



*Deutscher Bundestag and a government building in Berlin*



*Prof. Gert Weisskirchen  
(Chairman of the German friends)*



*Prof. Benjamin Neuberger lecturing at the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation*

## German Friends of the Open University

*Last year, a branch of the Friends of the Open University was established in Germany. Today, Vera Heuser, the Open University representative to Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, can look back with satisfaction on its prime achievement: an increased knowledge of and interest in the Open University has been generated among German policy-makers, academics, members of the public and within the Jewish community.*

A prestigious advisory committee of both Jewish and non-Jewish members has been formed. The committee head is Prof. Gert Weisskirchen, a member of the German parliament (Deutscher Bundestag) and advisor to the OSZE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) on anti-Semitism. Co-chairman is Yigal Bar-Yoav (industrialist) and members of the board are Dr. Gerhard Goetz (lawyer), Nico Rosenkranz (manager, Ritz Carlton Hotel), Vera Heuser, Dr. Gideon Joffe (head of the Jewish community Berlin), Dr. Hilda Joffe (Keren Hayesod), Jasmin Bruck (head of Jewish students in Germany) and Nathan Kalmanowicz (counselor in cultural affairs for the Central Committee of Jews in Germany).

On the board of trustees are Dr. Heiner Geissler (former federal minister), Dr. Niels Hansen (former German ambassador to Israel), Dr. Josef Joffe (co-publisher of "Die Zeit"), Ralph Giordano (author), Charlotte Knobloch (President of the Central Committee of Jews in Germany), Rabbi Dr. Henry G. Brandt (President of the German Association for Christian-Jewish

cooperation), Renate Schmidt (former federal minister) and Joel Lion (from the Israeli embassy in Germany).

### Courses in German

One of the first projects planned is the translation of 18 Open University courses in Judaic Studies into German, so that they can be studied by students in Germany through distance learning. These courses have already been successfully translated into Russian, and 8,000 students are enrolled in the degree program throughout the former Soviet Union.

"A number of universities, including Freie University in Berlin, are interested in adding these courses to their curriculum and integrating our textbooks," says Ms. Heuser, who made aliyah from Berlin two years ago, "and we are currently seeking funding for this and other projects."

Researchers from the Ruhr University Institute for Genocide and Diaspora are also hoping to cooperate with Open University researchers in the field of genocide studies, a unique program

of studies with an extensive range of textbooks on the topic.

Recently, the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation invited Prof. Benjamin Neuberger of the Political Science Department at the Open University for a visit. He lectured at the Bundestag, followed by a reception. His topic "Germany and Israel – Emotions, Reality and Morality" was very well received and was followed by another lecture on the topic "How Stable is Israel's Democracy?" at the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, in conjunction with the Germany-Israeli Association. An interview with Prof. Neuberger subsequently was published in a local newspaper.

The Friends Association plans to celebrate the first anniversary of its founding with further speaking engagements by Open University scholars. The German Friends organization also plans to hold events in cooperation with German universities and organizations to celebrate Israel's 60th birthday in 2008.

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