UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Decentering the Centralverein: German Jews, German Catholics, and Regional Associational Culture in Germany, 1890-1938

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

Sarah Rose Johnson

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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Professor David N. Myers, Chair

This dissertation examines how the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens and the Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland utilized decentralization into the local and regional spheres to participate in German society, shape public and political discourse, and strengthen their respective community's sense of belonging and identity. Drawing on the Centralverein and Volksverein's administrative records held in archives in England and Germany, this dissertation assesses how their networks of local and regional branches operated and how power and responsibility shifted between the center and the periphery during the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany. In decentering away from their respective central office to focus on the local and regional branches, this dissertation argues that

local and regional branches were the main sites in which religious minority groups constructed and reinforced their influence, whether political or social. Whether through providing legal or political defense or holding assemblies and lectures, religious minority associations worked to unite their members and create a unified front for political and social action on their own behalf. In promoting a positive connection to Jewishness while also defending Germanness, the Centralverein's local and regional branches created tailored spaces in which Centralverein members could develop and affirm a synthesized German-Jewish identity while also asserting their civic belonging in the local, regional, and national spheres.

Through both a comparative and integrated institutional history of the Centralverein and Volksverein's decentralization, this dissertation provides a more detailed understanding of social and political relations between minority and majority communities during the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany. A comparative perspective allows for examining how minority religious associations responded and adapted to changes at the state level and navigated shifting means of self-assertion and political expression. In examining how German-Jewish and German-Catholic associations implemented decentralization and accommodated regionalization, this study decenters the examination of belonging, the pluralities of civic, regional, and religious identities and what it meant to represent religious minority interests in the German public sphere in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The dissertation of Sarah Rose Johnson is approved.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

A.V. – Alldeutscher Verband

BdL – Bund der Landwirte

BdjJ – Bund deutsch-jüdischer Jugend

BVP – Bayerische Volkspartei

C.V. – Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens

CVZ – Central-Verein Zeitung

DDP – Deutsche Demokratische Partei

DIGB – Deutsch-Israelitischer Gemeindebund

DNVP – Deutschnationale Volkspartei

DPV – Deutscher Protestantenverein

DSTB – Deutschvölkischer Schutz und Trutzbund

E.B. – Evangelischer Bund

FVg – Freisinnige Vereinigung

FVp – Freisinnige Volkspartei

IdR – Im deutschen Reich

JAFP – Jewish Agency for Palestine

JFB – Jüdischer Frauenbund

JWB – Juristisch-Wirtschaftliche Beratungsstelle

JWH – Jüdisches Winterhilfswerk

KA – Katholische Aktion

KFB – Katholischer Frauenbund

KH – Keren Hayesod

KPD – Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands

LBI – Leo Baeck Institute

LVB – Landesverband

NSDAP – Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei

NSV – Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt

OG – Ortsgruppe

OV – Ortsverband

OHL – Oberste Heeresleitung

PLVB – Preußischer Landesverband jüdischer Gemeinden

PPK – Pro-Palästina Komitee

RjF – Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten

SPD – Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands

UOBB – Unabhängiger Orden B'nai B'rith

V.V. – Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland

VBI – Verband badischer Israeliten

VdJ – Verband der deutschen Juden

WHW – Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes

ZVfD – Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland

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Introduction

German Jews and German Catholics utilized associations to construct, define, and defend their identity and belonging. Twenty-four years after the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens' forced dissolution, its former managing syndic Hans Reichmann wrote that "There is one characteristic of the German-Jewish group at which good-humoured fun is often poked: that is their typical German tendency to organise, even to over-organise. One should accept this genial criticism as justified […]."[1] In making fun of just how over-organized and how well structured these associations were, Reichmann embraced the stereotype of German society as overly efficient and highly structured and made it part of German-Jewish identity as well. The tendency to over organize was something that the religious minority groups shared with majority German society both in the German Empire and in the Weimar Republic. Germans' preference for establishing highly tailored organizations for each social and political interest defined associational life in Germany and made it a core part of civil society in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As such, how religious minorities sought to participate in majority society was not tied solely to national ideals but to even the most mundane aspects of organization.

Established in 1893, the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith or C.V.) was the largest German-Jewish defense association in the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany. The Centralverein was initially solely a defense association against antisemitism. As it expanded into local and regional communities after the turn of the century, the Centralverein became the main associational representative of a synthesized German-Jewish identity. With over 630 local branches and 21 regional branches by the mid-1920s, managing the Centralverein's defense

[1] Hans Reichmann, "Bearers of a Proud Tradition: The Jews from Germany and Austria," *AJR Information* 17 (October 1962), 3.

work and community education was increasingly predicated on these decentralized local and regional networks throughout Germany.[2] The Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland (People's Association for Catholic Germany or V.V.) was also initially established as a defense association against Social Democracy in 1890. By 1914, the Volksverein had over 800,000 members and organized political education courses and thousands of lectures in Catholic communities throughout Germany.[3] After their establishments in the early 1890s, religious minority associations expanded into local and regional communities throughout Germany as part of a new wave of associational life.

Both initially established as defense associations, the Centralverein and the Volksverein began prioritizing community engagement and education as their respective membership grew. German Jews and German Catholics participated fully in German associational life during the German Empire and Weimar Republic. This was part of a Germany-wide phenomenon of associational expansion throughout the late nineteenth and into the mid-twentieth centuries. Many of those associations established in the late nineteenth century were characterized by a propensity to identify as a "social movement."[4] The associationalization of German society led to increased social segmentation while also creating new frameworks for exerting political and social pressure. With associations established according to the principle "for every new purpose a new association," hundreds of national associations and thousands of local and regional affiliates associationalized German society and politics from the late nineteenth century onward.[5]

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[2] Julius Rothholz, *Die deutschen Juden in Zahl und Bild* (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 1925), 38.

[3] BArch, R 8115/I/14, p. 216.

[4] Ralf Kleinfeld, "Die historische Entwicklung der Interessenverbände in Deutschland," in *Interessenverbände in Deutschland*, ed. Thomas von Winter and Ulrich Willems (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007), 60

[5] Hans-Peter Ullmann, *Interessenverbände in Deutschland* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1988), 118.

As associations often acted or attempted to act as intermediaries between their members and official political power structures, how they operated, expanded, and sought to exert this influence was dependent on building these local and regional networks of membership.[6]

Most associations established during the late nineteenth century – regardless of whether they had religious or political affiliations – adapted statutes that reflected key characteristics of the German state at the time. As such, they were largely centralized, bureaucratic, and generally oligarchic.[7] As there was no national law pertaining to associations or their rights prior to 1908, establishing an association in the late nineteenth century was a largely a regionally regulated process. That associations nevertheless adopted many traits similar to the German state reflected its considerable influence on society as well as the extent to which associations hoped to shape state policy and legislation.

German Jews and German Catholics took an active part in the rapid growth of associational life by developing their own associations that provided members with extensive community engagement, support, and defense. How German Jews and German Catholics utilized their regional and local spheres to defend and strengthen their respective communities and their belonging was based on majority frameworks of associational representation. Such regionalism was a common aspect of political life in Germany as well. The establishment of the German Empire under Prussian hegemony in 1871 consolidated four kingdoms, six grand duchies, five duchies, seven principalities, and three free cities into one nation. For many German citizens, this national unification occurred far away from their cities and communities. As Mack Walker argued, for many Germans "national politics […] had very little to do with communal affairs,

[6] Jörg Teuber, *Interessenverbände und Internationalisierung: Dachverbände, Automobilindustrie und Einzelhandel in der Europäischen Union* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009), 20.

[7] Kleinfeld, "Die historische Entwicklung der Interessenverbände in Deutschland," 56.

and local politics, such as they were, bore little relation to doings in Berlin."[8] The separation between the local and regional spheres and the national government in Berlin meant that most Germans retained their regionalized and local identities while also adopting a more nationalized cohesive German identity as well.

While unification centered politics in Berlin, it did not destroy existing decentralized political networks. Instead, regionalized politics and identity remained a dominant characteristic of German political life throughout the German Empire even while the organization of the local level was increasingly decided from Berlin. As such, regional and local differentiation became a pillar of an emerging national German identity. It was for this reason that Celia Applegate argued that regional identities were a "more traditional conception of Germanness."[9] Regionalized political identities were an inherent aspect of how individuals experienced and understood national German politics and made for regionally distinct understandings of Germanness.

The patchwork political and economic structure of the German-speaking regions shaped the uneven pace of Jewish emancipation in the states and kingdoms that unified into the German Empire in 1871. The process of Jewish emancipation in Germany began in the late eighteenth century and was an uneven one during the nineteenth century.[10] In 1812, King Friedrich Wilhelm III issued the Prussian Edict of Emancipation, which granted Jews in Prussia partial emancipation and citizenship. Jews in regions like the Rhineland and Westphalia were

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[8] Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971), 425.

[9] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 86.

[10] The process of emancipation in Germany slowed considerably from 1812 to 1848, and it was in the wake of the 1848/9 Revolutions that changes once again began being made to Jewish legal status. Reinhard Rürup, "The European Revolutions of 1848 and Jewish Emancipation," in *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, ed. Werner Mosse, Arnold Paucker and Reinhard Rürup (1981), 20.

emancipated under Napoleon after French occupation in 1794. Nevertheless, the Prussian edict was the first act that granted Jews in Germany limited rights, even if they were denied access to state positions – including professorships – and could not serve as officers in the army despite being required to serve in the military.[11] Jews were first fully emancipated in Hamburg in 1860, in Baden in 1862, and in Württemberg in 1864.[12] In 1869, the Prussian-dominated North German Confederation granted Jews complete emancipation, and, after unification, the German Empire emancipated all Jews in Germany in April 1871.[13]

Unlike German Catholics, who were often considerably socially and religiously homogenous, German-Jewish religious communities were far more differentiated. German-Jewish communities' relative heterogeneity was partially the result of a more egalitarian religious leadership structure, liberal communities' dedication to full integration in majority society, and a legacy of the patchwork emancipation in the nineteenth century.[14] These different experiences had a lasting effect on the varied nature of German-Jewish communities in these regions, and helped reinforce the Centralverein's decentralized and adaptive expansion into local and regional branches.

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[11] For the full text of the 1812 edict, see "Edikt vom 11. März 1812," in *Das Emanzipationsedikt von 1812 in Preußen: Der lange Weg der Juden zu "Einländern" und "preußischen Staatsbürgern,"* ed. Irene A. Diekmann (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2013), 335-340.

[12] Steven M. Lowenstein, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Peter Pulzer, and Monika Richarz, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, vol. 3, Umstrittene Integration 1871-1918 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997), 9.

[13] Nevertheless, this was not full equality, as German Jews were still prevented from holding certain professional positions like army officers, professors, or judges. Eugen Fuchs, "Erstrebtes und Erreichtes," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 326.

[14] While Jews in Prussia were granted partial emancipation in 1812, the small and diffuse communities of Jews in the Free State of Saxony, for example, were not granted certain civic rights until the 1830s and the Jewish community there remained very small until the arrival of Eastern European Jews around the turn of the century. Simone Lässig, "Emancipation and Embourgeoisiement: The Jews, the State, and the Middle Classes in Saxony and Anhalt-Dessau," in *Saxony in German History: Culture, Society, and Politics, 1830-1933,* ed. James Retallack (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 105.

Regional differentiation among German Catholics resulted largely from whether they were part of the dominant culture or a considerable minority in different regions. For German Jews, however, regional differentiation was predicated on entirely other reasons. As only around one percent of the German population, regionalized differences between German-Jewish communities were largely the result of assimilation into the German middle class during the nineteenth century.

Despite full emancipation and growing assimilation, Judaism remained only a tolerated sect and a "private association" while both Protestantism and Catholicism were "religious associations accepted by the state."[15] Catholic and Protestant churches not only received financial support from the state, but its clergy also had the same rights as civil servants while Jewish synagogues and rabbis received none of these privileges.[16] Despite such limitations, many German Jews fully embraced German culture and identity and sought to integrate into the German middle class as much as possible. With only twenty percent of German Jews identifying as Orthodox in 1871, the majority of German Jews embraced a more liberal and secular form of Jewish practice, if they remained observant at all.[17]

Partially as a result of secularization and growing urbanization, German Jews generally modernized quicker than the German population in terms of declining birth rates, urbanization, and professional positions.[18] Comparatively, German Catholics modernized slower than either

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[15] Marjorie Lamberti, "The Jewish Struggle for the Legal Equality of Religions in Imperial Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 23 (January 1978), 101-2.

[16] It was not until the Weimar Republic that Judaism received full recognition by the state, and not until the mid-1920s that its communities received public funding. Max P. Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge, 1918-1938: eine Geschichte des Preussischen Landesverbandes Jüdischer Gemeinden [1918-1938]* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1981), 109.

[17] Lowenstein, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, vol. 3, 11.

[18] Ibid., 381-2.

German Jews or Protestants and were more likely to remain in rural regions and trades. This meant that, according to Jacob Borut and Oded Heilbronner, German Jews and German Catholics represented opposite poles of socio-economic development, and neither fit the 'standard' pace of modernization in Germany in the nineteenth century.[19] Even as German Jews strove to assimilate into the German middle class, their more rapid modernization often set them further apart. As over and under-represented in German bourgeois society, respectively, German Jews and German Catholics each differed from the Protestant majority in the pace of their economic modernization.

The pace at which German Jews modernized and their rapid embrace of middle-class *bürgerliche* values, professions, and economy made them a growing target for those who opposed the industrialization and modernization of German society. By the late 1870s, a new form of anti-Jewish sentiment emerged in Germany, and Wilhelm Marr popularized the term 'antisemitism in 1879.[20] Between 1879 and the early 1880s, antisemitism emerged through Heinrich von Treitschke's printed attacks against Jews, the establishment of the Antisemitenliga (League of Antisemites), and the so-called *Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* – the Berlin Antisemitism Dispute.[21] The rise of political antisemitism following full emancipation meant that

[19] Jacob Borut and Oded Heilbronner, "Leaving the Walls or Anomalous Activity: The Catholic and Jewish Rural Bourgeoisie in Germany," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (July 1998), 479.

[20] Most attribute the coining of this word to Wilhelm Marr in 1879/80, but Reinhard Rürup and Thomas Nipperdey argue that the word was already evident in an 1865 'Staatslexikon' as well. Reinhard Rürup and Thomas Nipperdey, "Antisemitismus – Entstehung, Funktion und Geschichte eines Begriffs," in *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus: Studien zur 'Judenfrage' der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft,* by Reinhard Rürup (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 95.

[21] Olaf Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 119-20. The *Antisemitismusstreit* was provoked by Treitschke's article on his vision for the future of Germany in which he supported antisemitic claims. Treitschke's claims provoked a dispute over Jewish emancipation in the German Empire and set the tone for the emerging political antisemitic movement at the time. In 1881, the antisemitic Berlin movement submitted a petition to Bismarck with over 250,000 signatures demanding that many aspects of Jewish emancipation be revoked. Marcel Stoetzler, *The State, the Nation, and the Jews: Liberalism and the Antisemitism Dispute in Bismarck's Germany* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska

German Jews were forced to grapple with what it meant to be Jewish in Germany and in turn what it meant to be German as a Jew.

Despite the emergence of such antisemitic parties and movements, the state was generally ambivalent about rising antisemitism and did not take any action to restrict or prevent antisemites or their organizations from organizing.[22] With Kaiser Wilhelm II's own sympathy for antisemitism, this ambivalence was particularly pronounced after his coronation in 1888. Seven months before he was crowned Kaiser in June 1888, heir apparent Wilhelm II attended a speech given by radical antisemite Adolf Stoecker in Berlin and was highly impressed by what he heard.[23] While Bismarck reprimanded him for attending this speech and advised him against ever showing such overt political interest again, Bismarck's intervention had little effect on Wilhelm II or his political sympathies.[24] Though this incident occurred prior to his coronation, it contributed to his government lack of intervention against antisemitism. As the official head of state and the only man to which the Chancellor had to answer, Kaiser Wilhelm II's overt antisemitism and xenophobia was an official and influential state position.[25]

Press, 2008), 2-3, and Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich*, 120. The term *Antisemitismusstreit* was coined in the 1960s by Journalist Walter Boehlich, and contemporaries of this dispute generally referred to it instead as the "*Treitschkestreit*." Karsten Krieger, ed. *Der "Berliner Antisemitismusstreit" 1879-1881: Eine Kontroverse um die Zugehörigkeit der deutschen Juden zur Nation* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2004), VII.

[22] Lamar Cecil, "Wilhelm II. und die Juden," in *Juden im Wilhelminischen Deutschland, 1890-1914*, ed. Werner E. Mosse (Tübingen: Mohr, 1976), 313 and 326. In regions where ministries did intervene, antisemitic politics struggled far more than in places where they did not. Jacob Toury, "Antisemitismus auf dem Lande: Der Fall Hessen, 1881-1895," in *Jüdisches Leben auf dem Lande: Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte*, ed, Monika Richarz and Reinhard Rürup (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 183.

[23] Volker Ullrich, *Die nervöse Grossmacht: Aufstieg und Untergang des deutschen Kaiserreichs 1871-1918* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag GmbH, 1997), 112.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Cecil, "Wilhelm II. und die Juden," 332.

Despite the Kaiser's tacit approval of antisemitism, German Jews were often reluctant or even refused to fight back against antisemites directly prior to the 1890s. This had a long tradition in the discourse on Jewish emancipation.[26] Jews in Germany in the late eighteenth and early-to-mid nineteenth centuries often sought to have Christians advocate for Jewish emancipation. In doing so, they sought to prevent non-Jews from dismissing arguments for Jewish emancipation as "mere self-interest" in the hope that demands for emancipation would be more influential than if they came from German Jews.[27] As Ismar Schorsch argued, this passivity left German Jews "incapable of any public affirmation of their Jewishness."[28] Therefore, many German Jews were either ambivalent toward or actively opposed a synthesis of both Germanness and Jewishness. As such, the first associational reaction to this rising antisemitism was the establishment of the predominantly Christian-led Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus (Association for Defense Against Antisemitism, henceforth Abwehrverein) in 1890. Established by twelve Christian politicians in the Reichstag, the Abwehrverein was a response to alarm in progressive and Liberal circles over the rise of antisemitism in German politics.[29]

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[26] This began with Christian Wilhelm von Dohm's 1781 text *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*. Written at Moses Mendelssohn's request, Dohm argued that grating civil rights was the first step toward improving and integrating Jews into society, not the other way around. Mendelssohn tasked Dohm with writing this document instead of writing it himself. Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, "Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews, 1781," in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 31-2.

[27] Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), 46, and Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German anti-Semitism, 1870-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 79.

[28] Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German anti-Semitism*, 12.

[29] While the impetus behind its establishment came largely from the Jewish lawyer Edmund Friedemann and liberal Protestant politician Heinrich Rickert, the Abwehrverein was billed as a "Christian defense organization" against antisemitism.Exactly who all twelve of these politicians were remains unclear. Barbara Suchy, "The Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus (1): From its Beginnings to the First World War," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 28 (1983), 206-7 and Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism*, 81.

For the German-Jewish community, relying on the Abwehrverein for defense was a continuation of a century of what Ismar Schorsch called "passive reliance on Christian goodwill."[30] While it sought to combat antisemitism, the Abwehrverein remained critical of any German-Jewish actions that its leadership considered counter-productive to integration – particularly any public statements supporting Jewishness While this preference to defer to Christians for defense had its roots in the enlightenment, such reticence began to decline in the early 1890s. It was not until around the 1890s that this began to change. The Centralverein's combination of Germanness and Jewishness in the late German Empire and Weimar Republic was not new in itself, but it was new to the public sphere.

As German Jews began becoming more confident in asserting civic and religious identity despite rising antisemitism, the German-Catholic community became more insular in response to growing state persecution. Anti-Catholic legislation was an integral of liberal German nation-building in the 1870s and part of Bismarck's plan for creating a new modern state.[31] Catholic ultramontanism, regional particularism in the Rhineland and Bavaria, and the preference for a *Großdeutsche Lösung* to the German question – including Austria in the unification of German-speaking lands – threatened and challenged Bismarck's concept of a *kleindeutsche Lösung*.[32] After ultramontane German Catholics supported the papal declaration of infallibility in 1870,

[30] Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism,* 80 and 96, Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew,* 47, and Suchy, "The Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus (1)," 207.

[31] Michael B. Gross, *The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), 127.

[32] Noel D. Cary, T*he Path to Christian Democracy German Catholics and the Party System from Windthorst to Adenauer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 13.

Bismarck argued that Catholics were loyal to a foreign power and therefore an enemy of the state.[33]

Though many Protestant German Liberals considered the Kulturkampf a fight against all religious power in the public sphere, it was, in practice, a targeted attack against the Catholic Church in Germany.[34] Under considerable pressure from the Deutscher Protestantenverein (German Protestant Association or DPV), the Reichstag passed the 'Jesuit Law' in 1872, which banned the Jesuits and other similar orders from operating on German soil.[35] Within Prussia, additional measures against German Catholicism were particularly concerned with preventing and reducing the Catholic Church's influence on German society while also restricting and defining how priests could be educated and trained.[36] How German Catholics understood and experienced the establishment of a new German nation differed regionally. For Catholics outside of Prussia, the introduction of mandatory civil marriage in 1875 was the only other nation-wide legal measure that directly diminished the Church's role in society. Regional experiences of the Kulturkampf differed considerably; Catholics in Prussia – and particularly those in the predominantly Catholic Rhineland – faced far stricter persecution than those in Württemberg due

[33] Gross, *The War Against Catholicism*, 230. Bismarck also branded social democracy as an enemy of the state, and it was also methodologically shut out or suppressed in the 1870s. Klaus Tenfelde, "Die Formierung des deutschen Parteiensystems im parlamentarischen Obrigkeitsstaat 1870-1980," in *Auf dem Weg zur Parteiendemokratie: Beiträge zum deutschen Parteiensystem 1848-1989*, ed. Axel Schildt and Barbara Vogel (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 2002), 23. While the Kulturkampf came to an end in the 1880s, the attempts to shut social democrats out of politics continued officially until 1890 and unofficially until the outbreak of the First World War. Social democracy was unofficially banned in 1878 with the *Sozialistengesetzen* – the Socialist Laws. Nevertheless, the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany or SPD) itself was allowed to remain in German parliament. Sebastian Prüfer, *Sozialismus statt Religion: die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vor der religiösen Frage, 1863-1890* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 268f.

[34] Gross, *The War Against Catholicism*, 126.

[35] Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich*, 45.

[36] Ibid.

to the far higher percentage of Catholics in the Rhineland region.[37] The Catholic majority in Bavaria meant that the Kulturkampf in this region was largely focused on school reform.[38]

To justify the anti-Catholic legislation of this period, German Catholics and Catholicism were often condemned as "stupid, medieval, superstitious, feminine, and un-German" in order to direct "German society toward modern rationalism, bourgeois individualism, high industrialization, free-market capitalism, the unified nation-state, and gender-specific public and private spheres."[39] This manipulation of anti-Catholic sentiments meant that the persecution of German Catholics during the first decade of the German Empire was inherently part of the German national identity-building process in the 1870s. The unification of German-speaking kingdoms, duchies, and free cities into one nation-state necessitated a clear definition of membership and belonging. To legitimize the new German state and strengthen national unity, Bismarck sought a way to create a political and social consensus. It was toward this end that the Kulturkampf began in the early 1870s. After a rush of legislation in the first half of the decade, the Kulturkampf in Prussia slowed after 1875. By 1880 the first laws were attenuated and by 1887 the Pope declared that the Kulturkampf had ended.[40]

How German Catholics participated in German politics, society, and education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was shaped by the experiences during the Kulturkampf and the rise of organized lay Catholic life. The largest and most influential lay Catholic organization from 1870 until 1933 was the Zentrumspartei (Centre Party, often shortened to

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[37] David Blackbourn, *Class, Religion and Local Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Centre Party in Württemberg Before 1914* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1980), 62.

[38] Lisa Dittrich, *Antiklerikalismus in Europa: Öffentlichkeit und Säkularisierung in Frankreich, Spanien und Deutschland 1848–1914]* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 125.

[39] Gross, *The War Against Catholicism*, 22.

[40] Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich*, 46.

Zentrum). While open to all voters regardless of their religious affiliations, the Zentrum was, in practice, a Catholic political party representing German-Catholic interests. Established in December 1870, the Zentrum was led by Ludwig Windthorst until his death in 1891. The Zentrum's main goal was to ensure religious protection in the constitution and prevent the loss of regional political influence at the expense of a centralized state.[41] Throughout the Kulturkampf, the Zentrum consistently attained the second highest number of seats in the Reichstag.[42] Around ninety percent of German Catholics voted for the Zentrum in the 1870s, though in the Rhineland that number was at most seventy percent.[43] That Rhenish Catholics were less likely to vote for the Zentrum even at the height of the Kulturkampf when the Rhineland was a particular hotbed of anti-Catholic agitation showed the sense of security that came from being the majority in a particular region.

While the laws passed during the Kulturkampf granted the German state more control over marriage and schools, they failed to reduce support for the Zentrum or drive Catholics out of public life. Instead, German Catholics became both more socially and politically unified and distrustful of the state. As a result of this milieu, German Catholics increasingly formed what historians Thomas Nipperdey and Michael B. Gross both labeled a subculture within German

[41] Cary, *The Path to Christian Democracy*, 13 and 16.

[42] During the Kulturkampf, eighty to ninety percent of Catholic men voted for the Zentrum party, though this number declined continuously over the next twenty years. Olaf Blaschke, "Die Kolonisierung der Laienwelt: Priester als Milieumanager und die Kanäle klerikaler Kuratel," in *Religion im Kaiserreich: Milieus, Mentalitäten, Krisen*, ed. Olaf Blaschke and Frank-Michael Kuhlemann (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996), 110 and Gerhard A. Ritter, *Die deutschen Parteien 1830-1914: Parteien und Gesellschaft im konstitutionellen Regierungssystem* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 51.

[43] This was still quite high, especially compared to the end of the German Empire when around 55 percent of all German Catholics voted for the Zentrum. Blaschke and Kuhlemann, *Religion im Kaiserreich*, 110 and 178. For more on the Catholic middle class in the Rhineland, see Thomas Mergel, *Zwischen Klasse und Konfession: katholisches Bürgertum im Rheinland 1794-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1994).

society.[44] This Catholic subculture was the result of German Catholics' decision to establish separate organizations and community networks when faced with persecution from majority society.[45] Even in areas where Catholics were a majority, the frameworks of this subculture also remained largely intact. As the dominant culture in Bavaria and the Rhineland, Catholics in these regions had far larger social, cultural, and regional political influence than those in primarily Protestant areas like Brandenburg, Saxony, and Pomerania.

This Catholic subculture became part of what was already a largely separate and distinct Catholic milieu in Germany.[46] Though the Catholic milieu was not new to the German Empire, the Kulturkampf reinforced and strengthened it considerably. To manage the growing intra-Catholic community networks, German Catholic community organizations were characterized by a strictly top-down administration; the Church managed the national level, the ultramontane bishops the regional level, and the clergy the local level.[47] Not only were the regional and local spheres dependent on decisions made at the national level, Catholic society was also highly centralized in the Church. As a closed and largely self-contained milieu, theologian and Liberal

[44] Gross, *The War Against Catholicism*, 2 and Thomas Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch: Deutschland 1870-1918* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), 30.

[45] Gross, *The War Against Catholicism*, 2 This differed entirely from the subculture that David Sorkin argued German Jews established unknowingly in the mid-nineteenth century in response to partial emancipation and not being allowed to participate in majority associations. David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 40.

[46] Such a milieu only formed in countries where Catholics were a prominent minority group, and not in those where they were either the majority like in Italy or France or such a small minority that they were unable to organize, as was the case in England. Andreas Holzem, "Dechristianisierung und Rechristianisierung: Der deutsche Katholizismus im europäischen Vergleich," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 11 (1998), 79.

[47] Olaf Blaschke and Frank-Michael Kuhlemann, eds., *Religion im Kaiserreich: Milieus, Mentalitäten, Krisen*, (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996), 50.

politician Ernst Troeltsch called Catholics a "society within a society" during the German Empire.[48]

Regional identities and local politics shaped German-Catholic politics and associational life, and had a significant effect on the ways in which German Catholics participated in society outside the Catholic milieu. While the boundaries of this milieu were often well defined, there were regions in which German Catholics' political and economic status differed. While only a third of the German population, Catholics were the majority in a handful of German states such as the Rhineland, Bavaria, Silesia, and Westphalia. Additionally, Catholics in the Rhineland and Westphalia were largely more politically liberal and part of the local *bürgerliche* middle class than Catholics elsewhere in Germany.[49] Those living in regions with a Catholic majority in eastern Germany – such as in Silesia, Posen, and West Prussia – were largely more politically and religiously conservative than Catholics in western Germany.[50] Despite considerable cohesion within the Catholic milieu after German unification, regional particularities continued having a considerable effect on German-Catholic political and associational life. In response to such differentiation, there was a considerable amount of pressure from leadership in politics in associations and in the church to enforce and impose homogeneity.

The Volksverein played a considerable role in reinforcing and promulgating such Catholic unity. Throughout the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany, its

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[48] Blaschke and Kuhlemann, *Religion im Kaiserreich*, 55.

[49] Thomas Mergel, "Grenzgänger: Das katholische Bürgertum im Rheinland zwischen bürgerlichen und katholischem Milieu 1870-1914," in *Religion im Kaiserreich: Milieus, Mentalitäten, Krisen*, ed. Olaf Blaschke and Frank-Michael Kuhlemann (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996), 178 and Thomas Mergel, "Mapping Milieus Regionally: On the Spatial Rootedness of Collective Identities in the Nineteenth Century," in *Saxony in German History: Culture, Society and Politics, 1830-1933*, ed. James Retallack (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 83.

[50] Cary, *The Path to Christian Democracy,* 14 and Volker Berghahn, *Imperial Germany, 1871-1914: Economy, Society, Culture, and Politics* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1994), 97.

engagement in the local and regional sphere and its fight against opponents of religion in German society was predicated on reinforcing Catholic unity. As many German Catholics reinforced their separateness within the Catholic milieu, German Jews became increasingly integrated into German *bürgerliche* society after emancipation.

While a number of Jewish associations existed in Germany from the mid-nineteenth century onward, most middle-class German Jews joined non-Jewish associations when they were allowed to do so. Though Jews were allowed to join many professional and cultural associations after unification, they remained largely barred from student, veteran, and elite social associations like the freemasons.[51] In response, Jews began organizing such associations of their own – a process that accelerated in the 1890s. German Jews were less likely to create their own parallel organizations in rural regions that were predominantly Catholic. Instead, German Jews often joined the local Catholic associations and, while often denied access to the highest leadership positions, were often allowed to take less prominent roles.[52] While middle-class German Jews participated as fully as possible in majority associations, bourgeois German Catholics instead preferred to establish solely Catholic organizations of their own.[53] In forming their own associations despite having access to non-Catholic ones, German Catholics reinforced the often insular nature of the Catholic milieu. In regions like the Rhineland, where Catholics were a majority, establishing Catholic associations was also part of shaping the dominant culture in the region.

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[51] Borut and Heilbronner, "Leaving the Walls or Anomalous Activity," 487.

[52] Ibid., 488-9. This was what Jacob Katz defined as a semi-neutral society. While they were allowed to participate in many aspects of local life, German Jews were often nevertheless denied full access to majority culture and society. Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 54.

[53] Borut and Heilbronner, "Leaving the Walls or Anomalous Activity," 489.

Despite the Kulturkampf and anti-Catholic persecution in the early German Empire, German Jews and German Catholics continued operating with fundamentally different legal recognition and rights. Nevertheless, minority religious groups' experiences in German society and politics were also shaped by experiences of state persecution and access to majority forms of political and social representation. While Catholicism received the same religious rights as Protestantism, German Catholics' experiences during the Kulturkampf and their numerical minority in most of Prussia meant that German-Catholic leadership considered Catholics as a religious minority within Germany. In contrast, though Jews were not direct targets of state persecution during the German Empire, the emergence of racial and political antisemitism after 1879 meant that they were increasingly faced with open attacks in other areas of society and were often banned from joining certain associations and organizations.[54] It was not until the 1890s that antisemitism was widely incorporated into national politics and popularized at a mass level. German Jews and German Catholics' concurrent experiences of exclusion due to the rise of political antisemitism and the Kulturkampf defined how religious minorities experienced the establishment of a unified German nation.

As a dominant form of social engagement in German society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, voluntary associations provided an existing and socially accepted organizational structure that minority groups adapted to suit their own needs. As such, I argue that associations were the primary means through which religious minorities in Germany advocated for and defended their values, identity, and civic rights. Whether through providing legal defense, educational courses, holding lectures, or publishing in their respective newspapers,

[54] Barbara Vogel, "Selbstmobilisierung und Polarisierung – Für "Kaiser und Reich" gegen den "inneren Reichsfeind" 1890-1914/18," in *Auf dem Weg zur Parteiendemokratie: Beiträge zum deutschen Parteiensystem 1848-1989*, ed. Axel Schildt and Barbara Vogel (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 2002), 43.

minority religious associations brought their constituents together in political and social action in local communities and at the national level. The shifting degrees of autonomy that local and regional branches experienced and the extent to which they determined policy at the national level during the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany demonstrated that minority participation in the German polity was predicated on utilizing emerging associational networks to defend integration and assert identity and belonging.

It was in the periphery that German Jews modified and tailored Germanness and Jewishness to best fit their particular needs. A more direct embrace of Jewishness did not mean rejecting life in the Diaspora. The opposite was the case; the Centralverein's local and regional branches encouraged their members to strengthen their Jewishness while also embracing local, regional, and national German political identities as well. How individuals defined their Germanness and Jewishness varied considerably, and the Centralverein's branches developed frameworks within which German Jews could examine, adapt, and embrace the synthesized identity that best suited them. Synthesized German and Jewish identity not only varied regionally and locally, but was continuously adapted to fit new local, regional, or nation-wide needs and demands.

The Centralverein encouraged Jews to assert their Jewishness in the public sphere, to defend and advocate for their own interests, and to reject the longstanding passivity that had characterized the fight for Jewish emancipation in Germany. In doing so, the Centralverein changed what it meant to participate in majority society as a religious minority in Germany. Decentralization and regionalization were shared responses to larger German social and political trends. The Centralverein's growing network of local and regional branches after the turn of the century helped create new frameworks within which German Jews could determine what it

meant to live as an integrated and emancipated Jew in Germany. The Centralverein's programming in its local and regional branches created spaced in which German Jews could create, adapt, and strengthen a synthesized German-Jewish identity. Along with localized defense work, these branches helped encourage German Jews to assert their civil rights and fight back against antisemitism in their communities.

The Centralverein's local and regional branches created and reinforced German-Jewish networks to help Jews navigate the conditional natures of belonging and integration in Germany over the course of four and a half decades. German Catholics also utilized lay associations for political and social guidance, particularly in the German Empire. As a sizeable minority with considerable political influence after 1914, German Catholics faced few restrictions on their integration or societal participation after the end of the Kulturkampf. A concurrent examination of the Volksverein with the Centralverein situates the study of the Centralverein's local and regional networks within the larger history of minority associational life in Germany. As such, this trans-associational history also centers the study of minority religious associations within the majority associational networks in which they participated.

Both German Jews and German Catholics were highly integrated into and influenced by political and social trends in the German Empire. Associations were inherently majority structures, but the Centralverein and the Volksverein adapted them to better suit minority interests and needs. As such, they utilized majority tools and methods for constructing their own political and social participation in the local and regional spheres. By expanding focus on the interplay between local, regional, and national levels of administration and decentralization, this study contributes to scholarship on how German Jews and German Catholics sought to participate in their respective religious and local civic communities.

This study is an uneven institutional history of the two largest and most prominent German-Jewish and German Catholic associations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though examining both the Centralverein and the Volksverein's decentralization, this dissertation is primarily an examination of the Centralverein's decentralization and the shifting networks of local and regional autonomy within the association. As such, it examines the relationships between their respective local and regional branches and central offices to assess how decentralization and shifting networks of autonomy shaped minority religious associational life and defense in the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany.

With the Centralverein as the primary focus, the Volksverein's more centralized approach to local and regional branches provided a framework for both a comparative examination of the Centralverein as well as for constructing an integrated history of difference of German-Jewish and German-Catholic associational culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The German-Catholic case provides an expanded framework for assessing the parameters of religious-minority associational life and for contextualizing the conditions and boundaries of minority participation in German society within which German Jews were operating.

While this dissertation is mainly an institutional history of the Centralverein's decentralization, it also incorporates a similar secondary examination of the Volksverein to better appraise and situate religious minority associational culture during these periods. In decentering the study of the Centralverein and the Volksverein, this dissertation centers minority associational history within both regional German and associational history. Minority religious associations' frequent mirroring of similar patterns of development during the German Empire gave way to a far more particularized history from the Weimar Republic onward. This

divergence was part of the larger regionalization and specialization of German society during this period as well.

This dissertation is a trans-regional history of the relationships between minority religious associations and their local, regional, and national spheres across three political systems in Germany. It examines the local and regional sphere not just in one region, but within the network of regional and local spheres that operated concurrently within a nation-wide association. While regional history often focuses solely on the study of one region, this dissertation examines the shifting frameworks and pressures that characterized relationships between different local, regional, and national spheres. This intra-regional perspective allows for examining how differing experiences of localization and regionalization affected the ways in which minority individuals could assert local interests at the regional and national level. The Centralverein and the Volksverein's differing approaches to decentralization and managing their respective local and regional spheres reflected different understandings of how to best assert and defend their members.

As scholars like Till van Rahden, and Jacob Borut have argued, Jewish integration and participation in local communities was often highly situative and regionally determined. As German Jews were increasingly allowed to participate in non-Jewish parts of society, Jacob Borut identified the late nineteenth century as a period defined by a German-Jewish *Teilkultur*, or semi-culture.[55] This concept was predicated on the premise that, in response to both full

[55] Predicated on David Sorkin's theory of a German-Jewish subculture characterized by a parallel German-Jewish cultural life emulating that of the majority German culture, Borut's *Teilkultur* instead argued for increased German-Jewish integration at certain levels of associational life while remaining separated in others. Jacob Borut, "Vereine für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur at the End of the Nineteenth Century." *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 41 (1996), 122.

emancipation and rising antisemitism, German Jews participated in German institutional culture not only as Germans, but increasingly as Jews as well.

A *Teilkultur* implied both a conscious and in other cases unconscious ability to operate within the German cultural sphere while also doing so in other social or political contexts as well. Both the Centralverein's initial defense work in the 1890s as well as its growing focus on community engagement after the early 1900s was predicated on asserting full and unconditional belonging to German society. The Centralverein's conception of synthesized Germanness and Jewishness rejected this concept of a *Teilkultur* outright. While some of the professional restrictions remained, the Centralverein's focus on both Germanness and Jewishness while also defending belonging was part of majority associational life in the German Empire. The Centralverein and its local branches asserted the right to full and unconditional integration into all aspects of German society without persecution based on religious faith. Though their success was often limited, there was nothing partial in these demands.

While Borut developed this concept of the *Teilkultur* to address the shifting nature of German-Jewish organizational expansion in the 1890s, it is a concept that was applicable to the Volksverein as well. In establishing both political and social organizations to maintain and support the Catholic milieu, German-Catholic leadership created their own German-Catholic *Teilkultur* in the late nineteenth century. The establishment of the Volksverein as a lay Catholic association to defend German-Catholic interests created both an insular Catholic association while also bridging the gaps to the public.

The considerable regional differences within German Catholicism and German Jewry necessitate a comparative and inter-regional analysis. German, Jewish, local, and regional identities all coexisted not only in a situative manner, but often concurrently and in the same

spaces in the local sphere. While a minority in Germany as a whole, German Catholics were the majority in areas like the Rhineland and Bavaria. As the dominant culture in these regions, Catholics in these areas often felt little need to emphasize their Catholic identities. Whereas German Jews were minorities in all regions of Germany and felt considerable pressure to defend a synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness, many German Catholics were secure enough in their hyphenated German-Catholic identities that articulating such a synthesis was not considered necessary.

This dissertation draws German-Jewish and German-Catholic history into the larger framework of shared religious minority and associational history. In doing so, it integrates them into the larger political and social networks within which they operated. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum argued in 2015 that the rapid rise of German-Jewish history as a field of study within Germany over the last decades has led to a kind of "ghettoization" of Jewish history in Germany.[56] Schüler-Springorum's observation echoed Werner Mosse's argument from forty years before that any study of German-Jewish history was inherently part of German history and could only be understood from that larger perspective.[57]

Prior studies of institutional culture in Germany have focused largely on interest groups' ties to politics and political parties. Historian Thomas Nipperdey argued that the relationship between associations and political parties was one that reflected a larger weakness in the political system, and was ultimately ineffective at creating any lasting changes.[58] Despite this weakness,

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[56] Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, "Non-Jewish Perspectives on German-Jewish History. A Generational Project?" in *The German-Jewish Experience Revisited*, ed. Steven E. Aschheim and Vivian Liska (Berlin/Boston: Walter de DeGruyter GmbH, 2015), 202-3.

[57] Leo Baeck Institute, ed., *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Academic Press, 1971), 22.

[58] Thomas Nipperdey, "Interessenverbände und Parteien in Deutschland vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 2 (1961), 278.

Nipperdey characterized associations in Germany starting in 1876 as "secondary systems of social power."[59] Even for those associations such as the Centralverein that identified as above political party lines, acting as a secondary system of power was part of the shifting parameters of social, political, and legislative influence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This dissertation relies primarily on both the Centralverein and the Volksverein's surviving administrative documents, internal memorandums, reports, and correspondence. The Volksverein central office's documents are located in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde and its library is held in the city library in Mönchengladbach. Though the Centralverein collection is in Moscow, a full microfilm copy is located at the Wiener Holocaust Library in London. Believed to have been destroyed by the Gestapo in 1938, the C.V. central office's archive was confiscated by the Soviets at the end of the Second World War and taken to the Russian State Military Archive in Moscow, where it remained secret until 1990.[60] While the collection contains administrative documents from the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany, it contains few sources pertaining to its work during the German Empire. Where there are considerable gaps in the Centralverein's archival documents, this dissertation relies extensively on the Centralverein's newspaper, *Im deutschen Reich* and, which it published between 1895-1922. Additionally, both associations' publications, as well as the Centralverein's later newspaper – the *Central-Verein Zeitung* – which replaced *Im deutschen Reich* in 1922 are additional archival sources in this dissertation. The Volksverein sources in the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde provide a similar insight into the association's structure and the centralized

[59] Nipperdey, "Interessenverbände und Parteien in Deutschland vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg," 268.

[60] For more on the discovery of this archive and the effect it has had on the study of the C.V., see Avraham Barkai, "The C.V. and its Archives. A Reassessment," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 45 (January 2000), 173-182.

decentralization that defined the Volksverein from its establishment in 1890 to its dissolution in 1933.

This dissertation focuses on sources from the branches, their leadership, and, when possible, the local members themselves. As such, correspondence between the local, regional, and national levels, reports on regional and local cooperation, as well as the nature and frequency of memoranda from the respective central offices are particularly central to this analysis. These sources highlight points of negotiation, autonomy, and interdependence between the local, regional and national branches within the Centralverein. As such, this provides a foundation for examining the localized and regionalized processes of decentralization within the Centralverein and German-Jewish society as a whole.

Previous and ongoing scholarship on the Centralverein and the Volksverein have focused on the intellectual and administrative structures of the central offices in Berlin and Mönchengladbach, respectively. Previous scholarship on the Volksverein has largely ignored the fact that, while highly centralized, the Volksverein's local and regional spheres defined the form and structure of lay Catholic engagement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[61] A decentralized examination of the Volksverein in comparison with the Centralverein sheds further light on the relationships between German-Catholic politics and the state, as well as on the different ways in which religious minorities participated in German society and politics.

[61] There has been little new scholarship on the Volksverein since the mid-1990s. The scholarship on the Volksverein instead dates largely from the 1970s and 1990s, with Horstwalter Heitzer's 1979 book *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich 1890-1918* and Gotthard Klein's 1996 *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933: Geschichte, Bedeutung, Untergang*. Additionally, Georg Schoelen published a 1982 bibliography of leading Volksverein members and their publications, which contributed to the study of the Volksverein central office and its leadership.

Current scholarship on the Centralverein has already begun to expand the focus to include immigration, gender, and intra-Jewish political disputes. [62] Aside from Christina Goldmann's 2006 dissertation on the Centralverein in the Rhineland and Westphalia, no other work has focused primarily on the Centralverein's extensive network of local and regional branches. Other scholars have examined different local spheres, such as Sabine Thiem's study of Kurt Sabatzky in Königsberg or Jonathan Voges' on the Centralverein in Braunschweig.[63] This dissertation contributes to the growing body of scholarship on the Centralverein by examining it not as a monolithic Berlin-centric association, but one that was increasingly defined by its adaptive, decentralized, and regionally specialized networks of local and regional branches.

While some interest groups were first established in the 1870s and 1880s, demand for associational representation grew considerably in the 1890s. Established in 1893 and 1890,

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[62] The number of scholarly works on the Centralverein have increased rapidly since the discovery of the central office's archive in Moscow in 1990. In the last decade, the amount of German-language scholarship on the Centralverein has grown through works by historians like Johann Nicolai, Rebekka Denz, Tilmann Gempp-Friedrich, and Christian Dietrich. Despite the rise in German-language historical studies of the Centralverein in the last two decades, there is only one monograph that focuses on the Centralverein from its establishment to its dissolution. Avraham Barkai's 2002 book *"Wehr dich!": der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (C.V.) 1893-1938* is currently the only work that examines the Centralverein from its establishment in 1893 until its dissolution in 1938, though it does so almost exclusively from an ideological and intellectual-historical perspective. While Barkai did not discuss institutional history at the national, regional, or local level, his book nevertheless represented an important shift in the historiography on the Centralverein. This was not only because of its large source-base, but also because Barkai rejected the earlier Zionist-historiographical critical view of the Centralverein, which condemned it as overly assimilationist. Scholars like Arnold Paucker, Jehuda Reinharz, Jacob Toury, and Marjorie Lamberti wrote studies of the Centralverein prior to the discovery of the Centralverein's archive in Moscow in 1990, which was previously believed to have been destroyed. Toury, Lamberti, and Paucker each focused primarily on the defense work itself, while Reinharz's works centered around questions of Germanness and Jewishness in the Centralverein. See Arnold Paucker, *Der jüdische Abwehrkampf: gegen Antisemitismus und Nationalsozialismus in den letzten Jahren der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg: Leibnitzer-Verlag, 1968), Jehuda Reinharz, "'Deutschtum' and 'Judentum' in the Ideology of the Centralverein Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens 1893-1914," *Jewish Social Studies* 36 (1974): 19-39, Jacob Toury, "Organizational Problems of German Jewry Steps towards the Establishment of a Central Organization (1893-1920)," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 13 (January 1968): 57-90, and Marjorie Lamberti, *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany: The Struggle for Civil Equality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

[63] Sabine Thiem, "Kurt Sabatzky: The CV Syndikus of the Jewish Community in Königsberg during the Weimar Republic," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 44 (1999) and Jonathan Voges, "Der Centralverein in der Provinz: Norbert Regensburger als 'deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens' in Braunschweig," in *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens: Anwalt ziwschen Deutschtum und Judentum*, ed. Rebekka Denz and Tilmann Gempp-Friedrich (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2021).

respectively, the first chapter of this dissertation examines how German Jews and German Catholics utilized and adapted this increasingly popular form of social and political engagement to create their own associations. As a Jewish defense association organized by and for German Jews, the Centralverein was the first German-Jewish association to assert and defend Jewishness alongside Germanness in the public sphere. As such, this chapter argues that the 1890s was a period of fundamental change in how German Jews understood and articulated what it meant to be Jewish in Germany. Meanwhile, the Volksverein's establishment and expansion in the 1890s was the start of a rapid shift toward creating and supporting specialized networks for German-Catholic workers. This it did by fighting social democracy and defending religion's place in society.

Chapter two focuses on the period between 1903 and 1918 to examine how both the Centralverein and the Volksverein expanded their local and regional networks to accommodate rising local and regional engagement prior to the First World War. It was during the pre-war years that the Centralverein began decentralizing and granting its growing local and regional spheres considerable autonomy in managing their own affairs. For the Volksverein, the decade prior to the First World War was not only one of rapid expansion in the local sphere, it was also the point at which the Volksverein had the most members and influence in German-Catholic society. Unlike the Volksverein, which remained highly centralized, it was not the C.V. central office, but the local and regional branches that, from the early 1900s onward, defined and determined how German-Jewish associational life and representation was conducted and organized. This chapter demonstrates that local branches' growing influence both within their communities and the association as a whole decentered the Centralverein and created spaces within which German Jews could combat local antisemitism while also consolidating their

Jewishness and Germanness into one synthesized identity. In doing so, they asserted their civic rights and integration as German Jews in the public sphere. It was in the decade prior to the First World War that promoting positive connections to Jewishness and Germanness began to take precedence over defense work. This chapter also briefly examines the Centralverein and Volksverein during the First World War as well, particularly how they adapted their programming to wartime and the effects of considering the war an equalizing force in German society.

Chapter three focuses on the turbulent years between 1919 and 1924 and how the Centralverein and the Volksverein responded to these crises and how their local and regional spheres adapted to the new parameters of a democratic state. In the early 1920s, the Centralverein expanded into hundreds of new local branches and its regional sphere expanded as well to help coordinate and administer these new branches. While the Centralverein flourished in early 1920s, German Catholics' support for and participation in the Volksverein steadily declined in the post-war period. The first half of the 1920s was a period of rapid expansion and change in the form of new means of participation and new political and economic challenges. The decentralization and relative autonomy that the Centralverein's local and regional branches had meant that they were better able to accommodate the growing regionalization of German society as a whole. As Germanness became increasingly regionalized, the nature of its synthesis with Jewishness became more adaptive as well. Meanwhile, the Volksverein central office's inability to adapt to the expansion of Catholic associational life, declining support from German workers, and economic hardship from hyperinflation led to the rapid decline of its membership throughout Germany.

Chapter four examines the Centralverein and Volksverein from 1925 until the end of the Weimar Republic. The Centralverein's decentralization during the early Weimar Republic laid the administrative and financial foundations for its community education and outreach in the late 1920s and early 1930s. With its rapid local and regional expansion at an end, the Centralverein's local and regional branches became more focused on expanding programming to reinforce, defend, and support a nuanced and assertive synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness in the late 1920s. While the Centralverein reinforced the decentralized local networks of participation it developed in the early 1920s, Catholic associational life became more centralized under Church authority during the late 1920s. The Volksverein's influence as a lay association continued declining until 1928. It was only after its consolidation with a Church-run umbrella organization – the Katholische Aktion – and a renegotiated relationship with the Zentrum in that year that the Volksverein was able to return to a semblance of its earlier community work and fight rising National Socialism. To prevent German Catholics from supporting the NSDAP, it was in the early 1930s that the Volksverein's outreach to German Catholics began emphasizing a hyphenated German-Catholic identity and the responsibility to fight against any movement that questioned it. This chapter demonstrates that religious minority association's ability advocate their interests and recruit members in the late Weimar Republic was predicated on extensive regionalization and local autonomy.

While the Centralverein's defense work in the Weimar Republic often overlapped with its educational programming, following the rise of Nazi Germany in January 1933, it consolidated both into one concerted effort; that of strengthening and protecting German-Jewish identity and culture when integration was no longer possible. As such, the fifth and final chapter analyzes how the Volksverein and the Centralverein attempted to navigate associational life under the

Nazi regime from Hitler's appointment as chancellor in January 1933 until their forced dissolutions in July 1933 and November 1938, respectively. While the Volksverein was dissolved shortly after Hitler's rise to power, the Gestapo permitted the Centralverein and Jewish associational life as a whole to continue operating under its increasingly strict oversight until the violent Kristallnacht pogrom in November 1938. Chapter five argues that the Centralverein's local and regional branches were pivotal in organizing and supporting the growing cooperation between German-Jewish associations at the local, regional and national levels in the face of rising Nazi persecution. In response to many German Jews' decision to emigrate and growing fears of the future, the local and regional branches shifted from focusing on synthesizing Germanness and Jewishness to supporting a more universal German-Jewish identity. Alongside establishing financial and professional counseling centers to help support those who chose to remain in Germany, the Centralverein also began supporting those German Jews who chose to emigrate as well. In doing so, the Centralverein's local and regional branches became spaces of support, resistance, and strength for German Jews in Nazi Germany.

The Centralverein and the Volksverein provided a framework for German Jews and German Catholics to participate in civic life and to influence German society and politics – often for the first time. While they were lay associations, both the Centralverein and the Volksverein encouraged their members to strengthen their religious and civic identities. As such, these associations bridged the gap between religious minority and majority civic life. Associations were the primary means through which minority groups participated in German politics and civil society, and were responsible for teaching, regulating, and defining how their constituents did so. The ubiquity of voluntary associations in German society after 1890 meant that, in establishing their own associations, German Jews and German Catholics adopted majority associational

frameworks to assert their interests and defend minority religious identity and belonging in the public sphere. Instead of shaping Jews into a German model, associational life in the local and regional branches gave German Jews the means through which to articulate and express their already established sense of belonging and shared German identity.

Local and regional branches provided German Jews with designated spaces in which to construct and regulate a synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness. In doing so, it helped create a shared religious and political identity among German Jews. How the Centralverein strengthened and defined German-Jewish identities remained adaptive and highly decentered. The interplay between national, regional, local, and religious identities defined the Centralverein's synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness throughout the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany.

Chapter One
In the Age of Organizations: The Establishment of Religious Minority Associations in Germany, 1890-1902

Starting in the early 1890s, religious minority groups in Germany gained new means for participating in civil society. According to Eugen Fuchs, the co-founder and intellectual leader of the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, the formation of a German-Jewish interest group in 1893 came comparatively late when compared to other associations of its kind, and was completely new to German-Jewish society.[1] While Fuchs was correct in the latter claim, when compared to other interest groups of the period, the Centralverein was not established belatedly, but rather in the midst of the largest associational boom in the German Empire and in modern German history as a whole.[2] This was true for the Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland as well, which was established three years earlier in October 1890. While a number of influential interest groups were established in the late 1870s and into the 1880s, two hundred new associations were established in the trade and industrial sectors alone during the 1890s.[3] As such, religious minority groups not only participated in this majority social and political trend, but actively contributed to its formation and development. It was during the early 1890s that religious minority associations took part in mainstream German society most directly.

[1] Eugen Fuchs, "Konfessionelle Kandidaturen," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 81.

[2] Wolfram Fischer argued instead that it was not until the mid 1890s that interest groups reached their peak. Wolfram Fischer, "Staatsverwaltung und Interessensverbände im deutschen Reich 1871-1914," in *Interdependenzen von Politik und Wirtschaft: Beiträge zur politischen Wirtschaftslehre,* ed. Carl Böhret and Dieter Grosser (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1967), 453.

[3] Stefan Biland, *Die Deutsch-Konservative Partei und der Bund der Landwirte in Württemberg vor 1914: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Parteien im Königreich Württemberg* (Stuttgart: J. Thorbecke, 2002), 106 and Hans-Peter Ullmann, *Interessensverbände in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988), 116.

Associations established and popularized new tools and frameworks through which social, political, and religious groups could assert themselves in the public sphere. This led C.V. co-founder and figurehead Dr. Eugen Fuchs to argue that, "in the time of interest groups, it was deemed necessary to create an interest group for all German Jews" that worked to protect German-Jewish interests and demand the rights granted by the constitution.[4] The Volksverein shared Fuchs' assessment of the 1890s, with V.V. representative and Zentrum politician Carl Herold later calling it the "age of organizations."[5] As associational networks broadened and became more entrenched in the political and social landscape of Wilhelmine Germany, public interest and participation in politics expanded as well.

The 1890s was a period of transition from the nation-building of the first two decades to the economic and domestic political expansion.[6] In March 1890, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck was forced to resign. With almost all legislative power centered in the offices of the Kaiser and the Chancellor, Kaiser Wilhelm II's accession to the throne in 1888 and Bismarck's forced resignation in 1890 changed the dynamics of German politics for the remainder of the German Empire. This began shifting the centers of decision-making power in the German political system slightly. Furthermore, as the Bundesrat's influence decreased following Bismarck's resignation, state and constitutional power decentralized further into the state ministries.[7] While the

[4] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 2 (March 1896), 170.

[5] BArch, R 8115/I/19, p. 19.

[6] Matthew Jefferies, *Contesting the German Empire, 1871-1918* (Malden, MA; Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 123.

[7] Prior to the First World War, seven were established in the 1870s and 1880s, with one more established in the early 1900s. The ministries were established as follows: Reichspostamt in 1876/80, Reichsjustizamt in 1877, Reichsschatzamt, Reichsamt des Inneren, Auswärtiges Amt, and the Ministerium für Elsaß-Lothringen in 1879, and the Reichsmarineamt in 1889, Reichskolonialamt in 1907. Both the Reichsamt des Inneren and the Auswärtiges Amt were adaptations of already-existing departments. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 3, *Von der 'deutschen Doppelrevolution' bis zum Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges 1849-1914* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1995), 860 and 1021.

Reichstag's influence remained restricted, it became "a public forum" for articulating and debating public interests.[8] This left politicians with two main choices: to either cooperate with the state ministries in the hope of enacting some limited measure of change, or to repeatedly block or change executive measures.[9] As historian Matthew Jefferies argued, this "threatened to turn parties into lobby groups for narrow sectional interests."[10] That political parties themselves had to reevaluate how best to advocate for their constituents and their respective causes. This limited political maneuverability meant that the rise in interest groups emulated trends in politics as well.

Six months after Bismarck's resignation the *Sozialistengesetze* (Anti-Socialist Laws) were annulled as well. For the first time since 1878, social democratic associations and unions were allowed to assemble and the press was once again allowed to publish social democratic publications or newspapers.[11] The rapid expansion of trade unions in the months and years afterward further exacerbated concerns and drove the further rise of associations in response.

During this period, parties developed their own internal administrative structures and regulated their operations. As Peter Steinbach argued, this meant that "as they increasingly influenced public opinion and promoted the politicization of daily life, they fostered a further de-regionalization of politics and a nationalization of the electorate."[12] Despite considerable

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[8] Volker Ullrich, *Die nervöse Grossmacht: Aufstieg und Untergang des deutschen Kaiserreichs 1871-1918* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag GmbH, 1997), 161.

[9] Additionally, while the Reichstag could write and debate bills of its own, it could not pass any legislation without the Bundesrat's support. Jefferies, *Contesting the German Empire*, 100 and 101.

[10] Jefferies, *Contesting the German Empire*, 100.

[11] Sebastian Prüfer, *Sozialismus statt Religion: die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vor der religiösen Frage, 1863-1890* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 268f.

[12] Peter Steinbach, "Reichstag Elections in the Kaiserreich: The Prospects for Electoral Research in the Interdisciplinary Context," in *Elections, Mass Politics and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, ed. Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 143.

centralization at the national level through the influence of both political parties and associations, they remained necessarily dependent on support and participation from the local sphere remained. This was particularly the case for political parties like the Zentrum and SPD, which both represented marginal politics and had a large number of voters. In response, both the Zentrum and the SPD developed a centralized and regulated administrative structure earlier than the more traditional Liberal or Conservative parties.[13] This was reflected in their respective associations as well, which encouraged political homogeneity.

The rise of associations in the 1890s and their increased influence on political parties and society strengthened the segmentation of German society and weakened the State's ability to unify its citizens.[14] Interest groups created new and emphasized existing divisions in German society by focusing on ensuring that their constituents were able to exert political and social pressure on the state. The German state's considerable centralization and bureaucracy meant that associations and their local and regional networks created new means and satisfied a new demand for participation in public life that was not previously possible.

Associations' rising political and social power resulted from the ongoing transfer of power from federal states to the imperial state and the decline of aristocratic political influence. Driven by rapid demographic growth and internal migration that was tied to accelerating industrialization, mass political parties, associations, and the workers' movement expanded

[13] Brett Fairbairn, *Democracy in the Undemocratic State: The German Reichstag Elections of 1898 and 1903* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 44.

[14] Barbara Vogel, "Selbstmobilisierung und Polarisierung - Für »Kaiser und Reich« gegen den »inneren Reichsfeind« 1890 - 1914/18," in: *Auf dem Weg zur Parteiendemokratie: Beiträge zum deutschen Parteiensystem 1848-1989*, ed. Axel Schildt and Barbara Vogel (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 2002), 47-48 and Thomas Nipperdey, "Interessensverbände und Parteien in Deutschland vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 2 (1961), 279.

rapidly in the last decade of the nineteenth century.[15] Over the course of the decade, associations became increasingly dominant forms of contact between a diversifying society and the German state. As the state intervened more frequently in civil society following German unification, the knowledge that the state could and would intervene meant that it was increasingly common for groups to put pressure on the state to intervene on their behalf as well.[16] This variation between wanting to intervene and the increased demand to do so was partially what made organizations increasingly influential starting in the 1890s.[17]

The combination of Bismarck's dismissal of centralization and the Prussian state's authoritarian structure meant that regional identities were neither actively embraced or rejected, but rather that they became "a mere nuisance" in the Prussian nation-building process.[18] As Bismarck considered centralization contrary to German practice and custom, the decentralization that associations like the Centralverein underwent in the late German Empire were a reflection Bismarck's lasting influence on state structures.[19] Despite Bismarck's preference for less centralization, bureaucracy in the German Empire became increasingly consolidated at the national level, and this only accelerated after his dismissal in 1890.[20] This meant that for those

[15] Wilfried Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich: der politische Katholizismus in der Krise des wilhelminischen Deutschlands* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1984), 14-15.

[16] Ullmann, *Interessensverbände in Deutschland*, 115.

[17] Rainer Hering, *Konstruierte Nation: der Alldeutsche Verband, 1890 bis 1939* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2003), 93.

[18] Hans A. Schmitt, "From Sovereign States to Prussian Provinces: Hanover and Hesse-Nassau, 1866-1871," *The Journal of Modern History* 57 (March 1985), 56.

[19] Ibid., 41.

[20] Volker Berghahn, *Imperial Germany, 1871-1914: Economy, Society, Culture, and Politics* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1994), 239.

associations, organizations, and parties that hoped to influence the state and its policies, a certain centralization in Berlin was also necessary.

As local and regional forms of Germanness were increasingly subsumed in the national state, individuals in the local sphere also began joining larger regional and national organizations as well. As Brett Fairbairn argued, different social and professional groups utilized local fragmentation as a basis for national integration within representative associations.[21] By the end of the nineteenth century, the local sphere had become a center of both reinforcing and strengthening national identity tied to the rise of interest groups and mass political mobilization of this period.

As associations became the primary means for asserting interests in the public sphere, those without one found themselves increasingly driven to establish an association of their own in order to not be left behind or ignored.[22] As Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann argued, even those who opposed this growing *Vereinsmeierei* – club-based cronyism – established associations of their own so that they would also "be listened to and not be alone in their resentment."[23] While this encouraged further societal segmentation, it also provided minority groups like German Jews and German Catholics with new access to civil society. Minority religious groups were now able to

[21] Brett Fairbairn, "Membership, Organization, and Wilhelmine Modernism: Constructing Economic Democracy through Cooperation," in *Wilhelminism and its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890-1930*, ed. Geoff Eley and James Retallack (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 43.

[22] One such example was the Raiffeisen and other agricultural cooperative movements in the late nineteenth century. Like the V.V., the cooperative movement also relied on local networks of clergy and representatives as well as other pre-existing worker's associations to expand its influence. Unlike the V.V. but quite similar to the C.V., it was through decentralization and increased local autonomy that the Raiffeisen movement expanded as successfully as it did. Fairbairn, "Membership, Organization, and Wilhelmine Modernism," 42 and 45 and Alfons Hueber, "Das Vereinsrecht im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Vereinswesen und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland,* ed. Otto Dann (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1984), 128.

[23] Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, G*eselligkeit und Demokratie: Vereine und zivile Gesellschaft im transnationalen Vergleich 1750-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2003), 74.

utilize this proliferation of associational life and its growing influence on politics and the state to access means of political and social representation in the public sphere for the first time.

It was not the political parties but associations that created new space for intervention and self-assertion. In consolidating interests of specific economic, political, or religious interests and demanding attention from the state, they increasingly acted as mediators between the German government and the local and regional spheres. The new associational structures created an accessible framework for a comparatively small number of German Jews to create a large representative organization

It was during the 1890s that both the Centralverein and the Volksverein participated most directly in majority associational, political, and social trends. By establishing and expanding associational networks, German Jews and German Catholics gained new and adaptive means for asserting and defending their interests. The 1890s was a period of rapid development for religious minority associations. While they developed their regional and local networks at different paces, they shared a dedication to self-defense and self-assertion in the German public sphere.

Adapting and appropriating majority political and social structures made minority representation in the public sphere possible starting in the 1890s. In establishing their own representative associations in the early 1890s, German Jews and German Catholics utilized existing associational frameworks to participate in German society, shape public discourse, and strengthen their respective community's sense of belonging and integration.[24] In the 1890s,

[24] There is no archival evidence that the leaders of the two associations had any direct contact with each other. If contact between the two did occur at all during the German Empire, then it was at the local level in communities that had both an active Jewish and Catholic community. As the Centralverein's expansion into the local sphere did not begin at a considerable pace until after 1907, there were few opportunities for the associations to communicate directly.

religious minority associations like the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens and the Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland established the frameworks that later came to define their extensive community engagement in the late German Empire and Weimar Republic. The slow emergence of its local and regional spheres over the decade set the Centralverein's decentralization and its focus on supporting a synthesis of both Germanness and Jewishness in motion.

1.1. The Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens

For German Jews, the late nineteenth century was defined by reactions to full emancipation on one hand and the rise of political antisemitism on the other. While political antisemitism increased considerably during the 1880s, it was not until the 1890s that antisemitic parties sent their first elected delegates to the Reichstag. This, along with growing Conservative support for antisemitic and nationalist politics and a general political radicalization following Bismarck's resignation and the lapse of the *Sozialistengesetze* in 1890 led to a rise in political antisemitism in the first years of the decade as well.[25] While the antisemitic parties in the German Empire had limited and short-lived success, they were highly effective in popularizing and disseminating antisemitism.[26]

Following incidents like the 1891/2 blood libel case in the Rhineland town of Xanten and the growing societal and political support of antisemitism, German Jews were increasingly

[25] Otto Böckel became the first member of an antisemitic party in parliament in 1887, but it was not until the 1890s that he was joined by a growing number of other individuals as well. Olaf Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 120.

[26] Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (London: Peter Halban, 1988), XVII.

confronted with direct challenges to their rights and belonging.[27] In response, German Jews became more concerned with the question of how to articulate and defend both their Jewishness and Germanness in the public sphere. By the early 1890s, German Jews were increasingly more engaged in their own defense and began publicly articulating both their Germanness and Jewishness as well.

It was for this reason that Raphael Löwenfeld's 1893 text *Schutzjuden oder Staatsbürger?* contributed so greatly to the Centralverein's establishment that same year. In this text, Löwenfeld called on German Jews to stand up for themselves instead of looking to non-Jews or the Kaiser to do so for them. Löwenfeld argued that if they were to beg for protection from Kaiser Wilhelm II, German Jews would effectively reject the full civil rights granted to them by emancipation and instead return to their ancestors' medieval status of *Schutzjude* – a Jew under special protection.[28] Löwenfeld's outspoken repudiation of this passivity reflected a younger generation of German Jews' growing self-confidence and assertiveness. This generation came of age following full Jewish emancipation in Germany in 1871 and the rise of political antisemitism later in the decade. As such, these men were more willing to assert their Jewish distinctiveness in the public sphere than previous generations of German Jews.[29] As German Jews became more politically and socially integrated, they also gained access to the means

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[27] Trude Maurer, "The Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith: Jews and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Imperial Germany," in *Crossing Boundaries: The Exclusion and Inclusion of Minorities in Germany and the United States*, ed. Larry Eugene Jones (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 160 and Christian Dietrich, *Verweigerte Anerkennung: Selbstbestimmungsdebatten im "Centralverein Deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens" vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Metropol, 2014), 15. For more about the Xanten blood libel case, see Johannes T. Gross, *Ritualmordbeschuldigungen gegen Juden im Deutschen Kaiserreich [1871-1914]* (Berlin: Metropol, 2002).

[28] Paul Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, (Berlin: Verlag des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, 1918), 13-14.

[29] Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, 18 and Marjorie Lamberti, *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany: The Struggle for Civil Equality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 176.

necessary to become more assertive as well. That Löwenfeld's call to utilize the rights granted to them as German citizens to defend their Jewishness was such a driving force behind the Centralverein's establishment meant that the Centralverein's work was predicated on a synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness from the very beginning.

The Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens was established on March 26, 1893. Unlike the Abwehrverein, which refused to acknowledge any Jewish distinctiveness, the Centralverein was the first defense association against antisemitism that was both organized and run by German Jews. Though established in March 1893, it was not until December of that year that the Centralverein developed the administrative frameworks necessary for the Legal Defense Commission to begin providing German Jews with legal defense and support. The Centralverein's Legal Defense Commission focused on providing defense and counseling in legal cases in which either the Jewish religion, religious community or its customs were publicly berated or in which individuals or parties provoked class conflict.[30] In one such instance from April 1894, the Legal Defense Commission reported an article to the German judiciary in which Jews were accused of ruining the economy and that the acquittal in the Xanten blood libel case was only due to Jewish influence.[31] As the latter claim insinuated that it was money and influence that determined the verdict and not justice in the face of false accusations, the Centralverein was particularly determined to defend against blood libel charges.

While the Commission also responded to defamation of German Jews as a whole, it was not responsible for responding to individual grievances or reports of antisemitism. Instead, the Centralverein's founding members hoped that charges brought on behalf of an all Jews would be

[30] Eugen Fuchs, "Rechtsschutz und Rechtsfrieden," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 19.

[31] Fuchs, "Rechtsschutz und Rechtsfrieden," 11-12.

more effective in evoking a response from the state and its ministries. In the Centralverein's first public assembly in December 1893, Fuchs stated that "what the individual is not able to do, we as a big and strong collective can. Government agencies will listen to a large association."[32] This statement reflected associations' growing influence not just within their own communities, but at official state and political levels. This determination to conduct focused outreach to state authorities to defend German Jews from antisemitism was an inherent shared aspect of the larger boom in associational life in Germany at the time. It was in establishing their own association to better represent and defend German-Jewish interests that the Centralverein's leadership and its members fully participated in German civil society.

While the Commission could not report any concrete successes during these first few months, Fuchs argued in its first report in April 1894 that the Commission itself was successful in combating antisemitism since its threat of legal action was enough to prevent some antisemitic incidents from occurring.[33] The Centralverein's limited financial and administrative means in the 1890s made more individualized or localized defense work initially beyond its capacities. The expansion of individual membership in the local sphere after mid-decade first enabled the Centralverein to begin supporting local and regional structures to support localized self-defense.

Even during this early phase when it was primarily engaged in legal defense work based in Berlin, C.V. leadership acknowledged that legal defense was not capable of ending all persecution or granting Jews full equal rights.[34] Nevertheless, they also argued that it was imperative not to underestimate the significance of such advocacy or the influence that it could

[32] Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, 21.

[33] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 2 (March 1896), 171.

[34] Fuchs, "Rechtsschutz und Rechtsfrieden," 50.

have on German society and politics both at the national and local levels. In fighting back against those who sought to persecute German Jews, the Centralverein's defense work also sought to strengthen German Jews' dedication to the German state and, in doing so, to strengthen their Germanness as well.[35] Defense was more than holding antisemites accountable for their actions and public statements; it was also a means to strengthen and assert Jewish belonging in the public sphere.

1.1.1. The Beginning of Decentralization

Despite its claim to represent and defend all German Jews, the Centralverein expanded slowly during its first years. This was largely due to the fact that many German Jews were skeptical of or resistant to the idea of a Jewish defense association, especially those outside Berlin. Many German Jews outside Berlin were suspicious of a Berlin-based association that claimed to represent the interests of all German Jews. This was rooted in biases that pre-dated the Centralverein; Jews in Berlin generally considered those Jews living in the provinces to be conservative and unsophisticated, while German Jews outside Berlin traditionally accused Berlin Jews of being overly assimilationist and arrogant.[36]

This tension between Berlin and the peripheries was not unique to German Jews or to this period, and reflected larger geographic and political tensions between the Prussian capital city and the newly unified German states. This provincialism was strongest in non-Prussian regions

[35] Fuchs, "Rechtsschutz und Rechtsfrieden," 50.

[36] Jacob Borut, "The Province versus Berlin? Relations between Berlin and the Other Communities as a Factor in German Jewish Organisational History at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 44 (January 1999), 128.

like Württemberg, Baden, and Bavaria, which had a long legacy of autonomous governance. This created initial opposition to and distrust of a Berlin-based association.[37]

Jewish communities in southern Germany's reluctance to support a national organization had affected the success of earlier Jewish associations in Germany as well. Since Jewish communities in Baden, Bavaria, and Württemberg refused to join, the Deutsch-Israelitischer Gemeindebund (Union of German-Israelite Communities or DIGB) failed to become a national representative association despite representing over a third of Jewish communities in Germany by the end of the German Empire.[38]

Established in 1869, the DIGB was the first Jewish umbrella organization in Germany.[39] A federation of local Jewish communities, the DIGB provided financial support to Jewish religious communities and negotiated with the German state for Jewish welfare and local administration.[40] Though it initially worked to combat antisemitism, this ended by 1882 when

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[37] Historian Alon Confino argues that the reluctance and refusal in Württemberg to celebrate Prussian holidays like Sedan Day and other nation-building processes was based a combination of "particularism, anti-Prussian sentiments, Catholics' anxieties because of the Kulturkampf, the reservations of the king and the administration, and the time needed to digest the changes of 1866-71" Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 86.

[38] Alongside the DIGB, there were a series of other Jewish associations and organizations established in the late nineteenth century, which were predominantly focused on cultural or social concerns. The Unabhängiger Orden B'nai B'rith (UOBB) was established in 1882 following the movement from the United States. With lodges throughout Germany, the UOBB was the largest social association for German Jews. Four years later, students in Breslau established the Jewish-student association Viadrina, which was dedicated to Jewish self-defense. After expanding to other universities in Germany, Viadrina was renamed Kartell-Convent der Verbindungen deutscher Studenten jüdischen Glaubens (abbreviated KC) in 1896. The KC was closely affiliated with the Centralverein, and many of the Centralverein's later leading members were active in the KC while at university. Andreas Reinke, "'Eine Sammlung des jüdischen Bürgertums': Der Unabhängige Orden B'nai B'rith in Deutschland," in *Juden, Bürger, Deutsche: zur Geschichte von Vielfalt und Differenz 1800-1933*, ed. Andreas Gotzmann, Rainer Liedtke und Till van Rahden (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 316-7 and Paul Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, 12.

[39] While it was established in 1869, it did not begin operating until 1872. This was due the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/1871, which prevented its members from coming together to hold its inaugural meeting until April 1872. Wilhelm Neumann, "Der Deutsch-Israelitische Gemeindebund," in *Das deutsche Judentum: seine Parteien und Organisationen* (Berlin: Verlag der Neuen Jüdischen Monatshefte, 1919), 58-9.

[40] Steven M. Lowenstein, "Die Gemeinde," in *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit,* vol. 3, *Umstrittene Integration 1871-1918,* ed. Michael A. Meyer (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1997), 136-7.

the DIGB moved from Saxony to Berlin after being banned for expanding beyond Saxony's borders.[41] Despite this considerable break with its regional roots, this "became its salvation" by forcing the DIGB to nationalize in Berlin.[42] Communities in southern Germany avoided membership in the DIGB for two reasons: they did not want to possibly provoke local anti-Jewish sentiment by joining a Jewish association and they also refused to join any organization that promoted any kind of confessional politics.[43] Despite this failure to expand into southern Germany, the DIGB created a limited precedent for the Centralverein's role as a community-based nation-wide Jewish organization[44]

It was in the press that the tensions between Berlin and the periphery were articulated most clearly immediately after the Centralverein's establishment. In November 1893, the Magdeburg-based conservative newspaper *Israelitische Wochenschrift* published an article praising the Centralverein in Berlin for "finally adopting the position from the provinces" that the newspaper had been advocating in its pages for so long.[45] Five months before this article and three weeks before the Centralverein's establishment, the *Israelitische Wochenschrift* published an article calling on German Jews to conduct their defense work themselves and to do so

[41] B. Jacobsohn, *Der Deutsch-Israelitische Gemeindebund nach Ablauf des ersten Decenniums seit seiner Begründung von 1869 bis 1879: Eine Erinnerungsschrift* (Leipzig: W. Schuwardt & Co., 1879), 28-9 and Neumann, "Der Deutsch-Israelitische Gemeindebund," 59.

[42] Neumann, "Der Deutsch-Israelitische Gemeindebund," 59.

[43] Marjorie Lamberti, "The Attempt to Form a Jewish Bloc: Jewish Notables and Politics in Wilhelmian Germany," *Central European History* 3 (March-June 1970), 76.

[44] Eugen Fuchs, "Rede auf dem 8. Gemeindetage des deutsch-israelitischen Gemeindebundes," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 267.

[45] "Endlich! – aber…" *Israelitische Wochenschrift* 24 (November 3, 1893), 342. All of the suggestions that the editors made in this article for how the C.V. could better serve German Jewry did eventually become part of the C.V.'s operations, though it is highly unlikely that this article contributed to this development in any way.

publicly in the same manner as all other religious confessions and political parties.[46] While the editors were satisfied with the Centralverein's determination to represent German Jewry, it remained critical of its choice to focus solely on outward defense rather than on internal educational positive work as well.[47] To underline their argument, the editors called on the C.V. central office to form local and regional branches, which would be better at bolstering engagement and support than a centralized office in Berlin.[48] This early pressure for representation and inclusion was the first instance of demand from the periphery for regional representation at the national level. This helped set the tone for the Centralverein's future decentralization beginning around the turn of the century.

While the local and regional spheres had little real influence on the Centralverein's administrative decisions until after the turn of the century, the central office encouraged German Jews from the periphery to participate in certain aspects of its operations from the very beginning.[49] Nevertheless, the central office retained most decision-making power throughout the 1890s. As the number of C.V. members located outside Berlin – and particularly in eastern Germany – grew, so did the central office's need for guidelines on how to manage its developing presence in the local sphere. This issue arose in October 1895 as part of discussions in Berlin between representatives from communities in Lower Silesia, C.V. groups in Berlin, and Eugen Fuchs. The question at hand was whether the central office should send speakers to hold lectures in Silesian communities or if the local representatives should hold them themselves.[50] As most

[46] "Geld! Geld! Geld!," *Israelitische Wochenschrift* 24 (March 3, 1893), 74.

[47] "Endlich! – aber…" *Israelitische Wochenschrift* 24 (November 3, 1893), 343.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Borut, "The Province versus Berlin?," 138.

[50] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 1 (October 1895), 196.

Silesian representatives argued against the central office sending such speakers, Fuchs agreed that communities should discuss defense and other relevant issues amongst themselves instead.[51] This concession to the regional sphere allowed local communities and their representatives to make the primary decisions on what kind of programming or support they needed. Such autonomy at the local and regional levels decentralized the Centralverein's local programming from the mid-1890s onward. While this meeting with Silesian representatives temporarily settled the question of whether to send traveling speakers to local communities, it did not resolve the relationship between the central office and the growing number of non-corporate members in communities outside Berlin.

The discussion over how best to coordinate between Berlin and the periphery remained an ongoing aspect of the Centralverein's emerging decentralization. At the Centralverein's assembly of delegates in December 1895, Fuchs suggested that communities pay for their local delegates to travel to Berlin instead of Berlin sending speakers to communities all over eastern Germany.[52] While in Berlin, these local representatives would attend meetings and learn from the C.V. central office before returning home to use their new knowledge to advocate for the Centralverein in their communities.[53] To facilitate this process, C.V. chairman Maximilian Horwitz asked that communities designate a leading local member as their contact person for the central office. This representative was then responsible for contacting the Centralverein in Berlin, keeping them updated on incidents in their communities, and, when necessary, communicating what kind of defense would be best suited to their particular needs.[54] Since

[51] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 1 (October 1895), 196.

[52] Ibid., (December 1895), 318.

[53] Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 1 (December 1895), 317.

[54] Ibid., 316.

communities were most familiar with local conditions, the Centralverein's executive board deferred to them when deciding what kind of support they needed and when intervention was necessary. This created a kind of informal local branch in these communities. This also solved a financial issue for the central office; sending speakers and representatives elsewhere cost money that the Centralverein largely did not have in the mid-1890s.

As the opportunities grew for participating more directly in Berlin, Jews from outside Berlin were increasingly open to becoming members. This was reflected in a geographic shift the amount of dues collected from Berlin and the periphery in the mid 1890s. In 1895, the Centralverein reported 19,000 Marks in income from membership dues, 58 percent of which came from members in Berlin alone.[55] A year later, however, Berlin members were only responsible for nineteen percent of all membership dues paid, with the rest coming from communities elsewhere in Germany.[56] This decrease of almost forty percent reflected the beginning of the Centralverein's gradual shift away from Berlin. The structure of the Centralverein's financial support reflected its expansion into the local sphere in the 1890s. This meant that the Centralverein was increasingly financially dependent on the local sphere as well.

To respond to this rising local participation, the central office began recruiting and supporting local representatives in these communities. These so-called *Vertrauensmänner* were primarily responsible for recruiting new members, collecting dues, and keeping the central office updated on antisemitism in their respective community. Prior to the establishment of local branches, *Vertrauensmänner* were often the primary link between the Centralverein's central

[55] Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 1 (December 1895), 323. By 1898, the C.V. reported over 40,000 Marks in income and around 39,000 in expenses. Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 4 (January 1898), 54.

[56] Ibid., 2 (December 1896), 639.

office and its members in each town or city. This required the central office to delegate a certain level of responsibility for the local sphere to these representatives. As such, the local representatives were a central aspect of the Centralverein's initial decentralization and consideration of German Jews' localized and regionalized needs.

It was the local *Vertrauensmann*'s work that was largely responsible for successes in recruiting new members in their community.[57] This was particularly evident in the city of Posen in the mid-to-late 1890s. Under *Vertrauensmann* Nathan Kantorowicz's leadership, the number of Centralverein members in Posen grew from fourteen in 1894 to almost 250 in December 1896. A year later membership in Posen doubled to over 500 in May 1897 and reached almost 700 by his death in June 1899.[58] With over half of all Jewish residents in Posen registered as C.V. members by early 1896 – a number unequaled elsewhere in the Centralverein at the time – Kantorowicz was instrumental in coordinating the Centralverein's expansion into local communities throughout the region.

With the fastest-growing individual membership rates in the Centralverein at the time, Posen was one of the first communities to establish a local branch outside Berlin. Posen's so-called "local committee" was established on November 13, 1900 during a private meeting between local representatives and leading C.V. members from Berlin.[59] This committee was responsible for representing Posen's interests in discussions with the central office, administering

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[57] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 4 (January 1898), 52-53. Until 1908, all *Vertrauensmänner* were men. After the 1908 Reichsvereinsgesetz, women were given leadership positions within the C.V., including that of *Vertrauensmann*, in which case they were called *Vertrauensleute*.

[58] Ibid., 5 (August 1899), 437, Ibid., 3 (May 1897), 279, Ibid., 2 (December 1896), 639, and Ibid., 4 (February 1898), 103. By March 1901, that number in Posen had increased to 800 members out of a Jewish community of 900 eligible individuals. Maximilian Horwitz, "Jahresbericht," *Im deutschen Reich* 7 (March 1901), 137.

[59] This meeting occurred prior to a public lecture by Julius Moses and a report from Martin Lövinson on the C.V.'s work, both of which were given on behalf of the Berlin central office. Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 6 (November 1900), 613.

local affairs, as well as supporting the central office in its fight against antisemitism in the local press.[60] While this private meeting at the suggestion of a local delegate, it was the representative from Berlin who officially established the local committee on behalf of the executive board.[61] This showed that the local sphere was highly reliant on support from Berlin – a fact that did not begin to change for another five years. Though the Centralverein did not begin calling Posen's committee an *Ortsgruppe* until the early 1900s, it was, in practice, one of the Centralverein's first official local branches and was the first of its kind outside of Berlin.

It was not until the early twentieth century that establishing such local branches became common practice. Between April 1901 and December 1906, eleven local branches were established throughout Germany, primarily in western, northern, and eastern German cities.[62] The assemblies that preceded the official formation of new local branches were often well attended, with over 600 men and women attending the lecture in Hamburg that led to the local branch's establishment in April 1901 and 400 men attending OG Cologne's first public lecture in May 1903.[63] The main lecture at these assemblies was also often given by a representative from the central office. As many of these lectures took place at the behest of the new local branches, their frequency and the themes that were discussed consolidated national and local interests in the local sphere. The popularity of these lectures showed the extent to which the Centralverein

[60] Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 6 (November 1900), 614.

[61] This differed from the later pattern of the C.V.'s *Ortsgruppe* (OG) formation in two ways; the first was that Posen's committee was established behind closed doors prior to the main assembly rather than in front of members, and, secondly, the Berlin representative and a few select individuals received credit instead of local members and their initiative.

[62] These eleven cities were Barmen, Bonn, Breslau, Dortmund, Elberfeld, Essen, Halle, Hamburg, Hannover, Köln, and Königshütte "Die erste allgemeine Delegierten-Versammlung des Central-Vereins," *Im deutschen Reich* 12 (December 1906), 678.

[63] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 7 (May 1901), 290 and Ibid., 9 (May 1903), 364.

was expanding beyond the parameters of being solely a defense organization and was instead increasingly focused on supporting German-Jewish self-defense. In Cologne, for example, the speaker used humor to attack antisemites' absurdity and called on local residents to take up the Centralverein's fight against them.[64] This call to self-defense was also concurrently an appeal to assert Jewishness in their communities and to do so while fighting for their civil rights.

By the late 1890s, C.V. leadership became increasingly convinced that German Jews needed something to fight for, not just to fight against. As a former member of the Centralverein's executive board stated after its dissolution,

> From 1897 onwards, the question was asked: Is the C.V. "*Abwehrverein oder Gesinnungsverein*"? Is it an organisation for defence only, is it "anti" only, or is it also "pro" something? Again and again the answer was: The C.V. is both. It claimed equal rights for the Jews as German citizens based on the conception that they can do so if they are faithful to their fatherland. The Jew was expected to be faithful to his Judaism but second to none in his patriotic attitude.[65]

It was with for this reason that, alongside its legal defense work, the Centralverein also began teaching German Jews about the values they were defending, namely "loyalty, self-confidence, and self-discipline."[66] In strengthening German Jews' knowledge of their own self-worth and right to belonging, the Centralverein sought to increase pride in Jewishness alongside their Germanness.[67] The expansion of the Centralverein's local sphere put pressure on the association to develop what it called positive work as well. It became increasingly focused on educating its members on their responsibilities both to defend themselves against antisemitism as well as to

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[64] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 9 (May 1903), 364.

[65] H. L. Berlak, "A Chapter in Our History: 60th Anniversary of the C.V.," *AJR Information* 8 (March 1953), 5.

[66] Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, 50.

[67] Ibid.

strengthen and affirm the German-Jewish community itself. This formed the basis of the Centralverein's emerging synthesis of both Germanness and Jewishness, and centered this process within the local sphere from the outset.

As the Centralverein expanded into the local sphere, it also encountered towns and communities that had little interest in supporting either its defense work or its community engagement. According to Eugen Fuchs, it was not antisemitism that was the greatest threat facing German Jews, but rather German Jews' own indifference to asserting themselves and their rights in the public sphere.[68] In some cases, this reticence stemmed from both the lack of perceived need for such a defense association and a lack of interest in Jewishness as a whole. In many cases, however, it was also motivated by the fear of provoking any possible antisemitic retaliation in response to asserting Jewishness and Germanness in the public sphere.[69] Since the Centralverein attributed part of the blame for antisemitism to German Jews' fear of expressing their Jewishness openly and with confidence, it was this latter argument that the Centralverein considered most threatening to German Jews.[70] Therefore, by the turn of the century, the Centralverein became increasingly focused on strengthening German Jews' ties to their Jewishness while also defending Germanness both in areas with and without antisemitic incidents.

Even prior to the establishment of the first local branches around the turn of the twentieth century, engagement from the local sphere – particularly from Posen – frequently pulled the Centralverein toward the periphery. This gave the Centralverein's administrative networks a

[68] "Hauptversammlung des Centralvereins," *Im deutschen Reich* 19 (May 1913), 246.

[69] Lamberti, *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany,* 177.

[70] Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism*, 136-7.

sense of local specificity even while it remained firmly centered in Berlin. The Centralverein's initial expansion in eastern regions was largely due to the fact that Jews in these communities were more willing to express their Jewishness in the public sphere and were less likely to have ties to a separate regional identity as was the case in Baden or Württemberg.[71] While Baden also established its own regional defense association – the Vereinigung badischer Israeliten – in 1893 and other towns in western and southern Germany preferred to work on the regional level, eastern German communities were far more open to supporting a national association like the Centralverein. This reluctance in western and southern communities was also partially out of fear that doing so would disturb the more tolerant regional approach to German Jews.[72] The Centralverein central office firmly rejected such passivity or fearfulness. The Centralverein's initial expansion into communities that had good relationships with their non-Jewish neighbors was dependent on convincing German Jews that asserting their German-Jewishness in public would not harm their integration. These appeals for self-assertion were the first steps toward its later synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness.

One of the causes to which the Centralverein attributed its slower expansion in southern and western Germany was the Mainz-based Orthodox Jewish newspaper *Der Israelit,* which frequently published articles directly attacking the Centralverein.[73] *Der Israelit*'s early criticism of the Centralverein consisted largely claiming that the Centralverein's founding members did

[71] Jacob Borut, "'Not a Small Number of Notables': The Geographical and Occupational Structure of the Central Verein Membership during Its First Years," *Jewish History* 9 (Spring, 1995), 58.

[72] Lamberti, *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany*, 177.

[73] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 2 (May 1896), 286. *Der Israelit* moved to Frankfurt am Main in 1906, but retained its anti-C.V. position. Heike Kornfeld, *Die Entwicklung des Druckgewerbes in Mainz: vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges [1816-1914]* (Mainz: Stadtarchiv Mainz, 1999), 136.

not have any Jewish faith of their own.[74] As such, the editors of *Der Israelit* accused the Centralverein of hypocrisy in establishing a so-called Jewish association devoid of Jewish beliefs.[75] Despite this frequent denunciation of the Centralverein and its leadership, it had little lasting effect on the Centralverein's expansion into the region in the late 1890s.

While much momentum behind expansion came from local communities and their representatives, the central office occasionally also intervened directly to increase interest in a particular region. Though membership and engagement grew quickest in Berlin and eastern Germany during the 1890s, the C.V. leadership tried to mitigate difficulties in recruiting members in southern Germany. It was towards this end that the Centralverein's executive committee decided to coopt a leading Jewish lawyer from Nuremberg as a new board member in July 1895.[76] By including a representative from southern Germany, the C.V. executive hoped to improve the relationship between the central office and the growing number of members in the region. The number of C.V. members in Nuremberg grew considerably starting in 1896. This showed the considerable effect that such calculated decentralization could have on the local sphere.[77] That year, a large number of individuals elsewhere in southern Germany began showing increased interest in the Centralverein as well. This was the case in Bamberg, which, with over 120 members in May 1896, quickly became one of the Centralverein's largest and most active communities of the period.[78] By the end of the decade, Bamberg was the city with

[74] "Zeitungsnachrichten und Correspondenzen: Berlin," *Der Israelit* 35 (March 12, 1894), 373.

[75] Ibid., 374.

[76] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 1 (July 1895), 40.

[77] Ibid., 2 (June 1896), 334.

[78] Ibid., (May 1896), 286.

the most C.V. members outside of eastern Germany and, by 1901, it was one of only two cities in which almost all members of the Jewish community were also individual members of the Centralverein.[79]

Though there were few active groups of individual C.V. members outside Berlin during the mid-1890s, so-called *Agitationsarbeit* (campaigning against its opponents) took place in larger cities throughout Germany during this period as needed. In the first half of 1895, the Centralverein intervened in Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Nuremberg, Fürth, Gotha, and Rostock, among others.[80] It was in these regions that support for the Centralverein grew most rapidly during the 1890s, and such local engagement both reflected and drove its local expansion as the decade progressed.

The more the Legal Defense Commission provided legal support to Jewish communities and individuals fighting antisemitism outside Berlin, the more experience C.V. leadership gained in working within these local and regional frameworks. The Legal Defense Commission intervened directly with regional government agencies to make sure that they did not discriminate against Jewish applicants or to prevent antisemitic books from being distributed in schools.[81] In a small number of cases, the Commission reported that C.V. complaints following an unjust acquittal of an antisemite even resulted in the reversal of the verdict to guilty.[82] In September 1896, for example, the Legal Defense Commission reported that, while state prosecutors had previously dismissed the Centralverein's appeals for intervention against an

[79] The other town was Posen. Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 7 (May 1901), 295.

[80] Ibid., 1 (July 1895), 35.

[81] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 4 (February 1898), 104.

[82] "Bücherschau," *Im deutschen Reich* 2 (September 1896), 460.

antisemitic newspaper as unfounded, it had changed its position considerably in the previous months and was now willing to take action.[83] While limited, the successes both of individual cases and appeals to local authorities proved to the central office that providing representatives in these cities and towns with support and guidance was an effective way to conduct ongoing defense work.[84]

Alongside lobbying government agencies and prosecuting antisemites, the Centralverein also began shifting from reactive defense to supporting proactive community advocacy in the mid-1890s as well. This was largely made possible by growing individual membership outside Berlin. During its first two years, the Centralverein's membership grew the most rapidly in cities and towns with 20,000 inhabitants or less. The number of individual members from these small communities rose from 237 in 1893 to 941 in 1895, increasing from fourteen to almost twenty-five percent of the Centralverein's total membership.[85] That new C.V. members increasingly came from smaller towns and less urbanized regions was indicative of growing demand for representation and defense at the local level.

Despite growing urbanization both among the general German population and among German Jews, the Centralverein's membership was strongest in smaller towns and villages during the 1890s. That this occurred in smaller communities can best be explained by the fact that there was a strong correlation between the number of community representatives who joined the Centralverein and the number of members that did so as well.[86] Historian Jacob Borut

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[83] "Bücherschau," *Im deutschen Reich* 2 (September 1896), 460.

[84] Martin Lövinson, "Bericht der Rechtsschutzkommission," *Im deutschen Reich* 4 (June 1898), 304.

[85] If one excludes Berlin members from these numbers, the percentage increased by less than two between these years from just below 44 to just above 45 percent. Towns with 20,00-100,000 inhabitants – including Berlin residents – increased from 109 in 1893 to 689 in 1895. Borut, "'Not a Small Number of Notables,'" 62.

[86] Borut, "'Not a Small Number of Notables,'" 59.

hypothesized that this popularity in smaller towns or more rural areas was due to responses to antisemitism within the communities themselves; the Centralverein was initially strong in those communities that did not already have defense organizations to combat antisemitism.[87] Though the overall number of individual Centralverein members remained comparatively low throughout this period, membership rose more rapidly in both mid-sized and small towns than it did in large cities. It was in these towns that Jews were most likely to represent a large portion of the local population. As Till van Rahden and Steven Lowenstein have both demonstrated, the lack of anonymity in these towns led to the formation of situative identities and often highly integrated public life.[88] Nevertheless, it also meant that the boundaries between Jews and non-Jews were often far more clearly delineated as well.[89] Despite gradually increasing membership outside Berlin, the Centralverein's local networks grew slowly throughout the 1890s.

While the Centralverein's first local branches (*Ortsgruppen* or OGs) were not established until after 1900, entire Jewish religious communities (*Synagogengemeinden*) began joining the Centralverein as corporate members starting in the mid-1890s. In December 1895, the Centralverein had fifteen corporate members; a month later that number had doubled to thirty and by May 1896 it had fifty corporate members representing a total of over 24,000 individuals.[90] With ninety percent of the Centralverein's membership affiliated with a corporate

[87] Borut, "'Not a Small Number of Notables,'" 60-61.

[88] Steven M. Lowenstein, "Decline and Survival of Rural Jewish Communities," in *In Search of Jewish Community Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918-1933*, ed. Michael Brenner and Derek J. Penslar (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 228 and Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer: Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt von 1860 bis 1925* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 328.

[89] Lowenstein, "Decline and Survival of Rural Jewish Communities," 228.

[90] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 1 (December 1895), 820, Ibid., 2 (January 1896), 68, and Ibid., (May 1896), 285.

membership by the turn of the century, these communities were the Centralverein's largest support base throughout the 1890s.

These corporate members were predominantly Jewish religious communities – *Synagogengemeinden* – that already had their own executive board and dues-paying members who were responsible for taking care of local religious, social, and cultural concerns. As such, these communities joined the Centralverein solely for its legal defense work and not necessarily out of dedication to its cause.[91] While local branches were part of the Centralverein itself, corporate members were largely only affiliated through their membership dues. These dues paid for any necessary defense work while also preserving the community's original local autonomy.[92] Individuals in these collective communities were only distantly involved in the Centralverein's organization or administration. Though corporate membership simplified and broadened the Centralverein's range of influence, it did not contribute to expanding the Centralverein's administrative network. The central office had little direct contact with its corporate members. Instead, they provided financial support through their membership dues that helped enable the Centralverein's later decentralized and cooperative relationship with its own local branches. Corporate members gave the Centralverein the strength in numbers and the financial support that it needed to begin realizing its goal of becoming the representative association for all German Jews.[93]

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[91] It was not just Jewish communities that joined the C.V. as corporate members. In the summer of 1896, the Vereine für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur (Associations for Jewish History and Literature or VGL) joined the C.V. as a corporate member. Established in the same year as the C.V., the VGL was dedicated to spreading knowledge of Jewish history and culture widely through educational lectures. Representing over 2000 local literary societies and 16,000 members at its peak, the VGL's educational mission was highly compatible with the C.V.'s dedication to creating a positive connection to Judaism. *Das deutsche Judentum: seine Parteien und Organisationen* (Berlin: Verlag der Neuen Jüdischen Monatshefte, 1919), 76.

[92] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 1 (December 1895), 319.

[93] Ibid., 3 (May 1897), 279.

The pace at which Jewish communities joined the Centralverein as corporate members slowed as the 1890s progressed into the early 1900s. In July 1899 there were seventy corporate members, while in March 1900 there were 77, and in 1901 there was a total of eighty, and it was not until 1905 that the Centralverein reached 100 corporative members.[94] This deceleration of corporate membership coincided with a concurrent acceleration of individuals joining the Centralverein directly. Starting in 1899, membership began increasing rapidly in cities that had previously shown little interest; of the 1,100 new members who joined the Centralverein in 1899, 800 – 72.7 percent – were from outside Berlin.[95] The majority of these new members joined the Centralverein following lecture assemblies in Frankfurt am Main, Breslau, Liegnitz, Görlitz, and Glogau.[96] The lecture in Frankfurt focused on the Centralverein's "goals and aspirations," while the one in Breslau dealt with the topic "Our Conduct Against Antisemitism in Political, Moral, and Social Respects."[97] These lectures both on internal Centralverein matters as well as its defense work highlighted the different aspects of the Centralverein's work. In doing so, these lectures kept German Jews informed on larger political and social concerns while also bringing them together within their own communities.

As the number of individual members outside Berlin grew, both the scope of the Centralverein's defense work and its sphere of influence broadened and regionalized as well. This shift was propelled by discussions with local representatives, which focused on bolstering

[94] "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 6 (April 1900), 231, Maximilian Horwitz, "Jahresbericht," *Im deutschen Reich* 7 (March 1901), 135, and Martin Lövinson, "Jahresbericht," *Im deutschen Reich* 8 (April 1902), 193.

[95] Maximilian Horwitz, "Geschäftsbericht," *Im deutschen Reich* 6 (March 1900), 113.

[96] Horwitz, "Geschäftsbericht," *Im deutschen Reich* 6 (March 1900), 114.

[97] Ibid., 115 and "Unser Verhalten gegen den Antisemitismus in politischer, sittlicher und gesellschaftlicher Beziehung," *Im deutschen Reich* 6 (April 1900), 177.

political engagement among members in their respective communities. In most cases, this meant teaching German Jews about the necessity of conducting self-defense and advocating for their civil interests in the public sphere. In doing so, the Centralverein leadership also aimed to "foster and strengthen [German Jews'] loyalty to their faith and love for the fatherland."[98] This created the initial framework for the Centralverein's synthesis of both German and Jewish identities that became an increasingly central aspect of the Centralverein's community engagement by the end of the decade. Additionally, the central office and local representatives' shared emphasis on teaching members about a positive connection to Jewishness and Germanness set an initial precedent for the tailored local programming that emerged after the turn of the century.

1.1.2. Politics and Defense

While the Centralverein remained predominantly focused on legal defense work throughout the mid-1890s, its leadership began turning its attention to politics starting in 1898 as well. Though the Centralverein declared itself as a non-political religious association in 1895, by the parliamentary elections in 1898 its leadership defined the Centralverein as a political association.[99] This change was due in large part both to support from the Centralverein's growing local and regional networks as well as antisemitism's rising popularity among politicians and other interest groups. That the Centralverein first became politically active in 1898 coincided with a larger politicization of society in this election as well. Brett Fairbairn argued that it was in the 1898 election that the effects of mass politicization, modern

[98] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 2 (July 1896), 407.

[99] Ibid., 1 (December 1895), 319-20, Ibid., 4 (November 1898), 595, and Eugen Fuchs, "Konfessionelle Kandidaturen," *Im deutschen Reich* 4 (December 1898), 609-10.

campaigning, and the rise of the SPD first had a large influence on the outcome of an election.[100]

By the mid-1890s, most major political parties had an affiliated interest group or organization.[101] The close relationship between associations and political parties improved their ability to mobilize voters and propagate political messages. This was particularly the case for the BdL, which rapidly became an integral part of the Conservative's campaign process by providing considerable financial and organizational support during elections.[102]

While antisemitism did not receive much electoral support in 1890, by the end of the decade it had become a key tenet of the growing agrarian and conservative political movement spearheaded by the Bund der Landwirte (Agrarian League or BdL). Starting in 1898, the BdL provided conservative candidates with financial support and greatly influenced the conservative party's choice of candidates during this period. In doing so, Volker Ullrich argued that the BdL operated as the "election machine of the conservatives."[103] In its support of conservative candidates, the BdL conducted populistic and demagogic agitation in local communities and, in doing so, made völkisch and antisemitic attitudes socially acceptable among the rural and conservative population.[104] What made the BdL so radical was not necessarily the content of its politics, but the uncompromising manner in which it pursued them.[105]

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[100] Brett Fairbairn, "Authority VS. Democracy: Prussian Officials in the German Elections of 1898 and 1903," *The Historical Journal* 33 (December 1990), 812.

[101] While the SPD had the trade unions, the conservatives the BdL, and the Zentrum the V.V., it was not until 1909 with the establishment of the Hansabund that the left liberals were affiliated with one external association. Ninety percent of FVp delegates joining as members. Even then, the national liberals were largely opposed to the Hansabund, and it never managed to achieve much political or social influence. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,*vol. 3, 1055.

[102] Jefferies, *Contesting the German Empire, 1871-1918*, 119.

[103] Ullrich, *Die nervöse Grossmach*, 170 and Fairbairn, *Democracy in the Undemocratic State*, 52.

[104] Ullrich, *Die nervöse Grossmacht,* 170.

[105] Fairbairn, *Democracy in the Undemocratic State*, 133.

While the Centralverein remained small and far less influential than mass movements like the BdL, by 1898 its leadership had also gained considerable confidence in asserting German-Jewish rights in the political sphere as well. Though Fuchs repeatedly rejected the idea of becoming a Jewish party, he nevertheless stated in 1898 that "we want – and this is the most important of our tasks – to realize and protect our equality within government agencies, the courts, and the state itself, and that is a political act."[106] Though Fuchs repeatedly rejected the idea of becoming a Jewish party, he nevertheless stated in 1898 that "we want – and this is the most important of our tasks – to realize and protect our equality within government agencies, the courts, and the state itself, and that is a political act."[107] The Centralverein was, nevertheless, officially considered a non-political association and was listed under the category 'religious associations' in the address directory.[108] As such, the Centralverein was largely free from the same legal restrictions in Prussia that political associations were forced to navigate despite its growing political involvement.

As an officially non-political association, the Centralverein was neither affected by regulations on establishing local or regional branches, nor was it required to register their meetings in Prussia with local police unless they discussed a political topic. With the exception of prior to parliamentary campaigns, this regulation had little effect on the Centralverein's limited community programming during this period. As such, the Centralverein was, at least officially, relatively free to conduct local defense work without informing Prussian authorities beforehand.

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[106] Eugen Fuchs, "Konfessionelle Kanditaturen," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 69.

[107] Fuchs, "Konfessionelle Kanditaturen," 69.

[108] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 4 (November 1898), 595.

Its non-political status coupled with its leadership's ongoing official political neutrality meant that the Centralverein was unwilling to get involved in political campaigning for any specific party. To represent as many German Jews as possible, the Centralverein declared its full neutrality on questions of both political affiliation and Jewish religious practice. As long as Jews did not vote for an antisemitic party or candidate, the Centralverein left it up to the individual to decide whom to support. This formed the basis of what became the Centralverein's guiding principle. In an 1895 report on the pleasant manner in which C.V. members debated the topic of self-defense, *Im deutschen Reich* editor Alphonse Levy called on the Centralverein to uphold one thing: "*in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas!*"[109] This unity in necessary things and freedom in doubtful things meant that, while the Centralverein demanded an uncompromising fight against all forms of antisemitism, it did not ask its member to conform to particular political or religious affiliations. In doing so, the Centralverein hoped to avoid any potential conflicts within the Jewish community over supporting the Centralverein.[110]

This was also a core aspect of the Centralverein's nascent decentralization as well. In the fall of 1898, the liberal Freisinnige Vereinigung (FVg) put forward a Jewish candidate in Posen and asked the Centralverein to support his candidacy. Before making a decision, the central office sent a delegate to Posen to meet with local C.V. members. After returning to Berlin, these representatives explained to the central office hat Jews in Posen were longtime supporters of a different party – the Freisinnige Volkspartei (FVp) – and that any external support for the FVg's candidate would seem like an attempt to sway voters away from the FVp.[111] In what was the first

[109] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich*, 1 (July 1895), 41.

[110] Lamberti, *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany*, 10-11.

[111] Fuchs, "Konfessionelle Kanditaturen," 70.

considerable test of its declared political neutrality, C.V. leadership remained determined not compel anyone to change their political values simply to vote for a Jewish candidate.[112] Instead of supporting either the FVg or the FVp, the C.V. central office decided to withhold support entirely for any candidate in Posen.

Though the central office refused to openly support a political party, it nevertheless called on all German Jews to vote in elections and support non-antisemitic candidates both at the national level as well as in "countless localities" throughout Germany.[113] This willingness both to get involved at the local level and to step back when it was unhelpful was an integral part of the Centralverein's decentralization. As there were considerable political differences between regions, a more localized approach to lobbying and intervention allowed for responding directly to acute political issues.

1.2. The Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland

Starting in the late 1880s, the Evangelischer Bund (the Protestant Federation or E.B.) frequently attacked the Zentrum and German Catholicism in the press. Established in October 1886, the E.B.'s goal was to protect German-Protestant interests by "fighting Rome's growing power" in German politics and society.[114] Highly critical of ultramontanism and Catholic loyalty to the Pope, E.B. leaders condemned Catholicism as a "cancerous growth" that threatened to tear

[112] Fuchs, "Konfessionelle Kanditaturen," 71. Which political party C.V. members supported was, ultimately, only a relevant concern when the candidate or party in question was accused of representing antisemitic interests, which was not the case in this instance.

[113] Eugen Fuchs, "Rückblick auf die zehnjährige Tätigkeit," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 96.

[114] Walter Fleischmann-Bisten and Heiner Grote, *Protestanten auf dem Wege: Geschichte des Evangelischen Bundes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986), 15 and Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 51.

apart the nation.[115] It was this outspoken opposition to Catholicism that made the E.B. the initial focus of Catholic defense work prior to 1890. In response, the aristocratic arm of German Catholicism began pressing the Zentrum to create an anti-Protestant and anti-E.B. mass association of their own in early 1890.[116]

Despite this pressure, just as Windthorst prevented making the Zentrum party an anti-Protestant organization in 1870, he also insisted that the Volksverein be established not as an anti-Protestant association, but rather as an anti-Social Democrat one instead.[117] This was a tactical decision. While the E.B. was vehemently anti-Catholic, it was still a Christian association and had close ties to influential liberal politicians. Instead of opposing the E.B., the Volksverein focused instead on defending religion's place in the public sphere. This made combating the SPD's growing influence both in politics and among German workers its primary priority during the 1890s.

From German unification onward, the SPD actively opposed Catholicism and the Zentrum for its desire to keep religion in the public sphere. Starting in the 1870s, the SPD put a particular emphasis on promoting atheism and areligious positions in both its politics and its support of German workers.[118] It was this antireligious position that both Zentrum and

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[115] Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*, 56. The E.B.'s condemnation of ultramontanism and the Zentrum party was so fierce, that even the nationalist and antisemitic Alldeutscher Verband (the Pan-German League or A.V.), which virulently rejected ultramontanism as "anti-German," was willing to cede the fight against it to the E.B since they were doing such a formidable job already. While the A.V. fully rejected Catholic ultramontanism, it did not correlate ultramontanism with all Catholics and remained open to Catholic members who also opposed ultramontanism. BArch, R 8048/7, "Verhandlungsbericht über die Sitzung des Gesamtvorstandes des Alldeutschen Verbandes," February 10, 1907.

[116] Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich*, 40.

[117] Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Windthorst: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 138-9 and Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich,* 40. Historians Maragaret Lavinia Anderson and Hans-Georg Aschoff both argue that Windthorst was one of, if not the most significant parliamentarian in Germany of his time. Hans-Georg Aschoff, ed., *Ludwig Windthorst, 1812-1891* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1991), 7 and Anderson, *Windthorst,* 3.

[118] Prüfer, *Sozialismus statt Religion*, 254.

conservative politicians were adamant to repress.[119] Windthorst and the Volksverein's founding members considered the SPD's rejection of religion and appeal to German workers as the far more acute threat to German Catholics than attacks by the E.B. Despite both the German Catholics and the SPD facing considerable oppression during the early German Empire, the differences in ideology were too large to overcome in the 1870s and disagreements only intensified in the late nineteenth century.[120] The enmity between the Volksverein and the SPD during the German Empire was largely based on disagreements over the question of religion's role in the public sphere. It was for these reasons that the organized German Catholicism opposed the SPD so vehemently throughout the German Empire and one of the primary motivations behind the Volksverein's establishment.[121]

The SPD was also increasingly determined to fight organized Catholicism in largely Catholic regions like Bavaria, Silesia, and the Rhineland. As Catholics were the majority of the population in these regions, losing their support for the Zentrum would have greatly weakened German Catholic's political and social influence. Despite increased SPD recruitment, these regions remained largely uninterested in the SPD, which found it difficult to gain support in areas that defined belonging according to religion and not socio-economic status.[122] While the more cohesive nature of Catholic society acted as a bulwark against social democracy, it nevertheless did not prevent the SPD from gaining support amongst other workers within these

[119] Prüfer, *Sozialismus statt Religion*, 268.

[120] Stefan Ummenhofer, *Wie Feuer und Wasser?: Katholizismus und Sozialdemokratie in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2003), 35

[121] Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, *Protokoll über die verhandlungen des parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Berlin: Verlag der Expedition des "Vorwärts" Berliner Volksblatt, 1892), 35 and 101 and Ummenhofer, *Wie Feuer und Wasser?*, 42.

[122] Prüfer, *Sozialismus statt Religion*, 216.

regions. The Volksverein structured its defense work to prevent this external influence and the effects of economic modernization within Catholicism.

The annulment of the *Sozialistengesetze* in September 1890, and the SPD's subsequent call to fight Catholicism a month later signaled the start of a new political and social era for German Catholics.[123] The Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland was established on October 24, 1890. Conceived as a *Massenverein* – an association for the masses – with Ludwig Windthorst's support, the Volksverein's initial goal was to "fight against error and subversive theories in the social domain, and for the defense and re-establishment of social Christian order."[124] The Volksverein became the social and educational arm of organized political Catholicism during this period. Though it was an autonomous association, the Volksverein nevertheless often operated in close cooperation with the Zentrum party. As such, most if not all of the Volksverein's work was based on what its leaders deemed most necessary to both fight social democracy and increase support for the Zentrum. In doing so, the Volksverein complemented the Zentrum's political work and strengthened the comprehensive nature of organized German-Catholic life.

During the 1890s, the Volksverein's main concern was fighting against and preventing the SPD's growing influence among workers throughout Germany. The SPD's resolute rejection of the Zentrum and of religion in the public sphere made it the largest threat to the Volksverein,

[123] Vogel, "Selbstmobilisierung und Polarisierung," 38, and Hans Joachim Kamphausen, *Die ehemalige Volksvereins-Bibliothek in Mönchengladbach: Untersuchungen zu Geschichte und Bestand* (Köln: Greven Verlag, 1979), 26, and BArch, R 8115/I/123, p. 44.

[124] BArch, R 8115/I/127, "Windthorst's Great Work: What His Popular Union for the Defense of Catholic Rights has Accomplished," *New York Germans Journal and Catholic Register* (March 23, 1901).

the Zentrum, and organized Catholicism as a whole.[125] While the Zentrum opposed the SPD politically in the Reichstag, Zentrum politician Ernst Lieber argued that political intervention was not enough to keep the SPD and its unions in check. Lieber argued that, since the SPD's agitation went well beyond campaigning against the Zentrum, German Catholics also needed to have an association separate from the Zentrum party.[126] This meant that the Volksverein was largely focused on combating the SPD among Catholic workers and in society, while the Zentrum remained focused on the political arena. It was such a division of labor that defined not only the decision to establish and support the Volksverein, but the expansion of many interest groups and associations in German society as a whole during this period. As parties in the Reichstag had highly limited leverage at the state level, the need for more comprehensive networks of intervention and influence drove such parallel expansions in civil society as well.

The Volksverein referred to its fight against social democracy and the SPD as *Abwehrarbeit* – defense work. Windthorst hoped that the Volksverein would become "a line of defense against all who sought to reduce Catholics' roles in public life."[127] it focused on combating any organization that challenged religion's place in society, in schools, and in the home.[128] This was coupled with a proactive role in strengthening German-Catholic participation in the public sphere as well. The Volksverein's defense work balanced fighting against anti-Catholic or anti-religious political parties or associations with a proactive attempt to provide

[125] The SPD founding members August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht both resolutely rejected Christianity due to its long history of oppression, with Liebknecht calling for its complete elimination in 1875. Ummenhofer, *Wie Feuer und Wasser?,* 35.

[126] BArch, R 8115/I/1, "Katholikenversammlung" *Germania* (July 15, 1894).

[127] BArch, R 8115/I/12, p. 411.

[128] BArch, R 8115/I/123, p. 46.

German Catholics with the means to assert themselves and participate in German society, politics, and the economy.

The Centralverein's and Volksverein's determination to retaliate when attacked and assert their own distinctiveness in the public sphere was part of a larger shift in religious minority groups' attitudes toward their position in German politics and society. For German Catholics, this process began during the Kulturkampf; after the development of an insular milieu in response to the state-sponsored persecution, lay German Catholic leaders increasingly called on German Catholics to fight for and defend themselves and both their political and religious interests. The anxiety that such persecution could happen again remained a decisive motivator in the German-Catholic associational and political leaderships' response to anti-Catholic or anti-religious rhetoric.

While the Kulturkampf ended over a decade before the Volksverein was established, the Volksverein's leadership frequently warned their members that a new inter-confessional fight was just beginning.[129] Instead of state-based persecution, the Volksverein warned that this new Kulturkampf was centered in the social sphere and questioned Catholicism's compatibility with modern culture and society.[130] These differences led Helmut Walser Smith to argue that this was not a new Kulturkampf as such, but rather a recasting of pre-existing confessional conflict into new associational forms.[131] The relocation of these tensions from the state and politics to society was a further example of the considerable transfer of influence to associations after 1890. Now located in the social and cultural spheres, the threat of a new Kulturkampf functioned as a

[129] BArch, R 8115/I/135, pp. 12 and 18.

[130] Ibid., p. 12.

[131] Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*, 14.

mobilizing concept within Catholic associational life. The Volksverein drew on this threat when dealing with issues that were unrelated to the Kulturkampf itself but nevertheless presented a threat to the full and autonomous expression of Catholic religious identity in society.

The Kulturkampf had a lasting influence on how German Catholic politicians viewed legislation against other religious minorities. Following the Russian pogroms in the 1880s, a large number of Eastern European Jews traveled through Germany on their way to emigrate overseas. While the majority successfully emigrated, a small contingent remained in Germany instead of continuing onward in their journey.[132] In response, the German Jews in eastern towns were faced with antisemitic accusations from men like Treitschke, who purposefully confused Eastern European Jews with Jews from eastern Germany to imply that German Jews were not truly German.[133] This new wave of emigration raised calls from antisemitic politicians for Germany to introduce a ban on Jewish emigration from eastern Europe. In response, Windthorst's successor Ernst Lieber argued in 1895 that the Zentrum could not support any special legislation against Jews coming from Eastern Europe, stating that "As a minority in the Reich, we have not forgotten how we were treated and for this reason alone […] we shall never lend a hand to forge weapons to be used today against the Jews, tomorrow against the Poles, the day after against the Catholics."[134] The Zentrum's fight against antisemitism was not due to its rejection of antisemitism itself. Instead, it was a response both to its desire to prevent antisemitic political parties from gaining political influence as well as the fear that any special laws against

[132] Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 51.

[133] Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers*, 29. The accusation that German Jews were not fully loyal to Germany and the anxieties surrounding Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe were two closely related topics that greatly shaped both the C.V.'s defense work and relationships with other Jewish organziations.

[134] Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, 267.

Jews could easily then be turned against Catholics.[135] Such state-sponsored persecution had a lasting effect on how German Catholic politicians understood their minority status and their responsibilities in creating or supporting legislation.

Despite the Zentrum's refusal to support any antisemitic legislation in the Reichstag, Catholic antisemitism declined but did not disappear following the end of the Kulturkampf in the late 1870s.[136] While it remained part of Catholic culture in Germany during this period, Catholic antisemitism generally differed from that of Protestants in that it largely lacked racial or social-Darwinist theory.[137] Nevertheless, the Zentrum occasionally used antisemitism to underline German Catholics' belonging to the German polity. Catholic antisemitism remained low in regions in which Catholics were the majority of the population, particularly in the Rhineland. That antisemitism functioned as an integrating factor at the national level but was not necessary in certain regional spheres showed the conditional and highly regionalized nature of belonging. That the exclusion of one minority could assist another in gaining political and social acceptance at the national level also showed that minority status itself was often highly subjective.

Unlike the Centralverein, which utilized legal defense to combat antisemitic attacks and slander, the Volksverein's defense work was almost entirely political in nature. This reflected fundamental differences both between the kind of attacks these communities faced as well as the distinct professional affiliations of the two associations' founding members. While the Volksverein was largely established by Zentrum politicians, most of the Centralverein's

[135] Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich,* 103.

[136] Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, 84.

[137] Helmut Walser Smith, "The Learned and the Popular Discourse of Anti-Semitism in the Catholic Milieu of the Kaiserreich," *Central European History* 27 (1994), 320.

founding members were lawyers.[138] While the Centralverein's defense work during this period largely consisted of legal intervention on behalf of German Jews, the Volksverein's defense work primarily consisted of distributing flyers, holding assemblies, and, most significantly, publishing articles in the press.[139] Its publications in the press was the primary means through which the V.V. central office and its regional directors sought to both combat anti-Catholic claims in other newspapers as well as to educate German Catholics on the Volksverein's stances on specific social, political, and economic issues.[140]

Though they prioritized different means of defense, both the Centralverein and the Volksverein responded to complaints of anti-Jewish or anti-Catholic incidents in the local sphere in similar ways; local representatives reached out to the central office, explained what occurred, and then asked for and received support. This was precisely the case in Baden in 1894, when a Zentrum representative in Freiburg wrote to Zentrum delegates throughout the region after the SPD began organizing region-wide assemblies and trying to actively recruit German Catholics.[141] In response, the delegates in Baden were instructed to recruit more members for the Volksverein and to hold assemblies and lectures for their entire community.[142] Despite the regionally specific nature of the SPD's agitation, the offer to bring in speakers from the central office in Mönchengladbach to refute the SPD reinforced the regional sphere's reliance on the

[138] Avraham Barkai, "*Wehr Dich!": Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens 1893-1938* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), 150.

[139] The C.V. also began utilizing these forms of community defense in the years prior to the First World War, but it did not become a priority until the Weimar Republic.

[140] BArch, R 8115/I/112, p. 152.

[141] BArch, R 8115/I/122, pp. 1-2.

[142] Ibid.

central office.[143] In using education as a form of defense, the Volksverein's intervention further consolidated organized Catholic life in the region.[144]

Regardless of whether their defense work was legal or political in nature, both the Centralverein and the Volksverein revealed a deep-seated trust in the German state's willingness to protect and guarantee its citizens' civic rights. This was particularly the case for the Centralverein, whose work was based on the belief that equality could be secured for German Jews if only they were to speak up and actively condemn and oppose the injustices they experienced. Both the Centralverein and the Volksverein utilized their defense work as a means to assert their respective community' rights to participate in German society. This in turn also strengthened their ongoing role as the representative voice of German Jews and German Catholics, respectively.

1.2.1. Centralized Decentralization

Part of Ludwig Windthorst's role in establishing the Volksverein was also to ensure that its central office was located in the predominantly liberal and middle-class Rhineland rather than in the more conservative Berlin. Western Catholic communities – and particularly those in the Rhineland – were generally more bourgeois, supportive of the worker's movement, and commerce-oriented than those in the east, which tended to be more rural and traditionally religious.[145] This divide between eastern and western German-Catholic communities had a

[143] The C.V. also used such tactics, holding so-called *Aufklärungsversammlungen* – informational assemblies – to contradict antisemitic claims through education and information in the Weimar Republic.

[144] BArch, R 8115/I/135, p. 9.

[145] James Retallack (ed.), *Saxony in German History: Culture, Society and Politics, 1830-1933* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 83.

considerable effect both on where the Volksverein was established as well as its focus on anti-SPD agitation.

Though initially established in Cologne and run from Mönchengladbach, the Volksverein was legally registered in Mainz due to Hesse's more liberal and accommodating laws for political associations.[146] Prior to the introduction of the *Reichsvereinsgesetz* (Reich Association Law) in April 1908, each German state had its own laws pertaining to associations and how they were allowed to organize and function.[147] These laws were particularly concerned with regulating political associations and had a decisive bearing on where and how associations were established and operated.[148]

The Volksverein was considered a political association according to Prussian law since it was involved in social policy work and Church politics.[149] As these laws forbade political associations from cooperating or holding shared assemblies until 1908, the Volksverein could not establish regional or local branches with their own statutes and board.[150] This enforced a

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[146] Gotthard Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933: Geschichte, Bedeutung, Untergang* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), 44, 53.

[147] Ullmann, *Interessenverbände in Deutschland*, 68-9. For the full text of the law, see "Das Reichsvereinsgesetz: vom 19. April 1908," in *Das Reichsvereinsgesetz vom 19. April 1908: Text-Ausgabe mit erläuternden Anmerkungen, den Ausführungsbestimmungen für Preußen und ausführlichem Sachregister*, ed. Fritz Goehrke (Dortmund: W. Crüwell, 1908), 21-98.

[148] The V.V. was not the only association to choose where to operate based on these laws; the DIGB was also forced to move its central office from Leipzig in 1881 after Saxony banned all associations from expanding beyond Saxony itself. *Das deutsche Judentum: seine Parteien und Organisationen* (Berlin: Verlag der Neuen Jüdischen Monatshefte, 1919), 59. For more on Saxony's regulations, regional distinctions in associational laws, and the role of the police in monitoring political activity, see: Marven Krug, "Reports of a Cop: Civil Liberties and Associational Life in Leipzig during the Second Empire," in *Saxony in German History: Culture, Society and Politics, 1830-1933*, ed. James Retallack (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 271-286.

[149] MGB Hpw 41, "Rundschreiben A: Gesetzliche Bestimmungen, welche von den Geschäftsführern und Vertrauensmännern des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland einzuhalten sind," *Rundschreiben an die Geschäftsführer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland A-E,* (Mönchengladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag, 1899), 1.

[150] While the V.V. did establish regional branches in the early 1900s, they remained highly dependent on the central office. *Verordnung über die Verhütung eines die gesetzliche Freiheit und Ordnung gefährdenden Mißbrauchs des*

centralization in Mönchengladbach that granted the local and regional sphere little autonomy. Though the law lapsed in 1908, the Volksverein maintained this centralization throughout its over forty-year existence. This law also meant that the Volksverein was required to register its meetings with the police in all German states except those with laxer requirements for political associations like Baden, Hessen, Oldenburg and Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt.[151] Even in regions like Baden where associations had considerably more freedom, it was not until 1908 that the Volksverein was able to organize a regional branch there.[152] The Volksverein remained administratively centralized in Mönchengladbach despite different regional regulations intended to preserve centralized authority and strengthen German-Catholic unity.

To recruit as many German Catholics as possible, the Volksverein published its first appeal for public support a month after its establishment. Here its executive board called on all Catholic men in Germany to join the Volksverein, fight against Social Democracy, and defend both the Kaiser and the Church.[153] In December 1890, V.V. leadership released a second appeal in which it called on German Catholics' to provide their support and described how it planned to use the press and meetings to defend German Catholicism.[154] These two appeals were almost immediately successful; by the end of 1891, the Volksverein had over 100,000 members.[155]

Versammlungs- und Vereinigungsrechtes: vom 11. März 1850 (Berlin: Verlag der Deckerschen Geheimen Ober-Hofbuchdruckerei, 1850), 4-5 and MGB Hpw 41, "Rundschreiben A: Gesetzliche Bestimmungen, welche von den Geschäftsführern und Vertrauensmännern des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland einzuhalten sind," 1.

[151] MGB Hpw 31a, Der Vorstand des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, ed*., Anweisung für die Vertrauensmänner des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland* (Mönchengladbach: 1891), 11.

[152] BArch, R 8115/I/6, p. 29.

[153] Horstwalter Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich 1890-1918* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1979), 305-6.

[154] Ibid., 307-8.

[155] Ibid., 315.

Additionally, the Volksverein grew by twelve percent in 1892, and a further twenty percent to reach almost 150,000 members in 1893.[156]

Despite this rapid growth, it was not until theologian August Pieper was appointed chairman in April 1892 that the Volksverein's central office became well organized and fully operational.[157] The V.V. central office's main role was to observe its opponent's actions, to determine which regions needed practical reform work, and to both develop and enact association-wide standards of operation.[158] With the central office intervening where needed, this highly centralized administration was intended to keep the Volksverein's work uniform and consistent.[159] This top-down organizational structure characterized the Volksverein throughout its over 40-year existence. This was largely due to the fact that the German-Catholic milieu itself was highly centralized; prior to the establishment of associations, local clerics and the church were responsible for running most aspects of community life.[160] While this influence declined with the establishment of the Volksverein and the Catholic workers' movement, clerical influence over the local sphere and German-Catholic community organizations remained and had a considerable influence over Catholic life. That there was little local demand for more autonomy showed how well-established these centralized community structures were by the 1890s.

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[156] Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 315.

[157] Even with rapidly expanding membership and programming during the 1890s, it was not until 1898 that the V.V. was able to rent its own office in Mönchengladbach. Georg Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch des Volksvereins für das Katholische Deutschland* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1982), 11.

[158] BArch, R 8115/I/2, pp. 89-90.

[159] BArch, R 8115/I/1, "Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland," *Germania* (December 1890).

[160] Michael Klöckner, "Das katholische Milieu: Grundüberlegungen — in besonderer Hinsicht auf das Deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 44 (1992), 250.

The Volksverein's administrative structure was characterized by centralized decentralization. This meant that, while it began expanding into hundreds of towns, villages, and cities throughout Germany in the 1890s, the central office and the chairman in particular retained most decision-making power within the association.[161] With the central office handing down orders to regional leaders who then passed them on to local delegates, the regional and local representatives were responsible for carrying out these directives as instructed. The central office frequently described this process using the metaphor of an army. According to the 1891 directives for *Vertrauensmänner*, the central office was the general, the regional representatives were the captains, and the local *Vertrauensmänner* the officers. All those working for the Volksverein in local communities were an extension of the Volksverein's central office in Mönchengladbach.

In both medium-sized towns and larger cities in the Rhineland, the Volksverein received particular support from more middle-class *bürgerliche* Catholics. As Thomas Mergel argued, these individuals were only partially integrated into the Catholic milieu.[162] Nevertheless, their leading position shaped the Volksverein into a social-political association and increased the influence of these more *bürgerlich* and socially oriented Catholics within organized Catholicism as a whole. A more economically diverse population meant that German Catholics in the Rhineland were, in many cases, less involved in the Catholic community and had other social or political allegiances outside the Volksverein or the Zentrum party. These commitments outside the Catholic social sphere meant that the Volksverein had to compete for the time and, most

[161] MGB Hpw 31a, Der Vorstand des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, ed., *Anweisung für die Vertrauensmänner des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland* (Mönchengladbach: 1891), 4.

[162] Thomas Mergel, *Zwischen Klasse und Konfession: Katholisches Bürgertum im Rheinland 1794-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1994), 306.

particularly, the membership dues of these more urban German Catholics.[163] It was in these areas that having as many *Vertrauensmänner* as possible was most vital as it helped the Volksverein focus on meeting members' specific needs and interests in each neighborhood. As the Volksverein was dependent on local representatives to operate beyond Mönchengladbach, it sought to recruit as many *Vertrauensmänner* in any given community as possible. To do so, the locations to which each representative was assigned was highly restricted. While small communities only had one *Vertrauensmann*, larger cities and towns ideally had one delegate allocated to every 100-200 individuals.[164] The more representatives the Volksverein had, the more directly it could provide them with information and education.

It was for this reason that educating and guiding the *Vertrauensmänner* themselves was one of the main responsibilities of both the central office and the regional director.[165] V.V. *Vertrauensmänner* received extensive instruction from the central office on their roles and responsibilities in local communities. There were at least five different types of memoranda that the central office sent out to regional and local representatives. Each had its own particular focus, such as how to organize assemblies and the legal requirements for doing so.[166] That these

[163] BArch, R 8115/I/123, p. 47.

[164] MGB Hpw 31a, Der Vorstand des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, ed., *Anweisung für die Vertrauensmänner des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland*, 5.

[165] MGB Hpw 1-3, 47, Zentralstelle des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, *Brief an einem Geschäftsführer über die nächsten Aufgaben des Volksvereins* (Mönchengladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag, 1922), 5.

[166] Two different memoranda were sent out almost yearly starting in 1899 and dealt with administrative and organizational aspects of the local and regional representatives' work. Memorandum A dealt with the legal requirements to which regional directors and local representatives needed to comply while Memorandum B gave detailed instructions on how to institute the V.V. in a local community and how to organize official V.V. events. Memorandum C, D, and E are undated. Memorandum C was an appeal to Catholic men and women to join the V.V., Memorandum D discusses the relationship between the V.V. and the Zentrum party, while Memorandum E pertains to the V.V. and the educational system while also detailing the division of responsibilities between the V.V. and the Zentrum party. MGB Hpw 41, Zentralstelle des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, "Rundschrieben C: Katholische Männer und Frauen!" "Rundschreiben D: Zentrumsorganisation und Volksverein," and "Rundschreiben E: Volksverein und Schulorganisation," *Rundschreiben an die Geschäftsführer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland A-E,* (Mönchengladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag).

guidelines were so thorough spoke to the strict oversight under which V.V. regional and local representatives operated. The comprehensive structure provided by these guidelines reinforced the central office's authority in Mönchengladbach while also encouraging the formation of expansive regional and local networks during the German Empire.

The V.V. central office assigned its local and regional representatives specific responsibilities to better regulate the regional and local sphere. Both *Vertrauensmänner* and regional directors were responsible for recruiting new members, collecting dues, and distributing the Volksverein's newsletter.[167] Along with these tasks, local representatives were also given extensive guidance on how to prepare an assembly, how to conduct themselves during such meetings, what to do afterwards, and how to best interact with and organize in their community.[168] These yearly reports kept the central office informed on changes in membership, press work, the number and location of assemblies held, and possible cooperation with other Catholic organizations. Regional directors were also assigned so-called "special functions" alongside the same duties as *Vertrauensmänner*[169] This meant that they were also responsible for managing the *Vertrauensmänner* in their region, monitoring local SPD activity, and reporting on the latter to the central office at least once a year.[170] Due to the number of such directors and the geographic distance between them and the central office, they were subject to little actual

[167] MGB Hpw 31a, Der Vorstand des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, ed., *Anweisung für die Vertrauensmänner des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland,* 5-6.

[168] Ibid., 12-15.

[169] MGB Hpw 3, 30a, Der Vorstand des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, *Anweisung für die Geschäftsführer sowie Pfarr- oder Bezirksvorsteher oder Vertrauensmänner des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland,* 3rd ed. (Mönchengladbach: A. Riffarth, 1903), 15.

[170] Ibid., 12-16. There are at least sixty examples of such reports from throughout southern Germany between 1897 and 1902 in the file BArch R 8115/I/112. Other opponents in these questionnaires were Liberalism, the Bund der Landwirte, the Evangelischer Bund, and the Los vom Rom movement. All but Liberalism, however, were not added or referred to in the questionnaires until 1901.

oversight beyond these reports. This meant that the local and regional representatives had a certain degree of autonomy in their communities, particularly in regard to combating the SPD. While regional directors received extensive guidance and were required to submit a yearly report, they were also able to adapt their programming in local communities to better respond to local needs.

Based on both the central office's guidelines and the yearly reports, regional directors and their *Vertrauensmänner* were solely responsible for their respective communities. Nevertheless, in implementing the central office's directives in their area, they were the ones directly responsible for establishing the intra-Catholic networks that reinforced support for the Volksverein, the Catholic Worker's Movement, and the Zentrum party. As such, these regional and local representatives played a significant role in the Volksverein's larger attempts to both combat SPD influence among German workers and defend Catholic interests. Both in working closely with the Zentrum party and the frequent overlap in their respective leadership, the Volksverein rapidly became what Thomas Nipperdey labeled a "secondary system of social power."[171] As such, the Volksverein extended the Zentrum's influence into the social sphere and, in doing so, was a defining force in shaping German-Catholic society and politics throughout the German Empire.

1.2.2. Expansion in the Local and Regional Spheres

The more traditional and conservative attitudes toward religion and community in eastern Germany affected membership rates differently in the Centralverein and the Volksverein. While the Volksverein struggled to gain a foothold in the east during the German Empire, it was

[171] Nipperdey, "Interessensverbände und Parteien in Deutschland vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg," 268.

precisely in these cities and towns that the Centralverein expanded most rapidly during the mid-to-late 1890s. Instead, it was in the west that the Volksverein grew most rapidly, with approximately 37,000 members in the Rhineland, 28,000 in Westphalia, and 13,000 in Württemberg by the end of 1891.[172] These three regions together represented 71.6 percent of the Volksverein's 108,889 members at the end of 1891.[173] While the Rhineland was predominantly Catholic and Westphalia also had a Catholic majority, Württemberg had a small Protestant majority instead.[174]

That the Volksverein was also so successful in Württemberg was due to similar political attitudes among local Catholics; as David Blackbourn argued, Württemberg was also part of the larger shift away from clerical and aristocratic leadership to a focus on social issues that occurred in western and southern Catholic communities at the time.[175] This meant that Volksverein was most successful in regions with a more liberal and socially conscious Catholic population. As such, it continued and intensified organized Catholicism's ongoing regionalization and further shifted the power within lay organized Catholicism toward the more liberal and *bürgerliche* west and south.

The Volksverein established a regional branch in Württemberg only a year after the central office was established in Mönchengladbach.[176] As there was no active branch of the

[172] Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 313-4.

[173] MGB Hpw 4a, *Handbuch für Freunde und Förderer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland* (Mönchengladbach: Zentralstelle des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, 1901), 21.

[174] Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt, ed., *Die Volkszählung am 1. Dezember 1900 im deutschen Reich,* vol. 150, erster Teil (Berlin: Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, 1903), 108.

[175] David Blackbourn, *Class, Religion and Local Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Centre Party in Württemberg Before 1914* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1980), 21.

[176] Hermann Cardauns, *Adolf Gröber* (Mönchengladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag GmbH, 1921), 104.

Zentrum party in Württemberg when the Volksverein was established, this regional branch was the first large lay Catholic organization in the region. It was not until 1894 that the Zentrum established a regional branch in Württemberg, which it did at a private meeting of the Volksverein's regional managing directors. At a private meeting of the Volksverein's managing directors in Württemberg in May 1894, Württemberg parliament representative Johann Baptist Kiene argued that establishing a regional branch of the Zentrum party was a political necessity since the Zentrum and the Volksverein shared the same mission of defending Christianity in society.[177] Furthermore, he argued that to maintain Catholic influence at the national level, they needed to strengthen it at the regional one as well.[178] This showed the close and interdependent connections between the regional and national levels in the Volksverein and the Zentrum. The national level of both organizations were dependent on their regional offices to conduct the bulk of recruiting new members and organizing programming.

The concurrent lack of local demand for a Zentrum party and the almost immediately strong support for the Volksverein in Württemberg demonstrated that, at least in the majority-Protestant region of Württemberg, the Volksverein mobilized and unified German Catholics that were otherwise uninvolved in German-Catholic political life. That organized Catholicism developed differently in Württemberg than elsewhere in Germany – and that it did so at such an early stage for the Volksverein and a late one for the Zentrum – was largely the result of a less turbulent experience during the Kulturkampf in the 1870s, which reduced demand for Catholic political representation. That the Volksverein nevertheless expanded rapidly in Württemberg and in the Rhineland despite these regions' highly different experiences in the Kulturkampf showed

[177] BArch, R 8115/I/114, pp. 7-8.

[178] Ibid.

that, while the Kulturkampf had a lasting effect on German-Catholic society, regional politics and identity also occasionally superseded other factors in determining how certain regions participated in Catholic organizations.

Local demographics and relationships to the church also frequently had an effect on the Volksverein's work. Its engagement in small communities differed from that in mid-sized or larger cities. As the population was far more homogenous in rural communities, the Volksverein was most successful in recruiting new members in small and predominantly Catholic towns in regions like the Rhineland and Westphalia. It also relied heavily on support from local clerics and Church parishes for recruiting new members. This was, however, also an occasional liability. In some cases, local clerical or lay leadership sometimes refused to support or engage with the Volksverein as they "did not feel the need for it."[179] This was the case in the region around Neresheim in Württemberg in 1899. In the regional manager's yearly report for the area, he informed the central office that since local clergy had both "no interest in" and "no understanding for" the Volksverein or its work, the number of members in the area had declined by almost fifty percent over the past six years.[180] While other factors such as a lack of local programming or *Vertrauensmann* also likely contributed to this decreasing membership, that the chairman attributed it to a lack of clerical support speaks to both the perceived and actual influence that clergy had on determining the success of the Volksverein's local engagement.[181]

As the Volksverein expanded its local and regional networks, it also began developing educational programming for German Catholics as well. Starting in 1892, the Volksverein's

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[179] MGB Hpw 4a, *Handbuch für Freunde und Förderer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland*, 21.

[180] BArch, R 8115/I/112, "Jahresbericht für das Vereinsjahr 1899," p. 31. In 1893, the area had 562 members, in 1894 it dropped to 544, in 1895 to 475, in 1896 to 336, 1897 to 358, 1898 to 301, and then to 289 in 1899.

[181] Ibid., p. 31.

central office began holding so-called practical-social courses in communities throughout Germany. These courses were primarily concerned with teaching German Catholics the skills and knowledge necessary "to lead Catholics out of their pre-industrial thinking, to familiarize them with the capitalist economy and mode of production, and to strengthen their self-confidence and their readiness to participate in the government and society."[182] As Catholics modernized slower than other groups in German society, these courses aimed to accelerate their economic and political integration and, in doing so, increase Catholic influence on German society and the economy. Such courses made the Volksverein into an agent of modernization within Catholicism even as it strengthened the barriers of the Catholic milieu.[183]

These courses also taught leadership skills that prepared attendees for guiding and supporting the Catholic worker's movement.[184] Largely organized by local clerical leaders with the Volksverein's support, both the Catholic worker's movement and trade union began taking shape in the 1890s as it became increasingly clear that more support for workers was necessary to prevent the spread of social democracy.[185] In creating a system for "selecting and recruiting leaders" for the Catholic trade unions, the Volksverein's central office took concerted steps to ensure that a new generation of individuals was prepared to assume responsibility for the future

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[182] Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch des Volksvereins für das Katholische Deutschland*, 16.

[183] Thomas Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch: Deutschland 1870-1918* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), 27 and 31.

[184] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933*, 64.

[185] Michael Schneider, "Christliche Arbeiterbewegung in Europa: ein vergleichender Literaturbericht," in *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung im Vergleich: Berichte zur internationalen historischen Forschung*, ed. Klaus Tenfelde (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1986), 490 and 493. One of the leading figures behind the development of the Catholic and Christian workers movements was Franz Hitze, who was also a member of the V.V.'s executive board from 1890-1921 and later a member of parliament on behalf of the Zentrum during the Weimar Republic. Hitze argued as early as 1875 that the only way to effectively prevent social democratic unions from gaining traction would be to create dedicated Christian unions as well. Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch des Volksvereins für das Katholische Deutschland*, 267 and August Erdmann, *Die christliche Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1909), 55.

of Catholic workers in Germany.[186] In doing so, the Volksverein hoped that these new leaders would prevent social democracy from propagating its anti-religious and particularly anti-Catholic agenda among the working class.[187]

Starting in 1901, the Volksverein replaced its practical-social courses with a national-economics course. While the practical-social courses were held in different towns throughout Germany, the national-economics courses were intended solely for Catholic workers and were held exclusively in Mönchengladbach. These courses hoped to provide attendees with the "academic and practical knowledge and skills that enable them to successfully take part in the Christian Worker's Movement or in worker or union associations as members of the board, as secretary, speakers," and other representative positions within worker's organizations.[188] This meant that courses generally focused on teaching attendees about relevant social and economic questions for running such a movement such as laws pertaining to unions and associations, economic theory, and an introduction to core political issues.

These courses lasted ten weeks and were free to attend, though participants were responsible for all other expenses. As local worker's organization usually chose who to send to attend the course in Mönchengladbach, the Volksverein asked that the attendees were not only those already chosen to fill leading roles, but were instead those who could remain a worker

[186] Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power,* trans. Marc Silver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 54.

[187] While the German confessional worker's movement had much in common with other religious worker's movements in Europe at the time, they differed greatly from the American Catholic Worker Movement started by Dorothy Day in the 1930s. For more on this more radical and anarchist movement, see: William J. Thorn, Phillip M. Runkel, and Susan Mountin, eds., *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001).

[188] BArch, R 8115/I/130, p. 1.

while also becoming a leader.[189] This meant that either the Volksverein or the local worker's association provided most attendees with financial support necessary to attend. The cooperation between the Volksverein and Catholic worker's movement showed the considerable cooperation that was frequent between lay Catholic organizations. With between 500 and 600 workers attending these national-economic courses over its first seven years, these courses were part of the Volksverein's intensifying focus on supporting the growing Catholic Worker's Movement through the creation of a new and well-informed generation of leaders.[190]

Alongside its leadership courses, the V.V. central office also organized meetings and lectures that were, unlike the practical-social or national-economic courses, open to all its members.[191] One American-Catholic newspaper reported on this programming in enthusiastic terms in 1901, stating that:

> With this object more than 4,000 popular meetings have been assembled. These assemblies are open to the general public, and in them the workingman finds himself surrounded by thousands of Christians who share his convictions. Eminent speakers explain and refute the errors and utopias of socialism, and the hearers are made to feel an enthusiastic love for religion, the family and the Christian organization of society. […] They are taught how to think and act in such a way as not to become the victim of the agitation and wiles of the Socialists."[192]

This combination of community building, education, and defense was typical of V.V. events throughout this period. The topics discussed in this large number of lectures tied Catholicism together with a full repudiation of social democracy. These lectures educated V.V. members on

[189] BArch, R 8115/I/130, p. 2.

[190] Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich,* 88.

[191] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933,* 64.

[192] BArch, R 8115/I/127, "Windthorst's Great Work: What His Popular Union for the Defense of Catholic Rights has Accomplished," *New York Germans Journal and Catholic Register* (March 23, 1901).

topics important to the association such as defense work, politics, or the history of Catholicism in Germany.[193] In 1893 in Württemberg, for example, a publisher from Stuttgart held a speech in the small Württemberg town of Warthausen about Liberalism and Social Democracy. This lecture led the local community to declare a resolution to support the Catholic press more ardently as well as to increase V.V. membership in the town.[194] Other lectures were also given by local priests, such as one 1898 lecture in the Bavarian town of Elchingen titled "The Jesuits as mirrored in the history of their persecution."[195] As such, these lectures were targeted at strengthening the Catholic milieu both politically, religiously, and socially. Highly political in intent and content, educational programming was a core part of the Volksverein's attempts to prevent Catholics from supporting the SPD by reinforcing Catholic unity.

These assemblies were largely organized by the local *Vertrauensmann* in communities throughout Germany. The speakers at these assemblies were often local leaders in the respective community, the regional director, or representatives from other German-Catholic organizations like the Zentrum or the Worker's Movement. As was the case in its practical-social courses, these lectures were also particularly concerned with supporting Catholic workers and strengthening support for social reform. Both the Volksverein's meetings for the public and its social and economic courses were ultimately directed at increasing German Catholics' support of the growing associational and social networks in Catholic society and politics. Such educational assemblies and courses formed the core of the Volksverein's community engagement during the German Empire.

[193] BArch, R 8115/I/112, p. 6, 98, and 125.

[194] Ibid., p. 98.

[195] Ibid., p. 28.

Alongside its lectures, the also sought to prevent German Catholics from supporting the SPD by providing them with social and economic counseling. In 1895, the Volksverein established its first *Volksbüro* (People's Office) in Mönchengladbach. By the early 1900s, the Volksverein had 37 *Volksbüros* in cities and towns throughout Germany, with thirteen in the Rhineland, seven in Westphalia, four in Hannover, three in Baden, two in Bavaria, Hesse, and Alsace-Lorraine, and one in Saxony, Brandenburg, West Prussia, and Hamburg.[196] Notably, there was no office in Silesia despite its high percentage of Catholic population, and there was also no office in Berlin, Cologne, or Frankfurt am Main. These offices provided German Catholics with information and advice on health, accident, and pension insurance, as well as on concerns pertaining to taxes, income, schools, and military service.[197] While the *Volksbüros* were primarily concerned with advising working-class V.V. members, Catholic non-members were welcome to seek out its guidance and representation regardless of their occupation.[198]

This support for Catholic working-class individuals, farmers, and other lower income groups was also predicated on preventing German Catholics from turning to the SPD or its affiliated organizations for such assistance instead. As such, the work done at the *Volksbüros* was inherently political in nature, even though it did not discuss political topics directly. The legal advice and social work provided by the *Volksbüros* was intended to strengthen the Christian worker's movement and encourage economic integration. While separate from its other work, these *Volksbüros* were a further tool for recruiting new members and engaging in local and regional affairs. In doing so, they also strengthened and supported Catholic society as a whole as

[196] BArch, R 8115/I/80, "Rundschau: Vereinswesen," *Soziale Kultur* 26 (December 1906), 926.

[197] BArch, R 8115/I/27, p. 4.

[198] Ibid., p. 5.

well. It was through this increased community involvement that it expanded its press, publications, and political defense work against the SPD.

In cities without a *Volksbüro*, the Volksverein often supported an *Arbeitersekretariat* (Labor Office). While not affiliated with the Volksverein directly, were established under its guidance and support.[199] These labor offices were established and operated in cooperation with the Catholic Worker's Movement in Berlin. By 1905, there were 36 of such offices throughout Germany, with the majority in the Rhineland, Westphalia, and Bavaria.[200] There were also two offices Hesse-Nassau and one each in Hannover, Silesia, West Prussia, Württemberg, Hesse, Baden, and Alsace-Lorraine. While most of these offices were located in the same regions as the Volksverein's *Volksbüros*, they also expanded the Volksverein's networks. This cooperation with the Catholic Worker's Movement meant that the Volksverein utilized the close connections between associations in organized political Catholicism to expand its own networks and influence more rapidly than if it had organized such offices on its own.

1.3. The 1890s as an Associational Moment

By the turn of the century, German Catholics and German Jews had both fully embraced using associations to assert and defend their respective interests in the public sphere. As membership increased and their local and regional networks grew, both the Centralverein and Volksverein's initial focus on defense work, whether political or legal, began receding in favor of more direct and community-based forms of advocacy and education. While the Centralverein and the Volksverein were established only a few years apart and both expanded into the local

[199] BArch, R 8115/I/80, "Rundschau: Vereinswesen," *Soziale Kultur* 26 (December 1906), 925-6 and 928.

[200] Ibid., 926-7.

sphere, they did so at different rates and in distinct ways. While the Volksverein had over 100,000 members almost immediately after its establishment, it was not until more than a decade later that the Centralverein's individual membership began rising considerably.

Nevertheless, the Centralverein began decentralizing almost immediately after its establishment. The Centralverein did not initially intend to expand into the local and regional sphere or begin developing educational programming. After membership in eastern and southern Germany began growing in the mid-1890s, however, its dedication to political and religious neutrality necessitated creating adaptive and tailored networks in the local sphere. Granting Centralverein members 'freedom in doubtful things' allowed for a flexibility that was not present in organized Catholicism or the Volksverein's centralized decentralization.

The uneven rate at which minority religious associations expanded into the local sphere was closely tied to their relationships with other national organizations. German Catholics in all regions but Württemberg had voted for a Catholic political party for almost twenty years by the time the Volksverein was established in 1890. This meant that most Catholics were already participating in organized Catholicism and were more willing to join a new association that, in many ways, merely represented an expansion of pre-existing forms of participation. The Centralverein, on the other hand, was the first Jewish association of its kind; it was the first defense organization run by and on behalf of German Jews and the first Jewish umbrella organization established with the primary goal of representing German-Jewish interests in the public sphere. As such, its leaders had to establish new organizational networks and, most significantly, convince German Jews that such an association was both necessary and viable. Without a precedent for local and regional support, it took the Centralverein almost a decade to

expand enough to gain the local membership necessary to begin needing official local and regional branches.

This reflected a key difference between the Centralverein and the Volksverein; despite German Catholics' status as a minority religious group, they were nevertheless more than thirty percent of the overall population, while German Jews were only around one percent.[201] As a larger and more prominent group, the Volksverein not only faced far fewer obstacles in becoming a mass organization, but could also adapt the Zentrum Party's existing organizational frameworks to incorporate tens of thousands of new members almost immediately upon its establishment. German Catholics as a whole were also considerably more religiously and socially homogenous and had developed their own insular milieu during the first decade of the German Empire. The opposite was largely the case for German Jews, who strove to integrate as much as possible and had largely embraced increased secularization. The Centralverein represented not only a far smaller number of individuals, but people who needed to be convinced of the necessity and safety of asserting both Germanness and Jewishness in the public sphere.

Both the Volksverein and the Centralverein were deeply dependent on local support for their expansion, and indifference or hostility either stalled or completely prevented such efforts. Rising antisemitism and anti-Jewish discrimination at the local level was often the main motivation for joining the Centralverein. In communities with low rates of antisemitism, however, German Jews often joined to strengthen inner-Jewish unity and support those Jewish communities that needed defense. In both Neisse and Leipzig, for example, representatives

[201] In 1890, there were 17,674,921 Catholics and 567,884 Jews out of a total German population of 49,428,470, representing 35.7 percent and one percent, respectively. Ten years later, those numbers grew in absolute terms to 20,327,913 Catholics and 586,833 Jews but remained almost statistically identical at 35.9 percent and one percent, respectively. Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt, ed., *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das deutsche Reich* vol. 16 (Berlin: Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, 1895), 1 and 9, and vol. 24 (1903), 1 and 7.

argued in 1895 and 1896 respectively that while their communities were living perfectly peacefully with their non-Jewish neighbors, it was nevertheless their duty to support the Centralverein on behalf of other German Jews who were not as fortunate.[202] The Volksverein also made a similar argument when faced with claims from Bavarian Catholics that they had no need for the Volksverein since there was no SPD in their town.[203] As well as arguing that it was their responsibility to support the Volksverein on behalf of those elsewhere, the central office also argued that all Catholics had the duty to prepare for such conflict in their own community and not lapse into a false sense of security.[204]

By the turn of the century, the Centralverein's leadership was convinced that it was necessary to become even more active, assertive, and self-sufficient, and to teach German Jews to be the same.[205] Its leadership looked to both the Volksverein's established administrative network and organized Catholic life in general as an example worth emulating. The central office praised the Volksverein for its ability to represent German-Catholic interests when the government was not willing or able to do so.[206] This positive appraisal of the Volksverein reflected the Centralverein's growing desire to act in a similar capacity for German Jews and their interests.[207] Fuchs also called on C.V. members to learn a lesson from the German Catholic's effective and persistent political intercession on behalf of Catholic interests.[208]

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[202] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 4 (October 1895), 194 and Ibid., 2 (March 1896), 174.

[203] BArch, R 8115/I/123, p. 47.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Ludwig Holländer, "Die demokratischer Grundlange des Centralvereins," *Im deutschen Reich* 18 (January 1912), 4.

[206] Ibid., 3.

[207] Lamberti, *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany,* 26 and Barkai, "*Wehr Dich!,"* 32.

[208] Fuchs, "Rechtsschutz und Rechtsfrieden," 10.

Though there was no official contact between the two associations during the 1890s, organized German Catholicism served as a model for minority religious representation during the German Empire. While some members of the Centralverein's executive board supported the idea of establishing a Jewish Zentrum party the decision to remain neutral reflected a different and more adaptive approach to minority religious representation.[209] In remaining neutral, the Centralverein encouraged its members to create new local spaces in which divergent viewpoints on German and Jewish issues and questions of identity could be openly articulated and discussed. While the Centralverein had no desire to establish a religiously-affiliated political party like the Zentrum, its leaders hoped to utilize elections to make sure that the only representatives elected to parliament were those who respected and would support minority interests in Germany.[210] Its political work was not concerned with electing Jewish candidates to parliament, but rather with ensuring that politicians who opposed antisemitism got elected and those who did not lost their mandates.[211] The Centralverein focused on supporting those who promoted equality and, in doing so, worked to secure and protect religious minorities' civil rights.

This political work primarily took place outside political campaigns. German Jews and German Catholics adapted this developing form of 'secondary' political power to advocate for their respective interests in the public sphere. By the early 1900s the rise of mass politics, German society's broader embrace of associational life, and the SPD's growing political success all contributed to an even further expansion of associations and pressure groups who sought to

[209] Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, 38.

[210] Fuchs, "Rückblick auf die zehnjährige Tätigkeit," 96.

[211] Ibid.

influence and shape both official policy and German society. As such, religious minority groups continued utilizing and adapting these associational frameworks to better influence and participate in German society and politics throughout the German Empire. Though their approach to articulating religious distinctiveness and identity differed, both the Centralverein and the Volksverein shared a determination to engage in the public sphere with the same national and civil interests as all Germans.[212] In establishing the Centralverein and the Volksverein, both German Jews and German Catholics took part in the growing network of associational life that defined the last decade of the nineteenth century. As such, it was in this decade that the Centralverein and the Volksverein both laid the foundations for the administrative networks and community engagement that came to define their work after the turn of the century.

Despite the considerable influence of regionalized and localized identities, religious minority unity and cohesion was also a form of centralization. It provided individuals in the local and regional sphere with shared language and definitions. In beginning to embrace both regional and local variation as well as a shared German-Jewish identity, the Centralverein expanded how German Jews understood their place in civil society. In fighting for their Germanness and Jewishness instead of just against antisemites, the Centralverein hoped to convince German Jews to assert themselves, their rights, and belonging within their communities while also building a positive connection to Jewishness. The establishment of the Centralverein in 1893 was, therefore, a key turning point in how German Jews understood what it meant to be Jewish in the German public sphere. It was the catalyst for the end of over a century of German Jews deferring to non-Jews to represent and defend their interests. Part of the larger boom in associational life,

[212] MGB Hpw 3, Josef Joos, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland* (MGladbach: Sekretariat Sozialer Studentenrarbeit, 1914), 67.

the 1890s was also the start of a new period of German-Jewish advocacy, self-assertion, and defense that began to flourish after the turn of the century.

Chapter Two
The Path that Divides Us: Associational Expansion in the Late German Empire

After the turn of the century, associational life in Germany remained a pivotal aspect of civic and political life. As interest groups continued gaining social and political authority in the decade prior to the First World War, they became better positioned to influence politics and the German state.[1] While this collaboration strengthened associations' ability to assert their interests at the highest levels, the state also benefited from their assistance in shaping public opinion and mobilizing support for specific policies or legislation.[2] Even when the government did not seek out interest groups' cooperation directly, their size and political influence made it increasingly difficult for officials to avoid their interference entirely. This was largely a continuation of the political and social trends that emerged in the 1890s and became more prominent as political mobilization continued growing.

The closer cooperation between the German state and interest groups during this period meant that antisemitic associations like the Bund der Landwirte and the Alldeutscher Verband (Pan German League, or A.V.) were able to exert pressure on state structures to disadvantage German Jews. The state did little to address antisemitism in the early 1900s. While Protestant and Catholic religious communities in Prussia received a financial subsidy from the state budget, Jewish communities were refused the same support. [3] Those in Baden, Bavaria, and Württemberg, however, all were eligible for state support in their respective regions.[4] With over

[1] Hans-Peter Ullmann, *Interessensverbände in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1988), 122.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Marjorie Lamberti, "The Jewish Struggle for the Legal Equality of Religions in Imperial Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 23 (January 1978), 101.

[4] Lamberti, "The Jewish Struggle for the Legal Equality of Religions in Imperial Germany," 104.

two-thirds of all Jews in Germany living in Prussia at the turn of the century and Prussian political hegemony within the German state, the Prussian government's continued lack of recognition of Jewish religious life set the tone for how German Jews were allowed to integrate into the national polity.[5] Prussian ambivalence toward its Jewish communities convinced C.V. leadership that the German government and its administrative bodies would only step in if public opinion demanded it, and not at its own initiative or the Centralverein's insistence.[6] That German states remained responsible for determining whether to acknowledge Jewish religious communities as they did Christian ones made their status highly uneven and regionalized. Throughout the German Empire, experiences of Jewishness were closely tied to regionalized experiences of Germanness as well.

After the initial expansion and development in the 1890s, it was in the ten years prior to the First World War that both the Centralverein and the Volksverein came into their own within their respective communities. During the early 1900s, the Volksverein became not only the largest Catholic association in Germany, but also the Catholic workers' movement's primary source of education and social support. While the Volksverein maintained its centralized decentralization throughout this period, the Centralverein decentralized further by granting its growing network of local branches new autonomy within their own communities. While the roots for this community engagement were first established in the 1890s, it was not until after 1905 that the number of C.V. local and regional branches began expanding. As it decentralized and became more established in communities throughout Germany, its leading representatives gained the confidence and support necessary to expand its role in the German-Jewish

[5] Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt, ed., *Die Volkszählung am 1. Dezember 1900 im deutschen Reich,* vol. 150, *Die Volkszählung am 1. Dezember 1900 im Deutschen Reich* (Berlin: Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, 1902), 108.

[6] Justizrat Salinger, "Was erschwert unsere Arbeit?" *Im deutschen Reich* 16 (December 1910), 777.

community. During the early 1900s, the Centralverein became increasingly more dedicated to developing community spaces and programming that both strengthened and asserted German-Jewish identity.

It was in this period that the C.V. leadership began fully prioritizing the support of the local and regional spheres that began emerging in the late 1890s. As C.V. members established local and regional branches during the early 1900s, education and local intervention became defining aspects of the Centralverein's advocacy and defense. As German Jews became more secure in asserting their Jewishness in the public sphere, they were more determined to express both their Germanness and their Jewishness together as one cohesive identity. As such, the Centralverein became "more focused inward, more positive, more Jewish" during the early 1900s.[7] While defense was the initial motivating factor behind the Centralverein's expansion into the local sphere, local branches increasingly embraced positive work that prioritized Jewishness as well to balance and support their defense work. As Shulamit Volkov argued, this dedication was what made the Centralverein into an "agent of return" to Jewishness as well.[8] Both the act of decentralization and growing local support and demand for these local branches reflected German Jews' growing commitment to synthesized Jewishness and Germanness.

This shift to the local sphere was part of the C.V. leadership's larger recognition that the previous methods of legal and political defense work were no longer sufficient to eliminate antisemitism or defend German-Jewish interests. As the Centralverein argued that legal defense was best conducted on behalf of all German Jewry, so was the development and support of a

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[7] Eugen Fuchs, "Referat über die Stellung des Centralvereins zum Zionismus in der Delegiertenversammlung," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 237.

[8] Shulamit Volkov, "The Dynamics of Dissimilation: *Ostjuden* and German Jews," in *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From Enlightenment to the Second World War,* ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985), 198.

synthesized German-Jewish identity dependent on coordinated networks within the German-Jewish community at the local, regional, and national levels. Through the expansion of local branches and community programming in the ten years prior to the First World War, the Centralverein both adapted existing and created new networks for instilling and advocating a synthesis between Jewishness and Germanness. This chapter argues that the establishment of local and regional branches in this period began building a framework for German Jews to both fight antisemitism and to build a strong, assertive German-Jewish identity. It was at the regional and local levels that German Jews navigated and discussed questions of identity, belonging, and assimilation. In the decade prior to the First World War, local and regional branches began working together to create designated spaces in which German Jews could do so openly and regularly. As such, the Centralverein's regional and local sphere helped shape emancipation and integration into forces that unified German Jews while also strengthening local and regional particularity.

2.1. The C.V. in the Local and Regional Sphere

The number of German Jews who became Centralverein members grew considerably in the twelve years prior to the First World War. While it had 12,000 individual members in 1902, number had risen to 38,000 by 1914, and reached over 150,000 when including corporate members.[9] The number of communities joining the Centralverein as corporate members slowed as the number of individual members and local branches increased in the early 1900s. The

[9] "Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens am Schlusse des zweiten Jahrzehnts," *Im deutschen Reich* 19 (February 1913), 52 and Julius Rothholz, *Die deutschen Juden in Zahl und Bild* (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 1925), 40. Even with the numerous corporate members, the C.V. represented around a quarter of German Jews at the time. Statistische Reichsamt, *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das deutsche Reich: vierzigster Jahrgang* (Berlin: Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, 1919), 9 and Felix Goldmann, "Der Ausklang der 'Kunstwartsdebatte," *Im deutschen Reich* 18 (December 1912), 537.

decline of corporate membership and the rise of regional and local branches after the turn of the twentieth century both reflected German Jews' increased self-assertiveness and political participation. The Centralverein's leadership attributed this increased self-confidence and assertiveness to its own advocacy on behalf of German Jewry over the prior decade. As the local and regional sphere grew, the Centralverein's support of Jewishness and Germanness expanded with it and grew more regionally and locally nuanced.

While the Centralverein claimed to be the representative organization for all German Jews, this changed following the establishment of the Verband der deutschen Juden (Federation of German Jews or VdJ) in 1904. From its establishment in 1904 until its dissolution in 1922, the VdJ was the umbrella lobby organization for German Jews. As such, it lobbied government agencies and political parties on behalf of German-Jewish interests such as community aid, the right to kosher slaughtering, the amendment of citizenship laws, and for equal educational and teaching opportunities, among other causes.[10] This lobby work was almost exclusively conducted at the national level and on behalf of German Jewry as a whole rather than particular communities or regions. In incorporating representatives from religious communities, associations like the Centralverein, ZVfD (Zionist Federation of Germany, henceforth ZVfD) and DIGB, as well as select individuals, the VdJ greatly shifted the dynamics of German-Jewish

[10] "Die Auflösung des Verbandes der deutschen Juden," *Jüdische Rundschau* 17 (May 26, 1922), 280. All five of the main founding members were closely tied to leading German-Jewish associations of the time; alongside Eugen Fuchs and Maximilian Horwitz, who were the leading figures in the C.V. at the time, Martin Philippson was the president of the DIGB, while Edmund Friedemann was a founding member of the Abwehrverein and Bernhard Breslauer was a notable lawyer and member of the Berlin Jewish community. Shortly after Historian Martin Philippson became its first chairman in 1904, Edmund Lachmann, who was concurrently also the deputy chairman of the Berlin Jewish community, held the position until 1909. Lachmann's dual position as both head of the VdJ and of the Berlin Jewish community was representative of the organization as a whole. Ulrich Wyrwa "Die Reaktion des deutschen Judentums auf den Antisemitismus im deutschen Kaiserreich: eine Rekapitulation," in *Einspruch und Abwehr: Die Reaktion des europäischen Judentums auf die Entstehung des Antisemitismus (1879-1914)*, ed. Fritz Bauer Institut (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2010), 34, Max P. Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge, 1918-1938: eine Geschichte des Preussischen Landesverbandes Jüdischer Gemeinden [1918-1938]* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1981), 5, and Barbara Strenge, *Juden im preussischen Justizdienst 1812-1918: der Zugang zu den juristischen Berufen als Indikator der gesellschaftlichen Emanzipation* (München: K.G. Saur, 1996), 323.

associational representation for the remainder of the German Empire. The VdJ was the first attempt at consolidating Jewish associational life nation-wide and created a precedence for intra-associational cooperation within the German-Jewish community. While this meant that the Centralverein largely cooperated with the VdJ at the national level in Berlin, the VdJ's lobby work at the state level prior to the First World War enabled the Centralverein to focus on expanding into the regional and local sphere instead.[11]

While few local branches were established prior to 1906, the pace of expansion accelerated rapidly after the middle of the decade. While the Centralverein only had seventeen local branches in 1906 – five of which were in the greater Berlin area – there were 58 local branches in April 1908 and 174 in 1918.[12] All but four of the local branches established between 1908 and 1918 were founded prior to the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914.[13] Notably, six of the eight local branches in western Germany prior to 1907 were in the area of Rhineland-Westphalia, which was also the first to establish a regional branch in 1905. One reason why the Centralverein expanded so rapidly in this region after the turn of the century was due to its particular relationship with non-Jewish residents and Catholic society. As Jacob Borut demonstrated, Jews in the Rhineland and Westphalia region were far more likely to support the

[11] *Das deutsche Judentum: seine Parteien und Organisationen* (Berlin: Verlag der Neuen Jüdischen Monatshefte, 1919), 52-55. The VdJ began its lobby work in 1905, with the pace of its work increasing dramatically starting in 1908. In the last six years before the start of the First World War, the VdJ lobbied against laws on regulating *Sonntagsruhe* four times, the right for Jewish communities to receive financial support from the state three times, the right to kosher slaughtering twice, as well as longer ongoing intervention regarding citizenship laws, among others. The VdJ was also particularly active in lobbying for equal educational and teaching opportunities, defending Jewish kosher meat slaughtering practices, making exceptions for Jewish clerks to work briefly on Sundays despite it being a state-ordered rest day, as well as for Jews' ability to become officers in the German army.

[12] "Die erste allgemeine Delegierten-Versammlung des Central-Vereins," *Im deutschen Reich* 12 (December 1906), 678, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 14 (April 1908), 243, and Paul Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, (Berlin: Verlag des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, 1918), 76-81.

[13] According to *IdR,* one was established in 1916 and three more in 1918.

Zentrum party than Jews elsewhere in Germany and identified closely with the local Catholic community.[14] These close relationships with Catholics within these communities also increased German-Jewish support for associational life. With the Zentrum, the Volksverein, and the extensive network of local religious and social associations, German Catholics continued serving as a model for initial expansion in these regions.

While local participation first progressed most rapidly in eastern Germany in the 1890s, the first regional branches were established in western and southern Germany in the early 1900s. As the number of local branches grew, regional branches became increasingly necessary to manage growing local demands and the need for locally tailored administrative and educational policies. This began in 1905 with the establishment of the Centralverein's first regional branch in Rhineland-Westphalia. In November of that year, leading local and regional representatives met with Julius Brodnitz from the Berlin central office in Düsseldorf to establish what became the Centralverein's first regional branch. Less than a year after LVB Rhineland-Westphalia was established, C.V. members from Württemberg met in Stuttgart to establish a regional branch there as well. This was a response to the growing number of members in smaller communities throughout the region who needed tailored administrative support. To meet the local sphere's needs, these representatives from Württemberg insisted that the only effective response was to decentralize both the Centralverein's propaganda work and administrative network.[15]

The increase of local branches in regions throughout Germany was due in large part to a gradual regionalization within the Centralverein and the localization of its approach to recruiting new members and community engagement. While the Centralverein's initial expansion laid the

[14] Jacob Borut and Oded Heilbronner, "Catholics and Jews: Two Religious Minorities in the German Second Reich," *Jewish Studies* 37 (1996/1997), 140.

[15] Die Redaktion, "Korrespondenzen," *Im deutschen Reich* 7-8 (July 1906), 476.

foundations for its decentralization, these spheres remained highly dependent on support from the central office. Decentralization in the Centralverein was predicated on these branches maintaining considerable autonomy within their respective communities to better adapt and respond to local needs. As the number of local and regional branches grew, expansion sought to strike a balance between meeting local needs while also advancing a common cause.

2.1.1. Decentralization from the Center

Despite growing calls for decentralization, regional and local branches had little official autonomy within their own communities prior to 1907. Following pressure from local branches – and particularly from OG Hamburg – to increase cooperation between the local and national levels, the central office announced in December 1906 that the first *Delegiertenversammlung* would take place in Berlin in February 1907.[16] Attendance was limited to representatives from communities with at least 75 members or regional branches with 300. To encourage as many local delegates to attend as possible, the C.V. central office called on its members to establish branches in their own communities and to recruit as many new members as possible.[17] This appeal was highly effective, with the number of local branches outside Berlin increasing from twelve in December 1906 to 32 by the start of the first *Delegiertenversammlung* two months later.[18] This increase of almost forty percent showed the considerable demand from local members for representation at the regional and national level. This centralized order for

[16] Der Vorstand, "Die erste allgemeine Delegierten-Versammlung des Central-Vereins," *Im deutschen Reich* 12 (December 1906), 677.

[17] Ibid., 678-9.

[18] Der Vorstand, "Die erste allgemeine Delegierten-Versammlung des Central-Vereins," 678 and "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 13 (March 1907), 171.

decentralization was the catalyst for the rapid increase in local and regional engagement. As such, it accelerated the Centralverein's shift to supporting localization and regionalized autonomy that began around the turn of the century.

The first *Delegiertenversammlung* took place on February 24, 1907 in Berlin. This assembly laid the groundwork for the Centralverein's rapid expansion at the local level by better defining the relationship between local branches and the central office. In doing so, this first assembly of delegates hoped to promote closer cooperation between the central office and the local branches. As such, it laid the groundwork for the larger decisions on decentralization and statute changes at the next assembly two years later.

Despite increasing decentralization, the number of delegates attending these assemblies declined between 1907 and 1909. Of the 127 attendees at the first assembly, 92 – over seventy percent – were representatives from towns and cities outside Berlin.[19] While almost the same number of towns were represented in 1907 and 1909, there was an eleven percent decline in the total number of delegates from outside Berlin compared to 1907.[20] While the number of communities who sent multiple representatives to the *Delegiertenversammlung* dropped most in western towns, it was only the eastern communities that lost more than one delegate from the same town or city. Of the three local branches from eastern Germany who sent multiple delegates to both assemblies, the number of delegates from Posen declined from five in 1907 to two in 1909, Breslau dropped from five to three, and Stettin from four to two.[21] The declining number of delegates from eastern cities and the rising number from western ones reflected

[19] "Die erste Delegiertenversammlung," *Im deutschen Reich* 13 (April 1904), 218-9.

[20] "Stenographischer Bericht über die zweite Delegierten-Versammlung des Central-Vereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens," *Im deutschen Reich* 15 (March 1909), 221-2.

[21] Ibid., 221-2 and "Die erste Delegiertenversammlung," 218-9.

broader population shifts within German Jewry at the time; between 1900 and 1910, the number of German Jews living in the Prussian provinces of Posen, Silesia, and Pomerania declined consistently both in absolute numbers and in percentage of the population.[22] Unlike in eastern Germany, the absolute number of Jews in western Germany grew steadily throughout the German Empire, but were outpaced by faster population growth among Christians.[23]

The declining number of German Jews in eastern cities was partially attributable to antisemitic political parties' comparative success in their regions. During the early 1900s, antisemitic candidates received the most support in Saxony, Thuringia, and Hesse, as well as in Pomerania, Brandenburg, and other eastern regions of Germany.[24] Comparatively, antisemitic candidates received almost no support in southern regions like Baden, Bavaria, or Württemberg. Antisemitic parties were far more successful in predominantly Protestant regions than they were

[22] The population numbers were as follows:

		1871	1900	1910
Posen	Jews	61,982	35,327	26,512
	Total	1,583,830	1,887,198	2,099,831
Percent of Total		3.9%	1.9%	1.2%
Silesia	Jews	46,586	47,586	44,985
	Total	3,707,066	4,668,546	5,225,962
Percent of Total		1.2%	1%	0.8%
Pomerania	Jews	13,036	10,0880	8,859
	Total	1,431,627	1,634,716	1,716,918
Percent of Total		0.9%	0.6%	0.5%

Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt, ed., *Die Volkszählung am 1. Dezember 1900 im deutschen Reich,* vol. 150, 108 and Königlich Preußisches Statistisches Landesamt (ed.), *Statistisches Jahrbuch für den preußischen Staat,* vol. 9 (Berlin: Verlag des Königlichen Statistischen Landesamts, 1912), 10.

[23] The population numbers were as follows:

		1871	1900	1910
Rhineland	Jews	38,423	52,251	57,287
	Total	3,579,297	5,739,023	7,121,145
Percent of Total		1%	0.9%	0.8%
Hessen-Nassau	Jews	36,390	48,105	51,781
	Total	1,400,059	1,897,273	2,221,021
Percent of Total		2.6%	2.5%	2.3%

Ibid.

[24] Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (London: Peter Halban, 1988), 193.

in Catholic ones. This was due to the fact that German Catholics still overwhelmingly supported the Zentrum party during elections and were less likely to vote for antisemitic candidates.[25] It was not that German Catholics were free from antisemitism, but rather that, compared to German Protestants, they were not receptive to political or racial antisemitism.[26] German Jews living in predominantly Catholic regions were more likely to participate in non-Jewish community events since they were less likely to experience open antisemitism than those German Jews living in largely Protestant areas.

These different regional experiences of antisemitism and internal migration shaped how local C.V. delegates represented their interests at the national level. While the number of delegates from specific towns and regions fluctuated, the *Delegiertenversammlungen* gave the growing number of local and regional leaders the opportunity to have a prominent voice in determining association-wide policy for the first time. They were instrumental in shaping how the Centralverein decentralized and how it regulated the relationships between the local, regional, and national spheres for the remainder of the Centralverein's existence. In bringing together representatives from across Germany, the assemblies of delegates in 1907 and 1909 also allowed the central office to meet and educate local leadership. In doing so, these *Delegiertenversammlungen* provided local representatives with further tools for advocating the Centralverein's interests in their respective communities.

Two years after the first assembly, the Centralverein held its second *Delegiertenversammlung* on February 21, 1909 in Berlin. The three main topics discussed during

[25] Stefan Scheil, *Die Entwicklung des politischen Antisemitismus in Deutschland zwischen 1881 und 1912: eine wahlgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999), 142 and Olaf Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 129.

[26] Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich*, 19.

the second assembly were the Mugdan affair, women's new role in the Centralverein, and expanding the statutes to grant the local and regional sphere more representation at the national level. As such, this assembly dealt with managing tensions between the local, regional, and national levels as well as clarifying the ties between members and these branches.

As these assemblies of delegates remained based in Berlin and led by prominent Berlin-based executive board members like Eugen Fuchs and Maximilian Horwitz, they often centered on topics particular to Berlin politics. This was particularly the case at this second assembly, which took place at the height of the so-called Mugdan affair. In 1908, physician Otto Mugdan, who was a Jewish convert to Protestantism, ran for a position on the Berlin city council on behalf of the FVp. His candidacy sparked a large debate among the Centralverein's leadership in Berlin as to whether German Jews should support baptized Jewish candidates.[27] While some prominent C.V. leaders came out in direct support of Mugdan, both Fuchs and Horwitz took a more reluctant public approach in the fear that direct opposition would increase antisemitic attacks against Jews.[28]

This debate divided the Centralverein both along political as well as geographic lines. Representatives from Stuttgart received broad support from other non-Berlin delegates when they criticized the fact that the Berlin representatives were debating the Mugdan issue at the 1909 *Delegiertenversammlung*.[29] While they understood the heated nature of the debate in Berlin, C.V. members in southern Germany did not consider it a debatable question. Instead,

[27] Lamberti, *Jewish Activism in Imperial Germany*, 93-4.

[28] Ibid., 93.

[29] "Stenographischer Bericht über die zweite Delegierten-Versammlung" *Im deutschen Reich* 15 (March 1909), 143.

they asserted that anything less than fully condemning baptized Jews was dangerous and threatened to drive members away from the Centralverein.[30]

While representatives from southern Germany fully rejected conversion, representatives from eastern Germany did not see the need for such a debate since conversion was common enough in their communities that there was little local understanding for why it was controversial in the first place. The representative from Königsberg, for example, argued that supporting a baptized Jew posed no problem in East Prussia since it was highly common for Jews with little connection to their Jewishness to have been baptized.[31] The plurality of regional attitudes toward baptized Jews and how the Centralverein should approach baptized political candidates reflected differences in how German Jews in each region viewed the relationship between their Jewishness and their Germanness. Jews in Prussia were subject to more professional restrictions than those in Württemberg, where the Jewish community was recognized by the state. Baptism in regions with professional restrictions was often a means for advancement and was less associated with a blatant rejection of all ties to Jewishness. Though the Centralverein did not make a final decision on the question of supporting baptized Jewish politicians, the Mugdan affair and the large debate at the second *Delegiertenversammlung* in 1909 reflected the growing challenge of maintaining Berlin's authority while also supporting increased participation and influence from the peripheries.

The second topic discussed at the 1909 *Delegiertenversammlung* was the new *Reichsvereinsgesetz* (Reich Association Law), which was ratified in April 1908. This regulated

[30] The representative from Kassel shared the confusion over why the central office was so focused on this issue but did not share Cologne's vehement rejection of baptism. "Stenographischer Bericht über die zweite Delegierten-Versammlung des Central-Vereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (February 21, 1909)," *Im deutschen Reich* 15 (March 1909), 204-5.

[31] "Stenographischer Bericht über die zweite Delegierten-Versammlung des Central-Vereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (February 21, 1909)," 210.

the previously uneven laws in all German states pertaining to associations and their rights at the national level. This changed the associational landscape in Germany considerably between the first and second *Delegiertenversammlungen*. Along with unifying regulations under one nation-wide legal standard, the Reich Association Law also permitted women to participate in associational life for the first time.

While the Centralverein encouraged women to participate at all levels, the Volksverein remained a self-styled "men's organization."[32] In October 1908, the Volksverein's board of managers met in Frankfurt to decide that, while it would accept women as lifelong members – particularly those who were economically independent – it would not attempt to recruit Catholic women to the Volksverein in any way.[33] Instead, the Volksverein officially deferred to the Katholischer Frauenbund (Catholic Women's League, or KFB).[34] While women were allowed to attend V.V. meetings, they were generally not allowed to lead the meetings or to hold lectures, as the topics were considered too political or economic for women to discuss.[35] There was a considerable discrepancy between how both the Volksverein and the Zentrum approached allowing women from rural or urban regions to participate in local meetings. Women in the

[32] BArch, R 8115/I/8, p. 189.

[33] BArch, R 8115/I/223, p. 6.

[34] The boundaries of this division between the V.V. and the KFB were a source of debate and tension during the immediate pre-war years. This was particularly the case in 1913/14, when the KFB accused the V.V. of using its defense work against the SPD to take away the KFB's autonomy. BArch, R 8115/I/8, October 1914. During this period, the central office repeatedly reassured the KFB that while the V.V. could not prevent women from joining, it had no interest in establishing its own branches for women, and it had no plans to give women any leadership positions. Nevertheless, as the V.V. continued allowing women to attend their educational lectures, the need to regulate the relationship between the two associations at the national level remained. In September 1912, representatives from the V.V. and KFB met to discuss the relationship between the two organizations. The primary result of this meeting was the conclusion that the KFB lacked both the material and ideological ability to engage in politics. They therefore reached a temporary and limited agreement that the V.V. would provide political education within the KFB. BArch, R 8115/I/223, p. 14.

[35] BArch, R 8115/I/223, p. 20.

urban and working-class Rhineland were most likely to support social democracy since they and their husbands were often predominantly working class. In response, it was only in these areas that the Zentrum organized women's branches and the Volksverein invited women to attend its meetings. As more agricultural communities were less receptive to the SPD's platform, the Volksverein conducted no outreach to women in these rural areas.[36] This highly limited inclusion was not based on the desire to integrate women into the Volksverein, but to prevent them from becoming active in the SPD.

Unlike the Volksverein, which only included women out of political necessity, the Centralverein welcomed German Jewish women immediately after the ratification of the *Reichsvereinsgesetz*. Jewish women had already established an influential association of their own four years prior to this law – the *Jüdischer Frauenbund* (League of Jewish Women or JFB). The JFB was particularly focused on improving Jewish women and children's welfare and providing aid in social causes. With its demand that Jewish women also be allowed to participate in and shape German-Jewish society, the JFB was part of the larger rise of feminist consciousness around the turn of the century.[37] As such, by the time women were allowed to join general associations, there was already a precedent for Jewish women participating in associational life and asserting their Jewishness in the public sphere. At the second *Delegiertenversammlung*, Brodnitz called on all German-Jewish women to join the Centralverein, become active in its local branches, and make the Centralverein an organization open equally to both men and women.[38] While women were initially barred from becoming a

[36] BArch, R 8115/I/223, p. 19.

[37] Marion A. Kaplan, *Die jüdische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland: Organisation und Ziele des Jüdischen Frauenbundes 1904-1938* (Hamburg: Hans Christian Verlag, 1981), 121.

[38] "Stenographischer Bericht über die zweite Delegiertenversammlung des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens," *Im deutschen Reich* 3/4 (March/April 1909), 170.

member of the Centralverein's executive board, they were encouraged to hold all other positions and, particularly, to become active leaders in the local sphere.[39] This decision received resounding support from the local and regional representatives in attendance at the second *Delegiertenversammlung*.

Only six months after women were granted the legal right to join and participate in associational life, the Centralverein held its first and only *Frauenversammlung* (assembly for women) during the German Empire. Held in Berlin by the C.V. central office, the first speaker was Henriette May, who attended as a representative from the Jüdischer Frauenbund (League of Jewish Women). After much applause, May's lecture on 'The Rights and Duties of Jewish Women in Public Life' was followed by a speech by the head of the Centralverein's Legal Defense Commission Julius Brodnitz. Here he focused on the importance of educating and training Jewish women both to assert themselves as Jews in public and raise their children with both Germanness and Jewishness.[40] With 89 women joining the Centralverein as a result of these two lectures, *IdR* editor Alphonse Levy praised the assembly as a "milestone in the history of the association […]."[41] While this was the only assembly of its kind prior to the Weimar Republic, this *Frauenversammlung* was the beginning of the Centralverein's active outreach to Jewish women.

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[39] Christina Goldmann, *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in Rheinland und Westfalen 1903–1938* (PhD Dissertation, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, 2006), 41 and "Stenographischer Bericht über die zweite Delegiertenversammlung des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens," *Im deutschen Reich* 3/4 (March/April 1909), 170. While women were initially barred from the executive board, they were allowed to join the C.V.'s other main administrative body – the general management board (*Gesamtvorstand*). Henriette May was the first woman elected to this board in 1917 and joined as a representative of the Jüdisches Frauenbund. "Eine Sitzung des Gesamtvorstandes des Centralvereins," *Im deutschen Reich* 24 (January 1918), 31.

[40] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 14 (December 1908), 718. Henriette May was a founding member of the Jüdischer Frauenbund and acted as its secretary until her death in 1924. Along with her work for the Frauenbund, May was also the first woman to be elected treasurer in the *Zentralwohlfahrtstelle der deutschen Juden* (Central Welfare Office for German Jews) and the first woman on the C.V.'s executive board in 1917. Kaplan, *Die jüdische Frauenbewegung in Deutschland*, 143-4.

[41] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 14 (December 1908), 719.

This programming for women was part of a growing focus on education within the German-Jewish community as a whole. As both Paula Hyman and Marion Kaplan argued, by teaching their children how to participate in middle-class German society, Jewish women acted as "arbiters of German culture."[42] In doing so, they raised a new generation of integrated and educated German Jews.[43] Even as women blended the public and private sphere within the home, this education in both Germanness and Jewishness occurred behind closed doors.[44] The private nature of Jewishness meant that there was no synthesis of the two, but rather that religious and civic life remained largely separate. The Centralverein's new outreach to women aimed to further support this already-existing synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness that Jewish women were responsible for imparting in the home and to strengthen the next generations' German-Jewish identity from the very beginning. Previously centered in the private sphere, the Centralverein drew a synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness further into the public sphere.

In response to its changing priorities, the Centralverein amended its statutes in 1909. The changes prioritized establishing local branches and granted them considerable administrative influence. Even as the assembly of delegates changed the statutes to allow for and accommodate increased local and regional autonomy, the Berlin central office remained responsible for making the large financial and administrative decisions for the association as a whole. Berlin's considerable influence was reflected in the distribution of executive board members in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany. The Centralverein's statutes required that at least half of the executive board's members reside in Berlin, with the rother half either appointed by the

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[42] Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 9, 33 and Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 54-5.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 4.

executive board itself, as was the rule between 1893 and 1909, or elected by the board to the position, as was the case in the revised statutes from 1909.[45] With the central office's leadership tied closely to Berlin, changes to the statutes balanced providing the local sphere with more representation while also maintaining limited centralization in Berlin.

Despite growing decentralization, the Centralverein's leadership in Berlin was not always welcoming to Jewish communities outside Berlin. Though its expansion into the local and regional sphere was accelerating considerably during this period, the C.V. executive often defined the organization largely along the division of Berlin and everything else "out there."[46] To emphasize this divide, syndic Ludwig Holländer stated at the 1909 *Delegiertenversammlung*, that those German Jews who did not live in Berlin were living in the diaspora.[47] Despite this dismissive attitude, the Centralverein was increasingly dependent on and defined by the regional and local sphere role in conducting defense work and strengthening German-Jewish identity from the early 1910s onward.

2.1.2. The Expansion of Local Programming

While the central office retained considerable authority in the decision-making process at the national level, local and regional branches nevertheless gained considerable autonomy in

[45] Stenographischer Bericht über die Ordentliche Mitgliederversammlung," *Im deutschen Reich* 15 (March 1909), 235 and WL MF Doc 338/W367, *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (Berlin: 1893), 102. In 1893, there were thirteen members of the executive board and all were from Berlin, while in 1918 there were 59 board members of which thirty were from Berlin. This reflected a broader shift to including the periphery in the centralized decision-making process while also preserving Berlin's dominant position. WL MF Doc 338/W367, *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (Berlin: 1893), 6-7 and Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, 73-4.

[46] "Stenographischer Bericht über die ordentliche Mitgliederversammlung," *Im deutschen Reich* 15 (March 1909), 230.

[47] Ibid.

their own spheres in the years prior to the First World War. With the expansion of the regional and local branches, the Centralverein was able to shift the focus of its defense work from legal and state intervention to community programming. As such, a well-functioning local branch with active members became increasingly essential in ensuring that German Jews received the representation and support they needed. [48] In areas without a regional branch, local branches also functioned as the natural intermediary between the central office and Centralverein members.[49] This meant that for many communities during the German Empire, their local board and members were fully responsible for both managing administrative concerns and organizing programming in their communities. It was at the local level that the Centralverein operated most extensively prior to the First World War. The local branches were the foundation of the Centralverein's expansion, its decentralization, and political engagement during this period. It was not until after 1910 that the regional branches begena assuming responsibility for the intermediary level of management. This gradually relegated the local branches to operating solely at the local level in an ongoing process that continued into the early Weimar Republic. The roles of local, regional, and national levels were in flux and adapted according to the state of the Centralverein's decentralization.

As the number of local branches grew, the need for a larger administrative framework developed as well. Overall, ten regional branches were established between 1908 and 1914; LVB Pomerania and Baden were both founded in 1908, Hessen/Hessen-Nassau in 1909, the Kingdom of Saxony in 1909/10, the Palatinate in 1910, East Prussia, Upper Silesia, and Lower Silesia in 1911, Posen in 1913, and West Prussia in 1914. While the Centralverein was the largest Jewish

[48] Holländer, "Die demokratische Grundlage des Central-Vereins," *Im deutschen Reich* 18 (January 1912), 6-7.

[49] Ibid.

defense association in Germany, it was not the only one in the early 1900s. Established in 1893, the Vereinigung badischer Israeliten (Union of Israelites from Baden or VBI) was a regional Jewish defense organization solely for German Jews in Baden.[50] While the VBI operated independently of the Centralverein until 1908, it also occasionally intervened in local incidents at the Centralverein's behest in the early 1900s.[51] The VBI joined the Centralverein as a regional branch in early 1908 after eight years of repeated and failed attempts at negotiations and the subsequent cooptation of VBI leaders to the C.V. executive board.[52] Despite becoming a regional branch and joining the Centralverein, however, LVB Baden nevertheless kept its name as the Vereinigung badischer Israeliten into the 1930s. While the VBI was a C.V. regional branch from 1908 onwards, in keeping its own name on its letterhead, it retained a sense of difference from the other regional branches, even though it had the same level of autonomy. In both recognizing the VBI's regional particularity and fully integrating it into its regional network, the Centralverein began consolidating German-Jewish local, regional, and national networks of engagement and self-assertion.

While Centralverein already had a small number of dual members, with its consolidation into the Centralverein, the VBI's roughly 800 members became part of the Centralverein and pressure grew to establish local branches in Baden. In establishing local branches for the first time, the VBI began supporting community programming and education for the first time as well. As the Centralverein's local and regional spheres gained both more autonomy in their

[50] Dr. Hoffmann, "Versammlung des Landesausschusses für Rheinland-Westfalen," *Im deutschen Reich* 3 (March 1908), 148. VBI members were still allowed to join the C.V. as individual members.

[51] Maximilian Horwitz, "Jahresbericht," *Im deutschen Reich* 11 (March 1905), 134.

[52] The first mention of the central office's desire to incorporate the VBI into the C.V. in *IdR* was from a brief report on the C.V.'s membership growth at an ordinary assembly in Berlin in November 1900. "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 6 (November 1900), 610.

communities and influence on associational policy-making in Berlin, the number of local and regional branches began increasing rapidly as well.

Of all the regional branches in the Centralverein both during the German Empire and later during the Weimar Republic, LVB Baden was the only one that began as an independent organization. In incorporating the VBI as its regional branch for Baden, the Centralverein integrated a previously autonomous regional association into its larger Berlin-based administrative structure. It was this independence that had hindered the Centralverein's first attempts to negotiate with VBI representatives. VBI leaders were both reluctant to relinquish the association's legal status in Baden and apprehensive that support from Berlin would take too long to reach them when they needed it.[53] By the early 1900s, the regional reluctance to participating in a Prussian-based association that was common in the 1890s had receded in areas like Bavaria, Baden, and Württemberg. This declining reticence represented the local and regional spheres' acknowledgement that the C.V. central office worked with and listened to delegates from the peripheries.[54] Present from the beginning of the Centralverein's expansion in the mid-1890s, there was now a decade of trust from the periphery that local and regional identities would be respected within the Centralverein's work.

Nevertheless, strong regional identities remained significant factors in how individuals chose to participate in national associations. This was also the case in the Volksverein; despite the fact that the majority of Bavaria's residents were Catholic, the Volksverein's expansion into the region was also hindered by persistent local resistance to being part of a Prussian

[53] "Die erste Delegierten-Versammlung," *Im deutschen Reich* 13 (April 1907), 208.

[54] Jacob Borut, "The Province versus Berlin? Relations between Berlin and the Other Communities as a Factor in German Jewish Organisational History at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 44 (January 1999), 136.

association.[55] That both German Jews and German Catholics in southern Germany were reluctant to join a national association showed the strength of regional German identities as well. As a kingdom and grand duchy prior to unification, both Bavaria and Baden had their own traditions of autonomous self-rule and regional power. While they became federated states after German unification, this legacy of regional sovereignty and the resulting distrust of Prussian hegemony remained difficult for outside associations to overcome into the twentieth century. That regional identities still often took precedence over a national German identity made successful expansion in these regions even more dependent on local support and demand, and far more difficult to impose from above.

As its regional and local networks expanded, the division of responsibility between the different branches occasionally became a source of tension. In 1914, a disagreement arose between OG Ulm and the central office. In this case, the local branch accused the central office of going behind its back by reaching out to its local members directly regarding their unpaid dues.[56] Its chairman argued that this made the local branch superfluous and that OG Ulm could only be successful if the central office respected its autonomy within its own community when dealing with local members and their concerns.[57] As the number of local and regional branches began growing, regulating how the central office intervened was often a tenuous process and one that remained an occasional point of conflict between the Centralverein's administrative levels throughout the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany.

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[55] Gotthard Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933: Geschichte, Bedeutung, Untergang* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), 67.

[56] WL MF Doc 55/28/1231, March 6, 1914.

[57] Ibid.

One way that the Centralverein sought to prevent such communication issues was through frequent communication with the local sphere, particularly in organizing lectures and assemblies. While few administrative records survive from before the war, it was evident in the number of lectures and assemblies reported in *IdR* that organizing local programming was becoming a central aspect of its work. The popularity of so-called "outward programming" in towns and cities outside Berlin rose rapidly during the first decade of the twentieth century.[58] While the number of assemblies held outside Berlin remained largely in the single digits between 1902 and 1905, they began rising slowly in 1906 and then far more rapidly starting in 1909, with 31 held in 1909, 47 in 1910, 71 in 1911, and then 103 in 1913.[59] Meanwhile, the number of assemblies held in Berlin local branches remained in the single digits in almost every year between 1902 and 1914.[60] The lectures in local branches covered a broad range of topics pertaining to German-Jewish political and social life such as "German Jews' Vital Issues," "Our Equal Rights in Theory and Practice," "The Upcoming Parliamentary Elections" and "Economic Antisemitism."[61] Such lectures sought to teach attendees about the political, judicial, and social issues that were most concerning and relevant to both local and national leaders. As the titles of the lectures themselves were broad, they allowed speakers to focus on the aspects most relevant to the community and, in doing so, to encourage active discussion afterwards.

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[58] "Inhalts-Verzeichnis des Jahrganges XVI," *Im deutschen Reich* 16 (1910), XI.

[59] 1902: 7, 1903: 10, 1904: 6, 1905: 7, 1906: 12, 1907, 17, 1908: 10, 1909: 31, 1910: 47, 1911: 71, 1912: 55, 1913: 103, 1914: 45. The low number for 1914 was due to the fact that the C.V. did not report any assemblies in *Im deutschen Reich* after May of that year due to the outbreak of the war. These numbers are not a final tally, as some were unreported or were reported at a much later date and possibly not accounted for.

[60] The number of assemblies held in Berlin were 1902: 6, 1903: 8, 1904: 4, 1905: 7, 1906: 4, 1907: 7, 1908: 6, 1907: 7, 1908: 6, 1909: 8, 1910: 3, 1911: 4, 1912: 9, 1913: 10, and 1914: 6.

[61] "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 16 (March 1910), 175 and Ibid., 17 (June 1911), 351.

The Centralverein's growing regional presence also enabled speakers to hold multiple lectures in communities throughout their region. Between 1910 and 1913, the regional leaders for Rhineland-Westphalia organized a series of meetings and lectures in communities throughout the region. The lectures featured speakers both from the regional office in Essen as well as from leading members from Berlin, such as syndic Ludwig Holländer and Henriette May.[62] In hosting both national and regional speakers in these local lecture series, local communities participated in larger regional and national networks of Jewish community life. Many of these assemblies also included lectures from more than one speaker on topics like the history of Jewish emancipation, Jews in the German army, the Centralverein's defense work, as well as the different manifestations of antisemitism.[63] These topics educated members both on concerns facing the German-Jewish community as well as what the Centralverein was doing to assert Germanness and Jewishness in the public sphere. In doing so they consolidated local, regional, and national interests in the local sphere and contributed to building a larger sense of unity among German Jews.

While most of these meetings were for C.V. members only, the Centralverein also occasionally held public assemblies to which all members of the local community were invited starting in 1909.[64] As Eugen Fuchs was convinced that if both Jews and gentiles knew more about Judaism and Jewishness then they would embrace it instead of fighting against it, public

[62] "Die Rheinisch-Westfälische Woche," *Im deutschen Reich* 17 (January 1911), 7, "Die rheinisch-westfälische Tagung," *Im deutschen Reich* 18 (January 1912), 20, "Die rheinisch-westfälische Tagung 1912," *Im deutschen Reich* 19 (January 1913), 6, and "Die Rheinisch-Westfälische Woche," *Im deutschen Reich* 20 (January 1914), 26.

[63] "Die Rheinisch-Westfälische Woche," *Im deutschen Reich* 17 (January 1911), 8 and "Die rheinisch-westfälische Tagung," *Im deutschen Reich* 18 (January 1912), 20-21.

[64] While the first public assembly reported in *IdR* was in 1898 and they occurred infrequently in the early 1900s, it was not until after 1909 that public assemblies became a common aspect of local programming.

assemblies were an integral part of the Centralverein's expanding local defense work.[65] Such public lectures enabled the Centralverein to conduct direct outreach to non-Jews in the local sphere. The lectures given at the public assemblies focused on educating the public on the history of German Jewry, the economic and political motivations behind antisemitism, and the Centralverein's political work.[66] Education was both a form of defense against antisemitism and also a means of strengthening Jewish identity and shaping a synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness.

While most assemblies were held by a local branch or in communities with a growing number of members, some were also hosted in communities that had previously shown little interest in the Centralverein. This was the case in April 1910, when OG Duisburg organized such an assembly in the small community of Marxloh. After the chairman of OG Duisburg opened the assembly, LVB Rhineland leader Ernst Herzfeld held a speech titled "Fight for Justice," which discussed how the Centralverein established frameworks for self-defense, the history of its legal defense work, and the necessity of supporting it in the fight for equal rights for German Jews.[67] Thirty new members joined during the assembly and a further twenty more did so in the days afterward. It was regional and local branches' shared efforts that played the decisive role in when, were, and how new branches were established and new members recruited.

While most of these lectures in neighboring villages were organized by local branches, some were orchestrated by regional branches to encourage C.V. members to establish new local

[65] Eugen Fuchs, "Ansprache zur Einweihung des neuen Heims der Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums als Delegierter des Centralvereins," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 312 and Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten,' *Im deutschen Reich* 4 (September 1898), 470.

[66] "Die rheinisch-westfälische Tagung," *Im deutschen Reich* 18 (January 1912), 24.

[67] "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 16 (May 1910), 400.

branches. This was the case in both Öhringen and Buttenhausen in March 1914, when LVB Württemberg sent two speakers to hold assemblies and gather more support for the Centralverein among local Jewish residents.[68] Following the success of the assemblies in both Öhringen and Buttenhausen, the two communities decided to come together to form one shared branch for Öhringen-Buttenhausen.[69] In integrating two communities into one local branch, these towns gained access to representation at the national level and, in doing so, expanded the local sphere's influence on the association as a whole. This cooperation also further expanded the local sphere into the more rural regions that the Centralverein often struggled to mobilize and increased the influence of smaller communities on the Centralverein's growing network of local branches. While the call to establish new local branches first came from the central office, this cooperation showed the extent to which the local sphere itself was responsible for driving the Centralverein's decentralization after 1909.

2.1.3. German and German-Jewish Politics

While support for antisemitic parties declined after 1900, this was not due to rising tolerance, but rather to changing political and social trends. While antisemitism was generally a radical political position during the late nineteenth century, by the early 1900s it was, as Peter Pulzer argued, "endemic" in German society and no longer as politically influential as in previous elections.[70] Shulamit Volkov also argued that the key aspect of continuity was not the parties or organizations, but rather the culture and vocabulary of political and racial

[68] "Versammlungsberichte," *Im deutschen Reich* 20 (June 1914), 263.

[69] Ibid., 263-4.

[70] Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, 196.

antisemitism.[71] As antisemitism became more diffuse, German-Jewish defense work also became more localized and adaptive in response.

In February 1903, the Centralverein commemorated its ten-year anniversary with a large celebratory assembly in Berlin. While this was an overall happy and festive occasion, it was tinged by the deep disappointment that the Centralverein not only remained as necessary as it had been ten years before, but also that there was no reason to hope that this would change in the foreseeable future.[72] When it was established in 1893, its founding members hoped that the Centralverein would be only a temporary response to rising antisemitism and not a permanent defense organization. As defense proved ineffectual on its own, local and regional branches became increasingly promising sites for advocacy and intervention.

The Centralverein sought to combat mass antisemitism in society by mobilizing all of German Jewry against it.[73] This reflected a change not only within the Centralverein, but within German society as a whole; Holländer argued that while advocacy at the state level remained necessary, it would be "charlatanism" to claim that such defense work was enough guarantee either social or civil equality.[74] Instead, it was now necessary to complement this legal defense by organizing informational lectures for non-Jews and conducting more outreach these communities instead.[75] It was particularly the former that became an integral aspect of the Centralverein's local outreach to non-Jews, as it allowed the Centralverein's speakers to address

[71] Shulamit Volkov, "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 23 (January 1978), 46.

[72] Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 9 (February 1903), 181 and 185.

[73] Holländer, "Die demokratische Grundlage des Central-Vereins," 1.

[74] Ibid., 3.

[75] Ibid.

and repudiate antisemitic claims directly while also engaging in discussion with local individuals. As antisemitism became more socially acceptable and pervasive, such educational defense work became an inherent part of the Centralverein's work in the local and regional sphere.

While antisemitic political parties lost much popular support after the 1903 election, antisemitism became more virulent in the economic sector and in associational life over the course of the decade.[76] This shift was particularly evident in the 1912 parliamentary election. Antisemitic parties performed so poorly that both the BdL and antisemitic politicians referred to the 1912 parliamentary election as the "Jewish elections," – *die Judenwahlen*.[77] Despite this election, antisemitism itself had not declined. Instead, the means through which antisemites sought to attack German Jews and their rights had changed. With organizations like the Alldeutscher Verband becoming more openly antisemitic around this time as well, associational antisemitism became prominent tools for nationalist associations even as it declined in the political sphere.[78]

The changing nature of antisemitism in Germany was perhaps best evidenced by the 1912 book *Wenn ich der Kaiser wär*. Written by A.V. chairman Heinrich Claß and published under a pseudonym, Claß called for expelling all Jews without German citizenship from Germany, highly restricting German Jews' access to certain professions, and insisting that they pay twice as

[76] Scheil, *Die Entwicklung des politischen Antisemitismus in Deutschland zwischen 1881 und 1912*, 124.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Prior to 1908, the A.V. was not an overtly antisemitic association, with the national leadership leaving it up to the local branches to determine whether or not to accept Jewish members. BArch, R 8048/662, p. 7. This changed in 1908 with Heinrich Claß' appointment as chairman. Rainer Hering, *Konstruierte Nation: der Alldeutsche Verband, 1890 bis 1939* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2003), 194.

much in taxes as non-Jewish Germans.[79] In doing so, Helmut Walser Smith argued that Claß "brought together what had largely been separate: anti-Semitism, racism, and the elimination of peoples."[80] This books' popularity reflected considerable public support of such radical antisemitic positions. In combining these concepts, Claß further popularized a growing radical antisemitism outside of the political sphere.

Due to the public acclaim for Claß' text and the A.V.'s growing radical antisemitism, the Centralverein also began focusing its defense work on these issues as well. At a C.V. public assembly in Görlitz in December 1912, the speaker praised the Centralverein's success in both weakening radical forms of antisemitism while also strengthening German Jews' determination to speak out in their own defense.[81] This praise was justified; in 1913, for example, the A.V. reported that Jewish defense work was so thorough that the A.V. was no longer able to say anything against German Jews without "all of Judaism ruthlessly fighting and most likely defeating them."[82] The A.V. leadership felt that it had no other alternative than to try to conduct its antisemitic political lobbying secretly and wait until Jewish defense associations were weaker before taking their campaign public again.[83] This, along with the results of the 1912 parliamentary election, meant that Jewish associations were tentatively optimistic about the future of Jewish equality in Germany. Nevertheless, the A.V.'s radical antisemitism and the

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[79] Uta Jungcurt, *Alldeutscher Extremismus in der Weimarer Republik: Denken und Handeln einer einflussreichen bürgerlichen Minderheit* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 50 and Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race Across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 209.

[80] Smith, *The Continuities of German History*, 210.

[81] "Delegierten-Versammlung des Landesverbandes für Mittel- und Niederschlesien," *Im deutschen Reich* 19 (January 1913), 8.

[82] BArch, R 8048/662, p. 30.

[83] Ibid., p. 34.

adaptation of how and when it expressed it was representative of antisemitism's shift to the social sphere. This also pushed the Centralverein's defense work further into the local sphere as well. Though its decentralization was often driven by local initiative to strengthen the Jewish community, it remained highly predicated on providing the best possible defense against antisemitism.

National minorities in Germany during the early 1900s also faced new forms of persecution. In March 1908, the Prussian state passed a law legalizing the expropriation of certain Polish lands in Posen and West Prussia.[84] While the Centralverein was critical of this economic "Germanization," its leaders did not regard these regulations as a considerable threat to German Jews.[85] That the Centralverein did not consider its fight against antisemitism threatened by anti-Polish legislation in the Empire's eastern provinces revealed the large distinction its leaders made between the treatment of national and religious minorities. This differentiation was predicated on the Centralverein's conviction that German Jews were just as German as everyone else, which meant that they were unthreatened by such measures against national minorities.

This reflected a key difference between how German Jews perceived themselves and how German society was inclined to do so. While the Centralverein considered German Jews as solely a religious minority, German Zionists began claiming that Jews were in fact a national minority themselves as well. This supported antisemites' claims that Jews were both a religious

[84] Prussia took advantage of this law four years later when the agricultural minister expropriated land from four Polish landowners with compensation. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,*vol. 3, *Von der 'deutschen Doppelrevolution' bis zum Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges 1849-1914* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1995), 1069.

[85] Alphonse Levy, "Umschau," *Im deutschen Reich* 17 (June 1911), 337. This was the case in 1909 when *Im deutschen Reich* accused the civil servants in Posen of "chauvinistic posturing" and sympathy for the A.V.'s ideology. Alphonse Levy, "Umschau," *Im deutschen Reich* 15 (November 1909), 637.

and national minority.[86] As such, C.V. leadership became concerned that such language endangered German Jews' integration and safety in Germany. The Centralverein's growing focus on synthesizing Germanness and Jewishness made this Jewish nationalist position far more difficult to reconcile with its own principles. In calling for a Jewish national home in Palestine, the Centralverein accused the ZVfD of weakening Jewish connections to Germanness and supporting antisemitic claims that Jews were foreigners in Germany.[87] The Centralverein's definition of German Jews as a religious but not a national minority was the foundation of its growing rejection of Zionism in the late German Empire.

As the representative association of Zionists in Germany, the ZVfD supported Jewish nationalist aspirations in Palestine from its establishment in 1896.[88] Initially, German Zionism was largely focused on alleviating Eastern European Jews' situation by aiding their move to Palestine during the early 1900s. As such, its members generally embraced their life in the

[86] While Jews in Western Europe predominantly identified as a religious but not a national minority, this was different in Eastern Europe, where Jews developed into a national minority within multiethnic empires. This diaspora nationalism developed in tandem with the proliferation of Eastern European national movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and frequently blurred geopolitical lines. Both in the Habsburg and Russian Empire, shared language, cultural and economic practice, and religious tradition combined in different ways to form a shared religious and national Jewish identity in the diaspora. This combination of religious and national identity that was increasingly characteristic in Eastern Europe starting in the late nineteenth century was in stark contrast to the C.V.'s synthesized German national and Jewish religious identity. Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 12-13, Joshua Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2 and Barry Trachtenberg, *The Revolutionary Roots of Modern Yiddish, 1903-1917* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 22.

[87] "Centralverein und Zionismus," *Im deutschen Reich* 19 (May 1913), 213.

[88] Established as the National-Jewish Association in the mid 1890s in Cologne, it was renamed in 1897 and moved its central office to Berlin in 1910. There is some debate over the exact date at which the National-jüdische Vereinigung was established. While some scholars argue that it was not established until 1896, in his memoir *So wurde Israel: Aus der Geschichte der zionistischen Bewegung,* founding member of the National-jüdische Vereinigung and later chairman of the ZVfD Max Bodenheimer stated that while it was established in 1894, it first became fully active in 1896. Max Bodenheimer, *So wurde Israel: Aus der Geschichte der zionistischen Bewegung*, ed. Henriette Hannah Bodenheimer (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1958), 64.

Diaspora while also advocating for strengthening Jewish identity and culture.[89] Despite its small number of members – 6,400 in 1910/11 – the ZVfD had over 65 local branches by 1904 and grew to 10,000 members by 1914.[90] Prior to the First World War, German Zionism had little influence within German-Jewish or German society, and was of little practical concern for liberal German Jews. This began to change in 1908, however, when the ZVfD local chapters in both Posen and Hamburg forbid their members from holding dual membership in the Centralverein.[91] Such a localized ban on dual membership showed that there was already considerable animosity toward the Centralverein within the ZVfD. Despite this incident, the disagreements between the ZVfD and the Centralverein remained largely centered at the national level prior to the First World War.

The ZVfD became increasingly focused on supporting Jewish nationalist aspirations in Palestine and negating the Diaspora following a change in leadership. In 1909, Kurt Blumenfeld was appointed party secretary, and Arthur Hantke became chairman in 1910. Though Blumenfeld did not become chairman of the ZVfD until 1924, he was so successful as party secretary that, as historian Jehuda Reinharz argues, he was largely responsible for the ZVfD's political radicalization and its new embrace of palestinocentrism prior to the First World War.[92] In doing so, he both politicized and nationalized Jewishness, which in turn led ZVfD members to increasingly reject Germanness as well.

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[89] Jehuda Reinharz, "Ideology and Structure in German Zionism, 1882-1933," *Jewish Social Studies* 42 (1980), 127 and "Vortrag des Herrn Professor Dr. Falkenheim, Königsberg," *Im deutschen Reich* 19 (May 1913), 205.

[90] Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German anti-Semitism, 1870-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 183.

[91] Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, 54-5.

[92] Reinharz, "Ideology and Structure in German Zionism," 128 and 130.

As its palestinocentrism grew, the Centralverein's leadership found it increasingly difficult to find common ground with the ZVfD. Despite growing disagreements between the Centralverein and the ZVfD, the Centralverein continued calling on German Jews to remain unified in their fight against antisemitism regardless of their political or religious differences. Such calls for neutrality and cooperation were popular lecture topics in the local sphere as well. In early 1910, over 1,200 people attended an assembly in Posen, where it was standing-room only for Holländer's speech titled "What unites us Jews."[93] It was in this speech that Holländer repeated what was, in many ways, the Centralverein's unofficial motto regarding its approach to inner-Jewish differences: "*In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas.*"[94] The Centralverein remained uncompromising in its repudiation of antisemitism and dedication to combating it in any form while also allowing for differences in opinion on less crucial matters. Though the Centralverein was initially largely ambivalent towards Zionism or questions of dual membership in the ZVfD, this began to change as antisemites began using Zionism's support of Jewish nationalist aspirations to support their claims of German Jewish foreignness in and disloyalty to Germany.[95]

Despite growing tensions between the two associations, it was not until March 1913 that the C.V. general assembly approved its first resolution limiting Zionist membership. This resolution stated that Zionists could only be members in the Centralverein if they rejected Jewish nationalist calls for an international solution to the Jewish Question.[96] Those who remained

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[93] "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 16 (February 1910), 118.

[94] Ibid. This translates to "unity in necessary things; freedom in doubtful things; compassion in all things."

[95] Eugen Fuchs, "Glaube und Heimat," in *Im deutschen Reich: Feldbücherei des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (Berlin: Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens), 31.

[96] Ludwig Holländer "Zur Klarstellung," *Im deutschen Reich* 19 (May 1913), 200.

focused solely on providing Eastern European Jews with a safe home in Palestine were welcome to remain members.[97] This meant that those Zionists who denied their German national identity and identified as Jewish nationalists were no longer welcome in the Centralverein. As a result of the resolution, the Centralverein claimed that it lost fewer than 200 members, while 650 new ones joined.[98] With a membership of around 36,000 at the time, this new resolution had little effect on dual membership while also contributing to the Centralverein's overall growth as well. After restricting Zionist membership, the Centralverein's defense work during the German Empire also began targeting Jewish nationalist claims as well.

While the Centralverein's defense work prior to 1913 was focused solely against antisemitism and its proponents, this began to change after its 1913 resolution restricting Zionist membership. To emphasize and justify the Centralverein's growing animosity toward German Zionism, C.V. leaders repeatedly cited German-Jewish politician and proponent of Jewish emancipation Gabriel Riesser's 1832 statement: "Whoever denies my claim to my German Fatherland, he denies me the right to my thoughts, my feelings, the language that I speak, the air that I breathe. For this reason I must fight against him – as if against a murderer."[99] In its repeated publication of this quote, C.V. leadership emphasized that, regardless of whether it came from antisemites or Jewish nationalists, the Centralverein remained determined to defend their Germanness at any cost. While both the Centralverein and the ZVfD called for supporting a

[97] Holländer "Zur Klarstellung," 200.

[98] Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, 56.

[99] WL MF Doc 55/56/2053, May 6, 1913.

strong Jewish identity, German Zionists' growing repudiation of German national identity was a growing and increasingly irreconcilable point of conflict between the two movements.[100]

2.2. Intra-Catholic Disputes

As it became clear that the threat of a new Kulturkampf was unfounded, German-Catholic leaders began focusing more on internal Catholic issues. After the turn of the century, German Catholic leaders began debating the extent to which German Catholics should be allowed to cooperate with other Christian denominations. In 1906, Zentrum politician Julius Bachem published an article in which he called for the Zentrum party to leave its "splendid isolation" behind and embrace working together with Protestant politicians while also continuing to defend Catholic interests.[101] While Volksverein and Zentrum leaders from the Rhineland and Westphalia largely supported Bachem's call for non-confessional politics, Catholic representatives from Berlin and Trier received the Church's support in calling for confessionalism and Catholic separation. The debate this article provoked became known as the *Zentrumsstreit* (the Zentrum party dispute).[102]

These divisions became even fiercer through the *Gewerkschaftsstreit* (trade union dispute) in the early 1900s, which was also largely divided between Cologne and Mönchengladbach in the west and Berlin and Breslau in the east. The *Gewerkschaftsstreit* was,

[100] Both associations claimed that they were antisemitism's greatest enemy and most effective opponent, that communal unity in the face of antisemitism was their strongest tool, and that Jewish indifference to its own religious identity was one of the greatest threats facing the community. Heinrich Sachse, *Antisemitismus und Zionismus: eine zeitgemäße Betrachtung* (Berlin: Verlag von Hugo Schildberger), 15 and 21.

[101] Julius Bachem, "Wir müssen aus dem Turm heraus!" *Historisch-politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland* 137 (1906), 383-5.

[102] For more on the Zentrumsstreit, see Wilfried Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich: der politische Katholizismus in der Krise des wilhelminischen Deutschlands* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1984).

in many ways, both a continuation and predecessor of the ideological disagreements at the core of the *Zentrumsstreit*.[103] A dispute over the question of whether to support Catholic participation in the Christian Trade Union, the *Gewerkschaftsstreit* dealt with similar issues surrounding interconfessional cooperation.[104]

Associations and organizations within organized German Catholicism were increasingly divided between the so-called "*Berliner Richtung*" in the east and the "*Kölner Richtung*" in the west.[105] The *Kölner Richtung* advocated for an interconfessional Christian trade union together with German Protestants while the *Berliner Richtung* largely opposed such a shared trade union. These two movements had a considerable effect on the Volksverein's political and organizational work in the decade prior to the First World War. Due to the Volksverein's close cooperation with the worker's movement, it was also the *Gewerkschaftsstreit* that had the largest effect on its ability to conduct community engagement. Like the Centralverein, which became more focused on internal Jewish issues in the years prior to the First World War, these two disputes in organized Catholicism also forced the Volksverein to take a clear position on inner-Catholic issues and reject the episcopacy's attempts to consolidate German-Catholic organizational life.

As a result of its pro-interconfessional union position in the *Gewerkschaftsstreit*, the Volksverein lost a considerable number of members in Silesia, Brandenburg, and Saxony, as well as in the western city of Trier.[106] This active opposition to the Volksverein in eastern and central Germany was driven by the *Berliner Richtung*'s loudest and most fervent supporter, the

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[103] Rolf Kiefer, *Karl Bachem 1858-1945: Politiker und Historiker des Zentrums* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1989), 134.

[104] Horstwalter Heitzer, *Georg Kardinal Kopp und der Gewerkschaftsstreit 1900-1914* (Köln: Böhlau, 1983), 2.

[105] BArch, R 8115/I/150, p. 13 and Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich*, 240.

[106] BArch, R 8115/I/142, p. 72.

Prince-Bishop of Breslau and leader of the Fulda Conference of Bishops Georg von Kopp. In 1909, Kopp offered to help the Volksverein establish a regional office in Silesia provided that it remained fully neutral on questions pertaining to the *Gewerkschaftsstreit*.[107] Additionally, he also expressed similar support for such an office in Breslau, provided the Volksverein central office did not support the Christian unions there either.[108] These declarations of conditional support were the result of extensive negotiations between the V.V. central office, Kopp, and regional clerical leaders. Kopp's agreement for Silesia came in response to an appeal from the Volksverein's first chairman Franz Brandts, in which he defended the Volksverein's work to Kopp despite their disagreements or differences regarding trade unions. In declaring that the Volksverein was working for the betterment of all German Catholics and, more significantly, for the Church, Brandts' letter was a direct appeal to Kopp asking him to allow the Volksverein to continue and expand its work in the region.[109] Kopp's change in attitude toward the Volksverein was not due to newfound appreciation of the Volksverein or its mission, but rather a practical attempt to begin bringing the Volksverein more under the control of the episcopacy.[110] Kopp's statement of provisional support was, when considering his 1910 position on the Volksverein in Silesia, rather hollow and limited.

Kopp utilized his position as the leader of the Fulda Conference of Bishops to weaken the Volksverein and the Zentrum in eastern Germany. In March 1910, for example, he ordered all

[107] BArch, R 8115/I/93, p. 36.

[108] Horstwalter Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich 1890-1918* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1979), 56f.

[109] BArch, R 8115/I/93, p. 30.

[110] This attempt was largely unsuccessful; it was not until 1928 that the V.V. came under more direct Church influence when it was integrated into the *Katholische Aktion.* Heitzer, *Georg Kardinal Kopp und der Gewerkschaftsstreit 1900-1914*, 112 and BArch, R 8115/I/40, p. 223.

priests in Silesia to block any Volksverein efforts to establish further footholds in the region and to inform him if there were any such attempts.[111] Clerical leaders in these regions implemented Kopp's directives by preventing the Volksverein from communicating with local Catholic communities and their members. It was, however, not just religious leaders who disagreed with the Volksverein's support of the Christian Trade Union; some of the Volksverein's *Vertrauensmänner* in these regions also expressed their disapproval to the V.V. central office on this point in the early 1900s.[112]

While both the *Zentrumsstreit* and the *Gewerkschaftsstreit* were largely determined by disputes at the national level, they had direct consequences for the Volksverein's members and their local representatives. Despite this centralization, the disagreement with both Kopp and regional representatives over the Volksverein's presence in Silesia demonstrated that regional concerns and national political and religious disputes were highly interconnected. In this case, the regional level became the space in which national disputes and divisions were played out. With a tenuous relationship between the Volksverein and the episcopacy as a result of the *Gewerkschaftsstreit*, the local and regional spheres, particularly in eastern Germany, were granted little autonomy in organizing or managing their own communities. Much like in other aspects of the Volksverein's organization, the Silesian representatives were not granted any agency in the debate over their role in this dispute or in their communities. Instead, the central office negotiated and decided the structure of their regional office on their behalf. The Volksverein's considerable centralization in these cases was part of a larger consolidation of German-Catholic life at the national level.

[111] Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich*, 238.

[112] BArch, R 8115/I/142, p. 72.

2.3. The Volksverein in the Pre-War Period

While most regions in western and southern Germany averaged well over 20,000 members in the first decade of the twentieth century, Silesia was the only one in the eastern regions to reach such a number. This region recorded its peak membership of over 27,000 by 1910, while membership in other eastern regions like Posen or East Prussia remained in the low hundreds.[113] In comparison, the western regions of the Rhineland and Westphalia both had over 210,000 and 140,000 members, respectively by 1910.[114] With over half of the Volksverein's 652,645 members living in these two regions alone by 1910, the Volksverein's focus was predominantly on the western and southern regions. This had a marked effect on the Volksverein's ideological position within German-Catholic debates as well as on how and where it conducted outreach to its members. German Catholics were also the majority in these regions, which meant that the Volksverein was better able to recruit new members and represent German-Catholic interests.

The percentage of Catholics in the population was reflected in the Volksverein's membership numbers elsewhere in Germany as well. There was also a sizeable Catholic population in eastern Germany, particularly in Posen, West Prussia, and Silesia. The Volksverein nevertheless still struggled to gain support in these regions since many of these Catholics were Polish-speaking and not willing to join or support a German association.[115] Tensions over the *Gewerkschaftsstreit* further heightened this regional unwillingness to support the Volksverein. It

[113] Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 313-5 and Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland,* 422.

[114] Both the Rhineland and Westphalia reached their peak membership in 1913/14, reporting over 247,000 and 163,000 members, respectively. Bavaria reported the third highest number in that year as well, with over 94,000 members. Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 313-5.

[115] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland,* 66.

was only the limited cooperation between clerical leaders and the V.V. central office that made the Volksverein's expansion in Silesia successful compared to elsewhere in eastern Germany.

Despite these difficulties in eastern Germany, the Volksverein's membership among German-Catholic workers rose considerably during the early 1900s. In the early 1900s, the Volksverein's membership grew from less than 200,000 members in 1900 to over 565,000 members by 1907, before reaching over 800,000 by 1914. [116] This rapid growth was particularly evident in certain regions; the central office reported that the number of members in Bavaria had not only more than doubled between 1906 and 1908, it then did so again between 1908 and 1910.[117] This rapid growth during the early 1900s was largely due to the expansion of the Christian trade unions and the Volksverein more assertive position on social reform.[118] According to its senior chairman Fritz Brandts, it was also clerical support that made the Volksverein so successful in Baden, Bavaria, and Württemberg, and was the Volksverein's greatest challenge in Silesia due to the *Gewerkschaftsstreit*.[119]

The increase in membership dues that accompanied this growth provided the central office with the financial stability necessary to establish its own publishing house – the Volksvereins Verlag – in 1905. This also financed a new headquarters in Mönchengladbach – the

[116] Georg Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch des Volksvereins für das Katholische Deutschland* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1982), 14. While this was a large number when compared to the C.V., with over twenty million Roman Catholics in Germany in 1900, this was a relatively very small percentage of the eligible population. Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt (ed.), *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*, vol. 150, *Die Volkszählung am 1. Dezember 1900 im Deutschen Reich*, 105 and Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich* 154.

[117] In 1906 the V.V. in Bavaria had over 15,000 members, in 1908 that number rose to over 32,000, and in 1910 it reached over 64,000. MGB Hpw 40, Zentralstelle zu M.Gladbach und dem Landessekretariat zu München,"Mitteilungen an die bayerischen Geschäftsführer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland," Nr. 2 (October 1, 1908), 1 and Ibid. Nr. 4 (November 1910), 1.

[118] Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch des Volksvereins für das Katholische Deutschland,* 14.

[119] BArch, R 8115/I/93, p. 41.

Volksverein-House – in 1907.[120] The Volksverein-House consolidated the new publishing house, the Volksverein's growing library, and the central office's administrative functions under one roof. These new facilities in Mönchengladbach reinforced not only the Volksverein's centralization, but also its strong ties to the region. With the Catholic Worker's Movement, the Zentrum, and the Volksverein all strongest in western and southern Germany, the central office reinforced the close cooperation between organized political Catholic associations in response to both rising membership in the west and south and growing opposition from the *Berliner Richtung*.

In 1906, the V.V. central office amended its statutes to better reflect the association's shifting priorities. In the Volksverein's updated statutes, it was education and not defense work that took highest priority. These statutes now stated that it was the Volksverein's responsibility to "use education to support practical participation in the intellectual and economic elevation of all professions."[121] With education now its main priority, the Volksverein began expanding its programming and courses more rapidly as well. In 1905, the Volksverein began offering three-day general practical-social courses, 22 of which it held in towns throughout western and southern Germany between 1905 and 1910.[122] In 1906/7, the Volksverein also held eleven additional three-day courses in predominantly western and southern German cities as well. These courses focused on agricultural, commercial, and worker-related questions, and generally consisted of nine separate lectures.[123] Of these eleven courses, only one was held in an eastern

[120] Prior to this point, the V.V. had rented office space in the town instead. BArch, R 8115/I/11, Heinrich Getzeny, "Das Volksvereinshaus, seine Einrichtungen und seine Führer," *Die katholische Welt* 7 (November 23, 1930), 17.

[121] BArch, R 8115/I/7, p. 3.

[122] BArch, R 8115/I/6, p. 237.

[123] BArch, R 8115/I/130, p. 43.

city. This propensity toward western and southern Germany was closely tied to the regionalized effects of the *Gewerkschaftsstreit* and the resulting difficulty of gaining local support for Volksverein intervention in eastern German towns and cities.

The Volksverein's educational work became more politicized after Catholic priest and adult education specialist Anton Heinen was appointed the head of the Volksverein's department for national and civic education in 1909. Instead of providing general *Bildung* (education), the Volksverein's courses were increasingly more focused on *Volksbildung* (civic and nationalist education).[124] This meant teaching German Catholics – and the working class in particular – about their political and civic responsibilities and giving them the knowledge necessary to participate in society and politics.[125] Such education aimed to help grant Catholic workers political equality and equal representation.

Through these specialized courses and the multi-day lectures, the Volksverein central office sought to provide all Catholic workers with the support and guidance necessary to represent their own interests within their respective trade or profession. As such, the Volksverein held so-called social courses for tradesmen, businessmen, farmers, assistants, civil servants, technicians, and teachers.[126] Held between 1907 and 1914, these courses focused on educating attendees from each profession on the specific political and social issues relevant to their field. The 1907 social course for tradesmen was six days long and was centered around lectures on the history of the German economy, the guilds and cooperatives' work and role for tradesmen, as

[124] Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 34 and 65f.

[125] Ibid., 77.

[126] Ibid., 318. While participation was free, attendees were responsible for paying their own travel and accommodation expenses. BArch, R 8115/I/129, "Sozialer Kursus für Kaufleute," *Kölnische Volkszeitung* 463 (May 30, 1911).

well as political and legal concerns.[127] Held in cooperation with the Catholic Journeymen's Association, these lectures and discussions aimed to provide those tradesmen in attendance with the knowledge necessary to help them support and strengthen their affiliated organizations.[128]

Alongside courses for professional groups, the Volksverein began expanding the number of lectures it held as well. While many of the Volksverein's assemblies were open to the public, it only conducted active outreach to German Catholics. During the pre-war years, the Volksverein focused on recruiting Catholic workers, supporting Christian social movements, and encouraging Catholics to vote for the Zentrum.[129] This necessitated a stronger emphasis on the Catholic community itself instead of broadening to conduct outreach to the German public. Most of the Volksverein's lectures and courses were also held in regions where Catholics made up the majority of the population. In regions like the Rhineland and Bavaria, where Catholicism was the dominant religion, holding assemblies that were open to the public meant that those attending were also likely to be Catholic as well. Without the need to conduct further outreach, the Volksverein's lectures were able to remain focused on the issues most pertinent to the German-Catholic community

By the early 1900s, the Volksverein's assemblies were less focused on combating social democracy, and more on socio-political and economic topics. These discussed topics such as the "purpose and methods of social education," "the public sphere," "character building," and "the importance of Christian unions for Germany's economic and political life."[130] Keeping lectures focused on socio-political topics allowed speakers to provide German Catholics with access to

[127] BArch, R 8115/I/130, p. 14.

[128] Ibid., p. 13.

[129] Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 254.

[130] BArch, R 8115/I/7, p. 100.

relevant knowledge for participating more fully in German-Catholic and general German society. The number of V.V. assemblies grew rapidly as a result of these broad topics. While the Volksverein held around 1350 assemblies in 1902/3, only three years later it held two thousand, and that number increased steadily to reach over 3,600 in 1911/12 before declining slightly over the next two years.[131] This considerable increase during the early 1900s was both a reflection of the Volksverein's rapidly-growing membership as well as demand leading up to parliamentary elections in 1907 and 1912.[132]

The number of attendees at such lectures had a considerable effect on the structure of the evening. While smaller meetings allowed for discussion, audiences at larger assemblies were encouraged to participate through applause and heckling instead. This was because V.V. general director August Pieper did not think that large assemblies benefited from audience discussion afterwards. As a result, the main lecture was often followed by shorter talks representing a different viewpoint than the main speaker's in an attempt to present other viewpoints.[133] This prevented the audience from getting off topic in the discussion while also trying to make the lectures entertaining and interactive. Even in smaller lectures where the central office encouraged holding discussions, they advised the local representatives to seek out a few members before the lecture and provide them with additional reading material so that they could make sure that the discussion remained constructive.[134] As such, the Volksverein's community

[131] Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 320.

[132] The latter also led to the decline after 1912; many individuals in larger cities were so overwhelmed with assemblies and meetings prior to the election that they had little interest in attending one afterwards. BArch, R 8115/I/7, 99.

[133] Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 255.

[134] MGB Hpw 4a, *Handbuch für Freunde und Förderer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland* (MGladbach: Zentralstelle des Volksvereins für das kath. Deutschland, 1901), 85.

engagement and defense work were both "unimaginable without centralization."[135] This extensive control over the assemblies and their discussions – if held at all – was due to the central office's belief that V.V. members were not educated enough on these topics to hold productive discussions.[136] While they hoped that this would change through continued education, this highly critical view of German Catholics in the local sphere reflected a distrust of the local sphere's ability to manage its own affairs. It was this doubt that formed the basis of the central office's ongoing insistence on maintaining centralized decentralization.

Despite certain differences in how they organized assemblies, both the Centralverein and the V.V. central offices retained considerable control over what topics were discussed and which themes were addressed in local meetings and assemblies throughout Germany. While the Centralverein had a small number of speakers who traveled to provide lectures in assemblies throughout Germany, the Volksverein instead built a broad base of local individuals who were prepared to hold lectures in their regions. Though the Volksverein had a far larger number of speakers from a broader number of professions on which to draw than did the Centralverein, both central offices retained considerable oversight and control over which topics were discussed in their respective lectures. The Centralverein's speakers during this period were generally either members of the Berlin executive board or a regional director. As the Centralverein expanded and established more local branches, however, its local members were increasingly the ones deciding when and where to hold such meetings. This consolidated national and local interests within the local sphere.

[135] BArch, R 8115/I/4, p. 191.

[136] MGB Hpw 4a, *Handbuch für Freunde und Förderer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland*, 85.

The lectures and assemblies that the Volksverein held in local communities were also part of its ongoing dedication to protecting and asserting religion's place in the public sphere. While the Volksverein's defense work during the 1890s was focused almost exclusively on combating social democracy, the SPD was part of an increasingly broader range of social and political opponents by the early 1900s. It now also targeted other atheist associations like the Freidenkerbund (Free Thinker's League) and the Monistenbund (Monistic League) as well as the Hansabund and BdL.[137] Much like the SPD, these associations supported removing religion from the public sphere. With the Zentrum's expanding influence and its subsequent exclusion from the so-called Bülow-Block – an alliance of conservative and liberal parties in the 1907 election – it became a target for both liberal and conservative parties.[138] As such, both the Hansabund and the BdL were closely affiliated with the Zentrum's political opponents. In response, the Volksverein opposed any of their attempts at either organizing in local communities or gaining German-Catholic support.

In 1909, the V.V. central office developed a plan of action for dealing with the rise of the Freethinker's movement and its growing connection with the SPD. This policy consisted of observing their actions, conducting extensive public education on the Freethinker's movement and its politics, expanding both general education and social work, as well as increasing outreach to those already sympathetic to the Freethinker movement.[139] To further combat these

[137] BArch, R 8115/I/4, pp. 18 and 188. The Hansabund and the BdL were themselves political opponents of each other. While the BdL was antisemitic and closely connected to the conservative party, a large number of the Hansabund's founding members were Jewish, it was largely supported by progressives and national-liberals, and was itself established to act as a counterweight to the BdL's "tyranny." Werner E. Mosse, "Die Juden in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft," in *Juden im Wilhelminischen Deutschland, 1890-1914*, ed. Werner E. Mosse (Tübingen: Mohr, 1976), 93.

[138] Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918,* vol. 2, *Machtstaat vor der Demokratie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992), 730.

[139] BArch, R 8115/I/4, p. 185.

organizations' influence, the Volksverein began organizing conferences and assemblies on these topics alongside working closely with the Catholic press to release articles, pamphlets, and other forms of targeted literature. Both the Volksverein and the Centralverein expanded their community-oriented defense work considerably during this period. While the focus and content of their work differed considerably, both considered the local and regional sphere as the spaces best suited to asserting and defending their respective interests.

The centralized nature of the Volksverein's defense work and the attacks against it meant that there was often little regional or local differentiation in the material it produced to repudiate the SPD.[140] While the Volksverein did publish some tailored fliers and pamphlets for Baden, Württemberg, and Bavaria, it lacked well-educated regional leaders to expand this more focused programming.[141] Though this defense work was largely uniform and restricted the Volksverein's ability to adapt to different local or regional concerns, it also widened its possible audience as well. By 1910, even the organizations and communities in the *Berliner Richtung* used Volksverein printed defense material like brochures, flyers, newspaper correspondence, and lecture outlines in their defense work.[142] The inner-Catholic disputes surrounding the trade unions and the Zentrum party's confessionalism did not prevent both sides from sharing the same larger enemies.

Developing and writing publications for nation-wide defense work necessitated a considerable understanding of the issues being addressed. Much of the Volksverein's national leadership was highly educated and, in many cases, also consecrated by the Catholic Church. As

[140] BArch, R 8115/I/4, p. 190.

[141] Ibid., p. 194.

[142] BArch, R 8115/I/4, p. 191.

the V.V. executive board in Mönchengladbach was responsible for making decisions on policy and administration, it was only representatives at the national level that needed to have such formal education. Instead of wanting educated individuals in regional and local leadership positions, the central office claimed that uneducated individuals were better suited to the position since they would be better able to relate to the equally uneducated men in their communities.[143] Additionally, the central office was convinced that educated regional representatives would want to focus on "intellectual work" in their communities rather than the small organizational concerns for which he was needed.[144] As the Volksverein's operations in the local and regional levels were highly centralized, there was little need for these representatives to have such knowledge or experience. This rejection of academic education at the local and regional level spoke to a different set of expectations and values for different ranks of leadership.

The central office took a similar approach when organizing speakers for its assemblies as well. To encourage *Vertrauensmänner* to organize assemblies in their communities, V.V. regional directors curated an extensive list of possible speakers in each area and the topics on which they were prepared to speak.[145] While the Volksverein invited politicians and other leaders within Catholic society to speak since they drew a crowd, the central office increasingly favored local individuals who shared the interests and concerns of those attending, such as those workers

[143] BArch, R 8115/I/82, p. 6.

[144] Ibid.

[145] MGB Hpw 40, Zentralstelle zu M.Gladbach und dem Landessekretariat zu München."Mitteilungen an die bayerischen Geschäftsführer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland," Nr. 5 (August 15, 1911), 3-14. Such lists of speakers were also provided in the region of Geldern in the Rhineland in 1905 and in lists for the Upper Rhine region, northwest Germany, and eastern and central Germany in 1901. BArch, R 8115/I/1, pp. 290, 297-301, 303-304, and 305-308 and MGB Hpw 40, Zentralstelle zu M.Gladbach und dem Landessekretariat zu München."Mitteilungen an die bayerischen Geschäftsführer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland," Nr. 7 (March 15, 1914), 2-13.

who had completed one of the Volksverein's leadership courses.[146] For the same reason that local leadership was not supposed to be university educated, the V.V. central office also considered these local and regional leaders of the Catholic working class better able to speak "for the people."[147] In encouraging those that attended the Volksverein's professional, socio-political, and leadership courses to speak at these public lectures, the central office also maintained considerable control over the topics discussed in the local sphere. Therefore, though the number of attendees at the Volksverein's political and economic leadership courses remained comparatively low, the attendees spread the information and tools they learned to a far larger audience in holding these lectures.

These deliberations over how best to organize the regional sphere were driven by a gradual expansion of its regional offices. The Volksverein established a regional office in Bavaria in 1906, Baden in 1908, and in Danzig in 1910.[148] The office in Danzig was responsible for both West and East Prussia, as well as the government district of Bromberg.[149] While western branches like Baden had a say in choosing their regional leaders, the V.V. central office appointed the chairman of the Danzig office directly. They rationalized this disparity in autonomy by citing differences both between the situation in the east compared to the west, as

[146] Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 259.

[147] Ibid.

[148] While Baden representatives established a V.V. regional office in Baden almost immediately after the association's establishment in 1890, it was not until 1908 that the circumstances allowed for regulating the relationship between the regional and central office. BArch, R 8115/I/122, p. 2.

[149] BArch, R 8115/I/99, "Ein Sekretariat des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland in Danzig," *Kölnische Volkszeitung* 564 (July 7, 1910).

well as its geographic distance from Mönchengladbach.[150] This provided greater control over the regional and local sphere when closer oversight would otherwise have not been possible.[151]

The disparity in autonomy between eastern and western regional branches reflected differences both in membership size and engagement as well; while there were over 50,000 V.V. members Baden in 1910, West and East Prussia barely had 5,000 members combined.[152] The far smaller number of V.V. members in these eastern regions along with considerable local hostility to the Volksverein as a result of the *Gewerkschaftsstreit* made expanding and supporting regional branches in the east far more difficult than in western or southern Germany. Not only were German Catholics in western and southern Germany more receptive to the Volksverein's support of the workers' movement, they were also simply geographically far closer to the central office than those in eastern Germany. This made it easier for the central office to oversee and manage the western and southern regional sphere.

Considering the Volksverein's consistent centralized decentralization, the Centralverein and the Volksverein each expanded into the local and regional sphere differently. While Centralverein members first established local branches and then organized regional branches to provide intermediary administrative support, the did not establish local branches during the German Empire and hardly concerned itself with organizing at the local level. The Volksverein's expansion into the regional sphere was largely imposed and regulated by the central office in

[150] BArch, R 8115/I/99, "Ein Sekretariat des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland in Danzig," *Kölnische Volkszeitung* 564 (July 7, 1910).

[151] Ibid.

[152] Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich*, 313-5. Baden was also generally far more active in the V.V. and was closer geographically, which simplified the organizational processes and cooperation.

Mönchengladbach prior to the First World War.[153] The Volksverein labeled this larger distribution of V.V. networks as decentralization. Nevertheless, its *Vertrauensmänner* remained dependent on the central office and did not have autonomy in deciding how to manage their communities.[154] While Volksverein's local representatives were responsible for recruiting local members, they were reliant on the regional directors for support. The Volksverein's regional branches functioned as "intermediaries between the members of the Union throughout Germany."[155] They were largely the ones responsible for representing local interests at the national level, while the *Vertrauensmänner* provided local supervision. As such, regional directors remained dependent on the central office's support for both organizational and defense work.[156]

Alongside the Volksverein's regional offices, it also cooperated with other German-Catholic organizations to operate four other kinds of affiliated branches. In areas that were either only partially industrialized or still largely agricultural, such as Siegen, Düren, and Bocholt, the Centralverein formed a shared branch with the Catholic Worker's Movement. As demand was not strong enough to justify establishing separate Volksverein or Catholic Worker's Movement branch in those regions, they came to the agreement that communities in such regions instead formed a board of trustees in which both organizations were managed according to the respective percent of local members.[157] While it was up to the Catholic Worker's Movement to decide how

[153] MGB, Hpw 1919 18a, *Praktische Winke für unsere Arbeit im Volksverein* (M.Gladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag GmbH, 1919), 4.

[154] MGB Hpw 4a, "Handbuch für Freunde und Förderer des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland," 78.

[155] BArch, R 8115/I/127, "Windthorst's Great Work: What his popular union for the defense of Catholic rights has accomplished," *New York Germans Journal and Catholic Register* (March 23, 1901).

[156] BArch, R 8115/I/7, p. 19.

[157] BArch, R 8115/I/82, pp. 3-4.

to run the offices it received, V.V. branches were then treated like all other V.V. regional offices and received assigned representatives from the central office. This showed a close connection between the organizations that considered themselves a part of the *Kölner Richtung*. These coordinated efforts consolidated and strengthened intra-regional networks of support for Catholic workers.

The second type of partial V.V. regional office were the party secretariats, which were organized together with the Zentrum party. These offices were only organized in areas such as the Saarland where the population was almost exclusively Catholic. Since the population in these regions was often so small that it did not make sense for the Zentrum to invest the time and money in organizing its own office, the Volksverein was largely responsible for operating these party secretariats.[158] The third type of regional office was a cooperation between the Volksverein and the local office of the Christian Farmer's Community, while the fourth type was the so-called mixed secretariat. The latter consolidated a V.V. office with other worker or social associations, the Zentrum, or the press.[159] While the other three types and the full V.V. regional branches were all organized by the V.V. central office in Mönchengladbach, these mixed offices were often dependent on local financial support, which also meant that they had considerably more administrative autonomy than full V.V. offices.[160]

The Volksverein's diversification at the regional level was part of a consolidation of organized lay Catholic life in western and southern Germany. The Volksverein's work in eastern Germany remained highly affected by the ongoing *Gewerkschaftsstreit* as well as proportionally

[158] BArch, R 8115/I/82, p. 4.

[159] Ibid.

[160] They were only eligible for limited financial support if they sent the V.V. at least eighty percent of the dues they collected. Ibid., p. 5.

lower numbers of German Catholics within these regions. After Pope Pius X declared his general neutrality in the question of Catholic trade unions in November 1910, Kopp called for peace between the *Berliner* and *Kölner Richtungen*.[161] Kopp stated that, since the Christian trade unions already existed, it would not be possible to disband them without leading to a "catastrophe in Catholicism."[162] This put the issue on hold until 1912, when the Pope issued a further statement stopping just short of banning interdenominational union by allowing Catholic workers to join these unions provided they also joined their local Catholic worker's association as well. This limited compromise was due to pressure from Bavarian and Prussian representatives, who warned that banning the shared unions would drive Catholic workers to the SPD.[163] Nevertheless, 800,000 Catholics were members of organizations affiliated with the SPD by 1913. As the Catholic worker's association only had 120,000 members, the papal edict had little practical effect.[164] That a considerable number of German Catholics now supported organizations affiliated with the SPD reflected the party's growing political influence after the 1912 elections.

This followed larger patterns of associational membership as a whole during this period, with interest groups and associations' membership and networks growing consistently during the

[161] Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich,* 245.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Noel D. Cary, *The Path to Christian Democracy: German Catholics and the Party System from Windthorst to Adenauer* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 30.

[164] Ronald J. Ross, *Beleaguered Tower: The Dilemma of Political Catholicism in Wilhelmine Germany* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 87 and 94. Despite this compromise, controversy and disputes surrounding the trade unions continued to flare up sporadically in the years prior to the First World War, and it was not until 1919 that it was fully resolved. The *Zentrumsstreit* was also largely resolved in 1912, with the *Kölner Richtung* under Bachem prevailing. Cary, *The Path to Christian Democracy*, 33-4.

last years of the German Empire.[165] Similarly to the Volksverein, the SPD also made considerable political gains in the pre-war years and reached its peak pre-war membership numbers in 1914 with just over one million members.[166] Both the Centralverein and the Volksverein's membership also followed similar trends of expansion the five years prior to the First World War. While both the Centralverein and Volksverein's membership grew considerably during the decade prior to the First World War, the Volksverein's membership peaked during this period. Comparatively, as the Centralverein decentralized after 1907, it began a process of expansion into the local sphere that then accelerated rapidly after the First World War. Along with this difference in timing, how the associations expanded at the local and regional level differed as well. While the Volksverein remained highly centralized in Mönchengladbach even as its regional network expanded, the Centralverein continued decentralizing by expanding and adapting its networks of local and regional branches. This meant that it was not just in timing, but in the process itself that these two associations differed in their approach to the local and regional level.

2.4. The First World War

On the same day that Germany invaded Belgium and Britain declared war on Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II gave a speech to the Reichstag calling for a *Burgfrieden* – an internal truce

[165] Ralf Kleinfeld, "Die historische Entwicklung der Interessenverbände in Deutschland," in *Interessenverbände in Deutschland*, ed. Thomas von Winter and Ulrich Willems (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007), 60

[166] Brett Fairbairn, "Interpreting Wilhelmine Elections: National Issues, Fairness Issues, and Electoral Mobilization," in *Elections, Mass Politics and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, ed. Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 34. Similar to the V.V., the SPD's membership numbers also declined significantly during the First World War, rebounded in the four years following, and then dropped consistently throughout the rest of the Weimar Republic. Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933*, 421 and 424.

between political parties. The outbreak of war triggered the start of mass euphoria, which became known as the so-called *Augusterlebnis.*[167] While many politicians and public figures framed the *Augusterlebnis* as a unifying and integral part of how all Germans experienced the outbreak of war, responses to the war differed based on class and profession. While the educated middle class (the *Bildungsbürgertum*), the intellectuals, artists, and German Jews – including the Centralverein's leadership – were largely the most enthusiastic, farmers and workers were generally more reserved and dispirited, though workers also showed some enthusiasm after the SPD came out in support of the war.[168] These disparate responses to the outbreak of war reflected differing realities for each group; while the former greeted the war as an the great unifier of German society, the latter were concerned with immediate questions of maintaining their livelihood.[169]

Even after initial enthusiasm following the outbreak of war had waned, the Centralverein retained a highly optimistic belief that the war was a positive force for change in German society. While Fuchs cautioned that the war may also lead to increased chauvinism, he also praised it both for teaching German citizens idealism and functioning as a great peacemaker within German society.[170] Additionally, the allied powers' large military and propaganda mobilization against Germany following the outbreak of the war made all Germans the focus of international hate.

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[167] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933*, 446 and David Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914-1918: The Sins of Omission* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), 17.

[168] Ullrich, *Die nervöse Grossmacht: Aufstieg und Untergang des deutschen Kaiserreichs 1871-1918* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag GmbH, 1997), 263-5.

[169] Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, *Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914-1949* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), 17.

[170] MGB Adn 3, Eugen Fuchs, "Der Krieg" in *Kriegsvorträge* (Berlin: Verlag des Centralvereins, 1915), 6.

Fuchs compared the anti-German rhetoric that the allied powers used to disparage Germany directly to the language that antisemites frequently used to attack German Jews. In doing so, he hoped that this newly shared experience of hate and vilification would prove to German society that "the most hated people were not the worst ones, and that Jewish and German characters were kindred spirits."[171] German-Jewish philosopher Hermann Cohen made a similar argument in his 1915 book *Deutschtum und Judentum*. Cohen argued that experiences during the war would force non-Jewish Germans to acknowledge German Jews' contributions to Germany. In doing so, Cohen hoped that German politics would not only recognize a synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness but would become part of German social consciousness as well.[172] While the Centralverein ceased conducting defense work during the war, it remained hopeful during the first two years of the war that such shared experiences would be enough to repudiate antisemitic prejudices in Germany. The Centralverein's leadership viewed the war as a national force of equality that superseded political, religious, or regional differences.

The Volksverein's leadership also saw the war as an opportunity for German Catholics to not only prove themselves as equally worthy on the battlefield, but also to gain broader social advancement on the home front as well.[173] While German Catholics made up the majority of the population in certain regions, such a need to prove oneself was rooted the sense of Catholic political inequality and economic disparity at the national level that developed during the Kulturkampf. Despite the Zentrum's considerable political influence on the German state,

[171] Fuchs, "Erstrebtes und Erreichtes," 343.

[172] Hermann Cohen, *Deutschtum und Judentum* (Gießen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1915), 38.

[173] Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich,* 279.

German Catholic leadership still considered Catholics as a religious minority who needed to prove their belonging and loyalty to the state.

That both associations saw the war as a positive force in promoting their cause demonstrated the shared belief that, if only they could prove themselves, then German Jews or German Catholics would gain full acceptance into German civil society. While this optimism was tempered during the following years, particularly by the 1916 *Judenzählung*, the Centralverein leadership retained its optimistic belief in the war's role as an agent of positive change. Despite the Centralverein's leadership's optimism that the war would bring all of German society together, antisemitic associations and their publications did not respect the *Burgfrieden* in the early years of the war.[174]

The outbreak of the First World War thoroughly changed how associations operated in its first two years. As most believed that the war would be brief and life would soon return to normal, many associations decided to cease operations temporarily.[175] To maintain the *Burgfrieden*, the Centralverein also both brought its defense work to a temporary end and slowed its growing expansion to a near halt.[176] From the declaration of war in August 1914 until March 1916, *Im deutschen Reich* reported only two C.V. meetings or assemblies in all of Germany – one at the central office in Berlin and the other in OG Munich.[177] This almost complete collapse

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[174] Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden*, 61.

[175] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 109.

[176] For more on the *Burgfrieden* and the conflicts and debates surrounding it in German politics at the time, see: Ullrich, *Die nervöse Grossmacht*, 446-455, Wolfgang Kruse, *Krieg und nationale Integration: eine Neuinterpretation des sozialdemokratischen Burgfriedensschlusses 1914/15* (Essen: Kartext Verlag, 1993), and Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 156-178.

[177] The assembly in Munich was held together with the local branch of the Verein für jüdische Geschichte und Kultur. "Der Krieg," *Im deutschen Reich* 21 (January 1915), 2 and "Innere Mission," *Im deutschen Reich* 21 (March 1915), 49.

of the Centralverein's pre-war community engagement was the result of restructured priorities in the first two and a half years of the war. Upholding the *Burgfrieden* and defending the German nation took priority over the Centralverein's organizational or educational interests and goals.[178]

Part of maintaining the *Burgfrieden* also consisted of setting its defense work aside regardless of the situation. While antisemitic parties lost considerable influence prior to the war, antisemitism became more widespread, more virulent, and more radical over the course of the war. While antisemitism initially declined during the early years of the war, it increased in the army over the course of the first two years and gained further legitimacy through the 1916 *Judenzählung* – a Jewish census.[179] Organized by the Ministry of War in November 1916, the *Judenzählung* sought to prove the antisemitic claim that German Jews were shirking their military duty by counting German Jewish soldiers at the front.[180] While it proved the opposite, the 1916 *Judenzählung* represented the beginning of a rapid acceleration of antisemitism in German politics and society that only intensified and expanded as the war progressed and German defeat became more apparent.

Despite German Jews' deep disappointment in the German state for ordering and conducting the *Judenzählung*, the C.V. leadership did not conduct any defense work in response. Instead, it deferred to the VdJ for the remainder of the war.[181] While the VdJ had also ceased its lobbying work as part of the *Burgfrieden*, it returned to doing so following the *Judenzählung.* In this case, its leading representatives met with the Ministry of War to condemn its inaccuracy and

[178] MGB Adn 3, Fuchs, "Der Krieg" in *Kriegsvorträge*, 7-8.

[179] Moshe Zimmermann, *Die deutschen Juden, 1914-1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997), 2-3.

[180] Cornelia Hecht, *Deutsche Juden und Antisemitismus in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Dietz, 2003), 59.

[181] Fuchs, "Erstrebtes und Erreichtes," 338.

defend the honor and bravery of Jewish soldiers.[182] While the VdJ conducted defense work, the Centralverein remained determined to maintain its side of the *Burgfrieden* by not confronting the state or other parties. Through this neutrality, C.V. leadership in Berlin hoped to avoid making any statements that could compromise the German state to its enemies or neutral nations and, in doing so, to prove German Jews' dedication to their country.[183] As such, the C.V. leadership prioritized supporting the German war effort, even when it was at the expense of Jewish belonging.

While it did not resume its defense work during wartime, the Centralverein's local and regional branches began organizing their own local events more frequently starting in mid-1916. That educational programming resumed after a two-year pause, but, as the chairman of OG Schöneberg stated, defense had to wait "until the storm had passed" further cemented the Centralverein's ongoing shift to focus on decentralized community engagement.[184] In support of this emphasis on the local sphere, the chairman of OG Schöneberg Ludwig Friedman argued at the Centralverein's general assembly in February 1917 that "If we cannot conduct our work in the public sphere, then all that is left to us, as it were, is to carry on with internal affairs within our own circles."[185] This call for a sole focus on the German-Jewish community made supporting and strengthening German Jews' ties to a synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness in the local and regional spheres the sole focus of the Centralverein's work until the end of the war.

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[182] *Das deutsche Judentum: seine Parteien und Organisationen*, 55-6. This was met with success, at least on paper. The Minister of War released a statement in February 1917 in which he stated that "the behavior of Jewish soldiers and fellow citizens during the war had not warranted the release of that directive."

[183] Fuchs, "Erstrebtes und Erreichtes," 338.

[184] WL MF Doc 338/W369, *Stenographischer Bericht über die Hauptversammlung des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens vom 4. Februar 1917* (Berlin, 1917), 25.

[185] WL MF Doc 338/W369, *Stenographischer Bericht über die Hauptversammlung des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens vom 4. Februar 1917,* 27.

Between February and December 1916, at least nine different local branches and three different regional branches organized meetings and assemblies. That number rose to at least nineteen meetings in local branches and two region-wide assemblies in 1917, and then increased again to at least fifty local meetings in 1918. This rapid increase toward the end of the war was partially due to the Centralverein celebrating its 25th anniversary in March 1918. The commemoration of this milestone and the Centralverein's legacy was the topic of around 78 percent of the local assemblies reported in *Im deutschen Reich* that year. These meetings focused on the Centralverein's history, its goals for the future, and the central role of each German Jew in its success and often drew crowds of 500-800 attendees.[186] Though they took place eight months before the end of the war, these meetings were effectively the beginning of the Centralverein's postwar and Weimar-era community programming efforts.

This return to pre-war levels of participation also set the Centralverein's post-war rapid decentralization in motion. In October 1917, LVB Hessen-Nassau chairman Max Mainzer reported at the Centralverein's assembly of delegates that, despite stark limitations in the early years of the war, the amount of work it now had was hardly distinguishable from pre-war levels.[187] Not only did Hessen-Nassau not report any decline in membership due to the war, but local representatives from OG Mainz and OG Kassel also proposed a resolution during the Hessen-Nassau's 1917 regional assembly to establish a separate regional branch for this southwestern area of Rhine-Hesse. While the delegates at the assembly did not approve the establishment of a new regional branch in Rhine-Hesse, they did not fully reject the idea either. Instead, the representatives in attendance suggested that, if these two local branches could gain

[186] The anniversary celebration in Würzburg drew 500 guests, and 800 attended the one in Posen. "Noch einige Jubiläumsversammlungen," *Im deutschen Reich* 24 (May 1918), 218-219.

[187] "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 23 (December 1917), 518.

more local support for an appeal for a separate regional branch, then the debate could resume at a future assembly.[188] While this never occurred, the demand from two local branches for their own regional representation was indicative of the growing local demand for specialized regional organization that became so prominent after the war.

The Centralverein's local branches in Berlin were more successful in their attempt to form a regional branch a year later. On October 21, 1918, representatives from local branches in the greater Berlin area came together to form the Verband Groß-Berliner Ortsgruppen – LVB Greater Berlin. Established only a few weeks before the armistice, LVB Greater Berlin was the only regional branch established during the war, and was the last one established during the German Empire.[189] As members of the Berlin local branches had a long history of attending each other's meetings, the creation of a regional branch helped consolidate these already often-overlapping efforts. The regionalization of the Centralverein's work in Berlin reshaped these unofficial connections and integrated these local branches into the Centralverein's growing network of regional branches. As such, the establishment of LVB Greater Berlin was a further step in shifting administrative responsibility away from the central office to the regional branches.

Much like the Centralverein, the Volksverein's work also changed considerably following the outbreak of war. While the Volksverein never put its programming on hold in response to the *Burgfrieden*, it was initially considerably affected by wartime restrictions in travel and organization. As V.V. leadership was also convinced that it was not necessary to adapt programming to wartime since the war would end quickly, the Volksverein decided to hold

[188] "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 23 (December 1917), 518.

[189] "Verband der Groß-Berliner Ortsgruppen," *Im deutschen Reich* 24 (November 1918), 440.

fewer assemblies than usual during the first two years of the war. Though the Volksverein held far fewer assemblies compared to before the war, it reported in late 1915 that it had nevertheless held 154 conferences for regional leaders throughout Germany since the outbreak of the war. Alongside these conferences, the Volksverein also held 27 courses that focused on topics pertaining to wartime economy, the causes of the war, and social work during the war. The V.V.-Verlag also published millions of pamphlets and books, most of which were sent to soldiers on the front.

As it became increasingly apparent that the war would not end by the end of 1915, the V.V. central office called for a full return to educational work.[190] Though the Volksverein never put its work on hold due to the war, it resumed widespread community engagement starting in 1916. In 1916/17, the Volksverein held over 1,000 assemblies throughout Germany, and in the following year it reported at least 8,000 assemblies or rallies, which was more than it ever held during the previous 25 years of peacetime.[191] This was largely due to the fact that, instead of its normal focus on social and Catholic topics, these assemblies were open to the public and focused on highly patriotic topics in support of the war effort.[192] That all Germans were encouraged to attend regardless of their religious affiliation was part of the Volksverein's wartime focus on supporting what it deemed best for Germany as a whole.[193]

The Centralverein also initially put aside disagreements to cooperate on behalf of all German Jewry. Established by Zionist Max Bodenheimer in 1914, the Komitee für den Osten (Committee for the East) supported Eastern European Jewry's right to self-determination should

[190] BArch, R 8115/I/7, p. 22.

[191] Ibid., p. 68-9.

[192] BArch, R 8115/I/7, p. 115.

[193] Ibid., p. 65.

Germany win the war.[194] While led by German Zionists, it also included leading members from the Centralverein, VdJ, the DIGB, and the Unabhängiger Orden B'nai B'rith (UOBB). This broad support base from within organized German Jewry reflected a broader support for a kind of Jewish nationalism that combined "a commitment to German culture with a sense of responsibility for the Eastern Jew."[195] The war first slowed down and then rapidly accelerated the Centralverein's rejection of the German Zionist movement. This shift was partially the result of its growing conflict and limited wartime cooperation with the German Zionist movement. Despite the ZVfD and Centralverein's cooperation on behalf of Eastern European Jews during the First World War, enmity between the two only grew after 1917.

The Centralverein's initially conditional rejection of Zionism became more uncompromising following the Balfour Declaration in 1917. In stating Britain's support of a Jewish national home in Palestine, the Balfour Declaration gave Zionism a newfound political legitimacy and, in doing so, further strengthened the ZVfD's palestinocentrism and its rejection of Jewish assimilation into German society.[196] Furthermore, in acknowledging Zionist claims to Palestine, the Balfour declaration also raised concerns within the Centralverein that Britain would be considered the nation to save the Jews, and that German Jews would, by extension, be perceived as supporting the enemy during wartime.[197] The question of Palestine was increasingly

[194] Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 157.

[195] Ibid., 158.

[196] Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 97.

[197] Eugen Fuchs, "Die Einheitsfront," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 303.

a wartime issue and one that the Centralverein sought to solve by encouraging the German Foreign Office to gain Turkish support for backing Jewish settlement in Palestine.

The First World War highlighted and accelerated the administrative and political changes already occurring within the Centralverein and the Volksverein in the late German Empire. For the Centralverein, the last year of the war brought the return to its ongoing pre-war shift to decentralization, expansion, and education. For the Volksverein, it was in this period that it began experiencing considerable financial and organizational difficulties.[198] The Volksverein lost over 37 percent of its members over the course of the war, with over 200,000 members – 27 percent – leaving the Volksverein in the first two years alone.[199] The Centralverein's membership also declined during the first two years of the war. However, while C.V. membership dropped from 38,000 in 1914 to 35,500 in 1916, it increased gradually to 36,000 in 1917 before returning to pre-war levels in 1918 and rising above pre-war levels in the early Weimar Republic.[200] That the Centralverein and Volksverein's membership patterns diverged so considerably starting in 1917 indicated that the Volksverein was facing larger internal structural issues than simply the short-term restrictions of wartime.

The Volksverein's decline was a reflection of both its growing disagreements with the worker's movement and differences with the Zentrum party. Disillusionment over how the Zentrum treated Catholic workers and the Zentrum's support for middle-class party politics led to increased dissatisfaction with the Volksverein and growing sympathies for social democracy

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[198] BArch, R 8115/I/42, p. 52

[199] The V.V. lost 126,691 members in 1914/5 and 79,885 in 1915/16. In 1916/17 and 1917/18, the V.V. declined by 42,783 and 17492 members, respectively. Heitzer, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Kaiserreich 1890-1918*, 315. While it regained those members lost in the first two years of the war by 1922, this was only a temporary trend and began a continuous downward trend the following year. Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch des Volksvereins für das Katholische Deutschland,* 15.

[200] Rothholz, *Die deutschen Juden in Zahl und Bild*, 40.

among Catholic workers.[201] While the Volksverein remained the largest Catholic association until its dissolution in 1933, this wartime decline was, in many ways, the start of the financial and administrative difficulties that defined the Volksverein in the Weimar Republic. By the end of the war, the Volksverein's declining membership and a lack of local support left it facing growing questions of its relevance in German-Catholic associational life.[202]

While the early 1900s was a turbulent period within organized Catholicism, it was also during this period that German Catholics largely overcame Bismarck's anti-Catholic legislation and unofficial restrictions on political participation. The Volksverein's pre-war popularity amongst Catholic workers heightened the Catholic working class' political mobilization and increased their dedication to asserting their own interests in the public sphere.[203] This also meant a larger decline in the Church's influence on associational life and a small increase in German Catholics' social and political heterogeneity. The Volksverein played a pivotal role in modernizing German Catholic society and providing a clear and increasingly dominant alternative to traditional ultramontane religious Catholic life.[204]

While the Volksverein reached its peak membership and expansion in the late German Empire, for the Centralverein this period was characterized by the beginning of the expansion, regionalization, and focus on Germanness and Jewishness that defined its engagement during the Weimar Republic. By the end of the German Empire, the Centralverein's regional branches had replaced its local branches as the main intermediary network within the Centralverein as a whole.

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[201] Loth, *Katholiken im Kaiserreich,* 299, 302.

[202] MGB 49a: *Was haben wir deutsche Katholiken am Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland?* (Mönchengladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag, 1927), 3.

[203] This later had negative consequences for the V.V. when they began organizing their own associations and leaving the V.V. in the Weimar Republic.

[204] Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,*vol. 3, 1187.

While expansion began as a rather improvised process, by 1914 the Centralverein was increasingly divided into the local, regional, and national spheres that defined its work in the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany.

While the Centralverein was increasingly focused on strengthening Jewishness among its members, its primary mission remained defending and securing German-Jewish integration. This required extensive engagement in German society and politics as well as public relations work. By the last years of the war, the Centralverein's support of a synthesized German-Jewish identity was a pivotal part of its growing community programming. Its growing focus on education was part of the Centralverein's support for the "renaissance of Judaism" and the fight for "equality here in Germany on German soil."[205] This embrace of Jewishness combined with an uncompromising assertion of Germanness was the foundation of the Centralverein's synthesis of German and Jewish identity from the early 1900s onward. This renaissance was closely tied to demands for political and social equality and an equally strong dedication to supporting Germanness. A renewal of Jewish life was a necessary part of the Centralverein's synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness.

The Centralverein's branches and their intra-communal networks both created and strengthened expanding systems of Jewish education and identity building. The Centralverein's decentralized network of local and regional branches created spaces within which German Jews could navigate and tailor Germanness and Jewishness into one synthesized identity. With their growing autonomy, local branches developed new and adaptive frameworks within which German Jews could reinforce and assert both their Germanness and Jewishness while also building networks for local self-defense against antisemitism.

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[205] Eugen Fuchs, "Sombart und die Zukunft der Juden," in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 133.

This was a key part of what contemporary Jewish theologian and philosopher Franz Rosenzweig called the creation of "a particular Jewish sphere."[206] While it was not until the Weimar Republic that the Jewish community as a whole underwent what historian Michael Brenner identified as a "Jewish cultural renaissance," its roots were in the pre-war years.[207] The expansion and development of a space in which German Jews could articulate the nuanced expressions of both their Jewishness and Germanness set a strong precedent for a renewal of Jewish community engagement in the Weimar Republic. With the beginning of decentralization and the expansion of programming in the years prior to the First World War, the Centralverein reframed how German Jews asserted their Jewishness and Germanness in German society. It was in the initial local and regional expansion of the pre-war period that the resurgence of Jewish culture and identity in the Weimar Republic was based.

[206] Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1996), 2.

[207] Ibid., 69.

Chapter Three
New Times, New Methods: The Regionalization of Religious Minority Associations in the Early Weimar Republic, 1919-1924

Associations were omnipresent in German society by the early Weimar Republic, with each political, social, and cultural interests represented by an association of their own. However, interest groups were no longer the political forces they had been in the 1890s and early 1900s when historian Thomas Nipperdey described them as "secondary systems of social power."[1] The fall of the monarchy and the establishment of a parliamentary democracy changed the ways in which associations and interest groups sought to influence politics and the state. While associations continued to use similar lobbying methods to influence political parties and the courts, the secondary sphere of influence shifted after the end of the war. Whereas political parties were highly confined by the authoritarian monarchy of the German Empire, in the Weimar Republic, political parties became the main legislative and political power. Nevertheless, their general lack of consistent organization meant that interest groups, associations, and trade unions were often the ones representing their interests among their constituents.[2] This close cooperation between party and association was not new to the Weimar Republic, and was further reinforced by the considerable bureaucratic continuity between the two periods as well.[3]

This was a process that was closely connected to how politicians began conceiving and advocating for a German national identity in the post-war period. As historian Celia Applegate

[1] Thomas Nipperdey, "Interessensverbände und Parteien in Deutschland vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 2 (1961), 268.

[2] Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, *Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914-1949* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), 360.

[3] Ibid., 376.

argued, "The answer the national and state representatives came up with was largely decentralist, emphatic in its insistence on the importance of local particularity in the construction of a general German identity."[4] By making space for regional and local identities in their conceptualization of German nationalism, Weimar-era politicians decentralized German identity while also maintaining a standardized basis for articulating national belonging. The revolutions and crises of the post-war period meant that the Weimar state's legitimacy was itself so precarious that politicians from the moderate parties could not afford to reject these regionalized and localized expressions of German identity in favor of enforcing a centralized understanding of Germanness.[5] Maintaining the democratic liberal Weimar system necessitated adaptive forms of civic engagement and centralized support for decentralized political action.

Shifting political frameworks were both part of and a driving force behind a large regionalization throughout German society in the early Weimar Republic. In contrast to the German Empire, Weimar-era Germans were increasingly uninterested in national German identity and focused on their plurality of regional political, cultural, and historical particularities.[6] According to historian Mack Walker, the "national parliamentary politics and

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[4] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 134.

[5] This period of revolution was characterized by the Spartacist uprising and the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in January 1919, the declaration and dissolution of the Bavarian Socialist Republic in the spring of that year, along with a series of large strikes and the failed Kapp putsch in March 1920. Despite repeated communist attempts to overthrow regional and national governments, the only successful general strike was organized by the trade unions and not the communists in reaction to the Kapp putsch. While this strike effectively put down the putsch by bringing the transportation and communication networks to a complete standstill, it also triggered a number of left-wing uprisings in industrial cities throughout Germany. That this general strike both successfully ended an attempted right-wing putsch while also contributing to the ongoing number of uprisings on the left was emblematic of the overall political instability of these post-war years. Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (London: Allen Lane, 1991), 32 and 34, Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 91, and Alex Burkhardt, "A Republican Potential: The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Party in Hof-an-der-Saale, 1918–1920," *Central European History* 50 (December 2017), 484.

[6] This was evident in the focus on regionalized historical studies during the period as well as the expansion of regional radio networks rather than one unified German broadcaster. For more on these two aspects of

liberal economy" that emerged with the Weimar Republic contributed to a fragmentation that led many Germans to turn back to the local and regional spheres for a sense of community regardless of their religion or political affiliation.[7] This localization and disaggregation led to cohesion at the local and regional levels and the distrust of decisions and individuals from the capital in Berlin.[8] For most local residents and leaders, intervention from above was not correlated with more financial or administrative assistance in local issues, but with interference and restriction. Such skepticism of national government was not new, but was rooted in the regional reluctance to unification in the German Empire; the highly contentious establishment of the Weimar state renewed these latent doubts' influence in society.

The parameters within which German citizens engaged with their own civic identity and politics changed as a result of the political revolutions and economic crises that followed the loss of the First World War, the end of the monarchy, and the declaration of the Weimar Republic. Two months later, the Weimar constitution was ratified in January 1919. The Weimar constitution granted all Germans equal rights and religious communities the free right to practice. Unlike during the German Empire when Jews were not allowed to hold certain professional positions despite full emancipation, Jews were now granted full professional freedom. The separation of church and state in the Weimar constitution meant that all Jewish communities in Germany had the same rights as the Protestant and Catholic Church for the first time. In granting

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regionalization, see Celia Applegate, "A Europe of Regions: Reflections on the Historiography of Sub-National Places in Modern Times," *The American Historical Review* 104 (October 1999), 1157-1182 and Adelheid von Saldern, "*Volk* and *Heimat* Culture in Radio Broadcasting during the Period of Transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany," *The Journal of Modern History* 76 (June 2004), 312-346.

[7] Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971), 427.

[8] Ibid., 417.

the separation of church and state and the freedom of religion, the constitution established new liberal frameworks for religious life, expression, and identity.

German society's growing preoccupation with concepts like the *Volk* – the people – and *Heimat* rather than the nation meant that civil society, and associations in particular, became more attuned to and accommodating of local and regional particularities. Particularly the concept of *Heimat* supported a localizing impulse by framing discussions of national identity within a more immediate and tangible space. In establishing more local and regional branches and expanding local programming, associations contributed to the regionalization of Germanness during this period. It was not that a fully new form of associational life developed under the Weimar Republic, but rather that the established networks adapted to meet increasingly more decentralized demands.[9]

German-Jewish community life also expanded rapidly during this period due to the new freedoms afforded by the liberal democratic state as well as the need to fight against rising antisemitism and völkisch nationalism. As many German Jews were highly assimilated and relegated religious practice largely to the private sphere, Jewish community leaders began developing additional ways to encourage and teach German Jews to openly express their Jewishness. To support this broader "re-Judaization" of Jewish society and culture during the period, Jewish leaders turned to education and strengthening Jewish identity.[10] As historian Michael Brenner argued, "German Jews set out to explore new and creative modes of Jewish culture within a non-Jewish environment" by establishing adult education centers, Jewish

[9] Ralf Kleinfeld, "Die historische Entwicklung der Interessenverbände in Deutschland," in *Interessenverbände in Deutschland*, ed. Thomas von Winter and Ulrich Willems (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007), 51.

[10] Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1996), 39.

schools, publishing companies, and cultural associations.[11] In 1919 alone, German Jews established adult education centers – called a *Lehrhaus* – in Berlin, Breslau, Frankfurt, and Munich. These were part of a network of Jewish education organizations, which included other similar institutions in smaller communities in German as well.[12] Doing so necessitated an increased focus on the local sphere and adapting to each community's needs. This renewed interest and engagement in Jewish life was part of the localizing trend that characterized German society during the early years of the Weimar Republic. While the Centralverein's representatives had been holding educational lectures in local communities since the early 1900s, the accelerating pace at which they did so during the early Weimar Republic reflected this far-reaching turn back to Jewishness and the regionalization of community life.

As German Jews adapted how they conceptualized Germanness and Jewishness to better fit the new frameworks of the Weimar Republic, the Centralverein and liberal German Jewry as a whole became more confident in asserting this synthesized identity in society. Whereas the Centralverein had focused on creating a synthesis between Germanness and Jewishness in the German Empire, by the Weimar Republic, its national, regional, and local leaders were more intent on expanding the space for asserting this synthesized identity in the public sphere. This process was predominantly regionalized and was based not on prioritizing either Germanness or Jewishness, but in the maintenance of a cohesive, shared, regionally adaptive, and nationally integrated dual identity.

This synthesized identity did not prioritize either Germanness or Jewishness, but instead represented a balance between the two. For the Centralverein, synthesized identity meant that

[11] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 219.

[12] Ibid., 90.

individuals could embrace both Germanness and Jewishness equally and concurrently without weakening or invalidating either one. The increasingly localized frameworks within which German Jews framed this synthesis created the flexibility for incorporating the regionalized forms of political identity that developed in response to occupation, uprisings, and political unrest during the early Weimar Republic. The Centralverein's local and regional spheres operated as frameworks within which German Jews navigated and adapted this synthesized German and Jewish identity to the growing political and economic turmoil of the post-war period.

3.1. The Centralverein in the Post-War Period

For many Germans, joining associations was a decision based on social or professional interests more than full dedication to the association or its cause itself. While many German Jews joined the Centralverein out of deep conviction in the early Weimar Republic, for some, joining a German-Jewish association was done out of a sense of obligation. This was evident in reports from certain local branches who had dues-paying members but had not been active since before the war or where there was no interest in organizing lectures.[13] The former was the case in OG Solingen, which did not hold any programming between its establishment in 1912 and 1922. Though its members had continued paying dues over this entire ten-year period, the syndic of LVB Rhineland Hans Kalisch reported that a number of local men were surprised to find out that they were members of its management board.[14] While most C.V. branches participated in the Centralverein's network of programming and events, such instances of forgetfulness showed that

[13] WL MF Doc 55/19/752, April 10, 1922 and 55/20/768, May 8, 1922.

[14] WL MF Doc 55/19/752, April 10, 1922.

others did not consistently prioritize their C.V. membership. In most cases however, most local branches reported considerably higher levels of interest from all regions, and membership in the Centralverein became increasingly common.

By the early 1920s, the pace of the Centralverein's local expansion had rapidly outpaced pre-war levels and the Centralverein grew from 45,000 members in 1919 to 72,000 in 1924 – an increase of over sixty percent.[15] This rapid expansion was a highly German phenomenon; membership in professional, business, and leisure associations also rose after the end of the First World War.[16] The Centralverein's rapid expansion reflected not only German Jews' increased interest and participation in German-Jewish life, but the large extent to which they participated the social and cultural trends of German society and culture at the time.

While a small number of local branches were established in 1919, it was not until 1920 that the number of local branches began growing exponentially; the Centralverein had 174 local branches in 1918 and 632 in 1925.[17] This represented an increase of over 367 percent over the course of seven years. Almost half of the local branches established between 1920 and 1922 were in the western regions of Germany, with the most established in Hessen-Nassau, the newly established LVB Linksrhein, and in Rhineland-Westphalia.[18] With the occupation of the Rhineland following the end of the war, the subsequent occupation of the Ruhr after Germany

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[15] Julius Rothholz, *Die deutschen Juden in Zahl und Bild* (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 1925), 40 and Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens. *Tätigkeitsbericht für die Jahre 1924 und 1925* (Berlin: 1925), 87 and 89.

[16] Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 368 and Hans-Peter Ullmann, *Interessenverbände in Deutschland* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1988), 174.

[17] The C.V. also had over 250,000 corporate members by the mid-1920s. WL MF Doc 55/31/1410, p. 216, BArch, R 703/67: Paul Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden: Ein Rückblick auf die Geschichte des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, 1893*-1918 (Berlin: Verlag des Centralvereins, 1918), 76-81 and Rothholz, *Die deutschen Juden in Zahl und Bild*, 38.

[18] With the exception of Lower Silesia, which established at least nine new local branches during these years, the other regional branches with the highest number were in the south, with both Bavaria and Baden recording seven new local branches established between 1920 and 1922.

defaulted on its reparation payments in 1922, and separatist uprisings in the Palatinate, communities in western Germany were particularly affected by the political and economic insecurity of the post-war period. The rapid expansion of local branches in these regions was also closely tied to local German-Jewish communities' desire for representation and a structured space in which to engage with other likeminded German Jews. Its local expansion was not only motivated by regional engagement and growing local demand, but also represented the growing desire for decentralization within the Centralverein itself.[19]

Since local branches were essential in organizing and supporting the Centralverein's work, many local branches were established during this period that did not have the officially-required number of members.[20] Hans Kalisch justified LVB Rhineland's approach to local branches that did not meet the membership requirement in a letter to the central office, stating:

> Your question of whether Emmerich is a local branch or a propaganda site with a *Vertrauensmann* touches on a sore spot in our organization. I cannot answer this question with either a yes or a no. That Emmerich, as a small town with 34 members already, [...] is not a local branch with voting rights is obvious according to our statutes. On the other hand, for strengthening the sense of community it is of a particular psychological value whether a town only has individual members represented by a *Vertrauensmann* appointed either by them or by us or if the man in question is the chairman of a local branch [...]. The people in these places consider themselves as a local branch, and we therefore also refer to them as such in our correspondence.[21]

[19] Starting in 1907, a community needed seventy-five individuals to form an local branch; by the early 1920s that number had dropped to fifty, and even then that barrier remained open to interpretation. "Die erste allgemeine Delegierten-Versammlung des Central-Vereins," *Im deutschen Reich* 12 (December 1906), 678 and WL MF Doc 55/1/1, "Satzung des württembergischen Landesverbands," March 13, 1921.

[20] WL MF Doc 55/4/123, p. 103.

[21] WL MF Doc 55/32/1403, June 22, 1922.

Even when a community had fewer than the officially required number of members, if it was active and identified as a local branch then it was often treated as such by its regional branch.[22] While some smaller communities also came together to reach the required number of members to make a shared local branch, in many small towns it was geographic distance or community identity made such consolidation either highly impractical or even insulting.[23] Respecting a community's local networks and identity often took precedence over strict and consistent administrative regulation. In another letter to the central office in March 1922, Kalisch detailed the complex network of intra-community relationships in the region that prevented those with just shy of fifty members from cooperating. OG Solingen was too isolated geographically to be willing to combine with the closest community in Remscheid, while OG Soest, which had just over fifty members, would have been insulted if it was forced to combine with the much smaller community in Lippstadt.[24] To avoid any conflict, regional branches often deferred to preexisting community structures when organizing the local sphere.

Local branches were usually established following a lecture by a C.V. speaker from the regional branch or central office. These talks frequently focused on topics pertaining to Jewish life in Germany, the Centralverein's defense work, as well as current political and social issues.[25] Many lectures also highlighted the danger of antisemitism and, in doing so, discussed not only on what was wrong in German society and politics, but what the Centralverein intended to help make things right. Lectures focused on antisemitism were often held in communities without

[22] This also meant that the regional branch left it up to the local community to choose its own representative instead of having the regional branch or central office assign a delegate – as was generally the case for communities not large enough to form a local branch. WL MF Doc 55/32/1403, June 22, 1922.

[23] WL MF Doc 55/23/919, March 24, 1922.

[24] Ibid.

[25] WL MF Doc 55/32/1405, September 28, 1921, 55/30/1300, April 26, 1920, and 55/8/241, March 21, 1922.

local branches since it motivated otherwise ambivalent or indifferent communities to come together in their own defense. In highlighting the dangers of antisemitism and the concrete measures that the Centralverein took to combat it, these lectures both instilled fear of persecution while also promoting a local branch as an effective solution.

To manage the growing organizational and administrative responsibilities associated with such expansion, C.V. leadership relied heavily on its regional branches to provide local branches with the immediate support and guidance they needed.[26] This they did by offering administrative and financial assistance for lectures, providing speakers, and acting as intermediary between the local branches and the central office. Regional branches were so effective that between 1918 and 1922 alone, the Centralverein established ten new regional branches, bringing the total number up to 23.[27] Regional branches relieved the central office of the responsibility for managing hundreds of local branches, each with its own concerns and demands. In focusing on the local sphere, regional branches also became familiar with local conditions and adapted their management and programming accordingly.[28] The regional branches therefore acted as the Centralverein's main mediating structure both financially and organizationally. With each regional branch adapting to fit the organizational needs of their regions, they provided intra-regional cohesion while also allowing for local adaptation.

One of the Centralverein's most active regions both before and after the war, LVB Rhineland-Westphalia was not only the Centralverein's first regional branch, it was also the only one that became so large that it had to split into two branches. In February 1920, LVB

[26] "Die Vertrauensmänner-Versammlung für Rheinland und Westfalen," *Im deutschen Reich* 12 (January 1906), 9.

[27] These were LVBs East Westphalia: 1919, Bavaria: 1919, Hannover: 1919, Linksrhein: 1920, Northern Germany: 1920, Grenzmark: 1921, Thüringen: 1921, Brandenburg: 1922, and Province Saxony: 1922.

[28] WL MF Doc 55/12/380, May 9, 1922.

Rhineland-Westphalia became responsible solely for the right bank of the Rhine, while LVB Linksrhein was established for the left bank. This partition was rooted the political and regional divisions of the region. In dividing the regional branches according to the banks of the Rhine, the regional representatives acknowledged and incorporated regional differentiation in the Centralverein's administrative structure. The way in which LVB Rhineland separated into two regional branches was not a top-down organizational decision, but one that reflected the distinct cultural and political differences between the regions on the left and right bank of the Rhine.

LVB Linksrhein's establishment accelerated decentralization in the region. Established in February 1920 with its office in Cologne, LVB Linksrhein was the Centralverein's second fastest growing region in terms of new local branches.[29] Immediately after its establishment, eight new local branches were established in the six weeks between mid-March and the end of April 1920, as well as a new student branch in Bonn in May 1920.

Ten years later, Lise Leibholz from the central office reflected on the interconfessional relationships in the region, stating that "the establishment of an LVB for the left bank of the Rhine was greeted with particular joy because for generations, the well-established Rhenish Jewry has been connected with its Christian compatriots through a particular historical fate."[30] Regional cohesion in the Rhineland was stronger than in other regions due to the effects of occupation, the predominantly Catholic society, and the Rhineland's traditionally more open and welcoming nature.[31] With the Kulturkampf in the 1870s particularly virulent in the Rhineland,

[29] The fastest growing during this period was LVB Hessen/Hessen-Nassau.

[30] Lise Leibholz, "Zehn Jahre Landesverband Rhineland des C.V.," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 5 (January 31, 1930), 53.

[31] While Catholic antisemitism increased the further north in the Rhineland one went, the relationship between Jews and Catholics in Mönchengladbach – the center of the V.V.'s operations – was a peaceful one throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Olaf Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 140.

Catholics and Jews in this region shared experiences of state and societal persecution. Additionally, the Catholic majority meant that Jews generally experienced less political antisemitism from the regions' Zentrum delegates, and were able to participate in local customs like Karneval or Catholic religious celebrations.[32]

Here the interlocking categories of Jewishness and Germanness were joined by a strong regional identity as a Rhinelander. Regional identity was so pronounced that, instead of celebrating its own ten-year anniversary in 1930, LVB Linksrhein instead celebrated the 1,000-year anniversary of the Rhineland as a German territory in 1925 as well as the departure of occupation troops in 1929.[33] These celebrations were notable examples of how German Jews asserted a strong sense of regional identity through their participation in the Centralverein's local branches. Creating a separate branch for the region on the left bank of the Rhine acknowledged this longstanding regional cultural identity that separated communities on the left and right banks.[34] Despite both being in the Rhineland, the right and left banks of the Rhine were two distinct regions with their own sense of regional identity.

LVB Linksrhein's synthesis of Jewishness, Germanness, and a particular local or regional identity was not uncommon for German Jews in other regions as well, especially in smaller towns or villages in which Jews had more personal contact with their non-Jewish neighbors. In combining loyalty to the state and an affiliation with local culture while also maintaining their ethnicity as Jews, the Centralverein's members also embraced complex and situationally

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[32] Jacob Borut, "Religiöses Leben der Landjuden im westlichen Deutschland während der Weimarer Republik," in *Jüdisches Leben auf dem Lande: Studien zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte,* ed. Monika Richarz and Reinhard Rürup (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 246.

[33] Leibholz, "Zehn Jahre Landesverband Rhineland des C.V.," 53.

[34] When crossing the bridge between Cologne and the affiliated city of Deutz on the right bank of the Rhine, Konrad Adenauer is supposed to have claimed that Siberia began in Deutz. This reflected the attitude of many Germans on the left bank of the Rhine that they were the representatives of culture.

adaptive forms of identity and participation.[35] Jewish participation in the local sphere was highly dependent on whether German Jews lived in larger cities or small towns, the proportion of Catholics in the population, and local associations and customs. As Jacob Borut argued, Jews in small towns also developed a "complicated self-perception" that balanced these identities by participating in civic life outside the Jewish community.[36] Taking part in local community life meant attending community events and joining non-Jewish association. In small towns in predominantly Catholic regions, Jews also participated in Catholic society by donating to funds for renovating the local church or even participating in religious processions.[37] Coordinating cohesive associational life at the national level necessitated adapting to and accommodating the considerable variation at the local level not just between but also within different regions in Germany.

The rapid expansion of the Centralverein's network of regional branches reflected a broader regionalization of Jewish life during this period as well. With the dissolution of the Verband der deutschen Juden in April 1922 and the establishment of the Preußische Landesverband jüdischer Gemeinden (Prussian Regional Association of Jewish Communities or PLVB) two months later, Jewish community representation shifted further toward the regional level. German-Jewish leaders initially planned to create a similar national association after the VdJ's dissolution. Pressure from communities in Prussia and, more significantly, support from the German Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, and the

[35] This was highly similar to what Marsha Rozenblit identified as the "tripartite identity" of Habsburg Jews during and prior to the First World War. Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity: The Jews of Habsburg Austria During World War I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4-5.

[36] Jacob Borut, "Bin Ich doch ein Israelit, ehre Ich auch den Bischof mit": Village and Small-Town Jews within the Social Spheres in Western German Communities during the Weimar Republic," in *Jüdisches Leben in der Weimarer Republik,* ed. Wolfgang Benz, Arnold Paucker and Peter Pulzer (Tübingen: Mohr, 1998), 133.

[37] Borut, "Religiöses Leben der Landjuden im westlichen Deutschland während der Weimarer Republik," 246-7.

Prussian Ministry of Finance for a Prussia-based organization put an end to any aspirations for a representative national association of Jewish religious communities for the rest of the Weimar Republic.[38] Both the Prussian-Jewish community's and the German state's insistence on regionalization demonstrated the extent to which regionalism had been integrated into both Germanness and Jewishness. The PLVB's establishment established a new framework for German Jews to create and expand regionalized networks of representation and participation.[39] The increased focus on regional community organization in Prussia made the Centralverein the largest German-Jewish association at the national level without restricting the further expansion of its local and regional branches in Prussia.

As Jewish associational life became more defined by regionalization, the C.V. central office was increasingly reliant on its networks of local and regional branches. To accommodate local and regional differences, the relationship between the local and regional branches allowed for considerable leeway and autonomy in operations and structure. Since regional branches specialized in local affairs while also providing a direct link to the central office, they formed a cohesive network of administrative support for local branches throughout Germany. [40] Regional

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[38] Max P. Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge, 1918-1938: eine Geschichte des Preussischen Landesverbandes jüdischer Gemeinden [1918-1938]* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981), 60-2. The PLVB therefore represented Prussian Jewish communities at the state level, and was run by a parliament whose representatives were directly elected by Jewish community members. By 1925, the PLV represented 646 Jewish communities throughout Prussia and roughly 400,000 of the 425,000 Jews in the state. The umbrella association for orthodox Jewish communities (Preußische Landesverband gesetztreuer Synagogengemeinden) represented a further 140 communities, though many of them had a dual membership in the PLVB as well. By 1925, almost all Jewish communities were represented by at least one of the two. This also meant that the PLV represented over seventy percent of all German Jews in 1925. Ibid., 81 and 88 and Statistisches Reichsamt, "Volkszählung: Die Bevölkerung des Deutschen Reichs nach den Ergebnissen der Volkszählung 1925. Teil 1, Einführung in die Volksählung 1925: Tabellenwerk," in *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, vol. 401 (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1928), 382.

[39] The PLVB applied for financial support both from the Weimar state as well as from Prussia itself. In 1925, Prussian Jewish communities received the first support payment from the German state to help pay for Jewish community affairs. These payments, which continued through the first half of 1932 formed the basis of the PLVB's administrative support. Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge,* 109 and 274.

[40] WL MF Doc 55/25/1036, May 8, 1923.

branches gained insight into local matters through frequent correspondence with local branches, and even by sending out questionnaires to local branches.

To keep both the regional branch and the central office better informed of the conditions in its local branches, LVB Rhineland provided all its local branches with a four-page questionnaire in early 1922. Doing so provided them with insight into local demographics, what other associations or organizations were active, and how the local branch itself operated. All told, over 100 communities received such a questionnaire, which asked about the local Jewish community, the religious and political affiliations of non-Jewish residents, the extent to which antisemitism and Zionism were prevalent in the community, as well as what defense work was being conducted in response.[41] These surveys enabled the regional branch in Essen to gain detailed insight into the communities it managed and to tailor its work accordingly both in the local sphere as well as in conversations with the central office. Particularly during this period of political crisis, such a questionnaire allowed the Centralverein to assess and better adapt to its growing local sphere.

This survey enabled the regional branch to determine precisely how many members were in each local branch and to appraise local political, religious, and demographic conditions. As such, the regional branch and the central office could appraise the effects of lectures on membership, evaluate responses to local antisemitism or Zionism, and assess how a Protestant or Catholic affected Jewish community life. Local chairman's reports also allowed the regional branches to track changes in membership and the sum of dues collected from each community.[42]

[41] Many of these communities were overwhelmingly if not exclusively Catholic, particularly in smaller towns and villages. The local branches with the highest Catholic populations were Werl: 96 percent, Lichtenau: 95 percent, Dülmen: 94 percent, Rees: 94 percent, and Bocholt: 92 percent. WL MF Doc 55/14/470, 55/23/919, 55/19/719, 55/27/1157, and 55/12/379. In some cases, these four-page surveys were the only surviving archival document that indicated the presence of a local branch in a specific community.

[42] WL MF Doc 55/24/998, April 5, 1922.

LVB Rhineland and the central office did not discuss the results of these questionnaires in detail in their correspondence. Nevertheless, that it was conducted in such a manner showed the extent of the Centralverein's regionalization by 1922 and the difficulties of managing its growing local networks.

While the local branches could correspond with both the regional and central office on specific issues, the regional branches functioned almost exclusively as an administrative mediator between the two. At the same time, the Centralverein's regional branches were confined to a more rigid order of operations than either the local or national sphere. Though local branches could occasionally reach out directly to the central office, regional branches were restricted to acting as the intermediary between the local branches and central office. In 1923, the central office claimed that, since the regional branch operated according to the central office's directives, the regional branch was "[…]responsible for carrying out the Berlin central office's policies and could not be made responsible for the content of these directives.[43] This was a highly restrictive view of the regional branches' role in the association, and one that emphasized the central and meso-administrative position that they held in the Centralverein's Weimar-era organizational network. The Centralverein's decentralization into regional branches was rooted in a highly centralized order of operations.

The central office retained considerable influence over its regional branches. Starting with its establishment in 1924, the central office's Administrative Commission decided that the Berlin central office was entitled to control a regional branch's finances.[44] As the body solely responsible for all the Centralverein's financial decisions, the Commission decided that if an

[43] WL MF Doc 55/25/1036, May 8, 1923.

[44] WL MF Doc 55/1/1, July 10, 1924.

audit at a regional branch took a day or less, then the central office would cover the resulting costs, but if it were to take longer, then the cost would fall to the respective regional branch instead.[45] In doing so, the Administrative Commission asserted the central office's potential power and influence within the regional sphere without committing itself to frequent or direct intervention. The commission provided the central office with detailed insight into the state of both its regional and local spheres while also freeing up the Centralverein's executive board to focus on other political or social concerns.[46] Such delegation meant that the central office retained considerable control while also decentralizing responsibility. This common institutional measure provided the Centralverein with more flexibility in its administration while also allowing its local and regional branches to develop adaptive networks within their own communities.

In May 1922, the central office circumvented its regional branch in Rhineland-Westphalia by writing to both OG Bochum and OG Iserlohn directly to tell them that they should ask the regional branch for help if they were looking for a good speaker for upcoming assemblies.[47] The problem was that the central office wrote these letters without first asking LVB Rhineland if such intervention was necessary.[48] If the central office had followed standard procedure and first contacted the regional branch, they would have heard that both communities already had their own capable speakers. In skipping this step and reaching out to the local branches first, the central office demonstrated that it had little understanding of the circumstances in these respective local communities. As this weakened the regional branch's

[45] Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, *Tätigkeitsbericht für die Jahre 1924 und 1925*, 80.

[46] Ibid.

[47] WL MF Doc 55/20/768, p. 46.

[48] WL MF Doc 55/12/380, p. 198 and 55/20/768, p. 46.

authority as well, LVB Rhineland accused the central office of reducing its own position within the region.[49] In bypassing the regional sphere, the central office involved itself in precisely the organizational minutiae that it had hoped to avoid by establishing regional branches in the first place. This case of bureaucratic inefficiency showed the difficulties and growing pains inherent in such an administrative restructuring.

In response to this incident, LVB Rhineland's syndic Hans Kalisch gave the central office two options: either it take full responsibility for all local concerns in even the smallest communities and disband the regional branches or it let the regional branches do their jobs.[50] It was not that Kalisch intended to keep the central office in the dark regarding conditions in the local branches, but rather to insist that the central office respect the existing delegation of authority at each level. Intervention directly from the central office on organizational issues led to confusion on the roles and responsibilities of each branch. This made it "entirely impossible" for regional representatives to teach local members to turn to the regional branch in Essen with their concerns instead of going directly to the central office.[51] Though LVB Rhineland was not unhappy with the central office's leadership, it was highly protective of the communities for which it was responsible. While this was due to a high level of regionalization, it also indicated a certain precariousness in the regional branch's position within the Centralverein. As local branches were, in most cases, more than willing to manage their own affairs if given sufficient support directly from the central office, the regional branches' meso-administrative role was dependent on the central office's legitimation. Though this was a simple disagreement over

[49] WL MF Doc 55/12/380, p. 198.

[50] WL MF Doc 55/20/768, p. 45.

[51] Ibid., May 8, 1922.

autonomy, it reflected the degree to which the Centralverein's administrative networks had begun relocating to the regional sphere. While the central office maintained the right to bypass the regional office, doing so was often a source of conflict and tension.

While regional branches operated as an intermediary between the central office and the local sphere, local branches also occasionally challenged the necessity of this intermediate administrative role. In October 1922, OG Arnstadt accused LVB Thuringia of being superfluous and called for the central office to disband it. OG Arnstadt's chairman claimed that LVB Thuringia cost too much money and that it would be better for the local branch to pay dues to the central office directly rather than have them divided between Berlin and the regional branch.[52] This incident forced the central office to justify its organizational structure. It did this by arguing that regional branches were essential for the Centralverein's continued operation not only because the central office in Berlin was unable to maintain close contact with all local branches, but also because the regional branches were the ones familiar with local conditions and could better accommodate their needs.[53]

Though regional branches added another layer of administration, this also enabled the regional branches to maintain a consistent overview of local conditions and participation that would not have been possible in the central office due to the Centralverein's rapidly-growing size. OG Arnstadt's challenge to LVB Thuringia's authority showed the extent to which the nature of the relationships between the national, regional, and local branches was not always well-defined. The difficulty of setting clear parameters and limits to the Centralverein's

[52] WL MF Doc 55/10/297, October 6, 1922.

[53] Ibid., October 20, 1922.

decentralization was due to the large variation between local spheres and the difficulty of creating a single suitable administrative framework.

Regional differences also had a considerable effect on the Centralverein's programming. In regions with highly active antisemitic organizations and supporters like Bavaria, Thuringia, or East Prussia, the Centralverein's work was largely targeted at refuting antisemitic claims in public assemblies.[54] In other regions like the Rhineland where antisemitism was less acute, local branches largely organized private programming for their own members instead. This expanded educational work made the central office in Berlin far more dependent on support from the local and regional branches. The most frequent form of correspondence between the central office and its branches during this period dealt with planning upcoming meetings and lectures. These exchanges generally focused on three primary concerns: determining which speakers were available, organizing their travel schedules, and coordinating the topic or theme to be discussed. In most cases, local chairmen wrote to their respective regional branch asking for a lecture or a particular speaker to come to their town. Speakers from the central office like Alfred Wiener or Ludwig Holländer were particularly in demand, and local branches often asked for them specifically in their requests.[55] These lecturers were usually either leading figures from the Berlin central office or the syndic of a regional branch such as Eugen Jacobi from LVB Linksrhein or Felix Goldmann from LVB Free State of Saxony. Central office representative Lise Leibholz or Else Dormitzer from OG Nuremberg were also highly requested speakers both on general political and associational topics as well as ones tailored specifically for the Centralverein's female members.

[54] WL MF Doc 55/21/833, February 5, 1932.

[55] WL MF Doc 55/10/267, September 5, 1919, 55/11/310, May 23, 1923, and 55/26/1103, September 27, 1920.

To accommodate demand and connect with a larger number of communities, these speakers often gave the same or highly similar lectures in multiple local branches over the course of a few days or weeks.[56] As it consolidated travel costs and time spent traveling, larger lecture tours made accommodating such requests easier for the speaker and cheaper for all involved. Such trips also meant that speakers could hold lectures in small communities while they were in the area. This was the case in Bavaria in 1924, when a central office representative could use his trip to Nuremberg to hold a lecture in the small town of Ansbach as well. As Ansbach was only about an hour from Nuremberg, LVB Bavaria argued that including it as a stop in an upcoming lecture tour would not add much more expense to the total cost of the trip.[57]

During such lecture tours, speakers often mixed regionally or locally specific topics with nationally relevant themes. Doing so helped the Centralverein provide education on the issues it considered most relevant to German Jews and their communities while also working to strengthen inter-communal ties and German-Jewish identity. The consolidation of local, regional, and national issues was most evident in the months prior to regional and state elections when lecture series throughout Germany focused on political topics and the necessity of voting against antisemitic parties and candidates.

Each lecture was also followed by discussion between the attendees and the speaker. This encouraged members to discuss the themes and topics mentioned in the speech and, in doing so, to increase community involvement in the Centralverein. While some lectures were met with indifference and were followed by little or no discussion, others were quite lively and lasted all evening. The latter was the case in Witten in LVB Rhineland-Westphalia in September 1922.

[56] WL MF Doc 55/29/1282, February 13, 1921.

[57] WL MF Doc 55/10/290, April 7, 1924.

Following a lecture titled "Facing New Danger – To New Action" by a representative from LVB Rhineland, the discussion lasted until almost midnight and ended with local residents increasing their donations to the Centralverein and its defense fund.[58] As was the case in Witten, discussions and debates that followed a lecture often provided a space for C.V. members to engage with the broader political or social topics while also representing their own community and its concerns. It was this potential for mobilizing and educating members that made lectures such a central part of the Centralverein's work during this period.

In the public assemblies that they held for their gentile neighbors, local Jewish communities came together to defend and assert this combined local and national form of Germanness and Jewishness. These informational lectures or *Aufklärungsversammlungen* were a key aspect of the Centralverein's Weimar-era educational programming and were partially a response to the growing number of antisemitic and völkisch speakers who traveled to local communities to hold assemblies of their own. In 1922, OG Elberfeld sent a leaflet to its members calling on them to donate money and organize public assemblies to fight antisemitic speakers who were paid to "hammer the hate against [German Jews] into the brains of our fellow citizens of a different faith."[59] As these speakers did not "balk at any lie, any forgery, and any fabrication" in their attacks against German Jews, local branches began organizing public assemblies to repudiate these antisemitic lectures and educate local non-Jews.[60] While the Centralverein's public assemblies were targeted at discrediting antisemitic claims, they also

[58] WL MF Doc 55/14/495, September 29, 1922.

[59] WL MF Doc 55/31/1396, p. 185.

[60] Ibid.

strove to build a shared sense of community and local identity based on religious tolerance and understanding.

There were three different types of *Aufklärungsversammlungen*: open, half-open, and closed, though the latter two were often referred to interchangeably. Both the half-open and closed informational meetings were held for leading non-Jewish members of the local community such as government officials, the press, teachers, or lawyers and were generally invitation only. These often focused on topics relevant to the particular professional group invited and were a concerted attempt to influence how they treated German Jews. Most *Aufklärungsversammlungen* were, however, open to the general public, with all residents in the respective city or town encouraged to attend.

Much like the Centralverein's assemblies for its own members, these open meetings were also often held at the request of the Centralverein's local branch and were particularly popular in regions with a large antisemitic or völkisch presence like Hannover and Bavaria.[61] In some cases, the central office also reached out to local branches asking if they would like a prominent speaker to hold an *Aufklärungsversammlung*, though the local chairman was by no means required to accept the offer. Whether it was because a meeting would conflict with local events such as Karneval or simply because local leadership did not feel that it was a convenient time, local branches largely had the autonomy to decide what they considered to be best both for their members as well as their community as a whole.[62] In doing so, these communities created a

[61] WL MF Doc 55/14/499, April 27, 1925.

[62] WL MF Doc 55/20/796, December 29, 1927 and 55/27/1145, February 23, 1921. Local chairmen occasionally considered the situation in their community too dangerous for such open assemblies and refused the central office's offer to help organize an *Aufklärungsversammlung* in their town. This was the case in OG Pforzheim in Baden in 1921, when its chairman asked the central office not to organize an assembly for non-Jews, and to send Alfred Wiener to hold a talk for the local branch's general assembly instead. WL MF Doc 55/27/1145, February 23, 1921.

space tailored to their own needs and differing expressions of Jewishness, Germanness, and regional identity.

The goal of open assemblies was not to convince radical antisemites to change their opinion of Jews, but rather to educate those who were either casually antisemitic or indifferent.[63] While legal recourse in courts remained the best way to weaken and challenge virulent and violent antisemites, it was not effective in confronting individuals who held antisemitic beliefs but did not attack Jews physically or in print. These were generally local professionals such as teachers, lawyers, and businessmen, or simply members of the local community who were willing to vote for antisemitic political candidates. Public assemblies enabled the Centralverein's speakers to engage with these individuals directly in the hope of convincing them to reconsider their position on Jews. To do so, the open *Aufklärungsversammlungen* focused on topics like "The Jewish Question" "The Hatred of Jews and the German Jews," "The Talmud," and "Christianity and Antisemitism."[64] These lectures hoped to convince non-Jews to renounce any antisemitic beliefs they may have held and to replace them with a positive and informed interaction with German Jews and their culture. In this way, the Centralverein's education-based defense work often took priority over its focus on legal defense in the local sphere in Weimar Republic.

Alongside its *Aufklärungsversammlungen*, the Centralverein also conducted more targeted *Aufklärungsarbeit* – educational work – focused on individual cases of antisemitism. In these instances, local C.V. representatives intervened when individuals or small groups in their communities made antisemitic claims. This was the case in the Westphalian town of Warstein in

[63] WL MF Doc 55/20/786, February 6, 1921.

[64] WL MF Doc 55/20/782, April 13, 1921, 55/31/1378, p. 401, 55/13/399, March 20, 1924, and 55/17/610, December 12, 1922.

1920, when the local branch wrote to the central office about a Catholic priest in the area who was propagating antisemitic theories. Along with sending numerous brochures and informational material for the local branch to distribute, the central office also suggested providing this priest with the most recent edition of *IdR* so he could read about the Zentrum's latest party conference.[65] As it established a precedent for persecuting other minority religious groups like the Catholics, Zentrum representatives argued at this conference that antisemitism was both dangerous and politically unviable.[66] If the Centralverein's own arguments were not enough, it hoped that the Zentrum's strong stance against antisemitism would suffice to put an end to this priest's antisemitic statements.[67] As this incident demonstrated, while the central office and regional branch often organized defense work, both were dependent on the local sphere to know where and how to intervene.

This was not the only time that the Zentrum's rejection of antisemitism and political radicalism coincided with the Centralverein's local defense work. The Zentrum confronted the local chapter of the highly antisemitic Deutschvölkischer Schutz und Trutzbund (DSTB) in the small Hessian town of Friedberg in 1921 after the DSTB held assemblies in the community.[68] That German Jews were not always the only ones to combat antisemitism further reinforced the Centralverein's conviction that full integration was possible at local and national levels roughout Germany. While there was considerable continuity in state bureaucracy and civil servants from the German Empire to the Weimar Republic, the legal and political frameworks in which civil servants operated changed considerably. As a result, the continuity in personnel had little effect

[65] WL MF Doc 55/14/446, February 9, 1920.

[66] "Der Zentrumsparteitag gegen den Antisemitismus," *Im deutschen Reich* 26 (February 1920), 91.

[67] WL MF Doc 55/14/446, February 9, 1920.

[68] WL MF Doc 55/29/1274, November 18, 1920 and November 18, 1921.

on the Weimar state's tolerant position toward religious minorities. In fact, the Centralverein's leadership was convinced that the state and its ministries were free from antisemitism.[69] Accordingly, the C.V. central office shifted the focus of its fight against antisemitism even further from legal intervention at the state level to fighting antisemitism in society and politics through direct community action.

The DSTB's rising presence and popularity were part of larger structural forces at work that redefined the role of ethnic or religious associations. National associations like the BdL, the Flottenverein, and Kolonialgesellschaft, which had been highly influential on both the state and political parties during the German Empire, also lost much of their influence in the first years after the war.[70] This was also due to the new types of associations that were established after the war.

These new associations were generally militaristic, anti-democratic, highly antisemitic and often committed to violence. Many opposed the Weimar democratic system, condemning it as the "Jewish Republic."[71] The most prominent of these associations was the DSTB, which was established in February 1919.[72] The DSTB aggressively propagated radical antisemitism and

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[69] Eugen Fuchs, "Was nun?" in *Um Deutschtum und Judentum: gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze (1894 – 1919),* ed. Leo Hirschfeld (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1919), 362. Weimar courts, while occasionally treating Jews unfairly, generally approached court cases from a balanced perspective. Of over 330 individual cases logged by both the C.V. and the Abwehrverein, Historian Donald Niewyk demonstrated that these two organizations only considered around ten percent of verdicts as unfair. That they considered ninety percent of the verdicts as fair further supported German Jews' optimistic belief in the possibility of equal treatment in Weimar Germany. Donald Niewyk, "Jews and the Courts in Weimar Germany," *Jewish Social Studies* 37 (Spring 1975), 103.

[70] Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 382 and 390.

[71] Brian E. Crim, "Weimar's 'Burning Question': Situational Antisemitism and the German Combat Leagues, 1918–33," in *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Antisemitism,* ed. Larry Eugene Jones (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), 198.

[72] Stefan Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland: Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik* (Darmstadt: WBG, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008), 148 and Rainer Hering, *Konstruierte Nation: der Alldeutsche Verband, 1890 bis 1939* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2003), 145. The Alldeutscher Verband decided to establish the DSTB since its own name would be too incriminatory in a fight against Jews in Germany. Boris Barth,

played a large role in making virulent antisemitism and völkisch nationalism socially acceptable and politically viable.[73] As the largest and most extreme of the völkisch organizations in the early 1920s, the DSTB was the first to prove how effective antisemitic policies were in attracting large numbers of members and gaining considerable social influence.[74]

While the DSTB's political and social agenda was predicated on virulent antisemitism, other nationalist associations established in the early Weimar Republic were characterized by a more contingent form of antisemitism. Similar to Till van Rahden's concept of situative ethnicity, this situational antisemitism meant that associations adapted their antisemitic position in response to external pressure or opportunism, and that it was part of a plurality of values and identities.[75] One such organization was the Stahlhelm, Bund der Front Soldaten (Steel Helmet, League of Frontline Soldiers), which initially allowed Jewish members while also utilizing antisemitic positions when needed to attract new members.[76] Established in 1918 and closely affiliated with the right-wing Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National People's Party or DNVP), the Stahlhelm was one of the few paramilitary associations to remain influential after

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Dolchstosslegenden und politische Desintegration: das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914-1933 (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2003), 365.

[73] Uta Jungcurt, *Alldeutscher Extremismus in der Weimarer Republik: Denken und Handeln einer einflussreichen bürgerlichen Minderheit* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 274 and Hering, *Konstruierte Nation*, 145. The DSTB was banned in most German states after its complicity in the assassination of Foreign Minister and German Jew Walther Rathenau in June 1922 and its remaining members were incorporated into the NSDAP by 1924.

[74] Barth, *Dolchstosslegenden und politische Desintegration*, 365. At its establishment, the DSTB had around 30,000 members, half of which lived in Berlin; a year later that had grown to 110,000 and grew by around another 70,000 before it was banned in most regions in the summer of 1922. Breuer, *Die Völkischen in Deutschland*, 150.

[75] Crim, "Weimar's 'Burning Question," 195 and Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer: Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt von 1860 bis 1925* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 328.

[76] Crim, "Weimar's 'Burning Question," 195.

the mid-1920s.[77] While Jewish veterans were initially allowed to join the Stahlhelm, this changed in 1924 in response to the growing influence of its newer and younger members who tended to be more virulently antisemitic than those who had joined immediately after its establishment.[78]

Due to this resurgent antisemitism, most Jewish veterans joined the Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten (Reich Federation of Jewish Front-Line Soldiers or RjF) instead. Established in February 1919, the RjF was the second largest Jewish association in the Weimar Republic behind the Centralverein with between 30,000 and 40,000 members. Due to its size and shared values, the RjF often worked together with the Centralverein in organizing local assemblies and meetings, particularly in response to activity by antisemitic associations such as the Stahlhelm or the DSTB. By the mid-1930s, the RjF had expanded into sixteen regional branches and 360 local branches.[79] In the early Weimar Republic, the German-Jewish community began consolidating certain aspects of associational life while also creating and expanding Jewish organizations and structures.

The growing popularity and virulence of antisemitic theories and organizations in German society in the post-war period also "prompted droves of fighters to join the C.V., [and] forced the C.V. to confront the practical problem of utilizing decentralization to effectively tailor

[77] Unlike most of the radically right-wing paramilitary groups (*Freikorps*) that formed after the war, the Stahlhelm's close tie to the DNVP and its less radical nature meant that it was not disbanded following the Kapp putsch in 1920. Dietrich Orlow, *Weimar Prussia, 1925-1933: The Illusion of Strength* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), 10.

[78] Ibid., 200.

[79] Martin Liepach, *Das Wahlverhalten der jüdischen Bevölkerung: zur politischen Orientierung der Juden in der Weimarer Republik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 97 and Leo Löwenstein, "Die Linie des Reichsbundes jüdischer Frontsoldaten," in *Wille und Weg des deutschen Judentums* (Berlin: Vortrupp Verlag, 1935), 7.

its work to the needs of particular regions."[80] A decentralized approach to local defense allowed both for intervening in far more targeted ways as well as for considering the distinct political and social concerns at local and regional levels. Such adaptation was necessary to accommodate German-Jewish communities' diverse experiences during this time while also acknowledging their shared experiences of rising antisemitism and the mutual determination to fight it.

While lectures and community engagement were the core of the Centralverein's work in the local sphere, it also expanded its presence in the press during this period as well. Twenty-six years after its first issue, Centralverein printed the last issue of *Im deutschen Reich* in April 1922. A month later, the Centralverein released the first issue of its new newspaper, the *Central-Verein Zeitung* (*CVZ*). In response to rising antisemitism and völkisch nationalism, the *CVZ* was published weekly rather than monthly in order to better address these issues publicly.[81] Another sizeable motivation for this decision was that the Centralverein's growing membership base needed more frequent and timely articles.[82] The CVZ allowed the C.V. leadership's ability to keep both its members and the general public informed about the Centralverein's work as well as about its position on topical political and social issues.[83]

The central office used these publications, along with one-on-one meetings and private correspondence, to keep political parties and state representatives updated on the status of antisemitism in Germany.[84] This was part of the Centralverein's ongoing determination to "work

[80] Leibholz, "Zehn Jahre Landesverband Rhineland des C.V.," 53.

[81] Ludwig Holländer, "Nun, zu guter Letzt…" *Im deutschen Reich* 28 (March 1922), 50.

[82] Julius Brodnitz, "Auf neuen Wegen zu alten Zielen," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 1 (May 4, 1922), 1.

[83] Additionally, the CVZ also incorporated the longstanding *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* and, in doing so, further centered the C.V. as the representative of liberal Jewish interests in Germany. *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 86 (April 28, 1922).

[84] WL MF Doc 55/15/528, April 6, 1920.

hand in hand with the political parties and the powers that be," and reflected a closer connection to the state than during the German Empire when it deferred such work to the VdJ.[85] Without a national lobby organization for German Jews, the Centralverein stepped into the role of national representation and became more active in opposing antisemitic political candidates.

While the Centralverein remained officially politically neutral and welcomed Jewish members of all political affiliations, many of its leaders in Berlin and members in the local sphere were members or supporters of the Deutsche Demokratische Partei (German Democratic Party or DDP).[86] This was due to the DDP's rejection of antisemitism, embrace of liberal principles, and dedication to the democratic foundations of the Weimar constitution.[87] One such example was the relationship between the Centralverein's and the DDP's respective local branches in Tilsit, which was so close in the mid-1920s that the DDP asked the Centralverein for a loan to pay for the debt it accrued in fighting local antisemitic candidates in the 1924 Reichstagswahl. While the central office refused to provide a loan to the local DDP branch itself, the C.V. executive board did declare itself willing to provide the leading members of the DDP branch with private loans for them to use as they saw fit.[88] While the Centralverein participated in election campaigning in the German Empire, this increased if indirect access to and support from political parties at the national and local levels was new to the Weimar Republic.

[85] WL MF Doc 55/15/528, April 6, 1920.

[86] The ties between the C.V. and the DDP were so close that two members of the C.V.'s executive board were also DDP politicians in the Reichstag, DDP politicians frequently contributed to the *Central-Verein Zeitung,* and the C.V.'s local branches often provided considerable political and, in some cases, financial support to the DDP as well. WL MF Doc 55/19/756, April 28, 1921, March 6, 1921, and 55/12/379, July 1, 1920.

[87] Liepach, *Das Wahlverhalten der jüdischen Bevölkerung*, 119-20, 130, and 302.

[88] WL MF Doc 55/28/1213, July 13, 1925 and August 11, 1925.

While publications and political campaigns were both effective tools for amplifying the Centralverein's message, the central office favored a more direct form of outreach through lectures and assemblies in the local sphere. Its local defense work also targeted other associations or individuals that the Centralverein identified as either supporting or contributing to growing antisemitism in Germany. It was for this reason that the Centralverein became more concerned with the so-called Ostjuden and the German Zionist movement.

While the Centralverein still allowed dual membership in the ZVfD after the 1913 resolution, this changed in 1919. The Centralverein's repudiation of the ZVfD came in the wake of growing fears that Zionism's nationalist aspirations supported antisemites' claims of Jewish foreignness in Germany.[89] This increased focus on German Zionism was due in large part to the 1917 Balfour declaration and the rising number of Eastern European Jews following the end of the First World War.[90] The main reason behind the Centralverein's determination to combat the German Zionist movement as virulently as it did antisemitism was the claim that its Jewish nationalism strengthened antisemitic claims of Jewish foreignness in Germany.

The Centralverein's concerns grew further after the DNVP declared its support for the Zionist movement's goal of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine.[91] In response to these growing claims of Jewish foreignness in Germany, the Centralverein's national and regional

[89] One of the tipping points in the C.V. leadership's decision to break with the Zionist movement completely was the antisemitic political party DNVP's open support of Zionism and its mission to "re-establish" a Jewish state in Palestine. Avraham Barkai, "*Wehr Dich!": Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens 1893-1938*. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), 115 and 406 and "Zionismus und Antisemitismus," *Im deutschen Reich* 25 (July 1919), 341.

[90] While the debate surrounding eastern European Jews peaked in the post-war years, it began earlier with the influx of Eastern European Jews to Germany in the late German Empire, many of whom were on their way to port cities to emigrate to the United States or elsewhere. Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 86 and 177.

[91] Barkai, *"Wehr Dich!,"* 115 and 406f.

representatives argued that Zionism was fully incompatible with the Centralverein's mission and banned all ZVfD members from dual membership in the Centralverein.[92] The impetus behind this decision came not from Berlin, but rather from the regional representatives at the Centralverein's 1919 general assembly. The regional branches' growing involvement reflected a shift within the Centralverein itself; while its debates around Zionism prior to the First World War largely took place at the national level in the general assembly, they were increasingly driven by local and regional representatives during the Weimar Republic.[93]

Disagreements within the Centralverein over the Zionist movement was largely divided along regional lines and was greatly influenced by the local relationship with and presence of Eastern European Jews. Part of the ZVfD's growing support in Germany came from the influx of eastern European Jews, many of whom had either been forcibly brought to Germany to work during the war or had left eastern Europe after their livelihoods were destroyed in the war.[94] Eastern European Jews made up nineteen percent of German Jewry by 1925.[95] The majority remained in Germany's central and industrial regions like Saxony, Berlin, and the Ruhr region,

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[92] It was not until this point in 1919 that the last Zionist member left the C.V. executive board. WL 338/W372, Ludwig Foerder, *Die Stellung des Centralvereins zu den innerjüdischen Fragen in den Jahren 1919-1926: Eine Denkschrift für die Vereinsmitglieder* (Breslau, 1927), 9.

[93] This also may have had a large effect on the composition of the C.V.'s leadership. Shortly after the 1919 general assembly, Eugen Fuchs resigned as C.V. chairman citing health concerns. The timing of this decision, however, led to rumors that he resigned due to ideological differences with the new more "radical" position on Zionism, which the C.V. was compelled to refute in the next issue of *Im deutschen Reich*. "Rücktritt des Herrn Geh. Rat Eugen Fuchs," *Im deutschen Reich* 26 (February 1920), 91-2.

[94] Around 30,000 of the 108,000 Eastern European Jews in Germany by 1925 had been forcefully brought to Germany as workers during the war, while the rest immigrated in the post-war period Trude Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland, 1918-1933* (Hamburg: H. Christians, 1986), 48 and 65-6.

[95] Despite this influx of Eastern European Jews, the number of German Jews declined in overall percentages during this period, falling slightly from one percent of the population in 1910 to 0.9 percent in 1925. This demographic decline during the 1920s was largely attributable to a faster growth in the general German population and declining birth rates among German Jews. As these Eastern European Jews were predominantly Zionists and, therefore, unlikely to support the C.V., their increased migration to Germany did not offset the number of C.V. members lost through territorial secessions. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 499, and Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland*, 65.

with only 2,000 in the southern regions of Württemberg and Baden combined.[96] For many German-born Jews, Eastern European Jews represented a more authentic form of Jewish practice, which was both attractive and concerning; the former because it provided new access to living a Jewish life, and the latter because such traditional forms of expression were often targets of antisemitic claims of Jewish 'foreignness' in Germany. While there was a certain level of "enchantment" with Eastern European Jews and their more traditional forms of Jewish life, the majority of assimilated German Jews viewed Eastern European Jews' arrival in Germany with distrust, a lack of interest, and often contempt.[97]

German Jews' renunciation of eastern European Jews was driven by the large amount of antisemitic vitriol targeted at the so-called Ostjuden. In many cases, attacks against eastern European Jews were about far more than this comparably small number of Jews, rather they also aimed "to strike the German Jews. In hitting the German Jews, they mean the republic."[98] For antisemites, eastern European Jews' 'foreignness' was, in fact, a symbol of the 'foreignness' of Jews at large in German society and culture. As eastern European Jews were seen as a threat to German-Jewish integration, German-born Jews generally distanced themselves from this community and most of the Centralverein's local branches did not include them in their programming.

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[96] Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland,* 65-6.

[97] Whether it was medieval Sephardic or twentieth century Eastern European Jewry, historian John M. Efron argued that German Jews were characterized by a continued "cultural infatuation" with other models of Jewishness from the Haskalah through the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, the arrival of this new Jewish immigrant population triggered a debate across German society on whether they should be allowed to stay, with both German Jews and non-Jewish Germans taking part. As historians Jack Wertheimer and Trude Maurer both argued, the way in which Eastern European Jews were treated in Germany shed light on larger problems facing German and German-Jewish society at the time, such as antisemitic claims of Jewish foreignness in Germany and anxieties over the limits of belonging and expressing Jewishness in a religious manner. John M. Efron, *German Jewry and the Allure of the Sephardic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 236-7, Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland*, 29 and 36, and Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers,* 7 and 178.

[98] Rudolf Bertram, *Die Ostjuden in Deutschland* (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 1924), 15.

The Centralverein's refusal to conduct outreach meant that Eastern European Jews in Germany had no framework to create connections to Germanness and to the more liberal German-Jewish communities. That said, there were exceptions to the rule. For example, Eugen Jacobi, the regional chairman of LVB Linksrhein, held a meeting in Cologne, to speak with them "as Eastern European Jews, not as Zionists."[99] While encouraging the synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness was at the core of the Centralverein's agenda during this period, its regional and local representatives were occasionally willing to set that principle aside in favor of bringing all Jews living in Germany closer together. By including Eastern European Jews in the Centralverein's programming in Cologne, Jacobi tried to integrate them into German-Jewish community life and created a space for providing access to this synthesized form of identity. While this was not a common occurrence in other local or regional branches, Jacobi's outreach to eastern European Jews reflected a tendency in the Rhineland region to reject the prevalent repudiation of the so-called Ostjuden.[100] This tolerance was predicated on the larger openness and tolerance of religious difference that often characterized the Rhineland.

The question of whether to support or even conduct outreach to eastern European Jewish communities often led to disagreements between the Centralverein's regional and national leadership. The Centralverein claimed that Eastern European Jewish communities were far more likely to support Zionism than the German-Jewish community as a whole; in many cases, C.V. leadership simply assumed that Eastern European Jews in their local communities were already involved with the ZVfD and therefore did not conduct any form of outreach.[101] While there were

[99] WL MF Doc 55/20/796, November 16, 1925.

[100] WL MF Doc 55/31/1396, April 22, 1923.

[101] Jehuda Reinharz, "'Deutschtum' and 'Judentum' in the Ideology of the Centralverein Deutscher Staatsbürger Jüdischen Glaubens 1893-1914," *Jewish Social Studies* 36 (1974), 24. The C.V.'s correlation between the Eastern European Jews and their support of Zionism was so prevalent that the two departments in the C.V. central office responsible for questions pertaining to Eastern European Jews and Zionism were shared by the same man: deputy

no statistics pertaining to how many Eastern European Jews were members in the ZVfD, local C.V. reports support the claim that many ZVfD local branches consisted entirely of Eastern European Jews and some were in leadership positions in the ZVfD as well.[102]

Both the ZVfD's growing influence and the rising number of Eastern European Jews greatly shifted demographic and cultural dynamics within the German-Jewish community at the start of the Weimar Republic.[103] Unlike the Centralverein's fight against antisemitism, which took place at all levels and in all aspects of society, its work against Zionism and those who supported it was almost solely conducted in the local Jewish communities themselves. While the Centralverein officially rejected Jewish nationalism, its regional branches in Pomerania, Brandenburg, and both Upper and Lower Silesia were more willing to cooperate with the ZVfD in communities throughout their respective regions starting in 1923,.[104] One such instance occurred in November 1923 in Beuthen, Upper Silesia, when members of the C.V. local branch

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syndic Dr. Kurt Alexander. Alexander was far less tolerant of either Eastern European Jewish immigration or the concept that they shared culture and history with German Jews. Alexander had a prior history of taking a strong position against Eastern European Jews. In October 1915, Felix Goldmann, the syndic from Leipzig, published an article in *IdR* titled "Deutschland und die Ostjudenfrage" in which he advocated against any sort of border closings against Eastern European Jews. Three months later in January 1916, Kurt Alexander, then the syndic from LVB Rheinland-Westphalia, published an article with the same title in which he systematically refuted Goldmann's claims and called for the exclusion of Ostjuden by law. This article was accompanied by a note from the editor of IdR stating that, due to large general interest, "We have therefore accepted the above article and allowed contradictory opinions to be heard without taking an official position on either argument in any way." This distancing from the C.V.'s official newspaper was not only a reflection on the editors, but on C.V. leadership at the national level in general. The C.V.'s reticence to take a strong official position on whether the Eastern border should or should not be closed to Ostjuden was consistent with its later approach to the issue in the Weimar Republic. WL MF Doc 55/31/1378, June 10, 1920, Felix Goldmann, "Deutschland und die Ostjudenfrage," *Im deutschen Reich* 21 (October 1915), 195 and Kurt Alexander, "Deutschland und die Ostjudenfrage," *Im deutschen Reich* 22 (January 1916), 20.

[102] Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland,* 663, and WL MF Doc 55/26/1094, February 29, 1924, 55/31/1378, June 10, 1920, 55/20/796, November 16, 1923, and 55/26/1131, November 15, 1923.

[103] Despite the ZVfD's growing influence in the Weimar Republic compared to the German Empire, its members remained a small minority within German Jewry. In 1931, the ZVfD had only 7,500 members throughout Germany. Jonathan C. Friedman, *The Lion and the Star: Gentile-Jewish Relations in three Hessian Communities, 1919-1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 140.

[104] WL MF Doc 55/13/399, June 6, 1923.

met with representatives from the ZVfD and the local religious community to discuss the possibility of conducting defense work together.[105] Though it did not result in an agreement, that this meeting took place at all was indicative of the more tolerant and flexible attitude toward Zionism in communities with a higher population of Zionists and eastern European Jews

In the early 1920s, the central office was more reluctant to repudiate Zionism than its local or regional branches. Such hesitancy was evident in the case of OG Elberfeld in LVB Rhineland-Westphalia in 1920 when its chairman sent a letter to the Centralverein's then-deputy Syndic Dr. Kurt Alexander asking him to hold a lecture in their local branch on either Palestine or Eastern European Jews. In his reply, Alexander stated that, while he would be happy to do so, the Centralverein's general policy was to only discuss the topic of inner-Jewish disagreements directly when the Zionists were the ones to raise the topic first.[106] Nevertheless, Alexander also stated that if local conditions necessitated such a discussion, he was happy to hold the conversation and represent the Centralverein's interests. If that was not the case, however, he instead suggested holding a lecture on the "internal problems of antisemitism" within the Jewish community, which would allow him to discuss the so-called Eastern European Jewish Question (*Ostjudenfrage*) in depth without necessarily having to talk about Palestine or Zionism.[107] Though these were considerable intellectual constraints, the decision not to mention Palestine or Zionism in the title of the lecture directly did not mean that the topics themselves were not discussed. Instead, this was a strategic decision intended to reduce the likelihood of conflict

[105] WL MF Doc 55/11/327, p. 320.

[106] WL MF Doc 55/31/1396, June 22, 1920.

[107] Ibid.

between the Centralverein and ZVfD in the local sphere while continuing to discuss these topics in private.

This exchange between OG Elberfeld and Alexander in Berlin also clearly demonstrated the central office's deference to local interests and concerns. While the central office had certain preferences for how to discuss inner-Jewish issues in community programming, it generally allowed local communities and their representatives to decide what was best for them at the time. This flexibility enabled the Centralverein to integrate Jewish communities and individuals that may otherwise have refused to participate in a staunchly anti-Zionist association. Doing so helped the Centralverein unite more German Jews under one associational umbrella and create a standardized structure for promoting the synthesis of Jewishness and Germanness in the public sphere.

Despite their frequent disagreements and mutual repudiation, both the Centralverein and the ZVfD remained dedicated to strengthening and supporting the Jewish community; they were just divided on how best to do so.[108] Due to these similarities, the central office was privately more amenable to cooperating with certain Zionist-run initiatives. In 1922, Alfred Wiener wrote a letter to the local chairman of OG Beckum clarifying the central office's position on the recently-established Keren Hayesod (The Foundation Fund or KH) – the Zionist fundraising organization for the building up of Palestine – and the Centralverein's position on Zionism overall.[109] In this strictly confidential letter, Wiener acknowledged that, while the Centralverein fully rejected the premise of Keren Hayesod and its work, the need to focus on combating

[108] Eugen Fuchs, "Glaube und Heimat," in *Im deutschen Reich: Feldbücherei des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (Berlin: Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens), 30.

[109] For more on Keren Hayesod, the role that German Zionists played in its establishment, and the roots of conflict surrounding its work see Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996).

growing antisemitic and völkisch agitation overshadowed internal Jewish concerns at that time.[110] As in Alexander's letter to OG Elberfeld two years before, Wiener asked that the local branch in Beckum avoid doing anything that could create conflict with the Zionist movement. Despite his warning to be tactful, Wiener also ultimately left it up to the local speaker to decide how to discuss Zionism and völkisch nationalism in his lecture. The Centralverein's policy of fighting the Zionist movement during the Weimar Republic was predicated on its defense of Jewish rootedness in Germany and not principally on a rejection of Zionism itself. The Centralverein's community engagement was both a reaction to the rise of völkisch nationalism and more virulent forms of antisemitism and to cultural and political changes within the German-Jewish community at the local, regional and national levels.

3.2. The Volksverein and the Fragmentation of Organized Catholic Life

Associational restructuring following the First World War was not unique to the German-Jewish community. Both Catholic associational life as a whole and the Volksverein in particular also changed considerably during this period. As part of the Treaty of Versailles, French, Belgian, British, and American troops occupied the Rhineland in late 1918.[111] With Mönchengladbach part of the Belgian occupied zone, the V.V. central office was largely cut off from the rest of Germany until 1920.[112] It asked its regional and local representatives for their patience, stating in a 1919 memorandum: "For the time being, however, the V.V. must ask for a bit of leniency. Its central office is in the occupied zone. Its publications are subject to

[110] WL MF Doc 55/11/331, June 15, 1922.

[111] Margaret Pawley, *The Watch on the Rhine: The Military Occupation of the Rhineland, 1918-1930* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 1-2.

[112] Gotthard Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933: Geschichte, Bedeutung, Untergang* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), 80.

censorship. Difficulties for travel and mail remain considerable."[113] In response to the central office's difficult position, it established a general secretariat in Hagen that temporarily took over responsibilities for all territories west of the Rhine.[114] After the occupation became less austere in 1920, the central office in Mönchengladbach resumed responsibility for all of Germany and demoted the general secretariat in Hagen to a standard regional office. While the central office temporarily transferred responsibility for most of Germany away from Mönchengladbach, this was not a form of decentralization, but rather a means to maintain centralized authority despite extenuating political circumstances.

The Treaty of Versailles had a considerable effect on minority religious life and civil rights.[115] Signed in June 1919 and effective starting in January 1920, the Treaty of Versailles assigned Germany total responsibility for the First World War, set the legal foundation for German reparation payments to the allied victors, and required Germany to cede territory as well.[116] As a result of the treaty of Versailles, minority groups were guaranteed citizenship in their countries of residence, it protected the right to education and culture, and made the

[113] BArch, R 8115/I/8, p. 100.

[114] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933,* 80.

[115] Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 361.

[116] As a result, Germany lost around ten percent of its population, primarily in areas ceded to Poland, as well as the Alsace-Lorraine region. With almost 4.5 million German Catholics living in these surrendered regions, the percentage of Catholics in the German population declined from 36.7 percent in the German Empire to 32.4 percent in the mid-Weimar Republic. Comparatively, there were 1.87 million protestants living in these regions as well. Nevertheless, the Protestant population increased from around 61 percent to 64 percent of the population during this period as well. Similarly, over 76,000 Jews lived in these ceded regions as well, representing over eighteen percent of German Jewry prior to the war. Despite a considerable influx of Eastern European Jews to Germany in the postwar period, German Jewry also declined from one percent of the German population in 1910 to 0.9 percent by 1925. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic,* 7, Dietmar Petzina, Werner Abelshauser and Anselm Faust, ed., *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch*, Vol. 3, "Materialien zur Statistik des Deutschen Reiches 1914-1945" (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1978), 31, Statistisches Reichsamt, ed., "Vorläufige Ergebnisse der Volkszählung vom 16. Juni 1925," in *Sonderhefte zu Wirtschaft und Statistik,* vol. 5, issue 2 (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1925), 69, and Georg Evert, ed., *Statistische Korrespondenz: neununddreißigster Jahrgang,* issue 50 (Berlin: Königliches Statistisches Landesamt, 1913), 1.

countries themselves responsible for making sure this was granted.[117] While these minority treaties were unpopular in eastern Europe where they were largely implemented, the Versailles treaty received little attention in the Centralverein's lectures or programming.[118] These postwar political, social, and demographic changes forced associations to re-orient themselves within a new political system and to either adapt their existing methods or find new ways to articulate their ideology and mobilize their members.

The start of the Weimar Republic greatly changed the roles and responsibilities of lay organized Catholicism in Germany. It was in politics that these changes were most apparent. Following the election to the national assembly in January 1919, the Zentrum received almost sixteen percent of the vote to become the second strongest party behind the SPD.[119] This election led to the SPD, Zentrum, and DDP's decision to come together to form what became known as the Weimar Coalition in early February of that year. Though this majority of pro-democracy parties was short lived, the Zentrum remained one of the pillars of the Weimar political system until the early 1930s.

Despite this growing political unity between coalition parties, the Zentrum party itself became increasingly internally divided. By the end of the war, Bavarian Zentrum politicians "had had enough" of having their region being "governed from Berlin."[120] The Bavarian chapter

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[117] David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), 279.

[118] Instead, the focus of this post-war programming centered on repudiating claims of Jewish responsibility for the loss of the war. Initially propagated by the OHL in the last months of the war, the *Dolchstoßlegende* conspiracy theory claimed that Germany was stabbed in the back in the last days of the war, that it was undefeated militarily and its defeat was caused by sabotage on the home front. This was accompanied by antisemitic claim that the Jews were the ones responsible for German defeat. These conspiracy theories fueled the already accelerating radicalized antisemitism of the postwar period and rapidly became a focus of the C.V.'s defense work as a result. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 195-6.

[119] Karsten Ruppert, *Im Dienst am Staat vom Weimar: das Zentrum als regierende Partei in der Weimarer Demokratie 1923-1930.* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1992), 29.
[120] Heinz Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken, 1918-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992), 54.

of the Zentrum Party split from the national organization and formed its own political party – the Bayerische Volkspartei (Bavarian People's Party or BVP) on November 12, 1918, the day after the armistice.[121] As the Zentrum itself was only weakly centralized in Berlin at this point, the BVP's statement revealed both a strong dedication to regional autonomy and representation as well as a rejection of centralized authority. Nevertheless, the BVP and the Zentrum voted as a bloc in the Reichstag throughout the Weimar Republic.[122] Despite the division into two parties, the Zentrum and the BVP together made up a core pillar of the Weimar democratic system throughout the 1920s.

Despite a continued numerical minority, German Catholics were no longer a political minority. The Zentrum was not only one of the three leading parties in the Weimar Republic alongside the SPD and the DDP, its politicians also held the office of chancellor the longest and most frequently of any political party.[123] Zentrum politician Wilhelm Marx was chancellor between November 1923 to January 1925 and then again from May 1926 to June 1928. Prior to becoming chancellor, Marx was the Volksverein's general director between 1919 and 1920 and then its chairman from 1922 to 1933; his tenure as V.V. chairman overlapped with both of his terms as German chancellor.[124] This had a considerable effect on the Volksverein as well; after becoming chancellor for the first time in November 1923, Wilhelm Marx wrote to the V.V. central office pledging his support for the organization and its "beneficial and meaningful work"

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[121] Ibid.

[122] Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 357 and Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials,* 182.

[123] Ruppert, *Im Dienst am Staat vom Weimar*, 31. Along with Wilhelm Marx, Constantin Fehrenbach was chancellor from June 1920 to May 1921, Joseph Wirth from May 1921 to November 1922, and Heinrich Brüning from March 1930 to May 1932.

[124] Georg Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch des Volksvereins für das Katholische Deutschland* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1982), 41.

as much as possible in his new position.[125] Given that the leading member of the Volksverein was also the highest-ranking politician in Germany for over three years, the Volksverein became, to a certain extent, an unofficially state-sponsored association.

Despite Marx's letter, the Zentrum's new political position put a temporary end to its reliance on the Volksverein in the local sphere. In 1918, the Zentrum established its own central office in Berlin as well as regional party offices throughout Germany. It only managed to do this in six regions, with all but one in either western or southern Germany.[126] Though the Volksverein was previously responsible for educating and providing speakers to recruit support for the Zentrum, this slowed once the Zentrum had its own office it began developing its own networks for local and regional engagement. Without the Zentrum's support for its educational training, the Volksverein's sphere of influence in Catholic communities grew even smaller.

Marx frequently met with Volksverein representatives in the Reichstag building in Berlin and corresponded with the central office in Mönchengladbach to discuss both internal Volksverein and broader Catholic matters. Along with Marx, the Volksverein's director between 1903 and 1920 Heinrich Brauns was also a prominent Zentrum deputy in the Reichstag from 1920 to 1933 and the Minister of Labor from 1920 to 1928.[127] The growing overlap between Volksverein and state leadership made the Volksverein de facto part of the majority political system in Germany even as it continued to act as the representative of a minority religious group.[128] While still representing a minority group in a demographic sense, the German

[125] BArch, R 8115/I/9, p. 153.

[126] These were in Baden, Württemberg, Westfalen, Hessen, the Rhineland, and Lower Silesia. Ruppert, *Im Dienst am Staat vom Weimar*, 32.

[127] Brauns held the departmental director position in the central office from 1903 to 1920 and remained on the V.V.'s general board until 1932. Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch*, 152.

[128] Looking back at this period during his interrogations by the Gestapo in August 1933, V.V. lawyer Heinz Kohlen attributed this decline in the early 1920s to the fact that many V.V. leaders left Mönchengladbach for Berlin after the

Catholics' newfound political influence at the highest level of state meant that they were now powerful players in German politics as well. This was not the case in the local and regional sphere, however. Here Catholics remained largely separate from non-Catholic social life, with a large expansion of new Catholic associations for ever more diverse aspects of social life. This meant that German Catholics often retained and even reinforced a kind of Catholic subculture despite having full access to majority politics.

3.2.1. Membership Decline and the Fall of the Local Sphere

Unlike the Centralverein, which expanded rapidly following the war both in response to rising antisemitism and growing local demand for German-Jewish community structures, the Volksverein instead faced increasingly declining interest and engagement from its members. While its membership increased in the immediate postwar years from 539,000 in 1918 to 686,000 in 1922, by 1925 it had dropped back down to 516,000 and declined steadily for the remainder of the Weimar Republic.[129] The Volksverein's postwar decline was largely due to the growing number of Catholic associations during the period. As Catholic workers and other professional groups began establishing and expanding associations of their own, the Volksverein could no longer act as the large representative and educational power within German Catholicism that it had been in the German Empire.[130] Unlike the Volksverein, which operated fully separately from the Church and its related institutions, the Catholic worker's movement and

war. In assuming leading politicians in the Weimar Republic, Kohlen accused them of abandoning the V.V. and losing the V.V. thousands of members. This report was far from reliable, as it was created as part of establishing a financial connection between the Weimar government and the V.V. that was at the core of the Gestapo's case against its leading members in 1933. Nevertheless, the connection between changing political frameworks and the V.V.'s decline was considerable. BArch, R 8115/I/52, p. 8.

[129] Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch*, 15.
[130] Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch*, 15.

its affiliated organizations were now structured according to parishes and bishoprics.[131] This meant that they no longer needed to rely on the Volksverein's administrative and leadership support as they had prior to the First World War. Similarly, the growing number of Catholic youth movements for both girls and boys meant that they also had no need for the Volksverein's assistance or support.

Decline in demand and relevance made maintaining and expanding the Volksverein in the local sphere difficult and led to claims that the Volksverein had become irrelevant.[132] In January 1919, Heinrich Brauns painted a bleak picture of the Volksverein's post-war position, writing that,

> We are standing in front of a complete reorganization. In certain aspects we are destitute, materially and spiritually poor, and defeated. We stand here surrounded by enemies and internally distressed. Vitality, discipline, sense of duty, patriotic sacrifice: all these old ideals have faded and disappeared to a large extent.[133]

With the central office located in the occupied Rhineland and the lingering effects of the war, the Volksverein was in the worst administrative and financial position it had experienced thus far. With declining membership numbers, an almost complete collapse of its networks in the local sphere, and the worsening relationship to the Zentrum party, the first years of the Weimar Republic were debilitating for the Volksverein. Organized Catholic life expanded rapidly after the war with the emergence of new associations such as youth movement and academic societies.[134] No longer unified in one association, Catholic workers established new professional

[131] Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken*, 120.

[132] Der Zentralstelle des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, *Rundschreiben an unsere Vertrauensleute*. Number 7 (M.Gladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag GmbH, 1921), 3.

[133] BArch, R 8115/I/8, p. 63.
[134] Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 447.

organizations and were more open about joining other non-Catholic unions as well. The diversification of Catholic associations along with expanding opportunities in German society and politics as a whole meant that the previously cohesive Catholic milieu began to fracture. For the Volksverein, this meant that its pre-war monopoly over worker education and social assistance was over.

While the Volksverein was the most prominent and influential Catholic association until 1914, after the war it became "a relic of better days whose problems of survival were increasingly more difficult to overcome."[135] Despite the Volksverein's declining membership numbers during this period, the number of German Catholics leaving the Church slowed considerably between 1920 and 1923. The decline in Catholic associational and political unity over the course of the 1920s did not reflect a concurrent decline Catholic religious life at the time.[136] Instead, Catholic religious practice remained approximately constant between the German Empire and the Weimar Republic.[137] This continued religious homogeneity proved that economic, political, and social concerns were largely separate from religious identity and practice for most German Catholics in the early 1920s. Decreasing support for the Volksverein and the Zentrum was instead due to economic and social factors rather than lessening religious coherence.

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[135] Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken,* 121.

[136] Ibid., 571.

[137] Additionally, the number of German Catholics who received communion on Easter in 1923, 1924 and 1925 remained relatively consistent at between 56 and 57 percent. This was the same percent of Catholics in Freiburg that had received Easter communion in the late German Empire, and, in some regions like Regensburg, the number was closer to 75 percent and had remained at this level since at least 1910. Ibid., 566-7, H. A. Krose (ed.), *Kirchliches Handbuch für das katholische Deutschland*, vol. 3 1910-11 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herderscher Verlagshandlung, 1911), 273, and Kirchengeschichtlicher Verein fur Geschichte, Christliche Kunst, Altertums- und Literaturkunde des Erzbistums Freiburg mit Berucksichtigung der Angrenzenden Bistumer (ed.), *Freiburger Diözesan-Archiv,* vol. 43 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herderscher Verlagshandlung, 1915), 317.

While the number of V.V. members fell consistently over the Weimar Republic, fewer women left the Volksverein than men in the early 1920s. After women were granted the right to vote in 1918, the Volksverein's relationship to women changed as well. After 1918, the Volksverein began inviting women to attend its civic educational programming and allowing them to become local V.V. representatives.[138] That membership declined more rapidly among men that it did among women was largely due to the fact that women remained more religious and tied to the community than men throughout the German Empire and into the Weimar Republic.[139] As Marion Kaplan demonstrated, this shift of religious practice to the domestic sphere and women's stronger ties to religion was also evident in German Jewry during the German Empire.[140] That it occurred later in German Catholicism was a reflection of the more insular nature of the Catholic milieu throughout the German Empire and the beginning of its weakening boundaries in the early Weimar era.

Unlike the Centralverein, which expanded rapidly into the local sphere in the immediate post-war years, the Volksverein grew slowly during this period before declining in the early 1920s and only began organizing local branches in the early 1920s. As they were often divided by local parishes and not by city or town, the Volksverein often had multiple local branches within the same city.[141] This meant that the Volksverein also had over 4,100 local branches by

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[138] While the V.V. reported a decline of around 21,000 members between June 1923 and April 1925, it also reported an increase of around 5,000 female members between January 1924 and April 1925. Despite this temporary increase, the number of female members decreased overall by twelve percent between 1921 and 1925. Comparatively, the V.V. had almost 550,000 male members in 1921 and 407,000 in 1925 – a decline of around 26 percent. BArch, R 8115/I/9, pp. 353 and 365 and BArch, R 8115/I/14, p. 65.

[139] Volker Berghahn, *Imperial Germany, 1871-1914: Economy, Society, Culture, and Politics* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1994), 92. As Catholic women were more likely to remain in the home, they were also less affected by the growing plurality of Catholic associational life, as fewer were in professions that were part of this expansion.

[140] Marion Kaplan, *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 238.
[141] BArch, R 8115/I/9, p. 344.

June 1925.[142] The large number of branches and declining membership meant that the Volksverein. lacked the personnel necessary to conduct outreach to all these communities. This shortage was a further consequence of the Volksverein's declining membership, which reduced the number of local individuals willing to volunteer in their communities. The fragmentation of lay Catholic life meant that many of the local branches existed only on paper and did not reflect a newly thriving local sphere as it did in the Centralverein.

Similar to the Volksverein at the national level, the number of V.V. members in Baden declined by fifty percent by the end of the war; while it regained almost two-thirds of its pre-war membership by 1922, over thirty percent of these members left again following the economic crisis of 1923.[143] As Baden had two regional directors who both frequently held lectures and courses, the number of assemblies in Baden throughout the Weimar Republic remained consistently around 500 a year.[144] This stability was also due in large part to the strong support that the Volksverein received from the episcopal ordinariate in Freiburg.[145] While the Volksverein in Baden struggled to maintain its membership numbers and local branches, the regional engagement and local clerical support provided a considerable bolster to maintaining the Volksverein in the region. That this clerical support was so infrequent for the Volksverein was indicative of the continued schism between lay and Church associations. Aside from workers, who had their own organizations, the Catholic community looked to the Church as a model of

[142] Ibid., p. 365.

[143] Hans-Jürgen Kremer, "Das Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland in Baden, 1890-1933: Ein Beitrag zur Organisations- und Wirkungsgeschichte des politischen und sozialen Verbandskatholizismus," *Freiburger Diözesan-Archiv* 104 (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), 257 and 259. The number of local branches in Baden fluctuated considerably during this period; while Baden had 620 local branches in 1914, that number dropped to 415 by 1920, increased briefly to 487 in 1921 and then declined to 324 by 1925. Ibid., 251.

[144] Kremer, "Das Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland in Baden, 1890-1933," 251.

[145] Ibid., 259.

organizational life. Without support from Catholic workers like during the German Empire, the Volksverein lost its ability to operate without the support of the Church or its affiliated representatives.

Instead of decentralizing further to try to mitigate the decline of its local sphere, the Volksverein largely retained its centralized structure and instead sought to solve the problem from the top down. In July 1920, the V.V. general board met in Cologne to evaluate how best to counteract its declining relevance in the local sphere.[146] Prior to this meeting, director Heinrich Brauns reported that the board would inform the local and regional representatives as well as V.V. members of the unilateral decisions made at this meeting. In not consulting with the regional managers or local *Vertrauensmänner*, the Volksverein emphasized its long-standing conviction that only a centralized organization could maintain and strengthen German-Catholic unity.[147]

Despite this strict centralization in administrative matters, the Volksverein also encouraged a limited type of decentralization in the local sphere through its local representatives. As in the German Empire, the largest factor that determined whether the Volksverein received financial and popular support in a particular region was the work of its regional directors and *Vertrauensleute.* While the central office remained responsible for making administrative and organizational decisions, the *Vertrauensleute* and regional directors were the ones who implemented the Volksverein's directives among its members.[148] These representatives were encouraged to combine their own initiative with their official and strictly regulated

[146] BArch, R 8115/I/8, p. 34.

[147] Ibid., p. 97.

[148] Additionally, in those regions in which there was a considerable number of female members, the regional branch could also appoint women to act specifically as a *Vertrauensperson* for those women. MGB Hpw 1919, 18a, *Praktische Winke für unsere Arbeit im Volksverein* (M.Gladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag GmbH, 1919), 4.

responsibilities in their communities.[149] While these local representatives had restricted autonomy, the Volksverein continued encouraging as many individuals as possible to become *Vertrauensleute*. This increased focus on the community was part of the Volksverein's attempt to adapt to the considerable economic and social challenges German Catholics – and the German working class in general – faced during this period.

As was the case in the Centralverein, the Volksverein needed the support of the larger community to maintain the networks necessary for local engagement. While they had considerably different degrees of autonomy, the local branches in both the Centralverein and the Volksverein simplified the management of a large and, particularly in the Centralverein's case, often diffuse membership base. This was further reflected in a concurrent expansion of the Volksverein's regional networks as well. The Volksverein had seven regional offices in 1922, nine by early 1924, and ten by the end of that year.[150] The regional director's main responsibility when organizing meetings was not holding popular lectures or inviting exciting speakers, but rather encouraging and educating their members to be socially and civically minded.[151] While most regional leaders traveled to communities within their respective region, other regional representatives also conducted larger lecture and conference tours throughout Germany as well. This was the case in the Berlin regional office in 1922/23, when regional secretary Heinrich Getzeny held meetings in Danzig, Hamburg, Bremen, Kiel, Thuringia, Saxony, and

[149] *Praktische Winke für unsere Arbeit im Volksverein,* 3. In October 1921, the central office assigned its *Vertrauensmänner* five main roles: to distribute V.V. publications, organize conferences for *Vertrauensmänner* in the area, to collect all remaining outstanding dues, to hold a regional meeting that year, and to make sure that all members heard the call of "Catholics, unite!" Der Zentralstelle des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, *Rundschreiben an unsere Vertrauensleute*. Number 1 (M.Gladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag GmbH, 1921), 2.

[150] BArch, R 8115/I/9, pp. 319, 349-50, and 375.

[151] MGB Hpw 1-3, 47, Anton Heinen, "Brief an einem Geschäftsführer," *Das Arbeitsprogramm des Volksvereins*, Letter 12 (M.Gladbach: Der Volksvereins-Verlag GmbH, 1922), 3.

Hildesheim.[152] Getzeny's lectures on the Volksverein's current work were so popular that the Volksverein successfully recruited clerical leaders in Stettin for the first time and also restored local V.V. participation in Bremen after it dissolved after the war.[153] These instances demonstrated the positive effect that such engagement could have on local participation and support.

While the Volksverein's focus in the 1890s and early 1900s was on combating social democracy and its expanding influence among Catholic workers, this changed completely by the start of the Weimar Republic. With the Zentrum and SPD now political allies in the Weimar Coalition and the Catholic worker's unions becoming more self-reliant in the post-war period, the V.V. central office ceased its fight against the SPD.[154] Instead, it shifted towards providing political education focused on educating German Catholics on the political system and their civic responsibilities.[155]

The end to the mutual enmity between the SPD and German Catholicism was based on the shared determination to work together in support of the democratic state. Despite its continued determination to fight any movement or association that challenged religion's place in the public sphere, the Volksverein largely put its defense work on hold during the early 1920s. The challenges of maintaining its autonomy and weathering the political and economic challenges of the early Weimar Republic overshadowed these concerns. In its memoranda for its *Vertrauensleute* in the early 1920s, the V.V. central office did not mention defense work at all,

[152] BArch, R 8115/I/84, p. 15.

[153] Ibid.

[154] BArch, R 8115/I/184, p. 2.

[155] BArch, R 8115/I/8, p. 86.

instead focusing on the need for social work and community support.[156] This represented a stark change from the German Empire, when organized Catholicism's primary focus was defeating social democracy.

To make the Volksverein's programming more accessible to German Catholics outside the Rhineland, its educational work shifted slightly eastward in 1923. Though the Volksverein's central office remained in Mönchengladbach, its leadership and educational courses moved to a new educational center in Paderborn in the early 1920s. Established as a regional V.V. secretariat in December 1923 and named the 'Franz-Hitze-Haus' after one of the Volksverein's leading founding members, the V.V. *Landessekretariat* in Paderborn hosted many of the Volksverein's larger courses. These courses largely focused on supporting specific professional groups, especially clerics and Catholic functionaries as well as agricultural courses for Catholic youth.[157] It also held targeted professional support and training for specific *Arbeitsgemeinschaften*.[158] Similar to its pre-war leadership courses, these working groups were organized around discussion and community building exercises so that their participants could return home and strengthen the local "*Volksgemeinschaft*."[159] Rooted in the need for unity during the First World War, this concept was prominent in the political discourse of all parties in the Weimar Republic; though, as is well known, it found particular resonance in the NSDAP.[160] While the Zentrum

[156] MGB Hpw 42a, Zentralstelle des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, "Rundschreiben an Unsere Vertrauensleute," Nr. 1, October 1921, Nr. 2, December 1921, Nr. 3, December 1922, and Nr. 4, July 1923 (MGladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag).

[157] BArch, R 8115/I/87, p. 3.

[158] BArch, R 8115/I/9, p. 344.

[159] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933*, 150.

[160] According to historian Michael Wildt, the German Volksgemeinschaft adapted by the National Socialists was determined by and through violence and exclusion based on antisemitism. In doing so it functioned as a means of inclusion of the so-called Aryan German population. For more on how the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* developed in the Weimar Republic and became a core tenet of National Socialism, see Michael Wildt, *Hitler's*

rejected the idea of a *Volksgemeinschaft* as too egalitarian, the Volksverein's use of this term showed its gradual adoption of popular conceptions of social and political belonging. In incorporating discussion of the *Volksgemeinschaft* into its leadership training, the Volksverein hoped to teach German Catholics how to engage with broader social and political networks beyond the Catholic milieu or the Zentrum party. As such, this term created a closer tie between German Catholics and a larger political and social spectrum in Germany.

In moving the center of its educational work further eastward from Mönchengladbach, the V.V. central office hoped to make participation in its courses more accessible to broader and less industrialized segments of Catholic society.[161] This represented a broader decentralization of the Volksverein's educational work during the early 1920s and a further emphasis on social and political education.[162] Alongside the courses in Paderborn, V.V. representatives continued holding multi-day courses in local communities as well. In 1923, for example, representatives from the V.V. central office held three-day leadership courses, which provided leadership training for community leaders in the Rhineland cities of Essen, Geldern, and Montabaur.[163] Additionally, it also held thirteen half-day courses for various professional groups throughout the region as well. These courses in Paderborn continued the Volksverein's pre-war task of educating and guiding Catholic leaders in the hope that they would then instill the same knowledge in their communities.

Volksgemeinschaft *and the Dynamics of Racial Exclusion: Violence Against Jews in Provincial Germany, 1919–1939,* trans. Bernard Heise (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 266.

[161] BArch, R 8115/I/9, p. 3.

[162] Ibid., p. 148.

[163] Ibid., p. 348.

Associational success was dependent on having the manpower and effective lecturers to conduct consistent engagement in the local sphere. Without local initiative, the onus of this work fell entirely on the central office. As it was unable to adapt to crisis and change, this was where a highly institutionalized association like the Volksverein struggled most. As political scientist Angelo Panebianco argued, a highly centralized organization was more susceptible to crisis, as it did not have the autonomous structures to respond directly in one area or region.[164] While the Centralverein's flexible administrative structure enabled it to navigate a crisis at the local and regional levels, a crisis in Mönchengladbach affected the entire association. Since its local and regional networks did not have their own administrative structures or autonomy to adapt to new political and social circumstances, they were more susceptible to a crisis at the national level.[165]

In response to membership and organizational decline, calls for corresponding organizational and administrative changes within the Volksverein grew as well. This manifested primarily in two documents calling for comprehensive decentralization and, in the case of an undated document written by a representative of the Munich episcopacy, the transfer of the V.V. central office to Munich. This clerical representative argued that not only was Munich more accessible to the rest of the country than Mönchengladbach; it was also the center of many of the ideological movements against which the Volksverein was most opposed.[166] In 1922, another unnamed author wrote a report calling for the Volksverein to reorganize in order to meet the new challenges of the Weimar period. To adapt to the lack of support from the local sphere and the Volksverein's growing superfluousness, this author suggested that the Volksverein decentralize

[164] Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power,* trans. by Marc Silver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 57-8.

[165] Ibid., 56.

[166] BArch, R 8115/I/8, p. 115. Had the V.V. decided to move to Munich, this would also have weakened the Zentrum by moving its main associational supporter out of the Rhineland to the home of the BVP instead.

completely, with each region organizing into their own territorial groups (*Landsmannschaft*) that operated according to local residents' needs.[167] The author of this document suggested a structure that would have closely resembled the Centralverein's own more autonomous regional and local networks. Despite such calls for decentralizing away from Mönchengladbach, the decline of the local sphere, and the challenges of operating in an occupied zone, the V.V. central office remained dedicated to maintaining its comprehensive centralization.

With declining membership and shrinking participation in the local sphere, the Volksverein increasingly struggled with collecting enough dues from its remaining members to pay for its administrative and organizational costs. While the Volksverein was able to support itself on 1 Deutsch Mark (1M) yearly membership dues prior to the First World War, prior to the start of hyperinflation in 1923, the central office raised dues to 2M in 1919, to 4M in 1921, and then to 8M in 1922.[168] The decision to raise membership dues repeatedly was an attempt to offset the effects of declining membership.

Although the Volksverein had significantly more members than the Centralverein, it struggled far more with financial concerns during the Weimar Republic. This was largely due to the socio-economic differences between the two communities and to the organizational strategy of the associations themselves; German-Jews tended to be better educated, have professional careers, and be more well off financially while German Catholics were a largely working-class population and less likely to be middle or upper-middle class.[169] This meant that, while both associations were affected by financial and political crises in the early Weimar Republic, the

[167] BArch, R 8115/I/8, p. 138.

[168] BArch R 8115/I/8, pp. 2, 20 and 101, R 8115/I/18, p. 79, and Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933*, 427.
[169] Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken*, 14.

Centralverein was far better able to weather the effects than the Volksverein. Without continuous and reliable payment, any work that these associations hoped to do or any goals they aimed to accomplish were either not possible or made that much more difficult. The financial burden of supporting a centralized administrative network without local or regional support weakened the Volksverein's ability to engage with its members and was indicative of the ongoing diversification of lay Catholic associational life and the Volksverein's growing redundancy during this period.

3.3. Crisis and Stabilization in 1923/4

While the Volksverein's membership declined overall starting in the early 1920s, over half of the Volksverein members that left the association between 1923 and 1924 were from the occupied Rhineland and Ruhr region.[170] This decline in the regions in which the Volksverein had consistently been most active in the German Empire accelerated the deterioration of the Volksverein's local networks as a whole. Following Germany's default on reparations payments in late 1922, France and Belgium invaded the Ruhr in January 1923.[171] This provoked a period of passive resistance in the region. Beginning in February 1923 and continuing until August of that year, the German state provided saboteurs in the Ruhr with considerable financial support for disrupting railways and sabotaging transit networks that the French and Belgians utilized to transport raw materials confiscated in lieu of reparations.[172] While Chancellor Gustav

[170] BArch, R 8115/I/9, p. 348.

[171] Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 59.

[172] While there were also violent incidences during this period, violence was largely not given broader public support. Conan Fischer, "The 1923 Ruhr Crisis: The Limits of Active Resistance," in *Conflict, Catastrophe and Continuity: Essays on Modern German History,* ed. Frank Biess, Mark Roseman, and Hanna Schissler (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 48.

Stresemann ended support for passive resistance on September 26, 1923, the occupation of the Ruhr continued until 1925, and the economic and political instability that it caused had a lasting effect on German society and politics.

Alongside occupation and resistance in the Ruhr, regional instances of political upheaval such as the separatist uprisings in the Palatinate and the Rhineland destabilized other regions in Germany as well. These uprisings reflected a larger trend of regional separatism that was apparent not only in the west, but also in East Prussia, Upper Silesia, Hanover, and Bavaria.[173] The "virulence of political regionalism," as Jaspar Heinzen, called it, was primarily legitimized through conflict, and reinforced the regional differentiation that Prussia and Bismarck had worked so hard to consolidate in the German Empire.[174] This meant that regional political identity was a defining factor of political and social life for most Germans in a way that it had not been for over fifty years. While often tied to regionalized experiences of occupation and resistance, separatist uprisings also occurred in regions that were not occupied, thus suggesting a degree of national unity in rejecting centralized governance in Berlin. The expansion into the regional sphere – and granting these new regional branches considerable autonomy – was part of the turn to regionalism in the early Weimar Republic.

This embrace of regional forms of political identity was characteristic of the period and part of the continued differentiation within Germanness itself. Instead of complicating the task of promoting a standardized form of Germanness and Jewishness, this regionalization helped create a more situational and more accessible form of identity. In merging regionalism with a national

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[173] Martin Schlemmer, *"Los von Berlin": die Rheinstaatbestrebungen nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), 12 and Jasper Heinzen, *Making Prussians, Raising Germans: A Cultural History of Prussian State-Building after Civil War, 1866–1935* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 262.

[174] Heinzen, *Making Prussians, Raising Germans*, 261 and 263.

synthesis, German Jews participated in the larger process of utilizing regional differentiation to strengthen national cohesion. The decentralization of German identity was not unique to Germanness or Jewishness, but a product of German political and social processes in the early Weimar Republic.

German-Jewish communities' demand and support for representation did not decline due to occupation, which meant that the Centralverein not only maintained its networks in the region, but expanded them more rapidly than elsewhere in Germany at the time. Unlike German Jews, who turned to the Centralverein in response to these crises, German- Catholic support for the Volksverein declined further. In response to the separatist uprisings, the French banned assemblies in the Rhenish Palatinate in the fall of 1923.[175] This meant that during the height of the occupation and passive resistance, the Volksverein's regional office in Hagen was forbidden from holding most assemblies. Additionally, its representatives faced broad restrictions on both travel and mail, and were also required to register the small number of permitted events with the authorities.[176] Despite these restrictions and the "debilitating pressure" of its members' growing poverty and fatalism, the regional leader in Hagen reported that the Volksverein was nevertheless able to hold a small number of assemblies and collect most of the dues owed in the region.[177]

Lack of local interest in the Volksverein reflected both its declining relevance as well as German Catholics' preoccupation with the political and economic challenges of the period. Without any demand from German-Catholic communities themselves, the Volksverein was

[175] BArch, R 8115/I/9, p. 349 and Bürgermeisteramt Neustadt Dr. Forthuber, "Verkehrs- und Versammlungsverbot in Neustadt an der Haardt," November 7, 1923, in *1923-24: Separatismus im rheinisch-pfälzischen Raum,* eds. Joachim Kerman and Hans-Jürgen Krüger (Koblenz: Verlag der Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz, 1989), 177.

[176] BArch, R 8115/I/84, p. 8.

[177] BArch, R 8115/I/84, p. 9.

unable to maintain its local networks. German Catholics' and German Jews' differing support for their respective associations was due to the discrepant effects of the occupation itself, with German Catholic workers in the Ruhr far more directly affected than the more middle-class Jews in the region as well. While German Catholics were economically devastated by hyperinflation, German Jews were far more affected by rising antisemitism and völkisch nationalism. With their own associations and unions as well as the acute economic hardship of this period, German Catholic workers had less time, energy, or reason to support the Volksverein as well. That the German-Jewish community needed the Centralverein more than the German-Catholics needed the Volksverein reflected different needs and concerns in the two communities.

The Centralverein's local and regional branches' autonomy in determining what support their communities needed allowed them to adapt effectively to the acute conditions of occupation. Based in Essen, LVB Rhineland-Westphalia did not report any considerable decline in engagement or dues payments from its members in the region.[178] While the regional branch relied on the central office for support and guidance, this decentralization helped the entire association remain stable even when such a large region was in crisis.[179] Nonetheless, the occupation of the Ruhr did change the focus of the Centralverein's defense work in the region. As part of its ongoing commitment to fighting antisemitism, the Centralverein's regional and local branches focused on maintaining the Burgfrieden between Jewish and Catholic workers given their shared determination to "thwart France's raid" on the region.[180] As during the war,

[178] WL MF Doc 55/32/1413, January 6, 1924.

[179] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 58.

[180] This theory became so prevalent that the District President of Düsseldorf released a letter in May 1923 emphasizing German-Jewish solidarity with the German cause not only in this Ruhr occupation, but previously as well. "Die jüdischen Deutschen im Ruhrgebiet," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 2 (June 14, 1923), 195, WL MF Doc 55/32/1413, p. 233, and "Juden und Judenfeinde im Ruhrgebiet," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 2 (February 22, 1923), 58.

that Jewish and Catholic workers shared a common external enemy raised the Centralverein's hopes that mutual resistance to occupation would prove that German Jews were just as German as everyone else.

Socioeconomic status was just as decisive, if not more so, than religious affiliations in determining how they experienced these crises. Due in large part to the government printing money to provide financial support to those conducting passive resistance in the occupied Ruhr region, the German economy experienced a period of hyperinflation starting in early 1923.[181] Predominantly working-class, German Catholics were more affected by the economic downturn than middle class German Jews. While the Volksverein was badly affected by hyperinflation in 1923, this period of deep economic uncertainty had little negative impact on the Centralverein's financial situation. In fact, it had the opposite effect; the Centralverein's fundraising was so successful in 1923 and 1924 that it struggled financially in 1925, because members assumed that the central office had received so many donations that they did not need to pay dues anymore.[182] While this was the case during the crisis itself, it was only because donations had made up the difference for those who had not been able to pay dues at the time.

In response to hyperinflation and the rising number of individual members who were unable to pay their membership dues, the Centralverein did away with minimum dues payment

[181] The German economy experienced inflation between 1914 and 1918 when the German state decided to finance the war along with raising prices due to food scarcity. It underwent another phase of inflation due to demobilization after the war as well. As inflation simplified making reparations payments and paying war pensions while also reducing unemployment, there was considerable motivation to maintain wartime inflation rates in the post-war period. The value of the paper Mark to the Gold Mark, which was tied to the gold standard, declined from 4,279 paper Marks in the beginning of 1923 to one million in August 1923 and one Gold Mark was worth one billion paper Marks two months later. This hyperinflation ended with the introduction of the Rentenmark, which was again tied to the gold standard, and the German currency had stabilized by mid-1924. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 60 and 62-4 and Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 245, and 247.

[182] Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, *Tätigkeitsbericht für die Jahre 1924 und 1925*, 90.

in 1923. Even after the end of hyperinflation, the C.V. general assembly decided to adopt a more tailored approach to encourage members to pay a shifting amount based on the Centralverein's needs in that particular year.[183] This approach both created "elasticity" in meeting the Centralverein's financial needs as well as allowing those who could not afford to pay dues to remain C.V. members.[184] Keeping C.V. membership accessible was done in the interest of maintaining strong connections to the Jewish community and encouraging unity in the face of economic insecurity.

Unlike the Centralverein, the Volksverein had few wealthy members willing to donate additional funds. As a result, the Volksverein had a deficit of over 64,000 mark at the end of 1923.[185] This deficit contributed to the Volksverein's ongoing financial shortfalls during the postwar period; in December 1922, the central office reported that the Volksverein was missing 346,000M in dues that it should have received between June 1921 and 1922.[186] To offset this deficit, the central office used up what limited financial reserves it had put aside prior to the war. This meant that the Volksverein lost any potential financial capital to expand its networks.

In response to the hyperinflation, the Volksverein increased its required dues to 50M in the first quarter of 1923, 500M in the second, and 1,000M in the third quarter before dropping them down to 0.25M at the end of the year.[187] Members were only willing to continue paying

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[183] WL MF Doc 55/4/123, p. 102.

[184] This did not mean that members could simply choose not to pay their dues, however. New statutes in 1928 also included a clause that allowed local and regional branches to expel members who were deemed financially able to pay dues but refused to do so even after receiving two warnings. Appraising the situation on a case-by-case basis was the responsibility of the respective local or regional branch and not regulated centrally. Ibid.

[185] BArch, R 8115/I/17, p. 149.

[186] MGB Hpw 42a, Der Zentralstelle des Volksvereins für das katholische Deutschland, *Rundschreiben an unsere Vertrauensleute*, Number 3 (M.Gladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag GmbH, 1922), 1.

[187] In 1924, dues returned to the pre-war 1M, before being raised to 2M in 1926. Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933*, 427.

these increasing dues because the money they were using was so devalued that it had no effect on their financial situation. This was the case in Baden, when the Volksverein's regional branch in Freiburg attributed the fact that its membership numbers remained consistent throughout the early 1920s to the fact that members paid their dues using money that was made worthless by inflation.[188] The Volksverein could do little with such worthless money, and its community engagement was largely interrupted as a result.

More than the hyperinflation of 1923, it was the NSDAP's attempted putsch in Munich that concerned the Centralverein and German Jewry the most. Almost immediately after the putsch attempt, the Centralverein began holding lectures in local communities both in and outside Bavaria that focused on what happened in Munich and what the Centralverein was doing in response. This was the case in Plauen in the LVB Free State of Saxony, which was close to the Bavarian border and whose Jews were deeply concerned that the antisemitism and National Socialism popular in Bavaria would take root in their community as well.[189] The porousness of these regional and local borders meant that, while each region had its own specific needs, the differing regions shared many of the same concerns and fears of growing persecution.

In regions outside Bavaria, the Centralverein held lectures to raise awareness of the dangers that National Socialism posed to all German Jews and, in doing so, to encourage more German Jews to support the Centralverein's defense work as well. Alfred Wiener held one such lecture in Stuttgart and a representative from LVB Rhineland-Westphalia held at least one other in the small town of Borken.[190] While these communities were themselves not affected by the

[188] BArch R 8115/I/122, p. 3.

[189] WL MF Doc 55/26/1131, p. 301.
[190] WL MF Doc 55/31/1378, p. 250 and 55/12/377, November 13, 1923.

putsch or the events in Munich directly, these lectures encouraged increased defense work against both National Socialism and antisemitism while also strengthening association-wide solidarity. The lecture in Borken called on all local members to distribute both the *CVZ* and the Centralverein's publications as widely as possible.[191] While the lecture in Borken focused on the recent events in Munich, the appeal for more general defense work and outreach via the press reflected a continuation of existing strategies of using education to refute antisemitism. Most significant of all was to circulate a new brochure titled "Catholicism and Judaism" by the Catholic publicist Alfons Steiger in Christian circles.[192] Released by the Zentrum's publisher Germania and held in the Volksverein's library, this brochure was one of the few instances in which the Centralverein and Volksverein utilized the same materials in their respective defense work. [193]

It was not just the Centralverein that viewed the NSDAP with deep concern; leading Catholic politicians also saw it as a threat to Christianity as well. In a leaflet published in November 1920 titled "From Antisemitism to anti-Christianity," an anonymous Catholic author chided Christians for not noticing just how dangerous their antisemitic attacks were for all religious people. Here he asked, "Do the so-called good Christians notice that the grenades being sent into the Jewish camp are suspiciously also beginning to land in the Christian one?"[194] In this question, the author hoped to draw German Catholics' attention to the potential severity of such persecution and the necessity to defend against attacks against both Catholics and Jews. While Catholics were less likely to support the NSDAP, particularly during the early-to-mid 1920s, the

[191] WL MF Doc 55/12/377, November 13, 1923.

[192] Ibid.

[193] MGB Ada 25, Alfons Steiger, *Katholizismus und Judentum* (Berlin: Verlag der Germania A.G., 1923).

[194] WL MF Doc 55/22/862, p. 35.

increase in Catholic antisemitism was closely tied to declining social homogeneity within German Catholicism.[195]

While the Volksverein was highly critical of the NSDAP and its 1923 putsch attempt, the secretary of the Bavarian regional office alleged that the three groups that would benefit most from the failed putsch were the socialists, the French and, "as they like to add here [in Bavaria], the Jews."[196] While the regional Volksverein branch rejected the NSDAP, it was also not free of many of the same prejudices. The chairman's statement was representative of the casual antisemitism that was prevalent even among those who rejected the NSDAP or DSTB's virulent völkisch antisemitism. While Catholics were less likely to support völkisch antisemitism than Protestants, it was the case that Catholic political and economic antisemitism grew considerably in the post-war period. While the Volksverein was highly critical of the NSDAP and its 1923 putsch attempt, the secretary of the Bavarian regional office alleged that the three groups that would benefit most from the failed putsch were the socialists, the French and, "as they like to add here [in Bavaria], the Jews."[197] This meant that, while the regional V.V. branch rejected the NSDAP, it also itself was not free of many of the same prejudices. While Catholics were less likely to support völkisch antisemitism than Protestants, it was the case that Catholic political and economic antisemitism grew considerably in the post-war period.

It was only in two small aspects that German-Jewish and German-Catholic spheres overlapped within the Centralverein's work. These were in the *Central-Verein Zeitung* and in local programming in regions with a predominantly Catholic population. In March 1924, the

[195] This was a process that became particularly evident in the late 1920s and early 1930s when Catholics began supporting the NSDAP, but had its roots in the declining support for the Zentrum in the early 1920s as well.

[196] BArch, R 8115/I/125, p. 107.

[197] Ibid., p. 108.

CVZ published a report on a V.V. assembly at which Chancellor Wilhelm Marx had held a speech about the ramifications of the failed Nazi putsch.[198] This assembly focused on a shared condemnation of antisemitic and anti-Catholic sentiment. It also called on German Catholics to reject völkisch nationalism and support their neighbors and those of different backgrounds. While the Centralverein conducted outreach to German Catholics, it did not come as a result of Catholic initiative except in the above-mentioned case of publicist Alfons Steiger.[199] Despite this exception, the Centralverein's one-sided outreach to Catholics was often similar to or even overlapped with its *Aufklärungsversammlungen*. In towns with a large Catholic population, the local branch would often invite a Catholic speaker to hold a lecture intended to convince Catholics that antisemitism was dangerous for German Catholics and all religious minorities as well.[200] Alongside public lectures, these local branches also often organized private meetings with prominent local Catholics. This outreach emphasized the dangers inherent in the fact that völkisch associations such as the Alldeutscher Verband, the DSTB, and the NSDAP each condemned the Weimar system as both Catholic and Jewish.[201] Though there were few direct ties between the Centralverein and the Volksverein, the two associations and their communities were often conflated by their detractors – if not by their supporters.[202]

The stabilization of German currency by the end of 1923, the regulation of Germany's reparations by the Dawes Plan in August 1924, and the end of the French occupation of the Ruhr

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[198] "Deutschvölkische Katholikenhetze," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 3 (March 3, 1924), 99.

[199] Borut, "Bin Ich doch ein Israelit, ehre Ich auch den Bischof mit," 133, WL MF Doc 55/30/327, April 3, 1924 and 55/15/516, February 18, 1924.

[200] WL MF Doc 55/10/267, January 25, 1924.

[201] WL MF Doc 55/10/267, January 25, 1924.

[202] BArch, R 8048/240, p. 1.

all contributed to making 1924 a year of comparative stability.[203] Though political upheaval and violence declined after 1923, the radical völkisch right-wing parties and associations continued expanding and gaining mainstream influence throughout 1924. Völkisch nationalism and antisemitism were so popular that associations used them to gain political influence within the Weimar political system and they only became more virulent as the decade progressed.[204]

While the Centralverein became more involved in the local German and German-Jewish community as the decade progressed, the Volksverein struggled to overcome the German-Catholic community's declining social homogeneity. While the Volksverein was considered the "*Verein der Vereine*" – the association of associations – within German Catholicism before the war, it lost this status in the Weimar Republic as associational life diversified and was no longer dependent on the Volksverein for support.[205] As Detlef Grothmann argued, there was no monocausal reason for the Volksverein's decline in the 1920s. Instead, the interplay of political and inter-Catholic issues during the period was what weakened its position within the Catholic community.[206] As political consensus within German-Catholic society declined during the early 1920s, the Volksverein's centralization and determination to preserve Catholic unity made it hard for it to navigate the internal and external challenges of the early Weimar Republic.

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[203] Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 103-4.

[204] There were two national parliamentary elections in 1924. The DNVP gained seats in the Reichstag consistently in both the May and December elections, winning around twenty percent of the popular vote in each one. Immediately prior to the May 1924 elections, the DNVP banned Jewish members in an attempt to attract those who had supported the NSDAP prior to the attempted putsch. Ruppert, *Im Dienst am Staat vom Weimar*, 92 and Larry Eugene Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic: A Case Study of the German National People's Party," in *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Antisemitism,* ed. Larry Eugene Jones (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), 85 and 88.

[205] Heinen, "Brief an einem Geschäftsführer über die nächsten Aufgaben des Volksvereins," Letter 12, 7 and Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland*, 93.

[206] Detlef Grothmann, *"Verein der Vereine?": Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland im Spektrum des politischen und sozialen Katholizismus der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne: SH-Verlag, 1997), 12.

Unlike the Centralverein, the Volksverein's financial and organizational struggles during this period intensified as the decade progressed. In September 1924, the Volksverein and the Zentrum reached a new agreement on a division of labor within Catholic society. According to this arrangement, the Volksverein was responsible for community engagement as well as training and educating speakers, while the Zentrum was responsible for political work.[207] That it took until 1924 to reach this compromise, however, showed that, despite its close connection with influential politicians, the Volksverein's role in organized German Catholicism was often uncertain throughout the early Weimar Republic. As there was very little local demand to drive the Volksverein's expansion on its own, it depended on such agreements at the national level to regulate and determine how it could engage in the local sphere.

While the division of labor between the Volksverein and the Zentrum helped stabilize part of its educational work, the relationship remained strained throughout the mid-1920s. The Zentrum's highly uneven regional expansion meant that, despite the Volksverein's declining relevance, the Zentrum remained dependent on it and other Catholic associations to conduct election campaigning within Catholic circles. While the Zentrum took on many of the Volksverein's former responsibilities, it also repeatedly relied on the Volksverein to operate on its behalf in the associational sphere. Whether and how the Centralverein and the Volksverein adapted to the political and social changes in this new period was determined by the strength, engagement, and support of their respective local and regional spheres. It was during the early Weimar Republic that the politicization and radicalization that these organizations experienced prior to the First World War crystallized into official policy and practice.

[207] BArch, R 8115/I/184, p. 15.

Associations continued to play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, driving political trends, and challenging or bolstering state structures in the early Weimar Republic. Unlike in the German Empire, this was no longer part of a secondary sphere. This was not because associations had become so powerful as to be considered primary systems themselves, but rather because the growing diversity and power of political parties and their continued cooperation with associations made such an arrangement unnecessary. The lines between primary and secondary political power blurred to the point of nonexistence within the organized lay Catholic system. At the same time, German Jews had unprecedented access to political positions while also facing increased hate in the social and economic sphere.

While political conditions within regional branches were often similar, there was high variation in the virulence of antisemitism, the demographic makeup of the community itself, and the ways in which the local branches engaged within these spheres. Lectures, assemblies, and meetings in local branches accommodated the growing demand for adult education within the Jewish community while also supporting regionalization. The Centralverein's embrace of decentralized autonomy in the interwar period mirrored expanding regionalism throughout Germany at the time.

The Centralverein's extensive decentralization during the early Weimar Republic enabled local German-Jewish communities to create dedicated spaces in which they could advocate for their own interests while a Jewish identity that blended local and national elements. With a highly autonomous local and regional system operating within a network centralized in Berlin, the Centralverein developed a framework within which German Jews adapted and coopted a synthesized form of Germanness and Jewishness. In holding lectures and assemblies while also conducting community outreach, the Centralverein local and regional branches attempted to

reshape how their communities – both Jews and non-Jews – understood Jewishness and minority religious rights.

The Centralverein's ongoing defense of German-Jewish belonging shifted further away from the central office and into the local and regional sphere during the Weimar Republic. In establishing these local, regional, and national networks for self-defense and strengthening identity, the Centralverein itself became an intermediary between different conceptions of Germanness and Jewishness, and, in doing so, helped negotiate the considerable regional and local variation in how these identities were expressed. The rapidity with which the Centralverein regionalized during the early 1920s allowed German Jews to navigate their growing commitment to Jewish life while also maintaining and asserting their Germanness at the local, regional, and national levels. As such, German Jews became even further integrated into the regionalized majority networks of community participation in Germany. This meant that many German Jews in the early Weimar period also adopted the plurality of local, regional, and national German identities shared with their gentile neighbors. In embracing and encouraging these plural identities, the Centralverein's regional and local branches became the primary spaces in which German Jews could define, tailor, and communicate what it meant to be both German and Jewish in the Weimar Republic.

Chapter Four
"*In Necessariis Unitas*": The C.V. and the V.V. in the Late Weimar Republic, 1925-1932

The political and economic instability that had characterized the early Weimar years quieted by the mid 1920s. While the large revolts and strikes ceased after 1923, right-wing political movements grew more popular as the decade progressed. Part of this ongoing shift to the right in the mid-1920s was field marshal Paul von Hindenburg's election as president of Germany in May 1925. Hindenburg's Prussian militarism and near military dictatorship during the last year of the First World War made him a largely popular figure for the political right. As such, his election as president in 1925 represented what Hans-Ulrich Wehler called the "consolidation of the *republikfeindliche* majority."[1] Such enemies of the republic denied the legitimacy of the Weimar state and were fundamentally opposed to a democratic republic.[2] Parties like the NSDAP, which had tried to use violence to topple the Weimar Republic in the beginning of the decade, began turning to more legitimate forms of parliamentary political influence in their attempts to weaken and destabilize the Weimar state.

Political radicalism in the mid-1920s was incited further by new international diplomatic agreements. Ratified in December 1925, the Locarno treaties helped create relative political stability in Germany.[3] This reinforced German Jews' optimistic belief in the Weimar state as a

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[1] Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, *Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914-1949* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), 566.

[2] Ibid., 513.

[3] Germany, France, and Belgium agreed not to use force to change their borders and promised that Germany would be allowed to join the League of Nations. The Locarno treaty also reaffirmed the demilitarization of the Rhineland and guaranteed that Britain and Italy would come to France's defense if Germany were to invade. In return, Germany the occupation of the northern zone of the Rhineland, which included Bonn, Cologne, and Krefeld, ended on January 31, 1926. The open diplomacy with which the participating delegations underwent the negotiations and the willingness for cooperation led to what became known as the "spirit of Locarno." While the SPD, Zentrum, and DVP supported the Locarno treaties, the DNVP left the coalition in protest since it did not repudiate the Treaty of Versailles. Despite the DNVP's protest, the ratification of the Locarno treaties helped stabilize both diplomatic relations between these countries as well as German foreign and domestic politics through the rest of the 1920s. Eric

guarantor of truth, justice, and peace.[4] For many German Jews, the comparative calm allowed for focusing further on expanding social and educational networks within the German-Jewish community. As Michael Brenner stated, this did not mean that German Jews were now "profoundly immersed in Jewish culture, but it marked a first step toward the renewal of Jewish knowledge."[5] With the expansion of adult education, schools, and cultural organizations, more German Jews engaged with cultural forms of Jewishness as the decade progressed. While most of the adult education centers – the *Lehrhäuser* – were founded in the beginning of the Weimar Republic, the establishment of a new *Lehrhaus* in Stuttgart in 1926 was a further occasion for German Jews to emphasize their dedication to Germanness and Jewishness.[6] As part of this process, the *Lehrhaus* in Stuttgart began hosting debates with non-Jewish scholars in the mid-1920s to expand the frameworks in which German Jews could engage in constructive and informed exchange with non-Jews.[7] This made the local and regional spheres into the focal point of this ongoing return to Jewishness in the Weimar Republic. Alongside the stabilization of German politics and economy, growing inner-Jewish political neutrality led to the beginning of a consolidation of Jewish associational life from the mid-1920s onward.

D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 109, Brian C. Rathbun, *Diplomacy's Value: Creating Security in 1920s Europe and the Contemporary Middle East* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), 138, Philipp Heyde, *Das Ende der Reparationen: Deutschland, Frankreich und der Young Plan 1929-1932* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998), 17-18, and Ludwig Richter, "SPD, DVP und die Problematik der Großen Koalition," in *Demokratie in Deutschland und Frankreich 1918-1933/40: Beiträge zu einem historischen Vergleich*, ed. Horst Möller and Manfred Kittel (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002), 168.

[4] WL MF Doc 55/32/1413, p. 125.

[5] Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1996), 220.

[6] Ibid., 94.

[7] Ibid., 95.

4.1. The C.V. and the Professionalization of German-Jewish Associational Life

While local branches remained dependent on regional branches and the central office for some administrative and financial support, they had also gained considerable autonomy within their local communities by the late 1920s. The number of new local and regional Centralverein branches established slowed considerably after 1925. While over 450 local branches were established between 1919 and 1925, only a handful of new branches were established between 1925 and 1932.[8] That the number of local branches grew so rapidly in the early 1920s and then remained largely consistent for the remainder of the Weimar Republic was both part of a consistent demand for German-Jewish community as well as a response rapidly-rising antisemitism and völkisch nationalism. As the economic and political situation stabilized, local and regional branches increasingly focused on developing new programming to strengthen the German-Jewish community.

As the number of new local and regional branches established slowed by the middle of the decade, existing branches expanded their focus on their own local communities. This expanded the Centralverein's regional and local branches' involvement in Jewish community matters and forced the Centralverein to reassess and reassert what it meant to be a politically neutral association. By the end of the 1920s, the Centralverein's participation in Jewish community politics, its educational work, and its outreach to non-Jews was based primarily in the local and regional sphere. As the expansion of its local and regional networks slowed, the second half of the decade was instead characterized by continuity, expanded local engagement,

[8] Paul Rieger, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert im Kampf um das Recht und die Zukunft der deutschen Juden* (Berlin: Verlag des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, 1918), 76-81, Julius Rothholz, *Die deutschen Juden in Zahl und Bild* (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 1925), 38, and WL MF Doc 338/W368, Landesverband Niederschlesien des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (ed.), *Das Jahr der Entscheidung* (Berlin: Lichtwitz, 1932), 2.

and adaptation to inner-Jewish concerns. With experienced leaders, focused community engagement, and a continued and reinforced dedication to Germanness and Jewishness, the Centralverein's local and regional networks underwent a process of professionalization and specialization during the late 1920s and early 1930s. This chapter argues that German Jews shaped what it meant to belong to and participate in the Jewish community and civil society in the local sphere. It was here that they defined the nuanced and locally specific synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness that defined the Centralverein in the Weimar Republic.

Similar to the local branches, the Centralverein also established only two new regional branches between 1925 and 1933, both of which consolidated pre-existing branches. The first was LVB Pomerania-Grenzmark, which combined these two regions into one branch in 1928. Four years later, LVB Free State of Saxony, LVB Province Saxony, LVB Anhalt, and LVB Thuringia merged into LVB Central Germany based in Leipzig.[9] To help this new regional branch establish effective administrative networks, the central office sent deputy syndic of the C.V. Artur Schweriner to Leipzig to work as its temporary syndic for its first four months. Part of Schweriner's responsibilities was to ensure that LVB Central Germany and OG Leipzig worked well together within the local community. Generally located in cities with a large Jewish and non-Jewish population, the local branches in the same city as a regional branch often relied heavily on the support from their regional branch in organizing local programming and delegating resources for defense. To ensure this cooperation, Schweriner suggested to the local chairman that they meet once or twice a week, as was common in other cities that had both a

[9] WL MF Doc 55/10/260, p. 25. At its establishment, these four regional branches had an overall deficit of over 20,000M, and a projected deficit of 7,400M for the following year. The root of this problem was that membership dues from the local branches in the region only covered around 73 percent of LVB Central Germany's total expenses. Ibid., pp. 24, 27, and 40.

local and regional office.[10] This cooperation between the local and regional branch in Leipzig was characteristic of the relationship between local and regional branches in other cities that held both offices as well.

While only around twelve percent of Jews in Germany were C.V. members in 1925, these numbers did not reflect the full extent to which German Jews participated in its local and regional networks.[11] Though it was not uncommon for German Jews to join other Jewish associations while also being members of the Centralverein, it was not until the mid-1920s that these associations began working together and expressing mutual support. By the early 1930s, the Centralverein's local and regional branches worked increasingly closer together with other German-Jewish organizations in their communities. In being able to decide whether to remain neutral on participating in Zionist projects and creating close connections with local branches of other Jewish associations, local branches were given the leeway necessary to strengthen solidarity within their local Jewish communities. This all was rooted in the Centralverein's ongoing attempts to grapple with the questions of how best to protect and strengthen Germanness and Jewishness among its members and at in the local, regional, and national public spheres.

Alongside its official members, there were also at least a quarter of a million German Jews who were affiliated with the Centralverein indirectly through corporate membership in the mid-1920s.[12] As during the German Empire, corporate members were often entire Jewish communities or other Jewish organizations who paid a set fee for the entire body. These

[10] WL MF Doc 55/10/260, August 18, 1932.

[11] Statistisches Reichsamt, "Volkszählung: Die Bevölkerung des Deutschen Reichs nach den Ergebnissen der Volkszählung 1925. Teil 1, Einführung in die Volksählung 1925: Tabellenwerk," in *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, vol. 401 (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1928) and Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens. *Tätigkeitsbericht für die Jahre 1924 und 1925*. (Berlin: 1925), 87.

[12] WL MF Doc 55/31/1410, p. 216.

corporate members benefitted from the Centralverein's defense and support without paying individual dues or being affiliated with a local branch. With these individuals included, the Centralverein represented a majority of German Jews and their interests during the Weimar Republic.[13]

The Centralverein was also a corporate member of other Jewish associations like the *Jüdischer Friedensbund* (Jewish Peace Association), which it joined in 1929. As such, the Centralverein both relied on and was part of a growing network of Jewish communities, associations, and organizations that mutually supported and relied on each other.[14] This limited consolidation occurred primarily at the national level, which meant that Jews in local communities often had little to do with the corporate associations to which they indirectly belonged. When local or regional conditions necessitated it, however, inter-associational networks meant that German Jews had a growing network of help and support.

C.V. local branches also received support from and worked together with other Jewish organizations within their communities. Such cooperation was particularly the common between the Centralverein and the Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten (RjF). This frequent cooperation at the local level was also based on the close relationship between the two at the national level.

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[13] While the C.V. grew rapidly in the early 1920s from 45,000 in 1919 to 72,000 in 1924, its number of members declined gradually during the second half of the Weimar Republic, with 60,600 members in 1925 and just over 54,000 in 1928, before increasing slightly to 60,000 members in 1932. This decline in the late 1920s was due in large part to the comparative stabilization of the political and economic situation in Germany during this period. That membership numbers again increased starting in 1929 and into the 1930s reflected both the rising economic instability of the Great Depression as well as a reaction to the rapid rise of the NSDAP. The C.V.'s membership grew most rapidly in times of rising antisemitism and social unrest, as German Jews turned to the C.V. for defense and support. Rothholz, *Die deutschen Juden in Zahl und Bild*, 40, Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens. *Tätigkeitsbericht für die Jahre 1924 und 1925* (Berlin: 1925), 87 and 89, WL MF Doc 338/W368, Landesverband Niederschlesien des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (ed.), "Die Wirkung," in *Das Jahr der Entscheidung* (Berlin: Lichtwitz, 1932), 2, WL MF Doc 55/4/123, p. 132, and Ludwig Foerder, *Die Stellung des Centralvereins zu den innerjüdischen Fragen in den Jahren 1919-1926: Eine Denkschrift für die Vereinsmitglieder* (Breslau, 1927), 29.

[14] Margarete Fried, "Die Frauen des Centralvereins für den jüdischen Friedensbund," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 8 (August 9, 1929), 420.

Cooperation between the Centralverein and the RjF was so close by 1928 that the chairman of LVB Baden stated in March of that year that both associations were "entirely dependent" on each other.[15]As each had a representative on the other's executive board, this dependency consolidated defense work within the local sphere and provided stronger administrative and financial networks for broader and more targeted defense. In LVB Rhineland in 1932, for example, a number of C.V. local branches throughout the region worked together with their local RjF chapters to organize public lectures for non-Jews in their respective communities.[16] Shared defense of Jewish belonging in the public sphere and the close cooperation between the two associations at the national level set a precedent of close cooperation between German-Jewish organizations starting in the mid-1920s.

Alongside its cooperation with the RjF, the Centralverein also received considerable financial support for its work from the UOBB. Unlike with the RjF, however, UOBB members donated to the Centralverein without becoming members or participating in its local branches.[17] In one instance, the C.V. branch in Stuttgart did not adequately advertise a lecture by Alfred Wiener, which meant that few local Centralverein members attended. As his lecture was in the same building as a local UOBB meeting, however, many UOBB members attended Wiener's lecture.[18] Despite comparatively low C.V. attendance, the lecture was a considerable success, as the UOBB made considerable financial contributions to the local C.V. branch.[19] Such local cooperation between the C.V. and members of the UOBB was largely informal and were also

[15] WL MF Doc 55/15/522, March 20, 1928.

[16] WL MF Doc 55/32/1421, November 18, 1932.

[17] Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, *Tätigkeitsbericht für die Jahre 1924 und 1925*, 108.

[18] WL MF Doc 55/31/1378, December 9, 1923.

[19] Ibid.

part of frequent cooperation between the UOBB and the Centralverein at the local and national levels.[20] Both the RjF and the UOBB were and remained close supporters of the Centralverein throughout the Weimar Republic. This mutual assistance was predicated on a shared prioritization of German-Jewish associations that saw self-assertion and pride in their German-Jewishness as a duty and responsibility throughout the Weimar period.[21] Such collaboration within German-Jewish associational life at the local level and strengthened the decentralized networks on which these associations relied. In doing so, it created frameworks for such cooperation with Jewish organizations that had once been highly critical of the Centralverein and its synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness.

By the mid-1920s, Orthodox Jews were also more likely to support the Centralverein. In 1926, the Orthodox newspaper *Der Israelit* published an article stating that "[…] the C.V. has always prioritized defense; it never had the ambition to represent a positive religious or ideological idea, but rather wisely restricted itself to representing the interests that Jews in all diaspora countries share."[22] Such a positive appraisal both of defense work and of the Centralverein's religiously neutral position was a marked change from its highly critical view of the Centralverein in the German Empire. *Der Israelit*'s supportive stance on the Centralverein was based both by the need to respond to rising antisemitism in Germany and the Centralverein's consistent demonstration of its religious neutrality over the past decades. The number of Orthodox Jews who joined the Centralverein grow rapidly in the 1920s as a result. This meant that local branches that had previously consisted solely of liberal Jews now in many cases

[20] WL MF Doc 55/10/389, p. 83.

[21] *Das deutsche Judentum: seine Parteien und Organisationen* (Berlin: Verlag der Neuen Jüdischen Monatshefte, 1919), 48.

[22] "Zentralverein, Aguda und – Dr. Simon," *Der Israelit* 67 (January 14, 1926), 49.

became more religiously diverse. The Centralverein's local and regional branches increasingly became spaces in which pluralistic and diverse Jewish religious identities were unified in the interest of self-defense and asserting Germanness and Jewishness in the public sphere.

How the local sphere defined Germanness, Jewishness, and the conditions for belonging to the German-Jewish community sometimes differed from how regional or national leadership did so. This was particularly evident in OG Zittau in LVB Free State of Saxony, which was on the border to Czechoslovakia and had some Czech citizens as members. For OG Zittau, interaction with non-citizens within the Jewish community was commonplace, and both the local and regional branch met this plurality with openness and inclusion. For this reason, before holding a lecture, the local branch advised the speaker Dr. Siegmund Fürth from Hamburg not to discuss the question of non-German citizens' membership in the Centralverein.[23] Despite this warning, Fürth did so anyways and drew a stark line between Germans and foreigners.

After Fürth's lecture, the chairman of OG Zittau wrote a letter to the central office in which he stated that, "Today we want to reemphasize that we are of the unalterable opinion that anyone who joins the C.V. demonstrates through doing so that regardless of where he is from, he feels and thinks German, and has a right to demand a full and equal membership in the C.V."[24] As the Centralverein defined Jewishness based on descent and not nationality, there was little room for debate on whether Czech Jews were allowed to participate in its local branches. Unlike Fürth who saw Germanness as a product of citizenship, OG Zittau instead defined it as a question of identity and culture. Both Fürth and OG Zittau's definitions of Germanness and Jewishness were part of what Michael Brenner called the shift from being a "community of faith

[23] WL MF Doc 55/30/1313, April 2, 1925.

[24] Ibid., April 27, 1925.

to a community of fate and common descent" that characterized the German-Jewish community in the Weimar Republic.[25] This 'community of fate' gave German Jews considerable flexibility in defining what Germanness and Jewishness not only meant for them personally, but for the community in which they lived as well.

Excluding non-citizens living in Germany from participating in the Centralverein barred not only these Czech Jews, but also most Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe. In areas like eastern Germany or industrialized regions in the west, both of which had a comparatively large population of eastern European Jews, the Centralverein's regional and local branches often considered Jewishness the basis for membership in the Centralverein. While many non-German Jews living in Germany remained uninterested in participating in the Centralverein, the central office's continued regulation of how Germanness was expressed also purposefully restricted access to membership.

While political concerns over the so-called *Ostjuden* receded by the mid-1920s, debates within the Centralverein on whether they should be allowed to join the Centralverein continued until the end of the Weimar Republic. On January 25, 1933, Kurt Alexander and Felix Goldmann argued over the appropriate position to take on supporting Eastern European Jews. While Goldmann argued for helping Eastern European Jews join the Centralverein and for creating a specialized department within the central office to help deal with their concerns, Alexander claimed that, as important as it was to fight for the rights of all Jews in Germany, the situation was too dire to provide such support to non-German Jews in Germany.[26] As the Centralverein did not take a clear position, local and regional branches were able to decide for themselves what

[25] Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, 6.

[26] WL MF Doc 55/5/138, p. 24-5.

worked best for their community. In many cases, access to and understandings of Germanness and Jewishness was flexible and reflected local demographics. German-Jewish identity was situational, adaptive, and often highly individual.

Through their considerable autonomy, the Centralverein's local branches provided spaces in which German Jews could articulate and develop such locally specific and nationally cohesive German-Jewish identities. While the local branches were the main source of administrative and organizational influence prior to the Weimar Republic, the rapid expansion of regional branches in the early Weimar Republic meant that by the mid-1920s, regional branches had become the primary source of the Centralverein's organizational management. Despite not having as much administrative influence at the national level as the regional branches, the Centralverein's local branches remained the most influential factor in its defense and educational work. Regional branches were usually the ones responsible for providing the financial and administrative support for organizing lectures in local branches throughout the late 1920s. While the central office occasionally provided speakers or suggested possible topics, regional branches generally corresponded with the speaker and then, in turn, spoke with the local branch to organize the details.[27] Such delegation of responsibilities was due to the fact that the central office could not "appraise the situation in the regional branch" from Berlin, and left it up to the regional and local branches to determine what kind of support worked best at that time.[28] Despite such structure, this order of operations was not binding; local branches frequently spoke directly with the respective speakers to decide what topic was the better fit for their communities.

[27] WL MF Doc 55/25/1048, February 24, 1928.

[28] WL MF Doc 55/19/752, November 11, 1926.

While this system generally ensured that branches received the support and flexibility they required, the need to communicate between local, regional, and national levels in a particular manner also occasionally complicated responding to acute local issues in a timely manner. This was the case in OG Nordhausen in LVB Thuringia throughout the late 1920s. In March 1929, the local chairman wrote to the central office complaining that his community was not receiving the support they needed in organizing an *Aufklärungsversammlung* against the antisemitic Protestant Pastor and NSDAP member Ludwig Münchmeyer.[29] After Münchmeyer held a well-attended lecture in Nordhausen, the local branch wanted to hold an assembly to counter the antisemitic statements made in this assembly. The chairman was upset that the one speaker who was best able to counter Münchmeyer's arguments – Bruno Weil – had cancelled his intended visit with short notice and without offering to reschedule.[30] Though Weil could not attend, Alfred Wiener came to Nordhausen a month later to hold an open informational lecture, marking his second visit to the local branch in two years.[31] Though the lectures came from central office representatives, it was the local sphere and its engagement within its own community that enabled such direct responses to acute issues. Responses to antisemitism depended on local action and close cooperation between the local, regional, and national branches.

[29] WL MF Doc 55/25/1071, March 9, 1929.

[30] Ibid. Weil was the optimal speaker in this occasion because he had been the one to represent the C.V. in a libel case brought by Münchmeyer after the C.V. published a pamphlet exposing Münchmeyer's behavior in his personal life. While the C.V. was found guilty of libel, there was enough truth in their claims that Münchmeyer was defrocked and lost much of his influence and presence in Borkum where he had preached. This drove him to the NSDAP, for whom he became a popular speaker. Donald L. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 76.

[31] WL MF Doc 55/25/1071, p. 58 and 192.

As many lectures took place at the behest of the local branches themselves, the frequency at which they were held and the themes that they discussed represented a consolidation of national, regional, and local concerns within the respective community. This was particularly clear when considering what topics were discussed and when. Lectures on the topics 'Fight,' 'Defense,' and 'Antisemitism' were consistently popular throughout the Weimar Republic. These lectures focused on topics like "Our Fight against National Socialism," "Experiences in the Fight for Germanness and Jewishness," "Modern Antisemitism," and "The Mass Psychology of Antisemitism."[32] Some topics were so consistently popular that highly similar lectures were held over a decade apart. This was the case with the lecture titled "Attacks and Defense" held in a small community in Bavaria in 1920 and again as a discussion evening in the Rhineland in 1931.[33] Such repetition throughout the Weimar Republic reflected the consistent demand from the local sphere for discussions of current events and self-defense work. Through such lectures and discussion, the local branch reinforced a sense of unity and shared responsibility in their respective Jewish communities.

Similar topics were particularly intended to educate German Jews on how best to defend Jewish interests in their own communities. As such lectures that had the words 'Vote' or 'Election' in their title were largely held in years with parliamentary elections like 1924, 1928, 1930 and 1932. Similarly, while speakers held lectures that contained the word 'politics' or 'political' in the early 1920s, it was not until 1926 that these lectures became more popular. The discussion of political topics was closely tied to the frequency of parliamentary elections in the

[32] WL MF Doc 55/14/493, March 8, 1929, 55/16/590, January 21, 1929, 55/26/1103, p. 218, and 55/17/619, March 18, 1931.

[33] WL MF Doc 55/14/441, February 18, 1931 and 55/23/920, January 4, 1920.

late 1920s and early 1930s and the rising anxieties surrounding NSDAP electoral success. This motivated the Centralverein's shift to a more aggressive form of public engagement and press work.[34] Lectures intended to sway public opinion on German Jews often focused on topics such as "What is Going On? Our Front-Line Position in the Daily Political Fight," "German Politics, National Socialism, and Judaism," and "Dangerous Developments in Our Political Situation."[35] In holding these lectures, speakers encouraged C.V. members to engage with the political issues of the day and to vote in all upcoming elections. It was this local commitment to defending German-Jewish interests in their communities that shaped local engagement throughout the remainder of the Weimar Republic.

The number of lectures held in local branches rose compared to the early 1920s. While the number remained relatively consistent throughout the second half of the decade, there was a sharp rise in programming in the last two years of the Weimar Republic. Both the expansion of local branches and community engagement and growing anxieties over rising antisemitism and, particularly, the rise of the NSDAP that led to this rise in programming. The rapid expansion of the local sphere in the first half of the decade allowed the Centralverein. to focus more on direct engagement with German Jews. As the local branches became more self-sufficient and built their own networks among German Jews in their towns and cities, the Centralverein's programming expanded to reflect that new position. The Centralverein's lectures provided and promoted a space for German Jews to learn about and discuss topics pertaining to their everyday lives, Jewish culture, and the society in which they lived.

[34] Warren Rosenblum, "Jews, Justice, and the Power of 'Sensation' in the Weimar Republic" *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 58 (2013), 52.

[35] WL MF Doc 55/16/542, November 28, 1931, 55/24/1002, p. 7, and 55/29/1280, p. 70.

Alongside lectures for C.V. members, local branches also continued organizing public informational lectures – *Aufklärungsversammlungen* – for non-Jews throughout the Weimar Republic. The number of public lectures rose considerably in the late 1920s before declining again in the early 1930s. This pattern was largely due to the fact that the Centralverein predominantly held such lectures in years leading up to or with national elections. With the highest numbers of public lectures held in 1924, 1927, 1929, and 1930, they were part of the growing political assertiveness in the local sphere. While these informational lectures often did not focus on political topics or the election themselves, they concentrated instead on disproving misconceptions about German Jews, their religion, and their economic status.

Hosting a prominent speaker for such an assembly meant paying the speaker's fee as well as the cost of their travel and accommodation. Small local branches could often not afford to host a notable speaker like SPD politician Erik Nölting or economist Norbert Einstein.[36] To make such speakers more accessible to small communities, the central office recommended that local branches ask their regional branch either for direct financial support or for its help in organizing a lecture in its community as part of a larger lecture series throughout the region.[37] This reinforced interdependence between the local and regional branches. In working together to make sure that communities received the best speakers and programming, the local and regional branches cooperated to create a cohesive network of intra-community support.

In a small number of cases, the Centralverein's public lectures had immediate success in changing local antisemites' opinions on German Jews. This was the case in the small east

[36] WL MF Doc 55/34/1456, December 21, 1931. The cost of hosting a prominent external speaker like Erik Nölting was around 250-300M. WL MF Doc 55/27/1204, November 1, 1925.

[37] WL MF Doc 55/27/1204, November 1, 1925.

Prussian town of Ortelsburg in November 1929. Both Kurt Sabatzky and Felix Goldmann held lectures in an *Aufklärungsversammlung* on Jewish connections to Germanness and on the Talmud, Kol Nidre, and the blood libel, respectively.[38] While they were interrupted by heckling from around twenty völkisch youth throughout their two lectures, these young men came up to Alexander and Goldmann afterward, asked serious questions, and took home informational material and a free month of the *CVZ*.[39] In his appraisal of this conversation, Sabatzky stated that of the twenty, there was potential to convince all but one of them to leave the völkisch movement.[40]

While most incidents involving disruptions and heckling only led to the individuals being removed, this success in Ortelsburg was what the C.V. branches and speakers hoped to achieve with every public assembly. While this success was an isolated occurrence, the conversations that Sabatzky had with these youth showed that the networks of community defense that the Centralverein had organized over the course of the previous decade could be effective. It was here that those who were willing to learn about Germanness and Jewishness and to reconsider their antisemitic viewpoints were able to access the information necessary to do so. Such small successes in local community outreach gave C.V. leadership hope that such favorable outcomes were possible elsewhere as well. Nevertheless, these successes were an exclusively local phenomenon and had little effect on the result of similar attempts either in other communities within the region or at the national level.

[38] WL MF Doc 55/26/1101, November 9, 1929.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

Though the majority of local outreach was solely conducted by the Centralverein, in a small number of instances, local branches coordinated a public lecture together with Catholics or Protestants in their community. This was the case in Frankfurt in 1931, when the C.V. local branch organized a rally together with the local chapters of both the Protestant and Catholic communities.[41] Centered around a speech titled "Religion and the Kulturkampf in Russia," this assembly sought to bring together "all friends of religion, irrespective of their confession[…]."[42] The main goal was not to necessarily overcome the differences between the two religious communities, but rather to emphasize what they both shared: the dedication to and love for the German people.[43] The Centralverein relied on local branches to build and strengthen connections with non-Jews in their communities and to organize programming – such as the above rally with local Catholics and Protestants – that emphasized shared interests and local integration.

The Centralverein also organized specialized lectures, public debates, private meetings with Catholic organizations in regions with large Catholic communities like the Rhineland and Bavaria. While such outreach was not new to the late 1920s, the pace at which local branches did so increased considerably by the late 1920s and early 1930s. Expansion of outreach to German Catholics was a direct response to the rising threat of the NSDAP. Much of this Catholic-oriented programming, such as *Aufklärungsversammlungen* in Munich in December 1929 and in Cologne in January 1930, focused on the NSDAP's hatred of both Catholicism and Judaism to emphasize their shared responsibility to fight Nazism and radical politics.[44]

[41] WL MF Doc, 55/28/1263, p. 135.

[42] Ibid.

[43] BArch, R 8115/I/201, p. 121

[44] WL MF Doc 55/20/796, p. 64 and 55/24/1002, p. 25.

To emphasize unity and shared experience between local German Jewish and German Catholic communities, the Centralverein's outreach to Catholics focused primarily on the legacy of the Kulturkampf and the dangers of persecution based on religion. This was the case in a public assembly in OG Wittenberg in LVB Province of Saxony in May 1929, when Alfred Wiener spoke on the topic "Are German Jews Disrupting the Reconstruction of our Fatherland?"[45] In this speech, Wiener argued that, much like the Jews, minorities like "Christians in ancient Rome, and the Catholics during the Kulturkampf" had always faced persecution based simply on the fact that they were minority religious groups.[46] In drawing parallels between the persecution that Catholics and Christians had faced in the past and contemporary antisemitism, Wiener hoped to convince Catholics to fight antisemitism and political radicalism. Even more so than in the early 1920s, Wiener argued that antisemitism was a threat to all religious minorities, and that any attacks against German Jews were just as dangerous to Catholics as well.

As German Catholics remained less likely to support völkisch antisemitism than Protestants, the need for defense in towns with a Catholic majority was generally lower than those with a high Protestant population. Though Hessen itself was a largely protestant region, the city of Fulda was over 87 percent Catholic and was the host of the yearly Fulda Bishop's Conference.[47] German Jews in Fulda felt so well protected by the Catholic Church that they were relatively ambivalent about the Centralverein and Jewish issues in general.[48] This disinterest was also present in the Westphalian town of Münster, which was over 84 percent Catholic.[49] In 1927,

[45] WL MF Doc 55/14/396, p. 50.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Statistisches Reichsamt, "Volkszählung," vol. 401, 368.

[48] WL MF Doc 55/29/1280, March 8, 1929.

[49] Statistisches Reichsamt, "Volkszählung," vol. 401, 366.

a local C.V. representative from Münster reported that, since the local völkisch organizations were also largely anti-Catholic, the Catholic students in Münster were generally not antisemitic either.[50] Two years after his report on local Catholic students, the local chairman of OG Münster complained to the central office that assemblies were thoroughly ineffective in gaining local support for the Centralverein.[51] Without much antisemitism and a good relationship with their non-Jewish neighbors, the C.V. local branches in Fulda and Münster both had little reason to be active in the Centralverein as well. Such instances highlighted the regionality of local German-Jewish integration and the uneven regional nature of antisemitism in Germany at the time.

It was in the largely Catholic Rhineland that German Jews generally had the most positive connections to non-Jewish residents and local identity. In 1925, the LVB Linksrhein organized a large rally in Cologne to celebrate the 1,000-year anniversary of the Rhineland belonging to Germany, and in 1929 they again celebrated the end of the occupation in the region from Aachen to Koblenz.[52] These events were each a "pledge of loyalty to the Rhenish *Heimat*," and were rooted in a powerful regional identity that coexisted equally within both their Germanness and Jewishness.[53] In January 1930, LVB Linksrhein celebrated its ten year anniversary. Part of a longer tradition of celebrating significant local and regional events, LVB Linksrhein branch chose to use this anniversary to focus on mobilizing their members' "love for the German Rhine and their loyalty to the religion of their fathers."[54] This synthesis of regional

[50] WL MF Doc 55/24/1000, May 11, 1927.

[51] WL MF Doc 55/24/1000, February 28, 1929.

[52] Lise Leibholz, "Zehn Jahre Landesverband Rheinland des C.V.," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 9 (January 31, 1930), 53.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

pride, a sense of belonging to the German nation, and their own personal religious identity was highly prominent in the Rhineland and had a lasting effect on how the regional and local branches engaged with both Jewish and non-Jewish residents in the region.

Individual instances of interconfessional cooperation in the local sphere reinforced the C.V. leadership's conviction that the most effective tool against antisemitism was not legal defense, but education and community outreach. Rooted in the initial expansion of the local branches in the first half of the 1920s, this continued prioritization of education over legal defense work reflected the changing nature of antisemitism during the Weimar Republic. While legal defense targeted those who attacked Jews either physically or through defamation in the press, education, community engagement, and, when possible, interconfessional cooperation targeted the more pervasive subtle antisemitism that led individuals to vote for the NSDAP or other völkisch parties like the DNVP.[55]

By the mid-1920s, local and regional branches played a growing role both in conducting outreach to non-Jews and also engaging with the local Jewish community. To accommodate its widespread network of local and regional branches and their varied needs, the C.V. executive board began amending its statutes in 1926. After two years preparing a new draft, the C.V. executive board met in Berlin to vote on revised statutes in February 1928.[56] Alongside

[55] WL MF Doc 55/32/1410, January 25, 1924.

[56] WL MF Doc 55/4/123, p. 99. There were three main reasons for this decision: the C.V.'s executive board had become far too large and unreliable, that each of its meetings had become too expensive, and that the whole system was not democratic enough. Since two-thirds of the executive board's representatives were elected indirectly through the general assembly, local or regional branches were not given any direct say in who was chosen. All local branches with less than 200 members were allowed to send one delegate, those with less than 600 could send two, and all with more than 600 could send three, but never more than that. Similarly, regional branches were allowed one delegate per 300 members, with a cap at three delegates for over 900 members. Comparatively, the executive board consisted of eighty members and was able to coopt a further twenty if it chose to do so. Ibid., pp. 82 and 104-5.

allocating the executive board more responsibilities, these revisions also granted local and regional branches more flexibility within their respective spheres as well.[57] One suggestion that the committee entertained but did not pursue in the final draft was to change the Centralverein's name and function to reflect its new role and responsibilities better in the German-Jewish community. The committee decided against doing so for one main reason: to avoid any misunderstandings among the public – both Jewish and non-Jewish – that could possibly affect its work negatively in the future.[58] This decision to maintain its name and mission proved well-founded only a few years later when Joseph Goebbels stated that "Even every child knows that the C.V. has indeed become well known, and that it encompasses a kind of intellectual General Staff for all Jewish initiatives in Germany."[59] While the breadth of its community engagement changed greatly since its first statutes were written in 1893, what the Centralverein represented – German-Jewish self-defense and a strong unified front against antisemitism – remained. Even though the concept of 'German citizens of the Jewish faith' was no longer representative of the Centralverein's values, the almost forty years of defense work and community engagement made the name an inherent aspect of the Centralverein's identity and influence.

[57] WL MF Doc 55/4/123, p. 107. Among the changes made, the local and regional branches were granted the right to reduce or waive membership dues for certain individuals in cases of financial need, since "the association's desire to allow all those who identify with [the C.V.] ideologically to be members is more important than financial concerns." Local and regional branches also now had the right to appoint honorary members, which was previously a right reserved solely for the executive board. While they could decide to waive membership fees for those they considered dedicated C.V. members, the local branches were also granted the ability to petition the regional branch to revoke an individual's membership if he or she had already been warned twice to pay their dues. As dues were the "foundation" of the C.V.'s work, this gave the local and regional branches considerable control over the local sphere and allowed for leeway in mediating financial matters within their own communities. WL MF Doc 55/4/123, pp. 101-2 and 55/11/312, March 30, 1920.

[58] WL MF Doc 55/4/123, p. 101.

[59] WL MF Doc 338/W368, Landesverband Niederschlesien des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, ed., *Das Jahr der Entscheidung*, 9.

4.1.1 German Politics and German Zionism

Starting in the late 1920s, C.V. local and regional branches cooperated frequently with the DDP despite the Centralverein's refusal to officially endorse a political party during the Weimar Republic.[60] Though such support of the DDP began in the early 1920s, the Centralverein's financial and administrative stability allowed for an expanded focus on political campaigns. While the Centralverein retained its official political neutrality during elections, it granted its regional branches a certain amount of leeway in how they conducted their campaign programming. In the run up to the 1928 federal elections, for example, LVB Rhineland-Westphalia provided the DDP with considerable financial support for a rally in Düsseldorf. To maintain its claims of political neutrality, the regional branch decided to send the DDP the money for the political rally as a campaign donation instead of inviting a DDP politician to hold the lecture as part of a C.V. public assembly.[61] As this donation was not an official endorsement of the DDP, LVB Rhineland-Westphalia did not consider it a conflict of interest with the Centralverein's official refusal to endorse a political party.

Despite such unofficial support during national parliamentary elections, the central office was, as a rule, generally opposed to using C.V. funds to finance political campaigns outside the Jewish community. Instead of sending the money on to the central office as required in the statutes, OG Rostock asked its regional branch in Hamburg for permission to use the dues it had collected from its members to support left-wing campaigns in the Mecklenburg region in 1927.[62] After being informed of OG Rostock's request, Alfred Wiener wrote to the local branch directly

[60] By 1931, the central office also provided the SPD, the Deutsche Volkspartei, and the Reichsbanner with financial support. WL MF Doc 55/16/536, p. 243.

[61] WL MF Doc 55/19/723, April 3, 1928 and March 29, 1928.

[62] WL MF Doc 55/27/1185, p. 182.

to refuse their request. Due to the frequency of elections at the local, regional, and national levels throughout this period, Wiener argued that having a local branch use its dues to finance election campaigns would bankrupt the Centralverein.[63] Instead, he suggested that the chairman ask wealthier members of the Jewish community to donate to a separate fund to support the political campaigns in Rostock instead.[64] While OG Rostock was forbidden from providing political parties with any direct financial support, its desire to do so reflected a high degree of involvement in local civic matters and the synthesis of Jewishness with an active local political identity. Though its inability to provide political support showed the limits of the local branches' autonomy, OG Rostock's request also highlighted the extent to which these branches could utilize local personal and professional connections to create unofficial networks of regional political engagement.

That LVB Rhineland-Westphalia was allowed to provide financial support to a political party during the federal election but OG Rostock was forbidden from doing so during a regional election highlighted the differences in how the local and regional branches were allowed to operate. While the local branch had considerable autonomy within its community, where it sent its dues and how much it was able to use for its own work was highly regulated.[65] This was less the case for the regional branch, which kept most of the dues that local branches collected while also receiving additional financial support from the central office.[66] These differences were compounded by the fact that the parliamentary elections had a far larger potential influence on

[63] WL MF Doc 55/27/1185, p. 181.

[64] Ibid.

[65] In Regensburg in 1925, the local branch there kept only 1/6 of the dues it collected. WL MF Doc 55/27/1155, November 20, 1925.

[66] WL MF Doc 55/28/1213, May 6, 1929 and 55/1/1, p. 208.

legislation and politics than a regional or local election. While the C.V. leadership in Berlin still considered Germanness a largely national phenomenon, by the late 1920s, local and regional branches had redefined and adapted it to accommodate local politics and regional particularity.

Alongside parliamentary elections, the Centralverein also became more involved in regional Jewish politics during the mid-1920s as well. In 1925, the Preußische Landesverband jüdischer Gemeinden's (Prussian Regional Association of Jewish Communities or PLVB) held the first election to its parliament. While there were local Jewish community elections in Berlin during the first part of the decade, it was not until this election that the Centralverein began focusing on Jewish community elections in its community engagement.[67] Initially scheduled for May 1924, the PLVB elections were postponed to 1925 after the 1924 national parliamentary election was scheduled on the same day.[68] While candidates did not campaign for the PLVB election at first, this changed after the C.V. executive board's confidential resolution on rejecting Zionist candidates leaked to the public in September 1924. To prevent its local and regional sphere from reaching any compromises with local Zionist candidates, the executive board advised its members not to support any Zionist candidates in the election, regardless of their party affiliation. [69]

The Centralverein's anti-Zionist resolution caused an uproar within Prussian-Jewish communities and was met with mixed reactions from the Centralverein's regional and local branches as well. Both the RjF and the Orthodox *Der Israelit* complained that this resolution

[67] In June 1920, the Zionists won forty percent of the vote in the elections for the Berlin Jewish community's assembly of representatives. This was first time that the Zionists achieved a strong opposition position within the Jewish community. These election results reflected a shift toward supporting Zionism within Jewish community politics not only in Berlin, but across Germany. Max P. Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge, 1918-1938: eine Geschichte des Preussischen Landesverbandes jüdischer Gemeinden [1918-1938]* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981), 17.

[68] Ibid., 92.

[69] Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge*, 89 and 91.

went against community interests by creating unnecessary divides within the Jewish community.[70] While many of the Centralverein's local and regional branches were determined not to take sides, others were highly supportive of this anti-Zionist position. The former was the case in OG Breslau, which decided not to get involved in the campaign beyond encouraging its members to vote for any candidate they saw fit.[71] Breslau was not the only local branch that disagreed with the central office's rejection of Zionism; Hannover, Kassel, and Magdeburg were also critical of this decision.[72] In contrast, while both LVB Upper and Lower Silesia generally had an amicable relationship with Zionists in their communities, they were unwilling to compromise when it came to electing PLVB representatives for Upper Silesian communities. It was for this reason that LVB Upper Silesia noted happily after the election that the Centralverein's candidates had won decisively in their region despite a large number of Eastern European Jews voting for Zionist candidates.[73] These disagreements within the Centralverein on whether to support Zionist political candidates were part of growing regionalization in inner-Jewish political issues.

It was such differences between local and regional attitudes and experiences that defined the Centralverein's patchwork rejection of Eastern European Jewry and Zionism in the Weimar Republic. As a result of this PLVB election, the Liberal Party won 68 seats while the Zionist Jewish People's Party won 32. Additionally, the Conservative Party won 17 and Religious Middle Party won seven seats as well.[74] This meant that while the liberals had a distinct majority,

[70] Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge*, 90.

[71] WL MF Doc 55/13/399, January 13, 1925.

[72] Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge*, 91.

[73] WL MF Doc 55/51/1917, February 17, 1925.

[74] Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge*, 94.

they were also forced to form a coalition with either the Zionists or the conservatives to reach the two-thirds majority necessary for many decisions.

Following the PLVB election and the divisive nature of the Centralverein's anti-Zionist resolution, the C.V. central office decided to remain neutral on Zionism in future PLVB elections to avoid similar inner-Jewish conflicts.[75] As evidenced by the 1925 PLVB election, taking a strong position against Zionism became increasingly more contentious as the decade progressed. Its declared impartiality in community elections in Prussia was a strategic choice. In asserting its neutrality, the Centralverein could still claim that it represented all German-Jewish interests regardless of political or religious affiliation. Such neutrality was also an indirect result of the rapid regionalization that the Centralverein underwent in the first half of the decade; respecting intra-communal political and religious diversity within the Jewish community also necessitated extending neutrality to the question of Palestine as well. While the central office made its rejection of the ZVfD and Jewish nationalism no secret, it never officially banned C.V. members from supporting certain Zionist projects or candidates.

While the Centralverein demanded unity both in the rejection of antisemitism and in the defense of German-Jewish identity, it allowed for freedom of opinion in other less critical matters. Prior to the mid 1920s, the Centralverein's central adage "unity in necessary things, freedom in doubtful things, compassion in all things" referred primarily to freedom of political choice and religious practice.[76] By the mid-1920s, however, the growing number of non-nationalist Zionist projects in Palestine along with differing local and regional opinions on the

[75] Foerder, *Die Stellung des Centralvereins zu den innerjüdischen Fragen*, 31.

[76] Other references to this phrase can be found here: Alphonse Levy, "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 1 (July 1895), 41. This quote is also mentioned in "Vereinsnachrichten," *Im deutschen Reich* 14 (May 1908), 321, Ibid., 16 (February 1910), 118, "Ludwig Holländers letzter Weg," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 15 (February 13, 1936), 141, and WL MF Doc 55/27/1170, p. 40.

matter made the central office reconsider whether its previous stark repudiation of Zionism was still compatible with its decentralized and regionalized network of branches and members. Allowing such ambiguity further expanded the ways in which nuanced forms of Jewishness could be articulated within the Centralverein's synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness. It was, in a sense, the first time that this Germanness and Jewishness was allowed to also incorporate ties to an international community, which reflected a further shift toward more intra-community cooperation.

Though the Centralverein did not become more accepting of the ZVfD or any organization affiliated with Jewish nationalism, its local, regional, and national spheres were, in practice, divided on whether their members could support Jewish efforts in Palestine. The likelihood of executive board members supporting a Jewish organization either in Palestine or with ties to the Zionist movement was also geographically divided. Leaders from the Centralverein's eastern regional branches, such as Felix Goldmann in Leipzig, Ludwig Foerder in Breslau, and Leo Baeck, who was originally from Oppeln, were more likely to be on the board of or openly support Keren Hayesod and the Jewish Agency for Palestine (JAFP).[77] As the fundraising agency for Palestine and the official representative of Jewish interests in Palestine, respectively, both organizations' inclusion of non-Zionists in their leadership increased German-Jewish financial and organizational support for projects affiliated with the Zionist movement.[78]

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[77] There were two Keren Hayesod organizations active in Germany starting in 1922, the Zionist *Verein Palästina Grundfonds, Keren Hayessod, e.V.* and a newly established politically neutral German association *Keren Hayessod (jüdisches Palästinawerk) e.V.* The former association was based in London and established in 1920, while the latter was established two years later and expanded non-Zionist participation in fundraising for Palestine in Germany without supporting the Zionist Jewish nationalist project as such. For more on the development and debates surrounding the expansion of Keren Hayesod in Germany, see Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 88-105.

[78] Jehuda Reinharz, ed., *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus 1882-1933* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981), 420-1 and Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe*, 88-90.

Growing support for these projects within non-Zionist Jewish circles bolstered concerns within the Centralverein's local, regional, and national leadership that German Jews were contributing to their own alienation by supporting organizations that lent credence to claims of Jewish foreignness in Germany.[79]

Despite these misgivings, both C.V. members and local, regional and national leadership often disagreed on how best to approach these new Zionist-affiliated projects. While LVB Free State of Saxony's chairman Felix Goldmann was highly supportive of non-nationalist Zionist projects, OG Chemnitz's members and leadership vehemently repudiated any ties to the ZVfD. This rejection was so considerable that the last name of the chairman of OG Chemnitz – Georg Mecklenburg – became synonymous with the Centralverein's harshest anti-Zionist resolution in 1928.[80] Proposed at the Centralverein's general assembly in February 1928, the so-called Mecklenburg resolution declared that "the C.V. must confront Zionist positions more efficiently than ever before" and "assert the Centralverein's notion of Germanness and Jewishness in the public sphere."[81] Since Zionist propaganda supported a growing divide between Germans and Jews, this resolution reasserted that the Centralverein's conviction that Zionism was antithetical to the synthesized German and Jewish identity. Though this resolution repudiated Jewish nationalism, it did not ban support for non-nationalist Zionist organizations like the JAFP, Keren

[79] Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe*, 97-8.

[80] OG Chemnitz remained one of the loudest opponents of Zionism in the C.V. during the late 1920s. Its rejection of German Zionism was so uncompromising, that it proposed seceding from the C.V. if it failed to find other regional or local branches that shared its position on Zionism. WL MF Doc 55/29/1289, November 29, 1927.

[81] "Der Weg des C.V.: Dritter Verhandlungstag," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 7 (February 17, 1928), 103. Another representative from Chemnitz proposed adding an additional statement to the resolution to declare membership in the PPK as incompatible with the C.V. This recommendation was not accepted by the general assembly as the C.V. continued to support those Jewish organizations in Palestine that were solely social relief organizations. This was a continuation of the earlier C.V. resolution proposed in 1921 and ratified in 1926. WL MF Doc 456/110, Hauptgeschäftsstelle des Central-Vereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, "Material zur Frage der Jewish Agency," (1929), 19.

Hayesod, or the Pro-Palästina Komitee (PPK), which was primarily focused on supporting Jewish settlers in the Yishuv.[82] This ambiguity allowed local and regional branches as well as individual members to make their own decisions on how to articulate different understandings of Jewishness and Germanness.

Not all local branches were willing to grant their members freedom of choice when it came to supporting Zionist projects in Palestine. A year after the Mecklenburg Resolution, OG Chemnitz passed another resolution that effectively banned dual membership in the Centralverein and the JAFP.[83] When it submitted this resolution to Berlin, OG Chemnitz also included a supplementary petition. If the executive board disagreed with this proposed ban, OG Chemnitz argued that it should leave the ultimate decision on the JAFP up to the local branches

[82] "Der Weg des C.V.: Dritter Verhandlungstag," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 7 (February 17, 1928), 103. The PPK was nitially established in the summer of 1918 before being reconstituted by Kurt Blumenfeld in November 1926 after Germany joined the League of Nations. As such, the C.V. remained neutral toward the PPK and allowed its members and leadership to decide whether they wanted to join or not. Its main goal was to inform the German public about Jewish settlements in Palestine and, in doing so, to show that it was an effective means for "the economic and cultural development of the Orient, for propagating German economic relationships" as well as encouraging "reconciliation between peoples." Along with leading German Zionists like Chaim Weizmann, Albert Einstein, and Kurt Blumenfeld, prominent non-Jews joined the PPK's presidium and honorary committees, the most notable of whom was Konrad Adenauer – then the mayor of Cologne – who joined the organization in December 1926. Other prominent members of the PPK were Prussian Minister of Culture Carl Heinrich Becker, Prime Minister of Prussia Otto Braun, President of the Reichstag Paul Löbe, Diplomat Albrecht Graf von Bernstorff, and State Secretary Hermann Pünder. It was these men's participation in the PPK and Zentrum Reichstag Delegate Ludwig Kaas' argument that the PPK supported Jewish settlement work and not the establishment of a Jewish state that motivated Adenauer to join in December 1926. WL MF Doc 55/29/1289, April 3, 1928. "Streng vertraulicher Bericht über den Stand der Pro-Palästina-Comité-Aktion, November 1926," in *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus 1882-1933,* ed. Jehuda Reinharz (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1981), 374-5, "Das neue deutsche 'Pro Palästina'-Komitee," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 5 (December 24, 1926), 684, Konrad Adenauer, "Adenauer an das Deutsche Komitee 'Pro-Palästina', Berlin, January 20, 1927," in *Konrad Adenauer 1917-1933: Dokumente aus den Kölner Jahren*, ed. Günther Schulz (Köln: SH-Verlag, 2007), 266, and Ludwig Kaas, "Ludwig Kaas an Adenauer, December 20, 1926," in *Konrad Adenauer 1917-1933*, 265.

[83] WL MF Doc 55/53/1932, January 15, 1929. The Jewish Agency for Palestine was established as a result of Article 4 of the British Mandate for Palestine in 1922, which stated that the British must recognize and consult with a Jewish Agency as the representative organization of Zionists in Palestine. In 1929, the JAFP expanded to include international non-Zionists, who then represented half of the JAFP's delegates. WL MF Doc 456/110, Hauptgeschäftsstelle des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, *Material zur Frage der Jewish Agency* (1929), 6 and 23 and Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe*, 64.

at the next assembly of delegates instead of making a unilateral decision in Berlin.[84] This push to have a large policy decision made in the local sphere reflected not only a desire to circumvent a sweeping decision from the central office, but also to provide local and regional branches the autonomy to determine the regulations that would directly affect their members and their communities.

In response to OG Chemnitz's resolution, seven other local branches throughout Germany submitted resolutions of their own. Of these seven, OG Hannover was the only local branch that shared Chemnitz's opposition to cooperating with or participating in the JAFP.[85] The other six resolutions were in favor of not taking an official position either way.[86] OG Nuremberg's resolution stated that, while its members were free to participate in the JAFP, it expected that they were doing so solely to help Jews in need and not for the sake of Jewish nationalism.[87] Similarly, the chairman of OG Krefeld, Kurt Alexander, argued that, since the Centralverein could never truly prevent anyone from supporting the JAFP, banning dual membership would only push such individuals away from the Centralverein.[88] Felix Goldmann also took a neutral position toward the JAFP, stating that since the Centralverein was focused on supporting Jews in Germany, what Jewish organizations did outside of Germany was beyond its

[84] WL MF Doc 55/53/1932, January 15, 1929.

[85] Ibid., March 22, 1929.

[86] It was not just the local and regional representatives who supported a more neutral position; Brodnitz, Holländer, and Eva Jungmann also took a similar position in their shared resolution. Ibid., 164.

[87] Ibid., 158. OG Aachen's chairman Karl Löwenstein also took a similar position, stating that he hoped that those C.V. members who did join JAFP would use their membership to prevent Jewish-nationalist goals from permeating its work in Palestine. Ibid., 160

[88] Ibid., p. 159 and Avraham Barkai, "*Wehr Dich!": Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens 1893-1938* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), 161.

authority.[89] Such insistence on regional input showed the extent to which the regional and local sphere had become decisive factors in the decision-making process at the national level. By the mid-1920s, respecting and accommodating regionalized forms of communal identity largely took precedence over a single uncompromising position despite the Mecklenburg resolution.

Instead of accepting any of the above resolutions, the C.V. executive board released its own resolution on dual membership in the JAFP in March 1929. Rather than banning or allowing membership directly, it refrained from making any statement that would prevent C.V. members from deciding to join the JAFP on their own.[90] Maintaining ambiguity reflected a considerable degree of decentralization within a centralized decision-making process. While it was the executive board and not the assembly of delegates that decided the Centralverein's position on participating in the JAFP, the influx of resolutions from the local and regional sphere meant that the executive board utilized considerable regional input. In making a decision that respected regional and local differentiation, the central office acknowledged that the position on Zionism was a personal matter. In softening its critique of the German Zionist movement and its affiliated organizations, the C.V. created more space for local participation, community representation, and for a more comprehensive and united expression of both Jewishness and Germanness at the local, regional, and national levels.

4.2. The Katholische Aktion and the V.V.'s Reorganization

While the Centralverein's local and regional networks proliferated in the mid-1920s, the Volksverein continued struggling with gaining and retaining members. Its ongoing financial and

[89] WL MF Doc 55/53/1932, p. 162

[90] "Die Hauptvorstandssitzung des Centralvereins," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 8 (February 29, 1929), 160.

administrative difficulties were part of a larger "associational fatigue" in German Catholicism resulting from the rapid proliferation of Catholic organizations. By the mid-1920s there were over 240 Catholic associations in Germany with some of them encompassing hundreds of thousands of members with numerous local branches and affiliated organizations.[91] Such Catholic associations dominated the social lives of their members; like almost all Germans at the time, most Catholics were members of multiple associations at once. By the end of the Weimar Republic, such associationalization was a common factor of German life.

Multiple memberships and competition for both dues and attendance were factors with which each association had to contend, and their success was contingent on how members prioritized their time and the cause each association represented. The expansion of Catholic associations meant that the Volksverein now faced considerable competition for members and their dues. Engaging members despite competition from other associations was a common issue in Germany at the time, and one that the Centralverein occasionally faced as well. In August 1925, for example, the Centralverein reported that OG Delmenhorst had been completely inactive since its chairman was on the board of so many other associations that he had simply chosen to ignore the Centralverein[92] While only a small number of local branches in the Centralverein stagnated due to an over-saturation of associational life, this was the norm rather than the exception for the Volksverein.

[91] In 1933, the Central Association for Young Women had over 780,000 members, the Catholic Association for Young Men had 365,000, and the Catholic German Women's Association had 200,000. Heinz Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken, 1918-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992), 128-9 and Klaus Große Kracht, *Die Stunde der Laien? Katholische Aktion in Deutschland im europäischen Kontext 1920-1960* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016), 124 and 129.

[92] WL MF Doc 55/18/696, August 19, 1925.

This associational fatigue was not unique to German Catholicism; Protestant associations also complained of a similar problem among their members in the Weimar Republic. Much like in Catholicism, many of the social and political factors that had motivated Protestants to join confessional associations in the German Empire were no longer viable in the Weimar Republic, particularly with the fall of the Protestant Prussian-dominated monarchy. These issues were compounded by the effects of economic crisis in the early 1920s, a shared lack of vision for the future within the associations themselves, and the fact that separation of Church and State weakened Protestantism's ability to unify its adherents.[93] These conditions hindered religious associational work and weakened existing community structures in a slow but continuous process throughout the 1920s. Unlike both Protestants and Catholics, German Jews were increasingly involved in Jewish community organizations as a combined result of growing antisemitism and rising interest in Jewish life and tradition. Both of these factors meant that German Jews largely did not experience the same fatigue despite a similar expansion and plurality of associational life.

The organizational and financial difficulties that plagued the Volksverein during the early 1920s worsened in the second half of the decade. After reaching a postwar peak in 1921 with almost 696,000 members, the Volksverein had declined to just over 516,000 members in 1925, to 417,000 members in 1928, and, finally, to just over 330,000 by 1933.[94] Additionally, fewer than two-thirds of V.V. members paid their dues in the mid-to-late 1920s.[95] Most of its members and

[93] Siegfried Hermle and Harry Oelke, ed., *Kirchliche Zeitgeschicte_evangelisch*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt GmbH, 2019), 114-5.

[94] Gotthard Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933: Geschichte, Bedeutung, Untergang* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), 424 and 427. While the V.V.'s membership decline slowed in 1928 compared to 1926 and 1927, the central office reported an overall loss of members in all regions except Württemberg and Baden. BArch, R 8115/I/10, 259 and 268.

[95] BArch, R 8115/I/10, 261 and Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland,* 427.

local branches were in areas with particularly high unemployment, which made paying even the nominal yearly dues a hardship.[96]

V.V. members in Bavaria were considerably more likely to pay their dues than those in other regions in Germany; of the twenty-six dioceses in the Volksverein, five of the six highest-paying were located in Bavaria, while towns in Silesia, Saxony, Hessen, and the Palatinate paid the least.[97] It was often the smaller regions with fewer overall members that were more likely to pay their dues in full. These numbers demonstrated that, while the Volksverein remained dependent on the larger communities for their dues, it was not necessarily in these places that membership was strongest or most active. This was due to the fact that smaller rural communities generally remained more closely tied to the Church and religious practice, which in turn meant that they were more likely to remain paying members of Catholic associations like the Volksverein as well.

After its financial situation improved briefly after the end of hyperinflation, the large percent of V.V. members who did not pay their dues meant that the Volksverein's financial deficit worsened throughout the 1920s. By early 1928, the Volksverein's fiscal troubles had increased to the point where the Volksverein could no longer afford to remain self-sufficient. The financial issues came to a head in the summer of that year when director Wilhelm Hohn's extensive mismanagement of V.V. funds came to light in a report to the executive board

[96] Unlike in the early 1920s when the V.V. frequently adjusted its membership dues to reflect changing economic conditions, dues remained 2M from 1926 to 1931, only dropping to 1.80M in 1932. Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland*, 427.

[97] Ibid., 428-9. While the percentage of dues paid was low, dioceses in Rhineland and Westphalia remained leaders in total dues raised due to their comparatively large number of overall members. This meant that while diocese Cologne over 73,000 members – eleven percent more than the V.V.'s second largest diocese in Paderborn – only 49 percent of its members paid their dues in 1927 compared to over 63 percent in Paderborn. In 1927, there was only one diocese in Germany in which the V.V. represented more than four percent of local German Catholics, and even there it was only 4.17 percent. Ibid.

detailing the Volksverein's multi-million Mark debt. Hohn, who had been the V.V. chairman since 1922 and head of the V.V.-Verlag since its establishment in 1905, was forced to resign both positions in October 1928.[98] Not only did the V.V.-Verlag and its affiliated organizations lose a total of around three million Marks by 1928, Hohn also took on high-interest loans of over two million Marks for the Volksverein as a whole.[99] While German-Catholic cohesion in social and political matters declined during the mid-1920s, Catholic life consolidated further under the bishops and the clergy.

While the lay associations established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries struggled to remain relevant, new Church-oriented associations typified expansion in the late 1920s.[100] These new associations were primarily run by clergy and other individuals closely associated with the Church, and greatly restricted the influence of lay leaders. This associational shift changed the nature of organized Catholic life while retaining its highly centralized and top-down administrative structure.

In October 1928, the V.V. leadership decided that the Volksverein would join the Katholische Aktion (Catholic Action) and cooperate more closely with both the episcopacy and other Catholic associations.[101] Established by Pope Pius XI in the early 1920s, the Katholische Aktion began operating in Germany in 1928 and brought formerly lay Catholic organizations

[98] BArch, R 8115/I/40, p. 224, BArch, R 8115/I/30, p. 5.and Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland*, 31 and 191-3.

[99] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland*, 191-3.

[100] Alongside the Katholische Aktion, the latter also included new mass organizations for women and Catholic youth, both of which had been largely ignored in the expansion of lay professional and worker organizations in the prior decades. Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken*, 123.

[101] Ibid., 225.

under the influence of the Church.[102] Slow to gain support in Germany due to the already-prominent lay associational network, the Katholische Aktion's introduction in 1928 raised a new debate among Catholic associations as to what it meant to be affiliated with such clerical organization. To help smooth over these concerns, the papal nuncio to Prussia Eugenio Pacelli issued a statement promising that existing Catholic associations in Germany would not lose their own "individual character or independent activity" by becoming part of the Katholische Aktion.[103] This agreement with the Volksverein was the result of multiple months of discussions and negotiations and not a direct response to Hohn's resignation. Nevertheless, it was the Volksverein's sizeable deficit that forced its leadership to seek external help.

In 1928, the Volksverein completely reversed its position on cooperating with the episcopacy in Germany. Unlike the *Gewerkschaftsstreit* in the early 1900s when the Volksverein had done everything in its power to prevent the bishops from gaining any official influence within the association, the Volksverein now expressly sought its help and support.[104] Doing so was a large step toward the consolidation of associational influence that had previously belonged to lay Catholic associations under the Church's authority. While the V.V. central office and regional secretariats were allowed to continue operating as they had done before the October 1928 agreement, V.V. local branches and their *Vertrauensleute* lost what little autonomy they had.[105] This recognition of the national and regional levels and not the local branches had little effect on how V.V. members participated in the association. Instead, it reinforced the local

[102] Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken*, 133-4.

[103] Nina Kogler, *GeschlechterGeschichte der Katholischen Aktion im Austrofaschismus: Diskurse - Strukturen – Relationen* (Vienna/Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2014), 54.

[104] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland,* 123.

[105] BArch, R 8115/I/186, p. 25.

spheres longstanding dependence on the central office and, to a lesser extent, the regional offices as well.

As part of this new agreement, the Volksverein became responsible for combating rising secularism and attacks against religion in German society by educating German Catholics on these topics. The relative ease with which the Volksverein integrated into the Katholische Aktion was due to the fact that both the Volksverein and the Katholische Aktion wanted to support the "unified concentration of German Catholics" in order to strengthen the "Christian order in society."[106] This meant providing German Catholics with the political, social, and religious tools and knowledge to assert Catholic interests in the public sphere. As such, this statement was a return to the Volksverein's German Empire-era dedication to preparing German Catholics for their own self-defense and the beginning of a rapid increase of V.V. programming in the last years of the Weimar Republic. This it did while also retaining the consolidated leadership structure in Mönchengladbach. The agreement between the Volksverein and the Katholische Aktion did not redistribute any responsibility toward the local or regional sphere. Instead, it rearranged authority at the very top of organized German Catholicism. As such, organized Catholic life became more strictly centralized under Church influence during this period.

Despite Hohn's financial mismanagement and the Volksverein's resulting incorporation into the Katholische Aktion, the V.V. executive board did not reduce the next chairman's responsibilities just because the position had previously been "in unfortunate hands."[107] In 1929, Johannes Joseph van der Velden was named the Volksverein's new chairman. Under van der Velden's leadership, the Volksverein's programming and educational work expanded and

[106] BArch, R 8115/I/11, p. 52.

[107] BArch, R 8115/I/40, p. 224.

became more assertive.[108] In August 1929, van der Velden wrote an article in the Zentrum newspaper *Germania* about the Volksverein's goals for the future. Here he stated that "The hour demands unity, and the V.V. wants to help achieve it."[109] With declining religious practice in large cities and reduced participation due to the oversaturation of Catholic associational life van der Velden considered the Volksverein and the Katholische Aktion responsible for restoring the same level unity in the Catholic milieu that it had experienced in the German Empire.[110] To do so, the Volksverein began cooperating closely with many of the organizations that it had helped establish, such as the Catholic worker movement.[111] Though this increased cooperation was effective in keeping the Volksverein at the forefront of Catholic associational life, it did little to improve its number of paying members. This was largely due to the fact that German Catholics did not necessarily see the need to join the Volksverein itself when they could join or remain members of other affiliated associations instead.[112]

Alongside its agreement with the Katholische Aktion, this period was also a turning point in the Volksverein's relationship to the Zentrum party. Under V.V. executive board member August Pieper's considerable influence, the Zentrum agreed to work in a "renewed symbiosis" with the Volksverein in educational matters in 1928.[113] The Zentrum's desire to work closer together with the Volksverein was also a response to the parliamentary elections in May of that

[108] BArch, R 8115/I/90, p. 55.

[109] BArch, R 8115/I/11, p. 150.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid and Kracht, *Die Stunde der Laien?*, 144.

[112] BArch, R 8115/I/192, p. 73.

[113] Karsten Ruppert, *Im Dienst am Staat vom Weimar: das Zentrum als regierende Partei in der Weimarer Demokratie 1923-1930.* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1992), 332.

year. In this election, the Zentrum party lost almost nine percent of the Catholic vote, which meant that less than half of German Catholics had voted for the Zentrum.[114] Historian Karsten Ruppert attributed this considerable decrease to voters' disappointment in the Zentrum's political decisions, the rapidly declining support of Catholic farmers, as well as a lack of educational and propaganda work.[115] As lacking education was part of the reason for the Zentrum's poor performance among Catholics in 1928, Zentrum leadership decided that it needed to increase its community engagement and political education among German Catholics. To do so, the Zentrum agreed to cooperate with the Volksverein so that it could educate community leaders and speakers.[116] Both its affiliation to the Katholische Aktion and the Zentrum's subsidization of its community education, the Volksverein's financial situation stabilized briefly in the year prior to the start of the Great Depression.

The decline of lay Catholic life of the previous decade slowed starting in 1929. German-Catholic society and politics were generally better off in the early 1930s than they had been in the 1920s; the Zentrum was the only pro-democracy party that had retained its voters after 1930, while the relationships between the clergy, Catholic associations, the Zentrum, and the bishops were largely harmonious.[117] With the Zentrum and Catholic associations working closer with the Church than ever before and German-Catholics' continued high mass attendance, Catholic leadership was largely optimistic about the future of Catholic life in Germany. Despite this

[114] Ruppert, *Im Dienst am Staat vom Weimar*, 332.

[115] Ibid., 325-7.

[116] Heinrich Brauns summarized the shift in the relationship between the two in stating that "The party believed that it could manage without the V.V. It cannot, however, afford systematic educational work; its secretariats are occupied with dealing with practical issues." This meant that the two began working together along similar divisions as they had during the German Empire. BArch, R 8115/I/28, p. 163.

[117] Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken,* 175.

confidence, the end of the Weimar coalition after the parliamentary election in 1930 and the NSDAP's growing political success brought new challenges for organized Catholic life at the start of the decade.

4.3. The C.V. and V.V. in the Early 1930s

On March 30, 1930, Zentrum politician Heinrich Brüning replaced SPD politician Hermann Müller as German Chancellor.[118] Four months after Brüning's appointment, he asked President Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag after a majority of delegates voted against granting Brüning the right to use emergency decrees to govern.[119] As these decrees effectively circumvented the Reichstag, this dissolution put an end to the Reichstag's role as the primary legislative body in the Weimar Republic.[120] This reliance on emergency decree instead of democratic legislation signaled the beginning of the end of the Weimar democratic parliamentary system. By centering this power in the office of the chancellor and stripping the Reichstag of its legislative duties, these emergency decrees removed possible legal hurdles necessary for overthrowing Weimar's democratic political system.[121]

As a result of Hindenburg's dissolution of the Reichstag, another federal election was called for September 1930. A month before the election, C.V. syndic Ludwig Holländer held a lecture in Nuremberg titled "The Seriousness of our Position." In his talk, Holländer stated that

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[118] Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 514.

[119] Gerhard Schulz, *Von Brüning zu Hitler: Der Wandel des politischen Systems in Deutschland 1930–1933* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 117.

[120] In 1930 the Reichstag ratified 98 laws, while in 1931 that number dropped to 34, and then in 1932 to only five. Comparatively, while there were only five emergency decrees issued in 1930, in 1931 that number jumped to 44 and in 1932 to 66. Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 519.

[121] Schulz, *Von Brüning zu Hitler*, 15f.

"The generation before us was a generation of forging ahead; their worries were those of advancement, ours have become the worries of decline."[122] While German Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were concerned with protecting integration and creating a synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness, German Jews were now deeply concerned by an acute threat to their emancipation. Despite this bleak evaluation, Holländer argued that it was German Jewry's responsibility not to fall victim to pessimism, but rather to keep fighting for their rights and voting for political parties that rejected antisemitism.[123]

To assert German-Jewish interests better and to encourage all Jews to vote, the C.V. and ZVfD formed a temporary election committee along with representatives the UOBB, the RjF, and the Berlin Jewish community in August 1930. The goal of this commission was to prepare German Jewry for the upcoming election, with each participating association agreeing to conduct fundraising to support shared political programming ahead of the election.[124] The consolidation of five Jewish organizations in the interest of mobilizing all German Jews showed the growing centralization of Jewish community organizations in response to the Nazi threat.

The committee was disbanded two days after the election. It was not that the committee had been so successful in preventing antisemitic candidates from being elected, but rather because the Centralverein and ZVfD accused each other of misusing the committee. While the Centralverein accused the ZVfD of lacking initiative and financial investment in the commission's work, the ZVfD claimed that the Centralverein had used the commission both for

[122] WL MF Doc 55/25/1080, August 28, 1930.

[123] Ibid. There were a number of parties and political organizations that continued to do so into the early 1930s as well. The SPD, the Zentrum, and the Reichsbanner all used C.V. materials in their pamphlets against the NSDAP in the early 1930s as well. WL MF Doc 338/W366, Friedrich Brodnitz, *Leistung und Kritik: eine Untersuchung über den C-V und seine Arbeit* (Berlin: Lichtwitz, 1931), 33.

[124] Brodnitz, *Leistung und Kritik*, 9.

financial gain and for manipulating the ZVfD into recognizing the Centralverein as the leading organization in political work.[125] The short-lived nature of this commission showed that, while German-Jewish organizations were increasingly open to working together, tensions between the C.V. and the ZVfD at the national levels prevented long term political cooperation within German Jewry.

In the parliamentary election in September 1930, the NSDAP received over eighteen percent of the vote – up from 2.6 percent in 1928.[126] Now the second largest party behind the SPD, the NSDAP went from twelve seats in the Reichstag in 1928 to 107 in 1930.[127] The NSDAP's electoral success was in many ways a direct response to the financial crisis, which included shutting down banks, as well as rapidly rising unemployment.[128] These crises shook confidence in the German state and, in doing so, strengthened and radicalized the right while also drawing voters away from more moderate political parties.[129]

The political and economic crises in 1930 were a turning point for the Centralverein's local and regional engagement. Prior to 1930, C.V. leadership was fully confident in the Weimar state's ability and willingness to protect its minorities. As Brüning's political and legislative power increased through his use of emergency decrees, Jewish leadership in Berlin made multiple attempts to convince Brüning to condemn antisemitism and rising attacks against Jews

[125] Arnold Paucker, *Der jüdische Abwehrkampf: gegen Antisemitismus und Nationalsozialismus in den letzten Jahren der Weimarer Republik* (Hamburg: Leibnitzer-Verlag, 1968), 42-4.

[126] Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 518.

[127] Schulz, *Von Brüning zu Hitler*, 122.

[128] Tobias Straumann, *1931: Debt, Crisis, and the Rise of Hitler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), xxi.

[129] Larry Eugene Jones, *Hitler vs. Hindenburg: The 1932 Presidential Elections and the End of the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 2.

publicly in a speech.[130] Brüning was initially receptive to the idea, and both the Centralverein and the ZVfD drafted short passages for him to use in a potential speech on the topic. Nevertheless, Brüning never made any such public statement condemning antisemitism or speaking out on behalf of German Jews.[131] This failure to obtain an official condemnation of antisemitism meant that the Centralverein's defense work remained dependent on intervention in the local and regional spheres instead.

This lack of solidarity from the state also strengthened German Jews' growing conviction that they could rely on no one else but themselves to fight against rising antisemitism and National Socialism. In February 1931, the local C.V. branch in Wanne-Eickel sent out an invitation to the entire local Jewish community to attend an upcoming discussion evening on the importance and necessity of conducting self-defense. In the invitation, the local chairman stated "Do not believe that others will help us. We are on our own and we will perish if we do not fight with all our strength and with all means possible."[132] In inviting all members of the Jewish community and not just C.V. members, the local branch hoped to convince all local Jews to stand up, assert themselves and defend their rights in the public sphere. Despite the dire political situation, this demand for self-reliance and intensified defense work in the local sphere also showed German Jews' determination to defend their rights and integration. The German-Jewish community's return to Jewishness over the past decade meant that, unlike in the German Empire, the Centralverein could rely on German Jews in local communities to assert their synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness publicly.

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[130] Paucker, *Der jüdische Abwehrkampf*, 130.

[131] Ibid., 219-20.

[132] WL MF Doc 55/14/441, February 18, 1931.

In response to these political and economic crises in the early 1930s, the Centralverein intensified its focus on education and community engagement.[133] It was for this reason that some of the Centralverein's most popular lecture topics only became common starting in the early 1930s. While lectures that discussed the topic 'Future' were held occasionally throughout the 1920s, it was not until 1931 onward that this theme became frequent. Additionally, lectures with the word 'Emancipation' in the title were predominantly held from 1931 onward as well. These topics reflected growing concerns that the future of German-Jewish emancipation and integration was no longer guaranteed.

The introduction of economic boycotts and the NSDAP's growing political success all contributed to a sense that the fight for equal rights would be a long one.[134] In March 1931, Arthur Schweriner held the lecture "Our Situation, Our Future" in three communities, and Margarethe Edelheim and Werner Cahnmann held a lecture together in Munich titled "The Emancipation Crisis" in December 1931.[135] These topics reflected German Jews' rising concern over the future of Jewish life in a society increasingly sympathetic to Nazi racial and antisemitic ideology. These lectures also provided C.V. members and other German-Jewish attendees with a space in which to discuss their worries about the future. The increasing frequency with which these topics were discussed reflected growing anxiety and insecurity about the future of German-Jewish life and emancipation in Germany in the early 1930s.[136]

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[133] WL MF Doc 55/34/1478, p. 3.

[134] Hans Reichmann, "Bilanz," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 11 (January 1, 1932), 2.

[135] WL MF Doc, 55/26/1131, p. 28, 55/29/1289, p. 102, 55/28/1237, p. 14, 55/29/1283, December 11, 1931.

[136] It was for this reason, that lectures focusing on the concept of 'Fate' were held almost exclusively after 1933 and with increasing frequency after 1935.

Lectures were occasionally also a means to encourage cooperation within the Jewish community itself. In January 1932, the chairman of OG Würzburg in Bavaria wrote to Alfred Hirschberg in the central office to ask for material for an upcoming lecture he was giving on the Centralverein's work. This was part of an ongoing three-part lecture series on Jewish associations in Würzburg. The week before the Centralverein's lecture, a representative from the ZVfD had spoken about their branch's work in the local community, while a representative from the orthodox Agudas Yisroel was scheduled to do the same the next week.[137] Such shared community programming was infrequent, but it nevertheless reflected the growing trend toward cooperation between Jewish associations the local sphere in the early 1930s.

As part of this increased local engagement, the Centralverein expanded its programming and organization for women after 1930 as well. German Jewish women were already highly involved in the associational life of their towns and cities as members of organizations like the Jüdischer Frauenbund, women's groups in the ZVfD, as well as non-denominational local social and school groups. The Centralverein's women groups and their lectures hoped to help support these women by teaching them how to defend German-Jewish causes in a concise and educated manner.[138]

The topics of lectures given to women's groups were chosen to prepare liberal German-Jewish women to engage in discussions and debates with both Jewish and non-Jewish women. Lectures often focused on current political and social topics such as "Society, Fashion, and Antisemitism," "From the German Empire to the Third Reich," "The Home and the State," and

[137] WL MF Doc 55/45/1774, January 1, 1932.

[138] WL MF Doc 55/34/1465, October 10, 1931.

"Antisemitism in Schools."[139] These topics highlighted women's central role both in the family as well as in the German political and economic system. As Marion Kaplan demonstrated, Jewish women remained the ones responsible for perpetuating Jewish identity in the home and for educating the new generations of Jewish youth on their civil and religious identities.[140]By discussing women's role in the home in a public setting, these lectures blurred boundaries between the public and private sphere and shaped how German-Jewish identity was taught to the next generation. In teaching women about these topics, the central office sought to prepare German-Jewish women to combat antisemitism in schools and among non-Jewish women and their shared associations.[141]

By 1931, the success of such educational outreach to women in effectively repudiating antisemitism was so successful in LVB Hannover, Linksrhein, Rhineland-Westphalia, Saxony, and East Prussia that LVB Hessen-Nassau also asked to begin conducting such programming in October 1931 for the first time.[142] By mid-1931, the C.V. had women's groups in 22 towns and cities throughout Germany.[143] While there was a relatively equal number of groups in eastern and western cities, there were no women's branches in Baden, Württemberg, or Bavaria. This was not due to a lack of interest in organizing programming for women in these regions, however. In 1931, Else Dormitzer in Nuremberg wrote a letter to Lise Leibholz in Berlin stating

[139] WL MF Doc 55/19/710, October 14, 1926, 55/34/1462, December 6, 1931, 55/34/1478, p. 4, and 55/34/1457, October 15, 1931.

[140] Marion Kaplan, *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 238.

[141] WL MF Doc 55/34/1478, p. 4.

[142] WL MF Doc 55/34/1465, October 10, 1931.

[143] These were in Berlin, Chemnitz, Danzig, Düsseldorf, Elberfeld, Emden, Essen, Göttingen, Halberstadt, Hamburg, Hannover, Harburg, Hildesheim, Dresden, Leipzig, Cologne, Königsberg, Krefeld, Lübeck, Minden, Plauen, and Stettin. WL MF Doc 55/34/1478, p. 4.

that, since speakers frequently held lectures for women throughout LVB Bavaria, there was no need for a separate women's group there as well.[144] The chairman of LVB Baden made a similar argument a year later, stating that, since women were on the board of all larger local branches in the region, there was no need for any specialized group just for women.[145]

The decision on when and where to establish women's groups was a highly practical and pragmatic one. Even when women were not in leadership positions, the C.V. central office often encouraged women to organize tailored programming in their towns or cities instead. Such programming avoided the financial and organizational hassle of establishing a new branch while also being more inclusive of German-Jewish women.[146] By prioritizing the form of support that was most effective in the particular community, the Centralverein's programming for women became more locally and regionally specialized as well. Nevertheless, as Christina Goldmann argued, the Centralverein's support for women lacked the priority given to other aspects of the Centralverein's programming.[147] While women were not the main focus of the Centralverein's local engagement, the increase in targeted programming and groups for women reflected the local and regional branches' growing focus on including all members of the Jewish community in its educational defense work.

Unlike the Centralverein, the Volksverein did not expand its outreach to Catholic women or provide them with tailored programming. Though women were allowed to attend lectures and

[144] WL MF Doc 55/34/1458, November 16, 1931.

[145] WL MF Doc 55/34/1461, September 29, 1932. Additionally, three of the four cities with women's groups in 1931 also had women on the local branch's executive board. WL MF Doc 55/34/1468, p. 51-2.

[146] This was the case in September 1931, when Lise Leibholz wrote to the LVB Province Saxony to inform them that the Centralverein's priority was encouraging women to participate more directly through attending tailored lectures and taking leadership roles in their local branches. WL MF Doc 55/34/1463, September 17, 1931.

[147] Christina Goldmann, *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in Rheinland und Westfalen 1903–1938* (PhD Dissertation: Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, 2006) 202.

act as representatives in local branches, they were not allowed to hold leadership positions beyond the local sphere. The small number of female speakers that were active in the Volksverein's local sphere were also largely restricted to speaking on specialized topics specifically for women such as "Women and Family" or "Women in Public Life" instead of more general political and economic topics they discussed in the Centralverein.[148] Alongside such limited lecture topics, the Volksverein's regional offices also rarely held educational courses for women; of the 22 multi-lecture courses held by the Volksverein's Berlin regional office throughout the region between April 1931 and March 1932, only one was organized for women.[149]

Despite this lack of outreach to women, the Volksverein expanded its educational programming for men and Catholic youth considerably in the early 1930s. This was made possible by the stabilization that resulted from van der Velden's appointment as V.V. chairman and its 1928 agreements with both the Katholische Aktion and the Zentrum. With renewed financial and administrative support, the Volksverein began expanding its educational community programming at a pace that it had not seen since before the war in response to the political and economic crises in the early 1930.[150] While the Volksverein continued rejecting any political party that opposed religion in public life – particularly the NSDAP and the KPD – its educational defense work focused almost exclusively on the former during the early 1930s. In response to the NSDAP's growing political success, the Volksverein's educational work and

[148] BArch, R 8115/I/89, p. 8. In the regional branch for Berlin, for example, there were three women listed as potential speakers out of a list of sixty individuals, and all were restricted solely to "women's questions." BArch, R 8115/I/90, p. 10.

[149] Held over the course of three weeks, the three lectures in this course focused on the topics "Woman and Family," "Woman and Career," and "The Woman in Public Life."[149] These three lectures were each held by different women as well. BArch, R 8115/I/89, p. 8.

[150] Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken*, 123 and BArch, R 8115/I/90, p. 55.

publications became more uncompromising and assertive in their rhetoric against political radicalism on both the right and the left.

Aside from their political lectures, regional V.V. speakers often had a list of topics on which they were willing to speak. In late 1931, the regional secretary in Dortmund provided local parish with a list of thirteen possible lectures. These ranged from Volksverein-specific topics like "Windthorst and his Work" and "Volksverein and the Present Day," to political topics like "Can a Catholic be a Socialist?," "National Socialism," and "Communism and Bolshevism." Additionally, other lectures also dealt with religious themes such as "The Spirit of the Lord's Prayer in the Community" and "The Pastor's Family."[151] The political topics addressed the threat of radical movements directly, while the religious lectures were intended to strengthen Catholic consensus and, in turn, ensure that the attendees voted for the Zentrum. Such a wide range of topics allowed for the local priest to choose the most relevant or interesting topic for his community while also granting the local level a limited extent of decentralized decision-making. These lectures were both part of the Volksverein's larger fight against political radicalism as well as its ongoing struggle to retain support at the local level.

Alongside such lectures, regional offices also held multi-day courses for their members as well. The regional offices in both Frankfurt and Berlin organized such courses focused on political topics such as "The State and the Economy," "Political Radicalism," and "The Constitution."[152] Meanwhile, the courses held in the regional branch in Altenhundem – a small town in the similarly small Olpe district in Westphalia – focused instead on labor issues and

[151] BArch, R 8115/I/102, p. 251.

[152] BArch, R 8115/I/89, pp. 2 and 7.

insurance.[153] The difference in topics between the more prominent regional branches in Frankfurt and Berlin and the smaller secretariat in Altenhundem reflected the different economic and professional concerns of the respective regions. That the lectures in Altenhundem focused on immediate financial and work-related concerns while those in Berlin and Frankfurt discussed broader political topics reflected key differences both in the subjects the local speakers were prepared to discuss as well as the interests of the respective audiences. In a small town like Altenhundem, residents were more working class than those in large cities like Berlin and Frankfurt. Not only did this shape local interests, it also had a considerable effect on the profession of the speakers themselves. This was especially the case in Berlin, where Zentrum politicians were more likely to conduct programming on behalf of the Volksverein.

While the Volksverein conducted some courses in local communities, most of its educational and leadership courses were based in the Volksverein-Haus in Paderborn during the late 1920s. This changed following the economic crisis of the early 1930s, which forced the central office to relocate these courses back to Mönchengladbach.[154] This move was made in time for the twenty-sixth political economics und civic leadership course, which took place between July 15 and August 15, 1932. While there was no charge for attending the course itself, room and board cost 70M, and was due on arrival.[155] At a time when many V.V. members could not afford to pay their 1.8M yearly dues, attending such courses in Mönchengladbach was too expensive for most workers to afford. While particularly targeted at young Catholic workers, the

[153] BArch, R 8115/I/89, p. 6. This district had just shy of 60,000 residents in 1925, compared to Berlin and Frankfurt, which had over four million and 467,000 residents in the respective cities alone. Statistisches Reichsamt, "Volkszählung," vol. 401, 367 and 386.

[154] BArch, R 8115/I/50, p. 37.

[155] Ibid., p. 36.

costs were prohibitive for those who did not receive support from their unions. In educating the few so that they could guide the many, these courses in Paderborn and, from 1932 onward, in Mönchengladbach, perpetuated and widened networks of centralized leadership and expanded class differences within German Catholic society.

Despite continued leadership training, the largest factor that prevented the Volksverein from gaining local support was the worsening effects of the Great Depression. With rising unemployment, most German Catholics' financial situation was as bad if not worse than it was during hyperinflation in 1923.[156] While some Catholics ended their V.V. membership as a result, others simply stopped paying without formally leaving the association. In October 1931, the V.V. representative and local parish priest from the Württemberg village of Leinstetten wrote to the central office asking them to stop sending him Volksverein's publications. According to this priest, local V.V. members did not have any money for "such things" since they already had to spend so much on alcohol and tobacco.[157] This refusal to prioritize membership in the Volksverein was not unique to this village; while the Volksverein collected around sixty percent of dues owed in 1928, it was only able to raise around 46 percent in 1932.[158]

Even those regions whose leadership remained determined to continue supporting the Volksverein were unable to meet their financial needs in the early 1930s. This was the case in Dortmund, where local clerics established a Volksverein secretariat in February 1931. The clerics intended to use the new office to better manage the reorganization of the Volksverein in the region and to expand the number of lectures and assemblies held.[159] To support this new

[156] Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 260.

[157] BArch, R 8115/I/58, p. 186.

[158] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland*, 427.

[159] BArch, R 8115/I/102, p. 291.

office, clerics in Dortmund agreed to pay one Pfennig per member to offset lost dues caused by the central office's inability to support the regional office.[160] These clerics' decision to fund the V.V. regional branch on their own showed a considerable amount of community engagement. The fact that it was necessary, however, also revealed the dire situation of the Volksverein's local and regional networks in a region in which it had previously been popular.

Despite local clergy's decision to provide financial support for the Volksverein in Dortmund, the economic depression and the banking crisis in July 1931 worsened the economic situation so considerably that the office in Dortmund had a deficit of over 600RM in 1931 alone.[161] While such strong support from clergy had been enough to bolster the Volksverein in the local sphere in earlier instances, it was no longer enough to compensate for the effects of this global economic crisis. The clergy in Dortmund were the only ones to make such an agreement for their respective region, and this was not enough to make a notable difference in maintaining the Volksverein's regional networks. The Volksverein's main hurdle in the local sphere throughout the late Weimar Republic was, as Wrede wrote in English in an otherwise German letter, "not measures, but men."[162] While the Volksverein had the publications, lectures, and courses to conduct intensive community outreach and engagement, it lacked the representatives and local support to do so.

By the end of the Weimar Republic, the Volksverein had 325,394 members – 52 percent fewer than in 1922 and around sixty percent fewer compared to its peak in 1914.[163] While the

[160] BArch, R 8115/I/102, pp. 58 and 115.

[161] Ibid.

[162] BArch, R 8115/I/90, p. 45.

[163] BArch, R 8115/I/14, p. 216 and Georg Schoelen, *Bibliographisch-historisches Handbuch des Volksvereins für das Katholische Deutschland* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1982), 14-15.

Volksverein's membership declined continuously after the early 1920s, its number of local branches expanded slightly in the early 1930s. The Volksverein had 4380 local branches and fourteen regional offices in 1932, which was 280 more local branches than in 1925 and four more regional offices than in 1924.[164] This was part of the broader expansion of Catholic associational life after its consolidation under the Katholische Aktion in 1928. Additionally, the Volksverein's expanded civic and political education increased its engagement in local Catholic communities throughout Germany. In doing so, the Volksverein's speakers and courses had to navigate regional differentiation in organizing their programming. In 1931, the head of the V.V. central office's department for apologetics, Konrad Algermissen, wrote in guidelines for its speakers that "[The V.V.] counts all [Catholics] in its ranks, from the serious and tough Northern Germans, the lively Rhinelanders, the sensible Swabians, to the dashing Alemannen, the brave Bavarians and the sentimental Silesians."[165] Such regional attitudes and identities shaped the ways in which German Catholics participated in associational life. Despite different regional characteristics, the Volksverein claimed that all were united in the same shared goals for defending and representing Catholic interests, even if they needed to be reminded of this after the difficulties of the previous decade.[166]

In the wake of the growing economic crisis and rising NSDAP political success, V.V. leadership viewed the Germany's future with a mixture of concern and determination. In 1931, Wrede wrote: "God knows how we will emerge from this misery and hardship. Nevertheless, if

[164] BArch, R 8115/I/14, p. 216 and BArch, R 8115/I/9, pp. 365 and 375. This was a six percent increase of local branches and a 29 percent increase in regional branches over the same period.

[165] BArch, R 8115/I/192, p. 87.

[166] Ibid.

anywhere or at any time it was the Volksverein's moment, then it is now. *Carpe diem*."[167] Wrede's determination for the Volksverein to seize the day was part of the Volksverein's larger dedication to combat National Socialism and ensure that German Catholics did not turn to political radicalism. Unlike against the Volksverein's other political opponents, the NSDAP's rapid political success necessitated an immediate and calculated response.

Despite the Volksverein's growing opposition to the NSDAP, some areas that had previously had very strong connections to both the Volksverein and the Zentrum – particularly the Middle Rhine and Mosel regions – now began showing some interest in voting for the NSDAP. Wrede blamed this support on the fact that the Zentrum had largely ignored the region since it assumed all the residents would vote for them anyways, the residents' religious adherence meant they were largely unreceptive to the Volksverein's message, and because "where the wine grows, one often drinks away what little reason one has […]."[168] To counteract these problems, Wrede recommended that both the Zentrum and the Volksverein reevaluate and intensify how they engaged in these communities.[169] While Wrede was not optimistic that these measures could prevent the NSDAP from gaining support from Catholics in the region, he also argued that that the Volksverein needed to step out of the Zentrum's shadows and assert itself against the threats of political radicalism to make such prevention possible.[170] Despite this incident, the NSDAP generally struggled to gain support in Catholic regions in the west and south. Catholic support for the NSDAP did grow gradually elsewhere as their support for the

[167] BArch, R 8115/I/90, p. 45.

[168] Ibid., p. 44.

[169] Ibid., p. 45.

[170] Ibid.

Zentrum declined in the early 1930s, and came predominantly from men, as around eighty percent of Catholic women continued voting for the Zentrum.[171]

To combat the dangers that National Socialism posed to Catholics and Christians as a whole, the Volksverein's regional office in Berlin called for more intensive education on political and social topics as well as more extensive social support for German Catholics.[172] The Catholic Bishop Conference in Fulda's condemnation of the NSDAP bolstered such calls for more intensive work within Catholic circles. In 1931 the Conference released statements forbidding Catholic clergy or their affiliates from joining the NSDAP.[173] Additionally, many leading bishops released statements of their own condemning the Nazi Party and forbidding Catholics from lending their support. These statements rejected the NSDAP's racial politics, its denial of the Old Testament, and its use of violence. Alongside this clear rejection, the bishops based their opposition to National Socialism on the same criteria as their repudiation of other anti-religious political movements like socialism and communism.[174] In citing largely religious criteria, the bishops left a certain level of ambiguity regarding its position on other aspects of Nazi politics, most notably in regards to antisemitism. The Volksverein's anti-Nazi stance conformed entirely to the Church and organized Catholic leadership in Germany at the time. In

[171] Goldmann, *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in Rheinland und Westfalen*, 103, Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 354, and John O'Loughlin, Colin Flint and Luc Anselin, "The Geography of the Nazi Vote: Context, Confession, and Class in the Reichstag Election of 1930," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84 (September 1994), 366. As was the case in the early 1920s, when more women remained members of the V.V., this gendered difference in Zentrum support was based on women's more enduring ties to traditional religious practice and their tendency to vote for more conservative parties. Brian Peterson, "The Politics of Working-Class Women in the Weimar Republic," *Central European History* 10 (June 1977), 89 and Kaplan, *Jewish Daily Life in Germany*, 238.

[172] BArch, R 8115/I/90, p. 25.

[173] Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken,* 165.

[174] Ibid.

trying to prevent Catholics from voting for any party other than the Zentrum, the Volksverein also expanded the bishop's rejection of the NSDAP to include protecting the Weimar system.

To counteract these trends and to encourage Catholic voters to remain loyal to the Zentrum party, the Volksverein emphasized that "To be German is, in our opinion, to remain loyal to the oath made to the constitution. To be German is to love freedom, to also respect the freedom of one's opponents, and to not let acts of violence go unpunished. […] For us, German character and Christianity are a sacred obligation."[175] This expression of a synthesis of Germanness and Christianity was comparatively new to the Volksverein and reflected not a shift in beliefs, but rather in the need to re-emphasize the correlation between political and religious principles. The Nazis' racial and nationalist understandings of religion and frequent anti-Christian rhetoric attacked organized Catholicism and rejected its determination to assert Christian religion in the public sphere. This meant that, for the first time since the Kulturkampf in the 1870s, German Catholics were faced with a direct political challenge to what it meant to be a Catholic in Germany. Unlike during the Kulturkampf, when the Catholic community drew further together into its insular milieu, the German Catholic community during the early 1930s was more divided than ever before. It was in response to this growing pressure that the Volksverein began emphasizing German Catholics' combined religious and civic identities. While German Jews were consistently forced to consider their religious and civic identities due to ongoing antisemitism and fights for integration, it was not until the early 1930s that the German Catholic lay leadership deemed it necessary to articulate what it meant to have a hyphenated German and Catholic identity.

[175] BArch, R 8115/I/188, p. 9.

A hyphenated or synthesized identity was less a concern for German Catholics than it was for German Jews due largely to the fact that it was not attacked or challenged near the extent to which antisemites targeted German Jews. As David Ellenson argued, this hyphenated identity worked "not because it is logical. It works because one lives it. The synthesis inheres in the doing."[176] For both German Jews and German Catholics, the balance between these identities and navigating this liminal space within the hyphen was an often-instinctive part of how the communities responded to crisis. In Catholic regions like the Rhineland and Bavaria, German Catholics felt little need to emphasize or discuss their German-Catholic identities since Catholic culture was such a core part of local culture. Such regional majority status also simplified negotiating religious minority status at the national level and allowed for not needing to discuss such a hyphenated identity directly.

4.3.1. The *Entscheidungsjahr* 1932

Growing political and economic crises made 1932 into what the Centralverein called "the year of decision."[177] Following the banking crisis in the summer of 1931, the economic situation in Germany worsened rapidly as well.[178] As Hans-Ulrich Wehler argued, one of the main reasons why this political and economic crisis was different in the early 1930s than it was in the early 1920s was that unlike in the early 1920s, there were now political parties who were willing and

[176] David Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and the Creation of Modern Jewish Orthodoxy* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1990), 169.

[177] WL MF Doc 338/W368, Landesverband Niederschlesien des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, ed., *Das Jahr der Entscheidung*, 1.

[178] Albrecht Ritschl, *Deutschlands Krise und Konjunktur 1924-1934: Binnenkonjunktur, Auslandsverschuldung und Reparationsproblem zwischen Dawes-Plan und Transfersperre* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag GmbH, 2002), 12.

able to dismantle the existing democratic system.[179] The immediacy of these threats meant that minority religious associations like the Centralverein and the Volksverein were faced with an even more dire need for internal cohesion and collective action.

There were three large national elections in 1932. The first was the presidential election in March 1932, when incumbent president Paul von Hindenburg ran against Adolf Hitler. In the campaigning prior to this election, one V.V. representative from Erkelenz held twenty lectures in the region, all of which rejected Hitler and promoted Hindenburg.[180] This lecture tour was part of a large surge in local programming in March 1932 that was specifically targeted at ensuring that local V.V. members voted for Hindenburg in the election. As Hindenburg was not affiliated with the Zentrum party, this political campaigning was part of the Volksverein's larger attempt to combat rising Nazi influence among German Catholics.

Two months after Hindenburg's success in the presidential election, he appointed Franz von Papen as chancellor after Brüning's resignation in late May 1932. As a result of von Papen's failure to form a feasible coalition in the Reichstag, a federal election was also called for July of that year. With over 84 percent voter turnout – the highest in any federal election during the Weimar Republic – the NSDAP attained over 37 percent of the vote, receiving notable support from former SPD and KPD supporters for the first time.[181] As German workers had remained consistent SPD supporters since the 1890s, their growing support for the NSDAP showed a further fragmentation of Germany's social and political framework, particularly at the local level.

[179] Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 408.

[180] BArch, R 8115/I/198, p. 2.

[181] Schulz, *Von Brüning zu Hitler*, 940.

Both the Centralverein and the Volksverein expanded their focus on political topics in the run-up to the two federal elections in 1932. They published articles and pamphlets urging members to vote and emphasizing the need for religious groups to stand up for themselves, their rights, and their belonging. Prior to the July 1932 Reichstag election, the Volksverein drafted an appeal to its members, stating: "Never tolerate being denigrated to second class citizens, as once was the case. Protect the rights of your religious convictions and your church. Catholic people, give the Zentrum your vote!"[182] These warnings were a direct reference to the persecution that Catholics experienced during the Kulturkampf over forty years before. While the Volksverein had frequently used such references during the German Empire to mobilize German Catholics against the SPD, it had ceased doing so after the Zentrum formed a coalition with the SPD in 1919. In reminding German Catholics about the persecution they experienced during the Kulturkampf, the Volksverein emphasized the new and acute danger that the NSDAP posed to Catholic life and identity. While the NSDAP gained considerable support in certain areas in western Germany with a lower Catholic population, they were unable to make notable inroads in areas in which the Zentrum had a history of being the strongest party or where Catholics were the majority of the population.[183] As the majority of Catholics in towns and cities in these Catholic regions remained firmly rooted in the more insular Catholic milieu, both the Church's and the Zentrum party's repudiation of the NSDAP helped preserve considerable Catholic unity against national socialism through early 1933.

The same year as the Volksverein published its appeal, the Centralverein's regional branch in Lower Silesia published a brochure highlighting how the Centralverein was fighting

[182] Underlining in original. BArch, R 8115/I/188, p. 30.

[183] Schulz, *Von Brüning zu Hitler*, 942.

the NSDAP politically, in the press, and in different parts of society. In this brochure, LVB Lower Silesia detailed the Centralverein's ongoing defense and educational work in the fight against the NSDAP and völkisch antisemitism. It closed the brochure with the statement: "Fight with us, you fight for yourself! We are small in number but strong in intention, unshaken in the awareness of our rights and in the courage of self-assertiveness."[184] Coming from a region in which the NSDAP won over forty percent of the electoral districts in the July election, this call for self-defense was targeted not just at C.V. members, but at German Jews as a whole.[185] While both the Volksverein and the Centralverein appealed to individual members to do their duty to their respective religious community, the Centralverein's brochure was a regionally-based appeal for a cohesive nation-wide response against the NSDAP. Just as all German Jews were responsible for fighting antisemitism, it was the local and regional branches that led the Centralverein's campaigns against the NSDAP in the 1932 elections.

While the NSDAP failed to gain much Catholic support in the 1930 federal election, this began changing slowly in 1932. To prevent as much of this shift as possible, the Volksverein's appeals to German Catholics to oppose the NSDAP and its political radicalism grew increasingly more urgent.[186] Though German Catholics did not vote for the NSDAP in large numbers, the Zentrum party itself joined in a short-lived coalition with the NSDAP in the summer of 1932. This coalition was the result of extensive negotiations between the two parties and arose from the Zentrum and the NSDAP's shared rejection of von Papen's cabinet as well as the Zentrum's

[184] WL MF Doc 338/W368, Landesverband Niederschlesien des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, ed., *Das Jahr der Entscheidung*, 15.

[185] Schulz, *Von Brüning zu Hitler*, 943.

[186] Of the 25 electoral districts with either a Catholic or Protestant majority of over seventy percent, the NSDAP was highly successful in the 19 Protestant districts and unsuccessful in the six Catholic ones. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 442.

determination to build a government that was based on a "clear parliamentary majority."[187] The brief coalition ended when Hindenburg dissolved the Reichstag in September 1932 to prevent the Reichstag from issuing a vote of no confidence against von Papen after his failure to manage the growing economic crisis. As a result, new elections were called for early November. The NSDAP lost 34 seats, the SPD twelve, and the Zentrum five, with the KPD and DNVP both gaining seats in double-digit numbers.[188] This election also put an end to a possible coalition between the Zentrum and the NSDAP.

The negotiations between the Zentrum and NSDAP in the summer of 1932 had no effect on the Volksverein's attempts to repudiate the NSDAP, and even the Centralverein did not see a reason to change its position on the Zentrum as a result. After the November elections, Ludwig Holländer wrote in the *Central-Verein Zeitung* that "The fact that there were negotiations between the Zentrum and the National Socialists has never meant that there was a reason for Jewish voters to reject the Zentrum. Those with political experience know that political tactics require horse trading."[189] By labeling the Zentrum's coalition with the NSDAP as political maneuvering and not antisemitism, the C.V. leadership in Berlin felt that Jewish voters could continue to support the Zentrum in good conscience. While the Centralverein's leadership did not agree with this aspect of the Zentrum's politics, it retained its official political neutrality and did not attempt to discourage German-Jewish voters from supporting the Zentrum. This impartiality was predicated on the same rationale as its non-committal position on supporting the JAFP; since the central office was convinced that the Zentrum's actions came from wanting to

[187] Schulz, *Von Brüning zu Hitler*, 970-1.

[188] Ibid., 1004-5.

[189] Ludwig Holländer, "Nach dem 6. November," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 11 (November 11, 1932), 461.

protect Weimar parliamentary democracy, it declined to take an assertive position and either ban or encourage support.

Prior to the early 1930s, the C.V. central office prioritized defense work in regions that were particularly "endangered" by antisemitism.[190] Such regional classification ended in 1932 since all regions in Germany were now acutely threatened by antisemitism.[191] Nevertheless, the way in which local Jewish communities experienced this rising threat still often depended on the size of community in which they lived. Jews in smaller communities feared that the economic boycotts of Jewish businesses and products was an acute threat to their survival.[192] Described in the *CVZ* as a "dry pogrom," these boycotts threatened smaller communities more than those in larger cities, as it was there that German Jews were more economically dependent on their non-Jewish neighbors.[193] The fact that the type of threat differed according to the size of the non-Jewish community meant that a decentralized defense was as much if not more necessary at the end of the Weimar Republic than ever before. Decentralized defense enabled local and regional branches to respond to local boycotts or other instances of anti-Jewish persecution directly and to tailor their programming to address these concerns.

Even after the NSDAP's considerable successes in the two federal elections in 1932, C.V. leadership remained optimistic that public educational work could reduce political support for the NSDAP among German voters. Part of this outreach occurred in the press; the C.V. released

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[190] WL MF Doc 55/21/833, February 5, 1932.

[191] Ibid.

[192] WL MF Doc 55/21/833, February 5, 1932. While consumers boycotting Jewish businesses and refusing Jews service was not a new phenomenon in the Weimar Republic, it did not begin to threaten Jewish livelihood until the early 1930s. For more on the different types and methods of boycotts against Jews during the Weimar Republic, see Gideon Reuveni, "Boycott, Economic Rationality, and Jewish Consumers in Interwar Germany," in *Consumer Culture and the Making of Modern Jewish Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[193] Eugen Jacobi, "Die völkische Gefahr am Rhein," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 6 (April 8, 1927), 180.

new books and pamphlets that addressed current issues, such as the book *Wir deutschen Juden.* Published in 1932, this book aimed to educate non-Jews on the 1600 years of German-Jewish history and Jewish contributions to German culture. In doing so, it hoped to convince non-Jews "through facts" that antisemitic claims about Jews were entirely false.[194] It was with this goal in mind that the authors closed the book with the following appeal:

> But we know that this method of reasonable argumentation is unpopular today […] since the irrational and unreasonable are intentionally valued over reason. […] If all our factual evidence did not fully convince you, then we ask for you to believe what we feel – there is only one fatherland for us German Jews, and that is Germany! [195]

In acknowledging that appealing to emotion was more effective than presenting facts, the Centralverein made a deep departure from all of its defense work prior to this point. This was the result of the Centralverein's growing recognition that combating the Nazis' populist politics also necessitated a different and less academic kind of defense work. While the book *Wir deutschen Juden* consisted almost entirely of facts, figures, and rational arguments, this statement was also a call for mutual understanding and acceptance based solely on shared dedication to Germanness. Despite a brief appeal to sentiment, this book reflected the Centralverein's abiding belief that education and outreach were enough to put an end to worsening antisemitism and rising support for the NSDAP.

It was the Jewish communities and individual German Jews who were the ones that needed to engage with antisemites, to teach non-Jews about German-Jewishness, and to assert Jewishness in the public sphere. OG Leipzig even encouraged its members to carry a copy of *Wir*

[194] Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (ed.), *Wir deutschen Juden, 321-1932* (Berlin: 1932), 46.

[195] Ibid.

deutschen Juden with them so that they could use it as a reference to either prove or dispute certain topics when debating them with non-Jews.[196] The publication of such a book both centralized defense in the central office while also decentralizing responsibility for its implementation to the local branches and individual members.

While the Centralverein's publications and local branches provided a framework for such outreach to non-Jews, it was part of a larger communal effort that increasingly went beyond the limits of the association itself. Growing cooperation within the German-Jewish community was predicated on the belief that positive change was only possible if German Jews conducted enough outreach with non-Jewish members of their communities. The belief that it was up to the German-Jewish minority to engage with the non-Jewish majority necessarily placed the local sphere at the center of the fight for Jewish belonging in the early 1930s. In mid-December 1932, Ludwig Holländer stated in a letter that "One could not expect that the majority would come to the minority. The minority must find the way to the majority and educate them."[197] By integrating Jewishness with regionalized and localized forms of Germanness, the local and regional networks that the Centralverein developed over the course of the late German Empire and throughout the Weimar Republic were well suited to conduct such outreach to non-Jewish Germans.

Holländer's statement that minorities were responsible for educating the majority also reflected a shifting understanding of the political and social situation in Germany late 1932. With the democratic system all but entirely dismantled and both radical right and left-wing violence on the rise, German Jews and other religious minority groups were faced with the growing

[196] WL MF Doc 55/10/260, September 2, 1932.

[197] WL MF Doc 55/16/536, December 13, 1932.

realization that they could no longer rely on the state or politics for support or protection. For the regional and local branches in the Centralverein, this meant mobilizing not only all of its members, but all German Jews in all communities in which they lived. As the threat of antisemitism and national socialism became more pervasive, the networks of local, regional, and national Jewish community life began cooperating more closely than ever before.

While the Centralverein's regional and local networks of programming and outreach were ultimately unable to prevent the NSDAP's political success, they did expand networks of Jewish identity and self-pride in the face of this growing threat. As the political situation in the Weimar Republic deteriorated, local and regional branches played an increasingly vital role in supporting and strengthening the German-Jewish community. Educational programming and community outreach strengthened communal unity and asserted Jewish belonging in the local public sphere.

By late 1932, both German-Jewish and German-Catholic associational life had become increasingly united in their respective fights against the effects of rising National Socialism. The immediate and alarming effects of concurrently rising antisemitism and growing support for the National Socialism drove German Jews to act in a far more forceful manner than Catholics. While the NSDAP also opposed Catholicism, the NSDAP also could not afford to isolate the Zentrum or the BVP fully, since doing so would deprive the NSDAP of a possible source of much-needed political legitimacy. While the Volksverein and the Fulda Bishop's Conference resolutely rejected national socialism and forbid Catholics from supporting it, there was less urgency in these appeals than those from the Centralverein.

While both German-Catholic and German-Jewish associational life became increasingly more cohesive during the early 1930s, where such consolidation occurred differed considerably

between the two communities. The Volksverein's incorporation into the more Church-oriented Catholic organizational life in the late 1920s and early 1930s occurred almost entirely at the national level. In comparison, with the C.V. central office taking increasingly neutral positions on Jewish political concerns, it was the Centralverein's local branches that were at the forefront of this process in Jewish communities. That this process was so highly centralized for German Catholics and decentralized in German Jewry was a continued reflection of inherent differences in how these two minority religious groups understood leadership and synthesized identity. That the Volksverein did not thematize hyphenated national and religious identities until 1932 did not mean that German Catholics did not integrate the two, but rather that it had remained a private topic until the Nazis forced the discussion into the public sphere. In contrast, German Jews had been forced to defend the coexistence of Germanness and Jewishness since emancipation. Asserting a synthesized German-Jewish identity was also a strategy that C.V. leadership utilized to protect and assert Jewish integration and German Jews' rights to express the plurality of religious, civic, and regional identities in German society.

The driving force behind the German-Jewish community's growing cohesion and its uncompromising defense of synthesized Germanness and Jewishness was its resolute fight against antisemitism. Lectures, assemblies, and outreach within the local and regional sphere created and strengthened spaces within which German Jews could engage with and promote an active, independent, and positive connection to Judaism and Jewishness. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Centralverein's local and regional branches developed networks predicated on outreach and education. The Centralverein's call for exhaustive self-defense and political resistance to National Socialism at the local and regional sphere in the early 1930s helped

establish organizational foundations for the consolidation of Jewish relief and resistance efforts in the early Nazi period.

Chapter Five
"The Day is Short, the Task is Great": The End of Religious Minority Associational Life in Nazi Germany, 1933-1938

On January 30, 1933, German president Paul von Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler as German chancellor. In the days following Hitler's appointment as chancellor, other high-ranking Nazi figures were also granted leading government positions and the Nazis gained rapid control of the German state. Four days after Hitler's appointment as chancellor, Hindenburg issued the decree for the "protection of the German people," which greatly restricted freedom of press and the freedom of assembly and was countersigned by Hitler.[1] With this first measure, the Nazis began consolidating their power and eliminating political opposition.

While the Nazi state was highly totalitarian with power firmly centralized under Adolf Hitler, the different government offices and departments themselves often operated in a highly decentralized manner. This meant that their interpretations of anti-Jewish legislation often varied considerably, with regional and local offices implementing these policies unevenly and, occasionally, in a contradictory manner. The Nazi seizure of power was also highly regionalized, with the Bavarian government resisting such a takeover prior to the March parliamentary elections.[2]

The concurrent strict centralization and broader regionalization of Nazi administration was defined by tensions between and within the different spheres. As Mack Walker argued, Nazism was "a political expression of a tortured synthesis between hometownsmen and the general estate" and, as such, was a "revolutionary effort to accommodate community with

[1] Thomas Raithel and Irene Strenge, "Die Reichstagsbrandverordnung: Grundlegung der Diktatur mit den Instrumenten des Weimarer Ausnahmezustands," *Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte* 48 (July 2000), 428.

[2] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 199.

modernity on a national scale."[3] In doing so, it placed a new emphasis on the consolidation of local and regional interests in the national political sphere. The Nazis' exploitation of the local sphere and its hatred of outsiders made such integration of the local community in the national polity dangerous for those who did not fit into the Nazis racialized idea of the German polity. This decline of regionalism under Nazi rule also put an end to a nuanced or individualized understanding of Germanness as well.

Reframing local spaces as the core of national society and politics progressively eliminated the spaces within which minorities could participate in German society and culture. Under the Nazi regime, Germanness became highly centralized in the state even as it was recentered to embrace the concept of local community life. As Celia Applegate argued, "Nazi rule intensified the nationalism of Heimat sentiment and destroyed the autonomy of local associational life" by removing all of its previous "provincial particularities."[4] As German Jews were progressively excluded from German society, they were not allowed to participate in this process and retained their regionalized German identities. Instead of striving to embrace the Germanness of majority society, German Jews adhered to the cultural and liberal German identity of the Weimar era.

The interplay between political parties and associations that had characterized German society and politics since the 1890s ended by the summer of 1933. As part of this so-called *Gleichschaltung* process, associations were either integrated into the Nazi system or forcibly disbanded. In doing so, the Nazis dismantled the associational structures that had defined considerable parts of German society since the late nineteenth century. In recentering

[3] Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971), 428.

[4] Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 18.

associational life in the national sphere, the Nazis attempted to dismantle previous networks of community and reshape them to fit their nationalized concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft.* This they did through a dual process of violent exclusion of political opponents and promise of inclusion for non-Jewish Germans.[5] This meant that those groups considered "undesirables" such as Jews, communists, social democrats, freemasons, and Catholics were systematically and often violently excluded from society as a way to further unite the rest of German society under the Nazi state.[6] The Nazis forcibly dissolved any organization or association that it considered dangerous to its hegemony. This threatened the existence of many associations that had previously been anti-NSDAP or supportive of the Weimar democratic system.

Jewish associations were the one main exception. Reflecting on this moment of forced dissolutions and enforced conformity, former chairman of LVB Rhineland and the Centralverein's last chairman Ernst Herzfeld wrote that "Of all of the Nazi's potential enemies, the only ones to survive the period of the 'adjustment' of public life were the Jewish associations and organizations."[7] While many political Catholic associations were forcibly dissolved, Jewish ones were largely allowed to continue operating through the first five years of the Nazi regime. While subject to considerable Gestapo surveillance and often highly restricted in the topics they were allowed to discuss, Jewish associations like the Centralverein were allowed to retain their

[5] Michael Wildt, *Hitler's* Volksgemeinschaft *and the Dynamics of Racial Exclusion: Violence Against Jews in Provincial Germany, 1919–1939*, trans. Bernard Heise (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 84.

[6] Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 198.

[7] Ernst Herzfeld, *Meine letzten Jahren in Deutschland: 1933-1938,* Final version, 49 + 2 + 3 pages. Undated. Box: 1, Folder: 1. ME 287b. Leo Baeck Institute, 17.

regional and local networks and, in most cases, continue providing local support until November 1938.[8]

This chapter argues that the Centralverein's decentralization in the local and regional spheres in the Weimar Republic enabled it to navigate and adapt to the growing restrictions and persecution under the Nazi regime. With their considerable autonomy, the Centralverein's regional branches helped provide German Jews with the support and guidance necessary to withstand growing professional and social persecution. As such, these branches were agents of resistance even when defending Germanness was no longer possible. Much like in the Centralverein itself, Jewish life during this period was increasingly dictated from above while being concurrently adapted from below. This meant that the continued centralization and consolidation of Jewish associational life was kept in balance by an expansive and dedicated network of local and regional offices, representatives, and community members.

The Centralverein's unwavering dedication to strengthening Jewish life in Germany, particularly at the regional and local level, was itself a form of defense work against a regime that sought the complete elimination of all Jews. The Centralverein adapted its conceptualization of Germanness and Jewishness to suit the new demands of the Nazi period better and strengthen the Jewish community. This meant that, while they could no longer defend Jewishness in public, the Centralverein's local and regional branches continued working to support and strengthen German-Jewishness within the Jewish community itself. In doing so, they subverted Nazi attempts to annihilate German-Jewish identity. While German Jews were increasingly barred

[8] This was not to encourage emigration; as Herzfeld pointed out, if this had been the case then the ZVfD would have been allowed to remain but the C.V. and RjF – who did not initially support emigration – would have been banned as well. Herzfeld, *Meine letzten Jahren in Deutschland: 1933-1938*, 17.

from public life, German-Jewish associations adapted and expanded existing networks to encourage solidarity and mutual support within the community itself.

From late 1933 onward, Germanness and Jewishness were no longer conceived as synthesized identities. Rather, as the 1930s progressed, the Centralverein increasingly argued that German Jews possessed one unified and innate identity of German-Jewishness. This change was more than semantics; it represented a fundamental reconsideration of what it meant to be a Jew in and from Germany. In channeling their worry and fear over the future into engagement in the present, the Centralverein's local and regional branches and their members remained proactive agents in asserting their belonging and identities even as they became increasingly powerless. While this could not prevent the advance of Nazi persecution, it also showed that German-Jewish history prior to 1938 was not lachrymose or passive, but proactive and community-oriented.

While most Jewish associations were allowed to remain active until late 1938, there was always the threat that the Gestapo would force them to disband without prior notice. Herzfeld characterized this continued existence as living under "the sword of Damocles that could suddenly fall […] with lethal results."[9] The Centralverein was able to navigate this complete lack of security for almost six years. For the first time since its establishment, the Centralverein did not participate in majority associational trends; while non-Jewish associations were forcibly integrated into a new system, Jewish associations were allowed to retain the regionalization and decentralization they had developed during the Weimar Republic. This full break from majority associational life was enforced from the outside and was not a reflection of the Centralverein's leadership or members' changing attitudes toward social participation and belonging.

[9] Herzfeld, *Meine letzten Jahren in Deutschland: 1933-1938*, 18.

Nevertheless, this meant that the Centralverein and Jewish associations as a whole were the sole bearers of associational continuity from the German Empire and the Weimar Republic.

The Centralverein's regional branches adapted existing regional branches and created new local networks to better respond to the shifting parameters and restrictions of Jewish life in Nazi Germany. The extensive local and regional community networks that C.V. members developed during the Weimar Republic enabled the association to begin adapting how they supported German Jews starting in mid-1933. The coordination of shared efforts with other Jewish organizations was increasingly centralized in Berlin. Nevertheless, the implementation of these efforts meant that the Centralverein and Jewish community's work as a whole decentralized even further to provide Jews with financial assistance, professional and economic advising, education, and cultural entertainment. While the Nazis systematically stripped German-Jewishness from the public sphere during the 1930s, these networks within the Jewish community meant that many local and regional branches continued operating in Jewish communities throughout Germany until its dissolution in 1938.

5.1. The Consolidation of Nazi Power

The day after Hitler's appointment as chancellor on January 30, 1933, the Centralverein released an English-language statement to the international press in which it stated that,

> We naturally view with the greatest distrust a cabinet in which the Nazis occupy the weightiest positions. We await its acts. […] We are convinced that none will dare to infringe upon our constitutional rights. Any attempt to the contrary will meet with our most determined position for the defense of our constitutional rights. Our slogan today is: 'We calmly wait.'[10]

[10] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Central Union Will Fight for Rights of Jews" *Jewish Daily Bulletin* (January 31, 1933), 4.

This cautious position was based on three convictions pertaining to the political system, the first of which was that President Paul von Hindenburg would act as "a pillar of peace" and restrain Hitler and the NSDAP from instituting overtly anti-Jewish policies.[11] Additionally, German Jews were also hopeful that bureaucratic continuity in state ministries would preserve the constitution and that the NDSAP would be forced to form a coalition with the Zentrum if it wanted a parliamentary majority.[12] These three factors contributed to the initial belief that Nazi influence on the German state would remain limited and that the Reichstag would remain a legitimate political and legislative body.[13] These hopes quickly proved unfounded.

In mid-February, the C.V. executive board met to discuss what Hitler's appointment as chancellor would mean for the future of its work. The main questions raised in this meeting were how to understand the government's proposed anti-Jewish legislation, how to take the necessary measures to protect German Jewry, whether the Centralverein should engage in campaigning before the March elections, and, if so, in what capacity.[14] The issue at the heart of this meeting was not whether the Nazis were a threat to German-Jewish integration, but to what extent this was the case and how best to respond. Prior to April 1933, the C.V. leadership was hopeful that it

[11] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Central Union Will Fight for Rights of Jews," 4.

[12] While most civil servants who retained their positions did nothing to withstand Nazi measures, there were a few individuals – one in the Reich Chancellery and an undetermined number in the Gestapo's so-called Jewish Department – who provided information to Reichmann and the C.V. on Nazi plans against German Jews, The Gestapo representatives would also occasionally call or tip off the C.V. ahead of an attempted arrest by other Gestapo agents. Michael Wildt, "Einleitung," in *Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude: Novemberpogrom und KZ Sachsenhausen 1937 bis 1939*, by Hans Reichmann, ed. Michael Wildt (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1998), 12 and Johann Nicolai, *"Seid mutig und aufrecht!": Das Ende des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens 1933-1938* (Berlin: Be.bra Wissenschaft Verlag, 2016), 24.

[13] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Hitler Sworn in as German Chancellor; Names Nazi Aides to Two Key Cabinet Positions," *Jewish Daily Bulletin* (January 31, 1933), 1.

[14] WL MF Doc 55/9/247, February 14, 1933.

could find a way to cooperate and continue defending German-Jewish civil rights despite the NSDAP's virulent antisemitism and threats of anti-Jewish measures.[15]

While none of these questions were resolved in this meeting, the executive board did express its growing concern over its members in the local sphere. According to the editor of the *CVZ*, Alfred Hirschfeld, many German Jews viewed the current political situation with "alarming vapid optimism."[16] As much of the German-Jewish public was not initially as troubled by the political developments as the leadership of these associations, one of the primary questions in this meeting was how to counteract this naïve view and replace it with a more sober and realistic understanding of the Nazis' intentions.[17] While the Centralverein – and other Jewish associations like the ZVfD and the RjF – were still convinced that conservative politicians could keep the NSDAP in check, they were also highly apprehensive and concerned.[18]

On March 1, 1933, the SA shut down the C.V. central office in Berlin, confiscated materials, and briefly arrested a handful of leading members. Just prior to this raid, managing syndic Hans Reichmann organized the secret relocation of its finances and archive to Munich as well as the destruction of its records detailing the sum and organization of its financial resources.[19] In moving the Centralverein's assets and archive to Munich, Reichmann attempted to secure the central office through centralized administrative relocation.[20] Moving all these vital

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[15] WL MF Doc 55/1/35, 1933.

[16] WL MF Doc 55/9/247, February 14, 1933.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden 1933-1945*, trans. Martin Pfeiffer (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2010), 25.

[19] Herzfeld, *Meine letzten Jahren in Deutschland: 1933-1938*, 2. and LBI ME 1230, Hans Reichmann, *[Autobiography],* 72.

[20] This security did not last, and the C.V.'s Munich offices were raided shortly thereafter as well. LBI ME 1230, Hans Reichmann, *[Autobiography],* 73.

documents to Munich demonstrated a considerable level of trust in the regional sphere and a deep anxiety over the Centralverein's future in Berlin as well. These concerns were rooted in the fact that anti-Jewish measures were particularly harsh on the Jewish community in Berlin due both to it being the largest Jewish community in Germany and it being in the German capital.[21] Nevertheless, while conditions in Berlin remained dire, the size and engagement of its Jewish community meant that it also became a bastion of C.V. programming in the last years prior to the Centralverein's dissolution.

Those arrested during the SA's raid on the central office were released from prison in the middle of the night and the central office resumed operations the next day. In response to this harassment, members of the Centralverein's executive board met with representatives from the Foreign Office, the police, and with Hermann Goering personally in early March.[22] Goering reassured C.V. leadership in their first meeting that German Jews would be allowed to continue fighting antisemitism and defending Jewish assimilation even under the Nazi regime. In this meeting with C.V. chairman Julius Brodnitz on March 3, 1933, Goering stated that,

> Jews had every right to fight antisemitism. Admittedly, they needed to realize that the NSDAP led both the imperial as well as Prussian government and therefore determined the form and tone of their operations. If the C.V. believes that it has any complaints, Brodnitz could turn to him – Goering – who would be ready to receive Brodnitz at any time.[23]

Goering's statement raised hopes among C.V. leadership that, despite the fact that the Nazis controlled the state and the enforcement of their policies, the Centralverein would be able to continue intervening in cases of antisemitism. Goering's assurances reflected the larger

[21] Francis R. Nicosia, "German Zionism and Jewish Life in Nazi Berlin," in *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany: Dilemmas and Responses*, ed. Francis R. Nicosia and David Scrase (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 92.

[22] Herzfeld, *Meine letzten Jahren in Deutschland: 1933-1938*, 3.

[23] Ibid.

disconnect between the conversations held at the national level and the violence and intimidation that occurred in local communities in the days prior to the parliamentary election.[24] Nevertheless, Goering's statement and the parliamentary elections two days later reinforced the C.V. leaderships' belief that German Jews would continue to be allowed to fight for Jewish rights and defend against antisemitism despite the Nazi seizure of power.

Prior to the parliamentary election on March 5, 1933, German Jews had limited reason to believe that Goering's statement had some truth in it. In the first two months after his appointment as chancellor, Adolf Hitler focused predominantly on consolidating his power and eliminating political opponents like the communists and social democrats.[25] This began in earnest following the burning of the Reichstag building on February 27, 1933, for which the Nazis blamed the communists.[26] The next day, Hitler released a new emergency decree that suspended fundamental civic rights in Germany, granted the federal government the right to intervene in state matters, and introduced the death penalty for certain crimes.[27] The Nazis' growing repression of political opponents like the communists also made the Zentrum and the BVP potential targets as well.

Despite Catholic associations' vehemently anti-NSDAP campaign prior to the parliamentary election, the Zentrum and BVP were not initially a focus of Hitler's attack against political opponents. In the parliamentary election on March 5, 1933, the Zentrum gained three

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[24] "Der 5. März: Ein Wort an die deutschen Juden," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 12 (March 9, 1933), 77.

[25] Francis R. Nicosia and David Scrase, ed., *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany: Dilemmas and Responses* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 2.

[26] General consensus among historians is that Dutch communist Marinus van der Lubbe set the fire alone, but debate over this question continues. For current debate over the culprits, see Benjamin Carter Hett, "'This Story Is about Something Fundamental': Nazi Criminals, History, Memory, and the Reichstag Fire," *Central European History* 48 (June 2015): 199-224.

[27] Raithel and Strenge, "Die Reichstagsbrandverordnung," 416-7.

seats in the Reichstag while the NSDAP gained 92 and won all but two electoral districts.[28] Though the Zentrum gained a small number of delegates, its overall percentage of the vote declined from 11.9 to 11.2 percent of voters compared to the November 1932 election.[29] This meant that, of the 35 electoral districts in Germany, the districts Cologne-Aachen and Koblenz-Trier were the only two where the Zentrum and not the NSDAP won a majority of votes.[30] As such, the Zentrum was the only party other than the NSDAP to win any districts in the March 1933 election.

Less than ten days after the election, the BVP and the NSDAP met in secret to negotiate a coalition between their parties in the Bavarian parliament as well. With negotiations conducted by a BVP parliamentary delegate and Adolf Hitler, the Bavarian Catholic leaders considered these meetings preliminary negotiations, and no official meetings ever took place afterward.[31] Negotiations at both the national and regional level in March 1933 played with the hopes that the NSDAP could still be kept under control of established legal standards. In doing so, the Nazis maintained a semblance of political normalcy surrounding the March 1933 parliamentary election. This allowed the NSDAP to build up political legitimacy and court Catholic support afterwards as well.

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[28] Heinz Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken, 1918-1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992), 182.

[29] The BVP also declined from three percent to 2.7 percent, which meant it lost a seat in the Reichstag. The Zentrum only did well in regions with a high Catholic population – in areas without a Catholic majority, no party aside from the NSDAP managed to get more than thirty percent of the vote. Nevertheless, as Heinz Hürten argued, as the Zentrum was no longer necessary for a coalition, it lost the basis of its political influence. Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken, 1918-1945,* 182-3.

[30] Ibid., 183.

[31] Wolfgang Dierker, "'Ich will keine Nullen, sondern Bullen:' Hitlers Koalitionsverhandlungen mit der Bayerischen Volkspartei im März 1933," *Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte* 50 (January 2002), 122.

The Zentrum's limited political success in the March 1933 election reinforced the Volksverein's belief that its educational work had a pivotal role to play in German Catholic's continued resistance to the NSDAP.[32] In a letter to the V.V. central office, chairman of its regional office in Berlin, Joseph Wrede, argued that the results of the March election made it all the more likely that the German people would soon "wake up" and reject Nazism.[33] Wrede was convinced that when this happened, German Catholics would also realize that they needed the Volksverein more than ever before.[34] To be prepared for this greater responsibility in German society, Wrede encouraged the V.V. central office to organize more conferences for local and regional representatives, hold educational courses, assemblies, and meetings in local parishes.[35]

Wrede's hope that German Catholics would begin opposing the Nazis was disproven shortly thereafter. Less than three weeks after the election, the Reichstag ratified the so-called Enabling Act on March 24, 1933. This act granted Hitler the ability to declare laws without consulting the Reichstag or the president. Except for 78 SPD delegates, all other Reichstag delegates present that day voted unanimously in support of the Enabling Act.[36] Despite some reluctance, the fact that all Zentrum delegates voted in full support of the Enabling Act was largely due to Hitler's promise that the Nazi regime would not impede on the Catholic Church's rights in Germany, that the Reichstag would not be disbanded, and the president would retain his

[32] BArch, R 8115/I/90, p. 2.

[33] Ibid. Wrede wrote this letter on the same day that the Zentrum and BVP voted to support the so-called Enabling Act – March 23, 1933.

[34] BArch, R 8115/I/90, p. 2.

[35] Ibid.

[36] The communists had been forbidden from entering, which also precluded them from voting against the act. Adalbert Hess, "Das Abstimmungsergebnis zum Ermächtigungsgesetz vom 23. März 1933," *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 16 (March 1985), 6.

roles and responsibilities.[37] Despite these promises, the Enabling Act stripped the Reichstag of its authority within the German political system. As such, not only did the Zentrum and the BVP lose their political agency, but the Volksverein was also forced to give up much of its role as a center of political education.

On March 28, 1933 – only four days after the Enabling Act was ratified – the Fulda Conference of Bishops formally withdrew its ban on Catholics supporting the NSDAP. Instead, it now called for Catholics to cooperate with and be loyal to the new state.[38] The decision to withdraw its Weimar-era repudiation of Nazism and encourage loyalty to the new regime was a decisive factor in raising Catholic support of the Nazi system. The Fulda Conference of Bishops' support for the Nazi state after late March 1933 helped legitimize the NSDAP in German-Catholic society and accelerated German Catholics' political reorientation to the right. This made it even more difficult for other Catholic organizations like the Volksverein to continue operating without also accepting or collaborating with the Nazi government. Due to the extensive centralization within organized German Catholicism, such a decision had considerable influence over local Catholics. Just as the Fulda Conference of Bishops' repudiation in 1931 and 1932 had delegitimized the NSDAP in the eyes of many Catholic voters, this statement in 1933 did the opposite. This open statement of support legitimized the Nazi state and withdrew the largest source of official resistance against Nazism within German Catholicism.

To continue conducting its local educational programming after the passage of the Enabling Act and the Bishop Conference's declaration of support for the Nazi regime, the Volksverein modified both the content and, particularly, the language it used in its events and

[37] Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken*, 186.

[38] Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 811.

publications. These attempts were particularly evident in texts pertaining to its ongoing fight against atheism and the removal of religion from the public sphere. As both the rejection of atheism and protecting religion's place in society could have easily been interpreted as an attack on the Nazi state as well, the Volksverein asked its representatives to change how they talked about these issues. This was the case in Dortmund in early June 1933 when the chairman of the regional branch wrote to a local vicar about the language he used in an upcoming V.V. publication combating atheism in Germany. While the initial draft stated that the Volksverein needed to fight rising atheism even more fervently than before, the regional secretary instead asked that the vicar change it to say that, while the Nazis had mostly dealt with the issue, Catholics still needed to remain vigilant.[39] While the intent and meaning of the article remained almost the same, the secretary softened and adapted the language on atheism extensively to fit new Nazi demands and regulations.

As the Volksverein shared the Nazi's own vehement hatred of communism and bolshevism, it did not have to adapt the language it used in its anti-bolshevist publications. The Volksverein's anti-bolshevist position and rigid centralization was not entirely incompatible with the Nazi state. It was not that these values were in any way new to German Catholic society or to the Volksverein, but, as in so many other cases under the Nazi regime, were repackaged and intensified by the Nazi state to serve its own political and social intentions. This meant that, while organized Catholic networks were increasingly weakened and dismantled at the national level, local attitudes on these topics were often largely compatible with the Nazi state.

In response to the Volksverein's growing isolation within German Catholic society, its regional leaders became more willing to consider cooperating more closely with the Nazis. In

[39] BArch, R 8115/I/102, p. 9.

May 1933, Wrede stated that "we must count on the National-Socialists in the future and attempt to get along with them."[40] As had been the case in 1919 when the Zentrum first entered into a coalition with the SPD, this desire to adapt the Volksverein's politics meant that the Volksverein once again reframed its former political enemy as a potential ally. According to the Gestapo, Wrede also proposed reaching out to Goebbels and the Ministry of Propaganda to see if the Volksverein could profit from the ministry's "considerable financial resources." [41] Receiving such financial support meant setting aside the Volksverein's previous animosity to the NSDAP if it meant receiving financial support for their educational work in the local sphere.

While some local branches remained active through mid-1933, the Volksverein's larger lecture courses and speeches ended after February of that year.[42] In early April 1933, the regional office in Dortmund attributed its declining membership and participation to the fact that the Volksverein had participated in an appeal from Catholic associations against the Nazi government.[43] That such an action would drive a large number of members to leave the Volksverein demonstrated the extent to which pro-Nazi and right-wing political attitudes had spread among the Catholic population. Additionally, it showed the degree to which the Volksverein no longer represented national political Catholic leadership. While the Volksverein softened its anti-Nazi rhetoric after March 1933, that it did not call on its members to support the new regime further isolated the association from German Catholic society.

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[40] BArch, R 8115/I/78, p. 5.

[41] Ibid.

[42] In May 1933, for example, a small local group was established in a district in Dortmund, which consisted of only ten men. This was accompanied by a further reorganization of another local branch in the city, and a multi-day conference for regional representatives the following month as well. BArch R 8115/I/101, pp. 3 and 11.

[43] BArch, R 8115/I/103, p. 48.

5.1.1. The German-Jewish Local and Regional Sphere

The first few months between Hitler's appointment as chancellor in January 1933 and the declaration of a one-day boycott of Jewish businesses on April 1 of that year – the first concerted anti-Jewish action – was a period of uncertainty and waiting for all German Jews. The relative calm in the first few months for German Jews fueled the considerable uncertainty over what it meant to live as a German Jew under the Nazi regime. It was only after the Enabling Act was passed in late March 1933 that the Nazi regime began targeting German Jews. On April 1, 1933, the Nazis called for a boycott of Jewish businesses.[44] Notably, however, the Nazis' official boycott of Jewish businesses on April 1, 1933 was not the success they assumed it would be. It was called off after a few days due to large public indifference and new questions regarding the economic impact of such actions on non-German Jews and how exactly to define a shop as 'Jewish.'[45]

While this was the first official Germany-wide boycott of Jewish businesses, such boycotts had already occurred in some regions the month before. In early March, there were a series of boycotts in towns in the industrial Ruhr region, where SA men prevented non-Jewish Germans from entering shops and department stores owned by Jews.[46] The NSDAP denied any responsibility for ordering such a boycott. Instead, the Nazis claimed that it was the local population who had taken matters into their own hands and that the SA was simply there to

[44] It was this boycott that convinced many German Zionists that there was little hope for Jewish life in Germany. In response, the ZVfD and Zionist-affiliated organizations in Germany stepped up their support for those who wanted to leave for Palestine. According to Hagit Lavsky, seventy percent of the ZVfD's 10,000 members had left for Palestine by 1936. Hagit Lavsky. *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 234.

[45] Friedländer, *Das dritte Reich und die Juden*, 30.

[46] "Aktionen gegen jüdische Geschäfte: Einschreiten des Polizeikommandanten," *Jüdische Rundschau* 28 (March 10, 1933), 95.

ensure order.[47] While there was truth in this claim, it also showed the extent to which the Nazis immediately exploited decentralized structures to encourage the mistreatment of Jews in the local and regional spheres without officially implicating the state. While Hitler later issued direct orders that future actions against Jews needed to be ordered from the top, it did little to reduce such localized instances of anti-Jewish persecution.

Though official anti-Jewish measures did not begin until April, many German Jews began facing frequent intimidation by the Nazis in the regional sphere the month before. After the Reichstagswahl in early March 1933, C.V. regional branches in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Erfurt, as well numerous local branch offices were searched, and the LVB Thuringia was banned by the regional government.[48] The nature and duration of this ban on the Centralverein in Thuringia have remained unclear and disputed among scholars of the Centralverein. Avraham Barkai speculated that comments from Brodnitz and Herzfeld in 1934 indicated that the ban was lifted that year, while Christina Goldmann argued that there was no primary evidence to support Barkai's claim and that the ban on LVB Thuringia remained in place until the Centralverein's dissolution five years later.[49] Based on the documents in the microfilm C.V. collection held at the Wiener Holocaust Library, it was evident that, Goldmann was correct that the ban was never lifted. Instead, it had little to no effect on the Centralverein's regional and local administrative and educational networks in the area.

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[47] Aktionen gegen jüdische Geschäfte: Einschreiten des Polizeikommandanten," *Jüdische Rundschau* 28 (March 10, 1933), 95.

[48] "Der 5. März: Ein Wort an die deutschen Juden," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 12 (March 9, 1933), 77.

[49] Avraham Barkai, *"Wehr Dich!": Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens 1893-1938* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002), 447 and Christina Goldmann, *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in Rheinland und Westfalen 1903–1938* (PhD Dissertation. Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, 2006), 284.

In effect, banning LVB Thuringia did not affect the Centralverein's work in the local sphere. As LVB Thuringia had already been incorporated into LVB Central Germany in 1932, this ban had little effect on the continued operation of its former local sphere.

Based in Leipzig in the Free State of Saxony, and unaffected by decisions pertaining to Thuringia, LVB Central Germany continued managing the region as it had since LVB Thuringia was incorporated into LVB Central Germany in 1932. Local branches in Erfurt, Schmalkaden, Zeitz, Nordhausen, and Mühlhausen also remained active in Thuringia, with OG Mühlhausen continuing to organize local programming until shortly before the Centralverein's dissolution in 1938.[50]

When a crisis occurred in one region, as it did in Thuringia in March 1933, it did not necessarily lead to the collapse of entire regional or local networks. While such centralized decentralization was a contributing factor to the Volksverein's decline in the Weimar Republic, for the Centralverein's regional sphere in Nazi Germany, this consolidation of the regional sphere acted as a bulwark against Nazi measures in Thuringia.[51] Without such intra-regional cooperation, regional branches were more susceptible to such bans. This was precisely the issue in Bavaria later that year, when the Bavarian Nazi government attempted to disband LVB Bavaria in May 1933. Despite this attack on LVB Bavaria, its syndic and board refused to provide the signatures necessary to disband the regional branch.[52] Instead, LVB Bavaria operated in secret through January 1934 when it was also forbidden from operating in any capacity.[53]

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[50] For documents pertaining to these local branches and their continued operations after March 1933, see WL MF Doc 55/32/1411, 55/30/1344 and 1303, 55/25/1072, and 55/24/996.

[51] Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power,* trans. Marc Silver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 57.

[52] Rebekka Denz, "Der Centralverein in Bayern – ein Werkstattbericht," *Medaon* 13, 25 (2019), 12.

[53] Ibid.

Unlike in Thuringia, the local branches in Bavaria likely did not continue operating after this point. That the local sphere dissolved along with the regional branch in Bavaria but not in Thuringia was due in large part to LVB Bavaria's sole responsibility for this region. This made it easier for the Nazi government in Bavaria to target and ultimately dissolve the LVB Bavaria in Munich than was the case for officials in Thuringia, where the regional branch was based in Saxony.

While most of the Centralverein was allowed to continue operating, the Nazis imposed considerable restrictions on its operations throughout Germany starting in early 1933. As the Gestapo now required the C.V. executive board to register all its meetings and to allow Gestapo agents to attend, the C.V. executive board stopped meeting altogether in late 1933.[54] The Centralverein's working committee faced similar restrictions, and, after meeting twice in 1933, did not meet again after December of that year.[55] Without the board or the committee, C.V. chairman Julius Brodnitz became responsible for making all large administrative and organizational decisions in the central office by the end of 1933. While this prevented the Centralverein's executive board and working committee from meeting, the central office's departments, such as the one for education, professional support, and legal advice, continued operating and expanding according to need and demand from the local and regional branches.[56]

To compensate for the fact that the Centralverein's leading committees could no longer meet officially without having a Gestapo agent present, Brodnitz began holding lunches or teas in his home to discuss administrative concerns in a more informal setting. These unofficial

[54] This was because meeting without informing the Gestapo beforehand would have been too irresponsible, while registering it and then holding the meeting under Gestapo supervision would have been counterproductive. Herzfeld, *Meine letzten Jahren in Deutschland: 1933-1938*, 21.

[55] Ibid.

[56] WL MF Doc 55/8/170, p. 1-2.

meetings occurred every two or three months, and included all regional syndics as well as a further 15-20 local, regional, or central office representatives of Brodnitz's choosing as well.[57] Alongside these lunches, Brodnitz also regularly held smaller meetings with individuals from all levels of the Centralverein's administration. Though the official decision-making power was even more centralized under the chairman, the unofficial and adaptive nature of these meetings gave local and regional representatives considerably more leeway in their respective spheres. As state power was also highly decentralized during the Nazi period, such concurrent decentralization and centralization allowed the Centralverein to maintain the networks necessary for navigating and adapting to different conditions in the regional and local sphere. This reprioritization of decentralization was both a forced response to increased Gestapo intervention as well as an attempt to defend and preserve the Centralverein and its local and regional networks.

While the Centralverein's central office further consolidated under the chairman, local and regional branches often retained much of their previous autonomy and flexibility. Unlike the central office, regional and local branches "[…] could meet without registering [with the Gestapo] at an acceptable level of risk, and they fully utilized this opportunity."[58] Though not all communities could get away with doing so, there was initially less oversight in the local and regional sphere. As such, these branches continued organizing assemblies and lectures for their members and discussing political topics that would have been otherwise forbidden or made impossible had a Gestapo agent attended. As such, the local and regional sphere retained a

[57] Herzfeld, *Meine letzten Jahren in Deutschland: 1933-1938*, 21.

[58] Ibid.

considerable amount of autonomy even while the central office was forced to consolidate further under the chairman himself.

Despite its refusal to organize meetings attended by Gestapo agents, the central office was highly cooperative when forced to report to the Gestapo. This compliance was rooted in the effort to protect the association from the sweeping waves of forced dissolutions during the first six months of the Nazi regime. In July 1934, Brodnitz and Herzfeld wrote in a statement to the Gestapo that "The C.V.'s work naturally takes place in complete conformity with the legal regulations, especially in complete loyalty to the authorities."[59] This lip service to the Gestapo and the Nazi regime was no more than a means of self-preservation. In practice, the local branches usually simply registered their lectures and made sure that the topics they discussed did not provoke Nazi scrutiny.[60]

While some local police offices allowed local branches to continue organizing programming almost uninterrupted until late 1938, others were far less tolerant. The latter was the case of OG Emmerich in LVB Rhineland-Westphalia. Despite receiving initial approval from the district administrator for its Purim celebration in March 1934, the SS broke up the event while it was taking place.[61] In response, OG Emmerich decided to stop trying to hold any more assemblies in Emmerich. Only one day after the above incident, the chairman in neighboring OG Cleves – businessman David Weyl – reported a similar occurrence in a letter to the syndic of

[59] WL MF Doc 55/1/44, p. 285.

[60] This willingness to collaborate if it meant saving German Jews and their livelihoods was not unique to the C.V.; in August 1933, the ZVfD, Jewish Agency, and the Nazi Reich's Ministry of Economics reached what became known as the Ha'avara Agreement for the transfer of Jewish assets to Palestine in exchange for purchasing goods from Germany. While done solely in the interest of supporting emigration, this transfer agreement demonstrated the different approaches to protecting German Jews and their future Günter Schubert, *Erkaufte Flucht: Der Kampf um den Haavara-Transfer* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2009), 28 and 63.

[61] WL MF Doc 55/32/1403, March 13, 1934 and March 14, 1934.

LVB Rhineland. While OG Cleves had received police approval for all of its previous meetings and assemblies, local police denied the local branch permission for its upcoming meeting citing legislation allowing them to ban political assemblies that it deemed a danger to public safety.[62] It was not just OG Cleves that was banned from holding assemblies in the area; while the ZVfD branch in Cleves had initially received permission for their assembly the week prior, this was also broken up by the SS shortly after it began.[63]

These incidents in Emmerich and Cleves led Weyl to declare that the Centralverein could no longer conduct any more programming in the area.[64] While the local branch registered such assemblies with the local police, the official decision on approval came from the district administrator, which was not in Emmerich itself. This incident showed the arbitrary nature of such intervention and the extent to which it frequently depended on local politics and authorities.

In response to the situation in both Emmerich and Cleves, LVB Rhineland syndic Ernst Plaut wrote to the representative in Emmerich to lament the fact that the Lower Rhine area was now more antisemitic than elsewhere in the region.[65] While both the Lower Rhine region and the industrial Ruhr region were managed by the same regional branch in Essen, the considerable economic and social differences between these two regions meant that they faced different kinds of persecution and, as a result, needed different kinds of support from the regional sphere. That the Ruhr was comprised of mainly large cities while the Lower Rhine was primarily smaller towns meant that individuals in these more rural regions were not only more affected by

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[62] *Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten zum Schutze des Deutschen Volkes, February 4, 1933*, http://www.documentArchiv.de/ns/schutz-dt-vlk.html and WL MF Doc 55/32/1403, March 14, 1934.

[63] WL MF Doc 55/32/1403, March 14, 1934.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., p. 11.

economic and professional restrictions, but also had fewer community networks to turn to.[66] This intra-regional differentiation was not unique to LVB Rhineland. The challenges that arose from this system became increasingly prominent as the Centralverein's work in its regional branches began cooperating with other German-Jewish organizations during the 1930s.

5.2. The End of the Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland

By mid-1933, two kinds of minority religious life developed in Germany: one kept separate but allowed to continue and one disbanded so that its members could be integrated into the Nazi system. The former was the case for German Jews and the latter for German Catholics. The first months of Nazi Germany were characterized not only by the dissolution of organized Catholic life, but also the abrupt shift to toleration of the Nazi state. For German Catholics, the end of minority associational life also meant integration into majority society to an unprecedented extent. While some clergy remained opposed to the Nazi regime and German Catholics were occasionally the targets of Nazi violence, the general lack of protest or resistance from the local Catholic sphere meant that the end of German-Catholic associational life was met with little interest.

On July 1, 1933, the Gestapo raided the V.V. central office in Mönchengladbach and seized all the documentation it could find. This was part of a sweeping action to close the offices of six German-Catholic associations and their affiliated groups,[67] The order for these raids came

[66] Wildt, *Hitlers* Volksgemeinschaft, 4.

[67] BArch, R 8115/I/53, p. 3 and 8115/I/54, p. 52. These other associations were the Friedensbund deutscher Katholiken and the youth organizations the Windthorstbund, Kreuzschar, Sturmschar, and the katholischer Jungmännerverband. Despite these orders to dissolve the youth movements from July 1, the Gestapo retracted the orders for all but the Windthorstbund four days later, demanding that their operatives undo their dissolution and return all materials that were "politically unobjectionable" immediately. BArch, R 8115/I/53, p. 4. Both the Zentrum and the BVP also decided to disband in early July, 1933. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte,* vol. 4, 814. The documents seized from the V.V. central office also included its library. In August 1935, the city of

from the Gestapo office in Düsseldorf and was sent to the local police. The Volksverein's dissolution was highly regionalized and was, like many of the restrictions on the Centralverein's local activity, decided by the nature of cooperation between the regional and local Nazi officials. That these orders came from the regional and local sphere and not from Berlin itself demonstrated a widespread decentralization of state power.

This regional action was particularly advantageous for Adolf Hitler, who repudiated the raids on Catholic associations – but did not reverse their results – a week later in an effort to secure discussions with the Vatican over the *Reichskonkordat*.[68] Signed in the Vatican on July 20, 1933 after three weeks of negotiations, the *Konkordat* secured the Catholic Church's rights in Germany and legitimized the Nazi Regime by receiving Vatican support.[69] While German bishops and even the Vatican itself protested the "oppressive measures" against German Catholic organizations, the regional nature of the raid made it possible for the German state to deny responsibility and continue with the Volksverein's dissolution.[70] That the negotiations to rescue the Volksverein failed in early July 1933 was due to the fact that the Gestapo considered the

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Mönchengladbach bought back the library from the Prussian state for around 65,000RM. Despite subsequent Nazi attempts to destroy the books, very little was lost prior to or during the war, with estimates ranging from as little as less than one percent to between ten and twelve percent. Hans Joachim Kamphausen, *Die ehemalige Volksvereins-Bibliothek in Mönchengladbach: Untersuchungen zu Geschichte und Bestand* (Köln: Greven Verlag, 1979), 4 and 6.

[68] Hubert Wolf, "Reichskonkordat für Ermächtigungsgesetz? Zur Historisierung der Scholder-Repgen-Kontroverse über das Verhältnis des Vatikans zum Nationalsozialismus," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 60.2 (2012), 170. The *Reichskonkordat* remains in effect today, and was the source of a considerable debate in the 1950s over whether the treaty remained binding despite the defeat of Nazi Germany. For more on this debate and its repercussions for West Germany, see Mark Edward Ruff, *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945–1980* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 48-85.

[69] Christoph Hübner, *Die Rechtskatholiken, die Zentrumspartei und die katholische Kirche in Deutschland bis zum Reichskonkordat von 1933: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Scheiterns der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014), 782-3.

[70] Gotthard Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933: Geschichte, Bedeutung, Untergang* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), 344.

Volksverein an enemy of the state.[71] Nevertheless, this did not prevent the Gestapo from prolonging the official dissolution and liquidation process so that the Nazi state could benefit financially. While the police raid on the V.V. central office effectively disbanded the Volksverein, it was not the end of its local branches or the central office's need for their support.

Despite negotiations between the Ministry of the Interior and two bishops, the Volksverein was officially disbanded just over two weeks after the local Gestapo raided and closed the V.V. central office in Mönchengladbach.[72] Despite its large regional network, the V.V. regional directors were only informed of the Volksverein's dissolution by newspaper articles on the topic.[73] This meant that there was a delay of around a week before regional directors were informed of the Gestapo's raid of the central office.[74] That keeping its regional and local representatives informed was such a slow process spoke to the disjointed nature of communication between these two spheres and the full extent of the Volksverein's centralization in Mönchengladbach.

The Volksverein's difficulties in maintaining its local and regional spheres did not end with its dissolution. Many local community's inability to pay their dues in full since the start of the Great Depression meant that the Volksverein was operating at a deficit of over 350,000RM at the time of its forced dissolution.[75] To collect these outstanding dues, the Gestapo demanded that the Volksverein collect all outstanding dues as well as an additional 'special contribution' of

[71] BArch, R 8115/I/54, p. 52.

[72] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland*, 347.

[73] BArch, R 8115/I/58, p. 449.

[74] Ibid., p. 449 and July 7, 1933.

[75] BArch, R 8115/I/78, p. 7.

1RM per member from its local branches.[76] Not only was this highly unpopular with both former Volksverein members and their local representatives, in many communities it was impossible to enforce despite threats of legal consequences for those regional directors who did not pay in full by the end of July.[77] After regional representatives repeatedly failed to send in remaining dues on time, this deadline was pushed back to September 1933 and the process continued until at least well into October of that year.[78]

The fact that collecting outstanding dues was still ongoing over three months after the first ultimatum expired showed that the Gestapo's threat of legal ramifications was based solely on the determination to achieve as much financial gain from the Volksverein's dissolution as possible. While local representatives were able to raise outstanding dues from prior years in some cases, convincing members to pay an additional fee largely impossible.[79] Many German Catholics did not have the money to pay either their outstanding dues or the extra fee, and following the Volksverein's dissolution, even those that potentially could have afforded to pay also now had no motivation to do so. Not only was the association disbanded, but with its leaders arrested and set to be put on trial, German Catholics did not want to be affiliated with the association.

With both the Zentrum and BVP forced to disband in early July as well, organized lay political Catholic life came to an end in 1933. The same day that Hitler approved the

[76] BArch, R 8115/I/58, pp. 14 and 449.

[77] Ibid., July 7, 1933. There were three primary reasons why local representatives were unable to collect this new special fee from their members: some were unemployed and had no money to pay, others did not see why such a payment was necessary when the V.V. no longer existed, and others still simply refused to do so. BArch, R 8115/I/58, p. 14 and 82.

[78] BArch, R 8115/I/59, p. 3.

[79] BArch, R 8115/I/58, p. 112. This was the case throughout Germany, with communities in Oldenburg, Saxony, and Baden proving particularly difficult to force to pay these outstanding dues. BArch, R 8115/I/59, p. 3.

Reichskonkordat – July 14, 1933 – he also banned the establishment of new political parties. At the same time that the Catholic Church secured considerable rights in Germany, Christian political and union action ceased.[80] While the Volksverein shared the fate of other political Catholic associations, the so-called *Reichskonkordat* demonstrated the extent to which German Catholic leadership was willing to navigate and tolerate the Nazi system. This agreement and the dissolution of the Volksverein, the Zentrum, and the BVP, among other lay Catholic associations, removed the final barrier in integrating Catholics into the Nazi system and the beginning of the systematic dismantling of the Catholic milieu by the Nazi sate.[81]

Most of the Volksverein's leading members were arrested and interrogated following its dissolution. Despite these arrests and interrogations, only three men were charged with a crime, and only two were ever put on trial.[82] On December 4, 1933, the so-called "small Volksverein trial" began in Mönchengladbach, with Zentrum politician Friedrich Dessauer and director of the Carolus Druckerei Josef Knecht as the primary defendants.[83] Accused of conducting illegal financial transactions in October 1928, this trial was focused less on the actual accusations and far more on the prosecution's contrived theory that there was a conspiracy between Judaism and political Catholicism.[84] Despite these accusations, both men were exonerated and set free after the eleven-day trial. Further attempts for a so-called "large Volksverein trial" also failed; in

[80] Hübner, *Die Rechtskatholiken, die Zentrumspartei und die katholische Kirche in Deutschland.* 782.

[81] Ibid., 784.

[82] Wilhelm Hohn was also charged, but as he was out of the country, the charges against him were eventually dropped. Dessauer was accused because he, along with Lammers and Stegerwald, served on a committee to regulate the V.V.'s finances and prevent bankruptcy in the summer of 1928. The Carolus Druckerei was also affiliated with the VV-Verlag at this time and participated in Hohn's plan to regulate the financial situation through 1930. BArch, R 8115/I/77, pp. 4-5.

[83] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland*, 362 and 369.

[84] Ibid., 372.

January 1935, the prosecution officially withdrew charges against Marx, van der Velden, Kohlen, and Brauns, among others, after they were initially accused of using the VV-Verlag's bankruptcy for fraudulent purposes in 1928.[85]

The Nazi regime's failure both to secure a conviction in the small trial and to create a strong enough case to justify a larger trial was indicative of its ongoing need to maintain the Catholic Church's legitimizing support of the Nazi state. That the small trial did not include leading V.V. members also demonstrated the difficulty that the Nazi prosecution team had in finding any basis for financial misuse. While the Volksverein was part of the first wave of associational dissolutions in 1933, this did not necessarily reflect German-Catholic life in the early Nazi period. Religious practice in the form of church attendance and communion remained consistent throughout the 1930s and was even higher than in the early 1920s.[86] Though political Catholicism was forced to end, the deeply entrenched parameters of the Catholic milieu remained largely unaffected.[87]

5.3. The Consolidation of Jewish Associational Life

While German-Catholic political life ended in the summer of 1933, German-Jewish associations remained apprehensive and anxious about what the future would bring. As Marion

[85] Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland*, 383-4. Despite the Volksverein's dissolution in 1933, financial questions pertaining to the Volksverein-Verlag remained unclear until the mid-1970s. By the time the V.V-Verlag issue was resolved and its remaining assets were unfrozen and disbursed in 1975 – over forty years after the Volksverein's dissolution – any attempts at establishing a new Volksverein came to an end as well. Ibid., 407 and 418.

[86] In the years 1923-27, just over 58 percent of Catholics received communion on Easter, while in the years 1933-37, just shy of 62 percent did so. Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken*, 327.

[87] Thomas Breuer, "Widerstand oder Milieubehauptung? Deutscher Katholizismus und NS-Staat," in *Die Herausforderung der Diktaturen: Katholizismus in Deutschland und Italien 1918-1943/45*, ed. Wolfram Pyta, Carsten Kretschmann, Giuseppe Ignesti, and Tiziana Di Maio (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2008), 228.

Kaplan argued, prior to Kristallnacht in November 1938, the majority of Jews attempted to adapt to Nazi society in the hope that their situation might improve, or at least remain relatively stable.[88] During this period, the Centralverein still had many reasons to hope that German Jews would be able to navigate and adapt to restrictions.

The enforcement of the Nazis' anti-Jewish orders was often highly uneven. This was evident in professional discrimination against German Jews; even after the so-called Civil Service Law established the legal foundations for firing Jewish civil servants in April 1933, 53 percent of Jewish lawyers and 75 percent of doctors kept their jobs.[89] That a majority of doctors were allowed to continue practicing was a practical decision; as these doctors treated non-Jewish patients, forbidding them from practicing would have raised too many protests from non-Jewish Germans.[90] Instead, Hitler chose to delay stricter measures for a later date. As was the case for much of Nazi legislation during this period, local government, police, and local attitudes toward Jews were the largest factor in determining how anti-Jewish measures were implemented.[91] It was to respond to cases like these that the Centralverein began developing new regional assistance and advising networks in spring 1933.

Almost immediately after Nazi seizure of power, regional and local branches began utilizing the frameworks created by the Centralverein's regionalization and decentralization

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[88] Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

[89] Jonathan C. Friedman, *The Lion and the Star: Gentile-Jewish Relations in three Hessian Communities, 1919-1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 131. Additionally, the Nazis introduced laws regulating how many Jewish students were allowed to attend universities or schools. Ibid., 129.

[90] Friedländer, *Das dritte Reich und die Juden*, 33.

[91] In Bavaria and Prussia, for example, all Jewish judges and prosecutors were suspended. While in Bavaria this meant that almost all Jewish lawyers were now banned, Prussia instead aimed to introduce a kind of quota system instead. Benno Nietzl, "Die Vernichtung der wirtschaftlichen Existenz der deutschen Juden 1933-1945. Ein Literatur- und Forschungsbericht," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 49 (2009), 567.

during the Weimar Republic to begin providing German Jews with economic and social support. Based on the premise of Jewish solidarity and mutual aid, the Centralverein first established its Juristisch-Wirtschaftliche Beratungsstellen (Legal and Economic Counseling Centers or JWBs) in March 1933.[92] By February 1935, the Centralverein had 24 JWBs, thirty by July 1936, and 32 by the end of that year.[93] These offices provided German Jews with guidance on professional and legal concerns regardless of their affiliation to the Centralverein, and did so in cooperation with other local Jewish organizations as well.[94]

Along with individual counseling, the JWBs also provided what they called "collective advising" to address problems shared by entire professional groups, such as lawyers, doctors, and civil servants.[95] The Centralverein conducted this group-level counseling on behalf of other Jewish organizations as well. In doing so, the JWBs centralized German-Jewish economic and social support in the Centralverein's regional sphere. The comprehensive legal and professional support that these JWBs provided made the Centralverein into a "rallying point" for all German Jews.[96] Primarily conducted in the regional sphere, the JWBs also aimed to reinforce German Jews' support of the German-Jewish community and help them maintain their self-respect. In providing direct and immediate assistance to German Jews in the communities in which they

[92] "Eine Woche juristisch-wirtschaftliche Beratungsstelle des C.V.," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 12 (March 23, 1933), 99.

[93] The majority of these offices were in western and eastern Germany, with only two in the south or in the north. Notably, there were no JWBs in Bavaria at all, which was due to the broader ban on the C.V. in the region since July 1933.WL MF Doc 55/1/20, p. 17, 55/2/88, p. 403, *Wille und Weg des deutschen Judentums* (Berlin: Vortrupp Verlag, 1935), 24, Goldmann, *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in Rheinland und Westfalen*, 284. and Jüdischer Central-Verein, E.V. *Jüdischer Central-Verein E.V.: Aufgaben/Satzung/Organisation* (Berlin: 1936), 26.

[94] "Täglich wirtschaftlich-juristische Beratung," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 12 (March 30, 1933), 107.

[95] *Wille und Weg des deutschen Judentums*, 25.

[96] WL MF Doc 55/8/242, "Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, E.V.," in *Gemeindeblatt der Synagogengemeinde zu Stettin* (November 1934).

lived, the Centralverein's JWBs strengthened Jewish resilience and established new networks of self-help. In doing so, they were a form of internal defense against Nazi persecution.

The Centralverein's JWBs also functioned as a tool for administrative management in local branches. This was the case in OG Koblenz in July 1934. To revive local interest in the Centralverein, the regional branch in Cologne established a new JWB in Koblenz, which held office hours every other Tuesday in the local chairman's home.[97] The informal nature of this JWB provided Jews in Koblenz with access to individual counseling while also increasing direct involvement with the Centralverein's local branch as well. In doing so, LVB Linksrhein hoped to inspire OG Koblenz and its members to become more active and engaged in their own community. This was one way through which the regional branch utilized the JWBs to strengthen and support the local sphere.

By the mid-1930s, the traditional forms of membership were increasingly blurred as associations developed more adaptive forms of community aid. While the Centralverein remained a membership-based association, the JWBs were part of its larger consolidation of local and regional engagement. While C.V. members still received certain advantages like access to extended advising hours and more cultural programming, the question of membership receded as efforts for the whole Jewish community took increasing precedence. This was a reprioritization of German-Jewishness over a strictly membership-based system. Such an adaptive and cooperative undertaking was part of a wider consolidation of German-Jewish organizations and associations and a larger delegation of responsibilities between Jewish associations according to which was best suited to the respective task. While the C.V. dealt with such advising and counseling, direct financial support came largely from the Central Office for

[97] WL MF Doc 55/10/287, July 13, 1934.

Jewish Economic Aid, while the Hilfsverein and the Palestine Office were responsible for providing support for emigration.[98] In providing all German Jews with the necessary advice and support regardless of their membership, these associations simplified and enlarged the networks of mutual support for German Jews.

New forms of membership and participation in Jewish associations were accompanied and motivated by new forms of German-Jewish representation as well. In response to the rapid increase of anti-Jewish measures after April 1933, leading Jewish representatives established the Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland (Reich Representation of Jews in Germany, or Reichsvertretung) in mid-September 1933. Under its president Leo Baeck, the Reichsvertretung was the first official representative of German Jews at the state level that was also responsible for the practical issues among Jewish communities.[99] Though the Reichsvertretung and the Centralverein both represented German Jews, they did so at different levels; the Reichsvertretung operated primarily at the national level as an umbrella organization, while the Centralverein's regional branches conducted outreach and support at the regional and local level. This was the role that the VdJ had tried to fill prior to the First World War, and the one for which the PLVB was initially intended prior to its establishment in 1922. Though it only represented Jewish communities in Prussia, the cooperation between Jewish associations necessary to organize such a regional organization set the precedent for the Reichsvertretung's establishment in 1933.

As the representative organization of all Jews in Germany, the Reichsvertretung was, in many ways, the result of over two decades of negotiations, intra-communal disagreements, and,

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[98] "Die Tätigkeit des Hilfeausschusses der jüdischen Organisationen Hamburgs," *Gemeindeblatt der Deutsch-Israelitischen Gemeinde zu Hamburg* 9 (July 7, 1933), 3 and Salomon Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe unter dem Naziregime 1933-1939: im Spiegel der Berichte der Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974), 122.

[99] Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe unter dem Naziregime,* IX.

eventually, a shared determination to defend German Jews and their communities against Nazi persecution. While disagreements between different movements within German Jewry remained, that they all set aside their differences to establish the Reichsvertretung showed a shared determination to protect and support German Jews.

The Reichsvertretung's leadership emphasized the necessity of Jewish solidarity based on religious faith.[100] In its official statement to the German public after its establishment, the representatives of the Reichsvertretung stated that "in all large and essential tasks there can only be one community, only the one collectivity of German Jews […] We want to stand together and, trusting in our God, to work for the honor of the Jewish name. May from the suffering of these days the essence of German Jews arise anew!"[101] In uniting on behalf of all German Jews and its dedication to represent and renew both Jewish and German-Jewish life, the Reichsvertretung utilized established community networks to create a new form of German-Jewish representation. While the ability to live a distinctive Jewish life within secular German society ended after the Nazi rise to power, the Reichsvertretung and its declaration of Jewishness was part of a renewed focus on emphasizing Jewishness separate from civic identity.

The Centralverein spread the Reichsvertretung's appeal for a shared responsibility to support Judaism and Jewishness in Germany by printing its above appeal on the front page of the *CVZ* in late September 1933. In promoting the Reichsvertretung's call for Jewish unity, the Centralverein took a further step in reconceptualizing the essence and boundaries of its synthesis between Germanness and Jewishness. Through its own regional work and its close cooperation with the Reichsvertretung, the Centralverein reevaluated how it defined Germanness and

[100] Nicolai, *Seid Mutig und aufrecht!*, 88.

[101] "Die Reichsvertretung an die Öffentlichkeit," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 12 (September 28, 1933), 365.

Jewishness. Unlike in the German Empire or Weimar Republic, when the Centralverein rejected any form of Jewishness that could be perceived as creating ties other Jewish communities or organizations abroad, this also changed in the first two years of the Nazi regime as well. Increasingly, C.V. leadership at the national, regional, and local levels recognized that such international connections did not negate or devalue the importance of Germanness. Instead, it helped create frameworks that enabled German Jews to emigrate while also preserving their German-Jewish identities. As such, the Centralverein gradually redefined its synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness into one unified identity: that of German-Jewishness. This meant that Germanness was now defined by cultural and social values that were no longer tied to the political or state in which they lived. In removing the political connotations, German-Jewishness expanded what it meant to be part of both the Jewish and German-Jewish community.

The Centralverein's dedication to strengthening Jewishness became even more uncompromising as the 1930s progressed. In 1934, editor of the C.V. journal *Der Morgen,* Eva Reichmann-Jungmann wrote, "we know once again what it means to be and remain a Jew. Profession of faith, pride, dignity – to be sure! But also knowledge, learning, historical consciousness, and religion as part of life […]."[102] Reichmann-Jungmann's statement combined the Centralverein's longstanding dedication to defense and assertiveness with a deeper connection with their Jewish identity. While wider embrace of Jewishness represented a continuation of German Jews' Weimar-era turn to Jewish life, it was no longer predicated on the synthesis of religious and civic identities. Instead, this meant a more meaningful relationship to Jewishness in a cultural sense and Judaism in a religious sense. While the Centralverein had long encouraged a deep connection to Jewishness, this call to religious practice and awareness was the

[102] WL MF Doc 55/45/1784, p. 86.

result of a forced reevaluation of what it meant to be a Jew in Germany. As it was increasingly clear that Jewish emancipation had ended, this religious and historical form of Jewishness became the foundation of the Centralverein's work to preserve and strengthen Jewish identity of Jews in Germany.

This process occurred primarily in the Centralverein's local and regional branches. To adapt to changing responsibilities in the local sphere, financial demands, and the demographic redistribution of the German-Jewish local sphere, the Centralverein combined two further regional branches in February 1934. In this instance, LVB Hannover and LVB Northern Germany came together to form a new regional branch – LVB Northwestern Germany – with an office in Hamburg.[103] This consolidation occurred without any announcement in the *CVZ* or in memoranda to the local branches.[104] The complete lack of discussion of the establishment of LVB Northwestern Germany was due to the purely administrative nature of this decision. As a combined branch, financial and administrative management was consolidated in Hamburg with little consideration of regional political or cultural differences.

Acknowledging the distinctions between regions while maintaining a cohesive macro-level structure was predicated on tailored and adaptive administrative frameworks. While the local branches in the former LVB Northern Germany, such as Hamburg, Rostock, and Lübeck, were each highly active in the Centralverein, local branches in the regions formerly belonging to LVB Hannover, such as Wilhelmshaven, Emden, and Oldenburg were far less involved in the

[103] WL MF Doc 55/1/24, February 7, 1934.

[104] The consolidation of Hamburg and Hannover into LVB Northwestern Germany was also accompanied shortly thereafter by a consolidation of Jewish organizations in Hamburg, at least in regards to their office spaces. In October 1935, LVB Northwestern Germany moved to a building that housed eight other Jewish organizations and offices including aid associations, professional associations, community organizations, and the offices of Hechalutz. This was representative of the larger push for internal-Jewish unity as well as increased consolidation and restriction of Jewish life. WL MF Doc 55/9/257, October 4, 1935.

Centralverein. In early 1935, for example, C.V. attorney Berthold Weinberg held a lecture tour throughout East Friesland in which he spoke on the topic "The Path of German Jews."[105] During this lecture tour, Weinberg noted that many of local branches in these regions were largely indifferent about the Centralverein since their members had been living in the region for centuries and were highly integrated.[106] While the Jews in this region embraced both their Germanness and Jewishness, they were deeply tied to the idea of *Heimat* and did not see the necessity of an association like the Centralverein.[107] Though regionalized German identity and a deep identification with *Heimat* did not preclude support for the Centralverein in most communities, here it was a hurdle to supporting the Centralverein's specific understanding of Germanness and Jewishness.

Due to such regional differences and the large geographic area for which it was responsible, questions remained regarding whether LVB Northwestern Germany should remain one united branch. Despite the syndic of LVB Northwestern Germany's disapproval and resistance to the proposed division, LVB Hannover was reestablished as a regional branch in November 1936.[108] This renewed decentralization only two years after these two regional branches were first combined demonstrated the enduring nature of regional political identities and the difficulty of consolidating areas for solely administrative reasons. This rejection of a renewed distribution of regional responsibility in northern Germany reflected a prioritization of regional interests. Of the three regional branches created through the consolidation of multiple

[105] During this tour, Weinberg also held office hours in two of their legal advice bureaus as well. WL MF Doc 55/9/257, February 24, 1935.

[106] WL MF Doc 55/18/696, p. 3.

[107] Ibid., p. 4.

[108] WL MF Doc 55/7/231, p. 127.

preexisting regional branches, LVB Northwestern Germany was the only one to later disband and return to its original regional arrangements. That consolidation failed in Northwestern Germany spoke to the considerable differences in regionalized politics and identities within Germany itself. While, in some cases, consolidating regions was essential in preventing the collapse of the regional and local sphere, in Hannover, it hindered the development and expression of regional identities.

Though most of the Centralverein's local branches remained active until late 1937 and 1938, the local branches in Westphalia had declined so considerably by 1936 that LVB East Westphalia was disbanded in the fall of that year. With only around 400-500 members in September 1936, the entire regional branch was the same size as many of the Centralverein's larger local branches at the time.[109] After its dissolution, the local branches in the former LVB East Westphalia were assigned to neighboring regional branches. Which local branch was assigned to whom was determined based on the respective local branch's regional political identity; those that identified more closely with Westphalia – such as OG Bielefeld – were reassigned to LVB Rhineland-Westphalia and those politically closest to Hannover, like Schaumburg-Lippe, were assigned to LVB Hannover.[110] The negotiations over which local branch should be assigned to which region occurred between the regional branches themselves. As such, they did not incorporate the local branches in the process. In doing so, LVB Rhineland and LVB Hannover centralized considerable administrative authority within the regional sphere and further legitimized these regional branches as the primary arbiter of the local sphere. That the local sphere in LVB East Westphalia was divided according to longstanding historical

[109] WL MF Doc 55/7/214, September 23, 1936.

[110] Ibid., December 28, 1936.

political affiliations and not expedient administrative management demonstrated the continued importance of respecting questions of *Heimat* and regional German identity in the Centralverein. Unlike in the consolidation of LVB Hannover and Northern Germany, respecting local and regional identity in different parts of LVB East Westphalia made the process of redistributing local branches a smooth one.

Negotiating a plurality of German identities remained part of how the Centralverein adapted to the new demands of the Nazi period. Even when German Jews were stripped of their citizenship, a sense of *Heimat* and connection to local and regional identities were not taken away by legislation and remained an inherent aspect of community organization and integration. As historian Alon Confino argued, *Heimat* allowed for incorporating a plurality of local and regional identities into one common idea.[111] Like *Heimat*, German-Jewishness was also rooted in a plurality of local, regional, political, cultural, and religious identities that were then incorporated into one adaptive and shared idea. The synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness was a dynamic concept process that was predicated on an adaptive framework for integrating these civic, religious, and community identities within a shared national framework. In this sense, the Centralverein's conceptualization of Jewishness under the Nazi regime became more centered at the national level while Germanness remained highly regionalized.

Rising emigration and changing conceptions of German-Jewish identity had a considerable effect on the Centralverein's relationship to the Zionist movement. While the Centralverein remained convinced that the so-called "Jewish problem" could not be solved by the Zionist movement, the Centralverein and ZVfD reached a kind of truce after January 1933, and many C.V. members – especially the younger generation – were either ambivalent toward or

[111] Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 98 and 126.

even somewhat supportive of Zionism by the mid-1930s.[112] This growing support was largely the result of rising German-Jewish emigration to Palestine and the extensive preparation courses the Zionist movement provided to German youth before leaving. In a growing number of towns, many if not all local C.V. members were also dual members in the ZVfD as well. This was the case in the region around Aachen and Jülich in early 1935, where Centralverein members paid dues to both associations.[113] While the Centralverein had informally banned dual membership in the ZVfD after the war, it never issued an official statement that forbid it either. This ambiguity meant that C.V. members were technically free to make their own decision on whether they also wanted to support the Zionist movement. Though the Centralverein had actively prevented such dual membership in the Weimar Republic, it ceased doing so in any official capacity after 1933. By late 1935, the ZVfD's work to support emigration to Palestine was so integral in supporting the Jewish community that the chairman of LVB Pomerania wrote that dual membership was not only allowed, but a necessity – particularly for those German Jews who chose to remain in Germany.[114]

While the Centralverein remained dedicated to supporting those German Jews who wished or had to remain in Germany, it also no longer exerted pressure on its members to reject Jewish nationalism either. As dual membership became the norm rather than the exception, the Centralverein's local, regional, and national levels once again affirmed the Centralverein's

[112] Herzfeld, *Meine letzten Jahren in Deutschland: 1933-1938,* 28 and WL MF Doc 55/21/817, July 11, 1935. Disagreements nevertheless arose throughout 1930s. This came to a head in January 1935 after the C.V. did not intervene when a small town in Anhalt boycotted Jewish businesses. In their letter to the C.V., a German Zionist wrote that "We assume that the C.V. did not seek to intervene because a prominent member of the community (Mr. Cohn), whose business was particularly subjected to the boycott, is a Zionist." It was in the local level that the C.V. and the ZVfD projected their distaste for the other. WL MF Doc 55/89/7211, January 12, 1935.

[113] WL MF Doc 55/9/247, p. 148.

[114] WL MF Doc 55/56/2066, October 17, 1935.

longstanding dedication to neutrality on non-essential questions. While supporting Jewish causes in Palestine was already deemed a personal decision by the late Weimar Republic, the increased cooperation between the Centralverein and ZVfD after 1933 and German Jews' growing support for the Zionist movement meant that the Centralverein's neutral position was necessary if it wanted to retain many of its members. It was for this reason that C.V. speakers were asked to refrain from two things in their speeches: encouraging German Jews to stay in Germany and saying anything negative about either emigration or Zionism.[115] This was also a strategic political choice as well; as most assemblies were held either with the permission of or under direct observation of the Gestapo, local and regional branches also refrained from making any statements that could provoke a negative response. That the topics of these lectures were non-political and inclusive meant that growing local support for the Zionist movement had a direct influence on how the regional branches and central office were able to organize programming and community engagement at the local level.

Attitudes on Zionism were increasingly generational. Older German Jews were far less likely to support the Zionist movement, while Jewish youth and young adults were more open to its calls for emigration and Jewish nationalist identity. In OG Brandenburg an der Havel, for example, almost all Jewish youth in the town were involved in Zionist youth movements, and, while their parents remained dedicated C.V. members, they also supported their children's Zionist leanings.[116] This generational divide was a reflection of the younger German Jews' greater openness to immigration as an answer to persecution under the Nazi state.[117] Allowing

[115] WL MF Doc 55/34/1484, April 2, 1935.

[116] WL MF Doc 55/12/384, October 6, 1934.

[117] Men were also far more likely to emigrate prior to 1938, as Nazi professional restrictions on Jews affected them more starkly than did women and the elderly. By 1939, twenty percent more women than men remained in Germany, many of them elderly. Marion Kaplan, "Changing Roles in Jewish Families," in *Jewish Life in Nazi*

dual membership was part of the Centralverein's growing recognition that, for many German Jews, emigration was the best response to the growing number of economic and civic restrictions under the Nazis. In rearranging priorities on intra-Jewish politics, the Centralverein's regional and local branches also became more welcoming to all Jews in Germany and, in doing so, cultivated a more inclusive understanding of German-Jewishness.

For those who could not or did not want to emigrate, embracing German-Jewishness became a means of self-preservation. In January 1935, Berlin Zionist Dr. Siegfried Mehler wrote a letter to LVB Greater Berlin offering to volunteer on the Centralverein's behalf. To explain this change of heart, Mehler wrote that "Certain experiences in the last weeks have shown me that, for all intents and purposes, the C.V. has also taken a positive position on the Palestine problem; that for me, as an elderly man who can hardly leave Germany, the fight for working and living space in Germany must be just as important as the other fight."[118] Protecting German Jews' right to leave and guaranteeing the safety of those who chose to stay were at the core of the Centralverein's work during this period, particularly at the regional land local level. It was for individuals like Mehler that the Centralverein's JWBs and community programming were particularly intended.

How Jewish communities throughout Germany experienced boycotts, social persecution, and marginalization was often highly uneven. Though much changed in local relationships between Jews and non-Jews following the rise of the Nazi regime, the change was slower in regions with a Catholic majority such as the Rhineland. In December 1934, member of the C.V. executive board Karl Löwenstein reported that community coexistence with "the thoroughly

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Germany: Dilemmas and Responses, ed. Francis R. Nicosia and David Scrase (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 34-37.

[118] WL MF Doc 55/34/1484, January 24, 1935.

Catholic population" in Cologne was almost entirely peaceful.[119] This meant that, aside from the local newspaper or the regional Nazi *Gauleiter*, there was little local support for antisemitism or the NSDAP in the area.[120] This relative stability was a continuation of the comparably good relationship between German Jews and German Catholics that had characterized the Rhineland in the German Empire and Weimar Republic as well. As both the Volksverein and the Zentrum were disbanded in mid-1933, this also showed that these regional networks were not predicated on or based in associational or political structures. Instead, they were largely reflections of longstanding and deeply engrained local customs and shared experiences of occupation.[121] Even after the last occupation troops left in 1930, this area remained affected by demilitarization imposed by the Treaty of Versailles until German troops marched into the Rhineland on March 8, 1936.[122]

The long legacy of occupation had a considerable effect on how regional identity was constructed in the Rhineland. After more than a decade of occupation – and a longer history under Napoleon in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century – those living in the Rhineland were more accustomed to having to defend and maintain their political identities against outside political or state pressure. While German Catholics ultimately did not prioritize these connections and chose instead to let them dissolve under the pressure of the Nazi's anti-Jewish measures, it took time for them to completely break down. While regionalized political

[119] WL MF Doc 55/20/798, p. 8.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Lise Leibholz, "Zehn Jahre Landesverband Rheinland des C.V.," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 9 (January 31, 1930), 53.

[122] While it would have been in their right to do so, the British and French decided not to respond with military action and instead allowed Hitler to keep German troops in the Rhineland and to remilitarize the region. Alexander Wolz, *Die Rheinlandkrise 1936: Das Auswärtige Amt und der Locarnopakt 1933-1936* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2014), 461-2.

identities were deeply engrained in local populations, they also relied on local residents' determination to maintain and prioritize them. Though regionalism did not end in Nazi Germany, the ways in which the Nazi state defined civic belonging and membership in the polity progressively weakened and reshaped it.

The Centralverein's comparable centralization and shift toward large cities after 1935 reflected larger trends within German-Jewish organizational life. While Jewish life declined in small towns, new and existing cultural, social, and economic networks for German Jews grew in many large cities. Here Jewish children generally had better access to Jewish schools, while adults could receive better professional advice or support for emigration. German Jews also gained access to more cultural and social opportunities, and, in most cases, experiencing less persecution than in small towns.[123] While many of these so-called internal immigrants – particularly those above fifty years old and those unable to work – chose to stay in large cities, a considerable number moved as the first step toward emigrating from Germany as a whole.[124] Through the work of Jewish organizations and associations, large cities like Cologne and Berlin became bastions of Jewish community life in the mid-1930s. In Cologne, for example, the size of the Jewish community remained the same due to an influx of German Jews from surrounding towns despite over a thousand Jews emigrating by late 1934.[125] This internal immigration had a considerable effect on the composition of the Centralverein's local and regional sphere as well.

The decline of Jewish rural communities and internal migration to urban centers was a familiar phenomenon in German-Jewish history of the previous century. With many German

[123] Max P. Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge, 1918-1938: eine Geschichte des Preussischen Landesverbandes jüdischer Gemeinden [1918-1938]* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981), 252.

[124] Max Birnbaum, "Binnenwanderung als Etappe der Auswanderung," *Der Morgen* 13 (February 1938), 465.

[125] WL MF Doc 55/20/798, p. 8.

Jews leaving small towns and moving to large cities in the late nineteenth century, internal migration to cities was closely tied to German Jews' growing acculturation and rising social mobility.[126] In the mid-1930s, however, Jewish internal migration to urban centers was driven instead by the need for communal cohesion and support in the face of Nazi persecution. Relocation to urban centers in the 1930s was driven by necessity.

As more German Jews left small towns and villages to move to larger cities, the boundaries between different regions also became more diffuse. This was particularly evident in the growing cooperation between the Centralverein's regional branches within their respective local spheres. In the winter of 1934/5, LVB Linksrhein, Rhineland-Westphalia, and Hessen/Hessen-Nassau worked together to organize lectures and meetings in their local branches. LVB Linksrhein and Rhineland-Westphalia held get-togethers for individuals from particular professional groups in cities like Bonn, Cologne, Aachen, Mainz, and Düsseldorf, among others, while LVB Hessen/Hessen-Nassau held specialized lectures for these groups as well.[127] These targeted lectures were also accompanied by more general lecture tours through smaller communities in the region. All of these lectures and meetings were held either by the LVB Linksrhein syndic Hans Jacobi, former LVB Pfalz chairman Erich Kehr, or Rabbi Max Eschelbacher from Düsseldorf.[128] The consolidation of programming in western Germany was part of a broader decline of regional variation in German society.[129] Nevertheless, that LVB

[126] Marion Kaplan, *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 181 and Peter Pulzer, *Jews and the German State: The Political History of a Minority, 1848-1933* (Hoboken: Blackwell, 1992), 5.

[127] WL MF Doc 55/9/247, August 31, 1934.

[128] Ibid.

[129] LVB Rhineland-Westphalia's membership remained largely consistent throughout the 1930s; the regional branch in Essen had over 3,600 members in 1933, rose to over 4,200 in 1934 and 1935, before declining back to around 3,600 in 1938. Notably, while LVB Linksrhein had more members than LVB Rhineland in 1933, LVB Linksrhein's

Linksrhein and LVB Rhineland-Westphalia cooperated more closely during this period while also remaining separate branches also demonstrated that communities on both the right and the left side of the Rhine retained their own distinct regionalized identities. This showed the enduring nature of these regional political divides and the extent to which German Jews were integrated into the German political and social landscape in the Rhineland. As regional identities were tied not to legal status but to cultural and social traditions, they remained influential long after the political bonds themselves were forcibly removed.

Part of the Centralverein's expanding intra-communal engagement was a growing focus on supporting both German-Jewish youth and women. It was the determination to strengthen Jewishness among German-Jewish youth both because of and despite growing anti-Jewish measures that Kurt Steinberg wrote that: "There is no escape. There is no going back. A change of heart is useless. No party membership or certificate of baptism can protect you. All ways back are cut off. The only way out is through!"[130] In maintaining and strengthening Germanness and Jewishness among a new generation, Steinberg and the regional branch in Essen were determined to preserve German-Jewish life both in the present as well as in the increasingly uncertain future. Steinberg's call to Jewish youth to fight for a German-Jewish future was part of the Centralverein's larger expansion to support Jewish youth movements during this period. Established in late 1933, the Bund deutsch-jüdischer Jugend (Union of German-Jewish Youth or

membership declined by around fifty percent between 1933 and 1934 and then rose to remain only slightly over 2,000 in 1935 and 1938. This decline in LVB Linksrhein was less a response to acute instances, but a continuation of a process that began in the early 1930s.While the two branches continued operating independently, this cooperation demonstrated that the political and regional borders between communities on the left and right banks of the Rhine were increasingly permeable. Goldmann, *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in Rheinland und Westfalen*, 416.

[130] WL MF Doc 55/37/1531, p. 52.

BddJ) consolidated non-Zionist Jewish youth organizations and, starting in early 1934, reached agreements to cooperate closely with both the C.V. and the RjF.[131]

Alongside more opportunities for Jewish youth, the Centralverein also bolstered its networks for Jewish women as well. As Marion Kaplan argued, women were vital agents in helping families adapt in the private sphere prior to November 1938, and, in doing so, worked to keep "the effects of Nazism at bay."[132] German-Jewish women were now often agents of preserving Jewishness and Germanness in the home as well as in the Jewish community itself. While the Nazi state increasingly regulated and defined Jewishness in the public sphere, German Jews' Germanness was pushed further into the private sphere.[133]

The Centralverein's women's groups remained active during the mid-1930s, with the demand for new groups rising and older groups becoming active after years of inaction. The former was the case in Frankfurt am Main in 1934, Cologne in 1935 and Oppeln in 1936, while the latter in Leipzig in 1934 and Hamburg in 1936.[134] As part of the larger consolidation of Jewish associational networks, the Centralverein's women's groups also became corporative members of the Jüdischer Frauenbund in July 1935.[135] The C.V. central office and the JFB's executive board made this decision without informing its regional branches or the local women's groups of the negotiations until after the agreement had been made. [136] In doing so, the C.V.

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[131] WL MF Doc 55/1/25, January 30, 1934 and 54/39/609, June 29, 1934.

[132] Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair,* 5.

[133] Friedländer, *Das dritte Reich und die Juden*, 77.

[134] WL MF Doc 55/34/1482, p. 57, 91, 335, and 342 and 55/20/798, p. 1.

[135] WL MF Doc 55/34/1482, July 16, 1935.

[136] Apart from the women's group in Königsberg and Greater Berlin, which had joined their regional JFB branches in 1929, this executive decision made all previously separate C.V. women's groups members of the JFB at the national level. WL MF Doc 55/34/1482, p. 183 and WL MF Doc 55/34/1482, p. 223 and p. 197.

central office further consolidated Jewish associational life and centralized the administration of these groups in the national sphere.[137] The Centralverein's extensive local and regional networks were also accompanied by a growing network of subsidiary groups; women were encouraged to join or create women's groups, Jewish youth to join the BDJJ, and those interested in sport were encouraged to join the RjF's sport association *Der Schild* as well.[138] This diversification and specialization of the Centralverein's networks reflected the larger consolidation of Jewish organizational networks in the early 1930s.

Part of this consolidation meant adapting how the Centralverein advocated for Jewish interests. While it was increasingly difficult for the Centralverein to advocate for Jewish interests at the state level, it continued doing so at the local and regional level throughout the 1930s. In August 1935, syndic of LVB Northwestern Germany Ludwig Freudenthal met with the deputy director of the Gestapo for the Mecklenburg region in Schwerin, chief inspector Marquardt. In this meeting, Freudenthal and Marquardt discussed the fact that the local police in the town of Waren had forced Jewish stores to close for a week and that police in Parchim had forced Jewish businesses to close there as well.[139] In response, Marquardt assured Freudenthal that the Gestapo would send orders to all police departments in the region to forbid such "excesses and individual actions" in Mecklenburg going forward.[140]

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[137] This was particularly notable considering that the C.V.'s initial motivation behind these women's groups and their tailored programming was to offset the JFB's frequently Zionist leanings. As in the 1920s, joining the JFB also guaranteed the that the C.V. could appoint a representative to the JFB's executive board and that the local branches could elect their own representatives to its assemblies. This therefore increased C.V. influence on the JFB at the national level and further asserted its authority over Jewish education and community engagement.

[138] WL MF Doc 55/22/897, p. 26.

[139] WL MF Doc 55/9/258, July 23, 1935, August 16, 1935, and August 6, 1935.

[140] Ibid., August 6, 1935.

While this did not prevent the situation in Parchim from worsening even after the stores were allowed to reopen, it did demonstrate the regional branches' continued work in defense of German-Jewish life.[141] After the local bank cancelled existing loans to three Jewish business owners, the C.V. central office then appealed to the Ministry of Economics, Ministry of the Interior, as well as to the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin for assistance.[142] The highly limited defense work that the Centralverein could conduct during this period meant advocating local interests at the regional and national level.

Both whether the local and regional Gestapo and police offices worked together as well as whether their officers share the same attitude toward German Jews determined the outcome of such meetings. That this was not the case in Parchim showed the fragile and tenuous nature of the Centralverein's attempts at intervening on behalf of German Jews in the local sphere. Nevertheless, as the success of such interventions was entirely reliant on the local and regional officials in charge, such meetings reinforced the regional branches as a core part of the ongoing protection of German Jews in the local sphere. Regional branches acted as mediators between both the state and the local sphere as well as between the local and national levels within the Centralverein.

Regional branches also became targets of restrictive regulations as well. Starting in August 1935, the Gestapo forbid the C.V. regional branches from sending local branches newsletters and other informative mailings because they "conflicted with national socialist government politics."[143] To circumvent this ban, LVB Northwestern Germany instead asked the

[141] WL MF Doc 55/9/258, August 16, 1935.

[142] Ibid., p. 46-8, July 25, 1935 and p. 249.

[143] WL MF Doc 55/40/1674, August 9, 1935.

central office to send its nine largest local branches newsletters directly from Berlin.[144] While the regional branch remained responsible for the local sphere, the comparative autonomy that local branches retained helped them navigate and circumvent such arbitrary restrictions from Berlin.

The chain of communication between the local, regional, and national levels that was an integral aspect of the Centralverein's decentralization in the Weimar Republic was no longer suitable or enforced by mid-1935. Instead, relationships among the local, regional, and national levels were increasingly reprioritized according to what helped ensure that each sphere continued to receive the immediate support it needed. In cases where the regional branch could no longer support its local branches, the central office could step in with relative ease, and vice versa. By the summer of 1935, the intra-associational squabbles over who was responsible for what had fallen away to focusing on optimizing aid and support with shrinking resources. This in turn allowed the Centralverein's regional branches and central office to try adapting to the changing realities of Jewish life under the Nazi Regime.

5.4. After the Nuremberg Laws

Following the Nuremberg Laws, the Centralverein was increasingly forced to act as the caretaker and protector of German-Jewish identity.[145] First passed on September 15, 1935, the Nuremberg laws stripped German Jews of citizenship, forbid mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews, banned Jewish women under 45 from working in domestic service in non-Jewish homes, and prohibited Jews from raising the Nazi flag.[146] Two months later, an amendment to

[144] WL MF Doc 55/40/1674, September 26, 1935.

[145] Goldmann, *Der Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in Rheinland und Westfalen*, 401.

[146] Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden,* 65-6.

the law was added, which defined who was considered Jewish and divested Jews of their right to vote, among other regulations.[147] These laws, especially the precise definition of who was considered a Jew, further segregated German Jews and those of mixed descent – many of whom had not previously considered themselves Jewish – from the general German population.[148]

Following the Nuremberg laws, the Centralverein was forced to acknowledge that German-Jewish emancipation had ended. In a letter to its members for the Jewish New Year on September 27, 1935, Brodnitz and the chairman of LVB Greater Berlin Bruno Glaserfeld stated that "With the issuance of the Nuremberg Laws, an epoch of Jewish history, whose fundamental concepts we believe we have worked in honor to serve for over a hundred years, has come to an end"[149] This was a turning point for the Centralverein and for all German Jews who had remained optimistic that it was possible to adapt to and navigate the Nazi system. These laws effectively excluded German Jews from German society and forced them to focus solely on the Jewish community itself. While the Centralverein had managed to maintain its dedication to defending German-Jewish civil rights and social equality, the Nuremberg Laws put a final end to this work. In losing their citizenship and becoming state subjects, German Jews were robbed of the civil rights that the Centralverein had sworn to defend.

Two days after the first Nuremberg Laws were enacted, the Centralverein complied with the new legislation and filed with the district court in central Berlin to change its name from Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith) to the Centralverein der Juden in Deutschland (Central Association

[147] Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, 69-70.

[148] Wolf Gruner, ed., *The Persecution and Murder of the European Jews by Nazi Germany, 1933–1945*, vol. 1, *German Reich 1933–1937* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019), 56.

[149] WL MF Doc 55/2/74, September 27, 1935.

of Jews in Germany). In the same document, it also amended the first section of its statutes to state that the Centralverein's "duty is the maintenance of Jewish life in Germany as well as the legal and economic support of Jews living in Germany."[150] Like its new name, the statutes avoided any language that inferred citizenship or civil rights. In losing the right to publicly identify as the representative of German-Jewish civil rights and removing German-Jewishness from its mission and name, the C.V. was deprived of its official identity.

While the Centralverein was no longer a registered association and was forced to change both its name and the first section of its statutes, it continued its work in German-Jewish local and regional spheres. The name and statute change had little practical effect on the Centralverein's work in the local and regional sphere.[151] As the Central Association of Jews in Germany, the Centralverein remained dedicated to supporting German-Jewishness while also prioritizing advising and strengthening the Jewish community in Germany. Its local and regional spheres also remained active after September 1935, with the JWBs offering expanded office hours to meet rising demand. While the Nuremberg Laws denied German Jews the right to claim a national German identity, regional German identities remained far more difficult to regulate. As the definitions of regional German identities were often highly ambiguous and rooted in historical political and cultural divisions, German Jews continued to navigate and adapt their regional German identities even after being stripped of their citizenship.

Following the Nuremberg Laws, the Centralverein lost a considerable number of members. Some of those who left explained this decision by saying that they did not believe that

[150] WL MF Doc 55/2/69, September 17, 1935.

[151] While the central office sent a memorandum to its regional branches asking them to strike through the old name on all official letterhead to leave only Centralverein and the regional branch's name, there were no further adjustments made. WL MF Doc 55/5/162, January 13, 1936.

the Centralverein had any reason to continue existing.[152] It was for this reason that the deputy chairman of OG Konstanz, lawyer Moritz Bloch, resigned his post in October 1935. In response to this news, Eva Reichmann-Jungmann wrote him a letter defending the Centralverein's continued existence, stating,

> It is certainly easier today to sacrifice the C.V. along with the already buried emancipation; he who is familiar, however, with its comprehensive operations in all its offices and local branches, who knows how many grand networks of assistance within all of Germany would disappear at once, he cannot justify to spend time with such shrewd theoretical arguments. He knows that there is only one duty: to keep working![153]

Though the Nuremberg Laws put an end to Jewish emancipation in Germany, they did not shake the Centralverein's determination to utilize its existing and developing regional and local networks to ensure that German Jews received the help and support that they needed. This meant continuing to support both the local sphere and the JWBs, and, in doing so, providing the growing number of German Jews who were dependent on additional aid with tailored advice and tools for self-help. Such regionalized assistance was reliant on ongoing active support from German Jews in the local and regional sphere from men like Bloch. In highlighting these networks and their vital role in safeguarding Jewish livelihoods, Reichmann-Jungmann defended not only the Centralverein's legitimacy, but also the local and regional networks on which it relied.[154]

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[152] WL MF Doc 55/21/836, October 8, 1935.

[153] Ibid., October 30, 1935.

[154] Only a few days later, LVB Lower Silesia's syndic Dr. Breitbarth wrote a similar letter to three former members in OG Glogau asking them to rejoin the Centralverein. Here Breitbarth argued that just because the Centralverein had changed its name did not mean that it and its work had become any less important or meaningful. WL MF Doc 55/17/620, p. 28-9.

By late 1935, the Centralverein's local and regional branches were cooperating more closely with other Jewish associations to help expand support the Jewish community. This was particularly evident in community support measures such as the winter relief drives starting in the mid-1930s. While German Jews were allowed to receive funding from and donate to the Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt's (National-Socialist People's Welfare or NSV) yearly winter relief fundraising drive in the winters of 1933/4 and 1934/5, this ended in October 1935.[155] In its place, Jewish organizations immediately organized their own winter relief organization. Based on the Winterhilfswerk des deutschen Volkes (Winter Relief of the German People or WHW), the Jüdische Winterhilfe (Jewish Winter Relief or JWH) began operating in mid-October 1935. The JWH was run by fifteen Jewish organizations and associations including the Reichsvertretung, the PLVB, the Centralverein, JFB, RjF, the ZVfD, and Jewish religious community organizations in Hesse, Berlin, Baden Saxony, Württemberg, and Bavaria.[156] With over twenty percent of German Jews reliant on the JWH in its first year, this system provided necessary financial support to help German Jews withstand growing economic and professional marginalization.[157]

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[155] The NSV was the second largest association in the 1930s, with 4.7 million members and over 520,000 volunteers by 1935. While it was not enough to meet the needs of those German Jews who relied on such help, the C.V. characterized the cooperation between the NSV's WHW and Jewish winter relief programs in the winter of 1933/4 as "seamless." Despite this official approval, WHW drives in Hesse, Bavaria, and the Palatinate refused to support or accept donations from Jews in 1934/5. Though this was reversed in some local towns after German Jews intervened with local officials, by October 1935, all Jews were banned from participating in any capacity. Hilde Marx, "Winterhilfe in Berlin – ein Blick zurück," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 13 (April 12, 1934), 178, Wolf Gruner, *Öffentliche Wohlfahrt und die Judenverfolgung: Wechselwirkungen lokaler und zentraler Politik im NS-Staat [1933-1942]* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002), 30, and Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe unter dem Naziregime,* 162.

[156] WL MF Doc 55/2/75, p. 62.

[157] In some regions, particularly in Grenzmark Posen - West Prussia, Thuringia, and the Saarland, the number of German Jews reliant on the JWH was substantially higher than twenty percent. Comparatively, Jews southern Germany and the Rhineland were less reliant on the JWH than the national average. Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe unter dem Naziregime*, 163.

To support this new initiative, the Centralverein called on its members to volunteer for the JWH in their communities; over 100 C.V. members in LVB Greater Berlin did so immediately after its establishment.[158] That C.V. members were called to action on behalf of any organization that was involved in the JWH in their communities decentered the Centralverein's work beyond the perimeters of the association itself. Such a call for mutual support reinforced closer cooperation between Jewish organizations and individuals at the local, regional, and national levels. This decentralization across the Jewish community and not just within the Centralverein itself reflected the shifting parameters of Jewish associational life as a whole after the Nuremberg Laws. As such, it also meant that the highly autonomous regional and local networks that the Centralverein developed during the late German Empire and throughout the Weimar Republic were now also engaged in non-C.V. related initiatives within the Jewish community.

Alongside its growing cooperation in German-Jewish initiatives, the Centralverein also continued organizing its own programming and assemblies. Local branches held more lectures in both 1934 and 1935 than they had in most years during the Weimar Republic. These lectures focused largely on topics pertaining to community work and the growing concerns over the future of Jewish life in Germany. In October 1935, a local speaker held the lecture "Despite Everything: German Jewishness," while Manfred Swarsensky held the lecture "German Jew, whereto?" in two communities earlier that year.[159] Even prior to the Nuremberg laws, these lectures focused on encouraging German Jews to become more involved in their respective communities and to reinforce their German-Jewish identities. In doing so, these topics also

[158] "Ehrenamtliche Helfer an die Front," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 14 (October 17, 1935), 553.

[159] WL MF Doc 55/34/1482, p. 294, 55/8/242, March 5, 1935, and 55/9/249, February 11, 1935.

provided a foundation for reshaping identity so that German Jews could retain their German-Jewishness even after emigration.

Such lectures were part of the Centralverein's growing determination to protect German Jews even if that meant leaving Germany. In mid-October 1935, the assistant syndic in Essen, Kurt Steinberg, wrote in a memorandum that "[The C.V.'s work] is no longer about preserving German-Jewish existence, but rather safeguarding Jewish means of survival, wherever that may occur."[160] The Centralverein increasingly embraced emigration as a means to rescue not only German Jews as individuals, but German-Jewishness as a concept and identity as well. This expanded what it meant to be a German Jew, and redefined it as an attitude and a personal trait that was no longer predicated on being in Germany itself.[161] In doing so, the Centralverein redefined Germanness and Jewishness by "dissociating it from emancipation," and making it about perpetuating and conserving German-Jewish identity for the future.[162] Though emancipation had failed, the Centralverein responded by continuing to attempt to ameliorate the situation by internationalizing and reframing identity so that it was no longer dependent on or limited by geography.

[160] WL MF Doc, 55/55/2031, p. 4 and Rebecca Boehling and Uta Larky, *Life and Loss in the Shadow of the Holocaust: A Jewish Family's Untold Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 55.

[161] It was this mentality as a German Jew abroad that led to the development of the term 'Jecke' in the Yishuv in the 1930s. A largely negative term, the stereotype of German Jews in Palestine was of individuals who did not fit in, did not speak Hebrew, and insisted on wearing a shirt and tie despite the different climate. While the stereotype of the Jecke was highly exaggerated, this devotion to German-Jewishness despite emigration to a highly different culture and climate showed the extent to which German Jews remained dedicated to these identities long after they left Germany. Karl-Erich Grözinger, *Sprache und Identität im Judentum*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 238.

[162] WL MF Doc, 55/55/2031, p. 6.

The Centralverein's support of those who wished to emigrate was one of its most considerable policy changes since its establishment in 1893.[163] To respond to the rapidly-growing number of German Jews who wanted to emigrate after the Nuremberg Laws – many of whom did not want or were unable to receive certificates to emigrate to Palestine – the Centralverein began organizing its own emigration assistance centers in 1936. To establish emigration training centers for Jewish youth, the Centralverein needed permission from the Gestapo, which it received after a meeting in December 1935.[164] This led to the establishment of its emigration preparation school Groß-Breesen in May 1936, where youth were trained to be farmers after emigration. By 1936, the Centralverein contributed to growing networks supporting those German Jews who wanted to emigrate while also providing support to those who chose or had to remain in Germany. In doing so, the Centralverein attempted to provide German Jews with the most relevant and suitable advice and support based on what they considered best for individuals and their communities.

The Centralverein reframed its synthesized Germanness and Jewishness as an international project starting in 1935.[165] The internationalization of German-Jewish identity was

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[163] Prior to 1936, the C.V. provided what it called pre-consultations for emigration on behalf of the Hilfsverein, which was then responsible for the individual cases themselves. This was a further instance in which associations came together to coordinate on behalf of German-Jewish interests. While the Hilfsverein provided considerable support for adults wanting to emigrate, until late 1935, the Zionists' Palestine Office was the one most focused on supporting the emigration of Jewish youth. Based in Berlin with 22 local offices throughout Germany by 1936, the Palestine Office was in charge of distributing certificates for emigration to the British Mandate of Palestine. Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe unter dem Naziregime*, 82 and 86-87, and The Structure of Jewish Emergency Relief in Germany, December 1936; Max Kreutzberger Collection; AR 7183; 11; 2; Leo Baeck Institute, 31.

[164] WL MF Doc 55/2/74, p. 5 and October 25, 1935. For more on the C.V.'s emigration work and its preparatory school Groß-Breesen, see Frank Wolff, "Der Traum vom deutsch-jüdischen Bauern: Das Auswandererlehrgut Groß-Breesen (1935–1938) und die verspätete Emigrationspolitik des Centralvereins," in *'Was soll aus uns warden?': Zur Geschichte des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, ed. Regina Grundmann, Bernd J. Hartmann, and Daniel Siemens (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2020), 195-237.

[165] Other German Jews already began this process of reframing Germanness in mid-1933. Paul Schreiber writing in the C.V. journal *Der Morgen* in August 1933 that German youth must "continue to let our Germanness glow within us even far from German soil." Paul Schreiber, "Unser Weg," *Der Morgen* 9 (August 1933), 217.

particularly evident in late September 1938, when executive board member and treasurer for LVB Pomerania Max Eisenstein wrote a letter to the Centralverein's executive board prior to emigrating to South Africa. In this letter, Eisenstein echoed the complicated feelings of many German Jews forced to emigrate when he stated that "Though it is the desire of almost every Jew in Germany to be able to leave the country as quickly as possible, I don't need to tell you how difficult it is for me to have to leave the old and cherished *Heimat* and to face an uncertain future."[166] Despite leaving Germany, Eisenstein hoped to continue working for and defending Jewish rights in his new home in South Africa.[167] This was not a renunciation of German-Jewishness through emigration, but the attempt to rescue and reframe it in a new international context. With almost 170,000 – roughly 34 percent – of German Jews emigrating between January 1933 and December 1938, the Centralverein also encouraged those emigrating to maintain their German-Jewish identity abroad.[168]

Many of the Centralverein's lecture topics during the mid-to-late 1930s were focused on themes that supported emigration and helped educate German Jews on the possible opportunities and experiences abroad. Local and regional representatives increasingly held lectures intended to support and guide their members' emigration. In March 1937, OG Breslau organized a lecture with the topic "South America as an Emigration Destination" and LVB Greater Berlin hosted a lecture on "Constructive Emigration Policy," while OG Königsberg held the lecture "Jewish Emigration from Germany – Experiences and Possibilities" a few weeks later.[169] Such topics

[166] WL MF Doc 55/8/242, September 30, 1938.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Wolfgang Benz, ed. *Dimensionen des Völkermords: Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1991) 23 and 34.

[169] "Aus der C.-V.-Bewegung," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 16 (March 4, 1937), 183 and Ibid., (April 15, 1937), 306.

centered the discussion of emigration within the local and regional branches' educational programming and positive work. In doing so, these speakers recontextualized the regionalized understandings of Germanness and Jewishness to better accommodate and withstand emigration.

Following the Nuremberg Laws, the pace at which the Nazis implemented further restrictions on Jewish associations slowed temporarily. In 1936, the Nazis invaded and remilitarized of the Rhineland in March and hosted the 1936 Olympic games in late summer.[170] This brief respite in anti-Jewish measures was first due to preoccupation with the invasion and the potential – but ultimately lacking – consequences, and to avoid any potential international outcry during the games that could harm Germany's reputation abroad.[171] The Centralverein utilized this relative calm to conduct the largest lecture tour it ever organized. Between March and December 1936, at least three different speakers from the regional branches held the same lecture in fifteen different communities throughout Germany. Titled "Jewish Fate, Jewish Tasks," the respective speakers discussed the fact that, since Jews had faced centuries of persecution, they already knew that their fate was tied to their community.[172] As such, the speaker called on all German Jews to do everything possible to "foster the Jewish community, and continue Jewish history."[173] These lectures emphasized German Jews' enduring responsibilities to their German-Jewish community without restricting such connections to remaining in Germany. With multiple speakers holding the same lecture in numerous

[170] Moshe Zimmermann, *Die deutschen Juden, 1914-1945* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997), 49, On March 7, 1936, the German army invaded and remilitarized the Rhineland without meeting any armed protest from Britain or France, who, according to the Locarno treaty, were obligated to do so.

[171] Gruner, ed., *The Persecution and Murder of the European Jews by Nazi Germany, 1933–1945*, vol. 1, 57 and 618 and Wolz, *Die Rheinlandkrise 1936,* 461.

[172] WL MF Doc 55/23/949, p. 34.

[173] Ibid.

communities across Germany, they also further highlighted the growing cooperation both between different regional branches as well as between the regional and national levels.

Such cooperation both within the Centralverein and with other German-Jewish associations increased throughout 1936 and 1937. Over the course of 1937, the Hilfsverein expanded its offices in Frankfurt, Breslau, Leipzig, Cologne, Stuttgart, and Hamburg to provide more emigration support to Jews outside Berlin.[174] By the end of that year, the Hilfsverein, Palestine Office, and the Main Office for Migrant Welfare came together to form the Central Agency for Jewish Emigration.[175] For those who chose to or were forced to remain in Germany, the Centralverein provided even more extensive counseling and support. In 1937 alone, the C.V. office in Berlin provided 30,000 consultations and the regional branches held consulting hours in around forty different medium and large-sized towns and cities.[176] This concurrent consolidation and expansion reflected German Jews' growing financial hardship caused by progressive anti-Jewish measures and their exclusion from a growing range of professions.

5.4.1. The End of Jewish Associational Life in Germany

Despite the worsening economic situation after 1935, it was not until 1938 that a new phase of the Nazis' anti-Jewish persecution began. With the pace and severity of anti-Jewish measures increasingly rapidly, Saul Friedländer argued that 1938 marked a "fateful turning point" for Jews in Germany.[177] This phase began in early 1938, when German Jews were forced to relinquish their passports, and a small number of Soviet and Romanian Jews were expelled

[174] Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe unter dem Naziregime,* 87.

[175] Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge*, 260.

[176] WL MF Doc 55/6/191, p. 79.

[177] Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden,* 85.

from Germany.[178] Following the annexation of Austria in March 1938, the Nazis intensified attacks on Jewish economic independence in the spring and summer; Jews were required to register their assets in April 1938, Jewish medical doctors were banned from practicing, and Jews were forbidden from working as lawyers in September of that year.[179] These increased economic and professional restrictions sought to deprive German Jews of their financial means, and were accompanied by growing pressure for Jews to concentrate in large cities and, ultimately, to emigrate as well.[180]

In May 1938, the Gestapo ordered that all local groups in Jewish associations must be renamed *Ortsverband* – local chapter or OV – instead of *Ortsgruppe* and gave the Centralverein two weeks to implement this change.[181] While *Ortsgruppe* and *Ortsverband* meant the same thing and did not affect how these local groups operated, this order further asserted Gestapo control over Jewish associational life.[182] Starting in the spring of 1938, the Gestapo also increasingly intervened in the Centralverein's regional branches to demand the dissolution of certain local branches. This was the case in August 1938, when the Gestapo office in Stettin gave LVB Pomerania a choice: either disband branches that had lost too many members to remain an active *Ortsverband* or the Gestapo would do it for them.[183] To avoid granting the Gestapo such direct control over the Centralverein's local sphere, the chairman of LVB Pomerania chose the

[178] While it was not put into practice until early 1939, Jews were also required to have a "Jewish" forename or to include Sara or Israel as their middle name on official documents instead starting in August of that year. Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden,* 121 and 126-7.

[179] Ibid., 122.

[180] Nicosia, *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, 4 and Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 106.

[181] WL MF Doc 55/3/93, May 20, 1938.

[182] WL MF Doc 55/8/239, October 28, 1938.

[183] WL MF Doc 55/8/242, p. 19.

former option and disbanded two local branches immediately and four more less than a month later.[184] While the orders for local dissolution came from the Gestapo, by dissolving the local branches themselves, LVB Pomerania retained a small degree of agency. Despite LVB Pomerania's ability to choose which branches to disband, the Gestapo's demands for local dissolution was part of the Nazi regime's ongoing process of separating German Jews from German society and concentrating them in specific areas.[185]

Both the growing number of German Jews who emigrated and considerable internal migration from smaller towns to large cities meant that, by 1938, many smaller and medium-sized local branches saw little point in carrying on their work and asked for permission from their respective regional branch to disband. Citing declining membership and financial hardship, OV Bonn's chairman asked LVB Linksrhein for permission to do so in July 1938.[186] As there were still more than 400 Jews in Bonn at the time and no concurrent demand from the Gestapo for its dissolution, LVB Linksrhein promptly declined OV Bonn's request.[187] Despite the local branch's continued autonomy within its own community, it did not have the authority to determine when and how it was allowed to cease operating.

Regardless of whether the impetus came from the local or regional branches or the Gestapo itself, when local branches were disbanded the local members began paying dues to the regional branch directly.[188] This meant that when local branches disbanded, that region became centralized at the regional level and not the central office. In integrating local members into the

[184] WL MF Doc 55/8/242, August 10, 1938 and September 5, 1938.

[185] Nicosia, *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany*, 4 and Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 56 and 106.

[186] WL MF Doc 55/12/371, p. 2.

[187] Ibid., p. 1 and 3.

[188] WL MF Doc 55/8/242, August 10, 1938.

regional branch directly, regional branches helped make the process of dissolution less distressing for the small number of German Jews who remained in these communities. In doing so, the regional branches were agents of preservation and continuity until the Centralverein's own dissolution only three months later. As the number of local branches in small villages and towns declined, regional branches became increasingly more responsible for the direct management of the local sphere. By the fall of 1938, regional branches were the Centralverein's primary means of preserving Jewish community networks when local leaders were no longer willing or able to do so.

Despite growing persecution and anti-Jewish measures, the Centralverein's local and regional sphere continued intervening in cases of antisemitism in their communities. As late as March 1938, the C.V. branches in Braunschweig and Essen successfully intervened with local authorities to allow Jewish students to attend a professional school and to remove an antisemitic sign, respectively. Additionally, LVB Rhineland also negotiated with authorities in Warstein to remove signs calling for a boycott of Jewish businesses.[189] Alongside these cases, other appeals against antisemitic ordnances or signage were successful in late 1937 and early 1938 in places like the Province of Saxony, Berlin, Silesia, and Leipzig.[190] While only successful in highly limited cases, that some claims were decided in the Centralverein's favor reinforced hopes that German Jews could still fight persecution and protect German-Jewish interests in the local sphere. While these cases were always small, that success was possible reinforced the local and regional sphere's sense of agency and their ability to navigate and negotiate marginalization and persecution.

[189] WL MF Doc 55/5/190, March 21, 1938, March 22, 1938, and March 25, 1938.

[190] Ibid., February 5, 1938, January 21, 1938, December 15, 1937, and October 30, 1937.

The regional branches' continued engagement on behalf of their communities was partially a result of ongoing centralization over the prior five years, as well as a reflection of changing demographics within the German-Jewish community itself. The number of Jews who left small towns for bigger cities during this period was comparably high, and led to the decline of the small local sphere in German-Jewish life. Jewish migration within Germany increased at a rapid pace as German Jews left their small and mid-sized towns and moved to larger cities. While 74 percent of German Jews lived in mid-sized or large cities in 1933, by 1937 it had increased to 84 percent.[191] The rapid decline and dissolution of small communities throughout Germany and recentered Jewish life even further into the metropoles.[192] In February 1938, PLVB representative Max Birnbaum wrote in the Centralverein's literary journal *Der Morgen* that "*the internal migration of today is no longer the expression of economic development, but rather of economic liquidation*."[193] Since opportunities for professional, educational, and social life were increasingly disappearing in small towns, many German Jews were forced to seek new options in cities whose German-Jewish support networks were larger and well established.[194]

The Centralverein's local and regional branches continued organizing lectures and assemblies in Jewish communities. In the three years prior to its dissolution in 1938, the majority of its lectures took place in cities with the largest Jewish communities in Germany. By far the

[191] Additionally, 63 percent lived in the seven communities with more than 5,000 Jewish members compared to 55 percent five years previously. This increase was all the more notable considering the fact that in 1933 there were ten communities that had over 5,000 members, which means that the additional eight percent was concentrated in a thirty percent smaller space. Birnbaum, "Binnenwanderung als Etappe der Auswanderung," 461.

[192] This was a process that had been ongoing since the late nineteenth century; while only twenty percent of German Jews lived in cities in 1875, by 1933 over seventy percent did so. Benz, *Dimension des Völkermords*, 24.

[193] Italics in original. Birnbaum, "Binnenwanderung als Etappe der Auswanderung,", 463.

[194] While the PLVB largely continued operating as normal in 1933 and 1934, as Max P. Birnbaum demonstrated, it began dissolving smaller communities and combining them with the medium Jewish communities following the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935. Birnbaum, *Staat und Synagoge*, 242.

most active regional branch during this period was LVB Greater Berlin, which held a lecture or some form of cultural event almost weekly starting in 1937. Many of the lectures that the Centralverein held in 1938 were focused on topics like emigration, life abroad, and the future of the German-Jewish community.[195] LVB Greater Berlin also occasionally organized more lighthearted evenings of classical music and poetry for its members.[196] This was the case in both late January and late March 1938, when it held two cultural evenings. The first presented poetry as well as music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Felix Mendelssohn, while the second featured readings from works by Martin Buber, Sholem Aleichem, Jean Paul, I. L. Peretz, Ludwig Börne, and Shmuel Yosef Agnon.[197] In highlighting works by prominent Yiddish, Hebrew, Zionist, and German Romanticist writers, the regional branch in Berlin encouraged its members to engage with a broad spectrum of both Jewish and German culture. Literature, music, and other works of art were a form of culture that both allowed for a continued positive connection to German identity and expression and while also not as geographically bound as political identities.

The Centralverein's local and regional spheres became spaces in which German Jews could determine and navigate how they perceived their future as German Jews both in Germany and abroad. In February 1938, Rabbi Dr. Manfred Swarsensky held a lecture in LVB Greater Berlin in which he discussed the Mishnaic text Pirkei Avot. Swarsensky closed this lecture by stating that "Even in our situation the traditional Jewish saying applies: The day is short, the task

[195] WL MF Doc 55/7/218, March 12, 1938, 55/29/1266, March 10, 1938, and 55/23/941, May 19, 1938.

[196] That these evenings were only for C.V. members showed that the boundaries of membership were in cultural matters, as this was not a service that German Jews could obtain elsewhere. The German-Jewish Cultural Federation – the Kulturbund – had over 180,000 members at its peak and held hundreds of concerts and operas in 1934 and 1935 alone. Friedländer, *Das dritte Reich und die Juden,* 48.

[197] WL MF Doc 55/5/188, January 17, 1938 and "Rezitationabend," *Central-Verein Zeitung* 17 (March 17, 1938), 140.

is great, it is not your responsibility to finish the job, but neither can you ever neglect it."[198] Despite growing persecution, increased anti-Jewish measures, and the Centralverein's restricted field of work, Swarsensky argued that the Centralverein was not just a collection of individuals longing for what had been, but instead was dedicated to the future of Jewishness and the preservation of everything that was "truly Jewish." [199] With no mention of Germanness, this lecture was a resolute affirmation of German Jews' ongoing responsibility to maintain not only their own Jewishness, but to preserve and assert their Jewishness even when they were denied access to Germanness. While they mourned lost emancipation, lectures such as Swarsensky's called on German Jews to embrace their Jewishness and remain self-assured even when organizations like the Centralverein, the Reichsvertretung or the Palestine Office could do little to help.[200]

5.4.2. Bidding "Farewell to the Centralverein"

On November 7, 1938, a young polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpans stabbed Nazi Diplomat Ernst Eduard vom Rath in Paris.[201] After vom Rath's death two days later, Joseph Goebbels used this assassination as the excuse for a nation-wide pogrom against Jews. As a result of what became known as Kristallnacht, over 260 synagogues and 7,500 Jewish shops were destroyed, and hundreds of German Jews died either during the pogrom or as a result of their subsequent imprisonment in concentration camps.[202]

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[198] WL MF Doc 55/6/191, p. 109.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid., p. 101.

[201] Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden,* 131.

[202] Ibid., 137.

Following the pogrom of the previous night, the Gestapo raided the offices of Jewish associations throughout Germany throughout the afternoon of November 10, 1938.[203] Even as other Jewish associations were being systematically shut down the following morning, the C.V. central office remained determined to stay open as long as it could.[204] As Ernst Plaut told Hans Reichmann over the phone, the regional office in Essen was determined to do the same.[205] At around 1:30pm, *Kriminalsekretär* for the Berlin Gestapo Franz Prüfer sent all Centralverein employees home and closed the doors to the C.V. central office for the last time, telling those present that "The shop is shut down, the business is closed. I do not know if it will be reopened. […] Do not let yourself be seen here anymore!"[206] While employees were allowed to leave the office freely, the Centralverein's leading figures both in Berlin and in its regional branches were arrested followed the closure of the central office. The offices of the Reichsvertretung and the Berlin Jewish community were also closed at around the same time, with a similar ambivalent dismissal by an official from the Ministry of the Interior.[207] This coordinated attack against organized Jewish life meant that the C.V. was only one of many associations and organizations that the Gestapo targeted in the wake of Kristallnacht.[208]

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[203] The ZVfD offices had already been destroyed and their contents thrown into the courtyard during the night. Hans Reichmann, *Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude: Novemberpogrom und KZ Sachsenhausen 1937 bis 1939*, ed. Michael Wildt (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1998), 113.

[204] Reichmann, *Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude*, 113.

[205] Ibid., 112 and 115.

[206] Ibid., 115. At the same time, the remaining Jewish press, such as the *C-V Zeitung,* the Philo-Verlag, and the *Jüdische Rundschau*, were also banned, though initially only for just over two months. This temporary ban was quickly replaced by an indefinite one, and none of the newspapers or publishing houses banned in November 1938 returned. Katrin Diehl, *Die jüdische Presse im Dritten Reich: Zwischen Selbstbehauptung und Fremdbestimmung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1997), 236-8.

[207] Reichmann, *Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude*, 116.

[208] Its leading representatives were treated in a similar manner to those of other Jewish organizations. As Hans Reichmann reported, of the Berlin organizations, he and Hirschberg were arrested as leading C.V. representatives along with leading figures from the RjF, the Reichsvertretung, the reform religious community, the Berlin

The systematic manner in which the Nazis put an end to Jewish associational life in Berlin during the late morning and early afternoon of November 10, 1938 also occurred in the local and regional branches as well. Along with around 30,000 other German Jews throughout Germany, C.V. representatives in Breslau, Munich, and Essen were also arrested that day.[209] Many former C.V. leaders were sent to concentration camps before eventually being set free days or months later; Kurt Sabatzky was arrested in Dresden and sent to Buchenwald, while Ludwig Freudenthal was arrested in Hamburg and sent to Sachsenhausen, and Kurt Alexander was sent to Dachau.[210]

The concerted and systematic manner in which the Gestapo put an end to Jewish associational life within the course of a few hours proved that, in the end, regionalism had no effect on the totality of the Centralverein's dissolution. As this was just one part of the Nazis' offensive against German Jews in the wake of Kristallnacht, intra-associational questions of center and periphery or regionalism became almost irrelevant. This shared fate meant that the Centralverein's dissolution was only one part of this larger moment. That its dissolution occurred in both Berlin and in the regional branches meant that the mass arrests, destruction of synagogues and Jewish property, and the widespread fear and anxiety that followed was centralized both in Berlin and regional sphere. In the end, the dissolution of Jewish associations

Rabbinate, and the sport and student movements were also all arrested and taken to Sachsenhausen as well. Notably, representatives from the ZVfD, the Berlin Jewish community, and the Hilfsverein were not arrested along with the others. Leo Baeck was also not arrested, presumably to avoid the ire of international organizations over the arrest of such a prominent individual. Reichmann, *Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude*, 135.

[209] Ibid., 113 and 115

[210] Barkai, *Wehr Dich*, 362, Joseph Walk, *Kurzbiographien zur Geschichte der Juden 1918-1945*, ed. Leo Baeck Institute, Jerusalem (Munich/New York/London: K. G. Saur, 1988), 6 and 100 and Sabine Thiem, "Kurt Sabatzky: The CV Syndikus of the Jewish Community in Königsberg during the Weimar Republic," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 44 (1999), 203.

in Germany on November 10, 1938 put an end to independent German-Jewish organizations for the remainder of the Nazi period.

Unlike the V.V. leaders who were also arrested following the dissolution of the Volksverein in July 1933, interrogated, and then allowed to remain in Germany, many of the Jewish leaders arrested after Kristallnacht were only released after they promised to emigrate immediately. The violence with which Jewish associational life came to an end in November 1938 and the largely bureaucratic manner in which the Volksverein and the Zentrum were disbanded five years earlier itself showed the considerable discrepancy in how religious minority groups experienced associational life under the Nazi regime.

While the end of Jewish associational life was part of an increasingly systematic attack on Jewish life in Germany, the end of Catholic associational life merely shifted where German Catholics met and socialized. As German Catholics were the majority of the population in multiple regions in Germany, regional and local Nazi governments were reliant on their support to maintain control over these areas. While the Nazi regime was critical of the Church and of Catholicism as a whole, it did not conduct significant organized persecution of German Catholics or its leadership. With around 94 percent of those clergymen in Rhineland and Westphalia accused of a crime being released without punishment, German-Catholic leadership were, as Thomas Brodie argued "a part of the 'national community' and not a persecuted minority."[211] Though many German-Catholic political views conflicted with Nazism, German Catholics remained a considerable factor in local and regional politics and society. Instead of in

[211] Thomas Brodie, *German Catholicism at War, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 18.

associations, the Catholic life recentered into local churches after mid-1933 and, in doing so, remained largely preserved through the Nazi regime.[212]

The Centralverein's continued adaptive and proactive community engagement that defined their work prior to this point spoke to a deep dedication to German-Jewish identity while there was still reason to hope that Jewish life in Germany was still possible. Six months after he and his wife Eva Reichmann immigrated to London in January 1939, Hans Reichmann wrote in a letter that "We, Eva and myself, wanted to stay with the Jews in Germany for as long as it was possible. Without saying it, both of us wishfully hoped with the last chamber of our heart that perhaps a miracle could indeed occur and the logical process would find a different, quite different end."[213] While many had hoped that German Jews would be able to adapt to life under the Nazi regime despite anti-Jewish measures, Kristallnacht and the laws that came after disabused many German Jews of this last remnant of hope.[214]

The Centralverein, like other Jewish associations in Germany at the time, operated according to what its leadership and members deemed best with the information that its leaders had at the time. It was the Centralverein's extensive networks that enabled it to adapt and reinforce synthesized German-Jewish identities even as the avenues to do so were progressively forbidden. Though the Centralverein could not, of course, prevent the rise of Nazism or the

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[212] Peter Lösche and Franz Walter, "Katholiken, Konservative und Liberale: Milieus und Lebenswelten bürgerlicher Parteien in Deutschland während des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (July-September 2000), 484.

[213] Reichmann, *Deutscher Bürger und verfolgter Jude*, 46.

[214] While a large number of German Jews emigrated from Germany following Kristallnacht, for those who stayed, persecution also accelerated in the weeks afterward as well. Two days after the pogrom, Jews were forced to sell their valuable jewelry and art, Jewish children were forbidden from attending public schools on November 15, and Jews were banned from utilizing the general welfare system four days later. Additionally, from November 28 onward, Jews could be banned from certain areas in cities and the time spent in public places restricted. Their drivers' licenses were also revoked on December 3, and, starting December 6, they were banned from cultural centers like the theater, movie theaters, concerts, museums, and sport centers, among other places. Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden*, 143-4.

Holocaust, the Centralverein and its local and regional branches provided the help and support deemed most necessary and appropriate based on the knowledge that they had at the time. The Centralverein's local and regional branches created and adapted networks in their communities to help German Jews withstand dehumanizing legislation, to keep their dignity, their pride in their Jewishness, and to make the decision on emigration that was best for them.

Even as the Nazi regime systematically sought to break down social norms and reshape society, the C.V. local and regional branches' considerable autonomy within their own communities allowed for integrating a localized German identity with each members' own particular religious and cultural Jewish identity. Regionalism was what allowed Jewish organizational life – and the Centralverein in particular – to continue building localized networks of support even as Nazi persecution grew during the mid-1930s. Though integration was no longer possible, German Jews' sense of belonging to German culture and language did not end with the rise of Nazi Germany. The pluralistic and adaptive nature of the Centralverein's synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness not only accommodated regional variation, but also enabled its local and regional branches to adapt their programming and content to better respond to anti-Jewish measures. Doing so enabled them to adapt the ways in which Germanness and Jewishness were articulated and retain the regional particularities and personal identity that were integral to this synthesis during the German Empire and Weimar Republic.

Conclusion

The vibrant and assertive Jewish associational life that existed in Germany ended on November 10, 1938. Fifteen years after its forced dissolution, former C.V. executive board member and publisher Hermann Ludwig Berlak reflected on the Centralverein's legacy, stating that "Today, the achievements of German Jewry are largely forgotten, the remnants of German Jewry are dispersed, their institutions dissolved […]. So we ask ourselves if there is a place in history for this organisation, which once prided itself on being the largest of the many organisations of German Jewry."[1] Berlak was not the only one asking this question in the post-war period. For decades after its dissolution, the Centralverein was accused of ignoring the true extent of the Nazi threat and, in doing so, contributing to the fact that so many German Jews remained in Germany. In 1953, the British-Jewish newspaper *The Jewish Chronicle* published an article appraising German Jewry's institutional legacy. Here the author remarked that the Centralverein's "[…] valiant struggle against the rising tide of Nazi antisemitism was doomed to failure, while its blind refusal to see the approaching end after 1933 misled many German Jews into remaining in the Third Reich until it was too late."[2] The claim that the Centralverein not only completely misjudged the Nazi threat, but actively contributed to the destruction of German Jewry during the Holocaust by not doing more to encourage Jews to emigrate misinterpreted the nature of much of the Centralverein's work in the German-Jewish community after 1933.

In 1934, Eva Reichmann-Jungmann stated that "One of the greatest human follies is the wish to have known everything before it happened."[3] While she was referring to the initial

[1] H. L. Berlak, "A Chapter in Our History: 60th Anniversary of the C.V.," *AJR Information* 8 (March 1953), 5.

[2] M. Aberbach, "German Jewry: End of an Epoch," *Jewish Chronicle* (September 11, 1953), 14.

[3] WL MF Doc 55/45/1784, p. 78.

effects of the Nazi seizure of power the year before, Reichmann-Jungmann's sentiment reflected the bitter disappointment and despair of the years following the Centralverein's dissolution in November 1938. To accuse the Centralverein and Jewish associations of not doing more to rescue German Jews implies a teleological understanding of German and German-Jewish history. While German Jews faced increased persecution and exclusion between 1933 and 1938, it was not until after 1938 that it became clear to many German Jews that Jewish life in Germany was no longer feasible. As such, the question of whether the Centralverein was a failure is anachronistic and politically motivated. The accusation that German Jews should have known what was coming and the imposition of later knowledge onto these individuals and organizations retroactively corresponded to Michael André Bernstein's concept of "backshadowing."[4] Rejecting such teleological assumptions about German Jewry acknowledges the agency with which these individuals and their associations operated and determined their actions. Doing so also recenters the study of German-Jewish associational life to focus on the local and regional branches themselves and how German Jews understood, defined, and asserted their identities and sense of belonging.[5]

Appraisals of the Centralverein have begun to change in the wave of new scholarship that has emerged over the last half decade, however. It is to this scholarship that this dissertation also contributes. Though the Centralverein was not successful in preventing the rise of Nazism or the Holocaust, the Centralverein's local and regional branches provided German Jews with the help

[4] Michael André Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 16.

[5] Bernstein also provided numerous examples from literature, culture, and historical studies of such instances of backshadowing. For more on other instances of imposing future knowledge on appraisals of the past, see Bernstein, *Foregone Conclusions*, 9-41.

and support they deemed most necessary based on the knowledge that the C.V. leadership had at the time.

It was not just the Centralverein's legacy in the Nazi period that was the focus of critique after its dissolution. In the 1960s, both Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem also argued that there was not and had never been a true symbiosis of Germanness and Jewishness.[6] While Martin Buber argued that such a symbiosis had existed prior to 1939, the scholarly consensus in the mid twentieth century was that any symbiosis or synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness ended with the Holocaust.[7] I disagree with the argument that this synthesis ended after 1945. Claiming that the synthesis ended during the Holocaust ignored the fact that many of those German Jews who emigrated reframed and internationalized their German-Jewish identities in an attempt to preserve and protect what had existed and transplant it into a post-war world in which the German-Jewish community in Germany had been all but destroyed. Such internationalization began in the local and regional sphere in Germany in the mid-1930s. In doing so, German Jews helped create international networks of support for Jewish refugees and survivors by supporting new and existing associations dedicated to humanitarian and community support. In both advocating for and strengthening a synthesized German-Jewish identity, these branches laid the foundation for such post-war work on behalf of German Jews outside of Germany.

Examining the local branches and their relationships with the regional and national levels sheds light on how German society defined and navigated the limits of minority participation in majority society. Through their participation in the Centralverein and the Volksverein's

[6] Moshe Zimmermann, *Die deutschen Juden, 1914-1945* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997), 85.

[7] Gideon Reuveni, "The Future of the German-Jewish Past Starts Here," in *The Future of the German-Jewish Past: Memory and the Question of Antisemitism*, ed. Gideon Reuveni and Diana Franklin (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2021), xv.

programming, German Jews and German Catholics emphasized their belonging to the German polity and challenged definitions and limits of what it meant to be a religious 'other' in the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany. It was through decentralization that minority religious associations created dedicated spaces and methods for defending and advocating for their religious communities as a whole. Utilizing the growing popularity of associational life to do so enabled German Jews and German Catholics to construct and reinforce their influence and power, whether political or social. That the Centralverein and Volksverein differed so considerably in their approaches to decentralization reflected equally distinct understandings and experiences of local and regional identity and persecution. Examining how religious minorities adapted and utilized associational life in the local and regional sphere throughout the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and Nazi Germany provides a more nuanced record of how German Jews and German Catholics understood, navigated, and negotiated changing conditions of belonging and participation.

Both lay German-Jewish and German-Catholic leadership sought to further integrate their communities into German society and politics. German Jews adapted and negotiated what it meant to assert minority interests and identity both within their respective communities as well as in German society at the local, regional, and national levels. Meanwhile, German-Catholic leadership in the Volksverein worked to maintain the solidarity and unity of the Catholic milieu while also supporting German-Catholics' integration into the German economy. The ease with which the Volksverein assumed and set aside political enmity against the SPD and NSDAP when no longer politically expedient showed the extent to which German Catholics were not nearly as political uniform as the Zentrum and Volksverein tried to project. That support from German-Jewish and German-Catholic communities for these associations differed considerably reflected

the local and regional spheres' differing sense of need for representation, defense, and support. How these associations grew and the differing ways in which they decentralized demonstrated how they navigated the shifting conditions and expectations of belonging both from within and outside their own communities.

The Centralverein's regional and local branches created spaces in which German Jews could articulate resilience, activism, and a deep connection to both German and Jewish identity. It was in the regional and local spheres that German Jews most often defined and constructed identity. The Centralverein's regional and local branches regulated and defined German-Jewish identity. Instead of a private issue, Jewishness became a part of a public identity. As such, German Jews developed and maintained a plurality of coexisting and adaptive local, regional, national, and religious identities.

The Centralverein's decentralization into local and regional branches recentered and regionalized German-Jewish identity. The fact that regional particularities had such a large effect on the ways in which minority associations engaged within these different local and regional spheres showed just how integrated religious minorities often were with majority society. The Centralverein's local and regional networks tailored their programming to best meet the unique demands both within German-Jewish communities as well as in German society as a whole. Decentralization was, therefore, more than just an administrative process; it was also a means to defend German Jews and to adapt the synthesis of Germanness and Jewishness into the local and regional spheres.

The Centralverein's local and regional branches were both products and agents of Jewish integration. The prevalence of regional political identities in Germany throughout the German Empire and the Weimar Republic meant that creating a viable synthesis between Germanness

and Jewishness also required a more flexible and tailored understanding of Jewishness as well. Decentralization and growing local autonomy helped to accommodate such needs in the local sphere. The close cooperation between the Centralverein's local and regional branches meant that both helped determine how Germanness, Jewishness, and, ultimately, German-Jewishness were defined, expressed, and adapted.

While Jewish associational life in Germany ended after Kristallnacht, highly limited national and regional aid networks remained and were allowed to operate under strict Gestapo control. Though the Reichsvertretung was disbanded in 1938, the Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland was established in July 1939 by the Nazis to better coordinate Jewish emigration and replace the previously disbanded Jewish organizations.[8] While responsible for preparing German Jews for deportation, the Reichsvereinigung attempted to mitigate or delay such measures until its many of its own representatives were deported in 1942.[9] The terror of Kristallnacht, the growing persecution that followed, and the hopelessness of the situation drove many German Jews to emigrate after November 1938. By the end of the year, over 32 percent of German Jews had emigrated, and by 1941 that number had risen to over 78 percent.[10] For those Jews who remained in Germany, the options for emigration declined after 1938 and became even more limited after the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939.[11]

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[8] Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden 1933-1945,* trans. Martin Pfeiffer (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2010), 159-60 and Beate Meyer, *A Fatal Balancing Act The Dilemma of the Reich Association of Jews in Germany, 1939-1945*, trans. William Templer (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 6.

[9] Meyer, *A Fatal Balancing Act*, 6.

[10] These numbers are calculated according to the 1933 census. Zimmermann, *Die deutschen Juden,* 73.

[11] Beate Meyer, "Der Traum von einer autonomen jüdischen Verwaltung – Die Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland Auswanderer und Zurückbleibende in den Jahren 1938/39 bis 1941," in *'Wer bleibt, opfert seine Jahre, vielleicht sein Leben:' Deutsche Juden 1938-1941*, ed. Susanne Heim, Beate Meyer, and Francis R. Nicosia (Göttingen: Wallenstein: 2010), 28. For those German Jews who remained in Germany, deportations began as early as October 1939, when Jews both from Vienna and from eastern German towns were deported to near Lublin. Further deportations from eastern Germany to Lublin occurred in early 1940, and in October of that year Jews from

While the Centralverein was not reestablished after the war, many of its former leading representatives established or helped manage managing both Jewish and German-Jewish organizations abroad, particularly local, national, and international representative associations for German-Jewish refugees.[12] In doing so, they continued advocating for and asserting Jewish and German-Jewish interests. Many of the Centralverein's central office and regional leadership managed to emigrate, with a number of prominent C.V. leaders emigrating to London.[13] These former C.V. leaders in London established and contributed to new Jewish and German-Jewish organizations. First opened in Amsterdam in 1933, Alfred Wiener's growing collection of documents and sources pertaining to National Socialism moved to London with him in 1939 and the Wiener Library opened to the public on the day Germany invaded Poland – September 1, 1939.[14]

In addition, the Association of Jewish Refugees was established in London in 1941 and the Leo Baeck Institute (LBI) in 1955.[15] A research institute on the history and culture of

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Baden and the Palatinate were deported to a camp in France before mass deportations began in 1942. While scholars disagree on the total number of German Jews murdered in the Holocaust, the number lay between 125,000 and 165,000 German Jews who had lived within Germany's 1937 borders. Some German-Jewish leaders like Leo Baeck, refused to "desert" the German Jewish community and stayed in Germany to be deported along with the rest of German Jewry. Former leading C.V. members Cora Berliner, Eugen Jacobi, and Ludwig Freudenthal also stayed in Germany as Reichsvertretung representatives. Unlike Baeck who survived the war, all three died in concentration camps – the latter two in Auschwitz. Historians Wolfgang Benz, Raul Hilberg, and Geroges Wellers as well as Yad Vashem each claim different numbers between 120,000 and 180,000. Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Dimension des Völkermords: Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1991), 15 and 64 and Meyer, "Der Traum von einer autonomen jüdischen Verwaltung," 32 and 35.

[12] Marie Ch. Behrendt, "Kein Epilog: Das organisationskulturelle Erbe des Central-Vereins in der Emigration," in *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens: Anwalt zwischen Deutschtum und Judentum*, ed. Rebekka Denz and Tilmann Gempp-Friedrich (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), 220.

[13] Some of those who emigrated to London were Eva and Hans Reichmann, Alfred Wiener, Fritz Goldschmidt, Kurt Alexander, Kurt Sabatzky, and Ernst Plaut.

[14] H. Auerbach, "50 Jahre Wiener Library," *Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte* 31 (October 1983), 721.

[15] Letter from Hans Reichmann to Max Kreutzberger, December 31, 1954; Council of Jews from Germany Collection; AR 5890; 2; 10; Leo Baeck Institute, 69 and List of recipients, February 17-19, 1954; Council of Jews from Germany Collection; AR 5890; 2; 10; Leo Baeck Institute, 4-5.

German-speaking Jews, the LBI was established in close cooperation with the Wiener Library. The establishment of the LBI brought together both former C.V. leaders like Hans Reichmann, Rudolf Callmann, and Kurt Alexander and German Zionists like Robert Weltsch, Siegfried Moses, and Max Kreutzberger. This meant that many of the previous political and intra-Jewish associational divides that characterized German-Jewish associational life in the early twentieth century shaped the research and study of German Jewry and German-Jewish identity during in the post-war period.[16]

In 1961, there were just over 17,000 Jews living in West Germany – less than one hundredth of one percent of the total population.[17] After the fall of the Soviet Union, the number of Jewish community members in Germany rose by around ninety percent; between 1990 and 2005, around 220,000 Jews from throughout the former Soviet Union emigrated to Germany.[18]As the Jewish community in Germany grew after the fall of the Soviet Union, Gideon Reuveni argued that the rapid influx of Jews from the former Soviet bloc signaled the start of a new and "different reality" for Jewish life in Germany.[19] With the rapid rise of eastern European

[16] During its first decades, the LBI's journal, the *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, focused on German-Jewish institutional history. Here the journal focused on German Jews' affiliation with associational life and the fact "many German-Jewish organizations had served as models for similar organizations in other countries." Christhard Hoffmann, "An International Forum for German-Jewish Studies: The *Year Book* of the Leo Baeck Institute," in *Preserving the Legacy of German Jewry: A History of the Leo Baeck Institute 1955-2005*, ed. Christhard Hoffmann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck: 2005), 297-8.

[17] Statistisches Bundesamt, *Bevölkerung und Kultur*, Vorbericht 1, *Volkszählung vom 6. Juni 1961: Wohnbevölkerung nach der Religionszugehörigkeit* (Stuttgart and Mainz: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1961), 5.

[18] Dani Kranz, "Forget Israel—The Future is in Berlin! Local Jews, Russian Immigrants, and Israeli Jews In Berlin and across Germany" *Shofar* 34 (Summer 2016), 8 and 12 and Peter Schimany, "Asylmigration nach Deutschland," in *20 Jahre Asylkompromiss: Bilanz und Perspektiven*, ed. Stefan Luft and Peter Schimany (Bielefeld: Trascript Verlag, 2014), 48.

[19] Reuveni, "The Future of the German-Jewish Past Starts Here," xv.

Jews in Germany after 1990, the group that was once a source of worry and anxiety within German Jewry became the basis of its reemergence in the twenty-first century.

Unlike German Jews, German Catholics were largely left alone during the Nazi period and much of the Catholic milieu remained intact throughout the Nazi regime. It was not until early in the war the Nazis began confiscating Church property, evicting clergy, and restricting Catholic institutions.[20] After the end of the Second World War, Catholic politicians initially called to reestablish the Volksverein in Germany. Such attempts failed due to considerable changes within the lay apostolate since the war and the establishment of a politically oriented mass association would have been too threatening to its authority.[21] Additionally, German Catholics' secularization, the effects of the Second Vatican Council, and the decline of the Catholic milieu made establishing a new Volksverein neither viable or desired in post-war German-Catholic society.[22]

The decline of the Catholic milieu occurred at around the same time that the post-war discussions over whether to reestablish the Volksverein came to an end. Michael Klöckner argued that the Catholic milieu declined as a result of political Catholicism's full integration into

[20] Thomas Brodie, *German Catholicism at War, 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 66-7. In 1943, the V.V.'s last chairman – Johannes Joseph van der Velden – was appointed bishop of Aachen by the Nazis. Remaining in this position until his death in 1954, van der Velden was one of the few prominent V.V. leaders who not only managed to continue his career under the Nazi regime, but also was allowed to remain in a leadership position after 1945 due to his apparent ties to the resistance and July 20, 1944 plot against Hitler. Van der Velden also interceded with the German Wehrmacht on behalf of Belgian Catholics during the war as well. Michael Kißener, "Boten eines versöhnten Europa? Deutsche Bischöfe, Versöhnung der Völker und Europaidee nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Die europäische Integration und die Kirchen: Akteure und Rezipienten,* ed. Heinz Durchardt and Małgorzata Morawiec (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 66 and 71.

[21] Gotthard Klein, *Der Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland 1890-1933: Geschichte, Bedeutung, Untergang* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), 417-8.

[22] Ibid., 418.

both the CDU/CSU and the trade unions.[23] Meanwhile, political scientist Franz Walter argued that it was not until the 1950s that German Catholics felt secure enough in German society and politics that they began abandoning the subculture they had established over the previous century.[24] That the milieu lasted for over a century despite the effects of German unification, the loss of two world wars, and the establishment of the Bundesrepublik showed how entrenched it was in German-Catholic society. Though the social networks of this milieu did not dissolve completely, particularly in regions with a Catholic majority, the decision not to reestablish the Volksverein was closely tied to the decline of Catholic social and political cohesion after 1970 and the shifting interconfessional nature of Christian politics and workers' rights.

There was limited continuity of lay Catholic political organizations after the war. While the Zentrum Party was reestablished in 1945, it struggled to compete with the CDU – the Christian Democratic Union. At its establishment in June 1945 the CDU became the first party to successfully integrate both Protestants and Catholics under one political party. This, along with the union between the CDU and the Bavarian CSU – Christian Social Union – from 1949 onward meant that there was little direct continuity from the Weimar Republic to the post-war period within political Catholicism. While the CDU/CSU put forward five of nine chancellors since 1949, including Konrad Adenauer, Helmut Kohl, and most recently, Angela Merkel, the Zentrum did not have an elected delegate in the Bundestag after the late 1950s.[25] Nevertheless, the

[23] Michael Klöckner, "Das katholische Milieu: Grundüberlegungen — in besonderer Hinsicht auf das Deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 44 (1992), 246.

[24] Franz Walter, *Vom Milieu zum Parteienstaat: Lebenswelten, Leitfiguren und Politik im historischen Wandel* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010), 156.

[25] The Zentrum Party gained a delegate in the German Bundestag in January 2022 after a former AfD politician changed parties.

regional political networks established by the Zentrum and BVP shaped the emergence of a new democratic political system in West Germany.

Though the conditions in which they operated differed considerably, both the Centralverein and the Volksverein challenged the inconsistent limits of integration, participation, and belonging in Germany. Both the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens and the Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland created administrative frameworks and local and regional networks that strengthened and defended religious minorities' right to participate in civic life in the German Empire, the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany. Though neither the Centralverein nor the Volksverein were reestablished after the war, German Catholics and German Jews understood, organized, and adapted associational life to participate in German society while also reinforcing their religious distinctiveness.

Sixty years after the Centralverein's establishment, thirty of its former members came together to celebrate their "shared work and shared ideals" in London in February 1953.[26] In honor of this anniversary, a former C.V. executive board member also published an article in the Association of Jewish Refugees' journal in which he stated that "The world in which the C.V. worked does not exist any more, but wherever Jews, both the former adherents and the former opponents of the C.V., may stand to-day, they can agree on one point: It has written a great chapter in the history of German Jewry."[27] While one can debate whether the Centralverein's chapter in German-Jewish history was indeed great, it was nevertheless a chapter in which many German Jews became more assertive, more self-reliant, and more dedicated to a synthesized German-Jewish identity.

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[26] Behrendt, "Kein Epilog: Das organisationskulturelle Erbe des Central-Vereins in der Emigration," 211.

[27] H. L. Berlak, "A Chapter in Our History: 60th Anniversary of the C.V.," *AJR Information* 8 (March 1953), 5.

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