

Generational Perspectives on Modern German History: From Sonderweg to Global Networks

The Sussex Weidenfeld Institute/Centre for German-Jewish Studies co-sponsored a one-day conference on *Generational Perspectives on Modern German History: From Sonderweg to Global Networks* on 9 July 2019 at the German Historical Institute in London.

Organisers of the event included Dr Claudia Siebrecht and Dr David Jünger from the Sussex History Department. The idea of assessing generational influences upon historical actors has become well established in both German and Anglophone historiography. A generational methodology has rarely been applied scientifically to historians themselves. This conference brought together academics from the UK, Ireland, Switzerland, Australia and Germany to discuss Generations and their Agendas in German History. Panel sessions included: The 'Sonderweg' Generation, The 1968 and Post-1968 Generation, The Rise of the Global History Generation and a concluding round-table discussion. Connections between the major ideas that have emerged in the historiography during this period, such as the Sonderweg, to the birth cohort of the historians who

espoused them were assessed. Discussions addressed the relationship between the rise of, first, comparative, entangled and transnational history, and, second, global history approaches and the historians who developed these new methodologies. Questions covered the spread of gender history from the late 1970s onwards and how this mapped onto generational divides. While the concept of generation was critically addressed throughout the day, it also crystallised thoughts regarding the future of generational distinctions as the large tranche of historians of modern and contemporary German History hired during the expansion of European universities in the late 1960s and 1970s start to retire.



Participants at the conference: *Generational Perspectives on Modern German History: From Sonderweg to Global Networks*.

Mazel Tov to Professor Gideon Reuveni

Congratulations to Gideon Reuveni for his promotion to professorship. Gideon took up the directorship of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies in September 2011. In 2017, his book entitled: 'Consumer Culture and the Making of Modern Jewish Identity' was published by Cambridge University Press, receiving the prestigious National Book Award that year. In 2018, the edited volume 'The Jewish Experience of the First World War,' was published. This was based on a conference organized by the Centre to mark the outbreak of the Great War.

Gideon is currently developing a large-scale research project focusing on the history of individual reparations to Holocaust survivors in the context of rebuilding post-war societies. German archives hold around five million such claim files and the process is on-going. By looking at individual compensation claims from three main perspectives—that of the claimants; the various mediators dealing with compensation claims (lawyers, notaries, physicians, translators); and finally, the German bureaucracy that processed the claims—the project will offer an *Erfahrungsgeschichte* of the German reparations. It will suggest that further research on personal compensation claims could help us gain a better understanding of changing conceptions of historical selfhood as well as give us access to lost voices of men and women that otherwise left few traces from their lives before, during or after the Holocaust.

The Austrian Government and the Sussex Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies

Early in 2019, the Republic of Austria provided a generous gift towards the establishment of the Sussex Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies. The grant is designed to reinforce our working relations with Austrian academics and, in so doing, to strengthen our academic work on Austrian history and culture, with a specific emphasis on the history and experience of Jews in Austria during the 20th century. Part of this project is a study trip to Vienna that will enable a group of twenty students to journey in time from the Imperial period of the pre-1914 years, through the interwar period, to the post Second World War epochs. The first trip will take place in December 2019.

Another aspect of the programme will be to invite Austrian visiting fellows to spend time at Sussex to carry out research and to assist with the preparation for the study trip. This semester, we are delighted to welcome Professor Peter Becker and Dr Linda Erker, both from the University of Vienna. Professor Becker's current research deals with the topic of decision-making in modern states with a special focus on the Habsburg Monarchy from a comparative perspective. During his stay in mid-October Professor Becker presented a talk

on 'The Passport Conference in the 1920s: Stemming the tide of deglobalization.' Dr Erker studied history and Spanish at the University of Vienna and the Free University of Berlin and is now working at the Department of Contemporary History in Vienna. In her current research project, Dr Erker explores the migration of scientists between Austria and Latin America. During her visit to Sussex in mid-November Dr Erker will lecture on 'Politics and Memory: Whitewashing the Past through Academic Honours and Awards in post-war Austria.'

We are most grateful for the support from the Austrian Government for the Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish studies and look forward to further developing our cooperation with colleagues from Austria.

The 7th Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School 2019

The Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School for PhD Students in European-Jewish History and Culture was established in 2009. It offers young scholars, some of whom work in universities without Jewish Studies programmes, the opportunity to present their research in an academic setting providing in-depth feedback from established and upcoming scholars in the field. Since its establishment the Summer School has generated a growing network of historians, philosophers and literary scholars—a generation of talented scholars for whom the Summer School has offered a major boost for their academic careers.

This year The Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School took place between 7-10 July at the University of Sussex. The event was organised in co-operation with the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Graz, the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism and the Minerva Institute for German History, both in Tel Aviv University. Seventeen young scholars from ten different countries were given the opportunity to present and discuss their research in an interdisciplinary setting. The wide range of topics spanning from the first century to the new millennium and the consistently high-level of presentation, together with a friendly and supportive atmosphere made the Summer School an intellectually stimulating and inspiring event. The participants expressed their excitement about the opportunities they were given and the valuable feedback they received. A highlight of this year's Summer School was The Kurt Hellman Memorial Lecture delivered by Professor Shirli Gilbert on *Apartheid and the Jews*. Members of the Kochmann and Hellman families and members of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies advisory board attended the public lecture.



Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School 2019

The Summer School programme included a visit to the Middle Street Synagogue in Brighton and a guest lecture on the University's Special Collections held at The Keep - a world-class archival centre that opens up access to collections of the East Sussex Record Office and the Royal Pavilion and Local History Collections. The purpose of these visits was to introduce students to the history of Jews in the Brighton area and acquaint them with new resources that they might use in their future studies.

The Summer School was initially set up thanks to the generous support of Dr Kurt Hellman and named after Max and Hilde Kochmann, both founding members of the Centre for German-Jewish studies London Support Group. This year the Summer

School was kindly sponsored by the Kochmann family and the Leo Baeck Lodge in London and we thank them most sincerely for their support. Although the Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School is now an established institution on the map of Jewish studies in Europe, we are still seeking ways to secure further funding in order to continue this fine tradition that has helped to generate a network of young scholars for whom Sussex has become a stimulating source of Jewish learning.

Ernest Kochmann: Tribute to his parents, Max and Hilde Kochmann, delivered before the Kurt Hellman Memorial Lecture – July 8 2019

'My parents first became involved with the Centre for German-Jewish Studies when my father was invited to establish a Support Group for Edward Timms' newly established centre at the University of Sussex. Ever one to take up a challenge he accepted and in 1995 became chairman of the London Support Group - heading an enthusiastic number of members including our family friend and fellow refugee Kurt Hellman.

After my parents died in the early 2000s, following the initiative of the Kurt Hellman and with his financial support, the Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School was established.

The Centre for German-Jewish Studies concentrates primarily on the German-Jewish culture which my parent's generation imbibed in their youth; formed their view of the world and which they took to their diaspora.

My parents' families were very active in their Jewish communities. My father's family lived in Berlin and my mother's family came from Gliwice in Upper Silesia where her father was a lawyer. Both of my grandfathers were veterans of the first-world war and loyal patriots.

I recently came across an application submitted by my father in 1940, for a place at MIT in the United States, (which sadly he was unable to take up). To me, this demonstrates the aspirations of a young man from the cultured and educated classes of Berlin:

"The greatest influence for my ideals and interests has been exercised by my emigration, combined with the complete change of the standard of living.

From one day to the other I had to leave the protected home of my parents and to fight my own way. I succeeded not only in getting a job to earn enough for my living expenses but also in preparing for my future study.

These experiences have influenced nearly every part of my life. I saved every penny to attend courses, to read books, to buy newspapers, to attend lectures and meetings, or to visit theatres and operas. I took up my active participation in several kinds of sports, which the Nazis had forced to a standstill. I have been a very enthusiastic sportsman, especially in swimming, boxing and skiing. This made me many friends and has given me the strength and optimism for the difficult tasks in our life.

All this shall result in one aim, the further development of my interest and knowledge in technical science, art, history, politics - so that I might be able to fulfil my ideals to be a worthy member of society and to carry out the maxims of Goethe's Faust for which I have the greatest admiration:

'That I shall strive so to live, that if possible, I can benefit my fellow men.'

I believe that when my father was invited to become

involved with the Centre it came at a time when he could honour that maxim and help bring to the fore the proud legacy of German-Jewish culture of which he was a beneficiary in his youth.

He was immensely proud to receive a Doctorate from the University of Sussex in the year 2000, in recognition of his work in assisting the growth of this centre of excellence.

The Summer School also bears my mother name and, although well known for supplying an abundant amount of home-made cakes to all meetings she was very much the strength behind my father in his efforts to establish himself and his family in British life during and after the war years. Her dedication to my father's success in anything he undertook was driven by the father she adored but lost in the Holocaust.

I hope this gives a brief picture of my parents, for whom I am proud to have the Summer School named.'

Widening Participation event: CGJS Summer School for Year 12 students



Sussex Widening Participation Summer School
organised by the Centre

Fifteen hesitant Sixth Form (Year 12) students from across the South East of England gathered at Sussex in July 2019 for a Summer School – a four-day taster of life at University, with a focus on History.

The academic content for the week was provided by staff from the Centre for German-Jewish Studies - Gideon Reuveni and Florian Zabransky along with Paul Salmons, formerly Director of Holocaust Education at UCL. The students were given a fascinating case study concerning Shmuel Zygielbojm whose story the students would explore through online collections, gathering information in order to ascertain what was known about the Holocaust by different sectors of British Society

Shmuel Zygielbojm was a Polish-Jewish politician and an important Bundist member of the Polish Government in exile in London in 1942. He had regular contact with Warsaw about the deteriorating situation there; his own family were killed following the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and subsequent liquidation. Zygielbojm conveyed this information to British and American leaders, hoping they would understand the full extent of the disaster that faced Europe's Jews and take action. Unfortunately, all he received were platitudes, especially from a high-level Anglo-American Conference that met in Bermuda in April 1943. Despairing

of the situation Shmuel Zygielbojm took his own life, leaving the world a heartfelt message of condemnation.

During the week, as this tragic story unfolded, the young student detectives sifted through government documents, national and local newspapers and diaries from Sussex University's Mass Observation Archive attempting to find out how much information had reached the general population. And although Shmuel Zygielbojm did not always feature by name it was clear that government officials and the public in general could find out about the broad impact of the Nazi persecutions even if the numbers of deaths involved were varied and treated with caution.

By the end of the week the students had amassed a great deal of information. They learnt not only about the events involved; they also learnt the technique of exploring newspaper archives which was inspired by and modelled on the United States Memorial Museum's 'History Unfolded' project. This was scholarly work giving genuine insight into degree level study, and much appreciated by the young people involved. Perhaps, inspired by this experience, some of them will apply to take a History degree at the University of Sussex.

Steve Williams
CGJS Holocaust Education
Ambassador

Recollecting documenta Collectively – A Public Engagement Activity

On a snowy Monday morning in March 2019, in the parking lot of an archive in Germany, I packed everything from nametags and stationery to desk-lights and filming equipment into a rusty BMW bound for the comparably modern *Hotel Renthof*. I was to facilitate, as part of my PhD project at the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, a focus group event called 'Recollecting documenta Collectively'. The aim of the event was to bring together Contemporary Witnesses of the 1955 *documenta* exhibition, which took place in the north-Hessian city of Kassel, then some twenty-kilometres west of the Iron Curtain.

Now in their seventies and eighties, their coming together for a day of commemorative activities proved a professional, as well as personal, achievement more poignant than any piece of paper I have received to date. Despite illnesses and immobility, a dozen Contemporary Witnesses participated over the course of the day, doubling my expectations, with some outlasting the eight-hour programme.

The event opened with a sharing of personal objects, from childhood drawings to family photo albums, through which participants related stories about their individual experiences of the 1955 *documenta* and the immediate post-war years preceding it. Participants then engaged with a selection of primary sources (from newspaper clippings to typewritten letters selected from the *documenta Archiv*), as well as secondary sources (from literature to film). While all materials admittedly served as aids, if not provocations, to memory, it was the participants themselves who inspired in each other the greatest reflections. As one Contemporary Witness put it:

'I was very moved and touched. It was the first time that I could talk to so many people of my age group about the time of my childhood (i.e. the 2nd World War) and the shared experience of the first *documenta*...I saw my

experiences embedded in those of the other and could better understand them...The following night I dreamed intensively of the day, and will probably never forget it.'
– Elisabeth Schnell-Theis

The day was of course not possible without the support of many a colleague, whom I would like to acknowledge here in writing while I have the opportunity to do so. Thank you, Anja Ziegler, who served tirelessly as a translator prior to, during and after the event. Thank you, Karoline Achilles, who kept the cameras rolling and power levels in check. Thank you Alexander Zeisberg and Michael Gärtner, who provided me with the necessary equipment to preserve the day's proceedings for posterity. Thank you to all the staff of the *documenta Archiv*, who prepared my interminable list of materials with patience and to perfection. Thank you Dr Claudia Siebrecht, who continues to supervise my PhD project with utmost encouragement and positivity.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to recognise the support of the Researcher Development Programme, who awarded me with the necessary funds to realise my Public Engagement Activity. Thank you to the members of the panel, who saw potential in my application. On which note, I would like to conclude this report by urging other doctoral researchers to consider the Researcher-Led Initiative Fund (RLI) for their own activities.

Liza Weber
PhD candidate, Centre for German-Jewish Studies

Travel Grant



Florian Zabransky participating in the panel discussion "Accessing historical documents and creating expert networks."

On 3 July 2019, Florian Zabransky attended the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) conference entitled: 'Holocaust Studies in its Social Setting'. He participated in the panel discussion: 'Accessing historical documents and creating expert networks' as part of his research funding from the EHRI.

Participation in conference on sexuality

David Jünger and Florian Zabransky will participate in the 'Lessons and Legacies Conference. The Holocaust and Europe: Research Trends, Pedagogical Approaches, and Political Challenges' in Munich in November 2019. Jünger's presentation is entitled: 'Beyond Auschwitz: Jewish Migration Problems in 1930s Germany' and Zabransky will speak on the topic of 'Piepel and sexualised violence against Jewish boys in concentration camps'.

Jewish Studies Group at the University of Sussex

Are you working on a topic within the (broader) realm of Jewish Studies as a doctoral candidate or on a post-doctoral level at Sussex University, Brighton University, at any other institution or independently?

Are you looking for other people doing similar things with whom to exchange thoughts and ideas? You are invited to join our Jewish Studies Group at Sussex University (JSG).

The JSG was established in 2018 as a forum for mutual exchange between people of different backgrounds, disciplines and academic affiliations to discuss their work. We meet twice a term and sometimes in the holidays. The meetings are informal and everyone is welcome.

If you are interested, please contact
Dr David Jünger E: d.juenger@sussex.ac.uk or
Florian Zabransky E: F.Zabransky@sussex.ac.uk

Centre News

The Centre for German-Jewish Studies warmly congratulates two colleagues, Gerhard Wolf and Claudia Siebrecht, on the birth of their baby son, Leo, on 1 September 2019.

Research Paper

The next Centre for German-Jewish Studies research paper: 'An Interview with Professor Julius Carlebach (1922- 2001)' by Dr Bea Lewkowicz will be published later this year. A complimentary copy will be sent to Friends of the Centre.

Workshop: 'Jews and the Left: Between History and Memory' at Tel Aviv University

The Sussex Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies - Centre for German-Jewish Studies (WIJS-CGJS) continues its co-operation with the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism headed by Dr Scott Ury at Tel Aviv University (TAU). This co-operation was established in the summer of 2018 with a workshop at TAU (see report in Newsletter 47) and continued with the joint hosting of the seventh Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School for PhD Students in European-Jewish History and Culture, which took place at Sussex University in July 2019 (see report in this newsletter).

The WIJS-CGJS will participate in the workshop: 'Jews and the Left: Between History and Memory', at Tel Aviv University on November 20 2019. The workshop is part of a research project that aims to

probe the various links between Jews and left-wing politics and organisations over the past 200 years. Its main goal is to gain a better understanding of how and when Jews were drawn to left-wing organisations and ideologies, and whether or not this connection has changed over the past two generations and if so, why?

Dr David Jünger, Deputy Director of the WIJS-CGJS will participate in the workshop with a presentation entitled: 'Holocaust Memory, Civil Rights and Jewish Survival: The case of Rabbi Joachim Prinz (1902–1988).'

First Edward Timms memorial lecture

Monday 25 November 2019, 19:00
Austrian Cultural Forum London, 28 Rutland Gate,
London SW7 1PQ

'The Emperor Joseph II and the Tragedy of Enlightenment'

Professor Ritchie Robertson FBA

Joseph II became sole ruler of the Habsburg Empire in 1780 after ruling jointly with his mother, Maria Theresia, since 1765. He promptly used his power to introduce sweeping enlightened reforms, notably religious toleration, removal of many of the privileges of the Catholic Church, and virtual abolition of censorship. However, his reign illustrates both the powers and the perils of autocratic rule. Though he faced down the Pope, he met with resistance from the administrators on whom he relied, and still more hostility from the public whom he sought to benefit. He died in 1790, convinced that his enlightened mission had been a failure. Yet he was long remembered in popular culture as a good Emperor close to the people. His story provokes reflection on how much scope any government can have to introduce enlightened but controversial measures.

Ritchie Robertson is a graduate of Edinburgh and Oxford Universities. He was a Fellow and Tutor in

Holocaust Memorial Day will place on the University of Sussex campus during the afternoon of Wednesday 5 February 2020

Programme:

'Voices from the Past and the Present: Analyzing Narratives of Persecution, Flight and Survival'
Professor Ruth Wodak, Lancaster University/
University Vienna

Hannah Lewis MBE will speak about her experiences during the Holocaust.

Film: 'Last Folio' followed by a discussion with the film maker Katya Krausova.

Booking essential. The booking link will be available on the Centre for German-Jewish Studies website from November 2019 onwards:
www.sussex.ac.uk/cgjs

German at St John's College, Oxford from 1989 to 2010, when he became Taylor Professor of German at Oxford. His books include *Kafka: Judaism, Politics, and Literature* (1985), *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature, 1749-1939* (1999), *Kafka: A Very Short Introduction* (2004), *Mock-Epic Poetry from Pope to Heine* (2009), *Goethe: A Very Short Introduction* (2016), and *Enlightenment and Religion in German and Austrian Literature* (2017). From 1990 to 1999 he and Edward Timms jointly edited the yearbook *Austrian Studies*. In 2004 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. He is currently writing a book on the Enlightenment, commissioned by Penguin Books. He has also translated a number of books from German, most recently Franz Kafka, *The Man who Disappeared* (America), Oxford World's Classics (2012), and is currently translating Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*.

To book your place:
<https://www.acflondon.org/>

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

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