**Michael Curtis**



PRINCETON Michael Curtis, public intellectual and eminent scholar on Europe and Middle East politics died on Monday, October 3, 2022. He celebrated his 99th birthday on September 11. The funeral will be at 1 pm, Sunday, October 9 at The Jewish Center, 435 Nassau Street, Princeton. During the 1970s and 1980s Curtis was the spokesperson for the United States Jewish academic community on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, He was a founder of American Professors for Peace in the Middle East, initiating the APPME in 1967 during the Yom Kippur War when emotions ran high and no organization existed to express rational discourse about the situation. The APPME counted in its several thousand membership most of the Jewish academic community from all fields and published The Middle East Review, a respected scholarly journal. Curtis was the commentator of choice on major television news networks such as PBS and CBS. His interest in international politics was evident by the time he was 13 years old. In 1936 he participated in the famous incident when the Jewish population along with other residents of London's East End prevented the Fascists led by Oswald Mosely from marching down Cable Street, one of the major thoroughfares in the East End. Curtis was graduated from the London School of Economics with a double first in economics and political science. He and George Soros were in the same class (1951), but Soros ended at the bottom of the class. Curtis's self-deprecating joke was, "So much for graduating at the top of the class. Soros was busy with other things." Having already published his first book in the UK about British politics, he came to the United States in 1954 on a Cornell University postgraduate fellowship to study American political systems. He met his first wife, the late Laura Goldsmith Curtis, at Cornell and eventually became an American citizen. In 2014 he was honored by the president of France as Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor for his contributions to the study of the history of French political thought and 20th century French politics. His first book after coming to the United States was Three Against the Third Republic (Princeton University Press (1959), re-issued by Transaction Press with a new introduction by Curtis (2010). This book is considered the definitive study of early 20th century French politics and the rise of the right after the Dreyfus affair, becoming the rationale for the rise of rightist governments epitomized by Nazism. Inspired by the French Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld's book of photos of hundreds of French children murdered during the Holocaust, Curtis turned to an examination of France's complicity in that horrific event. The result, Verdict on Vichy, 2002, published in 2002, London by Weidenfeld and Nicolson (Orion Press) and was named one of the best books of the year by The Daily Telegraph. It went on to be published in the United States in 2004 by Arcade Press and was translated into Italian and Czech. Curtis was the author of more than 35 books. In addition French politics, his books cover the fields of political theory, comparative government, Western European politics, the European Union, and the United Nations. He has long been known for his writing on antisemitism, totalitarianism, the Middle East, and Israel. He was one of the first to discuss the tangled web of the interconnections between religion and politics in the Muslim world in Religion and Politics in the Middle East. Other significant books on the Middle East include Israel: Social Structure and Change, and Israel in the Third World. His textbooks introduced thousands of United States college students to the study of comparative government. They were used globally, translated into other languages (for instance, Elementi di Scienza politica, published by Il Mulino for instance first in 1968 and then reissued in the 1970s). His textbook, Great Political Theories, published in the 1960s, is still in print and used throughout the US. After reaching at Yale, Oberlin, and other U.S. institutions he retired as a Distinguished Professor Emeritus from Rutgers. Since his mid 90s, he has been writing almost daily columns for online journals, bringing to public view such issues as the fate of Christians in the Middle East or the role of the tribes in the Middle East that hold power, transcending borders and governments. In Orientalism and Islam, published by Cambridge University Press (2009), Curtis focused on the history of European thought in creating the field of Oriental studies. He traces the invention of terms like Oriental despotism back to Montesquieu. This book is highly regarded as revealing that Western philosophers like Montesquieu and Tocqueville were not inherently biased and could comment objectively on Oriental and Muslim societies, basing their theories on perceptions of real processes and behavior in Eastern culture and government. Curtis has received numerous awards and academic honors including several Fulbright Fellowships and a Bellagio/Rockefeller Institute Fellowship. The American Jewish Committee honored Curtis for his contributions to the literature about Israel and anti-Semitism. In addition to his years at American universities, he also has taught at Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, University of Bologna, and given lectures at hundreds of institutions. He was a Summer Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study (1981) and a Visiting Fellow, Center of International Studies, Princeton University. For many years, he was a member of the Advisory Council of the Politics Department at Princeton University. He was a longtime member of the boards of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy and the America-Israel Friendship League. In addition to his second wife, artist, author, and curator Judith K. Brodsky, Curtis is survived by, Dr. Anthony (Tony) Curtis, Champaign, IL, a patent lawyer with Schwegman, Lundberg, Woessner, Minneapolis, and Michael D. Curtis, Communications Director, Republican Party, New Mexico, two step-children, John B. Brodsky and Dr. Frances M. Brodsky, six grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, and a great grandchild.