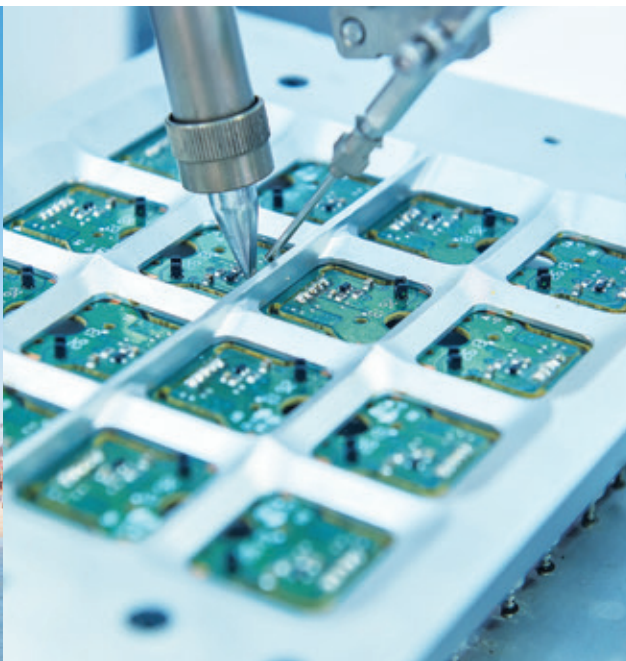


Israel at 70



A Message from Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on the 70th Anniversary of Israeli Independence

Germany and Israel Are United by a True Friendship

On 14 May 1948, David Ben-Gurion, who later became the first Prime Minister of Israel, read out the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel in Tel Aviv Museum. Following the Shoah, the Germans' terrible crime against humanity, the dream of a Jewish state finally came true.

Seventy years later, the "Jewish Voice from Germany" has invited the German Foreign Minister to mark this anniversary by writing a message for a special edition. This gesture alone shows the long road that Germany and Israel have travelled together over the past 70 years.

Germany and Israel are now united by a true friendship, and I would like to thank the countless people in both countries who have nurtured it. Based on forgiveness, this friendship is a precious gift for us Germans.

The unbearable crime of the Shoah that was committed by Germans against Jews does not only create a profound historic responsibility for our country. It also forms a crucial motivation for my own political work. In my inaugural speech as Foreign Minister, I said: "I went into politics because of Auschwitz."

I see it as a personal duty to ensure that Germany defends Israel's existence and security and takes a firm stance against all forms of anti-Semitism and racism, both in Germany itself and worldwide. We cannot and must not lower our stan-



dards in any way here, and I will do my utmost to guarantee this.

The fact that Germany is now once again home to a vibrant Jewish community is a reason for us Germans to rejoice and be grateful. Just a few days ago, we celebrated the laying of a foundation stone for a new Jewish education centre in the heart of Berlin.

But I also want to state clearly that it is unacceptable and a cause of shame for our country that Jewish schools and institutions in Germany still need police protection, that young men are beaten up on the streets in broad daylight simply because they are wearing a kippah, and that prizes are awarded for anti-Semitic provocations.

There is no room in Germany for anti-Semitism and we firmly reject it in any form. Our responsibility to protect Jewish life will never end. That is another reason why the decision to create the position of a Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight against anti-Semitism was right and indeed overdue. This office amalgamates the Federal Government's measures, serves as a point of contact for Jewish groups, and identifies and points out shortcomings in dealing with anti-Semitism.

During my first visit to Israel as Foreign Minister in March, I was particularly moved by my meeting with Holocaust

survivors, who invited me to celebrate Passover with them at the Amcha Centre in Jerusalem. These people put into practice what Amos Oz once expressed as follows: "The past is always present and will always remain present, but we must remember that the past belongs to us – we do not belong to the past."

In this spirit, we must keep memory alive. We must never forget what happened to the victims of the Holocaust. In awareness of the past and the responsibility arising from it, we can then ask ourselves the following questions, which are important to both our societies now and in the future.

How should we deal with populism and division in societies?

How do we ensure cohesion?

What risks and opportunities arise from the spread of digital technology?

How do we maintain scope for open societies in view of hostility from inside and outside?

These are all topics where we want to learn from one another and work together to find solutions.

When a state celebrates its 70th birthday, it can still be considered young. However, the past 70 years were by no means easy for Israel – the young state had a difficult youth and had to learn to stand on its own feet very quickly. My main hope for Israel, therefore, is that the next 70 years will be peaceful for the country in both its domestic and foreign relations.

That was always David Ben-Gurion's dream. And he also said that "in Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe

in miracles." Some say that peace in the Middle East would be a miracle. Then I must be a realist as defined by David Ben-Gurion, for I believe in a just peace, in which Israel's existence and security are guaranteed and Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in peace in two states.

On the 70th anniversary of the foundation of Israel, we want to make the friendship between Israel and Germany even closer and to show people in our two countries just how wide ranging and diverse our ties are. That is why we are supporting a large number of events in Israel and Germany at which the great range of ties that already unite us in the spheres of politics, the arts, culture, academia and business will become even closer. After all, our friendship, which is wonderful in the truest sense of the word, thrives on the interaction between Germans and Israelis in awareness of the horrors of the past and with the desire to build a bright future for the generations to come.

The friendship between Germany and Israel shows that miracles are possible in the course of history. Let us keep working together on this miracle!

Heiko Maas

CONTENTS



Making Aliyah
Young German moves to Israel
PAGE III



Let My People Go
Land of immigrants
PAGE VI



Innovation & Science
Israeli-German cooperation
PAGE VII



ברוכים הבאים לישראל
Welcome to the Promised Land
PAGE VII



Shalom & Salaam
No alternative to peace
PAGE VIII

GERMAN-ISRAELI REPARATIONS

Historic Agreement Between Adenauer and Goldmann

Payments allowed Bonn to earn reputation and Jerusalem to help survivors

By Dieter Sattler

In history, singular personalities sometimes play decisive roles. This was certainly the case with Konrad Adenauer, David Ben-Gurion, and Nahum Goldmann.

After the founding of Israel in 1948, the Jewish state was in dire need. Survivors of the concentration camps and Jewish refugees from Arab states were pouring into the country. This was the background for demanding material compensation from Germany although many survivors, who wanted nothing more to do with “German murderers,” vehemently rejected this plan.

Nonetheless, to secure the country's existence, the Israeli government under David Ben-Gurion had little choice but to signal its willingness to negotiate with Germany. This was highly controversial in Israel. The opposition, under the leadership of Menachem Begin of the Herut Party, rejected any negotiations over “blood money” with Germany. But Ben-Gurion saw no alternative. His foreign minister Moshe Sharett described the dilemma as follows: “Two contradictory demands are being articulated by the public, side by side. One calls for no negotiations, a total boycott. The other says: demand reparations from the Germans. But these two demands cannot both be met (at the same time). We will not receive reparations if we do not negotiate with them.”

International pressure

The Israeli government ultimately decided to hold talks with the Federal Republic of Germany, which was founded in 1949. However, Israel demanded that West Germany first issue a sign of good will. This took place on September 27, 1951. German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who had already spoken out in favor of reparations in an interview shortly after taking office, made a speech before the Bundestag: “Unspeakable crimes have been committed in the name of the German people that call for restitution, both moral and material in nature. The government of the Federal Republic is prepared, jointly with representatives of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, which has opened its doors to

so many homeless Jewish refugees, to bring about a solution to the reparations problem, and so to help ease the way to spiritual settlement of infinite suffering.”

To pave the way for concrete negotiations, Adenauer went to London on December 6, 1951 for a secret meeting with Nahum Goldmann. Goldmann was President of the World Jewish Congress and head of the Jewish Claims Conference, which he had helped found earlier that year and which represented the interests of Jews in



Goldmann, Adenauer, and Ben-Gurion, with Moshe Dayan in the background

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For the first time in the history of the Jewish people, their oppressor and exploiter must return something of his spoils and pay collective compensation

David Ben-Gurion, 1952

the Diaspora. He had been instructed by Ben-Gurion to propose an amount of \$1 bn, the equivalent of 4.2 bn deutschmarks, as the basis for negotiations. After Goldmann cited that figure and explained to Adenauer that the reparations amount must bear a symbolic relationship to the immensity of the crime that had been committed, the Chancellor accepted the offer. On January 9, 1952, Ben-Gurion succeeded in passing, with a narrow majority, a Knesset resolution to commence negotiations. The debate that preceded the resolution had been marked by vehement disagreement and protests that were loud enough to be heard from outside the Knesset's walls.

The talks commenced on March 21, 1952 in the town of Wassenaar, near The Hague. The head of the German negotiating delegation was Frankfurt University dean Franz Böhm, a man with a reputation for integrity who, like Adenauer, had resisted the Third Reich. In Wassenaar, Böhm's brief was to play for

time, as parallel negotiations were underway in London regarding Germany's pre-war and post-war debts. Germany hoped to delay the Wassenaar results until the extent of its financial obligations under the impending London agreement became clear.

The political strategy, advanced mainly by West German Finance Minister Fritz Schäffer (CSU) and his chief London negotiator, the later Deutsche Bank head Hermann Josef Abs, was



Jews from Yemen on their way to Israel (1949/50)

to link the two negotiations in hopes of reducing the scale of payments to be made by Germany. When Böhm emerged from the Wassenaar negotiations with a reparations amount of 3 bn deutschmarks – less than the amount that had been accepted by Adenauer as the basis for negotiations – Schäffer and Abs objected.

In May 1952, Abs tendered a low-ball offer to the Israeli negotiator. The Wassenaar negotiations were to be suspended, and Israel would receive between 100 and 200 million deutschmarks per year for three years to help bridge the gap. Israel responded with indignation: it would be immoral for the perpetrators to live better than their victims, they said.

In light of growing international pressure, Adenauer realized that his desire to rehabilitate Germany in the eyes of the world was in jeopardy. He allowed his lead negotiator, Franz Böhm, to convince him to honor his moral obligation.

On September 10, 1952, the Luxembourg Agreement was signed by Konrad Adenauer, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, and Nahum Goldmann on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany. The Federal Republic of Germany undertook paying the State of Israel an amount of 3 bn deutschmarks over 12 to 14 years. Another \$450 million would be paid to the Claims Conference to help support, resettle, and integrate Jewish refugees living outside Israel.

Boon for German companies

However, the Luxembourg Agreement did not become effective immediately. It still needed to be approved by the Bundestag – where it nearly failed. There were many “no” votes, both within Konrad Adenauer's CDU/CSU parliamentary group and among his coalition partners, the FDP and the Deutsche Partei. In the end, the agreement was saved by the SPD, which voted to approve the deal en bloc on March 18, 1953. It was the Social Democrats who, under the leadership of Otto Wels, had voted against Adolf Hitler's “Enabling Act” in 1933; now, they were unified in support of an agreement that helped Germany rehabilitate its reputation in the world. The decision also benefited German industry. The 3 bn deutschmarks were paid mainly in goods and transportation equipment. The follow-up orders were a boon for German companies.

In the end, Konrad Adenauer's calculation, which was motivated not only by moral conviction but by political prestige and economic concerns, proved a success. David Ben-Gurion was also satisfied with the results. In a 1952 letter to Nahum Goldmann, Ben-Gurion wrote: “For the first time in the history of the Jewish people, which has been oppressed and exploited for centuries ... the oppressor and exploiter must return something of his spoils and pay collective compensation for a share of our material losses.”

The Luxembourg Agreement, which would not have come to fruition without the efforts of Nahum Goldmann, also laid the foundation for good relations between Germany and Israel. In 1960, Konrad Adenauer and David Ben-Gurion met. Diplomatic relations were established between West Germany and Israel in 1965.

As a result of this agreement, Germany has, to date, paid more than \$60 bn in reparations to Jews. In addition, Germany has contributed twice that amount in compensation for expropriations and in other benefits. However, the term “compensation” was rejected in Israel. Israelis instead use the Hebrew terms *pitzuim* (reparations) and *shilumim* (payments).

Many of the German compensations in kind to Israel arrived at the port of Haifa



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By Sarah Fantl

Balagan. This was one of the first Hebrew words I learned in Israel. A very important word, it translates roughly as “chaos” – a rather apt description for the spirit of the country. Back in Germany, the summer sky was a chaotic tangle of thunder and lightning. Here, the rocket app on my smartphone flashed its hourly updates. In and of itself, that would not be newsworthy. But that night brought some 70 rocket attacks: day-cares and residential buildings were hit; soldiers were injured. After 24 hours, a momentary quiet returned to the border at Gaza. Apart from the newspaper headlines, day-to-day life in Israel seemed much as always. Chaos is Israel’s everyday normality. The Jewish state may be celebrating its 70th birthday, but tensions are high. Many Israelis believe there will soon be war. The last war, after all, was already four years ago.

During that night, my phone was illuminated time and time again by messages from my family and friends. They wanted to know if I was all right. If I wanted to return home. What most of them don’t understand is that Israel is now my home. Not just since that moment seven months ago, when I made Aliyah, became an immigrant, and began proudly showing everyone my new passport. Rather, since the moment I first looked out of the window while landing, and was overcome by the warm and comforting feeling of returning home. Just five days later, after gaining a brief impression of the country and its people, and drawing in that chaos with every breath, I decided to make Aliyah. No one I was traveling with believed my decision. But about a year and a half later, I won the bet – and 50 euros.

The question I have been asked most, by Germans and Israelis alike, since I packed my four suitcases in November and boarded the aircraft, is: “Why?” Why did I leave a well-paying job, a beautiful apartment, my family and friends, to come here and embark on the process of building a new life in a country gripped by a wearying and seemingly never-ending conflict?

Because Israel provides me with a Jewish home and life, far away from synagogues that are under police protection, from snack-bar owners and taxi drivers who spit out the words “dirty Jewish money.” Far away from a place that elect-



MAKING ALIYAH

Laughing Hearts and Helpful Hands

A young German calls Israel her home

ed the far-right AfD to the Bundestag – a party headed by a man who just compared the Nazi dictatorship to “bird shit”. From a place where musicians shamelessly rap about the emaciated bodies of Holocaust victims – and are then honored with a major music award. And far away from a capital city in which, yet again, a young person was threatened and attacked in public because he was listening to music by Omer Adam – music that I listen to at full volume every day, much to the delight of my neighbors.

Defending our homeland

Even beyond that, there is the country itself. It’s a small country that can be crossed by car in less than seven hours – on a drive that, at some times of the year, would have you packing both your bikini and your ski gear. A country that welcomes thousands of immigrants from all over the world every year. A country that has now grown to some 8.8 million people, where a carton of rasp-

berries costs the equivalent of ten euros, but which will never run short of cheap and tasty falafel. A country where orthodox Jews study Torah while large gay pride parades take to the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. A country of startups that is ever on the move and a leader in the field of medical research. A country that shrugs its shoulders at the idea of customer service. Maybe that will have improved somewhat by next year’s Eurovision Song Contest – but even if it doesn’t, the laughing hearts, helpful hands, and strong shoulders of this country will do enough to make up for that. All this under bright blue skies, to the accompaniment of a soundtrack that blends honking horns, loud voices, the rush of the ocean, and the thwack of the ball hitting the paddle as people enjoy the national pastime, matkot. Balagan – there it is again, that word that you learn as soon as you arrive. As you begin to learn more about this country, you learn not to take everything so seriously.

Of course, Israel is not perfect. There are tensions between Jews of different national backgrounds and different levels of observance. Tensions with Palestinians are ongoing. On top of that, political scandals, the ever-rising cost of living, and constant threat are faced by the only democracy in this part of the world. This is also a hot topic in the international media, which time and time again

it continues to press forward. That is probably one of the greatest strengths of this young country: its steadfastness, its refusal to give up. Day in, and day out.

For Israel’s 100th birthday, our only real wish can be the hope for peace. But even after such a short amount of time in this country, it is already becoming clear that this hope is both innocent and naïve. So we must

“As you learn more about this country, you learn not to take everything so seriously

twists reality in favor of attention-grabbing headlines – while obdurately refusing to comprehend the conflict itself. Refusing to understand that we are not the ones doing the attacking, but the ones who are constantly forced to defend our homeland and homes.

A functional, growing, vibrant, democratic home. All this in just 70 years. It is truly remarkable. What are 70 years, after all? Measured against a human lifespan, it is a venerable age. But measured against history, 70 years are nothing but the blink of an eye. A brief moment. A breath. Israel is still in its infancy, but has managed to accomplish so much, even as

content ourselves with hoping that over the next 30 years, the Jewish state will continue to grow and thrive at this breathless pace. By that time, I will have spent more of my life in Israel than in Germany, and I hope that I will look back at a life as vibrant as the country I am living in.

Sarah Fantl is the granddaughter of Holocaust survivor and film director Thomas Fantl. Following the completion of her training as a journalist at the Axel Springer Academy, she worked as an editor in Berlin until she decided to pack her bags and immigrate to Israel seven months ago. She now works as a freelance reporter in Jerusalem and is writing her first book on her family history



Sarah in Jerusalem



A forum with survivors at AMCHA center in Jerusalem

JEWISH CLAIMS

Caring for Holocaust Survivors

Ensuring dignity in old age

By Rüdiger Mahlo

Leah S. sits at a small wooden table in the living room of her basement flat in Tel Aviv. She continually repeats the words “bread is life” like a mantra. Since her liberation from the concentration camp in Auschwitz, she has always kept at least three loaves of bread in the house. On this sunny February morning, I join Keren, a partner agency of the Claims Conference, during a home visit with the elderly survivor. Leah originally comes from Czechoslovakia and emigrated to Israel via Hungary following her liberation. Her husband, also a survivor of the Shoah, was so deeply affected by what he experienced that he was no longer able to hold down a regular job. Leah worked as a cleaner to keep the family of five afloat. Her family could always rely on her; nowadays, the 94-year-old is no longer able to take care of herself physically or financially. She receives the regular amount of hours of care from the Israeli state health insurance Bituach Leumi, which the Claims Conference supplements with an additional nine hours per week. Leah is by no means an outlier. Almost 40% of the survivors worldwide live below the poverty line in their respective countries of residence.

Taking action

Over the past few years, the Israeli government has made every effort to improve the situation for survivors in Israel. The hours of care granted by the health insurance funds, however, fall short of the mark in many cases. The additional hours of care borne by the Claims Conference enable a tangible improvement to the care situation. In addition to the funds supplied by the Claims Conference’s successor organization, the German government also provides funds to this end. Yet, in spite of these joint efforts by the state of Israel, Germany, and the Claims Confer-



“The history of reparations and rehabilitation for the victims of National Socialism has been a lengthy battle for historical truths and the alleviation of injustice

ence, it is far from sufficient when it comes to meeting all of the needs for in-home nursing and medical care among Holocaust survivors.

Many people are surprised to learn that – more than 70 years after their liberation – there are still approximately 180,000 survivors of the Shoah living in Israel alone. Some immigrated to Israel during, and especially after, the Holocaust. Hence, the Claims Conference’s mission to provide survivors with a small measure of justice is not likely to end any time soon.

The history of reparations and rehabilitation for the victims of National Social-

ism has been a lengthy battle for historical truths and the alleviation of injustice. The NS era cannot simply be reduced to twelve years of factual dictatorship; this holds particularly true for the history of injustice from which persecutees suffered even after their liberation. There continued to be a number of people who adopted a mentality of shutting their eyes to, or repressing, the injustice. Having said this, there were some who also spoke out against the German “blood money” – especially in Israel. Nevertheless, those who decided to apply for compensation at that time were often subjected to degrading investigation and interrogation procedures.

In light of the large number of survivors, the Claims Conference draws a great deal of its attention to survivors in Israel. In 2017 alone, the Claims Conference paid ongoing compensation pensions to 21,000 survivors in Israel. It also finances projects such as soup kitchens for survivors, funds institutions that are dedicated to providing survivors with material and social services, and renovates and develops facilities in a way that is appropriate for the elderly.

Even traumas can be portrayed as a form of continuity, since they have the ability – to this day – to leave a mark on and represent a burden for survivors of extreme persecution and violence. Especially during old age, when social bridges such as family, friends or everyday working life break away, traumatizing experiences present a burden. Zvi Steinitz, who survived Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen, once said, “I was free on the outside, but on the inside, in my soul, did I really feel free?” Today, he lives in Tel Aviv and uses social services from AMCHA, one of our partner organizations in Israel. With some 20,000 people who receive assistance in psychotherapies, social activities, and through home visits, the number of survivors seeking help at AMCHA has doubled over the last ten years.

Throughout the course of negotiations with the Federal Government, the Claims Conference has consistently reported the particularly difficult living conditions of Holocaust survivors and has seen successful results. This is why the funding for home-care support for survivors has been increased time and time again over the past few years. However, the aging group of survivors also has a increasing need for support as they grow older. In 2017, our help in the area of home-care support reached approximately 35,000 survivors of the Shoah in Israel. Today, around one third of all Shoah survivors live in Israel. According to figures from the Israeli bureau of statistics, some 26,000 survivors

of the Shoah will still be alive in the year 2035. They, too, must be able to count on our support.

An important issue for survivors in Israel and across the globe is how the world will remember the Holocaust when they are deceased. In the face of rapidly declining societies in Europe, many survivors fear that the history of the Holocaust will be distorted or denied. This is why the Claims Conference’s Holocaust educational and memorial work will play a greater role in the future.

Rüdiger Mahlo is the representative of the Claims Conference in Germany

ENCOUNTERS

Different Generation, No Reservation

On the optimistic future of the Israeli-German Youth Exchange

By Franziska Knupper

You have read it in the papers, you have seen it on TV, yet it remains a phenomenon of our time: around 30,000 Israelis currently live, walk, eat, and sit in the apartments, streets, cafés, and bars of Berlin. Hebrew is being spoken between Hermannstraße and Kottbusser Tor, between Uhlandstraße and Rosenthaler Platz. As the State of Israel celebrates its 70th anniversary, a new generation of Israelis have returned voluntarily to the Diaspora. The third and fourth generations see the German capital in a completely different light than their ancestors do back home. To them, Berlin is a utopia, far away from Middle Eastern politics, very close to nightclubs, and cheap to live in. “This generation lives a whole new diversity. They all have different narratives and various life plans, values and ideas,” says Christine Mähler, director of ConAct, the German coordination center for exchange projects between German and Israeli youths. This generation, Mähler continues, is more aware of the fact that they live in a colorful migration society. They know that they will have to practice complete openness in order to flourish. To her, it therefore does not come as a surprise that the number of exchange participants is constantly on the rise: “Even political disturbances in the Middle East are not able to change that,” she says. Apart from a single drop during the last Intifada, interest in the other has remained on a steady high for the last fifteen years.

Curious young pioneers

German-Israeli youth exchange is the backbone of the close relationship that the two countries have built through today. The options and programs are never-ending: the German organization Aktion Sühne-



German-Israeli youth congress

zeichen sends out volunteers to work in Israeli hospitals and social programs, and Youth Press Germany cooperates with peace activists from the Israeli “Peace Now”. Since 2014, German has also been anchored in the syllabus of four schools in the greater Tel Aviv area. But building and crafting this bridge took seven decades, from the foundation of the Jewish state to the Berlin Diaspora of today. It was a long road to travel, and success came only in baby steps. Before diplomatic ties between the countries had even been officially established, curious young pioneers took cautious steps towards each other. A small number of students from the Socialist German Student

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It took time until German teenagers felt comfortable running around the beaches of Tel Aviv and Haifa

Union (SDS) were the first ones to enter the Holy Land in 1952. Five years later, the Protestant Student Union embarked on a one month trip to Israel, passing themselves off as a Dutch or Swiss travel group. Maybe the time was not right for them. Or as a Rudolf Weckerling, one of the initiators of the visit puts it in his travel report, “The young Germans surely had posed a great imposition to many Israelis.”

It took time until German teenagers felt comfortable running around the beaches of Tel Aviv and Haifa. And politics obviously needed to catch up with the newborn interest. As a result, the Knesset created the Public Council for Youth Exchange, including members of community and sports organizations, the Youth Hostel Association as well as the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Airline El Al. In short, it included everyone who had anything

to do with young people moving around. Yet, when asking Christine Mähler from ConAct, it took Johannes Rau to mark a turning point in the history of Israeli-German youth exchange. As the first German Federal President to ever hold a speech in front of the Israeli Parliament in the year 2000, he pointed out the importance of the young ones: “I am convinced; if we pass on the memory to the youth and encourage them to meet, then we will not need to worry about the future of the relationship between Israel and Germany.”

Only one year later, Christine Mähler and her colleagues moved into their offices in Lutherstadt Wittenberg. The head of ConAct has been involved in German-Israeli youth collaboration for the last thirty years. She found a passion for this area during her teenage years: “I participated in an exchange as a young adult and have remained active ever since. It is some-

thing that has accompanied me my whole life,” she says. Since 2001, the organization has been funding and coordinating about 300 exchange programs each year with an overall number of roughly 7,000 participants from both countries. It has created some 90 new project partnerships, and on top of that, funded bilateral work aimed at professionals from several aid organizations. ConAct is the intersection where everybody from the field meets eventually. No wonder the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) has increased ConAct’s budget to a new high of 2.2 million euros per year.

But it’s not enough, stresses Mähler: “Each year we lack around 1.5 million euros. We refrain from turning down any applications but as they are becoming more, it means that, in the end, we will have less money for each one of them.” According to her, if ConAct is to stay effective and German-Israeli sleepovers are to be intensified, there needs to be a proper bilateral youth organization. The network has to be tighter and the funding has to flow more easily. Mähler sounds enthusiastic when speaking about such a future: “I see it as my mission to stress the uniqueness of the relationship between those two societies and to cherish it with others.”



Kreis Siegen-Wittgenstein



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Land of Immigrants

From 650,000 people to 8.8 million – Israel's success story of integration

By Elisabeth Neu

A joke from the 1930s: “An immigrant arrives at the port of Haifa at the Yishuv, pre-state Israel. Having just set foot on the soil of the Promised Land, he is instantly asked: ‘Have you come here because of Zionism – or because of Hitler?’”

The anecdote shows that immigration to Israel has always been both: the wish to build and live in a homestead for the Jewish people in their ancient land, and a consequence of suppression, persecution, and danger to life and limb in the land of one's birth.

Theodor Herzl, father of Zionism, penned his pamphlet *The Jewish State* (1896) under the impact of anti-Semitic rage he had experienced in France during the trial of Captain Dreyfus. According to Herzl, Jews should be able, if they so wished, to return to their historic homeland: “We shall live at last as free men on our own soil and die peacefully in our own homes.”

But even before Herzl formulated his dream, there was immigration to the Land of Israel. “Whosoever there is among you of all His people, his God be with him, – let him go up,” states the Book of Ezra. Moving to the Promised Land is making Aliyah, literally meaning “to go up.”

From the 1880s to the 1920s, during the first, second, and third Aliyot, more than 100,000 Jews came from Russia and Eastern Europe to their biblical homeland. The reasons for their immigration were manifold: Some wanted to live a religious life in the Land of the Fathers,



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Operation Solomon, 1991

and some were pioneers or adventurers. Others wanted to make their dream of a just and socialist society come true on the shores of the Mediterranean, and others were fleeing pogroms, violence, and hatred. The 1920s and 1930s saw an influx of Jews from Poland and the Soviet Union, where an increase in anti-Semitic policies was making life hard for them. The fifth Aliyah brought immigrants mainly from Germany in the 1930s as the Nazis were tightening their grip on the country, setting out on their path of annihilation by robbing the Jews of their civil rights.

During the “secret” Aliyah Bet between 1939 and 1945, more than 100,000 refugees entered Palestine. Their immigration was deemed “illegal” by the British, who at the time ruled over Palestine. Frequently, ships carrying refugees were intercepted by the British Navy and passengers were brought into detention camps. The most famous of these ships was the “Exodus”; the film based on the book by Leon Uris would later move millions to tears.

From the end of the Shoah until the founding of the state, some 100,000 survivors made their way

to Palestine, still under British rule. Carrying for these deeply traumatized people was, again, a colossal task.

Consequently, between the late 1880s and 1948, the Jewish population in Palestine had grown from 50,000 to 650,000 people. On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was founded: “The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people – the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe – was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the community of nations,” stated the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel.

As soon as Israel had been established, Jews who for centuries had been living in countries like Iraq, Algeria, Egypt, Libya,

Never shy of spectacular action when desperately needed, Israel – still in its infancy – flew 49,000 Jews from Yemen to Zion during Operation Magic Carpet between 1949 and 1950. Having to leave the few possessions they had behind, they needed to make a new life in Israel. Similarly, in 1984 and 1985, the no-less spectacular Operation Moses brought some 8,000 Ethiopian Jews, known as Beta Israel, to Israel. And on May 24 and 25, 1991, Operation Solomon took place: 35 Israeli aircraft brought more than 14,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. During the operation, a trusty ElAl 747 made it into the annals of aviation history by carrying more than 1,100 passengers to freedom – the plane is constructed for about 600 passengers.

In the meantime, with the decline and eventual collapse of the Soviet Union from the late 1980s onward, more than 1.6 million Jews set out with Israel as their destination. This exodus would have been a unique opportunity for Germany and its Jewry, overaged and declining at the time, to renew itself. But the German government decided only to take in 250,000 Russian emigrants.

Welcoming more

Many Russian Jews who made Israel their new home were well-educated and talented. Engineers, medical doctors, and artists helped advance Israeli society. A large number of them became indispensable for Israel's growing IT-sector.

Anti-Semitic incidents in France made the number of French Olim grow rapidly over the past several years. About 40,000 French Jews have decided to turn their backs on La Douce France and make Israel their new home. It remains to be seen whether President Macron's announcement, that France would not be the same without its Jewish people, will persuade French Jews to stay there.

In recent years, another form of immigration has become an integral part of Israeli society, even if it is not overseen by the Jewish Agency. This includes the hosts of people who come to Israel to work and help ensure a smooth day-to-day running of things: Thai women and men working in agriculture, Romanians on building sites, and Filipinos, who have become vital in ensuring that elderly Israelis are well cared for.

Over the last decade, some 40,000 immigrants from Africa have entered Israel illegally. Government attempts to enforce a return to their home countries were thwarted due to public protest and the subsequent decision made by the High Court in Jerusalem.

Israel continues to welcome immigration and ensure that its Olim quickly find their place in their new society. Sure, the integration of a vast number of immigrants in this tiny country has not always been smooth sailing, and the different groups might bear grudges against one other every now and then, as brothers and sisters sometimes do. But they are all united when it comes to standing up for Israel, which ensures their “right to a life in dignity and freedom.”



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were threatened, persecuted, and killed. Once flourishing communities were destroyed. The “gates of the homeland” were open for them: Around 800,000 Jews from these countries came to Israel. The enormous problems this influx of people posed for the young state were mastered in an exemplary manner and the Olim, those who had just made Aliyah, were integrated and helped build the state. Simultaneously, around half a million Holocaust survivors, mostly from Displaced Persons camps in Europe, arrived in Zion.



Nechama Rivlin, wife of Israel's president, with soldiers

INNOVATION

Embarking on New Challenges

German-Israeli science cooperation continues to grow

By Hartmut Bomhoff

With our German-Israeli Accelerator, we are combining the strengths of Israel as a cybernation with the excellent and application-oriented research of Fraunhofer,” said Reimund Neugebauer, President of the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, earlier this year. The Accelerator program, a collaboration between the German research organization and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, bridges the gap between market needs and academic knowledge and know-



Shamoon College of Engineering in Beer Sheva

“Our common duty is to use science and research to create a brighter future for humanity

how. New ideas and solutions in cybersecurity are only one example of the fruitful scientific relationship between Germany and Israel. Cooperation focuses on scientific and technological fields such as marine and geosciences, biotechnology, environmental sciences, battery research, cancer research and water technologies.

The Hebrew University was one of the first Israeli academic institutions that built relations with Germany, which is now considered its most significant research partner in Europe, second worldwide only to the U.S. Cooperation is based on scientific excellence,

bringing together top scientists in a wide range of joint research projects and a growing number of students from both countries. Among the many collaborations are the Max Planck Center for Sensory Processing of the Brain in Action, the Martin Buber Society of Fellows at the Hebrew University, several Minerva Centers, and recently, the Fraunhofer Project Center for Cybersecurity in Jerusalem.

Unique cooperation structure

Even before diplomatic relations were established in 1965, there were connections between

students and faculties at the Hebrew University and Freie Universität Berlin. Two generations of scientists have since advanced research, student exchanges, and daily cooperation. “In every interaction with Germany, there is an element of introspection,” explains Menahem Ben-Sasson, former President of the Hebrew University. “We must never forget the Holocaust, its victims, and its perpetrators; yet this memory also unites us in a common duty – to remember the past, to educate accordingly, and to use science and research to create a brighter future for humanity. To this end, we will continue to grow our academic and research relations with Germany.”

Over the years, all Israeli universities have strengthened their ties with Germany. The pioneering research institution, however, was the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot. In 1959, it received a delegation of the Max Planck Society, headed by Otto Hahn. The German Academic

Exchange Service, DAAD, has provided scholarships for scientific cooperation with Israel since 1960. The cooperation smoothed the path for diplomatic relations between Germany and Israel. Today, a unique cooperation structure exists including contributions from foundations and long-term programs in addition to the ministerial cooperation. Germany is Israel’s most important partner in the EU research program, of which the country has been a member

since 1996. The research relationships gained a lasting momentum through the German-Israeli Science Year in 2008 and the annual government consultations held since then. The German-Israeli Research Forum was organized for the first time in 2011 to further intensify collaboration

In Germany, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research finances five foundations and programs specifically dedicated to German-Israeli scientific cooperation. Initiated in 1964, Minerva is the largest and most multifaceted cooperation program. Germany’s largest scientific research community, the Helmholtz Association, is about to open an office in Tel Aviv in fall. This office will serve as the first point of contact for existing and future partners from science, business and politics. Last year, German and Israeli scientists embarked on a new challenge around the Moon: the Israel Space Agency signed an agreement with the German Aerospace Center (DLR) to use its expertise in the examination of deep space radiation effects in conjunction with the Orion M1 mission. ■



Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot

TOURISM

Welcome to the Promised Land – ברוכים הבאים

By Lola Thiel

“Absolutely fantastic!” enthuses Lisa. The 27-year-old from Berlin has just returned from her first visit to Israel. “I’m going back as soon as I can!”

Like Lisa, a record 3.6 million tourists have made Israel their travel destination in 2017. That means more than 700,000 visitors came to the Holy Land than did the previous year. An increase of 25%!

And it’s not hard to see why: where else in the world does such a small country offer such a large variety of things to do and see? Israel is home to numerous holy sites revered by three monotheistic religions and to spectacular landscapes ranging from fine beaches to soft rolling green hills, from the arid, stark desert to snow-capped mountains – all within a space of hardly more than 20,000

square kilometers. And above all: bright blue skies for most of the year!

Whether you are interested in antiquities, outdoor activities, taking a dip in the Mediterranean, bird watching, finding serenity and contemplation at the Dead Sea (the lowest point on earth), or burning the midnight oil at one of the innumerable parties in Tel Aviv, Israel offers a plethora of vacation options. Accommodations range from luxury hotels to *zimmerim*, private bed&breakfasts, from log cabins to (former) Kibuzzim guest houses. And, as Israel is a country that has to watch its scarce natural resources, eco-tourism is on the rise everywhere.

Travelling around is easy, and public transportation, whether you hop on a



coach, a train, or the famous share taxi Sherut, is smooth and efficient. And very affordable.

Then, befittingly, for the Land of Milk and Honey, there is the food. Don’t miss out on stocking up at the colorful markets, the Mahane Yehuda Market in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv’s Shuk HaCarmel. For lovers of spices and dried fruit, Levinsky

Street market in South Tel Aviv is a must. The restaurant scene of the Israeli “city that never sleeps” is full of innovative eateries.

Board a plane to Tel Aviv and you will instantly notice the wide range of visitors on their way to the Holy Land: Christian travelers find their seats next

to Rasta musicians, while business people and scientists sit next to young families. Age? Along the range from a couple of weeks to octogenarians.

Israel is not a cheap destination. Accommodations tend to be on the pricey side as is eating out – and drinking. But worth every shekel! Lisa has already started to save up for her next visit to the Holy Land. ■

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Sacred to Jews, Muslims, and Christians: The Tomb of the Patriarchs, Hebron

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ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

No Alternative to Peace

By Benjamin Ludwig

Shalom, Salaam. The Israeli-Arab-Palestinian conflict has been going on for nearly a century: much longer than the State of Israel has existed, and longer than the history of the Nakba, the catastrophic flight and expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes 70 years ago. Since the early 1920s, there have only been very few years without violent clashes between Arabs and Jews, without terrorist attacks, skirmishes, battles and wars. One might be excused for thinking that Israelis, Palestinians, and Arabs feel only hatred for one another. But even the traditional greeting in this part of the world expresses the eternal desire for peace: Salaam and Shalom.

However, the shared longing for peace is not sufficient to resolve this deepening dispute. The conflict has too long a history and is too complex. What is needed to resolve the conflict are clear, stable structures that will have to be established according to international law. And, above all, shared political, economic, and social interests. The classic example is the Israel-Egypt peace process. The two countries fought three wars, resulting in grave loss of life and heavy economic burdens. When the Likud Party under Menachem Begin won Israel's 1977 elections, so-called "experts" announced that having the "chauvinist" Begin serve as head of government would increase the risk of war.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat disagreed. Sadat declared that he was ready to travel to Israel and make peace. The Egyptian head of state understood Israel's deep-seated fear for its own existence. Begin responded by inviting Sadat. In an address before the Knesset in Jerusalem, Sadat reiterated that Egypt was willing to bring an end to the war and to recognize Israel's right to exist. In return, the Egyptian president demanded Israel's complete withdrawal from all occupied territories. The Israeli government complied. In the 1979 Camp David Accords, concluded with the help of the U.S., Jerusalem commit-

ted to a complete withdrawal from Sinai and the dismantling of Israeli settlements there. Egypt, in turn, reestablished diplomatic relations with Israel. This peace has now lasted nearly four decades. The accord should serve as a model for all further peace agreements with Arab states – and with the Palestinians.

An agreement between the Jewish state and the Palestinians is undoubtedly far more complex than the agreement between Cairo and Jerusalem. The exis-

same for the Palestinians. About five million Palestinians are classified as refugees – they have now been refugees into the fourth generation.

Yet Palestinians have still been unable to commit to a unified political leadership. In the West Bank, the PLO – of which the largest faction is Fatah – is in control. Gaza is ruled by Hamas. The two organizations are also engaged in a bitter struggle with each other. Fatah is prepared to acknowledge Israel's existence in principle. Hamas



Jewish settlers vs. Israeli security officers at the evacuation of Amona settlement

Knight Foundation / 12346085195_09730a4f_01 / Flickr / (CC BY-SA 2.0) / https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/

tence of Egypt as a state has never been called into question. Israel had only to withdraw from Sinai, which had been occupied since 1967, and vacate its Jewish settlements. There were no other territorial claims on either side.

Generations of refugees

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is incomparably more complex. Both Palestinians and Israelis call the land between the Mediterranean and Jordan their home. Their capital is Jerusalem – or Al-Quds. The Israelis have a state, the Palestinians have none. As already noted, the Palestinians mourn the flight and expulsion of some 700,000 Arabs in 1948 and 1949. Israel, for its part, notes it opened its doors to more than 800,000 Jewish refugees from Arab states such as Morocco, Iraq, and Yemen between 1949 and 1961. While the Jewish arrivals were absorbed into Israel, most Arab countries, with the exception of Jordan, still refuse to do the

and the fundamentalist-Islamist Islamic Jihad have flatly refused to accept that Jews have a right to their own state in the Middle East. Hamas believes its only option is armed struggle to destroy Israel and expel the Jews. It receives financial, political, and military support mainly from Iran, which also seeks to destroy Israel.

This complex status quo is further complicated by a long-term process of historical transformation. Biblical Jews lived mainly in Judea and Samaria, which is now the West Bank. The Palestinians, who regard themselves as descendants of the Phoenicians, lived on the coastal plain – the present-day territory of Israel. As a result, the West Bank and Jerusalem are claimed by both sides as their own. Nationalist and nationalist-religious Israelis believe that the traditional biblical homeland and East Jerusalem is theirs by right. This is rejected even by moderate Palestinians.

These contradictions should not cause us to give up hope. A century of conflict

between Israelis and Palestinians has shown that the problem has no military solution. The creation of a new state, or the defense of an existing one, cannot be achieved by way of force. As anyone who has spoken to the affected peoples knows, most in the region can no longer tolerate the conflict. They are sick of fear, violence, and death. They are desperate for peace.

The foundations of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement were established long ago. There is no alternative solution that would meet the fundamental interests of both parties. Any Palestinian government that seeks popular legitimacy must insist on a sovereign state, with Jerusalem as its capital. Israel requires the recognition of its right to exist from Palestinians and the Arab states, as well as their representative, the Arab League. And Israel's capital must be Jerusalem.

Israel cannot consent to the return of five million Palestinian refugees, lest Jews become a minority in their own country. Palestinians will insist on appropriate compensation. Both Israelis and Palestinians demand security. As Egypt once did, Palestinians will demand a state within the 1967 borders and the evacuation of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

No utopian dream

These facts provide the framework for an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel must withdraw from all occupied Palestinian territories and give up most of its settlements, apart from those that can be kept through localized exchanges of territory. An Arab state of Palestine will be born. Jerusalem will be the capital of both countries. Most of the descendants of the original Palestinian refugees will not be able to return to the place their parents called home. After 1945, German expellees were also not permitted to return. Palestinians who are not permitted to return will require financial compensation. A peace treaty between Israel and Palestine will need to be concluded and be subject to international monitoring.

Is this nothing but a utopian dream? By no means. The "hereditary enmity" between Germany and France was also resolved. The only alternative to peace through compromise is an unbearable continuation of violence and war. ■

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