

Israel and the *Freistaat Sachsen*—A Foreword

Kurt Biedenkopf

The book you hold in your hands is one of the many proofs for a close relationship between the *Freistaat Sachsen* (the Free State of Saxony, one of the 16 *Länder* of the Federal Republic of Germany) and the State of Israel. From early after the political turn-about in East Germany in 1989 the re-founded federal state of Saxony engaged very actively in establishing a firm relationship with the State of Israel. There are examples in abundance that confirm the success of this endeavor. Not all of them can certainly be mentioned here. Numerous activities relate to the lives of Jews in Saxony. New synagogues were built in Saxony's capital Dresden, and in Chemnitz, its third largest city. Many other activities were directed towards establishing a close relationship between Saxony and Israel in the fields of science and arts. The state of Saxony has—for example—wholeheartedly supported the establishment and growth of the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture in Leipzig, among others by supporting the University of Leipzig in appointing the internationally renowned historian Dan Diner to a Professorship for Jewish History and Culture. Professor Diner is now also the Director of the Simon Dubnow Institute. Close scientific relations were also established with the Bar-Ilan University in Ramat-Gan. Members of that university have frequently visited Saxony. A high-ranking delegation from Saxonian universities, including the then rectors of the Universities of Technology in Dresden and Chemnitz, visited the Ramat-Gan campus of Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv a few years ago. The most important outcome of this cooperation effort was and continues to be the establishment of the Dr. Josef Burg Chair of Human Values, Peace and Tolerance at the School of Education of Bar-Ilan University. This chair was established in 1995 and is supported by the State of Saxony with an annual endowment of approximately € 130.000. Recently, the Saxonian State Government has decided to continue its support for this chair at least until 2003.

I, personally, in my capacity of Prime Minister of Saxony, have visited Israel several times since 1990, most recently in the year 2000 when I paid Israel a visit during my term of office as President of the *Bundesrat*, the second chamber of the German Parliament. An earlier visit to Israel in 1997 laid the ground for this book. At a reception given by The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, I was introduced to Professor Alfred Tovias, at that time deputy director of the Institute for European Studies at the Hebrew University. We talked about ways how Saxony could take a part in supporting the

institute and agreed that a scholarship program would be an optimal measure. Beginning in 1998 the State of Saxony has offered scholarships to Saxonian students and young faculty members of the Saxonian universities, funding study and research visits to Israel, and to Israeli students and faculty, funding such visits to Saxonian universities. In the year 2000 a formal agreement between the Saxonian universities and The Hebrew University was signed by the Rector of the Hebrew University and by Professor Boehnke from Chemnitz University of Technology, the editor of the current volume, on behalf of the Saxonian universities. This agreement lays down regulations for the annual awarding of scholarships to students and young faculty primarily of—to quote from the agreement—"political science, international relations, and economics, but also of law, sociology, social psychology, current history, and cultural studies who engage in research related to the field of European Studies including European-Israeli relations."

This book now is meant as the scientific founding document of the scholarship program. In late 1999 a larger delegation of students and faculty from the Hebrew University visited Chemnitz, Dresden, and later the federal capital of Berlin as part of the scholarship program. A small workshop-like conference was organized in Chemnitz at which German—mostly Saxonian—and Israeli scholars presented their work from the field of European Studies. These contributions were the seeds out of which this book eventually grew. May the volume find a wide readership and may it also serve as a further piece of evidence for a lively scientific cooperation between Saxony and Israel.