THE SWEDISH THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE – A VENTURE FROM VIENNA TO JERUSALEM

BY HÅKAN BENGTSSON

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The Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem (STI) has been a meeting place for learning and religious encounters across borders since 1951. When the Swedish Mission to the Jews (*Svenska Israelsmissionen*) decided to open an institute in Jerusalem, this was a pioneering step towards a more equal and trusting relationship between Jews and Christians. Making Jerusalem the site for the institute came naturally, since both Jews and Christians had their historical and theological roots there. At the same time, choosing Jerusalem meant establishing oneself in a context where religion, culture and politics were going to have considerable influence over the work.

The STI was able open its doors to the first Nordic students in February 1951, offering Bible studies as well as studies in Judaism and Hebrew, under the guidance of the Matron, Greta Andrén, and the Director, Hans Kosmala. The STI had made an arrangement through which the Nordic students got their tuition as well as their room and board in Jerusalem covered by scholarships. Being able to study in Jerusalem meant a new opportunity to combine theory and research with the experience of living in a country, where an encounter with Judaism as a living tradition – together with the other major religions present in Jerusalem – was offered. This became the guideline for the work at the institute.

PHOTO: MAGNUS ARONSON/IKON

MISSION WORK IN VIENNA 1936–1941

The initiative to open a Swedish theological institute in Jerusalem was taken by the Swedish Mission to the Jews during World War II. In September 1944, its board decided that Swedish activities were to be established in Jerusalem – an educational institute rather than a missionary one, as a follow-up to the academic education that the Swedish Mission to the Jews had been carrying out in Vienna before the Nazis' arrival in 1938. In Vienna, education in Jewish life and tradition, taught by among others Hans Kosmala, targeted not only the group of missionaries, but also Viennese Christians and Jews in general.

Hans Kosmala worked together with the Reverend Göte Hedenquist at the Swedish Mission from 1936 to 1938. Kosmala had before that been the director of the research institute *Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum* in Leipzig until it was closed down by the Gestapo in 1935. Thanks to Birger Pernow – the head of the Stockholm office

Vienna in the 1930s.

The young mens' association at Seegasse 16 celebrating Christmas.

of the Swedish Mission to the Jews – Kosmala and some of his fellow academics were allowed to reinstate the activities of *Institutum Judaicum* at the Swedish Mission in Vienna. The idea was for them to teach missionaries about Jewish life and customs, and to enlighten secular Jews in Vienna about their own tradition.

The lectures and study activities were successful and represented a new line of work for the Swedish Mission in Vienna. Together with Göte Hedenquist, Hans Kosmala edited a monthly publication called *Aus zwei Welten* (From two Worlds), in which different Christian perspectives on Judaism were discussed. The publication and the open lectures advocated close relations between Christianity and Judaism, and a friendly outreach towards Jews was propagated. The lectures and study groups, in which Jews and Christians participated together, created an intellectual climate, where similarities and differences between the two religions could be discussed. Such talks took place in other locations as well and were at this time called *Religionsgespräch*, talks about religion.

However, a missionary strategy lay behind the work all the time. The evangelizing work of the Mission to the Jews had begun back in

The building owned by the Swedish Mission to the Jews in the 1930s, Seegasse 16.

the 1920s. However, Sweden was a meagre place for mission work with few Jews in its population, whereas Vienna was more relevant in this respect. In Vienna, many Jews were married to Christians, and it was primarily this group that was targeted by the missionary work. The core of it all was the congregation of mostly Christians of Jewish descent who gathered to worship in a chapel called the Messiah Chapel at the address Seegasse 16 in Alsergrund.

After Hitler's seizure of power in Germany in 1933, many Jewish refugees arrived in Vienna. The result was a shortage of housing in the city, and Jews felt rootless and worried about what would happen if the Nazis took over in Austria as well. The Swedish Mission in Vienna responded to this situation with not only missionary preaching but also with social support. German refugees came to make up a large part of the Seegasse congregation. The Swedish Mission to the Jews was the only mission among Jews in Vienna for a long time, and as such it peaked in the middle and at the end of the 1930s.

A prominent co-worker at the Mission was Greta Andrén from Marstrand, a small village on Sweden's west coast. She was an ordained deaconess, and her first assignment was at the Swedish Mission in Vienna. She arrived at the end of 1934 and worked there until

the Nazis closed down all work in the large building in 1941. After a few years in Sweden, Greta Andrén was then tasked with the establishment of the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem, where she worked intermittently between 1947 and 1971, when she passed away in Sweden.

When Hitler's armies rolled into Austria on March 11, 1938, the work of the Swedish Mission in Vienna went from social mission to refugee support. One imminent problem was that staff of Jewish descent risked arrest. Since it was expected that the Nazis upon their arrival in Vienna would embark upon the same terror campaign as in Germany, Friedrich Forell, the renowned Director was forced to flee Vienna immediately, leaving his wife behind. When reunited in Paris, they got involved in refugee work there until the Nazis occupied Paris as well. At the Seegasse mission, Göte Hedenquist was appointed new Director from the middle of March, 1938.

Another, more bureaucratic, issue was the name of the mission: *Schwedische Gesellschaft für Israel* (approximately the Swedish Israel Society). The Jewish dimension irritated the Gestapo. Following

The staff at Seegasse 16 with Birger Pernow, the director of the Swedish Mission in the centre.

both raids and threats, the name was changed to *Schwedische Mission Stockholm; Missionsstation Wien*. Hedenquist's main task as newly appointed director was partly to stop the Gestapo from closing down the Swedish Mission's work, and partly to try to save as many as possible of the congregation's members from being deported. The person in charge of what the Nazis called the purge of Jews from Vienna was the young SS Captain Adolf Eichmann, and his treatment of the Viennese Jews was harsh.

Göte Hedenquist was ordained as a Church of Sweden Minister in Uppsala in 1936, and he arrived in Vienna late that autumn together with his wife Elsa. His duties were numerous: pastoral care, services of worship, information, budget and finally a total reorganisation of the mission. From spring 1938, work was divided into three sections: a) spiritual care, b) food and lodging support, and c) refugee support.

The work was now quite costly, and funds were provided through grants and collected money from the Swedish main office, but also from foreign organisations. Through contacts with Nazi authorities, and with Adolf Eichmann in particular, exit visas were obtained for some 3,000 persons, many of whom were children. Transports were

German troops parading in Vienna after the so-called Anschluss, in March 1938.

arranged in coordination with *Büro Grüber* in Berlin, an organisation that helped Jews and Lutheran Christians to leave Nazi Germany.

Most of the refugees from Vienna did not go to Sweden but to the UK, France, the USA and Argentina. Sweden was more or less closed to immigration at this time, and those who could go to Sweden were mainly children without parents, baptized by the Swedish Mission in Vienna and able to go because the Swedish Mission was successful in obtaining exit visas for them. Hedenquist, later wrote about his efforts during these turbulent years in *Undan förintelsen* (*Away from the Holocaust,* Editor's translation).[1] In her book *Och i Wienerwald står träden kvar* (*And in the Vienna Woods the Trees Still Stand*, Editor's translation),[2] the Swedish journalist Elisabeth Åsbrink pointed out the problem that baptized Jewish children were prioritized in the Swedish Mission's refugee support. This was so; members of the congregation and their families were prioritized when it came to leaving Vienna, and both the Stockholm headquarters and Swedish authorities preferred baptized refugees. Finally, however, the increasing terror of the Nazis made it necessary to give priority to simply saving lives. Much of the work had to be carried out secretly. In retrospect one may conclude that both the Swedish Mission and the Nazi authorities had the same goal after spring 1938 – to get as many Jews as possible out of Vienna – albeit for totally different reasons and by totally different means.

The very complicated relationship with the Nazi administration in Vienna was something one was forced to enter into because of the difficult situation at hand. Theologically, the missionaries and the Nazis stood far apart. The missionaries lived among Vienna's Jews and found many friends among them, and they felt close to Judaism. In the eyes of the Nazis, the Jews were enemies who were to be deported and killed. According to the Swedish Mission, a Jew who had been baptized became a Christian. In the Nazi world, a Jew was a Jew, baptized or not. Members of the Jewish-Christian congregation in Seegasse were arrested and transported to the camps. However, being baptized helped some Jewish children to get their transfer to Sweden

1 Göte Hedenquist, *Undan förintelsen: svensk hjälpverksamhet i Wien under Hitlertiden*, Verbum: Älvsjö, 1983.
2 Elisabeth Åsbrink, *Och i Wienerwald står träden kvar*, Natur & Kultur: Stockholm, 2011.

as refugees, but this was mainly a Nazi gesture to please Swedish authorities.

Assisting the refugees was indeed imperative, since Nazi authorities began to deport Jews to concentration camps as early as in January 1941. Greta Andrén wrote in her book *Ett Kristusbrev – Gerty Fischer*[3] (A Letter from Christ – Gerty Fischer, Editor's translation) about one of the congregation's members who ended her life in a prison camp in the Polish town of Kielce in the summer of 1942.

The Jews who joined the congregation of the Swedish Mission in Vienna were particularly vulnerable. The Swedish Mission called them "Christians of Jewish descent", or just "Jewish Christians". They were usually ostracized from their Jewish context when they were baptized. Under the Nazi regime, they were not allowed medical care or housing assistance, but were at the mercy of the Swedish Mission. Despite this, they were not accepted as true Lutheran Church members either, since their status, legal and otherwise, was debated.

When Vienna was more or less emptied of Jews in the summer of 1941, the Gestapo closed down the work at Seegasse, and most of its staff went to Sweden. The last worship service took place on July 15, 1941, but a certain amount of assistance to those who had been deported could still be given. And many of those who had worked at Seegasse continued with similar work in Stockholm.

After the war, when the extent of and the mechanisms behind the Holocaust became fully known, it became even more urgent to teach Christians about Jewish life and tradition. Before the organized deportations and the mass murders of Jews began, the Nazi regime had spread hateful propaganda against them for nearly ten years, and now the need for reliable knowledge and competent teaching became obvious.

3 Greta Andrén, *Ett Kristus-brev: Gerty Fischer*, Svenska Israelsmissionen: Stockholm, 1944.

PHOTO: HÅKAN BENGTSSON

The building at Seegasse 16, Vienna today.

PHOTO: MAGNUS ARONSON/IKON

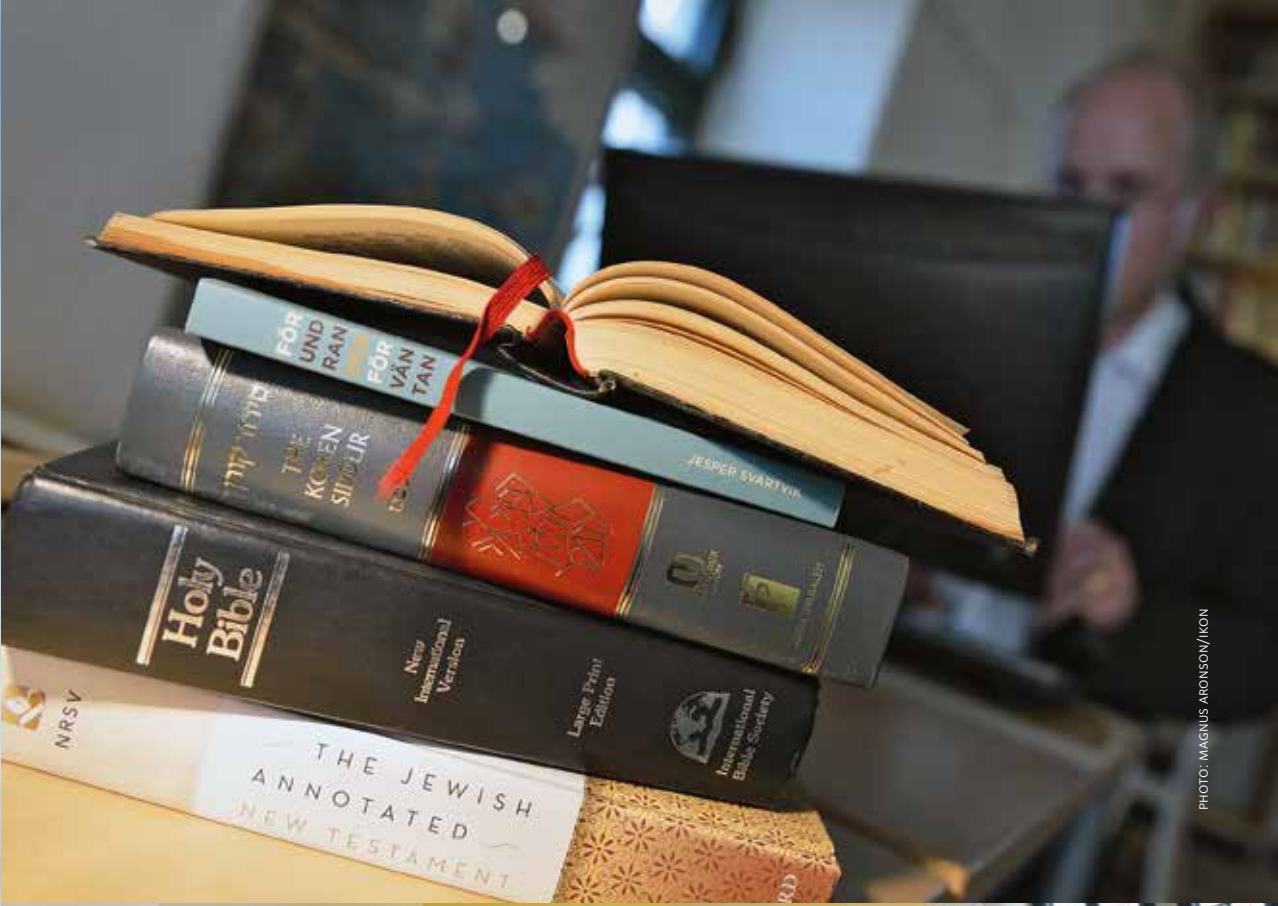


PHOTO: MAGNUS ARONSON/IKON

PHOTO: MAGNUS ARONSON/IKON

THE FIRST LAUNCH IN JERUSALEM, 1946–1950

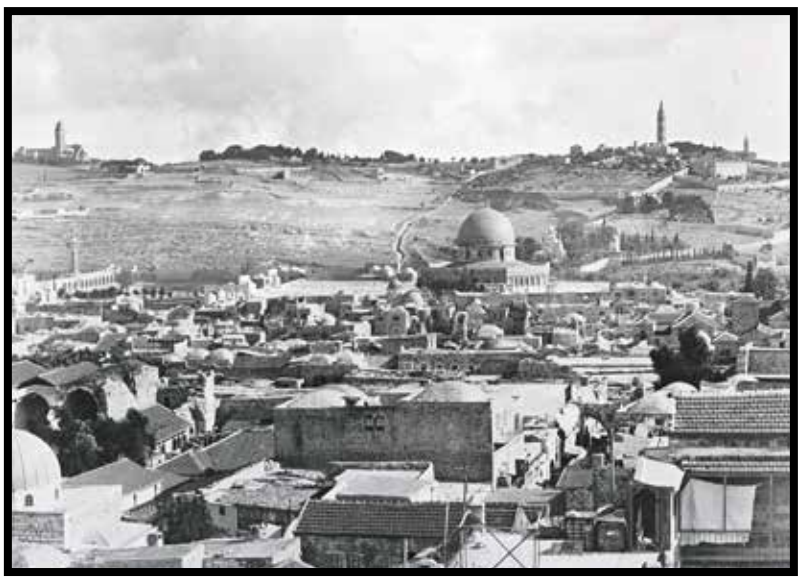
The Swedish Mission to the Jews closely monitored the large numbers of refugees who came from World War II Europe to the British mandate of Palestine. There was obviously a missionary interest in doing so. Before the war, Hans Kosmala had gone to the UK, where he became ordained as a Minister in the Presbyterian Church and tried to re-establish the *Institutum Judaicum* in London. During an international conference in the summer of 1945, the then Director of the Swedish Mission, Birger Pernow, proposed to open a theological

The director of the Swedish Mission to the Jews, Birger Pernow plans for activities in Palestine when preparing an exhibition in Stockholm.

institute in Jerusalem. The idea was to establish *Institutum Judaicum* in a place where Judaism was tangible and where the institute could be of service – as well as involved in missionary work. The proposal was not approved by the conference – but the Swedish Mission continued to work on it.

After World War II, Jerusalem became an obvious centre for Jewish culture and Jewish life. There was already (since 1925) a Jewish university – the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The Swedish Mission already supported, through its Finnish sister organization, the presence of the missionary Aili Hava in the city. Though many of the so-called missionaries to the Jews were against political Zionism, others understood the Jewish immigration to Palestine in eschatological terms. According to the missionaries's view, the Jewish immigration that took place against the wish of the Arabs and the British alike, was a sign in preparation of the second coming of Christ.

Greta Andrén was sent out to the then British Mandate of Palestine in April 1946 to investigate the options for a Swedish institute of studies in Jerusalem. She came to Haifa on May 11 and was received



View from the Old City of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives.

by a former colleague from Vienna. This was her first visit to the Holy Land, and she wrote down her impressions in the book *Palestinabilder*[4] (*Images of Palestine*, Editor's translation) which was published in 1949.

Greta Andrén's visit to the country inspired her to continue working there. Although the places were already known to her from the Bible, the complexities of Jerusalem and the ongoing civil war offered challenges to the Swedish deaconess. Andrén was helped to adjust to the new context by two Swedish women who lived in the city. One of them was Hilda Andersson, a former missionary to China who lived in a house of her own on the Mount of Olives, the so-called *Svenskbo* (Swedish House). The other was the headmistress of the Swedish School in Jerusalem, Signe Ekblad. Both of them had much experience of life in Jerusalem.

It soon became obvious that *Svenskbo*, at first considered suitable to house the new institute, was both too small and in too bad a condition for this purpose. So, another Jerusalem profile – the Swedish Consul Lewis Larsson, who had come to Jerusalem as the teenager Hol Lars Larsson together with the immigrants from Nås in Dalarna,

4 Greta Andrén, *Palestinabilder,* Svenska Israelsmissionen: Stockholm, 1949.

The house of Hilda Andersson called Svenskbo, close the compound of the Augusta Viktoria hospital.

and whose story was made known by the Swedish Nobel Laureate Selma Lagerlöf in her novel *Jerusalem*[5] – offered the second floor of the Swedish consulate on Nablus Road as a suitable venue for the institute.

So, under the auspices of Consul Larsson and his son Theodor, the Swedish Theological Institute (STI) was opened in 1947, and the Bible researcher Harald Sahlin was appointed its first director. Now, only the students were needed for the activities to begin. In the meantime, Greta Andrén tried to evangelize among Jews – an attempt that for many reasons became limited in scope.

She often visited the Christ Church at the Jaffa Gate, where missionary activities were carried out. Walking to the different holy sites, she taught candidates for baptism, and two Jews – one woman and one man – were baptized in January 1948. However, the pendulum soon swung in another direction; when the study activities were again taken up in western Jerusalem in 1951, the idea *not* to evangelize became a guiding principle. The STI was then situated in a Jewish area, and in a Jewish context where mission was not allowed according to Israeli law.

It was mainly in consultations with the Anglican Church that the conviction gradually grew, not to carry out missionary work in Jerusalem itself. Against the backdrop of World War II, the then Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, Weston Henry Stewart, urged the Swedish Mission to refrain from mission in Jerusalem: "…the method is the most odious to the Jews". However, the Anglican Bishop welcomed the idea of an institute for studies. And Greta Andrén was given the same advice from the Reverend Carlyle Witton-Davies in the Saint George Cathedral.

The Swedish Consulate and the Theological Institute were situated on Nablus Road, between an Arab and a Jewish area. When fighting became more severe in 1947, the area was fired at. And when Sweden had voted in the UN, in November 1947, for splitting the country into an Arab and a Jewish part respectively, the consulate was the target of a bomb attack. The possibilities to carry out study activities were nil.

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5 Selma Lagerlöf, *Jerusalem*, Bonnier: Stockholm, 2004.

The Swedish Consulate at Nablus road in the beginning of 1947.

When the fighting continued into 1948, both Harald Sahlin and his wife Malin and Greta Andrén were encouraged to return to Sweden. The Sahlin family left first; Greta Andrén stayed on as long as she could.

The winter of 1947–48 became even more troublesome for people living in Jerusalem. Snipers were everywhere and bombs exploded. One of the victims was Hilda Andersson, who was shot by a sniper. It

was a triangular war between Jews, Arabs and the British army. When the State of Israel was proclaimed in May 1948, war broke out between the new state and its neighbours. In 1949, a ceasefire between Jordan and Israel was declared; the so called "green line" on the map came to play an important role for the population of Jerusalem. Greta Andrén immediately returned to Jerusalem that had become a city divided between Israel and Jordan.

Both the consulate and *Svenskbo* were now situated on the eastern Jordan side; if good relations were to be established with Jewish people, this could only take place on the western side. Greta Andrén was now tasked with finding a new suitable site, where teaching, lodging and meals could be provided. Through contacts she was told that the known landmark *Beit Tavor*, Tabor's house on *Rechov HaNevi'im*, the Street of the Prophets no. 16, stood almost empty.

The house was well known in Jerusalem; it was built in 1882 by the famous architect and archaeologist Conrad Schick and was his home. Schick built some of Jerusalem's new hospitals, schools and private houses during the last decades of the 19th century. His home,

The building called Beit Tavor, "the house of Tabor", was the home of the famous Jerusalem architect Conrad Schick.

Beit Tavor, was built in a mixture of German romantic and local Arab styles, and offered facilities such as guest rooms, a library and a beautiful garden. Greta Andrén was offered some rooms to rent in this old house and thought that they would meet the needs of the institute. It was also a very cosy house, in a genuine Jerusalem environment. But much needed to be done to make the building available to students.

Beit Tavor was owned by the American Methodist Episcopal Church, which had run a school for missionaries as well as a language school there during the 1930s and 40s. The school was the famous Newman School of Mission, which also had similar outposts in India. Contacts were taken with the American organization in New York thanks to Göte Hedenquist. It was agreed that the Swedish Mission would be allowed to rent *Beit Tavor* on very favourable terms for five years. The agreement was finalized in the summer of 1950. The house was in somewhat bad shape and needed restoration. Neither was the institute allowed to use the whole house from the beginning, since it also housed Jewish refugee families and, in the main building, a medical doctor and his family.

That same summer, the establishment of the Swedish Theological Institute as a research and study centre in Jerusalem was permitted by the Israeli Department of Education. It was not self-evident that a Christian institute would be allowed to establish itself in Jerusalem. But the idea was supported by no one less than Martin Buber, and by the Israeli researcher and diplomat Chaim Wardi. Once the venue and the permit were arranged, the issue of director was still to be solved. Greta Andrén was the obvious candidate for responsibility for practical issues, and she was given the title of Matron.

When preparations were ongoing for moving into *Beit Tavor*, Hans Kosmala worked as a minister in the Scottish Church of St Andrews in Tiberias. During a visit to Israel, Göte Hedenquist and Kosmala met, and it was decided that Kosmala should be responsible for research and teaching at the institute until a Swedish director could be appointed. Kosmala was, as we will remember, very knowledgeable about Jewish life and Hebrew. Also, he was not a person unknown to the Swedish Mission. Some Swedish Bible researchers were asked if they wanted to take on the responsibility for the new institute and its

activities – and the one who finally accepted was Henrik Ljungman. However, he soon returned to Sweden, and Kosmala was then appointed Director again.

The matron Greta Andrén and the director Hans Kosmala.

PHOTO: MAGNUS ARONSON/IKON

PHOTO: LINDA MICKELSSON/IKON

PHOTO: MAGNUS ARONSON/IKON

ESTABLISHED STUDY AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IN 1951–1971

So, in February 1951, Greta Andrén and Hans Kosmala were able to receive the first five Scandinavian students for the first term of studies: Magne Saebø and Olav Farestveit from Norway, Anker Gjerding from Denmark, and Abel Isaksson and Torgny Erling from Sweden. For Andrén and Kosmala, this was the beginning of a possibility – together with ministers, theologians, teachers and other students in Jerusalem – to get to know the origins of the Bible and of Judaism, in the young state of Israel. Andrén and Kosmala came to work together for 20 years. It was obvious that the institute could pave the way for new ways of seeking knowledge – and thus improving the knowledge about the Bible and Judaism.

The life of the first students in Jerusalem was intense and rewarding, even though they lived in simple conditions. They had travelled to Haifa by boat, at the institute the rooms were small and spartan, and food was rationed. They were woken up at a quarter past seven in the morning by Greta Andrén's camel bell. After breakfast, a

The first Scandinavian students at the Institute in 1951 with Henrik Ljungman, Greta Andrén and Hans Kosmala (in the middle).

morning prayer in English was held, followed by two lectures before lunch and one before the evening meal, held in the library of the institute. The language of conversation during meals was German. The Swedish scholarship holder Torgny Erling, later to become a missionary and a minister in Gothenburg, wrote in the annual report of the Swedish Mission in 1951: "You would not want to trade a term at this institute for a stay of any length at another college, no matter how venerable!".

In the first annual report from the institute, in 1951, Bishop Torsten Ysander, who was the chairman of the Swedish Mission at the time, writes under the heading "New Road":

> A theological institute for studies in Jerusalem is a thought that becomes all the more dear and fascinating, the more one gets to know about it. Far too much and for far too long, Christianity has been content to learn about other religions from the outside. Errors of judgement within research, and misunderstandings at social encounters have been the result of this. In different fields of work within science, our generation has come to discover the useful instrument of situating the studies at institutes placed in the midst of another religion's living context.

Torsten Ysander then continues to point out the two most important tasks of the institute, i.e. to listen *in situ* and learn, above all, about Judaism, but also to represent Swedish churches in Jerusalem. The task of the institute is to be a kind of ambassador, if you like. His article ends, however, in a somewhat hopeful way concerning individual mission. Ysander holds that mission is the responsibility of each evangelist. While the responsibility of the new institute is an outer, respectful and listening representation, it may – if carried out properly – lead to the institute attracting interested Jews. The chairperson of the Swedish Mission thus does not exclude mission, as long as it is not institutional.

It was, however, high time to distance oneself from false images of Judaism. There was, after World War II, a willingness in churches and Christian organizations to revalue the traditional, anti-Jewish theology, which often depicted Jews as diabolical Christ killers. It was

realized how this had played into the hands of the Nazis. Time had come to get rid of not only garish antisemitic attitudes but also more subtle negative representations of Jews and Jewish piety that figured in Christian education and Bible research.

Researchers, Students and Famous Visitors at the STI

It was around the issue of Jewish-Christian relations that the Swedish Theological Institute came to develop a both scientific and pastoral-care profile during the 1980s and 90s. The opportunity already mentioned to meet modern Jewish life in Jerusalem itself was part of the institute's idea. Another opportunity was to have Jewish speakers introducing Jewish traditions in a professional way, speakers who were willing to engage in talks with Christian representatives. At the end of the 1960s, this method was called dialogue – as opposed to traditional mission.

What Torsten Ysander called the study and learning function of the institute was mainly carried out by way of regularly – each spring and autumn term for five decades – receiving students. Scholarships from the Swedish Mission to the Jews made it possible for them to study for a couple of months at the institute. Thanks to the international contacts of Hans Kosmala, students from outside Scandinavia could also come to the institute. Courses were often tailored to suit the interests and needs of the students. The subjects were many: the Bible, Judaism, Archaeology, Languages, and the modern State of Israel. Bible texts and other Jewish texts, such as the *Passover Haggadah*, were studied in their original languages. Many Bible and language scholars received a useful foundation for further studies and research in this way. Language courses were very varied: Bible Hebrew, Modern Hebrew, Aramaic, Yiddish and even Ugaritic. Many of the Bible researchers and language experts who later worked on the new Swedish translation of the Old Testament had been scholarship holders at the STI in Jerusalem.

The Swedish Mission to the Jews granted three fulltime scholarships per year for Swedish students, and they could be distributed over spring and autumn terms as suited. At the ten-year jubilee in 1961, it was stated that almost one hundred students from Nordic as

A class with students under the supervision of Hans Kosmala in the STI library in spring 1958.

well as other countries – such as the UK, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, the USA, South Africa, Japan and India – had studied at the institute. Many of these students later moved on to both clerical and academic tasks for which the studies in Jerusalem were of fundamental importance.

The ecumenical exchange was, to begin with, quite limited, as were contacts with Muslims. The initial focus was primarily on Jewish and Israeli subjects and contacts, since the institute was situated in western Jerusalem that had become Israeli right after the ceasefire with Jordan. Eastern Jerusalem was governed by Jordan, and it was in and around the Old City that most holy places were to be found. Students and staff at the institute were, as tradition in Jerusalem would have it, given permission to pass through the Mandelbaum Gate in order to visit the holy places in the old parts of Jerusalem, and in Bethlehem during Christian holidays.

Between 1951 and 1967, one was thus referred to research and contacts in western Jerusalem and Israel. Hans Kosmala, Greta Andrén and the students at the institute quickly learned Modern Hebrew and were invited to participate in national radio broadcasts with lectures and discussions. At the same time, valuable contacts were established

The Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander with his wife Aina visting the institute's library together with Greta Andrén and Hans Koslmala.

with the Hebrew University that built a new campus at *Givat Ram*. Famous scholars, such as Martin Buber, David Flusser, Abraham Schalit and Chaim Rabin, lectured at the institute. The famous archaeologist Yigael Yadin also shared his new excavation findings. The above-mentioned Chaim Wardi became an important person for the institute to be in contact with and receive good advice from. Wardi had a special interest in and administrative responsibility for Christians in Israel.

It was, however, not only Israeli scholars who visited the institute during the 1950s and 60s as lecturers. Well-known Scandinavian language and Bible researchers, such as H.S. Nyberg, Johannes Lindblom and Sigmund Mowinkel also taught at the institute. Valuable academic contacts were established in this way, and the Hebrew University soon decided to give the institute a gift in the form of a complete edition of the Talmud. This was done in recognition of the high quality and good intentions of the institute. The gift was handed over personally by the Professor of Philosophy, Hugo Bergmann.

During the first decade of the institute, Swedish tourist and pilgrim groups were rare in Jerusalem. When travelling increased, an increasing number of Swedish groups came to the institute as well. The groups

often came from the Jordan side, and the institute then became a welcome first stop in western Jerusalem. Greta Andrén was the one to receive these groups. She gave the lecture on "The Land, the People and the Book", and showed the groups around in the garden of the institute. The number of visiting groups grew, and in the middle of the 1960s an average of 1,500 Swedish pilgrims visited the institute each year. They also contributed to the finances of the institute with donations and money. The Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander and his wife Aina also visited the institute during a State visit to Israel on March 26, 1962.

Institute in a Young State

The institute had, in one decade, become known and respected. In a way, the STI grew together with the new state of Israel and shared its challenges. It was in no way self-evident that a Protestant study institute would be allowed to start in this way, but by 1963 the registration as a "Church-linked institute" was in order.

The view on mission was not the only thing that was changed when the institute was established; the view on Zionism was changed as

Rechov HaNevi'im, the Street of the Prophets', view outside the STI in the end of the 1960s.

well. Before the 1967 war, it was rather the rule than the exception that Swedish theologians and Church representatives were negative to political Zionism. Even though its pioneering spirit was admired, Zionism was nevertheless considered non-spiritual and, thus, fraudulent. However, there were also so-called evangelicals among the members of the Swedish Mission to the Jews, and to them Zionism was seen to help the Jewish people along in their attempts to return to the places where their roots were to be found. These perspectives also coincided with the way in which many official representatives of the Israeli state saw the country and their people. In the encounter with the land of the Bible (the Holy Land) and in the Zionist narrative, the Jewish attachment to the country became confirmed. One prominent person in the discussions about this issue was the diplomat and researcher Pinchas Lapide. Lapide's book *Israel: A Guide to the Old and the New*[6] was translated into Swedish by Greta Andrén and was published in 1968.

Once the study and research activities were up and running, it could be concluded that the charming venue contributed both to a feeling of homeliness and to publicity. The house *Beit Tavor* had already previously been famous in Jerusalem and often talked about as the most beautiful and homely house of the city. In popular speech it was known as "the house of dreams". Amos Oz, among others, writes about it in his self-biographical book *A Tale of Love and Darkness*[7]. After many years of negotiations, the house could finally be bought from its American owner in 1966–67. What the house offered in cosy atmosphere, however, it lacked in comfort and practicality. During the first decades, it lacked suitable kitchen space, and the old building was constantly in need of improvement. People were looking for a way of finding more rooms to accommodate students and visitors, since the institute had now become an attractive place at which to study.

The number of friends of the institute grew as well. One important person was the author Shalom Ben-Chorin, who worked in the spirit of Martin Buber and was, together with David Flusser, one of the

6 Pinchas Lapide, *Israel: guide till gammalt och nytt*, Verbum: Stockholm, 1968.
7 Amos Oz, *A tale of love and darkness*, Harcourt: Orlando, 2005.

Israeli intellectuals who took on studying Jesus from a Jewish perspective. Having Jewish researchers lecture about both Judaism and traditionally Christian subjects, such as Jesus, was something new. It influenced wider contexts, for example in Sweden. One of the Swedish researchers who worked with more modern Jewish interpretations of Jesus was Gösta Lindeskog. He was a frequent guest lecturer, member of the board, and Inspector for the STI for more than 20 years.

The Director Hans Kosmala's work on research and lecturing also found new influences in the contexts and texts of Jerusalem. The Dead Sea Scrolls that were discovered at the end of the 1940s became a source of increased knowledge about Judaism as it was practised during the time of Jesus. In 1959, Kosmala wrote his doctor's thesis at the University of Leiden on the Letter to the Hebrews.[8] His idea was that the recipients of that letter belonged to the same Jewish group that wrote parts of the Dead Sea Scrolls, i.e. the Essenes. From 1961, Kosmala was also the editor of the *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem* (*ASTI*).[9] Many of the Israeli and international researchers who lectured at the institute also published articles in the *Annual*, and the publication contained articles within areas such as Philology, Archaeology, Old and New Testament Exegesis, as well as Judaica. ASTI was published between 1962 and 1983.

Ecumenism and Religious Dialogue

Not only research views were broadened; by and by, ecumenical and inter-confessional perspectives were also deepened. 1962–65 were the years of the Second Vatican Council's meeting in Rome. For the institute, one of the most important results of this meeting was the document *Nostra Aetate*, in which among other things the Roman Catholic Church revalued its relation to Judaism. Many European Churches had distanced themselves from antisemitism after World War II. *Nostra Aetate*, went even further; Judaism was seen as a religion equal in merit to the Christian faith, and the Church wanted to actively change the image of Judaism in liturgies, teaching and research. Christianity

8 Hans Kosmala, *Hebräer - Essener - Christen: Studien Zur Vorgeschichte der Frühchristlichen Verkündigung*, Brill: Leiden, 1959.
9 *Annual of the Swedish theological institute* vol. 1–12, Leiden: Brill 1962–1983

was no longer going to define Judaism as inferior, and the idea of mission became all the more problematic.

It was through ecumenical relations that the attitudes towards Judaism began to change within Theology of Religions. The Dominican Father and Professor of Philosophy, Marcel Dubois, participated in courses and seminars at the institute together with other Catholic representatives. Dubois was one of the founders of *The Jerusalem Rainbow Group* in 1965. This was one of the first groups for Jewish-Christian dialogue in Jerusalem, and it is still active. In this group, Jewish and Christian representatives conducted dialogue together through academic lectures and discussions. The year after, Kosmala was one of the persons founding *The Ecumenical Research Fraternity* at the STI. The aim of this group was to monitor Jewish-Christian relations in the ecumenical contexts of Jerusalem. In these dialogue groups, friendship, collegiality and, more than anything, trust was built. The groups filled, and still fill, a great need for dialogue and meeting across cultural and religious borders.

Few cities have changed as much as Jerusalem during the 20th century. 1967 was the year when the city was to change again. After a few dramatic days of war in the beginning of June, Israel had taken control over, among other places, the West Bank, which to the STI meant that the holy places in and around the Old City became open for daily visits: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Mount of Olives, the Temple Mount with its mosque area, the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque.

The war hit Jerusalem heavily, with shellfire. Despite severe recommendations from the head office of the Mission to the Jews in Stockholm that they should leave Jerusalem, Greta Andrén and Hans Kosmala chose to remain in the cellar of *Beit Tavor* until the fighting was over. The house was damaged in many ways but was repaired after the war. Eastern Jerusalem was now occupied and controlled by Israel. The conditions for studies and research in Jerusalem also became different.

During the autumn term teaching continued, and the challenge to get involved in more ecumenical contacts as well as in Muslim con-

texts was expressed from many different directions. Many other institutes changed their profiles in relation to the new situation – and new institutes were established. Special competence was required in dialogue with Islam and Arab Christians, as they were called at the time. Both Hans Kosmala and other persons responsible for the Swedish Mission were hesitant.

However, changes also took place in the Stockholm office of the Swedish Mission to the Jews. The ecumenical spirit of the time, as well as theological work with the relation between Christians and Jews, rendered the traditional concept of mission outdated. The Swedish Mission to the Jews moved increasingly towards dialogue, the method that the STI had successfully paved the way for. Göte Hedenquist had since 1961 been the Director of the Mission to the Jews, both internationally and nationally, and he pushed the contacts between Jews and Christians towards dialogue.

The financial consequences for the Swedish Mission became quite noticeable. It was easier to collect funds for mission than for dialogue. The activities shrank, and to mark its theological change, the Swedish Mission to the Jews changed its name in 1970 to *The National Organization for the Church and Judaism. Swedish Church Service to the Jewish world*. Five years later, Jewish-Christian relations became part of the work of the Church of Sweden Mission, and the STI in its turn became part of this work. The Swedish Mission to the Jews had by then been an independent organization from 1875 to 1975 and had worked in Vienna, Paris, Casablanca and Jerusalem.


סדור
ברכת
רפאל
חשלם

PHOTO: LINDA MICKELSSON/IKON

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY, 1971–1979

1971 became the year when both Greta Andrén and Hans Kosmala left Jerusalem. Hans Kosmala retired and returned to his family in the UK, where he passed away in 1981. Greta Andrén was seriously ill and died in October 1971, just a few months after she returned to Sweden. She was buried in her birth town, Marstrand. The two of them had been deeply involved in pioneering work for both Jewish-Christian and Swedish-Israeli relations in Jerusalem. They were awarded the Order of Vasa for their accomplishments, and will forever be associated with the establishment of the STI in Jerusalem. Today, the library of the institute is named after Hans Kosmala, and the meeting room after Greta Andrén.

It was now time for new staff for the posts of Director and Matron. Bengt Knutsson, a language researcher from Lund became the new director, and Harriet Holmquist from Skara the new matron with staff responsibility. They arrived in Jerusalem in 1971. The tasks of Harriet Holmquist were many. An enlargement and renovation of

PHOTO: JAN-OLOF JOHANSSON

The kitchen roof is completed. To the right is the contractor Alfred Epstein and in the middle the foreman Abu Todar.

the building was planned. The institute needed more working space, a bigger lecture hall, more suitable staff rooms, and kitchen space. Renovating old houses is a complex task – but the house was not yet culturally protected, so there was room for manoeuvre as long as one did not change *Beit Tavor*'s special look.

The renovations at the institute are a chapter in themselves. They have been many and sometimes too time-consuming. One of the improvements from 1972 was the acquisition of a better kitchen – and this work led at first to difficulties but later to celebrations. Harriet Holmquist was responsible for the many practical arrangements during the rebuilding. The piece of land on the other side of the street that belonged to the institute was sold; the area opposite became a parking lot; and the institute was able to install central heating. In 1978, new student quarters were built as well.

During the staffing changes and all the other changes, there remained one person who represented continuity and local connection: Abed Odeh Rizek, who worked as a gardener. Abed came to Jerusalem as a young man from Qalanswa, his Arab home village outside Netanya. After a time in hospital, his many talents were discovered, and in 1964 he was employed by the institute, where he worked for nearly

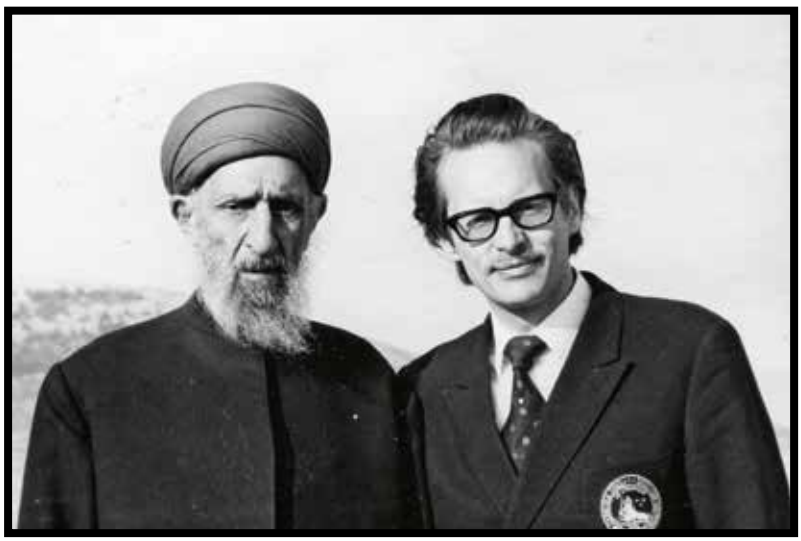
The matron Harriet Holmquist and the gardener Abed Odeh Rizek.

30 years. His living quarters at the institute are today called Abed's Room.

Harriet Holmquist also worked hard to give the institute an outgoing profile. Swedish holidays, such as Advent, Lucia and Walpurgis Night, were celebrated, and the friends of the institute were invited to participate. Regular worship services in Swedish were held in the chapel. During her ten years at the institute, it became a trusted meeting place for Jews, Christians and Muslims – all described in her book *Mötesplats Jerusalem*[10] (Meeting Place Jerusalem, Editor's translation), which was published in 1985. She was honoured with a beautiful fountain in the courtyard of the institute, called Harriet's Well – one of the institute's treasures.

Under the auspices of Director Bengt Knutsson, the important academic contacts were upheld, and new ones were established. The scholarship terms were continued, now with support from the National Organization Church and Judaism. It was now not only possible to enter a dialogue between Jews and Christians, but a trialogue as well, with Muslims included. Knowledgeable in both Modern

10 Harriet Holmquist, *Mötesplats Jerusalem*, Förlagshuset Gothia: Göteborg, 1985.



The Samaritan High Priest Amram Ben-Yitschaq and the director Bengt Knutsson.

Hebrew and Arabic, Bengt Knutsson worked to support this development. However, time and the Swedish mother organization were not yet ready for this widening of scope.

One of the important contacts made in the beginning of the 1970s was with the Samaritan High Priest, Amram Ben-Yitschaq. He was a lineal descendant of the High Priests and represented the small Samaritan group still found around the Mount Gerizim in Nablus. This group counts its roots from the northern Israeli Kingdom from the 8th century BC. On top of the generous reception always bestowed on visitors from the institute in Nablus, Amram Ben-Yitschaq lectured in the Samaritan language, writings and traditions at the institute in Jerusalem.

A unique representative for the connection to Modern Hebrew, *'ivrit,* was Dola Ben-Yehuda, the daughter of the man behind that language, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Dola Ben-Yehuda came to be a faithful and appreciated guest at the institute for a long time, and also a teacher in Modern Hebrew there. Bengt Knutsson has extensively described these relations in his book *Jag minns mitt Jerusalem. En svensk orientalist bland judar och araber*[11] (*I Remember My Jerusalem. A Swedish Orientalist among Jews and Arabs*, Editor's translation), from 2014.

11 Bengt Knutsson, *Jag minns mitt Jerusalem: en svensk orientalist bland judar och araber,* Carlssons: Stockholm, 2014.

PHOTO: MAGNUS ARONSON/IKON

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PHOTO: LINDA MICKELSSON/IKON

JEWISH–CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE AND PALESTINIAN PERSPECTIVES FROM 1979 AND ONWARDS

During the final years of the 1970s, the institute changed directors many times, and experienced many different leadership profiles and directions of interest. International research and religious dialogue had come a long way in terms of Jewish-Christian relations. One person who carried out truly pioneering work in research about Paul was Krister Stendahl. He was Dean and Professor at Harvard Divinity School in Boston, USA, and later Bishop in Stockholm. Krister Stendahl's commitment to ecumenical and Jewish-Christian relations, as well as to the STI, was significant for both parties. Today, the lecture hall at the institute is named after Stendahl, as is the professorship in Theology of Religion that was established in 2008.

The matron Harriet Holmquist and the director Göran Larsson.

This was a time for understanding that one should not think in antithetical terms about the relation between Judaism and Christianity. Instead, the Jewish roots of Christianity were to be seen as an asset. The relation of Christianity to Judaism was no longer described in terms of triumphalism or superiority. The differences between Jews and Christians were rather to be considered a positive aspect of what might be described as a mature sibling relationship. At long last, the old paradigm of hate and suspicion had to give way to a new one, built on trusting dialogue and cooperation. Jews and Christians were seen as equal parties.

The person who came to incorporate these new research-related as well as theological perspectives into the activities at the institute was Göran Larsson, who became its director in 1979. Thanks to Göran Larsson's professional competence and language skills, the close academic and social contacts of the institute were continued, both with Jerusalem and Sweden. The scholarship terms gave many ministers, teachers and students the opportunity to challenge and broaden their theological views, now with the perspective of equal dialogue as a guiding-star.

The mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek vistits the Swedish Theological Institute.

Thus, the work at the STI did not only comprise the collection of data about Bible texts and Judaism. It was a new situation for Swedish students to hear Jewish lecturers talk about Jewish and Christian subjects. In the trajectory of work with Jewish-Christian relations, the Jewish roots of Christianity were revalued. They became an asset – and a challenge. New questions were discussed: How should the relation between the "old" and the "new" covenants be described in a correct way? How should the polemics between Jesus and the Pharisees be introduced without discrediting Judaism or Christianity? The result of these discussions was later summarized in the document *Guds vägar*[12] (*The Ways of God*), which was adopted by the Church of Sweden in 2001.

Jews in Jerusalem expressed much appreciation for the ongoing dialogue at the institute. The work got much attention and received

12 *The ways of God Judaism and Christianity*, 2001

Jesus is presented in the Temple. The icon of Bengt Olof Kälde in the chapell of the institute.

many prizes and was conferred with distinctions. One popular guest at the institute during this period was the Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek. He re-stated the trademark of *Beit Tabor* as the "most beautiful house in Jerusalem". The house had also won such a vote in the newspaper *Kol Ha'ir* in 1981.

Jerusalem is a place where dialogue and spirituality may walk hand in hand. A concrete example of this is the icon that Bengt Olof Kälde made in 1986 for the institute's chapel, its motive Jesus being presented in the Temple to the Lord, according to Luke 2:21–38. Together with Göran Larsson, Kälde worked with traditional Jewish and Christian motives to portray the Jewish roots of Christianity. The icon – a triptych – is today one of the institute's most outspoken manifestations of its Jerusalem roots. The creation of the icon and the work with Jewish-Christian relations were later described by Göran Larsson in his book *Fönster mot Gud. Ikonernas budskap i Svenska teologiska institutets kapell i Jerusalem*[13] (*Windows towards God. The Message of Icons in the Chapel of the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem*, Editor's translation), 2011. The Birgitta Chapel – dedicated to the Swedish Saint Birgitta – is a place of worship for course participants and the Swedish congregation. Swedish history and presence in Jerusalem are ecumenical.

The introduction of international scholarships during the 1980s broadened the international network contacts as well. The first course where the main part of participants came from countries outside Europe took place in 1982. This course concept has, with a few breaks, been maintained since then. Also for these students, the encounter with the land and its people has been decisive. One dimension became especially obvious for students from Africa and Asia in their meeting with the country: the political dimension. These students saw and recognized themselves in the situation of the Palestinians. Traditional expectations of the Holy Land were now confronted with the problematic political reality. The relation to Islam was also brought up as a subject for study in the institute's programme. And as the teaching and networks of the institute changed, the Church of Sweden Mission

13 Göran Larsson, *Fönster mot Gud: ikonernas budskap i Svenska teologiska institutets kapell i Jerusalem*, Arcus: Lund, 2011

The International Course in 2011.

in Uppsala elaborated a new framework for STI activities in 1998, in which relations to and teaching about Judaism, Christianity and Islam were included.

The First Intifada, the first Palestinian uprising, which began at the end of 1987 became a reminder of the vulnerable situation of the Palestinians. A long time had passed since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza began, and increased restrictions had worsened the situation for the Palestinians. The cause of the Palestinians, and their identity as precisely Palestinians, were now internationally discussed, and their demand for political independence was openly expressed.

For the institute, the question now became to which degree a Palestinian representation among lecturers, contacts and teaching should be created. The established contacts of the Church of Sweden with Palestinian Christians and Muslims were certainly an asset – but they

also became a bone of contention when it came to the approach of the institute. The Palestinian political history and reality had gradually become part of the institute's activities and programme. During a few years in the middle of the 1990s, both Israelis and Palestinians felt that they were getting closer to each other, and there were hopes for an end to the conflict. However, these hopes were frustrated by broken agreements and increasing religious and political radicalization on both sides. Political Islam came to stand opposed to the nationalism of the Israeli settlers. And finally, the peace process that began with the Oslo Agreement in 1993 collapsed.

The Second Intifada began in September 2000. Its violent course of events led to many European and American institutes having to close down or radically reduce their activities. The STI stayed open and carried on its activities, despite fewer students and visitors. The strain on staff and finances was considerable. However, the situation became an opportunity for evaluation – and a venture into the future. After a conclusive evaluation of the STI's activities and potential, the Church of Sweden General Synod in 2005 decided that STI activities were to continue with strengthened academic competence in Theology of Religion as regards Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A professorship in Theology of Religion in the name of Krister Stendahl was established in 2008. It is presently (2016) held by Jesper Svartvik from the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies at Lund University, Sweden. Since 2005, the number of courses and visitors has again increased, and the institute today receives about ten groups each year.

It is the task and challenge of the institute to be an academic and human conveyor of the situation and of ongoing dialogues in Jerusalem. The institute has carried out this task for several decades, and it will continue to carry it out in the future, *insha'Allah*, God willing.

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PHOTO: MAGNUS ARONSON/IKON

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Translation to English by Mia Melin.

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