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l'IECJ, Institut interuniversitaire d'Études et de Culture Juives
IECJ, Interuniversity Institute of Jewish Studies & Culture

Conférence Internationale du 30 juin au 3 juillet 2013 à Aix-en-Provence
International Conference from June 30 – July 3, 2013 in Aix-en-Provence

**La Laïcité: une chance ou un défi pour les religions?
En France et dans le monde**

**Secularity: Opportunity or Peril for Religions,
The French Experience and Global Perspectives**

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

Memorial Session for Ruth Weyl

By Dr Eva Schulz-Jander, President of the Association of the Friends and Sponsors of the Martin Buber House

In Memory of Ruth Weyl

I consider it a real honor to have been asked to speak in the memory of Ruth, although I find it hard to express my thoughts, for it is a very emotional moment. We have just seen her in this short film and it seems as if she was in this room, but it is her spirit that is among us.

This Conference feels different from all the others. It is one without Ruth. It was Ruth who introduced me to the work of ICCJ and later urged me to share her commitment to the Friends and Sponsors whose driving force and unrelenting spirit she had been since its beginnings.

Ruth was one of the last representatives of a very special group of European Jews. Born in 1924 into a Jewish family of entrepreneurs in Berlin, a family who had at one time moved from East to West, from a religious community into an urban environment but with a strong Jewish identity. Her life was a paradigm for European Jewish history. She was living history.

Raised in a liberal household, she was never afraid to raise her voice, or speak her mind. After a happy childhood came exclusion, persecution and finally expulsion. Forced to leave the comfortable existence in Berlin the family fled to then Palestine, started a new life full of hardships, but undertaken with great courage. She helped to build the new State of Israel, and eventually returned with her husband and two daughters to Europe, i.e. Great Britain. Back in Europe she became committed to interreligious dialogue reaching into continental Europe especially into Germany. In

2008 the President of the Republic, Horst Köhler, awarded her one of the highest honours the State has to offer, the Bundesverdienstkreuz to honour her for her untiring contribution to German-Jewish and Jewish-Christian understanding.

Ruth Weyl was a builder of bridges. She reached people's minds, but more importantly, she touched people's hearts. She was the soul of our organisation.

We from the Friends and Sponsors of the Martin-Buber-House owe it to her to continue her work. And we shall do so, her spirit will guide us.