



## **Israel and Germany**

**Five decades of diplomatic,  
scientific and cultural relations**

From the Munich Olympics until  
the end of the 1970s



## 14. MUNICH OLYMPICS 1972

On September 5, 1972 a group of terrorists attacked the members of the Israeli Olympic team at their quarters in the Munich Olympic Village. The terrorists belonged to a Palestinian secret terrorist organization called "Black September" that was established by Yasser Arafat as part of the PLO. Two members of the Israeli team were killed in the course of the battle with the terrorists. Nine were taken hostage. In the course of a failed attempt to release the hostages conducted by the German police at the Fürstenfeldbruck airport, all of the hostages were murdered and one German policeman was killed. Five of the terrorists were killed and three captured. The Olympics were suspended only for 34 hours, despite the criticism voiced in Israel. In the wake of the incident, the presidents and the heads of governments of Israel and Germany have exchanged letters expressing feelings of sympathy and appreciation. The Israeli government was interested in strengthening the relationship with West Germany and saw Willy Brandt as a friend. Therefore it made an effort to assuage the sharp criticism, voiced by many in Israel in view of the Germans' failed operation.

Federal President Dr. Gustav Heinemann speaks at the Munich Olympic Stadium, during the memorial ceremony for the victims of the massacre, 06.09.1972.

Bundesarchiv, B 145 Bild-00048529 /  
photo: Wegmann, Ludwig



סוגיות 41

בשלה: ספט 6.9.72

אל: המשרד

את: גרמניה

HISEXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL,  
MR. ZALMAN SHAZAR  
JERUSALEM  
MR. PRESIDENT,

THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIK OF GERMANY HAS ORDERED ME  
TO CONVEY TO YOUR EXCELLENCY THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE:

''ERSCHUETTERT VON DEN ENTSETZLICHEN EREIGNISSEN,  
DIE UNSER ALLER HOFFNUNG AUF RETTUNG DER NOCH  
IN VERBRECHERISCHER TERRORISTENHAND BEFINDLICHEN  
ISRAELISCHEN SPORTLER EIN JAEHES ENDE SETZTEN,  
SPRECHE ICH EURER EKSZELLENZ MEINE ZUTIEFST  
EMPFUNDENE ANTEILNAHME AUS. MIT MIR TEILT DAS  
DEUTSCHE VOLK DEN SCHMERZ, DER SIE, DAS ISRAELISCHE  
VOLK, BESONDERS DIE ANGEHOERIGEN DER OPFER, JA  
DIE GANZE ZIVILISIERTE MENSCHHEIT BEWEGT. DIE WELT,  
DIE DEN FRIEDLICHEN SPORTLICHEN WETTKAMPF DER JUGEND  
VERFOLGT, IST TIEF VOM SCHLAG DES UNBERECHENBAREN  
UND HEIMTUECKISCHEN TERRORS GETROFFEN. MOEGE UNSER  
ALLER STREBEN NACH VERSEHNUNG DIESEM TERROR,  
WO IMMER ER AUCH AUFTRITT, NICHT ERLIEGEN, SONDERN  
DEN HASS UEBERWINDEN UND DEN FRIEDEN STAERKEN.  
GUSTAV W. HEINEMANN  
PRAESIDENT DER BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND''

PLEASE ACCEPT AGAIN, MR. PRESIDENT, THE EXPRESSION OF MY DEEPEST  
SYMPATHY WITH YOUR EXCELLENCY AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.

JESCO VON PUTTKAMER  
AMBASSADOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

A telegram from the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Gustav W. Heinemann, to Zalman Shazar, the President of Israel, 6.9.1972.

**"Shocked by the appalling events that put an abrupt end to our hopes to save the Israeli sportsmen, held by the criminal terrorists, I address your excellency to express my profound sympathy. The German people, just as myself, are sharing the pain of the people in Israel, and especially the pain of the victims' families, a pain which moves the whole of humanity. The world that was following the peaceful sports competitions of the youth closely, feels deep sorrow at the unexpected and vicious terrorist attack. We wish and hope not to surrender to this terror, wherever it may appear, but to overpower the hate and to strengthen the peace.**

**Gustav W. Heinemann**

**President of the Federal Republic of Germany"**

Israeli State Archives



בלתי מסווג

משרד החוץ

מחלקת הקשר

מברק יוצא

מס' 76

בשליח: ספט 72 1800 06

אל: שג בון

מאת: המשרד

לידיעתכם להלן מברק מהנשיא לנשיא :

H. E. DR. GUSTAV W. HEINEMANN PRESIDENT FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF  
GERMANY BONN

DEEPLY MOVED BY TRAGIC TRUTH AND SHATTERING SINCERITY OF YOUR  
EXCELLENCY'S SPEECH AT THIS MORNING'S MEMORIAL FOR ISRAEL  
ATHLETES

I AM, AS I TOLD YOUR AMBASSADOR YESTERDAY, ALWAYS CERTAIN OF YOUR  
HUMANE AND UNDERSTANDING APPROACH AND MOREOVER HOPEFUL THAT THE  
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY WILL FIND WAYS TO AID IN OVERCOMING  
PERNICIOUS HATRED AND ADVANCING UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PEOPLES

ZALMAN SHAZAR  
PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL

שהח רוהמ מנכל מ/מנכל אלון דיין סמנכל איר א טקס מעת הסברה לש. הנשיא

גל/כר

A telegram from the President of Israel Zalman Shazar to the President of the Federal Republic of Germany Gustav Heinemann, 6.9.1972.

8.11.72

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Botschaft des Bundeskanzlers der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

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Die kürzliche Entführung einer Lufthansa-Maschine hat der bayerischen Staatsregierung und der Bundesregierung eine schwere Entscheidung abverlangt. Unser Handeln wurde von der Überzeugung bestimmt, dass der Rettung der gefährdeten Menschen Vorrang vor allen anderen Erwägungen gebühre. In diesem konkreten Fall gab es keine andere Wahl.

Die am 29. Oktober eingenommene Haltung der Bundesregierung bedeutet kein Zurückweichen gegenüber dem Terrorismus. Die Bundesregierung wird sich auch in Zukunft mit ganzer Kraft und allen ihr zur Verfügung stehenden Mitteln terroristischen Anschlägen entgegenstellen. Wir werden nicht dulden, dass unser Land zum Schauplatz gewaltsamer Auseinandersetzungen wird. Wir werden unsere Sicherheitsmaßnahmen ausbauen und uns verstärkt für eine internationale Zusammenarbeit bei der Bekämpfung des Terrorismus einsetzen.

Sie werden verstehen, dass ich schmerzlich berührt bin von Äusserungen, die im Zusammenhang mit der Entführung der Lufthansa-Maschine von israelischer Seite gefallen sind. Mit allem Nachdruck muß ich widersprechen, wenn hierbei Parallelen zu einer verbrecherischen Periode deutscher Politik gezogen werden.

Es erfüllt mich mit Sorge, dass durch diese Vorgänge das Verhältnis zwischen unseren Ländern belastet werden könnte, und ich meine, wir sollten uns in gemeinsamem Bemühen dafür einsetzen, dass die deutsch-israelischen Beziehungen keinen Schaden nehmen.

A short while after the massacre, the relations between Israel and Germany became strained following a severe report presented by the Director of the Mossad Zvi Zamir to the Israeli Government, regarding the actions of the German police during the release attempt. The tension became particularly acute in October-November 1972, when the West German government surrendered to the demands of Palestinian hijackers of a Lufthansa airplane. The hijackers threatened to blow up the aircraft, and so the German government released the three terrorists that participated in the massacre of Israeli sportsmen. The Israeli ambassador in Bonn was called back to Israel for consultation, and public opinion expressed blatant anti-German sentiments that went as far as comparisons to the treatment of Jews by the Nazi regime. In his letter to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, Chancellor Brandt notes that he was deeply hurt by this attitude.

Israeli State Archive



## 15. CHANCELLOR WILLY BRANDT VISITS ISRAEL, JUNE 1973

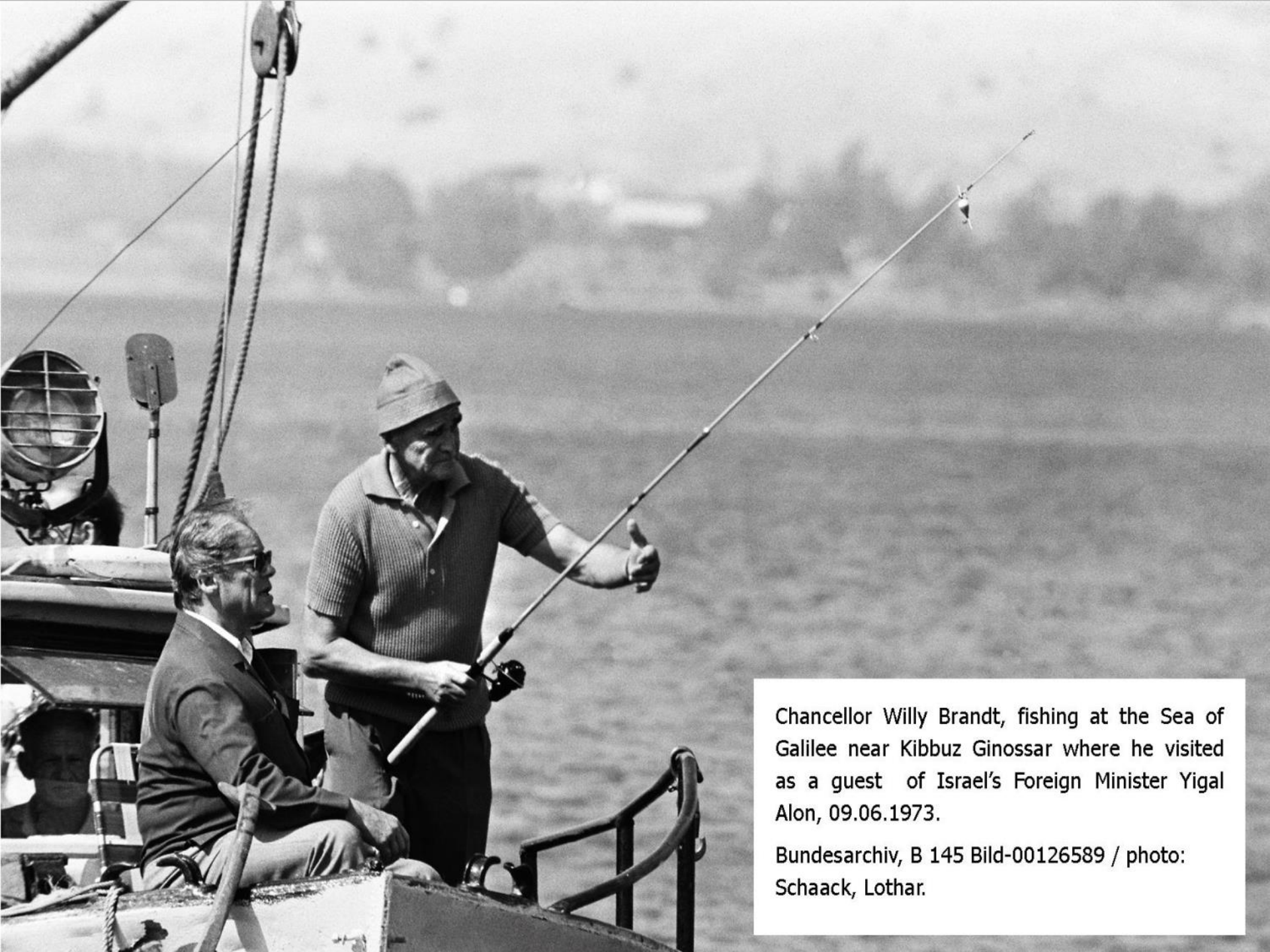


The visit of Willy Brandt to Israel in June 1973 was the first visit of a German Chancellor to Israel. Brandt was held in a very high esteem in Israel, as a strong opponent of Nazism and a great ally of Israel. In February 1972 Brandt was invited by Golda Meir, who developed a personal friendship with him as members of the Socialist International Organization. In view of the Munich Olympics' massacre and especially after the release of the three terrorists, Brandt's advisors were worried about possible

Prime Minister Golda Meir welcoming West German Chancellor Willy Brandt at Lod Airport, 7.6.1973.

Government Press Office (Israel), Photo: Milner, Moshe.

protests in Israel. The Israeli government assured Brandt that such protests are not expected, and indeed Brandt did not witness any mass protests during his visit. Brandt, wished to "normalize" the relations between Israel and Germany in a way that will focus less on past accounts and allow Germany to exhibit a more balanced position on the issue of Arab-Israeli conflict. In the course of his visit Brandt was critical of the Israeli attitude regarding the conflict with its neighbors.



Chancellor Willy Brandt, fishing at the Sea of Galilee near Kibbutz Ginossar where he visited as a guest of Israel's Foreign Minister Yigal Alon, 09.06.1973.

Bundesarchiv, B 145 Bild-00126589 / photo:  
Schaack, Lothar.



Members of "Beitar" youth movement chanting anti-Nazi slogans during arrival of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, Lod Airport, 7.6.1973.

Government Press Office (Israel), Photo: Milner, Moshe.





Madam Prime Minister,  
dear Mrs. Meir,

since returning from Israel I have, as I suggested to you in our talks, been able to convey to both President Nixon and Secretary General Brezhnev as well as some other friendly Statesmen my favourable impressions of your Government's will for peace. With President Pompidou I had a detailed talk about the situation in the Middle East during the recent consultations in Bonn. It is moreover intended to transmit a communication to a high-ranking personality in Cairo in the near future.

I hope that all this can serve common aim of initiating peace talks.

The Council of the European Community in Luxembourg has - not least as a result of German insistence - given the commission a mandate to negotiate with Israel at an early date a new agreement within the framework of a comprehensive mediterranean concept.

[...]

I was pleased to welcome the delegation of your party in Berlin. On that occasion I again felt deep satisfaction over the fact that as a result to the talks I had with you and other members of your Government during my visit to Israel and thanks to my contacts with the people in your country, we have been able, mindful of the burden of the past, to open up a new chapter in the relations between our two peoples. Let me use this opportunity to express to you once again my warm thanks for this.

With warm regards,  
signed  
Willy Brandt.

The talks between Brandt and the Israeli leadership focused on two main issues. The first issue was the Israeli request for assistance in its efforts to sign a commerce agreement with the European market. The other issue was the request made by Israel to convey a clear message to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat that Israel is willing to retreat from most of the Sinai territories, although it does not agree to retreat to the pre-1967 borders. The message was passed to Egypt, but it was rejected. Some historians criticized Brandt for not acting assertively enough on the matter, and instead of attempting to convince Egypt in the seriousness of Israel's intentions, only delivered the message through a personal delegate.

An excerpt from the Willy Brandt's to Golda Meir upon his return to Germany after his visit to Israel, 28.7.1973.

Israeli State Archives

## 16. PRIME MINISTER YITZHAK RABIN VISITS GERMANY, JULY 1975

On July 8, 1975 Yitzhak Rabin arrived to Germany as a guest of the Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. Rabin was the first Israeli prime minister to visit West Germany. The main goal of the visit was to prevent the drift of West Germany's position towards the Arab states. The German authorities were concerned that the oil embargo will cause a serious economic crisis in West Germany. Disagreements between Israel and Europe, including Germany, especially in regard to the Palestinian issue intensified. Despite the disagreements, the visit was described as successful. It helped to maintain the economic assistance to Israel and to strengthen security cooperation.

The visit began with a ceremony at the former concentration camp Bergen-Belsen. Rabin laid a wreath at the site of the memorial obelisk and the Jewish monument, where he also lit candles and recited the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead. Since then, a visit to the concentration camps became a traditional ceremony that takes place at official visits of Israeli prime ministers, presidents and even ministers to Germany.



Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin standing in silence after laying a blue and white carnation wreath at the foot of the obelisk at the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany, 8.7.1975.

Government Press Office (Israel), Photo: Milner, Moshe.





Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt are received with military honors in front of the Chancellor's Office in Bonn, 09.07.1975.

Bundesarchiv, B 145 Bild-00014474 / photo: Wegmann, Ludwig.



## 17. GOETHE INSTITUTE BEGINS OPERATION IN ISRAEL, 1979

The Goethe Institute library is based on the private library of Walter Hirsch, who made his collection of German language books available to the public in Tel-Aviv. The German government supported the library and it was incorporated into the Goethe Institute since the opening of the institute in Tel Aviv. Today the library holds a variety of books, periodicals and audio-visual material in German, Hebrew and English.

The Goethe-Institut is an official institution of the Federal Republic of Germany operating worldwide. In Israel the Goethe Institute operated since 1979, at first in Tel-Aviv and since 1988 in Jerusalem as well. As a link in a chain of institutes worldwide the Goethe Institute in Israel is active in every field pertaining to intercultural relations between Germany and Israel. It fosters the learning of the German language and makes its library available to everyone who is interested in the various aspects of cultural, social and political life in Germany. In addition, the Goethe Institute initiates and organizes a variety of events related to cultural exchange between Israel and Germany, such as this exhibition.

**Goethe-Institut**

**TEL AVIV**

**Post- und Materialversand**  
Luftpostbriefe nach Israel brauchen oft 3 bis 5 Wochen. Eilige Nachrichten erreichen uns besser telegrafisch oder telefonisch. Material kann ohne Entzollungs- und Zensurschwierigkeiten direkt an das Goethe-Institut versandt werden mit dem Vermerk „Material For Cultural Activities“

**Telefon**  
Wenn Sie uns von Deutschland aus anrufen: Vorwahl Tel Aviv — 009723 —. Auch von hier können Sie direkt nach Deutschland durchwählen: — 0049 — dann deutsche Vorwahlnummer ohne -0-. In Israel gibt es nur ganz wenige Telefonzellen, diese funktionieren nur mit Jetons. Telefonieren Sie möglichst vom Hotel.

**Visum**  
Kein Visumszwang **ausser** für deutsche Staatsbürger, die vor 1928 geboren sind. Das Visum wird nur für die Ersteinreise verlangt und gilt automatisch weiter für spätere Reisen.

**Impfungen**  
Impfungen sind für Israel nicht notwendig.

**Klima**  
Von April bis Mitte Oktober hochsommerliches Wetter, in der Küstenebene schwül und feucht, im Landesinneren heiss und trocken. Von November bis März ist das Wetter ähnlich dem deutschen Herbst, häufige und sehr starke Regenschauer, im Landesinneren manchmal empfindlich kalt.





Photos courtesy of the Goethe Institut

Above: Goethe Institut library today.

Right: the German library in Tel-Aviv, the basis for the Goethe Institut in Israel, 1977.





Left: Student at Goethe Institut today.

Below: Students study German in the German Library in Tel-Aviv, 1977.





## 18. SPORTS RELATIONS

Before the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1965 the sports relations between Israel and Germany were scarce and included only a few visits, including the visit of Willi Daume, the president of the German Sports Association in 1957. Since 1957 the Israeli Football Association sent coaches to Germany to participate in a course offered by Germany's DFB Football Association and obtain a diploma in coaching.

In 1968 Germany's young national team came to Israel and played two games against Israeli teams. Spectators were not allowed to attend the games for "security reasons". Since then games and activities related to football continued. One of the highlights in these co-operations was the game between Israel's national team and Borussia Mönchengladbach on February 25, 1970. The German team beat the Israeli team 6:0. Between 1969 and 2008 Borussia Mönchengladbach played 27 friendly games against Israeli teams.

מעריב לספורטאים מעריב לספורטאים מעריב

שיעור מאלף בכדורגל פשוט ויעיל

קבוצת הצמרת הגרמנית, "בורוסיה" מיננגלדבך הנחילה לנבחרת ישראל את הפסדה הגבוה ביותר 0:6

A headline in *Maariv*. "Important lesson for Israeli Football, Israel faced the biggest loss ever at the hands of Germany's elite team Borussia — 0:6."

Maariv, 26.02.1970.



A football game between the Israeli team and German team Bayern Munich.  
Government Press Office (Israel), Photo: Milner, Moshe.