



Holocaust Memorial Day

'We made a run for it with forged papers!' Anita Lasker-Wallfisch explained, midway through a gripping account of her experiences as a Holocaust survivor. Tragically, her parents had been deported from Breslau to their deaths in April 1942, while she and her sister were put to work in a paper factory alongside French prisoners-of-war. They made their dash for freedom after being discovered smuggling messages through a chink in the wall dividing the women's toilet from that used by French prisoners. Arrested at the railway station, they were put on trial and convicted for helping the enemy by forging identity papers.

In December 1943 Anita was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Paradoxically, the fact that she was serving a prison sentence made her position slightly less desperate than that of other Jews. While she was held in the Quarantine Block, the number 69388 was tattooed on her arm. But when it was discovered that she was a gifted cellist, this saved her life. For she became a member of the Auschwitz Women's Orchestra, playing cheerful tunes as gangs of slave labourers were marched off to work. She was even obliged to play Schumann's 'Träumerei' to an audience of Nazis that included Dr Joseph Mengele. When the Red Army advanced on Auschwitz, she was transported with other members of the orchestra to Bergen-Belsen, where she was among those liberated by the British Army in April 1945.

This is not the first time that Anita has spoken at Sussex, holding a large audience enthralled by the clarity with which she recalled unimaginable events. But this year her contribution gained added depth through the dialogue that followed with her daughter, the psychotherapist Maya Jacobs-Wallfisch. 'What's that written on your arm?' Anita was asked by her small son, after she had settled in England, married and started a family. 'I'll tell you another time,' she replied. She and her husband had to get on with the business of earning their living, while doing their best to shield their children from the horrors of the past. But the resulting family secret cast a shadow over young lives, as Maya recalled during an illuminating discussion, chaired by Trudy Gold of the London Jewish Cultural

Centre. When is the right moment to share the story of attempted genocide with the younger generation? It was many years before Anita Lasker-Wallfisch was able to commit herself to an educational mission that now also involves her in visits to schools in Germany.

This presentation was framed by an address by Sir Andrew Burns that put the Sussex programme into a wider context. As the UK Envoy for Post-Holocaust issues and Chairman-designate of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, he was able to review an impressive range of educational activities designed to combat racism in both Britain and the wider European Union. In Hungary the priority may be to combat the rise of neo-nationalism, in Germany to ensure the restitution of recently rediscovered Looted Art. While a new political ethics must be based on rigorous historical study, Sir Andrew concluded, we must actively monitor contemporary trends and take decisive action to combat all forms of Hate Speech.

The discussion between Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and her daughter, as Sussex student Charlotte Lee remarked afterwards, reminded us that 'the journeys of Holocaust survivors did not end upon liberation – surviving genocide has a profound effect on the lives of those who survived and their families for generations after the atrocity has occurred.' Charlotte, who has trained as a HMD Youth Champion, felt inspired to organize a further commemorative event, including a screening of the film 'The Pianist', which portrays the ordeals of the Polish-Jewish musician Wladyslaw Szpilman.

Greetings from Belsen István Irsai's picture postcards and life in the concentration camp

A Research Paper by Ladislaus Löb

Several of the Research Papers published by our Centre since its inception twenty years ago have become collector's items. The prototype was *Goethe and the Wandering Jew: A Leitmotif in German Literature and Politics*, the professorial lecture by Edward Timms that inaugurated the Centre in April 1994. This has been followed by an intriguing range of further topics: *Emancipation and its Discontents: The German-Jewish Dilemma* by Peter Pulzer; *The Burning of the Synagogue at Neu Ruppin* by Stephen Nicholls; *Memories of Mikhailowka: Labour Camp Testimonies in the Arnold Daghani Archive* by Edward Timms; *Jewish Dimensions of Hans Jonas's Response to Heidegger* by Christian Wiese; *The Legacy of Eva Ehrenberg* by Lewis Elton; *Buy Jewish: Ethnic Marketing and Consumer Ambivalence in Weimar Germany* by Gideon Reuveni; *Compensation and Restitution for Jewish Victims of the Holocaust* by Clemens Nathan; and *The 30th January 1933* by Peter Pulzer.

The latest contribution to this series is *Greetings from Belsen. István Irsai's picture postcards and life in the concentration camp* by Ladislaus Löb. This strikingly illustrated Research Paper forms a sequel to Löb's prize-winning book, *Dealing with Satan: Rezső Kasztner's Daring Rescue Mission*.



(From left to right) Trudy Gold, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and Maya Jacobs

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New Research Projects at the Centre

An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Holocaust Education in Britain

Dr Caroline Sharples has been appointed to a research fellowship assessing the effectiveness of Holocaust education in Britain. Working closely with the Centre for Holocaust Education in London, her project will evaluate what is currently being achieved by Holocaust education in the UK, analysing the resources available to Holocaust educators, as well as exploring pupils' and teachers' experiences of Holocaust education. Ultimately, the aim is to provide recommendations for new and publicly accessible Holocaust education programmes, a timely venture given prevailing debates over History education in the UK and the announcement, in January 2014, of Prime Minister David Cameron's Holocaust Commission to consider how the nation might do more to memorialise the Holocaust and provide valuable educational resources for future generations.

Dr Sharples joins us from the University of Leicester, where she was Lecturer in Modern European History and an active member of the Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. She has a longstanding research interest in cultural memories of National Socialism and the Holocaust and has produced numerous articles on the legacy of the Kindertransport in Britain. She is the author of *West Germans and the Nazi Legacy* (2012) and, with Olaf Jensen, co-editor of *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (2013). If anyone would like to share their thoughts and experiences of Holocaust education with Dr Sharples, she can be contacted via email:

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or via the Centre for German-Jewish Studies (contact details at the end of the newsletter).

Maritime and Migration History



Postcard showing the ship 'Ausonia' sent to a Mr D Schitz in Yaffo-Tel Aviv from Venice. The postcard is dated 26.8.1935.

Jewish identity is traditionally linked to the land, while the biblical narratives offer scarcely a glimpse of the sea. The reluctance to recognize the sea as a constraining reality is epitomised the escape out of Egypt. Do the children of Israel, when they reach the Red Sea, consider constructing rafts? Nothing could be further from their minds. Moses stretches out his hand, the waters are divided and they cross the sea on dry land.

The situation (as suggested by the postcard reproduced above) was transformed by the Zionist migrations, which form the subject of Björn Siegel's pioneering research at the University of Sussex. In 1934 the German-born journalist Erich Gottgetreu, who emigrated to Palestine in the 1930s, described in his book *Das Land der Söhne – Palästina nahe gerückt* a fictional conversation between an inhabitant of Tel Aviv and the mayor of the same city: 'How many people actually live in Tel Aviv?' The mayor answered: 'Yesterday there were 95,000. But today new ships are arriving – ...'

This fictional anecdote demonstrates the important role of ships in the Jewish migration to *Eretz Israel*. Björn Siegel's research project focuses on the 'ship' as a maritime place in Jewish history in order to shed new light on Jewish migration movements to

Mandatory Palestine. It aims to combine maritime and migration history and use the influential research of N. Kashtan, D. Ran and M. Azaryahu, which has enlarged our knowledge of maritime Jewish history and the Zionist maritime ideology. Moreover, by taking J. Schlör's and T. Brinkmann's studies into account it also investigates the transmigration processes of the interwar period. Consequently, it analyses the strategies of European shipping companies, which were influential in the emigration business and investigates the ideas and tactics of the Zionist organisations, which attempted to organize the general Jewish migration. It also incorporates the personal experiences of the actual passengers on their journeys from Europe to Mandatory Palestine in order to add an internal perspective. By using these different perspectives the project aims to look beyond national frameworks and strengthen the transnational approach towards Jewish migration.



One of István Irsai's picture postcards entitled: 'Huts into Synagogues'

Greetings from Belsen

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The book showed how Kasztner, an Austro-Hungarian born Zionist, journalist and author, succeeded in organizing the rescue of 1,670 Hungarian Jewish men, women and children on the celebrated 'Kasztner train'. As a child Professor Löb, accompanied by his father, was among those transported via the ordeal of several months in Bergen-

Belsen to ultimate safety in Switzerland. 'There can be no comparison between the hardships suffered by us and the horrors experienced by the victims of the death camps,' Löb stresses in this Research Paper. 'The five months we spent in Bergen-Belsen were horrific, but our privileges, such as they were, helped to make them bearable'.

The History of Concentration Camps From the Boer War to Guantanamo Bay



(From left to right) Claudia Siebrecht, Gerhard Wolf and Sara Berger

The concentration camp embodies the power structures of the modern world to such an extent that several historians have referred to the 20th century as 'the century of the camp'. From the first colonial examples during the Boer War to the establishment of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay in 2002, the camp has played a central role in some of the defining episodes of modern history. To explore these frequently neglected histories, an international workshop on 'The History of Concentration Camps' was held on 28 February 2014 at the University of Sussex.

This workshop was part of a series of events organized this academic year for our students on topics related to the Centre's teaching and research activities.

Focusing on different case studies in order to assess possible similarities, differences and continuities, the workshop sought to examine potential links between modern-day camps and former social practices of exclusion and control as well as address the singularity of the extermination camps established by Nazi Germany.

Discussing the pre-modern roots of the concentration camps Andreas Gestrich (Director of the German Historical Institute, London) set the stage for the rest of the workshop with theoretical overviews and illustrative case studies. In a more empirical paper Claudia Siebrecht (Sussex) explored colonial concentration camps. Discussing the different functions of these camps she argued against recent interpretations that link colonial camps to the Nazi camps system. Her observations were confirmed by Sara Berger (Shoah Foundation, Rome), whose presentation focused on the Nazi extermination camps.

The workshop closed with presentations by two Sussex history students who reported on their dissertation projects. In her paper on Camps and Public Opinion, Kate Friedlander Moseley provided a comparative framework to discuss public reaction to the Guantanamo detention camp and the British concentration camps from the period of the Boer War at the beginning of the 20th century. Kelly Shields examined in her paper Soviet concentration camps. She argued that the Soviet camps system was not merely a tool to gain and consolidated state domination, but in many ways became a model for how society should be organized.

Refugees and Migrants: Unaccompanied Children in Britain 1914-2014

With the Parkes Centre at the University of Southampton, Rose Holmes is co-organising a conference to be held in Southampton on 17-18 July 2014 on the theme of 'Refugees and Migrants: Unaccompanied Children in Britain 1914-2014'. This will cover the history of unaccompanied child migration both in and out of Britain in the last century.

The organisers of the conference plan to cover topics including the Kindertransport, child migration to the Dominions, Basque refugee children and post-war Holocaust orphans. To this end, we welcome presentations from former child migrants as well as academics researching the history of migration. If any readers would like to participate, or would like further information, please contact Rose Holmes.

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or via the Centre for German-Jewish Studies (contact details at the end of the newsletter)

The Centre for German-Jewish Studies congratulates Rose Holmes on the successful defence of her thesis entitled: 'A Moral Business: British Quaker work with Refugees from Fascism, 1933-39'. She is working as an ESRC Research Fellow in the History Department at the University of Sussex and will continue to be associated with the Centre.

Rudolf Kasztner and the Hungarian Holocaust

*Our appeal for contributions towards a bursary for research into Rudolf Kasztner's rescue activities (Issue 37, October 2013) may have created the impression that Ladislaus Löb's book *Dealing with Satan: Rezső Kasztner's Daring Rescue Mission* lacks balance. In fact the book was widely praised for its even-handedness. We hoped to express the notion that the bursary would be used to extend the study of Kasztner's work beyond his rescue of almost 1,700 Hungarian Jews from the Holocaust.*

'I was Klaus-Peter Sommerfeld'

An inspirational talk at the University of Sussex

On 15 March 2014 Peter and Marianne Summerfield visited Sussex to address a group of students studying the Holocaust. Peter Summerfield is one of the founder members of the German-Jewish Centre's Support Group and its Honorary Solicitor. The talk took them back to their childhood experiences in the Germany of the 1930s and their escape from National Socialism.

Peter opened his presentation with the statement: 'I am now Peter William Summerfield, but was born Klaus-Peter Willi Sommerfeld'. He then explained how his family managed to get on the last train from Berlin only days before the outbreak of the Second World War. Both Peter and Marianne lost close family members in the Holocaust. Marianne's grandmothers were murdered in Auschwitz and Peter's grandmother and uncle were killed.

Their stories gave the students a genuine insight into the struggles they endured and the challenge of rebuilding their lives in a new country. Students were particularly keen to hear about life in Germany under National Socialism. They also inquired about the refugees' experiences in Britain during and immediately after the war and asked Peter and Marianne if it was their shared ordeals that brought them together. Responding to these vividly individualized stories of survival and endurance, some of the students decided to write their research essays on the history of German-Jewish refugees in the UK.



Marianne and Peter Summerfield speaking to the students at Sussex

The Jewish Experience of the First World War

London, 11–13 June 2014



In conjunction with the London Jewish Museum and the Wiener Library, both of whom are hosting First World War exhibitions, the Austrian Cultural Forum and the Institut für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden in Hamburg, the Centre is organising an international conference on the Jewish Experience of the First World War. The conference seeks to explore the variety of social and political phenomena that make the First World War a turning point in the Jewish experience of the 20th century. Delegates will consider in a broad interdisciplinary and transnational context the degree to which individual Jews and Jewish communities in Europe, the US and elsewhere engaged with total war between 1914 and 1918. By bringing together leading scholars in the field from the USA, Australia, Israel, France, Poland and Germany, the conference aims to provide the setting for an in-depth discussion of the multifaceted meanings of the First World War for our understanding of the Jewish experience of the modern era.

The Conference will be held at the London Jewish Museum and in the Wiener Library. In addition, Professor Derek Penslar (Oxford) will deliver the conference keynote address entitled 'The Great War and Modern Jewry' on Wednesday 11 June at 7 pm, at the new Jewish Community Centre London (JW3). In this address, Professor Penslar will discuss the half million Jews who served in the armed forces of both the Allied and Central Powers during the First World War. Many fought because they had no choice, but others served willingly, eager to demonstrate their loyalty, courage, and worthiness for acceptance. His lecture will focus on the conflict Jewish soldiers felt between duty to their country and solidarity towards fellow Jews across the battle line.

All the proceedings of the conference are open to the public. A detailed program of the conference will be available through the Centre website and from our partner organizations.

For further information please contact Gideon Reuveni [E g.reuveni@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:G.reuveni@sussex.ac.uk)

Ismar Schorsch



Rabbi Dr Ismar Schorsch

Rabbi Dr Ismar Schorsch, chancellor emeritus at The Jewish Theological Seminary (New York) delivered an enlightening talk at the Jewish Community Centre (JW3) in London on March 24. He explained how emancipation shattered the medieval unity of Ashkenazic Jewry and how meanwhile, in Germany, the estrangement expressed itself in an exchange of identities. The emergence of a Sephardic mystique enabled emancipated German Jews to find a historical model that vindicated living in two worlds. In contrast to the insularity of Ashkenazic Jews in medieval Christendom, Sephardic Jews in the Islamic orbit had immersed themselves in the language, science, medicine, philosophy, mysticism and poetry of their Muslim neighbours and overlords.

That cultural preference readied young Jews in German universities in the 19th century – encouraged by a remarkably enlightened Lutheran professor in Leipzig, Heinrich Fleischer, to study Arabic and Islam, implicitly inheriting the rich legacy of Sephardic Judaism. And when Arabic ceased to be ancillary to the study of the Hebrew Bible in Protestant theology faculties, Jewish students gravitated to the academic study of Islam, contributing to these studies in gross disproportion to their numbers. The imprint of Islam in the centuries of its cultural ascendancy on Sephardic Judaism thus primed Jews in Western and Central Europe and even the Russian Empire to its study in an era when there were no Muslims in the universities to advocate the cause.

Culture and Catastrophe: Vienna on the Eve of the First World War

Professor Edward Timms
Tuesday 24 June 2014, 6.00pm
Goethe Institute, London

This lecture will highlight what is most impressive about the culture of late Habsburg Vienna, as well as what was most problematic about its politics. Rather than simply listing great names and original achievements, it will focus on structural transformations of the public sphere, including the introduction of universal manhood suffrage, the empowered marginality of Jewish migrants and the pioneering achievements of women. Drawing on a new translation of Karl Kraus's documentary drama, *The Last Days of Mankind*, it will address the question of responsibility for the outbreak of the Great War. The evening will conclude with a reading from this work.

To book a place, contact the Austrian Cultural Forum: **T** 020 7596 4000
http://www.acflondon.org/

'The Bird World of Auschwitz'

A novella by Arno Surminski

'An extraordinary event that actually occurred': this classic definition of the German novella is amply fulfilled by Arno Surminski's *The Bird World of Auschwitz*, now published in English for the first time. In October 1940 a German ornithologist, Dr Günther Niethammer, embarked on a study of the birdlife of the region. His findings appeared in the 1941 number of the scientific journal, *Annalen des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien*. Readers of that article must have been impressed by the wealth of birdlife he described, gaining the impression of a tranquil landscape. The only jarring note occurred on the opening page of the article, where the author indicated that he was 'currently in the Waffen-SS'. Niethammer went on to thank another member of the Waffen-SS for encouraging his research: Rudolf Höss, commandant of Auschwitz from May 1940 until November 1943.

When Niethammer's fieldwork was drawn to Arno Surminski's attention, his imagination went into overdrive. His masterstroke, which gives his fictional reworking of those events its dynamic, is to imagine that the ornithologist, whom he gives the name Hans Grote, is accompanied by a Polish prisoner from the Concentration Camp. On this basis he creates the second main character of this remarkable story, Marek Rogalski, a Catholic student detained during a round-up of educated Poles. An uncanny dialogue ensues between Grote the ornithologist, who can think only of the variegated life of birds, and his assistant Marek, who is haunted by his knowledge of the gruesome death being inflicted on Auschwitz prisoners.

The understated narrative of *The Bird World of Auschwitz* poignantly measures the crimes of a brutal regime against the rhythms of nature. The ornithologist remains trapped in his pursuit of specimens for scientific research, but the novella is a morality tale in which such conduct does not go unpunished. Here again Surminski respects the historical record, for after the defeat of Nazi Germany the original ornithologist, Dr Niethammer, was sentenced to several years in a Polish prison for complicity in war crimes. After his release he was rehabilitated and appointed to a Professorship in Bonn. This adds a further disturbing resonance to Surminski's imaginative reconstruction of an extraordinary event that actually occurred.

Translated by Stephen Cameron Jalil Nicholls
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The translation is published to mark the 80th birthday of Arno Surminski on 20 August 2014 and will be available from the Centre for German-Jewish Studies.

Discounts on publications associated with the Centre

Publications by researchers at the Centre for German-Jewish Studies may be purchased at a discount by Friends of the Centre.

For further information about the Centre for German-Jewish Studies and joining the Friends, please contact:

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