewish immigrant neighborhood made Washington Heights atypical. Studies of the refugees of the 1930s in general (admittedly not free of an apologetic note) emphasize the rapid integration of the group into the American mainstream in contrast to other immigrant groups who created their own enclaves and resisted assimilation.<sup>2</sup> Those German Jews who moved to Washington Heights, however, were more like other immigrant groups than these studies would imply. Yet even they retained certain bourgeois traits which made them different from most immigrants, especially from those who came to America in the period of mass immigration between 1880 and 1924. They also shared with other members of the German refugee wave a composite culture and identity made up of both Jewish and German elements, though with the Jewish elements stronger than elsewhere.

In the 1930s Washington Heights was a typical area of second settlement with a middle-class character. Its ethnic make-up was mixed, with Jews (both native and foreign-born) being the largest group, though not a majority. There were also many Irish-Americans and some Greeks and Armenians. The refugees began arriving in substantial numbers in the mid and late 1930s with the largest number coming to Washington Heights between 1938 and 1940. Large numbers of vacant apartments and pleasant middle-class surroundings, including many parks overlooking the rivers which surrounded the neighborhood were an attraction but so, undoubtedly, was the pre-existing Jewish community. The Nazi experience had shattered relations with ethnic Germans. Whereas before the 1930s quite a few German Jews settled in Yorkville, the refugees, even if they did not move to Washington Heights, chose such Jewish neighborhoods as New York's Jackson Heights, Forest Hills, Kew Gardens, Upper West Side and West Bronx, or their equivalents elsewhere. With the exception of a few intellectuals, the refugees felt much closer to Jews than to Germans. Of the 150,000 or so refugees from Nazi Germany who came to the United States, about one-half settled in

Wolfgang Frühwald and Wolfgang Schieder (eds.), *Leben in Exil. Probleme der Integration deutscher Flüchtlinge im Ausland 1933 - 1945*, Hamburg 1981, pp. 235-251.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Davie, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-56, 156-170, 189-203 *et passim*; Gerhart H. Saenger, *Today's Refugee, Tomorrow's Citizen*, New York - London 1941.

New York City and at least 20,000 moved to Washington Heights where they made up over 10% of the population.<sup>3</sup>

Such traits of the ex-refugee community today as choice of residence, relative attitudes towards Israel and Germany, affiliation with synagogues and self-description leave little doubt of their self-conception as part of the Jewish community. Nevertheless, the refugee community created its own sub-group which remained socially and institutionally separate from the bulk of American Jews. Though the German Jews tended to concentrate in the same parts of Washington Heights as other Jews, they created their own network of institutions. Only a minority of German Jews joined native congregations for instance; instead a dozen large German synagogues were founded in Washington Heights between 1935 and 1949.<sup>4</sup> In the pre-war and war years Washington Heights had its own German-Jewish cabarets, social and athletic clubs and even an active association of Jewish veterans of the German army (with over 400 members).<sup>5</sup> German Jews in Washington Heights opened their own kosher and non-kosher butcher shops, created their own kosher supervision networks, and their own charity and self-help groups. In their social life most stuck to their own circle. Feelings of distance and

<sup>3</sup>The United States Census of April 1940 counts about 22,400 persons born in Germany in Washington Heights and Inwood (then including all of Manhattan north of 159th Street as well as the area west of Amsterdam Avenue between 135th and 159th Streets). In 1950 the number of natives of Germany was slightly higher. A survey of over 2,000 families resident in Washington Heights undertaken by Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in 1965 showed 86% of those interviewees born in Germany or Austria to be of the Jewish religion. Besides the Germans there were some 5,000 Austrians and 1,000 Czechs in 1950, many of whom were also refugees of the 1930s.

<sup>4</sup>Synagogues in Washington Heights founded by refugees from Germany included: Shaare Hatikvah, Emes Wozedek, Ahavath Torah, Tikwoh Chadosch, K'hall Adath Jeshurun, Beth Hillel, Agudas Jeshorim, Ohav Sholaum, Nodah Biyehudo, Kehillath Yaakov, Sichraun Kedauschim and Beth Israel. All but Nodah Biyehudo followed the German rite. In addition there were several short-lived German congregations (e.g., Adath Israel) and at least three congregations founded by "native Jews" which had a majority of German members (Hebrew Tabernacle, Washington Heights Congregation and Fort Tryon Jewish Center).

<sup>5</sup>The most ambitious cabaret was Lublo's Palm Garden at 158th Street and Broadway. Social and athletic clubs include the Prospect Unity Club, Maccabi and an uptown branch of the New World Club. The veterans of the German army of the First World War (most of whom presumably had belonged to the *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten* in Germany), formed the Immigrant Jewish War Veterans (later known as the Jewish Veterans Association). Of the over 800 members which the JVA had in New York City more than half were in the Washington Heights branch. The papers of the Jewish Veterans Association are in the Leo Baeck Institute Archives in New York.



even hostility between them and native Jews were often mutual, and expressed themselves in numerous ways. One particularly striking issue involved the question of language. Most refugees who came to the United States as adults continued to speak German, often in public as well as in private. Even synagogue sermons were held in German well into the 1960s. The newcomers divorced their often hostile feelings towards Germany from their feelings towards their native language which was so interwoven with their personalities. American Jews resented this tie to German for two reasons. On the one hand, the presence of these conspicuous non-English speakers seemed to jeopardize the American status of the native Jews. On the other, the inability of the Germans to speak Yiddish (indeed their ill-disguised contempt for the language) seemed to many American Jews to show how un-Jewish the refugees were. Some even questioned whether the newcomers were really Jews at all.

Relations with German Jews outside Washington Heights were almost as complex as relations with American Jews. Many German-Jewish organizations were city- or even nation-wide and residents of Washington Heights frequently met their compatriots from elsewhere in the city there. Because Washington Heights was a residential area with few facilities for large scale activities, even organizations based in the neighborhood had to hold social functions in large midtown hotels. Above all the *Aufbau*, largest press organ of the refugees, helped unite the newcomers and announced their weddings, newborn children and deaths to German Jews all over the world. Even in the press there were signs of tension between the Washington Heights community and the bulk of the émigrés. The *Aufbau* rarely referred to Washington Heights in its news columns; its few references sometimes included snide remarks about small-town habits which hurt the position of the new immigrants.<sup>6</sup> However important Washington Heights was as a refugee population center many refugees looked down on it as provincial. Retaliation was

<sup>6</sup>Such comments were especially common in the early days of the settlement. Characteristic is the following answer to a letter from "157th Street and Broadway" printed in the *Briefkasten* column of *Aufbau* on 15th July 1939: "Sie haben völlig recht. Diese kleinstädtische Angewohnheit vieler unserer Landsleute, die in Plaudergruppen vor Cafeterien und an Ecken herumstehen, ist eine schreckliche Angewohnheit. Der Amerikaner sieht so etwas erst mit Erstaunen dann aber mit Abneigung und den Schaden trägt die Gesamtheit." A later letter to *Aufbau* (3rd May 1940), this time in English, again criticizes immigrants in Washington Heights for congregating in front of stores.

There were some occasions when *Aufbau* did give Washington Heights more extensive and better coverage. One such example is its extensive treatment in various issues in October 1948 of the congressional campaign between Jacob Javits and Paul O'Dwyer under the rubric 'Der Kampf um Washington Heights'.

also not unheard of. The *Jewish Way*, a smaller, less successful competitor to the *Aufbau*, based in Washington Heights, attacked the *Aufbau* as representing Berlin decadence in contrast to its own deep Jewish feeling.<sup>7</sup>

The German-Jewish population of Washington Heights differed from the bulk of refugees in several ways. Whereas the refugees as a whole were noted for their high percentage of professionals, those in Washington Heights had a low percentage (lower than that of native Jews in the neighborhood).<sup>8</sup> In origin they also differed. Two-thirds of those in Washington Heights came from Southern and Western Germany (as against three-eighths of a general refugee sample). Jews from Berlin who dominated twentieth-century German Jewry made up 22% of the overall refugees but only 8.8% of those in Washington Heights. Whereas small-town Jews played little role in German Jewry in the twentieth century, three-eighths of those in Washington Heights came from towns with 10,000 or fewer inhabitants and only a minority from cities of over 100,000.<sup>9</sup> Besides their heavier rural and Southern component, those in Washington Heights were also more traditionally religious than the refugees as a whole. The arrival of the German Jews strengthened the traditional elements in Washington Heights Jewry. The newcomers showed a high rate of synagogue affiliation (over 5,000 families in Washington Heights refugee congregations alone) and of synagogue attendance (over one-fourth reported weekly attendance in 1960 and almost three-fifths attended at least monthly).<sup>10</sup> (By contrast only 14% of New York Jewry in 1981 attended weekly and 23% monthly).<sup>11</sup> Most of the synagogues founded by refugees in Washington Heights were

<sup>7</sup>In an advertisement on 20th August 1944 *The Jewish Way* referred to itself as "die einzige in deutscher Sprache erscheinende ausschliesslich jüdische Zeitung Amerikas" (the only exclusively Jewish newspaper in the German language in America). It goes on to describe its programme in the following terms: "nicht billige Zerstreung und Sensation, sondern dem zielbewussten Kampf für den jüdischen Glauben, die jüdische Ehre, die jüdischen Rechte, und für die jüdische Zukunft. ...Nicht seichte Erinnerungen an europäische Grosstadt-Dekadenz, sondern die ewigen unsterblichen Kulturwerte des Judentums."

<sup>8</sup>The 1965 survey by Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center showed only 12.3% of employed male Jews born in Germany or Austria in professional or technical fields as against 15.4% of employed male Jews born in Eastern Europe and 36% of those employed male Jews born in the United States.

<sup>9</sup>These figures are based on a tabulation of all obituaries in the *Aufbau* in 1960. Most such obituaries included both the former hometown of the deceased (e.g., früher Giessen) and the address of the mourners.

<sup>10</sup>*Community Factbook for Washington Heights, New York City, 1960 - 1961*, Table 6.5 (based on a 1960 survey by Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center).

<sup>11</sup>1981 Jewish Population Survey of New York City. This information was graciously made available to me by Professor Paul Ritterband.

Orthodox with the rest being traditionally-oriented Conservative. Self-definition was less overwhelmingly Orthodox, with the Orthodox being only about one in four, the Conservatives 40%, the Reform 25% and about one in eight unaffiliated,<sup>12</sup> but this still is a far higher proportion of Orthodox and Conservative Jews than the average for Jews in New York.

Though Washington Heights residents were more traditionally Jewish and more petit-bourgeois than the bulk of the 1930s refugees, they shared with their fellow émigrés certain characteristics which distinguished them from other immigrants. They truly were refugees rather than ordinary immigrants because they left their homeland only because of persecution, not mainly to better their economic situation. In fact, like many other refugee groups, they had to accept greatly reduced status, income and living conditions as the price of freedom and safety. With few exceptions the German Jews (even those in Washington Heights) had lived comfortable bourgeois lives in Europe. The new arrivals did everything they could to retain their former status even in their new poverty. Many brought good clothes and furniture even though they arrived penniless. They moved to respectable areas like Washington Heights; the newly-founded immigrant groups helped the newly declassed retain a feeling of what they had been "formerly" – a favorite word in refugee circles.

The native Americans – both Jews and non-Jews – bitterly resented the fact that the refugees were proud of their former status and that they saw some aspects of their former culture as superior to America's. The widespread view of the German refugees as arrogant stems in part from this resentment against criticism by newcomers. Though the refugees were true refugees who might never have left Germany had there been no Hitler, they were not mere exiles like such refugee intellectuals as Bertolt Brecht or Thomas Mann. It quickly became clear to the vast majority of the Jewish refugees that they would never return to Germany. Virtually all quickly acquired American citizenship and identified their political destiny with America. The United States became "die neue Heimat" (the new homeland).

The first ten years of the new colony were marked by great economic hardships and difficulties of adjustment. Finding work was difficult in the last years of the Depression. The patriarchal German family was

<sup>12</sup>The 1965 Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center survey shows the following "denominational breakdown" for Jews born in Germany or Austria:

Orthodox	23%
Conservative	41%
Reform	23%
None of the above	12%

strained by the increased economic role of women and especially by the financial independence of children. Those who did work often put in long hours at menial jobs, in many cases violating the Jewish Sabbath for the first time.

In addition to these problems typical of many immigrant groups, the refugees (at least in the period up to the establishment of Israel) were obsessed by international developments. Before Pearl Harbor the main agenda was helping relatives to escape from German-occupied Europe and to procure entry to the United States or to other countries. When the United States entered the war the community turned to fervent American patriotism, war bond drives, army service and civilian volunteer work. In this wave of patriotism there were both ironic echoes from the German patriotism of the First World War and the need to prove that German Jews were not the "enemy aliens" that many Americans felt them to be. The concern for the fate of relatives mixed with "win the war" sentiment. Then in 1945 the *Aufbau* was filled with obituaries as the dreadful fate of those who had not been able to get out was revealed. In the immediate post-war years concern for the survivors and interest in the "Palestine situation" filled the German-Jewish press.

After 1948 with a Jewish state established, the Washington Heights community could afford to turn inward. Most of the German-Jewish institutions were founded before 1942, but their nature changed drastically after the war as the community entered an era of growing prosperity. Gradually the synagogues emerged as the dominant institutions of the immigrant community, replacing the social and athletic clubs, cafés and places of entertainment which had been more important previously. There are several reasons for the change. First, the young adult generation married and settled down after the war. The frequent dances, soccer games and lectures were no longer so necessary nor did the young couples have much time for them. Clubs and cafés closed or became less active. Meanwhile the congregations which had begun in loft buildings, storefronts or the basements of existing synagogues, acquired enough funds to buy or build their own edifices. Between 1948 and 1960 most German synagogues moved into modern facilities with social halls and classrooms. Functions which were formerly held in neighborhood halls or clubs could now be held in congregational halls. Social life and entertainment took place to a large extent within the confines of the congregations. The American model of the synagogue as a community center had both a conscious and unconscious influence in this area.

Economic conditions markedly improved during and after the war. Most families with apartments were able to dispense with taking in boarders to help pay the rent. Most men could give up menial positions



and turn to white-collar work, unionized blue-collar jobs or to opening their own businesses. Many, though not all, women were able to give up working outside the home. After initial difficulties most physicians were able to return to practice. Most of the numerous immigrant businesses operating from home were transferred to proper shops.<sup>13</sup> The German-Jewish population began to decrease in the less socially desirable sections of Washington Heights and increase in the wealthier parts. Families could afford to take vacations in the Catskills or at the beach.<sup>14</sup> This slow re-establishment of a decent, if still modest, economic position was aided by two factors – the refugees' strong "German" tradition of thrift and the beginning of reparations and pension payments by the West German government in the late 1950s.

The disappearance of the outside pressures of economic survival and the need to save European relatives enabled the community to turn its attention to the problem of cultural continuity and generational relations. At first virtually all children of the émigrés attended public schools and many had notable success. Later two Jewish day schools founded in 1937 and 1944 began to gain a large following among the more Orthodox of the German Jews.<sup>15</sup> For most families, however, the main formal vehicle for transmission of the parents' heritage was the supplemental Hebrew school complemented by youth groups and youth worship services. All these youth activities were directed to inculcating Judaism with virtually nothing German about them. Except for the large numbers of young people studying German as a foreign language in school, there was almost no formal attempt to cultivate Germanness. Germanness was transmitted mainly by example: manners, foods, attitudes towards music and books, formality and thrift, which the young were expected to emulate though no one ever expressed this explicitly.

Two generations of young people reacted in different ways to the culture of their parents. Those who were born in Germany but educated

<sup>13</sup>Much of the refugee press and bulletins of synagogues and organizations before 1945 were filled with advertisements for products and services (including even barbering) available in the "entrepreneur's" apartment. After 1945 these are far outnumbered by businesses in proper rented shops.

<sup>14</sup>The many advertisements in the *Aufbau* for Catskill resorts in the post-war period are characteristic of the amount of refugee clientele for such places. Certain Catskill towns like Fleischmanns were visited predominantly by German Jews.

<sup>15</sup>Yeshiva Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik was founded in 1937 by Jews of East European origin. By 1958 it had 550 pupils, many of them the children of German-born Jews. Yeshiva Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch was founded by the Breuer community in 1944. In 1953 it had only 125 pupils, but by 1969 the Breuer yeshiva system had 950 students, most of them of German-Jewish background.

in the United States broke away from the community in large numbers. Many consciously avoided the clubs, associations and immigrant habits of the community and tried to become "real" Americans. Whereas most of those who came to the United States aged between eighteen to thirty-five married other German Jews and settled in Washington Heights, a large number of those born in the 1920s and 1930s moved out of the neighborhood at the first opportunity leaving a permanent demographic gap.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to those born in the twenties and thirties were those born after the Second World War. Washington Heights experienced a post-war baby boom similar to that prevalent throughout the United States. Because of a pattern of very late marriage, these children were often thirty-five or even forty-five years younger than their parents. By the 1960s there was a missing generation in the Washington Heights community consisting of those born between the two world wars. This demographic gap was accentuated by the famous American "generation gap" of the 1960s. In Washington Heights there was only a pale reflection of the intense conflict between politically radical youth and conservative elders so typical of the period, but there was considerable cultural estrangement. The degree and form of this estrangement differed in various sectors of the Washington Heights community. Within some of the Orthodox congregations, the generational conflict took a particularly striking form. While the fall-off in religious practice and outright rejection of the community was less prevalent in such congregations in the 1960s than it had been in the 1940s, there were often direct and heated confrontations about such matters as liturgical style. Many of the young people desired a type of Jewish life more similar to the informal, enthusiastic styles of American Jews of East European origin, while their elders preferred the formalism of German-Jewish traditions. These young people desired to make the community less German (a process already under way as English rapidly replaced German as the official language of

<sup>16</sup>In 1965 only 14.3% of Jews born in Germany or Austria living in Washington Heights were between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five. The group born in the 1930s was especially small (2.9%). In K'hal Adath Jeshurun, the congregation with the smallest loss of the younger generation, the percentage of heads of household born between 1933 and 1942 (9.8%) was only about one-half of what would have been expected from a comparable United States urban population, while the 21.8% of heads of household born after 1942 was much closer to what would have been expected. (Adolph D. Oppenheim, *Membership Survey on Preferences regarding Relocation, Branch Development, and Preservation of the Washington Heights Area* – presented to the board of directors of K'hal Adath Jeshurun on 26th July 1977. It should be noted that these figures represent percentages of respondents to the survey rather than percentages of the entire membership. Over 52% of members resident in Washington Heights responded to the questionnaire.)

the congregations in the 1960s), but they wished to transform the community, not reject it. In the end all but the most Orthodox of those born after 1945 moved out of Washington Heights, but this was probably caused more by economic and social factors and the decline in the social status of the neighborhood than by a conscious rejection of the Washington Heights community.

In the 1970s the generational conflict receded into the background as the German-Jewish community was faced with the challenge of rapid demographic change. Even as early as the 1950s, Washington Heights was beginning to lose its status as a comfortable middle-class area.<sup>17</sup> In the 1960s a large influx of Hispanic immigrants led to an out-migration of white ethnic groups including Jews from the southern and eastern portions of Washington Heights. In the 1970s this population shift had so intensified that by 1980 Hispanics made up a majority of the Washington Heights population, while German Jews, now numbering only some 10,000, lived mainly in an enclave of middle-class housing near Fort Tryon Park.<sup>18</sup> The "white flight" in Washington Heights was, however, a relatively slow process and German Jews were among the most stable elements in the white population. The slowness of German Jews to move away was partly a function of their high average age (well above sixty-five), the difficulty of finding apartments as cheap as their rent-controlled ones, and the fact that only in Washington Heights could they continue to live in their own cultural milieu.

The Jewish community of Washington Heights which had previously been split on ethnic (German versus American) and religious (Orthodox versus non-Orthodox, anti-Zionist Orthodox versus pro-Zionist Orthodox) lines, now mobilized, using both German traditions of efficient administration and American traditions of political mobilization and social service. Spearheaded by the fifteen hundred member, extremely Orthodox, Breuer congregation,<sup>19</sup> the Jews of Washington

<sup>17</sup>In 1951 Stock already referred to Washington Heights in terms of "at the moment somewhat shabby - gentility" (p. 583) and a 1954 study by the Protestant Council of the City of New York (*Upper Manhattan - A Communal Study of Washington Heights*) refers to the neighborhood as a "downhill residential area" (p. 2).

<sup>18</sup>See the census figures for 1960, 1970 and 1980. In 1980 all but some 53,000 of the 176,000 residents of Manhattan north of 158th Street were either Blacks or Hispanics.

<sup>19</sup>The Breuer congregation (K'hal Adath Jeshurun) is the direct descendant of the separatist Orthodox congregation founded in Frankfurt a. Main in the nineteenth century. The dominant rabbinic figure of the Frankfurt congregation in the nineteenth century was Samson Raphael Hirsch, the leading theorist of separatist "Neo-Orthodoxy." His grandson, Joseph Breuer, was the founding rabbi and spiritual leader of K'hal Adath Jeshurun in Washington Heights from 1938 until

Heights formed a community council, set up a car patrol, organized a referral system for social needs, helped settle Soviet Jewish immigrants in the neighborhood, and purchased and rehabilitated apartment buildings. Representatives of the community sat on the local planning board; despite the fact that by the 1970s there were few Jewish children in local public schools, the synagogues mobilized Jewish voters to choose a Jewish voting list for the local school board, a list whose influence has remained decisive.<sup>20</sup> All of these efforts were intended to keep whatever Jewish influence remained in the area. Despite the fact that the main commercial streets now have an overwhelmingly Hispanic imprint, a considerable Jewish population remains.

In the course of time the traditionalist nature of the German-Jewish community of Washington Heights has been accentuated. Today the Orthodox element, especially the Breuer community, plays a predominant role even though its members are far from the majority. If Washington Heights' German Jews were more traditionally Jewish than other refugees from the start, this contrast has become more striking in recent years.

The concerns of German Jews in Washington Heights today are very much the same as those of other white ethnic groups, especially Jews, in the United States. The tie to and concern with Germany and with the long history of Jews in Germany is very much attenuated. The American-born descendants of the German Jews are rapidly merging into American Jewry and there is little reason to believe that German Jews will preserve a cultural subgroup similar to that of Sephardic Jews.<sup>21</sup>

A look at the Washington Heights community can help give perspectives both on the nature of German Jewry and on the nature of the American immigrant experience. First, the Washington Heights case forces a re-evaluation of the traditional stereotype of German Jews as

his death (at the age of ninety-eight) in 1980. For a good thumbnail sketch on the Breuer community see Charles Liebman's article, 'Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life,' in the 1965 *American Jewish Yearbook*.

<sup>20</sup>Concerning the struggles over the local school board and the mobilization of Washington Heights Jews to keep a strong influence see Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches, Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States*, New York 1981, pp. 154-176.

<sup>21</sup>Among the older generation there are two different models of the kind of German-Jewish culture they would like to pass on to their children. If one speaks to one group, one hears references to love of literature, music and general culture; if one talks to the other, one hears of Jewish liturgical customs specific to Germany ("our *minhagim*") and to a style of celebrating the Jewish holidays. Each model represents a different picture of German-Jewish culture. Outside Washington Heights the first model predominates; in Washington Heights the two models are more evenly balanced, with the second gaining in influence.



assimilated and more German than Jewish. The German Jews of Washington Heights were certainly as Jewish-minded as American Jews, though their Jewishness might be expressed in a different way. Second we see that even a group which prided itself on its modernity and on its cultural (though not religious) identification with the host nation, could, in the American context, act very much like other ethnic groups. Despite certain advantages given by their previous experience in an advanced Western culture, German Jews in America were still "outlandish" and "in need of Americanization." Earlier arrival in America, from no matter what cultural background, was still more prestigious than foreignness no matter what its former status. German Jews in America had an adaptation process somewhat different from that of most immigrants, since it involved not only adapting to America but also to American Jewry specifically. Finally Washington Heights shows us that an immigrant neighborhood is by nature the home of the most "ethnic" of the newcomers and may not be typical of the immigrant group as a whole. Even in other ethnic groups where a larger percentage lived in ethnic enclaves, those outside them may have been quite different. A look at those both inside and outside the enclave is needed to assess the immigrant group as a whole. In the German-Jewish case we can see how a look at the main German-Jewish neighborhood provides an important corrective to a one-sided picture gained by exclusive concentration on an impressive but equally unrepresentative elite.

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