

## *Preface*

Numerous books and articles have been published on German Christian organizations in general and on the story of the Auguste Victoria Foundation (= AVF) in particular. These authors<sup>1</sup> focus mainly on the history, architecture and goals of the Foundation. Most of them praise the German Protestants' efforts and achievements. Only a few writers like Shlomo Elan question the German project. This study offers a critical view on the subject, focusing on the theological and political background of German Protestantism which provided the values and ideals for the Foundation's members. Why did German Protestants decide to build a palatial mansion and large church at a time when the majority of Jerusalem's population still lived in poor conditions? Why was the Mount of Olives chosen for the new building project? Did strategic issues play a role?

As some German researchers show the tendency to ignore or neglect the fact that Jerusalem had not only Arabs and Christians, but also Jewish inhabitants, this book raises the question of how the German Protestants responded to the local Arab *and* Jewish population. How did they visualize Jews and Muslims? How did various local groups in Jerusalem react to the new building project? Did World War I, with the Turks and Germans as allies, change the Protestants' attitude to Jews? Did the rise of the Nazis in Germany have an impact on the Protestant members around the AVF?

The status and role of women members have never been studied in the context of the AVF. This is surprising because women played an important role at the Foundation. For example, Laura Oelbermann (Cologne, Germany) donated a very generous gift, which helped considerably to get the project underway. The Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth worked hard, day-in and day-out, to meet the needs and expectations of their guests. This paper presents a chapter on the position and work of women within the Foundation. How did board members in Germany and officials in Jerusalem react to them? Documents preserved in German and Israeli archives illustrate the daily life of the guesthouse, especially during World War I, and the official tasks of the Leading Sister, Theodore Barkhausen, in the 1920s and 1930s. This information will be published here for the very first time. The fact that the Auguste Victoria compound even contained an area for breed-

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<sup>1</sup> Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, Alex Carmel, Shlomo Elan, David Kroyanker, Jürgen Krüger, August Strobel, Caroline Wenzel, Michael Trensky, et al.

ing pigs and a chicken coop, found its expression in the title of this work: “Ham and Eggs in Palestine”.

The book consists of two major parts:

1. The history, development, and work of the AVF in Jerusalem.
2. The relations of the AVF members to Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

The first three chapters inform the readers on the history of the AVF, ask for the Foundation’s concept and its fulfillment. Furthermore, they display the important contribution of the deaconesses who made the project work through their daily efforts. The following three chapters raise the questions of the AVF members’ religious background, political attitudes, and relations to Jews and Arabs in Palestine. As the project covers the period until 1939, the Foundation’s involvement with the NSDAP in Palestine is also examined. The last chapter points out both the differences and the common ground with other European enterprises in Palestine.

## *Introduction: Historical Background and Definitions*

The Crusader movement, in which Germans were extensively involved, took place from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century: All in all, eight Crusades including a *Kinderkreuzzug* (Children's Crusade) were launched. During this period, countless nobles and many rulers of the Holy Roman Empire took up the Cross and mobilized armies of knights in order to free the Holy Land from the "unbelievers". Members of the poorer classes, hoping for riches, participated in the Crusades. Many excesses and pogroms were committed against the non-Christian population as they made their way to the Holy Land. Jews in France, England, and Germany were murdered. The First Crusade reached Jerusalem in 1099. The city was captured and turned into the center for the Latin-Christian states in the East. Feudal states were founded in the Near East, modelled on Western patterns according to their religious and military needs. Churches and monasteries were established, fortresses extended and new and imposing castles erected. German rulers such as Konrad III, Friedrich I Barbarossa and Friedrich II were also involved (Goren 2003a: XII). Up to the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, seven more Crusades had taken place. All of them were launched in the name of Christianity and intended to regain Christian control of the Holy Land with its holy sites. These Crusades were characterized by wars, pogroms, bloodshed, destruction, and religious fanaticism, and finally ended in defeat and disappointment.<sup>2</sup>

For several hundred years the European powers displayed no interest in Palestine which, from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century on, was under Turkish rule (Eisler 1997: 5). However, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and his subsequent excursion into Palestine in 1799, changed this attitude and awakened a new interest in the Middle East. At this time mainly Western tourists and a few researchers were exploring the region. Activity by the European powers in this area began several years later in the nineteenth century when the Egyptian army occupied Palestine between 1831 and 1840. Egyptian officials introduced reforms, which were beneficial to the non-Muslim population as well as to foreigners. The Great Powers of England, Prussia, France, etc. were now allowed to trade and

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<sup>2</sup> Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches (1990), vol. 2 and 5; Neues Lexikon des Judentums 1992; Weltgeschichte (w/o yr): 171–180.

open consulates. In 1840/41, England, Austria, Prussia, and Russia overthrew the Egyptian regime and helped restore and strengthen the Ottoman Empire. As a result the Ottoman government continued the liberal policy toward Western foreigners, which successfully promoted economic and social development in the region. The nineteenth century was an era of growing interest in Palestine and a time of keen competition among European nations to establish a strong hold on the Holy Land.<sup>3</sup>

From 1840 onwards, the European powers (France, Austria, Russia, Britain, Prussia) intensified their political, economic and religious activities. Recognizing the weakness of the Ottoman Empire, European governments, as well as established churches and Christian sects, used the opportunity to gradually gain a stronger position in Palestine. European efforts in Palestine were mainly aimed at “winning” the status as protector of Christian interests in the Holy Land. Every nation that participated in this “contest”, initiated ambitious building projects to symbolize their energy. They conducted religious and social programs to increase influence, and opened educational institutions to bring its culture and values to the population of Palestine.<sup>4</sup>

Prussia, later the German *Kaiserreich* (Imperial Germany), was among the nations displaying an interest in Palestine. The first friendship pact between Prussia and Turkey was signed in 1761 by Friedrich the Great. The two powers saw themselves as allies against Austria and Russia during the Seven Years War. This pact did not have any direct effect on Palestine. Only after the termination of Egyptian rule in 1840, did Prussia become an active agent in the country. At this same time, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV came to power. He was a man of romantic, religious views. He had shown an interest ever since his youth, in the position of Christians in the Holy Land. As a consequence, he supported the missionary work and “dreamed” of a European protectorate over the holy sites in Palestine, while promising national autonomy for the various Christian groups and protection for the Jews.<sup>5</sup> Under his rule, the Joint Anglican Prussian Bishopric and the first German

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3 Ben Arieh 1979: 67ff; 111ff; 159ff; Carmel 2000: 17ff; Eisler 1997: 5ff; Eisler 1999: 7; Eliav 1997: 15; Goren 2003b: 13f; Hänsel 2003: 15ff; Lückhoff 1998: 11ff; Perry 1995: 9f.

4 Carmel 2000: 21ff; Sapir 1989: 105; Elan 1984: 9ff; Eliav 1975: 423f.

5 Eliav 1975: 425f; Schütz 1988: 13f, 157ff; see also: Carmel 1998: 135; Carmel 2000: 23f, 29; Hänsel 2003: 17f.

consulate were opened in 1841/42.<sup>6</sup> While the Joint Bishopric closed its door in 1886, the German consulate successfully increased German influence in Palestine. In contrast to German Christian groups which conducted missionary and social work mainly among the Arab population, the consulate's activity included help and support for Jewish projects and organizations. The Jews of German origin cooperated with the consulate out of loyalty and a realization that the consulate could help and protect them from Turkish injustice and atrocities (Elan 1984: 38ff; Eliav 1975: 441; Goren 2003b: 194ff). German consuls and other officials viewed the German Jews "as a faithful support for [their] policy of increasing the Germanization of Palestine" (Eliav 1975: 423). One result of this policy was the fact that thanks to the Jews, the German language was very popular in Jerusalem (Eliav 1975: 439).

From the late 1880s onward, German foreign policy changed drastically in regard to foreign countries in general and Palestine in particular. *Reichskanzler* Bismarck had always stood for a policy of balance within Europe and the guiding principle of non-interference within the Ottoman Empire. However, after the inauguration of Wilhelm II in 1888 and Bismarck's resignation in 1890, the new Kaiser supported the idea of increasing German economic and political influence in the colonies (Elan 1984: 12f). Very soon Germany reached a key position among the European powers strengthening the trend of nationalism among Germans (Goren 2001: 45; Lückhoff 1998: 268ff, 300). In regard to Palestine, the German foreign policy did not intend to gain territorial conquests but intensify its influence and nationalize its work in Palestine. This change had a strong impact on the region: Germans expanded their economic, social and religious activities in the region by increasing their building and welfare program. More Christian schools, hospitals, and guesthouses were erected. The activities of religious institutions were expanded: The Catholic mission of the *Palästinaverein* opened a series of schools for the non-Jewish population, and bought land in Tabgha and Emmaus in order to establish colonies and guesthouses (Cramer 1939: 301ff). In 1895, the German Catholics were organized in the general organization *Deutscher Verein vom Heiligen Land*, which aimed to protect the holy sites and support Catholic missionary and social work in the Holy Land (Goren 2001: 39). Protestant groups also extended their

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6 Ben-Arieh 1984: 250ff; Goren 2003b: 193f; Hänsel 2003: 19ff; Lückhoff 1998: 36ff; 50f; 72f; 119ff, 285ff.

activity. In 1894 they opened a hospital in the New City of Jerusalem under the auspices of the Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth (*Kaiserswerther Diakonissen*). Economic activity also increased and the importance of the German Christian community greatly exceeded its numerical strength. It may be credited with considerable progress in mechanizing agriculture, improving transportation, developing crafts, hotel-keeping, light trade, and increasing imports and exports (Carmel / Eisler 1999: 12, 21f; Carmel 2000: 23–28; Eliav 1975: 438f).

Germany gradually became the *meistbegünstigte Nation* (the most favored nation) of the Ottoman Empire (Eliav 1975: 438). The “traditional friendship” with the Turkish government was strengthened through the official visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II to the Ottoman Empire, including Palestine (Eliav 1975: 438). Wilhelm II visited Jerusalem to inaugurate the German Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in the Muristan, a gift from the Turkish Sultan. Like his predecessor Friedrich Wilhelm IV, Wilhelm II was a man of romantic vision. He viewed himself as a Crusader, fighting peacefully for the Protestant faith and regaining the holy sites (Elan 1984: 17; Krüger 1995: 108). By that, he used the idea of the “Peaceful Crusade”, which had existed in Germany since the 1840s (Goren 2003b: 318f; Schölch 1993: 31f). Baron Mirbach participating in the Emperor’s journey to Jerusalem, summarized the purpose of the voyage as follows:

*“First glowing, religious enthusiasm, then incessant wars and streams of blood, dreadful destructions, defeat and disappointment were the characteristics of the Crusades of the Middle Ages. Now Kaiser Wilhelm II took up the flag with the Cross and initiated in 1898 a new, wonderful, unique crusade in the name of peace and reconciling love...”* (Das deutsche Kaiserpaar 1899: 11).

The Emperor’s journey had a great impact on the German engagement in Palestine. Three impressive building projects followed his visit: the church of the Dormition Abbey, the Catholic Hospice of St. Paul and the Protestant guesthouse of the Auguste Victoria Foundation. Private and official financial donations came in, more official support was given for building and welfare programs, and several foundations were created in Germany for undertakings in Palestine. A German *Palästina*bank was founded. A new era of blossom time began for the Germans in Palestine (Elan 1984: 18; Neubert-Preine 2003: 27ff).

All in all, the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of growing political interest on the part of Western nations. It was also the century of missionary work

(Eisler 1997: 5f) and a time of religious awakening in America and Europe resulting in the birth of new movements (Lückhoff 1998: 294; Moscrop 2000: 215ff). Members of these movements believed in the redemption of the Jews, expecting the return of Jesus Christ and the beginning of the millennium in the near future (Geldbach 1991: 150f; Schölch 1993: 31f). Subsequently, believers began recognizing Jerusalem not only as a heavenly place, as “God’s dwelling place” but also as the most important location of their eschatology. Templers and other religious members immigrated to the Holy Land, establishing colonies and performing missionary work. Their efforts were understood as part of the eschatology, believing the end of days was close (Geldbach 1991: 150f).

Many Germans who lived in Palestine belonged to this special group of believers. In general, the Germans in Palestine fell into three categories: Some settled there permanently such as the religious group of Templers mentioned above. Others came to serve in various institutions for a longer period like the craftsmen-missionaries from St. Chrischona<sup>7</sup> or the Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth<sup>8</sup>. A third group of Germans were in Palestine on temporary duty, in the diplomatic service (consuls) or representing the Protestant / Catholic Church for a limited period of time (Geldbach 1991: 153). The Protestants involved in the Auguste Victoria Foundation came from all three groups. Examining and exposing their political and religious backgrounds along with their efforts and attitudes toward the local population, will be a significant part of this study. However, before starting with the subject, a few terms used in the present work will be clarified:

1. According to archival sources, the Auguste Victoria Foundation was called *Oelbergstiftung* or *Auguste Viktoria Stiftung auf dem Oelberg* (*Oelberg* = Mount of Olives). This name is geographically incorrect. Maps prove that the site of the Auguste Victoria Foundation is part of the foothills of Mount Scopus. Nevertheless, German Protestants called this hilltop “Mount of Olives” since the building complex of the Foundation included the Church of Ascension, and according to Christian tradition the ascension of Jesus took place on the Mount of Olives and not on Mount Scopus. Until today the Auguste Victoria compound is generally known as being located

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<sup>7</sup> For more details, see Carmel 1981: 23ff, Lückhoff 1998: 165ff, and Eisler 1999: 18f.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth, see the chapters I to III.

on the Mount of Olives. In respect to this popular tradition, the present study takes over the description of “Auguste Victoria Foundation on the Mount of Olives” (Dalman 1916: 74).

2. The name of the Foundation varies from Auguste Viktoria to Auguste Victoria and today’s *Augusta Victoria*. As the undertaking was named after its patroness, the German Empress Auguste Victoria, it is advisable to ask how the Empress herself wrote her name. Archival material does prove there was no regularity, no standard regarding the spelling of “Victoria / Viktoria”.<sup>9</sup> As the paper will be published in English, the spelling closer to the English language has been chosen, i. e. Victoria.

3. The description “members of the Auguste Victoria Foundation” does not refer to a technological term of official membership, since the German Protestant corporation included members from many cities and counties in Germany as well as foreign countries<sup>10</sup>. This paper acknowledges all individuals, either working in the guesthouse or being engaged in the Foundation’s interests as “members of the Auguste Victoria Foundation”. Depending on the context, the trustees of the Foundation are either mentioned in particular or subsumed as “members”.

4. The name “Palestine” (Greek / Latin: Philistine land, Arabic: *Falastin*, German: *Palästina*) went through many different definitions over the centuries dating back to the second century C. E., when the Romans named the province of Judea “Palaestina”. Until the present days, “Palestine” has various religious and political meanings. It is seen as the Promised Land by Jews, the Holy Land by Christians, and a home and future state by Palestinians. Subsequently, it is important to clarify its definition in this study. As this work concentrates on the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was decided to use the terms of “Palestine” and “Holy Land”, as used in the region at the time of the British Mandate.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> EZA 5, 7, 56.

<sup>10</sup> EZA 7/433: list of members.

<sup>11</sup> For thorough information on this issue, see Vieweger 2003: 75–81 and Goren 2003b: 18.