

Biography: Dr. Walter Zander

WALTER ZANDER, lawyer and scholar, died on 7 April, aged 94. His father had been a lawyer. His mother, a gifted amateur painter and sculptor, perished in the Holocaust.

Born in 1898 in Erfurt, Germany, his life spanned the whole of this century and its immense changes, in some of which he was himself deeply involved. In particular, for decades and until the end of his life he worked and wrote on political, religious and legal developments in the Middle East.

As a student he read classics at Jena University, but he was soon conscripted and fought in the First World War on both the Eastern and the Western Fronts. He won the Iron Cross for gallantry in action. After the war he studied law and started a law practice in Berlin.

Music was always a central part of his life. In his youth he studied at the Conservatory in Erfurt. He was at the time of his death almost certainly the last person alive to have played under Arthur Nikisch, legendary conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and friend of Brahms. All four members of his Berlin student quartet immigrated to England and continued to play together for decades.

His scholarly impulses were always evident. Early in his professional career he took time off his legal practice to study economics at the London School of Economics. In the early 1930s he wrote several articles and pamphlets on monetary policy.

In 1930, he married Gretl Magnus, daughter of the well-known physiologist Rudolf Magnus. She shared and nurtured his love of family and community life. They started their family in Berlin, but by 1937, as a result of the Nazi persecution, they immigrated to England with their three young children, Michael, Luke and Angelica. Benjamin, their fourth child, was born in 1939.

In 1944, Walter Zander became Secretary of the British Friends of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, a job he held for 27 years and which he expanded far beyond its original role of fund-raising. In particular, seeing the importance for Israel of developing strong external cultural and political links, he took the lead in fostering and developing Asian and African studies at the University. On his retirement as Secretary of the Friends he became a Governor of the University.

One of his principal concerns over years was the attitude of Israel toward the Arabs. 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 indigenous Palestinian population. Leo Baeck, former Chief Rabbi of Berlin, commenting on the pamphlet, wrote: 'I was time and again moved by the courage, the straightforwardness, and the accuracy of your arguments.' The pamphlet led to an invitation from Mahatma Gandhi to participate as the only Jew in a conference on world conflict situations held in India.

In 1972, at the age of 72, he retired from the Friends, as he said 'to devote his remaining years to study'. Principally through his close friend for more than fifty years, the Arab scholar the late Albert Hourani, he became Senior Associate Fellow of St Anthony's College, attached to the Middle East Centre. The connection with St

Anthony's in his seventies and eighties was for him the culmination of his intellectual life.

In 1971, he published *Israel and the Holy Places of Christendom*, which established him as an authority in this complex field involving religious, legal and territorial disputes and on which he wrote further scholarly articles. His last major publication, in the *Israel Law Review* in 1982, concerned a historic dispute between the Coptic and the Ethiopian Churches.

The aim in these publications, as always, was to find ways in which a spirit of tolerance and understanding could help resolve deep-rooted tensions and animosities. To bring Jews, Muslims and Christians together and, above all, to find ways of creating peace between Jews and Arabs, were Walter Zander's abiding concerns to which he brought his full range of scholarly, legal, human and spiritual gifts.

These qualities were evident in every aspect of his life: in his natural gift for friendship, his total involvement in the lives of his children and grandchildren, and his deep interest in everyone he met.

In 1988, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, Sir Isaiah Berlin wrote:

'Walter Zander is probably the purest-hearted man I have ever met during my long life. He seems to me to be moved by a vision of spiritual ideals shared by the major religious faiths and forms of life shaped and dedicated to such ideals ... If ever there was an embodiment of integrity and the disinterested pursuit of the good life, these qualities shine through in everything that he has done and been.'

He is survived by his four children, their spouses and nine grandchildren.