

Obituary - Dr. Walter Zander

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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 indigenous 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.*