

Walter Zander

Obituary *The Times* 30 April 1993

Walter Zander, lawyer and scholar, died in South Croydon on April 7 aged 94. He was born in Erfurt, Germany, on June 8, 1898.

WHEN, in 1948, Walter Zander published his pamphlet *Is This the Way?*, questioning the right of Jews to displace the indigenous Arabic population in the newly-formed Israel, it was barely noticed by the Palestinians whom he was trying to protect, and failed to move the politicians. But to his friends and fellow intellectuals (among them Gandhi and Albert Hourani) he was one of the most important Zionist thinkers of the century.

Zander was reading classics at Jena University when the first world war broke out. He fought on both the Eastern and the Western Fronts, winning the Iron Cross for gallantry. After the war he followed his father into the law, and started a practice in Berlin, later taking time off to study at the London School of Economics. In the early 1930s he wrote several articles on monetary policy.

In 1930 he married Gretl Magnus, daughter of the eminent physiologist Rudolf Magnus. By 1937 he and his family were forced to leave the increasingly hostile atmosphere

of Berlin and emigrated to England. Showing a certain talent for improvisation, he set up a printing business in Slough and settled with his family in the village of Gerrards Cross. With the outbreak of war, however, he and his family were interned in the Isle of Wight (their rations were supplemented by food parcels from their former English neighbours). Meanwhile his mother, a gifted amateur painter and sculptor, had died in the Holocaust.

Zander was made Secretary of the British Friends of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1944. He held this post for 27 years and used it to air his considerable worries regarding proper arrangements, including compensation, for the Palestinians. *Is This the Way?* so impressed Gandhi that Zander was invited, as the only Jew, to a conference on world conflict situations in India.

One of the few Arabs to recognise Zander's talents was his friend for more than fifty years, the late Albert Hourani. When, in 1972, Zander retired from the Friends, to devote himself to study it was principally through Hourani's influence that he was made Senior Associate Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford, attached to the Middle East Centre.

In 1971 Zander published *Israel and the Holy Places of Christendom*. He wrote about the Christian church with an understanding rarely found in non-Christians. It reflected the obvious uneasiness he felt about the "judaizing" of Jerusalem, although he held out a forlorn hope for the future in the shape of a probable Arab-Israeli agreement.

His last important publication, in the *Israel Law Review* in 1982, concerned a historic dispute between the Coptic and the Ethiopian Churches.

Music had always been important to him. As a boy he had studied at the Conservatory in Erfurt and he was almost certainly the last person alive to have played under Arthur Nikisch, the legendary conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and friend of Brahms.

His wife died in 1968, and he is survived by his four children, one of whom is Michael Zander, Professor of Law at the London School of Economics.

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Walter Zander

Obituary *The Guardian* 30 April 1993

THE LIFE of Walter Zander, the lawyer and Hebrew scholar who has died aged 94, overlaps the century and resonates correspondingly. Born in Erfurt, he graduated in classics at Jena University, won the Iron Cross for-gallantry on both the Eastern and the Western fronts in the first world war and followed his father into the law: But his mother, a gifted amateur painter and sculptor, later perished in the Holocaust.

He himself studied viola and piano in Erfurt and may well be the last person to have played under the baton of the great Nikisch, the friend of Brahms and director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus. All members of Walter's Berlin student quartet immigrated to England and continued to play together for decades. One of his grandsons, Benjamin, is a-conductor. Musicians thronged Walter's funeral in north London.

Apart from his legal practice, Zander studied economics at the LSE during the thirties and wrote several articles on monetary policy. But during and after the war he took a different route. In 1944 he became and remained for 27 years secretary of the British Friends of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He foresaw that Israel needed to forge cultural and political links

abroad and he fostered Asian and African studies at the university.

In 1948 his pamphlet *Is This The Way?* addressed the problem of both securing the new State of Israel and making proper arrangements, including compensation, for the indigent Palestinian population. In 1972 he retired, as he put it, "to devote his remaining years to study," and through the Arab scholar the late Albert Hourani he became attached to the Middle East Centre at St Antony's College, Oxford.

This was for him the culmination of his intellectual life. *Israel And The Holy Places Of Christendom* (1971) established him as an authority in this complex field involving religious, legal and territorial disputes. Bringing together Jews, Muslims and Christians was his chief concern to which he brought his full range of scholarly, legal, human and spiritual gifts. - **C.P.D./M.Z.**

Roger Owen, Director of St Antony's; writes: Those of us who worked at the Middle East Centre during Walter Zander's association from 1970 until 1987 will remember him in particular for his careful scholarship and for the meticulous way he prepared, and then presented, his ideas at

our regular Friday seminars. He will also be remembered for his generous parting gift to the centre when age and infirmity prevented him from visiting us regularly. It has now become the Walter Zander Scholarship, awarded each year to the best candidate for the Oxford M.Phil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies. But Walter's circle of Oxford friends extended far beyond that. Those, who met him at High Table or simply walking slowly in the College grounds were all struck by his air of gentle dignity and the importance he so obviously attached to the simple rituals of everyday life. After even the shortest exchange you came away with the comforting feeling that the world was a reasonable and much more manageable place.

Walter Zander, born June 8, 1898; died April 7, 1993

Walter Zander

Obituary *The Daily Telegraph* 29 April 1993

WALTER ZANDER, lawyer and scholar who has died aged 94, was a latter-day Pangloss.

“You never know what is good news and what is bad news,” he would say. When Hitler came to power and he had to flee Germany he thought his whole world had collapsed. “But,” he liked to add, “I came to England and lived happily ever after.”

Walter Zander was born on June 8 1898 into a cultivated and prosperous German Jewish family; his father was an eminent lawyer, his mother a painter.

Young Walter himself trained as a musician and played the piano and viola. Then came the Great War. He fought in the German army both on the eastern and western fronts and was awarded the Iron Cross.

He studied at Jena and Berlin, took a doctorate in law and soon built up a legal practice in Berlin. In 1930 he married Gretl Magnus, daughter of Rudolph Magnus, the physiologist, and they had three children (a fourth was to be born in England).

When Hitler was elected to power in 1933 Zander could not believe what was happening, for it did not accord

with his understanding of Germany and the Germans. As he came to terms with reality, he found it difficult to abandon his clients and he did not come to England until 1937.

Zander was nearly 40 by then, with a young family and without an income or prospect of employment. But he teamed up with a fellow refugee who had developed a new photogravure process and set up a printing works in Slough. It immediately prospered, but in 1940, shortly after the fall of France, he and other German refugees were rounded up as “enemy aliens”, his factory was confiscated and he was interned on the Isle of Man.

Zander recalled those events, and even his flight from Germany, without bitterness; he preferred to dwell on the kindness of his neighbours in Gerrards Cross. His wife took in lodgers, traders gave her extended credit, and the headmaster of the local preparatory school waived his fees. His experience of those years made him an inveterate Anglophile.

He remained on the Isle of Man for 25 months and joined with other internees to set up a sort of ad hoc university in the camp and a scratch symphony orchestra. He lectured in law

and economics and played in the orchestra. (Four of the more accomplished musicians were later to set up the Amadeus String Quartet.)

On his release Zander was engaged by the Ministry of Information to lecture British troops on the Nazi treatment of the Jews. In 1944 he became secretary of the British Friends of the Hebrew University, a post he retained for the next 27 years.

It was a lowly office for a man with his qualifications. He began with one assistant in a tiny room, but soon built up a major operation which endowed scholarships, arranged cultural exchanges and remitted millions of pounds to Jerusalem.

Though working for an organisation at the heart of the Jewish national revival, Zander was not a Zionist. In 1948, while the nascent Jewish state was struggling for life, he published a pamphlet, *Is This the Way?*, in which he questioned the need for a state at all. He was not only concerned about the situation of the Arabs: he was also inclined to regard Jewish culture as a sort of homeland in its own right.

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A deeply religious man, without any trace of sanctimoniousness, Walter Zander somehow managed to combine spirituality with geniality.

He could, though, carry charity to uncharitable lengths, and did not let even the Holocaust, in which his own mother perished, open his eyes to the realities of the Jewish situation.

Is This the Way? caused an immediate furore and there were demands for his resignation. But if it was easy to be exasperated with Zander it was impossible to be angry with him.

After Norman Bentwich, a former Professor of Interna-

tional Law at the Hebrew University (and a Zionist), came to his support, the uproar subsided and Zander eventually became not only a cherished institution but a governor and an honorary fellow of the University.

In 1971 he was appointed an associate fellow of St Antony's College Oxford. His eyesight was failing by then, and he became completely blind, but he managed to produce one book on Soviet Jewry and another on Israel and the Christian Holy Places.

He had an idyllic family life and derived great joy from the successes of his children.

One son became a professor of law at the London School of Economics, another a lecturer in medicine at St Thomas's, the third, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, while his daughter, a distinguished art historian and critic, is married to the President of Harvard University.

Sir Isaiah Berlin summed him up in a phrase on his 90th birthday. He was, he said, "probably the purest hearted man I have ever met".

His wife died in 1968. They had three sons and a daughter.

Walter Zander

Obituary *The Independent* 20 April 1993

THE PROBLEM in writing about Walter Zander is that readers who did not know him will not believe the words one is obliged to use. How to persuade them that this is not the ritual eulogy of the newly dead?

His life began with distinguished but conventional success: then turned in its middle years into horror and catastrophe. He could, have been, he should have been, bitter, angry, desperate, cynical. Instead, he was tolerant, gentle, courteous, generous, civilised, honourable - beyond belief honourable.

Born a Jew in Germany, he fought in the Great War on both fronts and won the Iron Cross. Afterwards he established a lawyer's practice in Berlin. When the Nazis arrived his Iron Cross offered no protection and he moved to England with his wife and young family (his mother died in the Holocaust). His career destroyed at the age of 40, this scholarly, unworldly man became an entrepreneur: With astonishing versatility he set up a printing business in Slough and a family home in Gerrards Cross. How bizarre those names ring out against his Central European background.

But very soon the Second World War destroyed his business and sent him off to

internment in the Isle of Man. One of his comic memories was of the village bobby coming to arrest him and being hustled by the indignant villagers, indignant on behalf of an enemy alien with a music-hall German accent. Deprived of their livelihood for a second time, his family were supported with food and comfort by those same suburban, English villagers.

The troubles passed. In 1944 he was appointed secretary of the British Friends of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. This was his profession for the next 27 years and he was a whole-hearted Zionist. Whole-hearted but magnanimous: one of his principal concerns was the attitude of Zionism to the Arabs who lived in the land where the new state of Israel was to be established. His pamphlet *Is This the Way?* (1948) influenced intellectuals all over the world (Gandhi among them) but failed to move the politicians or the public. The Israelis respected him but could not take his advice. The Arabs, convinced of Zionist injustice, were hardly aware of his efforts.

One man on the Arab side, the Oxford don Albert Hourani, saw his worth and became his close friend. Under Hourani's sponsorship he became a member of St Antony's

College, Oxford, and active in the Middle East Centre, where he was loved and respected by both sides in the grim Arab-Israel debate. In Oxford and in London, in Israel and in the United States, there grew around him, without effort on his part, a vast range of friends and disciples. The death of his wife Gretl 25 years ago hit him hard, but he saw their four children into careers of enviable talent and distinction, united by family love and a devotion to music which was central to their lives.

The blindness and infirmity of old age did not diminish his dignity, his grace or his goodness. On his 90th birthday Isaiah Berlin wrote that he was "probably the purest-hearted man I have ever met". He died calm, confident of his religious faith and preternaturally polite. As we put him in his grave last week we were lovingly but uncomfortably aware that he had set us unattainable standards.

Sir James Craig

Walter Zander, lawyer and scholar: born Erfurt, Germany 8 June 1898; Secretary, British Friends of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem 1944-71, Governor of the University 1972-93; Senior Associate Fellow, St Antony's College, Oxford 1972-88; author of Is This the Way? 1948, Israel and the Holy Places of Christendom 1971; married 1930 Gretl Magnus (died 1968); three sons, one daughter); died South Croydon 7 April 1993.

Walter Zander

Obituary *The Jewish Chronicle* 23 April 1993

Walter Zander, who has died aged 95, was a unique institution in postwar Anglo-Jewry, writes Jon Kimche.

As secretary of the Friends of the Hebrew University from 1944-70, he used his office as a springboard not only to raise urgently needed funds for the university on a level not previously achieved but, even more, to spread the academic range of the university.

He was more concerned with achievement than with publicity and he enjoyed the personal support of Israel's Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, during his years of often uphill struggle to introduce African, Asian and Arab studies - and students - to the Hebrew University. In those early days, Anglo-Jewry, American Jewry and Israelis had more pressing priorities for Israel.

But Walter Zander persevered with incomparable tact and natural charm supported by his profoundly knowledgeable background of all that was best in the German-Jewish liberal culture, he had acquired as an eminent Zionist lawyer in Berlin.

When he came with his young family to England in the 1930s, he first set up a printing business outside London but then suffered internment on the Isle of Man. His appointment as secretary of the Friends of the Hebrew University drew on his scholarship and wide talents. His influence was founded as much on example as on persuasion.

His counsel was sought increasingly and always given discreetly. After retiring at 72 to devote himself to study and writing, he became a Hebrew

University governor and a senior associate fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford.

Often critical of Israeli policies towards the Arabs, but never of Israel, his greatest achievement was perhaps his ability to understand positions with which he deeply disagreed.

He became one of the foremost authorities on Israel's holy places. His book on "Israel and the Holy Places of Christendom" has become a standard history of a very complex topic.

Despite his blindness in later years, he maintained his interest in his life's work to the last.

Predeceased by his wife, Gretl, in 1968, he is survived by three sons, a daughter and grandchildren.