

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Supping with the devil

Some ten years ago, I was sent to Brighton by the Shoah Foundation to interview Professor Ladislaus Löb of Sussex University. I knew Laci Löb professionally, and had always assumed that he was Swiss. Only during the course of the interview did it emerge that he had been born the son of Hungarian Jews in Kolozsvár (Cluj), capital of Transylvania, which became part of Romania in 1918 and was returned to Hungary by Hitler in 1940.

At the age of 11, in 1944, his life was saved when he and his father boarded the legendary train organised by Rudolf Kastner (Rezső Kasztner), a prominent figure in Hungarian Jewry, in which some 1,670 Jews travelled from Budapest to safety in Switzerland, spending several months in a compound for special prisoners at Bergen-Belsen camp en route. Kastner had successfully negotiated this rescue with Adolf Eichmann; for this he was assassinated in Israel in 1957, after having been vilified as a collaborator with the Nazis. Now, Ladislaus Löb has written a book about his experiences: *Dealing with Satan: Rezső Kasztner's Daring Rescue Mission* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008, £18.99), which mounts a stout defence of Kastner against the charges levelled against him.

The Holocaust came late to Hungary, with the German occupation of their erstwhile ally in March 1944. But in the months before their eviction by the Red Army in January 1945, the Germans used the techniques of extermination they had perfected to kill some 450,000 Hungarian Jews. In this desperate situation, Kastner set up the Vaada, an organisation to rescue Jews, in Budapest. Considering resistance futile and assistance from outside unlikely, Kastner opted to negotiate – with remarkable audacity, as he held no bargaining cards in his hand at all and could himself have been deported at any moment.

But he succeeded in spinning out negotiations with Eichmann and other senior SS officers for months, the trainload of Jews released to Switzerland being only the most visible evidence of his efforts. Löb



Rudolf Kastner, 1947

claims that Kastner's negotiating tactics also helped to protect the Jews in the Budapest ghetto from deportation, saved children and the elderly from murderous forced marches from Budapest towards Austria, and even that he influenced Himmler's decisions to terminate the extermination programme in late 1944 and to hand over Theresienstadt and Belsen to the Allies without fighting. These claims are disputable, but Kastner probably saved more Jewish lives during the Holocaust than did any other Jew.

Kastner played on the Nazis' greed and, towards the war's end, on their need for testimony to their lenient behaviour towards Jews. The Vaada raised 5 million Swiss francs, the ransom demanded by the Germans for the Jews on the train, by selling 150 places on it to rich Jews still in possession of their property. But mostly the Vaada had to bargain with imaginary assets. Joel Brand, one of Kastner's associates, was sent to the Middle East with Himmler's offer to spare a million Jews if the Western Allies provided the Germans with 10,000 lorries for use on the Eastern Front. Brand was arrested by the British and his mission failed. Kastner realised that the Allies would reject the Nazi offer, but hoped that they would make a show of interest, so as to drag the process out and delay the deportations.

The transparent bad faith of the Germans gave him something with which to flesh out his bluff: he was able to lay the blame for the failure of Brand's mission on Eichmann by pointing out that he had already sent the Jews intended for exchange to Auschwitz.

Hence the importance of the train to Switzerland: only if the Germans gave a tangible token that they were negotiating in good faith, argued Kastner, could they have any hope of obtaining money from 'world Jewry' or concessions from the Allies. On this frail basis of bluff and deception, Kastner built up a position in which he worked closely with SS-Obersturmbannführer Kurt Becher, travelled freely around Germany, crossed the Swiss border with the train from Bergen-Belsen and returned, and even went to Berlin for a meeting with Himmler (which never took place). It was a performance of staggering audacity and steely nerves.

But one needs a long spoon to sup with the devil. Post-war Israel was psychologically unprepared to accept the moral compromises necessitated by attempts to negotiate with the Nazis. Israelis preferred to see the Holocaust in black-and-white terms, with the evil of Nazism opposed by heroic figures like those of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising; they saw Israeli society as creating a new kind of Jew – the sabra – tough, self-reliant and capable of striking back at any enemy, in contrast to the image of the European 'ghetto Jew' – weak and passive, who had gone 'like a lamb to the slaughter' in the Holocaust.

In this scenario, even when it came to saving Jewish lives, those who opted for negotiation rather than resistance became associated with the figure of the grovelling, conniving Jew who had half-collaborated in his own extermination, a standpoint advanced with more force than fairness by Hannah Arendt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Even Yiddish, the language of Jewish Eastern Europe, was tainted with inferiority to Hebrew: when Rozka Korczak, a resistance heroine from Vilna, spoke Yiddish at a Histadrut convention soon after her arrival in Palestine in late 1944, David Ben-Gurion complained that 'Comrade Refugee' was speaking a 'foreign language'.

Consequently, when Malchiel Gruenwald, an embittered eccentric from Jerusalem, used his newsletter to launch a wild and highly

continued overleaf

SUPPING WITH THE DEVIL continued from page 1

coloured attack on Kastner in 1952, attitudes to Kastner's rescue operation were far less favourable than would be the case today. Kastner felt obliged to sue Gruenwald for libel, since the charges levelled against him were extremely serious; worse still, he held an important position in a government ministry, so the attack could be extended to the entire Mapai-led government and had, Attorney-General Chaim Cohn believed, to be refuted in open court.

Gruenwald alleged that Kastner had profited from his collaboration with the Nazis, both financially and through saving members of his own family, and that he bore indirect responsibility for the murder of Hungary's Jews. Judge Halevy, who presided over the trial that commenced in 1954, listed Gruenwald's accusations under four headings: collaboration with the Nazis; 'indirect murder'; partnership in theft with a Nazi, Kurt Becher; and saving that Nazi from punishment after the war. Kastner proved to be his own worst enemy, for he had indeed travelled to Nuremberg and provided an affidavit in Becher's favour; his reasons for doing so, however, were not financial, as Gruenwald alleged, since Kastner lived and died a poor man.

But when Shmuel Tamir, Gruenwald's able and unscrupulous lawyer, caught Kastner out in an ill-judged attempt to fudge the truth about his intervention on Becher's behalf, Kastner's credibility began to unravel; he effectively became the defendant in the case. Tamir, allowed remarkable latitude by the indulgent Judge Halevy, went on to exploit the fact that Kastner had allocated places on the train to Switzerland to members of his family, to people from his hometown of Kolozsvár and to leading Hungarian Zionists. He alleged that Kastner had indeed used the negotiations with Eichmann for his own selfish ends and that, by failing to warn Hungary's Jews about their impending fate, he had colluded in their murder in order to save a small number of those close to him. (How Kastner might have done more to save those deported remained obscure.)

In what seems today a seriously flawed judgment, Halevy found that three of the four charges levelled at Kastner by Gruenwald had been substantiated, and in relation to the fourth imposed the derisory fine of one Israeli pound on Gruenwald. Kastner had, said Halevy, in a remarkable departure from the normal language of legal verdicts, 'sold his soul to Satan'. Though

Kastner was subsequently cleared of most of the accusations against him on appeal to the Supreme Court, the damage had been done. On the night of 3 March 1957, he was shot, and died three days later. Three suspects with extreme right-wing connections were convicted of the murder, but released in 1963.

Kastner's murder was not the first of its kind. In June 1924, Jacob de Hahn, a Dutch Jew and poet who was friendly with Arabs (especially Arab boys), was shot in Jerusalem by political activists, for whom he epitomised the ignoble 'Diaspora Jew', the antithesis of the new Zionist pioneer. The murder inspired a gripping novel by the German-Jewish writer Arnold Zweig, *De Vriendt kehrt heim* (*De Vriendt Goes Home*, 1932). In June 1933, Chaim Arlosoroff, a senior Jewish Agency official involved with the *haavara* (transfer) agreement with Nazi Germany, by which German Jews were allowed to emigrate to Palestine while economic benefits accrued to the Reich, was assassinated in Tel Aviv, presumably by right-wing activists. And we are still living with the consequences of the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by a right-wing fanatic.

Anthony Grenville

Reconstituting a Traumatized Community

The German-Speaking Refugees of the 1930s and their Legacy to Britain

Afternoon Workshop at the British Academy,
10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1
on Tuesday 24 June 2008 from 2 pm to 6 pm

This Workshop provides an opportunity to reassess the legacy of the refugees of the 1930s, taking account of the newly created database 'British Archival Resources Relating to German-Speaking Refugees, 1933-1950' (BARGE). The database, which covers both public and private collections, was compiled by researchers at the University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The Workshop will begin with short presentations by the researchers involved, including an online demonstration of the functions of the database. This provides access to a remarkable range of archival testimony, recording both liberation and frustration. The immigrants, although assisted by voluntary refugee committees, also encountered hostility and resistance, culminating in the trauma of internment.

The aim is to promote further research

concerning the involvement of the refugees in all aspects of public life. Their achievements have in some respects proved exceptional, especially in the fields of natural science, medicine and the arts. But in construing the process as a success story, there is a danger that the stresses of resettlement may be obscured. A balanced picture will require further rigorous research, combining archival evidence with oral testimony.

The Workshop will conclude with a Buffet Supper. Participants are also invited to attend the evening Public Discussion on 'Immigration, Diversity and Integration: Past Experience and Present Trends', which begins at 7 pm. The aim of the Discussion is to consider whether past experiences of immigration can shed light on the highly topical issues of cultural diversity and social cohesion in multi-ethnic Britain today.

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of

THE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH REFUGEES TUESDAY 3 JUNE 2008 AT 11.00 AM

at The Paul Balint AJR Centre
15 Cleve Road London NW6
For further details,
please telephone 020 8385 3070

The three members retiring by rotation are Mr W D Rothenberg, Mr C W Dunston and Mr E Reich.

The Association has received notice in accordance with the rules to propose that Ms Karen Goodman and Mr Tim Schwarz be elected as members of the Management Committee.

AJR Directors Gordon Greenfield Carol Rossen

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Michael Newman Media and Public Relations
Susie Kaufman Organiser, AJR Centre

AJR Journal
Dr Anthony Grenville Consultant Editor
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Andrea Goodmaker Secretarial/Advertisements

Views expressed in the *AJR Journal* are not necessarily those of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.

To AJR members

A letter from Jewish Care

I am writing to let you know about the services that Jewish Care offers to Holocaust survivors and refugees in addition to those you can receive from the AJR.

You may have heard of our two centres based in Hendon: **Shalvata** and the **Holocaust Survivors' Centre**. Shalvata was set up in 1990 to offer survivors and refugees an opportunity to speak about the emotional effects of their suffering to professionals trained to respond to these particular difficulties. Today, we also focus on current problems as well as past traumas. We offer monthly therapeutic groups for the spouses of survivors, as well as a combined group for those who were hidden as children in Europe and those who came on the Kindertransport. The setting is informal and friendly and we receive very positive feedback from those who have been helped by these services. Shalvata's work is unique and we would encourage you to contact us if you feel you may be able to benefit.

The Shalvata team also includes qualified social workers who can assist with the many practical requests that we receive. Someone may need financial help, domiciliary help, or a volunteer. Like our colleagues at the AJR, with whom we liaise closely, our staff will visit at home if it is too difficult for you to come to Shalvata. If, for example, someone is finding it hard to cope in their own home and wishes to enter sheltered or residential accommodation, our staff can assess and deal with this complicated process. If a survivor or refugee wishes to record their testimony, we have trained volunteers to help with this. We also work closely with educational organisations such as the London Jewish Cultural Centre and the Imperial War Museum to enable survivors and refugees to speak about their experiences in schools or other settings.

If you have gone through Nazi persecution and feel that Shalvata can assist you, please contact us on 0208 203 9033 between 9 am and 5.30 pm from Monday to Friday. There is no charge for these therapeutic services.

Next door to Shalvata is the Holocaust Survivors' Centre, which opened in 1993. Unlike Shalvata, the present membership of the Centre is limited to those who were in Europe during the war – in camps, ghettos, in hiding, as partisans

or living under false papers – as well as refugees who came to the UK after Kristallnacht.

The Centre is open 6 days a week including Sunday afternoons. The social programme, which is developed in partnership with the members, is aimed at providing relief from the traumatic memories that so many of you carry every day. The regular programme includes an art class, creative writing, a weekly Yiddish group, keep fit, Israeli dancing, Tai Chi, and current affairs, to name but a few. There are regular outings to the theatre, opera, stately homes, exhibitions, museums and other places of interest. We run groups for those who are alone and feel isolated as well as a singing group and well-being workshops. Meetings with a solicitor can be arranged.

At the heart of the Centre is a vibrant café and members can just come in to enjoy the delicious food and have a chat with fellow survivors or join in the activities – the choice is yours. All the Jewish festivals are celebrated at the Centre. We also hold a Seder at Pesach and once a month we have a Friday-night dinner. On Yom HaShoah, we arrange for members to go to Logan Hall and then return to the Centre for lunch, and similarly on Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Holocaust Survivors' Centre produces a monthly newsletter to keep our 600 members informed, and we encourage members to write articles. The members have told us that they regard the Centre as their 'home'. Perhaps most importantly, through the Centre the members have helped to build a new community out of the aftermath of the Holocaust.

If you meet the membership criteria and would like to know more, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please ring 0208 202 9844 between 9 am and 5.30 pm Monday to Friday.

Judith Hassan OBE
Director of Services for Holocaust
Survivors and Refugees (Jewish Care)

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The telephone rang. A voice asked: 'Would you be willing to take part in a project called "Letter to the Stars"? It involves making links between school students in Austria today and those of you who were schoolchildren in Austria before the Anschluss.' I said I would.

That set me thinking about my connection with the country of my birth. Having come to England as a nine-year-old refugee without my parents, I regarded Austrians as the enemy. My memories of willing participants in the Nazi explosion of hate made it impossible to buy the excuse that Austria was Hitler's first victim. For many years the thought of going back to that hated place did not cross my mind. After all, my relatives were dead, so what was there to go back for?

Then, as the years went by, I began to get curious about the country that had rejected me. Had it all been a dream? Had I really lived in the 5th district of Vienna? I had to be sure. So 37 years after I made that fateful train journey to England, I decided to drive back to Vienna accompanied by my husband. The route took us through eastern France and I remember taking a deep breath before crossing the border into Germany. I had a fantasy that the sun wouldn't shine on the other side. Not only did it shine, but the people who answered my request for

THE RETURN

directions understood my German and were polite and helpful. I couldn't make it out. Gone were the swastikas and the uniforms. Had the leopard really changed its spots?

So deep was my aversion to staying under an Austrian roof that we took a tent and camping equipment. When we stopped at Regensburg I was for turning back, but my husband persuaded me to carry on until we arrived at a campsite on the outskirts of Vienna. Now for the moment of truth. Would anyone be able to make sense of the address I gave them? Did it still exist? To my astonishment, I was given clear and unhesitating directions. Two bus rides, the first to the Ringstrasse, took us to the district of Margareten. Before long I found the flats where I had lived with my parents for nine years, the primary school I had gone to, the park where I had played 'Faules Ei' and other ring games. The synagogue no longer existed – it had been burnt down

on Kristallnacht.

In the centre of Vienna the cathedral loomed darkly as I remembered it and, walking on to the 2nd district, I was back by the Donaukanal along whose banks I had wheeled my cousin in his pram. Two incidents stand out. In the Innere Stadt, I saw a big stone chained up. On my Sunday walks with my father he had shown me such a stone and explained that it was a relic of the Turkish siege. I wondered: was this the same one? It was! Another favourite place was the Prater. I found it easily. The big wheel made famous by the film *The Third Man* was still there, as was the palace on the hill, the Gloriette. All the buildings were as I remembered them – but gone were the people. As I was standing by an ice cream stall, a child called out 'Papa!' That proved too much for me. I said to my husband: 'We must leave.'

The trip had been a painful but necessary reality test for which I'm grateful. My next visit, by invitation for the launch of the German version of my book *A Child Alone (Ich kam als Kind)*, was a rather different experience and marked a new chapter in my relationship with Austria. But more of that anon.

Martha Blend

The second and concluding part of this article will appear in the July issue.

'Aktion Sühnezeichen has changed Germany'

The 50th anniversary celebration of Action Reconciliation/Services for Peace (ARSP) took place in Berlin from 27 April to 4 May – a week of debates, workshops and festivities attended by more than 1,000 guests and ARSP volunteers. German President Horst Köhler gave the keynote address, in which he thanked the 15,000 volunteers from the last 50 years who, he said, had been goodwill ambassadors for their country.

ARSP volunteers are young German conscientious objectors who have to undertake some form of 'Zivildienst' (alternative service). They work in all the countries affected by the Nazi regime, including Israel. One will find them in old-

age homes, in hostels for homeless people, in centres for children with special needs. Britain has had them over the years at the Wiener Library, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Jewish Museum, the AJR and the Anne Frank Trust.

Michaela Vidlakova, a Jewish survivor from Prague, opened her address to the conference with the words 'Meine lieben Freunde' – something no one could ever have thought possible 50 years ago. She said the young volunteers of ARSP had changed the face of Germany, a feeling echoed by Charlotte Knobloch, president of the German-Jewish community, who stated that the work of ARSP was a major cornerstone in relations between

Germany and Israel.

My husband and I feel very strongly that this organisation has stretched out the hand of reconciliation. Many people with a similar history to ours have been prepared to accept such a gesture and believe that it finally brings a return to some sort of normality in Europe.

Lilian Levy

Lilian and Herbert Levy were invited to the conference in recognition of their work with ARSP over the last 15 years. In that time, they befriended volunteers who came to England and were guest speakers at reunions organised by the country coordinators.

RECONSTITUTING A TRAUMATISED COMMUNITY cont from page 2

Speakers at the Workshop

Dr Marion Berghahn (publisher, New York and Oxford), author of the recently republished study *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany*

Professor Gustav Born FRS (King's College, London), author of *The Born Family in Göttingen and Beyond*

Dr Andrea Hammel (University of Sussex), Research Fellow for the BARGE project, author of *Everyday Life as*

Alternative Space in Exile Writing

Ms Samira Teuteberg (University of Sussex), Resource Officer for the online database of *Archival Resources Relating to German-Speaking Refugees 1933-1950*

Professor Edward Timms OBE, FBA (University of Sussex), Principal Investigator of the BARGE project, author of 'Remembering Refugees Lost at Sea'

Professor Paul Weindling (Oxford Brookes University), author of *Nazi Medicine*

and the Nuremberg Trials and authority on Medical Refugees in Britain, 1930-1955

The Workshop is organised by the University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies in collaboration with the British Academy. The BARGE database can be accessed on <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/cgjs/barge>

If you would like to participate, please register with Penny Collins at p.collins@britac.ac.uk, telephone 020 7969 5238, website www.britac.ac.uk/events

THE BRITAIN WE LIVE IN

The Britain we now live in has changed very much from the one I first knew. There is no longer a pride in one's country. The virtue of the stiff upper lip is ridiculed. Queuing is often ignored. Contemporary Britain has turned into a back-biting, self-denigrating society which has sacrificed the old rules on the altar of modernity and has only trendy stratagems for their replacement. Not even Winston Churchill has been left unmocked. Climbing on the bandwagon of one-upmanship and touchy-feeliness are the flavours of the day. Despite increasing taxation, sneakily introduced, the country's infrastructure has not improved.

Two current topics highlight the state of Britain. One is asylum-seekers, the other the Euro. Asylum-seekers first. As a former refugee myself, I empathise with them. Yet, while there are many foreigners (like me) who had, or can acquire, a right to live here, not all have an inalienable right to settle here, or anywhere else for that matter. There is a profound difference between those truly in fear of life and limb and those who merely wish to improve their lot. Surely restrictions are justified to control the flood of the world's poor. There is a need for immigrants, but the influx needs to be regulated in the country's interest and the immigrants' long-term interest as well.

An awkward problem – often ignored – has to be stressed. Previous waves of immigrants – whether they were Huguenots, Jamaicans or Jews – accepted the need to integrate and adapt to the majority culture, without sacrificing their identity. This assimilation process no longer applies to recent waves. They insist on retaining all the aspects of their culture, often in direct opposition to the mores of the host country. Catering to the immigrant's lifestyle now goes under the heading of 'multi-culturalism'. Regrettably, no such tolerance is extended to non-believers or minorities in the immigrants' home countries.

An unprejudiced, colour-blind community, desirable as the ideal is, may exist in parts of Hampstead and Islington, but regrettably nowhere else. The outcome of any enforced policy which goes against the grain of a population which feels itself threatened is the same for every endangered species – it becomes extreme and violent.

The issue also has a bearing on the argument about whether or not Britain should adopt the Euro as its currency. I consider myself a European, and though to me Britain is part of Europe, I am not in favour of joining the single currency. I am

against it not for economic but for political reasons. Britain's long history overall shows a favourable balance of good over evil. I have greater confidence in this country's standards of public life, even if they are dubious at times, than in those on the Continent, where devotion to tolerance and democracy is of more recent vintage.

People change, nations change, but one's

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Still, if one has to be labelled,
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Nor do I mind getting
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perception of the past does not. I and all those who found a refuge in this country owe Britain a debt. It was this nation which, at long last, stood up to Hitler in 1939; and it was Britain which, after the defeat of its allies, faced the might of a victorious Germany all alone. By standing firm it saved Europe from regressing into the Dark Ages. Half-a-century later this intrepid chapter tends not only to be disparaged, but the new wave of modernisers brush it aside.

So far, a rapidly changing world has only marginally affected the small community in which we live. There are more cars, a few more dwellings and talk of a lot more to come. Gone are the small store, the post office and the village policeman. When we arrived 23 years ago, the vast majority of inhabitants were locals whose roots went back for generations. Now, a clear division has become apparent. On one side of the village are those born and raised here, living in council houses; on the other side are commuters and comfortable incomers who live in loftier dwellings. Only the village green, the church and graveyard attest to what was once a closely knit community with a life of its own.

Looking back at my ABC periods, I am content to complete the journey in Britain, where we have spent more years now than in either Austria or Canada. By now, I am past the *Sturm und Drang Jahre*, when I felt the need to identify with a specific nationality. Still, if one has to be labelled, I have no objection to being called an Austrian Jew of British and Canadian nationality who prefers to live in England. Nor do I mind getting older as long as I do not feel old.

Jussi Brainin

This article is excerpted from the author's 'My A (For Austria), B (For Britain), C (For Canada) Trilogy: Short Version'.

'Our hero': In memory of Leon Greenman



Teachers at Thornhill School, a Business and Enterprise College in Sunderland, have sent a cheque to the AJR in memory of Holocaust survivor Leon Greenman, who died earlier this year at the age of 97.

The teachers – Christine Farmer, Judith Elphinstone and Trevor Harvey – write on behalf of TAIT (The Arts Included at Thornhill), in which they work with pupils to challenge all forms of bullying and injustice. They say they were privileged to hear Leon Greenman speak at the Arena in Newcastle and that 'The impact of Leon's presence and words was immense, and made a lasting impression on our young people.'

The teachers also enclose a letter by Tony Richardson, one of their Year 9 pupils. Tony writes: Leon Greenman 'is our hero. He might be Jewish but he's just the same as us with a different religion.'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

'FINE WORK' OF THE AJR

Sir – Thank you for the very fine work the AJR has done for us all over many years. It was through the AJR's efforts that I learned about Austrian pensions and claims. Also, the May article by Dorothea Shefer-Vanson brought back memories of my family's treasures that are now untraceable and all I have is very happy memories of a lovely and loving family.

Re the letter by Peter Phillips, the team of Dr Ariel Muzicant helped just a few years ago to trace where my mother and 133,000 others were gunned down as they emerged from cattle trucks somewhere in Eastern Europe. It was through them that I at last had a death certificate and was therefore able to submit a claim for restitution. My father's death certificate I had soon after the Second World War: the British Red Cross traced the small Dutch village which Dad had left for Auschwitz.

R. Willis, Loughborough

Sir – As usual, I enjoy the contents of *AJR Journal* and gladly continue my subscriptions for myself and my sister-in-law in the USA.

I am pleased to see that Victor Ross is back again. I agree with the comments of Peter Phillips (April, Letters): 'I am a Jew racially. I am also a Jew religiously because I do not believe any religion makes more sense than Progressive Judaism.' The English woman who saved the three of us knew nothing about kosher food. She was the only one to take us three into her humble home. Otherwise, I might not be here writing to you. This might be a blessing from your point of view!

Laura Selo (née Gumpel)

Clara Nehab House, London NW11

ENGLAND ANTISEMITIC?

Sir – I was shocked by the April 'Letter from Israel'. The writer, on her return to London from Israel after many years, found an enormous increase in the number of Arabs. These are students, shop-owners, workers in many fields, and tourists. She then went on to state that the English media ignores Arab rocket attacks on Israel. All this, she suggests, is an indication of English tolerance of Arab attacks on Israeli Jews.

The link between Israel and Britain over the past 75 years, including the Palestinian Jews who fought with the British Army, Navy and RAF, is a powerful indication

that the relationship between Israel and Britain (including England) remains strong. Long may it continue thus. Let us have no suggestion that it no longer exists.

John M. Davis, London NW11

Sir – So Dorothea Shefer-Vanson concludes that England is antisemitic. She bases her allegation on the assumption that criticising Israel's government is equivalent to being antisemitic. On these grounds, she would class me as being antisemitic because I belong to Jews for Justice to Palestinians and Alternative Jewish Voices. Both organisations criticise the Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians.

Inge Trott, Cheam, Surrey

THE PALESTINIANS

Sir – So the Palestinians are not in fact Palestinians! According to the article by Mendel Storz (February), they are only Arabs who have been living in that part of the Levant since the seventh century CE. Well, that's about as long as the Anglo-Saxon English people have been settled here in Britain. Do they not have a right to live in this land? Fifteen hundred years or so is an awful long time whoever you are, wherever you live. It is your home and your heritage.

The Israeli author Amos Elon made the point succinctly: 'There is an unexpected element of irony in the fact that the Israeli Jews, who owe their existence as a nation to their extraordinary memory of past history, should now be forced to rely on the Arabs forgetting theirs.'

Howard Turner, Ashford, Kent

'ISRAEL AT FAULT'

Sir – In the May letters pages, it's the turn of the Israeli hawks. It's all the fault of the terrorists; Gaza democracy is a sham. But in *Newsround* (page 16), Israel is regarded as the country with the most negative influence, second only to Iran. This is what bugs me. After all the charges and counter-charges, the consensus (and this includes very many Jews and a fair number of Israelis) is that Israel is at fault.

George Schlesinger, Durham

COMMEMORATION OF 1941 AMSTERDAM STRIKE

Sir – Looking through the AJR newsletter recently, I came across a small item by George Landers about the coming annual

commemoration of the strike in protest against the treatment of Dutch Jews by the Nazis in February 1941.

This was the largest civil protest against Nazi occupation anywhere in the occupied lands and at any time during the Nazi period. Starting among tram and dock workers in Amsterdam, it spread to Utrecht, Hilversum and other areas before it was brutally suppressed by the Germans, who shot nine people dead, seriously injured 24 and arrested countless strikers.

By February 1941 the brutality of the Germans, supported by the vast number of Dutch collaborators, was well known to the Dutch. The Austrian Nazi governor of the Netherlands announced on 10 February that anyone with one or more Jewish grandparents had to register, a 'service' for which the Dutch local and national authorities charged a fee. On 22-23 February the first round-ups of Jewish men took place and 427 were sent to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria and Buchenwald in Germany, where they all died within a year. The strike, publicised by an 'illegally' cyclostyled pamphlet which couriers risked their lives to distribute, started on 25 February.

So I decided to go along to the commemoration, which was held in the Jonas Daniël Meijerplein, the square in which the Jewish men had been herded for deportation before the strike. The square, close to the Amsterdam Jewish Museum and the Portuguese Synagogue, now contains a bronze statue of a dock worker commemorating the strike. A few thousand people crowded around a temporary enclosure in which cabinet members, representatives of trade unions and local authorities, ex-strikers and pupils from a Jewish school, as well as representatives of organisations such as the Anne Frank Foundation, participated in the ceremony. One senior politician quoted Sophie Scholl, a young Lutheran German woman executed by the Nazis for membership of the anti-Nazi student organisation *Die Weisse Rose* and for distributing leaflets: 'One has to do something in order not to be guilty oneself. What is needed is a strong spirit and a soft heart.' Many people left flowers at the foot of the statue.

For me, the event was a good excuse to pay a visit to the woman who hid me during the war and lost her husband in Neuengamme concentration camp as a result. I'm glad I went and sorry not to have done so in earlier years.

Martin Stern, Leicester

THE RABBI AND THE PARISH PRIEST

Sir – I vividly remember this beautiful part of Bavaria (May issue) as I did a lot of mountaineering with my father in this area.

In 1941, prior to joining the RAF, I was

living in Ampthill, Bedfordshire working on invasion barges in the engineering department of a local factory. The Admiralty printed an appeal in one of the dailies for information on suitable German bombing targets, which reminded me of a suitable object – the huge power station at the end of the Walchensee, where the force of the water falling down to the Kochelsee drove the turbines.

With the aid of photographs and maps I was preparing a sketch when suddenly the door was thrust open and my landlord entered with two policemen and three soldiers, pointing at me with handcuffs at the ready and shouting 'We have a German spy!' A third policeman – I think a superintendent – entered and he recognised me as an air raid warden. I changed my lodgings the following day.

Anthony Goldsmith
Wembley, Middx

IN SEARCH OF HEINZ NATHAN

Sir – Does any reader of this journal remember Heinz Nathan and what became of him?

Heinz Nathan was a prominent sprinter in pre-war Berlin and a longstanding member of Sport Club Charlottenburg, one of the top sports clubs in the city. There, he was a member of the record-breaking sprint relay team in 1918-33, after which all Jewish members were expelled (including my late father and his three brothers).

On escaping to England just before the Second World War, Heinz Nathan got a teaching job at Rugby School, where he stayed many years (probably teaching German). Among the important items he brought with him from Berlin was an amateur film taken of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. This amateur film had no connection whatever with the infamous Leni Riefenstahl film commissioned by Hitler.

The film Heinz brought to England would be of immense historical interest today, but unfortunately no one at Rugby School can throw any light on the fate of either Heinz or his film. If any reader can assist in tracing Heinz Nathan's movements after retiring from his teaching job at Rugby School, or indeed the film's whereabouts today, please contact me.

On a related topic, could anyone who has knowledge of any other amateur film of the Berlin Olympics please contact me.

Henry Kuttner, Edgware, Middx
henry@cnc-london.net

tel 020 8959 2176 fax 0870 916 5216

VIENNA AUTOGRAPH BOOK

Sir – I inherited an autograph book containing signatures of stars of the opera, ballet, theatre and film, including Marlene Dietrich, Adele Kern, Michiko Meinl, Lillian Gish, Helene Thimig, Nora

Gregor and Tibor von Halmay. The autographs were obtained in Vienna in 1935-38. I have been able to decipher about 30 of the signatures. As for the rest – about 20 – I have so far failed, although I have consulted volumes of the *Deutsches Bühnenjahrbuch*.

Are there any readers who may be able to identify the rather illegible signatures and tell me who these people were? An interesting observation on the *Deutsches Bühnenjahrbuch* is that several actors who appeared on the stage in Vienna in 1935-38 had entries in pre-1933 volumes but were absent in post-1933 volumes. Obviously they were still alive and performing, but they must have been considered undesirable (Jewish, Czech, Polish, etc) by the Nazis. Please contact me on 020 8467 5656 or at brettargh.holt@dsl.pipex.com

Professor Robert A. Shaw,
Chislehurst

'ROSEBUD'

Sir – Seeing an article about Paul Rosbaud in an earlier issue of yours, I am reminded of an unforgivable lapse by a film critic writing about *Citizen Kane* when it was going to be shown on TV a few years ago. He could not understand the significance of the sledge being thrown on the fire when Kane's house is cleared after his death. On his death-bed Kane had murmured the word 'Rosebud' and part of the story of the film is to try and discover who or what Rosebud was.

As the sledge is consumed by the flames, the camera reveals only for a couple of seconds the word 'Rosebud' before the fire erases it. The sledge called 'Rosebud' was Kane's prize possession as a child and he was using it when his father called him into the house to tell him that he was going to be sent away immediately and the sledge was unceremoniously left behind. So all Kane's life was geared upon losing his lovely sledge in childhood, never to be regained, and he remembers it on his death bed above all his other loves. In the cinema the sledge and its name could be clearly seen, albeit only briefly, but on the TV screen it was too small to be deciphered and the critic on his review copy missed the most important point of this magnificent film.

Rudi Leavor, Bradford

NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND THE EU

Sir – Professor Bryan Reuben's letter about national sovereignty and the EU (May) confuses two entirely separate bodies: the European Parliament (which he wrongly calls corrupt and unaccountable) and the European Commission, which it is appropriate to call corrupt and largely unaccountable.

The accountability of the European Commission and the bureaucrats there is

largely in the hands of the elected European Parliament. So do not shoot those who in a vastly imperfect system try their best, Professor Reuben. MEPs are as approachable as MPs are – I correspond with several by email and get replies particularly in relation to EU policy on funding the Palestinian Authority and accountability thereof. One does not need meetings in many cases to get the point across. The problem is what the MEPs can or cannot achieve in relation to the Commission.

Whether one likes the system or not, it is here and the fact is that it controls far more of UK life than Westminster does already.

Peter Simpson, Jerusalem

PIGS AGAIN

Sir – I am sorry to have to bring the subject of pigs up again. These poor creatures were bundled and prettily dressed up and sold for billions by clever bankers in the USA who lost other people's shirts, only to be snapped up by some very naïve British mortgage lenders. The result – officially known as the credit crunch – was, in reality, simply a case of buying pigs in pokes wholesale.

Frank Bright, Ipswich



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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Flowing shapes, mass and volume are the themes chosen by **Alison Watt**, the **National Gallery's** seventh Associate Artist and the youngest since they linked with the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation to develop this scheme. The selected artist works for two years at the NG, which ensures continuity between the Old Master and the young contemporary artist.

In Alison's case, she has come up with six large-scale works which reflect her preoccupation with volume, shape and space. For this she has elected to study **Courbet** and **Ingres**, although she takes **Ingres's** 1856 portrait of *Madame Moitessier* with its elaborate frills to a far more modernistic and sculptural level – indeed, some of the work, in its softness and pallor, has the fluidity of sand dunes. Deceptively white, with what appear to be darker entrances to the fabric folds, her palette actually includes grey, burnt sienna, cadmium red and yellow ochre.

The six works she shows look as though she enjoys folding and melding fabric, as though she is pushing the subject as far as it will go without leaning too far into abstraction. Both her works, *Pulse* and *Echo*, seem representations of a knot and the weighty substance of it physically begins to invade the viewer's space. Her interest in Zurbarán's *Saint Frances in Meditation* is said to have excited her most. The crude, rough-spun brown fabric habit worn by the mystic, whose hooded face is completely obscured, although his mouth is open, speaks of death, especially in the skull imagery. Watts's reductive skills have bleached away colour, realism and imagery to leave us with a space to get lost in.

The term 'bluestocking' once signalled a dried-up, sexless woman too clever for her own good. At least in the limited viewpoint of terrified men! But the original meaning of the term was anything but derogatory, and in the eighteenth century, awash with Enlightenment ideas and aspirations, the impact of intellectual women on creativity was lauded and romanticised, particularly in painting. The romantic view of the young poet, hosted in the salons of Paris, has found its way into literature and music.

Yet here in Britain, the term 'bluestocking' was a way of poking fun at intellectual women and the **National Portrait Gallery's** current show, **Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings**, restores the romance of the salon set and offers historical insight into how wealthy women with literary aspirations nurtured each other. In London, the movement grew informally in social circles which also developed the talents of poorer women during

the rise of the middle classes.

The three most fashionable eighteenth-century hostesses were Elizabeth Vesey, Frances Boscawen and the literary critic Elizabeth Montagu – called the queen of the bluestockings by Samuel Johnson, who honoured her pivotal role in attracting intellectual contemporaries. Let their menfolk booze on: these three offered tea and literary conversation, the motif of civilised conversation in the eighteenth century. Politically, Britain was at peace: it had won the Seven Years' War against France and the horrors of the French Revolution were way in the future. Women who bemoaned their lack of inspirational feminine role models or



Anna Seward by Tilly Kettle, 1762
oil on canvas © National Portrait Gallery

mentors decided to take on the role themselves, often supporting poorer gifted and aspiring poets or novelists, and taking them under their wing. Literature and scholarship were their new bond as well as a need for sexual equality.

In portraits by **Allan Ramsay**, **John Opie** and **Frances Reynolds**, the women are beautifully dressed but their faces have an intellectual edge, at odds with the soft lace and drapery. Allan Ramsay's dreamy portrait of *Montagu*, in which she is softly moulded by her salmon-pink dress with pearls and old lace, a flower in her corsage and one in her hair accentuates the refinement of her hands and the sad wisdom in her eyes. As a widow, she proved a shrewd businesswoman, building Montague House in Portman Square, whose classically opulent drawing room, which she described as 'a temple of virtue and friendship', was the setting for her literary meetings, which embodied the spirit of the Enlightenment. There was a mutual admiration society, but if equally based on mutual wealth, patronage was also offered. After her husband's death she offered annuities to several women writers. One famous case is that of the milkmaid poet Ann Yearsley, whose work was promoted by the women until a bitter legal suit ended their patronage. A mezzotint of Ann by Joseph Grozer portrays her in muslin cap and workaday dress, glancing up from her writing with a knowing smile.

REVIEWS

THEATRE

The theft of childhood

**AND THEN THEY CAME FOR ME:
REMEMBERING THE WORLD
OF ANNE FRANK**
by James Still
produced and directed
by Nic Careem

Criterion Theatre, London

John Bird, founder of *The Big Issue*, and Nic Careem of the Blue Sky Network, supported by the AJR among others, are on a mission to 'dismantle poverty and discrimination' through something they describe as the Bigger Movement, which proposes to break down hatred – or, in Careem's words, 'to make poverty history by making hate history'.

Such noble intentions, so innocently expressed, may fall on the cynical ears of those scarred by Nazism, even in these days of so-called diversity, but they have been harnessed to the experience of two young girls, both born in 1929 and both hidden in Amsterdam during the Nazi era. One of them was the literary prodigy and Holocaust martyr Anne Frank; the other was Eva Schloss (née Geiringer), who became her posthumous step-sister. The relationship between the two does not appear close: Eva seems to have felt dwarfed by Anne, who giggled a lot, flirted with boys, loved clothes and celebrities and was the centre of attention. Every inch the modern teenager, in fact.

The war decimated both families. Anne's father, Otto, was broken by the murder of his entire family, yet saved from the pit of depression by his work on his daughter's diary. Eva, who went to school with Anne and saw her nearly every day between 1940 and 1942, lost her father and brother, while she and her mother, Fritzi, survived. New families, aching and fragile with grief, started to rebuild their tenuous lives, among them Fritzi Geiringer, who married Otto Frank.

This, including the most graphic description of camp terror, is the burden of the play, which was first performed at the Gatehouse Theatre, Highgate in 2000 and has been widely shown, first to Parliament, Scotland Yard and City Hall, then to over 70 London schools before touring the North of England, including the West Yorkshire heartlands of the British National Party.

Through a blend of live performance and the video testimony of the survivors, the horrors that Eva and her family faced during the Holocaust are brought to life. The play seeks to show how a once care-free young girl had to adjust to life under

the Nazi regime and how this impacted on her and her family.

The audience witnesses Eva's humiliation at restrictions imposed on all aspects of her life and her community. We see how this spirals into a tragedy of family separation and eventually into her incarceration in Auschwitz along with her mother and into the indignities of the dehumanisation process there. Eva survived and the audience is offered hope that survivors have been able to overcome their ordeal and are using their experiences to raise awareness of the effects of prejudice.

Germany has been taking school-children to see its former concentration camps for many years now as part of their educational process and it is essential that 'Lest we forget' is not forgotten in Britain either and that the crimes of Europe's terrible past are brought up whenever racism, fascism and bigotry threaten social stability. However, watching this play made me feel a little uncomfortable. Rubbing the audience's nose in the Holocaust with this rollercoaster of shock-horror and screaming may only serve to cheapen the experience, where the lighter touch of an experienced director would have given it edge and distance and aroused genuine compassion. Think Primo Levi. Think Aharon Appelfeld.

This is not to say that the piece does not grab you by the throat and make you want to wail – perhaps that's all Nic Careem wanted it to do. Buffeted by all the noise and action, the still, serene and sanguine voice of Eva Schloss discussing her life on video was all but lost in the background, drowned out by the hysteria onstage. Yet hers, and that of Anne's surviving boyfriend, Helmut Silberberg (now Ed Silverberg), were the authentic voices you wanted to hear. It is at least a laudable experiment that their moving testimony formed part of the drama, even if it failed to rise above the din. As for the actors, apart from Catherine Robey's convincing performance as Eva, they may well have been acting a school play. Better perhaps to let the school-children up and down the shires of England read Eva Schloss's book *Eva's Story*. Or, for that matter, *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

Gloria Tessler

with additional material by Darren Aaron

Film as propaganda

NAZIS AND THE CINEMA

by Susan Tegel

Hambledon Continuum Books, 2007, 324 pp.

From the end of the First World War to the end of the Second World War Germany had the largest film industry outside Hollywood. Many of the original film-makers were Jews who had

to leave when the Nazis came to power. Once in government, the Nazis soon realised the value of film as propaganda and made good use of it to that end.

There had already been films showing historical figures like Frederick the Great as heroes. These were designed to boost morale after the defeat of the First World War. In 1933 came *Morgenrot*, a film about the sacrifice of some submarine sailors in that war. Ironically, the actress who played the part of one of the sailors' wives was half-Jewish. However, the most widely shown film was Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens* (The Triumph of the Will - 1934), made to glorify Hitler and the Nazi regime. There are shots of massed ranks of Nazis with their swastika-emblazoned banners and of enthusiastic crowds watching the Führer descend god-like by aeroplane from the sky. The images of individuals are stereotyped – adoring women and determined men – and much use is made of low-angled shots to give a heroic effect.

Antisemitic films specifically about Jews do not appear until 1937, though there had been negative Jewish stereotypes as part of a story before then. One of the first antisemitic films is *Die Rothschilds*, which shows Jews manipulating the finances during the Napoleonic Wars. Another is *Jud Süß* (Jew Süss - 1940), the story of a court Jew in Württemberg who becomes influential through lending money to the cash-strapped duke. He comes to a bad end but the British version is quite sympathetic to the Jewish characters, while the German one depicts them all as villains.

The most notorious of the antisemitic films is *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew - 1940). This was a compilation that made use of any footage that could be twisted to show Jews in an unfavourable light. There were scenes from the Lodz ghetto of Jews bartering in the street and shots of crowded and dirty interiors, though of course no mention is made of the fact that these conditions were imposed on the Jews by Nazi policy. Finally, maps of the wanderings of the Jews were juxtaposed with images of rats: it is implied that Jews, like vermin, bring ruin and disease. What the reaction to these films was is difficult to gauge as critical reviews were not allowed to be published. There was a change after the outbreak of war. Many films, as in Britain, were escapist but there were also morale-boosters.

What of the treatment of the Jews? There is virtually no footage of the interiors of the concentration camps though German soldiers filmed ghetto scenes and executions with high-quality cameras. However, there is a film made in Theresienstadt to reassure neutral opinion. This shows football matches, a cabaret and well-fed, smiling people – the new arrivals. A scene showing children eating bread and margarine had to be

filmed twice as the starving children disposed of the food before the camera could catch up with them.

The author of this book was an advisor to the legal team which planned to press charges against Leni Riefenstahl for denial of the Holocaust. The book itself is a fascinating and well-documented piece of research and deserves a place in every library.

Martha Blend

Intractability of Arab-Israeli conflict

THE SALADIN MURDERS

by Matt Rees

London: Atlantic Books, 2008, 340 pp.

LET IT BE MORNING

by Sayed Kashua

translated from the Hebrew by Miriam Shlesinger

London: Atlantic Books, 2006, 271pp.

Two remarkable second novels set in Israel and the Territories!

The Saladin Murders is a classic crime novel by *Time Magazine's* former Jerusalem Bureau chief. It marks the second appearance of Omar Yussef, Arab history teacher turned detective, whom we met in *The Bethlehem Murders*. This time, he has been tempted to visit Gaza with a United Nations inspection team. But Gaza is not St Mary Mead; it is more like Texas in the 1850s. There is neither effective government nor police, and the area is dominated by terrorist gangs. They fight each other, while justifying their actions as the liberation struggle against the Israelis, who withdrew some time previously but glower over the border. The groups compete in the smuggling of rockets through tunnels from Egypt into Rafah. Yussef's fellow teacher, Eyad Masharaw, has been imprisoned on a charge of spying for the CIA and UNWRA official Magnus Wallender has been kidnapped by the Saladin Brigades. As Yussef tries to free them, the body count mounts as if it were the last act of *Hamlet*.

Sayed Kashua, the author of the second novel, is an Israeli Arab with a regular column in *Ha'Aretz*, a 'soap' on Israeli prime-time television, and a previous novel, *Dancing Arabs*. He writes in Hebrew, as he explains self-deprecatingly, because his word processor does not have Arabic fonts. His narrator is an Israeli Arab journalist, who is being marginalised as a result of anti-Arab feelings following the second *intifada*. His paper has downgraded him from full-time employee to freelance and, because of the increased antagonism in Tel Aviv, he has moved back to the village where he and his wife grew up. They are used

Continued on page 10

REVIEWS continued from page 9

to urban Israeli ways and find the traditional Arab life oppressive; his wife did not want to return in the first place. When the Israeli army feels the need to isolate the village, the clashes between the narrator's identities as Hebrew journalist, Israeli Arab and ethnic Palestinian assert themselves.

At first reading, the moral ambiguities of Kashua's novel seem more acute than those of Rees's crime story, but that is to misunderstand the complexity of Yussef's position. He too is torn between a Palestinian identity, a loyalty to his United Nations friends and colleagues, and a respect for historical truth. 'Shame', he writes, 'that I chose to live a quiet, easy life for so long, while there was death and suffering all around me.'

Both heroes operate in an anarchic, dysfunctional society in which life is cheap and democratic accountability an unheard-of concept. What does it mean to be a moderate Arab in Israel? Or in the West Bank and Gaza? What can a man of honour do in a society in which honour means clan loyalty rather than integrity?

Rees and Kashua could have written 'easy' novels – a *Mysterious Affair at Gaza* thriller perhaps and a mawkish inter-ethnic romance, 'Goy meets Girl' (to be turned into a musical: 'West Bank Story'). But both have written infinitely more complex books that illustrate the intractability of the Arab-Israel conflict. That is an excellent reason to recommend them.

Bryan Reuben

Yom Hashoah commemoration at Pinner Synagogue

Recalling the Kindertransports

Pinner Synagogue has once again held an evening in remembrance of the Holocaust, paying tribute to all who perished in those dark days.

Over 400 people packed the hall, among them the Mayor of Harrow, Councillor Jean Lammiman; the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, His Excellency Mr Juraj Zervan, who gave a brief address; and the deputy Heads of Mission of the Austrian, Polish and Slovak embassies.

The theme this year was 'Reflect and Act' and the guest speakers were former Kinder Susi Bechhofer and Hermann Hirschberger.

Susi Bechhofer arrived with her three-year-old twin sister Lotte at Liverpool Street Station in May 1939. They became foster children of a Baptist minister who raised them as Christians. Susi described how she learned of her real identity, finding members of her large family scattered around the world, and

described vividly how she was in a constant state of 'tug-of-war' between her two personas as she sought to embrace her *Jewishkeit*.

Hermann Hirschberger, former chairman of the AJR's Kindertransport special interest group, arrived in England in

March 1939 with his brother. He described his early childhood in Germany, including a memory of staring into the pistol of an SS officer who demanded that he 'hand over' his father. Hermann highly praised the then British government for its unique action in sanctioning the Kindertransport programme.

For both speakers, the true heroes of their stories were their parents who, knowing of the

personal hardships and dangers they were likely to face, unselfishly made the decision to send their children away to a land of safety and opportunity.

Brian Eisenberg



CANDLE-LIGHTERS: (back, from left) Hermann Hirschberger, Ernest Simon, Erich Reich; (front, from left) Bertha Leverton MBE, Susi Bechhofer, Ursula Gilbert

'Our most loyal volunteer' calls it a day

Popular volunteer Fred Dunston has finally decided to call it a day and is moving into Hammerson House.

Fred has been coming to the AJR offices since 1983. In the last few years he has worked in the accounts department in Stanmore filing documents.

Last year, when the AJR held a lunch to celebrate Fred's 90th birthday, AJR Director Carol Rossen described him as 'our most loyal volunteer'.



NON-STOP TRIP TO ISRAEL

Earlier this year, 29 AJR members and 3 staff met at Heathrow Airport for the AJR's first organised trip to Israel. On arrival at our hotel in Netanya, we were joined by 4 members who had travelled from Manchester.

During the 10 days we were in Israel, it was non-stop. We visited Caesarea to see the gardens. We spent time in Jerusalem, including a visit to the tunnels beneath the Western Wall. We danced the *Hora* on a boat from Tiberias to Ein Gev. On top of that, we were in Jaffa, where we paid a visit to the

gallery of sculptor Frank Meissler; Tel Aviv; and Yad Vashem, where the AJR was presented with a certificate thanking us for collecting names for their archive. One evening, there was a fascinating talk by two refugees from Darfur.

Judging by the number of letters, cards and emails we have received thanking Susie Kaufman, Carol Hart and myself for the trip, we are delighted it was so successful. We're now working on 2009!

Carol Rossen

Moving on



Social Care Worker Nomi Lackmaker is leaving the AJR almost exactly three years to the day she arrived.

AJR Director Carol Rossen told staff at a lunch given in her honour that Nomi had had 'a great impact' on the AJR. Nomi, for her part, said she had learned a great deal at the AJR and had had 'the privilege of meeting some amazing people'.

Nomi is not, however, going far and will remain in contact with the AJR: she is moving to the Hendon-based Shalvata therapy centre for survivors, refugees and their families.

More fighting talk

This is the concluding part of an article which appeared in last month's issue of the Journal.

As I was telling you in the May issue, I was knocking about on the Indian subcontinent, a British army lieutenant on attachment to the Indian army in acknowledgement of my linguistic prowess, including a recently acquired knowledge of Urdu. What I lacked was a proper job. I was supposed to supervise the construction of landing strips in the Burmese jungle, but no one seemed to think my contribution was essential to the coming battle. Who was I to try to push myself forward and influence strategy, the more so as my knowledge of languages did not extend to the correct phrases for formal surrender in Japanese (theirs or mine)?

'Speak Urdu, don't you,' the brigadier tackled me out of the blue. 'Just the man. Court martial.'

'I didn't know learning Urdu was a punishable offence, sir.'

'Not *your* court martial – not yet! They warned me you were a bit of a wag. Where did you say you came from?'

'I didn't say, sir, but I was born in Vienna and live in Hampstead when the army lets me.'

'Not much difference these days, eh? Got a job for you.'

The job was to act as 'Soldier's Friend', a lay defending officer, to a soldier accused of knifing a comrade. A conference with my client revealed that he had been in a drunken brawl about which he remembered little except that he had been attacked and forced to defend himself.

'With a knife?'

'No, sir. With a pen.'

'You mean a penknife.'

'No, a pen. Ball point.' He pointed to a row of ball point pens in his breast pocket, their number an indicator of status in the world of the Indian army clerk.

Over the next few days I studied the papers in the case and immersed myself in court martial procedures. The evidence had been negligently assembled and poorly documented. There was no reference to a pen or a knife, just 'a weapon'. The victim's injuries were described as 'cuts', which was not consistent with the use of a pen. He was

not down to be called by the prosecution because he was too ill to attend; his evidence was contained in a sworn statement. So I took myself off to the hospital and found him playing ping pong in the recreation hut.

'Healing well?', I asked.

'Very well, sir. Look.' He pointed to a small bandage on his arm and a sticking plaster below his left eye.

'It must have been a jolly big knife.'

'Very big,' he confirmed. 'It made hole.'

The president of the court was a lieutenant-colonel, a member of the English bar, assisted by two lay assessors, both captains. The prosecuting officer was a tubby Tamil, a lawyer, distinctly unimpressive. I had him down as L.I.D. Madras (failed twice).

Proceedings were conducted in English, with every word translated into Urdu by the court interpreter. Just to lay down a marker, I pulled him up once when he took a shortcut in translation. Surprise all round. We got off to a bad start when I asked why the weapon was not among the exhibits. 'It's all in the papers,' Tubby said irritably. 'If you come to court you must read the papers.' He began to outline his case.

Translating every word made it infinitely tedious. When my turn came to speak, I decided to make the most of everybody's desire to finish before lunch: 'We are a bit short of substance: no weapon, no chance to cross-examine the alleged victim. The weakness of the prosecution's case may help us to reach a speedy conclusion.' At the words 'speedy conclusion' everybody perked up. 'Given my lack of experience, I would like to ask the court's indulgence in calling just one more witness who is not listed. He is waiting outside.'

There was a bit of whispering on the bench and a shrug of the shoulders from Tubby. 'Granted,' said the president, 'but make it snappy.'

I made the two guards who stood either side of my client take off their caps so that they were bareheaded like the accused. Then I asked them to stand in a row, with the accused next to me and no longer in the middle. 'What's going on?', asked Tubby. 'This is most irregular.'

'I am holding an identity parade. Doing

your job for you.' Then I asked for the alleged victim to be marched in. I had fixed this with the hospital, which was only too happy to let him go. 'Here we are. Now tell us,' I said, pointing to the guard in the middle, 'whether you recognise this man.' Note that I didn't ask whether it was the man who stabbed him – I wanted that to come from him.

And the answer came back at once. 'Yes, sir. He is the one who cut me.'

'Are you quite sure?'

'Quite sure, sir. He had the big knife.'

Tubby tried to save the situation, but it was beyond retrieval. 'I think a conviction would be unsafe in the circumstances,' I said.

'We have wasted a morning,' said the president. 'Case dismissed.'

The following day I was collared by my brigadier. 'You made a fool of the court. Nothing to be proud of.'

'On the contrary, sir. I stopped the court from making a fool of itself. The evidence was all over the shop. If there had been a conviction I would have asked for a review, and the Judge Advocate's Office would have blown a gasket.'

'I dare say. Even so, it was all a bit too much Hampstead.'

Three weeks later, miraculously accelerated, I was on active service in Burma.

Victor Ross

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(former director for BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?*) on 01227 281 222.

INSIDE the AJR

Hendon Middle East update

Rabbi Charles Emmanuel spoke to us on 'Israel and the Diaspora'. At first, he said, Israel had been welcomed by European nations but now anti-Israel feelings had come to the surface, resulting in antisemitic prejudice. Israel remains, though, the only democratic country in the Middle East.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: 30 June. Audiologist Robert Beiny

Weald of Kent: History of South Africa

At a well-attended meeting in Tunbridge Wells, we listened to Dr Sheila Marshall on the history of South Africa – not at all reassuring! Mr Pincus's video threw light on the part of the Jews in present-day life in that country.

Inge Ball

Ilford: Voices from the past

Alan Bilgora gave us a highly enjoyable illustrated talk on 'Famous Jewish Operatic Singers'. Wonderful voices from the past – Jan Peace, Richard Tucker, Yossele Rosenblatt, and my favourite, Alexander Kipnis.

Hermi Rothman

Next meeting: 4 June. Revital Shloman, 'From Givatayim to Redbridge'

Pinner lecture on Wiener Library

Wiener Library archivist Howard Falksohn traced the Library's development from its origins to the present day and showed us pictures from its collection, providing explanations of the individuals and events involved.

Paul Samet

Next meeting: 5 June. Jerry Lewis, 'Board of Deputies'

Essex and Jewish Care

Jewish Care's Richard Shone told us, among many other things, that there were 2,700 Jews in our area with 63 per cent of them over 75. Jewish Care was, he said, spending £15 million per year on Southend and Westcliff caring for people with dementia and other old-age illnesses in care homes.

Ken Ward

Next meeting: 3 June. Accordion recital

Edinburgh: The Jews of Jamaica

Francoise Robertson's talk on the Jews of Jamaica was riveting. Her theme: the wandering Jew, persecuted wherever he is for his religion and success. Susanne Green discussed the Holocaust Memorial Books and their great educational potential.

Jonathan Kish

Wembley CF: 'Keeping safe'

Members reported on their experiences, negative and positive. We were warned not to open our front door unless we had checked the credentials of unknown callers – including those of policemen. A lively afternoon.

Myrna Glass

Cambridge and Ben Uri

Two new members enjoyed with us an excellent talk by Suzanne Lewis, from whom we learned about the Ben Uri Gallery's history, its function in recent years, its international reputation, and its planned contribution to displays in Liverpool, 2008 European City of Culture.

Keith Lawson

Next meeting: 12 June

Oxford power-point presentation

Howard Falksohn, himself the son of a refugee from Germany, gave a power-point presentation on the past, present and future of the Wiener Library.

Anne Selinger

Next meeting: 3 June

HGS: The Vienna Kaffeehaus

Otto Deutsch, born in Vienna and a tour guide there for some 40 years, spoke to us about the ritual of drinking coffee in the 1930s. Otto's parents and sister did not survive when the Germans annexed Austria in 1938, whilst he came to England with the Kindertransport.

Max Sulzbacher

Next meeting: 16 June. Jason Caplin (Israeli Embassy), 'Mid East Update'

Brighton & Hove Sarid:

Talk by Scarlett Epstein

Professor Scarlet Epstein OBE updated us on her life-long study of developments in India. We were shown a film illustrating the differences between two villages with respect to obtaining irrigated water.

Susanne Dyke

Next meeting: 16 June. Ivor Richards, 'A Journey to Ashkenazi Jewry'

Edgware current affairs' discussion

Ronald Channing chaired a discussion on such topics as the election of the mayor of London; the Olympics; and, once again, whether we are still refugees – and, if not, how we can best describe ourselves (no agreement reached).

Felix Winkler

Next meeting: 17 June. Clare Ungerson, 'Kitchener Camp'

Liverpool: Return visit to Bochum

AJR member Dr John Goldsmith talked about his recent return visit to Bochum, when a commemorative plaque had been placed outside the family home prior to the war. The RESPECTACLE exhibition, which drew a large, appreciative audience in Liverpool Town Hall, is being re-housed in the World Museum Liverpool.

G. Alis



The AJR Manchester Holocaust Memorial Book was launched at the Yom Hashoah Commemoration Event in Manchester on 1 May. Pictured are Ruth and Werner Lachs, who, together with Angella Carne, produced the Book, and Tania Nelson and Susanne Green, who helped with the collation of the information. The Book is now on display at the Manchester Jewish Museum. For copies of the Manchester Memorial Book, please contact Werner Lachs on 0161 773 4091.

Radlett: Safety in the Community

Community Police Liaison Officer Phil Tuck told us that Radlett was a safe place. He also gave us insight into the work done by the local police.

Eric Newman

Next meeting: 18 June. Maurice Collins MBE, 'Memorabilia Collection'

Cleve Road: Jewish opera singers

Alan Bilgora told us Jewish opera singers had often begun their musical careers by singing in synagogues. Some had changed their names in order to progress or because they wanted to change their recording company. The meeting ended with a presentation to Mr Bilgora.

David Lang

Next meeting: 24 June. Dr Helen Fry, 'The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens'

Welwyn Garden City Get-together

About 13 of us met at the home of Monica Rosenbaum. We chattered among ourselves for a little while, then discussed speakers for future meetings as well as possible outings.

Ruth Tuch

Next meeting: 19 June. Social Get-together

Kingston CF/ South London/ North London outing

The heavy rain was not conducive to our visit to Kew Gardens. But our guide was excellent: many thanks to her for making the visit so enjoyable despite the weather. Our thanks too to Hazel and Esther for organising this event.

Herbert Haberberg

Spring in Surrey

Edmée Barta entertained us once again for the Spring coffee morning. We have added a number of newcomers to our group – all due to the continuing hard work of Myrna and her colleagues. Also, Myrna ensures we are updated on the AJR's wider activities as well as services for members. Once again, an enjoyable social

gathering. *Vernon Saunders*
Next meeting: 18 June. Social Get-together at home of Saunders

FURTHER MEETINGS

Kingston CF 18 June. At home of Joe and Margaret Allen in New Malden

Temple Fortune 19 June. The Wiener Library's Howard Falksohn

Wessex 25 June. Outing to Isle of Wight

North London 26 June. Jane King, 'Coram's Children'

An emotional occasion



'The mock Seder held at Cleve Road was a most enjoyable yet emotional occasion', writes Hortense Gordon. 'I – and I think most AJR members present – would like to thank Susie Kaufman and all the staff most sincerely for their hard work and loving care that made the event so memorable. Many thanks also to Rabbi Katz for the way he led the Seder.'

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

Bradford Continental Friends
Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)
Fausta Shelton 01273 734 648

Bristol/Bath
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

Cambridge
Anne Bender 01223 276 999

Cardiff
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Dundee
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

East Midlands (Nottingham)
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

Edgware
Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

Edinburgh
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

Essex (Westcliff)
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

Glasgow
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

Harrogate
Inge Little 01423 886254

Hendon
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

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Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

HGS
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

Hull
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Ilford
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Leeds HSFA
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

HOLIDAY FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS

Sunday 20 July 2008 –

Sunday 27 July 2008

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OUTINGS

MEET OLD AND NEW FRIENDS

Travel to St Annes by RAIL,

NATIONAL COACH or CAR

Please contact Ruth Finestone on

020 8385 3070

DIARY DATES

Tuesday 24 June

Day trip to Brighton and Hove
Jewish Day Centre

Sunday 20 July – Sunday 27 July
St Annes Holiday (Fernlea Hotel)

Sunday 21 Sept
AJR Tea at Hilton Watford

Sunday 26 October – Sunday 2 Nov
Eastbourne Holiday (Lansdowne Hotel)

For further information, please call us
on 020 8385 3070.

Liverpool
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Manchester
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

Norfolk (Norwich)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

North London
Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

Oxford
Susie Bates 01235 526 702

Pinner (HA Postal District)
Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

Radlett
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Sheffield
Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

South London
Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

South West Midlands (Worcester area)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

Surrey
Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

Temple Fortune
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Weald of Kent
Max and Jane Dickson
01892 541026

Wembley
Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

Wessex (Bournemouth)
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

West Midlands (Birmingham)
Ernest Aris 0121 353 1437

Paul Balint AJR Centre
15 Cleve Road, London NW6
Tel: 020 7328 0208

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Wednesday 18 June 2008

Kathleen O'Malley
'Childhood Interrupted'

Please be aware that members should not automatically assume that they are on the Luncheon Club list. It is now necessary, on receipt of your copy of the *AJR Journal*, to phone the Centre on 020 7328 0208 to book your place.

KT-AJR

Kindertransport special
interest group

Monday 2 June 2008

Alex Faiman
'The Jews of Ukraine'

KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH
WILL BE SERVED AT
1.00 PM ON MONDAYS

Reservations required

Please telephone 020 7328 0208

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday
9.30 am – 3.30 pm

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS
CLOSED ON TUESDAYS

June Afternoon Entertainment

Mon 2	KT Lunch – Kards & Games Klub
Tue 3	CLOSED
Wed 4	BINGO
Thur 5	Geoffrey Strum
Mon 9	CLOSED – Shavuoth
Tue 10	CLOSED
Wed 11	Douglas Poster
Thur 12	Madeleine Whiteson
Mon 16	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 17	CLOSED
Wed 18	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur 19	Katinka Seiner
Mon 23	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 24	CLOSED
Wed 25	Guyathrie Peiris & Bill Patrick
Thur 26	Ronnie Goldberg
Mon 30	Kards & Games Klub

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

Members requiring benefit advice please telephone
Linda Kasmir on 020 8385 3070 to make an
appointment at AJR, Jubilee House, Merriam Avenue,
Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups Co-ordinator
020 8385 3070

**Myrna Glass, London South and Midlands
Groups Co-ordinator**
020 8385 3077

Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator
0151 291 5734

Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator
020 8385 3070

Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator
020 8385 3077

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Birth

Congratulations to AJR Northern Social Worker Anthony Fagan and Jennifer on the birth of their daughter.

Deaths

Breskin, Nathan (Nat), husband, father, grandfather and Holocaust survivor. Slipped away with grace and dignity on 25 February 2008. Deeply mourned by his wife Edith (née Eichner), sons Stephen and David, daughter-in-law Manijeh, and grandchildren Andrew and Alison.

AJR Centre

Chiropractor Trevor Goldman at the Paul Balint AJR Centre Wednesday 25 June, 10-11.30 am.

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Afternoon tea will be served
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AJR DAY TRIP

Join us for a trip to
Brighton & Brighton & Hove
Jewish Day Centre

Tuesday 24 June 2008

Coach leaving AJR Centre,
Cleve Road, London NW6
at 10.00 am

£20 per person to include
transport, lunch and tea

Please contact Carol Rossen
or Lorna Moss on 020 8385 3070
Places are limited so please book early

**THE HOLOCAUST CENTRE
INVITES AJR MEMBERS TO
THE POST-OPENING
VIEWING OF
'THE JOURNEY'
AT BETH SHALOM,
THE HOLOCAUST CENTRE**

in Laxton, near Nottingham
on Sunday 14 September 2008

'The Journey', partly created with a grant
from the AJR Charitable Trust, tells the
story of the Kindertransport – the
refugees' escape from Nazi-occupied
Europe to resettlement in Britain.

To reserve a place, please contact
Susan Harrod at AJR head office
on 020 8385 3070 before 29 May.

There are 60 invitations, which
we are making available to members
throughout the country on a
first-come first-served basis.

Please let us know if you are concerned
about travel – transport can be
arranged from main centres.

Members who have already received
invitations from Beth Shalom for the
opening of 'The Journey' should reply
directly to The Holocaust Centre.

KINDERTRANSPORT 70TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION ELY EVACUEES

In order to create a small exhibition on 23
November at JFS, we are looking for
memorabilia – letters, pictures, photographs
etc – from Kinder who were evacuated with
JFS to Ely.

Please contact Andrea Goodmaker at the
AJR on 020 8385 3070 if you have anything
that might be suitable.

SECOND GENERATION GATHERING

The next Second Generation gathering will
take place in Manchester on 15 June from
10 am to 4.30 pm

For further information, contact Barbara
on 0161 368 5088 or at barbara@ajr.org.uk

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OBITUARY

Edyta Klein-Smith, 4 May 1929-10 February 2008

Edyta Klein-Smith, one of the last survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto, has died in the Hammersmith Hospital at the age of 78. Her entire family, with the exception of Edyta and her mother, were killed in the Holocaust: she and her mother escaped from the Ghetto immediately prior to its destruction.

The following years were spent living rough on false papers in Warsaw until the Russians arrived in January 1945. In 1946 they escaped from Poland and arrived in the American zone in Germany. They tried to get to Palestine but failed.

While living in the refugee camp in Germany, Edyta married Carl Fink, also a Jewish refugee from Poland. They and her mother emigrated to the United States in 1947. None of them spoke English. In late 1947 Edyta gave birth to a son, Norman. Within a year Carl was killed in an automobile accident.

Soon after, Edyta and other Polish-Jewish survivors founded the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organisation to ensure

the Holocaust was never forgotten. The group was a major promoter of the New York Holocaust Museum in Manhattan and a prime mover in the establishment of the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC.

In 1967 Edyta and her family moved to London, where she became active in organisations promoting Holocaust studies and speaking in schools throughout England telling of her experiences. She and her survivor friends began to push for a Holocaust museum in London. Through the efforts of Suzanne Bardgett and many concerned Jews and Jewish organisations, the Holocaust Exhibition opened in the Imperial War Museum. Edyta and others featured as survivors. Much has been published about her exploits, strengths and determination.

Edyta was a member of, among other organisations, the AJR, Jewish Care and the London Jewish Cultural Centre. She is survived by her husband Thomas, sons Norman and Andrew, and five grandchildren.

Thomas Smith

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY — JUNE

To 29 June 'Lifelong Impressions – Paintings, Prints and Drawings by Milein Cosman' Hampstead Museum, Burgh House, New End Square, London NW3. Contact Dina Wosner on 020 8371 7371. Sponsored by Burgh House and Hampstead Museum, AJR and Jewish Museum

To 8 June 'Whitechapel at War: Isaac Rosenberg and His Circle' Ben Uri Gallery, 108a Boundary Road, London NW8, tel 020 7604 3991

Mon 2 No lecture (hall not available) Club 43

Mon 9 No lecture (hall not available) Club 43

Tues 10 Prof Christian Wiese, 'Challenging Cultural Hegemony: Jewish Studies, Liberal Protestantism, and Anti-Semitism in Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany' German Historical Institute, 17 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1, 5.00 pm, tel Centre for German-Jewish Studies on 01273 678771

Wed 11 Professor Jay Winter, 'The Degeneration of War' Wiener/Birkbeck Lectures. Venue: Birkbeck College, Lecture Theatre B33, Malet Street, London WC1, tel 020 7636 7247

Fri 13 Prof Saul Friedländer, 'An Integrated History of the Holocaust: Some Historiographical Issues' Chawen Lecture

Theatre, Brighton and Sussex Medical School Building, University of Sussex, 5 pm, tel Centre for German-Jewish Studies on 01273 678771

Mon 16 Avis Saltsman, 'The Roots of Twentieth-Century Art: Van Gogh and Gauguin' Club 43

Mon 16 'Remembering Hungarian Jewish Composers Who Perished in the Holocaust' Hungarian Cultural Centre, 10 Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, London WC2, 7.00 pm. Tel Agnes Kory, Bela Bartok Centre for Musicianship, 020 7435 3685. Admission free, booking required

Wed 18 The first study of the wartime Austrian Centre, *Out of Austria: The Austrian Centre in London in World War II* by Marietta Bearman, Charmian Brinson, Richard Dove, Anthony Grenville and Jennifer Taylor, will be launched at the Austrian Cultural Forum, 28 Rutland Gate, London SW7 at 7.00 pm. The book is available from publishers I. B. Tauris, London

Mon 23 AGM Club 43

Mon 30 Ernst Flesch, 'A Journey across Central Europe (Germany, Austria, Slovakia and Czech Republic) with Slides' Club 43

Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Hans Seelig on 01442 254360

AJR REPORT

Michael Newman

Tax and benefit exemptions

We set out here confirmation that certain Holocaust restitution and compensation payments are disregarded when calculating entitlement to welfare benefits and are exempt from specific taxes.

Atrocity pensions

We have received confirmation from the Pension Service that an atrocity pension, such as a German *Wiedergutmachung* or payments from the Article II Fund, is fully disregarded when applying for pension credit.

DSS capital disregards clarified

Lump-sum compensation payments, such as slave and forced labour reparations, can be disregarded as capital when calculating housing- and income-related benefits following an extension to social security regulations announced in November 2001.

Income tax

At the instigation of the AJR, legislation passed in July 2005 makes exempt from income tax compensation payments paid by foreign banks and building societies, including dormant Swiss bank accounts, to Holocaust victims or their heirs. The announcement extended the terms of extra-statutory concession A100.

Separately, Section 330 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 confirms that pensions and allowances paid to victims of Nazism are exempt from income tax. Importantly, this exemption applies to compensation received regularly but not to one-off or ex-gratia awards.

Capital gains tax

Awards made in respect of insurance policies under the terms of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims and for property in the former East Germany are exempt from capital gains tax in accordance with the terms of extra statutory exemption D50 (ESC D50).

Inheritance tax

Lump-sum compensation payments made in respect of personal persecution are excluded from inheritance tax (IHT) under the terms of an extra-statutory concession (F20) announced in March 2002. This concession allows the compensation to be deducted from the claimant's IHT-chargeable estate, whether the payment is made to the claimant before their death or is made subsequently to their personal representatives. This concession does not apply to compensation for assets or property.

Written enquiries should be sent to Central Office for Holocaust Claims (UK), Jubilee House, Merriam Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL, by fax to 020 8385 3075, or by email to mnewman@ajr.org.uk



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



Israel at sixty

Turning sixty is not generally an event to be celebrated. It marks a turning point between being middle-aged and elderly, though perhaps that is not as clear-cut today as it once was. But for a country, and especially one whose initial survival was uncertain, it is a significant milestone. Today, Israel's existence, though still questioned by some on the terrorist fringe, is firmly entrenched and its achievements are far from insignificant.

There is no need here to go into the details of Israel's struggle to combat the initial onslaught by the Arab countries surrounding it. Suffice it to note Israel's integration of the myriad Jewish refugees from Europe and the Arab countries, when its population doubled in the first five years of its existence. Those Arab countries refused to invest even one hundredth of their vast resources in absorbing their own refugees, preferring to leave their fellow-Muslims to rot in refugee camps, thereby deliberately perpetuating the problem.

Israel's record in absorbing immigrants has been recognised as an unparalleled social and economic achievement. At the same time, Israel has managed to mark up achievements in agriculture, education, science, the arts and industry that are the envy of many larger, richer and longer-established countries.

In this era of ecological awareness it is worth noting that back in the 1950s Israel made the use of solar power for heating water mandatory in all new buildings. The Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, together with the Technion in Haifa and the universities in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Beersheba, stand at the forefront of global academic research. Israel's bio-tech and pharmaceutical industries are also among world leaders. Contrary to George Steiner's expectations, Israel has even managed to produce several Nobel Prize laureates in the sciences.

Despite adverse conditions, Israel's agriculture has flourished. Today, Israel's

fruit, flowers, vegetables – even its wines – are welcomed in global markets, while demand for its organic produce outstrips supply.

One of the world's leading high-tech companies, Intel, esteems Israeli brain-power so highly that it has made Israel one of the leading centres of its R&D activities, with several development units in Israel. It is also the site of some of its largest factories, or 'fabs', in which micro-processors, the 'brain' of the computer, are made. So when you see the words 'Intel inside', you can read them as 'Israel inside'.

Israel's literary production – and consumption – is phenomenal, with new and veteran writers being published at an unprecedented rate. Israel's market for books is among the largest in the world relative to population size. Fifty Israeli writers whose books have appeared in French were feted at the recent International Book Exhibition in Paris. Many more Israeli authors were left out for lack of room and resources. Furthermore, the Israeli film *Beaufort*, based on a novel by Ron Leshem, was a candidate for best foreign film at the recent Oscar ceremony, and took first prize at the Berlin Film Festival.

Alongside such established names as Zuckerman, Barenboim and Perlman, Israeli musical talents continue to gain international renown. At the recent Rubinstein Piano Festival, no first prize was awarded but the joint second prize was awarded to young pianists from Taiwan and Israel – the first time an Israeli has achieved this. A young Israeli cellist took first place at a recent music competition in England. And Israeli names appear frequently on the international art and design scene. Israeli talents even grace the international football world.

While this is no time for complacency, Israel's achievements are remarkable by any criterion. They can – and should – constitute a source of pride for all Jews everywhere.

Dorothea Shafer-Vanson

Newsround

Germans and Israel's welfare

Most Germans feel their country has no particular responsibility for Israel's welfare, according to a poll conducted by the German TV network ZDF. The poll shows that only 40 per cent of some 1,230 respondents said that Germany had a special responsibility towards Israel. The poll also shows that 58 per cent felt that Germany must come to Israel's aid if it were attacked, as opposed to 33 per cent who opposed assisting Israel.

German-Jewish leader calls for end of ban on *Mein Kampf*

Stephen Kramer, the secretary-general of Germany's Central Council of Jews, has called for the ban on Hitler's *Mein Kampf* to be lifted. He said his organisation was prepared to edit the text so the book could be published together with editorial comments.

Armenian genocide museum under construction

An Armenian genocide museum is currently under construction in Washington DC, close to the Holocaust Memorial Museum. The museum, which is privately financed, is scheduled to open in two years.

Jewish memorial vandalised in Slovakia

Slovak police say three teenagers have vandalised a memorial in Bratislava to the nineteenth-century scholar Rabbi Chatam Sofer. If the youths are convicted, they could face a sentence of up to two years' imprisonment.

Rise in violent antisemitic attacks worldwide

Despite an overall decline in antisemitic incidents worldwide in 2007, a report by Tel Aviv University's Antisemitism Research Centre records a 6.6 per cent rise specifically in violent antisemitic attacks. The report says a commitment to combating antisemitism is apparent in Western countries such as Canada, the USA and Britain, but less so in Russia and Ukraine.

Complaints over anti-Jewish comments on Scottish newspaper websites

Replying to a letter from AJR member Walter Kress, Barbara Schuler of the Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate's Equality Unit Division in Edinburgh, writes that the Scottish Government is 'aware of the offensive comments which have been posted on the websites of The Scotsman and The Herald' and that 'the complaints are being actively pursued by the relevant police force.' She adds that 'it is also the responsibility of editors to ensure that their sites are being effectively moderated.'