

Seminar for European Marom Coordinators in Berlin

By Judy Dvorak Gray

In the week between the world's commemoration of 60 years since the liberation of Auschwitz and the historic visit of German President Horst Koehler to Israel, the Marom European coordinators met in Berlin for two days of intensive meetings. The seminar took place on Monday, January 31 and Tuesday, February 1 in the Masorti Center in Berlin.

Adam Schonberger (Hungary), Joel Stanley (UK), Marie Laine (Paris), Leandro Nicenboim (Madrid), Zlatka Palkovicova (Czech Republic) joined representatives from Germany including Rabbi Gesa Ederberg, Tino Fleischer, Benjamin Marcus and Conny Rieger, as well as representatives from Israel Assael Romanelli (the next shaliach to UK), Oren Roman (studying in Berlin this year), Udi Givon (Director, Marom Olami) and Judy Dvorak Gray (Office Coordinator, Masorti Olami Jerusalem). The seminar was subsidized by the Hagshama Department of the World Zionist Organization.



Top row (left to right): Benjamin Marcus (Germany), Rabbi Gesa Ederberg (Germany), Joel Stanley (UK), Assael Romanelli (Israel), Udi Givon (Israel), Leandro Nicenboim (Spain)
Bottom row (left to right): Adam Schonberger (Hungary), Conny Rieger (Germany), Zlatka Palkovicova (Czech Republic), Oren Roman (Israel), Judy Dvorak Gray (Israel) Missing from picture: Marie Laine (France) Tino Fleischer (Germany)



Assael Romanelli leading a spirited Shacharit



Seminar participants (left to right): Marie Laine (France), Conny Rieger (Germany), Zlatka Palkovicova (Czech Republic), Tino Fleischer (Germany)



Udi Givon, Marom Olami Director

The opening session began with each coordinator describing in depth the current situation of Marom activities in their country. We quickly realized how each country's situation differs regarding its young adult Jewish community and the importance of the Marom program being tailored to fit the needs of each community.

At the same time, we understood the value of working together to contribute our own experience to our colleagues and to find the common denominator of Marom in Europe. We found we had a lot in common: we are all working with young adults (ages 18-35, depending on the community), are interested in living a traditional, pluralistic view of Judaism, are searching for spirituality and meaning in religion, are interested in learning and broadening our knowledge of Judaism, and want to strengthen our Jewish identity and connection to Israel. Our common goals are to develop future leadership; keep young adults connected to Judaism; strengthen Jewish identity, offer a tangible alternative to assimilation; inspire people spiritually and educationally, and educate towards Masorti Judaism and Zionism.

We recognized the fact that we have many challenges before us in our goal of building a stronger Marom European movement. Not only do we speak many different languages and come from diverse cultural backgrounds, we have very different levels of knowledge, practice and ideology which we need to address when planning Marom European events. Yet, we all understood the importance of strengthening European Marom activities in the continent and to feel that we are part of a world-wide movement and not isolated in our own individual countries.

Other sessions during the seminar included learning about long and short-term Israel programs and the importance of such experiences for Jewish young adults. Moty Likwornik, tour operator from the European Department of the Israel Experience (Jewish Agency for Israel —Educational Tourism) joined us to explain options for creating and marketing Israel programs. A new Marom Israel program called "Hemshech" was introduced via a video conference with Avigail Ben Arie, educational coordinator for Marom Olami, which took place at the Israeli Embassy in Berlin. "Hemshech" will provide an opportunity for post-university young adults to live together in Jerusalem and choose a track which is most suitable for them (including an internship in profession, study at the Conservative Yeshiva, or the M.A. program at the Rothberg School at Hebrew University). The participants will also study Hebrew, participate in weekend seminars, volunteer in the community, tour Israel and have a personal mentor. We hope to begin the program in August 2005. More details and brochures will be forthcoming.

Other topics discussed in the seminar were ways to reach out to new members, the marketing and publicity of programs, and resources for funding European projects, including the European Union. A session was dedicated to planning the next Marom European Seminar, which will take place May 19-22 in Berlin.

A highlight of the two-day seminar was the evening tour of Berlin, provided by Mr. Richard Campbell, an American who has lived in Berlin for 45 years. The tour focused on the history and sites of East and West Berlin as well as the former Jewish quarter. What was intended to be a one-hour tour turned into a three and a half hour seminar! We were all so mesmerized with the knowledge of our guide and the sites we were experiencing that we didn't want to stop. The cold temperatures, darkness and fatigue of the late hour didn't deter our curiosity and quest to understand more.

We are grateful to Rabbi Gesa Ederberg and her administrative assistant, Conny Riegler, for their outstanding organization of the logistics of the seminar. Learning about the work and accomplishments of the young Masorti Movement in Germany was very inspiring. We were delighted that our meetings took place in the Masorti Center in Berlin and were fortunate to observe the new Masorti bi-lingual (German / Hebrew) nursery school program in action which meets on the premises.

Some of us had reservations about traveling to Germany for these meetings because of the history of the country and the association with the darkest period in Jewish memory. Yet sitting with dynamic, young Marom leaders and planning together how to strengthen the connection of European young Jewish adults to their heritage, davka in Germany, was truly an act of retribution. Jewish history compels us to remember. But in addition to remembering, we need to confront our past and learn the lessons of the Holocaust for our future. Marom is working to make the future brighter for European Jewry.