

Wiener Library News

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Further Co-operation

Since January 2002 the Library has worked in collaboration with its partner, the Leo Baeck Institute, London, in organising and putting on its programme of public lectures. This has proved to be highly successful, enabling us to bring outstanding lecturers to larger (and growing) audiences.

Speakers have ranged from local talent such as Professor Joanna Bourke to lecturers from further afield including Professor Sander Gilman (USA), Professor Shulamit Volkov (Israel), Dr Ignacio Klich (Argentina) and Professor Alastair Davidson (Australia).

The Library and its partner are now pleased to be able to announce that, starting in 2005, we will be joined in organising and running the lecture programme by the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at Sussex University. It is hoped that with such a wealth of institutional support, the intellectual fare offered at Devonshire Street will be of unparalleled quality.



At Windermere Reception Camp, 1945.

Meeting & greeting



Entertainment of displaced persons in camps.

Since last November the Library has hosted a series of highly successful early evening events designed to attract vital new support to our cause. To date, four events have taken place and more are planned for the rest of the year. The aim of each evening is to meet new people and develop our core base of supporters – particularly those who have heard of the Library and are interested in what we do, but have not necessarily visited us before, or seen the collection close up. The evenings enable our visitors to view the collection in small, intimate groups and afford an opportunity to discuss ideas concerning future plans and ways of enlisting support.

For the first evening event, Executive Committee member Edward Freedman invited a group of 14 friends to learn about our collection and work. Among his guests, three visitors – Marion Lichtig, Ena Green and Carol Silver – were so moved and impressed by what they saw, they decided to become more closely involved and host an evening of their own. This took place in May and brought a further number of interesting and interested persons into our orbit.

During each evening event, guests listen to short presentations by the Library's Chairman, Anthony Spiro, the Director, Ben Barkow and the Education and Events Co-ordinator, Katherine Klinger or the Senior Librarian, Katharina Hübschmann. They learn something of the Library's unique background and history, although the emphasis is always on our current activities and future plans. These short talks are followed by a guided tour of the collections and an opportunity to ask questions and "brain-storm" issues relating to the Library's need for new accommodation.

The two other evenings also took place in the first few months of this year, hosted by James Freedman and Board member and Endowment Trustee, Richard Bolchover. They were equally successful in introducing new people able and willing to lend their support to our cause. In all cases the costs of hosting the events have been donated by anonymous sponsors.

We would like to express our gratitude to the hosts, the sponsors and above all to the guests. It is our great hope that these introductory evenings will mark the start of ongoing and fruitful relationships.

Press relations and PR

New appointment

Over the last two years, the Library has increasingly felt the need to raise the profile of its activities and, in particular, its public events. Since organising our lecture programme jointly with the Leo Baeck Institute, numbers attending have increased significantly, but the word still needs to be spread further afield. This is doubly true now that the Sussex University Centre for German-Jewish Studies has become a partner as well.

To address this issue, the three institutes have agreed jointly to employ a Press Officer. Victoria Freudenheim is working with us for 12 hours a week. Victoria has a deep engagement with the Library's subject matter and relishes the challenge of making the institution and its programme of events better known. Among her early contributions, Victoria has consolidated our e-mail listings to streamline how we notify people of events. If you would like to receive e-mail notification of events, please contact Victoria at victoria.freudenheim@wienerlibrary.co.uk

Wiener Library News

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Library volunteer

I joined the Wiener Library in September 2003 as an ARSP volunteer. ARSP (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace) gives young people from Germany the opportunity to do voluntary service abroad for a year, instead of compulsory military service.

The project in Great Britain is based on the belief that a trilateral programme – volunteers come from Poland and Germany – can result in a mutually beneficial multicultural exchange. An additional aim is to



dispel stereotypes and improve relations between participants through their practical work in Britain.

Work collaboration, seminars and events organised by the different projects offer volunteers the opportunity to work and share time together.

My work at the Library has been quite varied and included helping and supporting staff, as well as readers. Among my current projects are:

- working in the reading room twice a week, where I help readers
- assisting in the preparation of a published edition of the Theresienstadt notebooks of Philip Manes
- cataloguing various artefacts from the Third Reich
- reshelving books and copying material
- the digitalisation of eyewitness accounts of the November Pogrom in 1938, in collaboration with the Leo Baeck Institute.

The work at the Library is amazingly interesting and offers an excellent opportunity of extending one's knowledge of the subject matter through working with the documents and books, as well as the sheer mass of unpublished original diaries and eyewitness accounts. I am very glad that I chose to come to the Library because I am really enjoying my work here.

Janek Peter

Staff changes

Franziska Goldschmidt, the Acquisitions Librarian, left the Library in April having come over to London from Germany in October 2003. She now works as a researcher for a television production company in Cologne.

Franziska is replaced by Michaela Meiser who starts her new position as the Acquisitions Librarian in June. Michaela joined us in January 2003 as one of two Retrospective Cataloguers and is looking forward to a different challenge within the organisation.

Andrea Zierer is the new Retrospective Cataloguer and will see the retrospective conversion through to the end of this year.

Library profile

Katherine Klinger has been the Library's Education and Outreach Co-ordinator since joining the staff in 2001. As the daughter of refugees from Austria and Czechoslovakia, she brings a combination of personal and professional insight to her activities, which have included developing a number of ground-breaking conferences and lectures at the Library. Born and educated in London, she originally read English Literature at the University of Sussex, and taught English for a number of years, before becoming involved in Holocaust education in the early 1990s.



In 1995, she organised the first conference in this country for teachers on how the Holocaust is taught in different countries of the European Community, and that year was awarded a special Winston Churchill Fellowship to study relations between Jews and Germans post-war. In 1996, she started the Second Generation Trust, the only UK-registered charity for descendants of Holocaust survivors, and became interested in facilitating meetings between descendants of Holocaust survivors and refugees and descendants of Nazi perpetrators.

That same year she organised the first meeting in this country in which the son of camp survivors and the son of a Gestapo officer spoke about their meetings together. In 1997, she organised the first two-day public conference in Berlin for children of survivors and perpetrators, and in 1999 organised another public conference, *The Presence of the Absence*, aimed at a similar audience, in Vienna. Her main interest was and continues to be, the relationship between the past and the present – and the impact of the Holocaust on post-war European society. "I am strangely fortunate," she says, "in being able to bring together many of my own interests such as history, psychology, music, literature and architecture through this terrible subject matter. Ideally, I would like the conferences and lectures we hold at the Library to form a bridge between the academic and the thinking-public world."

Since working at the Library, among the many conferences and lectures Katherine has organised, those that stand out are the first international conference looking at four genocides of the 20th century; a series of lectures on the development of international criminal law from Nuremberg to the Hague; and a conference on politics and responsibility, based on the writings of Hannah Arendt. Katherine is particularly pleased that the joint lecture series with the Leo Baeck Institute has become a regular feature of her educational work, and she looks forward to more partnerships developing with other educational establishments. She is also keen to broaden the outreach aspects of her work, and regularly gives tours of the Library, speaks to outside groups and takes part in fund-raising events. Developing a new core base of supporters and friends is crucial, she believes, to the long-term survival of the Library.

Katherine has co-edited a number of books and written articles in a variety of journals, including *European Judaism* and *The Jewish Quarterly*. At present she is co-editing a book of essays by leading commentators on Hannah Arendt, to be published in Germany later this year.

In brief

The coming generation

A problem which many people are becoming concerned about is, what do the next generation, the grandchildren and great grandchildren of Holocaust survivors and refugees, know about their heritage and how can they be encouraged to examine the lessons of their past?

With this in mind it was a great pleasure to welcome to the Library Alexander and Simon Finkelstein, the great grandchildren of Dr Alfred Wiener, our founder. Aged 8 and 14 respectively, they toured the Library with their grandmother and Katharina Hübschmann, Senior Librarian. Among the many types of material they viewed, examples of schoolbooks from the Nazi era, full of vicious antisemitism, and the notorious board game, *Juden Raus*, were of particular interest.

Their lively and intelligent questions, nevertheless, highlighted that in the area of educating the so-called "Third Generation" there is still much to be done.

Helmut and Annema Rothenberg gift

By a wonderful coincidence, shortly before the visit of the young Finkelsteins, the Library had been informed that the Rothenberg family is making a substantial annual gift in memory of Helmut and Annema Rothenberg. Helmut founded the firm of Blick Rothenberg and was one of the Library's oldest supporters and friends. The family wish to see their gift used to help address the educational shortfall highlighted above, and plans are being discussed about the most effective way to target this gift.

The Library wishes to thank David Rothenberg together with Mr R.M., Miss E. and Mr J. Rothenberg and Mrs J. Knox for their remarkable generosity.

Human Rights, history and the "sparrow's eye" view: in homage to Norberto Bobbio

Alastair Davidson is Professor of Human Rights and Citizenship at the University of Wollongong, Australia. We publish an edited version of his lecture given at the Library in April 2004. He is the author of ten books and presently completing a two-volume History of Human Rights.

There is no solid history of the struggle that led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). I started my research drawing from anthologies – usually by and for lawyers – containing the great texts used in defending human rights. Typically, these run from the English Magna Carta (1215) via Habeas Corpus (1679) to the Petition (1628) and Bill of Rights (1689) to the declarations of rights of the American colonies of Virginia, Delaware, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and the US Constitution (1787) and culminate in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789. The latter is seen as marking a rupture between a pre-history of human rights and its history properly speaking. There is usually no further major document in these compendia until the Universal Declaration and the Genocide Convention of 1948.

What also struck me as absent from the work available was the story of the struggles of men and women to create these legal outcomes, the story of the "constituting power" "from below" of masses of men and women, a history that gives human rights further meaning. Also absent are the continuous setbacks met in that history

explaining why men and women returned again and again to the struggle, usually in violent social revolution. Following the adage of a greater historian than I, that it is where a historian smells human flesh and blood that he finds his game, I have been concerned to make sense of the legal waypoints by reconstituting the whys of the "constituting power" needed to impose human rights in a world in which they did not exist.

The eve of the French revolution marks the beginning of the history of human rights. The authors of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789 set out to create the means to protect individuals from injustices of the state. The state they had in mind was that of an absolute unaccountable tyrant. They thought that a state accountable to a people or nation would not commit such injustices. It is a view that still has great currency – and it is wrong.

In the 150 years that followed the Declaration, it became clear that a majority community was empowered and encouraged to commit more terrible injustices than the authors of the Declaration ever had in mind. So the rights of man had to be something other than the rights of citizens or limited to those who "belonged" to a national people. The only way to protect individuals treated as rightless because they were different from the majority by race, gender or religion was to make rights universal. By the time of the Nuremberg trials, exclusionary nationalism in a genocidal form culminating in the Holocaust had made clear that no rule of law could be regarded as higher than the justice

written in individual conscience. The Universal Declaration and Genocide Convention of 1948 sought to put those lessons into unquestionable rules for all humanity.

Rights against the state

The authors of the 1789 Declaration intended to set up new mechanisms to establish the rights of the individual against and within an existing state only. It was the first document to establish the right of individuals to certain beliefs and activities, decreeing that they were never to be interfered with by state power or law.

What the *menu peuple*, the "sparrows" of this lecture, wanted was more than the old law informed by new principles of natural justice. What they wished to establish in the rights of man was a system of rights precedent and superior to any rule of law; any law of the city; any *état de droit*; any state reason; a system that protected them.

This was what really marked human rights as something new, as a departure from all other rights known in legal systems. Human rights are politically imposed standards outside the law, precisely because their object is to protect individuals from the law, state, and therefore court claims to a monopoly of decision about what is just.

The 1789 Declaration was the first document to establish the unquestionable right of individuals to certain beliefs and activities, decreeing that they were never to be interfered with again by state power or law. That right was imposed on the state politically by those asserting it. The rights of man were not just a realm that the law did not yet cover but

could be added to its jurisdiction by legislation, something that always exists in society. The rights of man were as intrinsic to the individuals as life itself and could not be divested by those individuals. They could enforce them against the law. In the area of those rights – precisely because they belonged to individuals and not to state or community – their reason and sense of justice was what applied. While these implications were not then clear, today they are.

In France and in all states that followed its example, the rights of man were restricted to individuals deemed to be citizens of the nation. Among those left out were workers, women and ethnic minorities. Given the disempowerment and oppression of those not deemed to be citizens, excluded groups within territorial states fought for 150 years to be admitted to the rights of citizens. For some this was possible once they proved their unswerving commitment to the nation. Workers, women and finally other ethnicities made the 19th and early 20th century a story of their struggle to be included. While on the “outer side” they frequently claimed to want the rights of man.

In sum, the 19th century was a century of rights for citizens only, marked by the re-establishment with popular endorsement of the belief that the rights of man should be subordinate to the community interests of the nation.

Rights for all people

The nastiness of limiting rights to citizens became very clear where the colonial peoples of other races were concerned. In the same decades as the western working classes and women obtained citizen rights, there began a series of genocides often justified as being in the national interest. Such slaughters of human beings had not been seen since the destruction of the Indies in the 15th and 16th centuries. The murderous logic of “peoples” had led to rights for nationals and rightlessness for outsiders.

Human rights for all people – rather



Two Jews imprisoned in Germany, 1930s.

than for citizens – only became a real issue again when nationalism took on its ugliest form in western heartlands, as Fascism and then Nazism. An extreme example of the exclusion of people from the nation was proclaimed in Article 4 of the Nazi party programme that simply stripped all Jews of German citizenship. Indeed, such victims were deemed not only outside rights but less than human.

Only when such extremes were reached, did critiques begin to emerge of the confusion that had developed since 1789 of the notion of rights with national popular power over individuals. A significant break had taken place over the vital problem of the rights of man.

By 1945 the claim that there is a justice higher than that of any community and one capable of being understood by all humans began to be publicly recognised. It was the *leit motif* at the Nuremberg trials despite the contradictions it posed for lawyers. No accused was able to hide behind the rule of law they had applied, even when it was acknowledged that it was legal. Desperate attempts by some lawyers

to save the notion of the people as good and thus to separate the Nazi leaders and their crimes from the German people, could not hide the exhaustion of that argument for a defence of the individual against community tyranny. Standards of justice and decency were set that henceforth would be applied to all human beings, whether perpetrators or victims of human rights abuses. They are higher and different from those of a rule of law against which human rights were established.

A higher justice

I conclude that if we take the distinctive feature of human rights to be the attempt to defend the individual against the tyranny of state power and law by recognising that all justice is not encapsulated in the authorised reason of those institutions, we can read the history of what led up to it differently. Its predecessors are those individuals who claim that right to refer to a higher justice than that already adhered to by society and its laws.

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The Picture archive

Photographs preserve so many moments in history: peace and destruction, suffering and triumph, arrogance and desperation, gloom and hope. Since its foundation, the Wiener Library has gathered more than 10,000 pictures to turn history into something alive and meaningful for those trying to understand what the rise of Nazism, the Holocaust and survival meant. And for decades, the Picture Archive has been used as an invaluable source to illustrate numerous books, press articles and TV documentaries.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, the collection is still growing. Our donors understand the relevance of pictures as historical documents, and donate the contents of family albums and even shoeboxes, collected by their parents and grandparents.

In order to preserve our original prints we are now digitising our collection. This is also the first step towards making our pictures more accessible. At the moment searches may be conducted in person or by addressing requests to Marek Jaros, our Picture Archivist. But our aim is to make our picture catalogue searchable by anyone via our website, and enable visitors to download images from the site.

Marek says, "Since I took over the post of Picture Archivist last October there have been two things that have fascinated me most. One is the adventure of discovering something new and astonishing whenever I browse through 'my' albums. The other is the question I have on my mind with every picture request I receive: What is in the picture? What can it prove and what concept beyond itself can it represent?"

Photo feature

Images from the Archives

These photos show the Landjugendheim in Finkenkrug near Berlin, founded in 1927 by two social workers and educators, Isa Gruner (1897-1989) and Anna von Gierke (1874-1943). See opposite for the story of the Landjugendheim. The photos were taken in the mid-1930s, with the exception of the one at the top of page 7, which shows Christmas 1948. Lutz Becker is shown third from the right.





A special place

The Landjugendheim was originally created to provide children from the Berlin slums with country holidays, though a number of children lived there permanently.

From the mid-1930s the home sheltered children of persecuted Jews and after 1938 Isa Gruner and Anna von Gierke looked for ways to bring children out of Germany. Gruner had kept in touch with Quaker groups in Britain who had helped feeding German children during the depression of the 1920s; she now used these contacts to bring children to safety in the UK. Several groups of 20-30 children were brought together in Finkenkrug and sent by train from Berlin to Bremen and from there to Britain by ship. Isa Gruner accompanied some of these transports, returning to Berlin each time.

In 1939, when time seemed to have run out, she contacted Ernst Udet, a senior figure at the Air Ministry, who amazingly made two flights available to take children from Berlin Staaken to Croydon. Gruner's initiative saved some 300 children. Some found a new home at the Stootley Rough School in Sussex, others went to Quaker homes in Scotland.

At the end of the war Isa Gruner continued to provide help to children now facing different problems. The home was in the Soviet occupation zone. It was a favoured place where returning exiles who were involved in the establishment of the GDR placed their offspring. Gruner used this fact to enable her to shelter a number of children of people being persecuted by the Communist regime. Among these was Lutz Becker, whose father, one of the founders of the Liberal Party, had been imprisoned by the Soviets and deported to Siberia. Lutz is now on the Board of the Wiener Library and donated the album in 1999 in memory of Isa Gruner.



Education report

The Wiener Library/Leo Baeck Institute joint lecture series has continued to host leading academics and draw loyal, capacity audiences each month. As part of our series on the history of human rights, Professor Michael Ignatieff lectured on terrorism, warning of the need for those fighting against it to uphold the highest standards of human rights and maintain transparency. In March, Cilly Kugelman spoke about some of the problems and issues of the first two years of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, presenting a candid insight into a museum that is continually evolving and changing. Later in the month, Professor Alastair Davidson gave a powerful overview of the history of human rights, or perhaps more accurately, the lack of historical research on the subject since the French Revolution. We publish an extract from the lecture in this Newsletter. In May, Nicolas Berg spoke about his recent, controversial publication on West German historians and the Holocaust, which has, unusually, achieved best-seller status in Germany and provoked a storm of criticism.

Future lectures include Professor Sigrid Weigel (see opposite), Dr Hans Keilson on trauma, Professor Robert Liberles on the Holocaust and rewriting of Jewish history, Professor Ettiene Balibar on Carl Schmitt and Professor Carlo Ginsburg on human rights.

Lecture

TUESDAY, 29TH JUNE 2004 AT 7.00 PM

WIENER LIBRARY

**THE MARTYR AND THE SOVEREIGN:
SCENES FROM A CONTEMPORARY TRAGIC DRAMA, READ
THROUGH WALTER BENJAMIN AND CARL SCHMITT**

PROFESSOR SIGRID WEIGEL

Professor Weigel will focus on current images of terrorism and warfare and explore how they relate to Walter Benjamin's critique of sovereignty and violence, and Carl Schmitt's concept of the Political. She looks at Schmitt's theory of the state of emergency, the sovereign and the partisan, and asks whether it can account for religious motives in contemporary times. She discusses the ideology of martyrdom in connection with suicide bombers and explores the different ways in which Christianity and Islam perceive martyrs. Professor Weigel also analyses Benjamin and Schmitt's concepts of sovereignty in relation to perceptions of Saddam Hussein and George W. Bush. In conclusion she will discuss Benjamin's critique of violence with regard to the deployment of the martyr as a weapon.

Professor Sigrid Weigel is the Director of the Centre for Literary Studies in Berlin and Professor for Literary Studies at the Technical University in Berlin.

Document descriptions go online

Since the beginning of March this year, descriptions of many of the Wiener Library's collections of deposited documents are now accessible online via the website at www.wienerlibrary.co.uk. For those with internet access, detailed descriptions of up to 700 collections, ranging in size from one manuscript to several boxes, can be searched by entering any keyword, personal or place name, or combinations thereof, into the search field.

Subjects and document types include the following:

- personal papers, letters and diaries of Jews in Nazi Germany, former Kindertransportees, internees and Jewish emigrants in general
- documents in relation to Nuremberg and other war crimes trials
- minutes and reports of Jewish welfare organisations

- reports about concentration camps and correspondence from inmates
- historians' and biographers' papers.

An important facility of this system results in the Library being able to monitor access to the database, which averages well over 400 hits per month.

This interest has resulted in a number of enquiries and a substantial increase in the number of readers specifically consulting our document collections.

The database is continually growing as more and more material is processed and catalogued. What was once a relatively under-used resource is now available to a vastly increased potential readership.

For this reason we ensure that only material which has been fully catalogued and preserved is made accessible to the public.