

Holocaust Memorial Day 2013

The main lecture theatre in the new Jubilee Building on the University of Sussex campus was filled to capacity with schoolchildren, university students, faculty and members of the public for our 13th Holocaust Memorial Day programme which took place on January 29th 2013. There was widespread news coverage this year. BBC Southern filmed the event and interviewed the speakers and coverage was shown on news bulletins.

'The 30th January 1933' was the title of the first lecture, delivered by Professor Peter Pulzer (Oxford), an analysis of Hitler's seizure of power by one of Britain's foremost political historians. The Nazis gained power, Pulzer explained, not by a dramatic political coup, but through a process spread over several years – 'one salami slice at a time'. It is understandable that many German-speaking Jews failed to realize the precariousness of their position, for measures like the boycott of Jewish shops in April 1933 were relatively ineffective. It was only after the passing of the Nuremberg Laws in autumn 1935 that they were reduced to second-class citizens. As to the programme of genocide, even after 1945 many people found such a thing hard to believe. Hence the need for a strenuous effort to learn the lessons of history. Information on its own is not enough – we have to make leaps of the imagination.

In the concluding section of his lecture, Professor Pulzer focused on the unintended consequences of totalitarianism. The Germany that emerged out of the ashes of the Second World War became more democratic than ever before, while the predominantly Jewish refugees who had escaped from Nazi-occupied Europe brought to their countries of resettlement a cosmopolitan culture that has enriched the wider world. The founding of the Glyndebourne Festival Opera in 1934 by Fritz Busch is only one of innumerable examples. Britain and the United States were the principal beneficiaries from this enforced migration. 'Why are you an English nationalist?' Peter Pulzer was once asked by a sceptical Oxford colleague. 'Because the English, they alone, saved my life,' Pulzer replied.

The audience sat spellbound as Zigi Shipper gave a most moving account of his life. Zigi and his grandparents were forced to leave their homes and live in the Jewish ghetto in Lodz in 1940, when Zigi was ten years old. When the ghetto was liquidated in 1944, Zigi was sent to Auschwitz, and then to a concentration camp near Danzig. With the Russians advancing, Zigi and other survivors were sent on a 'death march', finally arriving by barge at the German naval town of Neustadt on the Baltic coast. They believed they would be taken to Denmark, but before this could happen British troops arrived and Zigi and his fellow captives were liberated. He was subsequently reunited with his mother, whom he hadn't seen since he was five, and came to live in England.



Zigi described himself as lucky to have survived and feels he owes it those who did not survive to keep talking about what happened. 'Whole families were wiped out,' he says. 'Who will tell their story?'

Multi-award-winning film director Daisy Asquith was present for a showing of her film: 'Britain's Holocaust Survivors'. This film takes a unique approach to recording the experiences of the last generation to have living memories of the Holocaust.

They experienced perhaps the greatest crimes against humanity the world has ever seen. Yet what do we know about the Holocaust survivors who made Britain their home?

Viewers are taken into the homes of a small group of extraordinary survivors, amongst them, our speaker, Zigi Shipper, and they tell their stories with sensitivity, humour and compassion.

This film is an important historical and visual document, a testimony to the strength, determination and character of Holocaust survivors, a contemporary benchmark and possibly the final chance to hear from those survivors living in Britain.

A lively discussion with Daisy and Zigi followed the film.

Reactions from 6th formers who attended the event:

Never forget. We must remember the horrific events that surprise us even today, despite the killing going on around the world now. I, myself, still can't believe that something as brutal and soulless as this happened. For me the Holocaust isn't just a Jewish tragedy, but also a human tragedy. However, after listening to the lecture and the film I understand that there is something that will always light the way; hope. Even out of the darkest and bleakest times hope can spring

up like a grain buried in winter soil. I've learnt that humans can be amazing; they can somehow move on from a terrible tragedy and live the most beautiful lives without bitterness or hatred.

Arielle Jasiewicz-Gill, Year 10

I found Zigi Shipper's speech very interesting. After being brought up in Poland, living in a Ghetto and Auschwitz-Birkenau, he managed to survive the holocaust. As the things told in his speech were his own personal experiences, it gave me a better understanding of the extent to which the Jews were persecuted than I could ever have from reading about the holocaust in a textbook. Although he has experienced horrifying things, Zigi Shipper insists that he was 'lucky' and has, in spite of everything, lived a full and happy life. We then watched a film which showed us how the holocaust affected people throughout their lives. I learned things that I had never even considered about the problems that survivors and their families had for the rest of their lives as a result of the holocaust.

Phoebe Gurden, Year 11

The Holocaust memorial speech from Zigi Shipper was fascinating and provided a remarkable insight into the lives of those sent to concentration camps. His story was extraordinary, poignant and at times humorous. The film made by Daisy Asquith, 'After the Holocaust' also provided an interesting look into the lives of other survivors, and showed how many are still overcoming the horrors even today. Overall, the session was incredibly interesting and was very enjoyable!

Callum T-Walker, Year 11

St Richard's Catholic College

A transcript of Peter Pulzer's talk will be circulated to Friends of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies. For information on how to join the Friends, please see back page.

Workshop on Holocaust and Genocide: Contextualizing the Holocaust – Obstruction or Facilitation for Genocide Studies

In 2012 the Centre for German-Jewish studies started a new series of workshops to which leading scholars are invited to discuss subjects relating to the topics Centre faculty currently teach. The workshops are open to students and members of the wider community. The workshops expose our students to academic discourse beyond the classroom. Following the success of last year's workshop on the 70th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference, the March workshop dealt with the Holocaust in relation to other genocides. Whilst for many students of the Holocaust, contextualizing the Holocaust within broader patterns of human development contributes to understanding the event's special position within history, a challenging debate has arisen latterly among scholars of genocide reflecting the gradual development of the field beyond its point of origin – namely the Nazi murder of Europe's Jews. Some scholars suggest that this study hampers scholarship and obstructs a wider vision of the phenomenon. Does the Holocaust constitute an obstacle to the study of genocide, and if so, what does that mean for the study of mass violence? Under the title 'Contextualizing the Holocaust: Obstruction or Facilitation for Genocide Studies' this question stood at the midst of the discussions of this year's workshop. Dirk Moses (European University Florence/University of Sydney), Paul Salmons (Program Director, Centre for Holocaust Education, University of London) and Gerhard Wolf (University of Sussex), all leading scholars of Holocaust and Genocide studies, explored how different episodes of mass killing should be seen in a common framework, and whether and how such a perspective might alter understanding of the Holocaust itself. Following their statements there was a lively discussion engaging students, faculty and members of the Jewish community who attended the event.



(Speakers from left to right) Paul Salmons, Gerhard Wolf, Gideon Reuveni, Dirk Moses

Citizenship, Equality and Civil Society – The 200th Anniversary of the Prussian Emancipation Edict for the Jews 1812



(From left to right) Andreas Brämer (Hamburg University), Grit Schorch (University of Bayreuth) and Gideon Reuveni (Sussex University)

A major international conference took place in Jerusalem from 4-6 March commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Prussian Emancipation Edict for the Jews of 1812. The event was jointly organised by the Centre for German-Jewish Studies together with the Leo Baeck Institute of

Jerusalem, The Richard Koebner Centre and The Rosenzweig Minerva Research Centre (both at the Hebrew University). Professor Reinhard Rürup (Technischen Universität Berlin) delivered the keynote address on 'The Prussian Law of 1812 and the Ambivalence of Jewish Emancipation

in Germany'. Beyond its immediate effect on German Jewry, Rürup outlined the vigorous discussions over the fundamental principles of citizenship, the concept of civil society and the status of minorities within society and the state generated by this edict.

Juxtaposing the historical significance with the contemporary relevance of Jewish emancipation, the proceedings were divided into two major sections. The first day and a half was dedicated to the Edict and its various implications for German Jewry from 1812 to the Nazi period. The scope and variety of topics dealt with in this discussion was vast – ranging from the diverse Jewish reactions to the Edict, through the different ways in which emancipation was experienced by Jews in the 19th century, to the end of the emancipation under National Socialism. Together the lectures gave a rich and nuanced picture of the history of Jewish emancipation in Germany. The second half of the conference moved beyond the specific German context to examine the concepts of citizenship, civil society and the relations between majority and minority groups as they have developed in Israel. The two sections of the conference were thematically linked through a public symposium at the Konrad Adenauer Conference Centre in Mishkenot Sha'ananim on 'Citizenship in Germany and Israel – A Comparative Retrospective'. Over two hundred people attended this event, which ignited a lively debate over legislation aimed at minorities, highlighting the relevance of the 1812 Edict to present-day civil life.

Evi Wohlgemuth

Evi Wohlgemuth, who died in London on 5 March 2013, was for fifteen years one of the most dedicated members of the German-Jewish Centre's Support Group. Jenifer Glynn, a childhood friend, has recalled an episode from Evi's early life in England:

'It was in autumn 1938 that Evi, leaving her Viennese home, arrived to join what must have seemed our rather alarming family. She was nine years old, didn't speak English and was to be separated from the only person whom she knew here – her mother, who had to undertake domestic work; and she had to leave her beloved father behind to the horrors of Dachau. Somehow Evi coped with the language problem and with school. I have two particular memories here – once when she managed to learn, and to recite, a poem in English, and the other when we joined the Girl Guides. The fussy woman in charge insisted that Evi should swear allegiance not, like everyone else, to the King, because he was not her King, but to 'the country in which I am now living'. After some months Evi's life improved. Her father was released and her family was able to begin a new life in Chicago.'

In his own tribute, Evi's son John Wohlgemuth added further personal details, from which the following excerpt is taken:

'Evi went through the American state school system and built up a new network of friends. Her school reports indicate she was a bit of a swot right through from Vienna to Chicago. Ultimately all this hard work resulted in her gaining a scholarship worth \$400 to Barnard College New York, part of Columbia University, from which she graduated in 1950. Academic life would be her chosen career, and soon she met

Evi Wohlgemuth with her granddaughter Leni, January 2013



my father Ernest Max Sigmund Wohlgemuth, a Jewish refugee who had escaped to England. They made many lifelong friends from the people that they had met together at the University of Chicago, and when she came to London my mother was heartily welcomed into my father's circle of friends from his time at the London School of Economics and even the refugee boarding school at Stotley Rough, to which he had been sent in the 1930s.'

Such reminiscences about Evi's educational background help to explain why she took such an active interest in the German-Jewish Centre after it was founded in 1994. Gifts that have generously been donated to the Centre in Evi's memory will be used to support research about the Austrian-Jewish heritage which she so loved.

Quakers and the Kindertransport

As part of a PhD research project, Rose Holmes from the Centre for German-Jewish Studies has been looking at the work of British Quakers with refugees from fascism in the period leading up to 1939.

Together with Jewish relief agencies, the Quaker community in Britain were heavily involved with organising the Kindertransports into Britain in 1938 and 1939. The Kindertransports remain the largest group immigration of child refugees into Britain, yet the Quakers' role has not been fully acknowledged or explored.

Quakers were involved in the Kindertransports in three main ways – working with Jewish leaders to get government permission for the project, helping to organise the scheme from the Quaker Centres in Berlin and Vienna, and caring for children once they arrived in Britain.

On 21 November 1938, a deputation of Quaker and Jewish leaders went to see the Home Secretary, Samuel Hoare. Concerned by the severe escalation of violence against Jews, they pleaded to be allowed to bring child refugees

into Britain. Hoare agreed, on condition that the voluntary agencies would undertake all administration and financial commitment related to the refugees.

Part of the administrative responsibility was organising the selection and transportation of the children from Europe. The Quaker Centres in Berlin and Vienna, which had been established as famine relief centres in the aftermath of the First World War, provided a base for organising the Kindertransport from the European side, and were able to send regular reports on the political situation to Britain, facilitating the prompt organisation of the scheme.

Beginning in December 1938, nearly 10,000 children were brought to Britain under the Kindertransports. Once the children had arrived in Britain, many Quaker Meetings and families acted as foster parents, encouraged by Quaker policy to do anything possible to help refugees. One Quaker remembers, 'it seemed like every Quaker household we knew had refugees in the living room.'

Lishmah Sussex – Jewish learning for its own sake

Inspired by Limmud in Sussex which offered a wide range of topics from Jewish history, to practical Jewish response given by local speakers, members of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies taught an evening course on **The Holocaust: History and Memory** as part of the Sussex Lishmah evening sessions which took place in February and March 2013. The course set out to introduce some of the major historiographical trends in the field of Holocaust studies. In a century of genocides, the Holocaust of the European Jews remains perhaps the

most systematic attempt to destroy a whole people. The course considered the history of the Holocaust against the background of Jewish and German history in modern times. It provided a detailed historical understanding of selected aspects of the events leading up to and during the Holocaust, and discussed the evolution of Holocaust memory in the post War period.

Adam Sutcliffe on Saul Ascher

On Thursday 14 February, Dr Adam Sutcliffe, Head of Department and Senior Lecturer in Early Modern History at King's College London, delivered a lecture on 'Saul Ascher, Jewish Emancipation, and the Emergence of the German-Jewish Left' at the history department Work in Progress seminar. Adam Sutcliffe specializes in the intellectual history of Western Europe and in early modern Jewish History. His talk dealt with the preponderance of Jews in the first generation of the German Left – Ludwig Börne, Heinrich Heine, Moses Hess, Eduard Gans and ultimately Karl Marx. Sutcliffe's paper approached this broad question through the life and work of one of the earliest German-Jewish

radical thinkers: Saul Ascher (1767-1822), a Berlin writer best known for his *Leviathan* (1792) – a rethinking of Judaism in Kantian terms which in many respects foreshadowed the later emergence of Reform Judaism. As we learned from Sutcliffe's lecture, Ascher was one of the first of an important lineage of Jewish thinkers who insisted upon a vision of Jewish Emancipation that was set within a politically radical and universalistic framework.

Book publication

Claudia Siebrecht, *The Aesthetics of Loss: German Women's Art of the First World War*
(Oxford University Press, September 2013)



Lotte B. Prechner (1877-1967), *Heimatlos (Without Homeland)*, woodcut, 1920.

Claudia Siebrecht joined the History Department at the University of Sussex in 2011 and has recently become a member of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies. Her forthcoming publication entitled: *The Aesthetics of Loss* is a cultural history of German women's art of the First World War. The book locates their rich visual testimony in the context of the civilian experience of war and wartime loss. Drawing on a fascinating body of visual sources produced throughout the war years, the book examines the thematic evolution of women's art from expressions of support for the war effort to more nuanced and ambivalent testimonies of loss and grief. Many of the images are stark woodcuts, linocuts and lithographs of great iconographical power that acted as narrative tools to deal with the novel, unsettling and often traumatic experience of war. Female German artists developed a unique aesthetic response to the conflict that expressed their emotional distress and permitted them to re-imagine the place of mourning women in wartime society. Historical codes of wartime behaviour and traditional rites of public mourning led female artists to redefine cultural practices of bereavement, question existing notions of heroic death and proud bereavement through art, and place grief at the centre of women's war experiences. As a cultural, aesthetic and thematic point of reference, German women's art of the First World War has had a fundamental influence

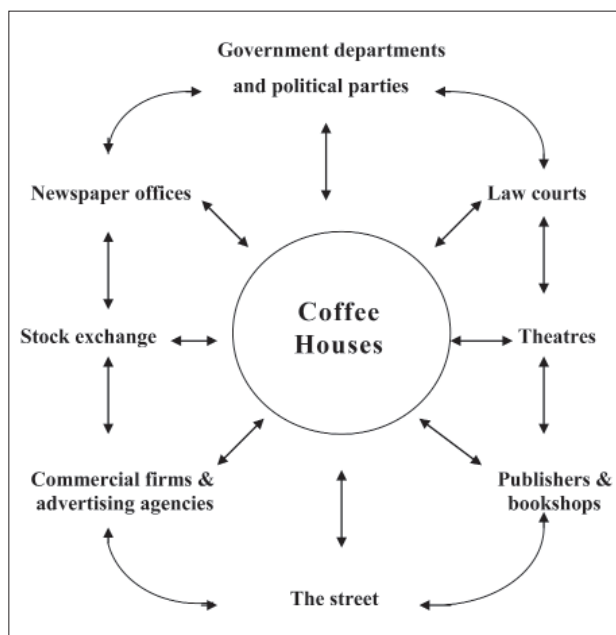
on the European memory and understanding of modern war.

The Jewish artist, Lotte B Prechner was based in Cologne for most of her career and produced many Expressionist-style woodcuts and linocuts that engage with the war experience and with the social deprivation that was widespread in the aftermath of the conflict.

Forthcoming event

At a ceremony in Vienna City Hall on Monday 6 May 2013 Professor Edward Timms is due to be awarded the Grand Decoration of Honour in Gold for Services to the Province of Vienna. That evening he has also been invited to deliver a lecture on 'Die Antikriegssatire von Karl Kraus'. The lecture will highlight the role of musical motifs in Kraus's anti-war satire, anticipating the stage techniques used by Joan Littlewood in *Oh What a Lovely War!*

The book Edward has written in German entitled *Dynamik der Kreise, Resonanz der Räume: Die schöpferischen Impulse der Wiener Moderne* is also due to be published in Austria in May. This study of conflict and creativity in the Vienna of Herzl, Freud and Mahler, Kraus, Kokoschka and Genia Schwarzwald will be accompanied by numerous illustrations and diagrams. A main theme of the book is the transformation of the public sphere initiated by the intellectual and artistic circles that met in the city's salons and coffeehouses (see illustration).



The centrality of the Vienna coffeehouse in the transformation of the public sphere

Research Paper No. 8 ISSN 1468

'The Law and Practice of Rehabilitation in Domestic Administrative Reparation Programmes: **Compensation and Restitution for the Jewish Victims of the Holocaust**' will be printed and distributed to Friends of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies in May 2013

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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