

AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Ken Livingstone's School Report

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Subject History

Report

Livingstone, K. is a student with considerable achievements in the field of animal biology; his interest in the genus *Pleurodelinae* (newts) has already earned him good marks. His abilities in the field of human history, however, appear to be more modest, not least because of a tendency to let his imagination run unchecked by factual evidence and to latch on to lines of argument that owe more to ideological preconceptions than to any concern for historical accuracy. This is evident in his essay 'Adolf Hitler and the Zionists'. Here he advances the eye-catching thesis that during the 1930s Hitler supported 'the Zionists', i.e. the Jewish Agency for Palestine, by promoting the emigration of Jews from Germany to Palestine, and Palestine alone – at least until he 'went mad' at some stage during the war and switched to a policy of genocide. Those familiar with the actual history of the period would regard this argument as difficult to sustain.

The deficiencies in Livingstone, K.'s grasp of history become clear from the very start of his essay: he states that among the policies advanced by the Nazi Party when Hitler 'won his election in 1932' was the designation of Palestine as the sole territory to which Jews 'should be moved'. Livingstone, K. appears to be ignorant of the fact that there were two parliamentary elections in Germany in 1932 – that of July 1932, when the Nazis emerged as the largest party in the Reichstag with some 37 per cent of the total vote and 230 seats in parliament, and that of November 1932,

which saw the party lose some two million votes and 34 seats. Hitler's electoral failure in November, creating the impression that support for the Nazis was waning, led a



A Haavara Agreement certificate, 1935,
kindly supplied by Eric Elias

coterie of right-wingers to pressure the aged President of Germany, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, to appoint Hitler Chancellor (30 January 1933), calculating that his party was now weak enough to be harnessed to a conventional right-wing political agenda. Actual evidence of policy statements or real electoral pledges regarding the emigration of Jews to Palestine is hard to find; one comes across little more than the rabble-rousing chants of 'Alle Juden nach Palästina' ('All Jews to Palestine') favoured by marching Nazi Brownshirts – but those hardly reflected Party or government policy.

The argument that Palestine was the only territory to which the emigration of Jews was promoted by the German government, by means of official agreements, is weak. Those like Livingstone, K. rely principally on the Haavara Agreement of September 1933, a scheme that traded the emigration

of Jews from Germany to Palestine against an expansion of German foreign trade; that expansion eased the chronic shortage of foreign currency which threatened the capacity of Nazi Germany to finance the imports required both for its rearmament programme and to ensure a reasonable standard of living for the German people. The Agreement also broke the pattern of boycotts of German imported goods by foreign countries, in which Palestine had been in the van. It is, of course, hardly surprising that bodies like the Jewish Agency would wish to make every effort to save the Jews of Germany by facilitating their emigration.

The Haavara Agreement required German Jews emigrating to Palestine to deposit their assets in blocked accounts (*Sperrkonten*) that remained in Germany. When Palestine bought German goods it had to pay only 50 per cent of the total price in its own foreign exchange, while the other half was taken from the blocked accounts of the German Jews who had emigrated there. On arriving in Palestine, the Haavara trust company paid these immigrants half the value of their blocked accounts in Germany, thus ensuring that they recovered at least that part of the assets that they would otherwise have left behind in Germany.

That it was Germany's economic interests – not some murky policy of covert collaboration with 'the Zionists' – that lay behind the Haavara Agreement is hard to contest: it was negotiated on the German side by the Ministry of Economics under Hjalmar Schacht, who was also President of the Reichsbank, Germany's central bank, where he was much concerned by Germany's critical shortage of foreign currency. Schacht was an economic realist: once policy-making on Jewish affairs passed from men like him to radical, ideologically motivated anti-Semites like Heinrich

Ken Livingstone's School Report *continued*

Himmler and the SS, after November 1938, the Haavara Agreement promptly lapsed. The agreement was no more than the result of the Nazi government's perception of a temporary conjunction of its interests and those of the Jewish Agency in one specific, limited sphere: its lack of any solid ideological foundation, such as a belief on the part of the Nazi leadership in the project of forcing German Jews to emigrate solely to Palestine, led to its being discarded as soon as circumstances changed.

Livingstone, K. appears to contend that the Nazis collaborated with 'the Zionists' by concluding agreements about Jewish emigration with the authorities in Palestine alone, a contention that is all too easily refuted. The best known agreement on Jewish emigration from Germany to another country is probably the rescue effort known as the Kindertransport, which brought nearly 10,000 children from Germany to Britain, by agreement between the British and German governments. Livingstone, K. resides in north-west London, the principal area of settlement of the Jews who fled to Britain from Germany and Austria after 1933. He has been known to frequent a branch of a well-known chain of coffee shops adjacent to West Hampstead Overground station and a well-known upmarket supermarket near Finchley Road Underground station, both in the heartland of refugee settlement. It would have been easy for him to encounter former Kindertransportees – living evidence of the falsity of his arguments – but one suspects that Livingstone, K. tends to favour the company of newts over that of Jews.

Livingstone, K. raises the visit made to the Middle East by Adolf Eichmann of *Referat II 112*, the section responsible for Jewish affairs in the *Sicherheitsdienst*

(SD), the SS intelligence agency. This was indeed a remarkable episode, but not one that had the sinister overtones attributed to it by Livingstone, K. In November 1937 Eichmann and his superior, Herbert Hagen, travelled to Cairo, where they held talks with Feivel Polkes of the Haganah. The meetings proved fruitless: Hagen and Eichmann were mainly concerned to discover information about assassination plots against leading Nazis, while Polkes wished to promote the large-scale emigration of German Jews to Palestine. But in his report to Reinhard Heydrich, head of the SD, Eichmann dismissed Polkes's proposals out of hand: 'Since the emigration of 50,000 Jews per year would greatly strengthen the Jewish position in Palestine, this plan is not worth discussing. The policy of the Reich is much more to hinder the development of a Jewish state in Palestine.'

It was the real prospect of the creation of a Jewish state that had caused Nazi policy to shift abruptly against Jewish emigration there. In July 1937 a Royal Commission set up by the British government had recommended that Palestine be partitioned into an Arab state and a Jewish state. Far from wishing to contribute to a substantial population increase in a future independent Jewish state, the Nazis now saw that state as a dangerous enemy. Eichmann wrote: 'The proclamation of a Jewish state or a Jewish-administered Palestine would create for Germany a new enemy, one which would have a deep influence on developments in the Near East.' Senior Nazis like Alfred Rosenberg, the leading Nazi ideologue, also warned against the establishment of a Jewish state. Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop warned of the danger posed by such a state, which would serve as an operational base for 'world Jewry', as the Vatican did for political Catholicism.

The British proposal to partition Palestine was dropped in 1939. But Nazi hostility to any Jewish state continued implacably. Behind it lay Adolf Hitler's unremitting and vitriolic hatred of the Jews, arguably the most consistent weapon in his ideological armoury, from the beginnings of his political career in Munich after the First World War to the

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The Annual Election Meeting of The
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will take place at **4 pm on Wednesday
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Agenda: Annual Report, Financial Report,
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**If you wish to attend please contact
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karin@ajr.org.uk**

political testament that he wrote in his Berlin bunker the day before his suicide on 30 April 1945. In *Mein Kampf* he had expressed his view that a Jewish state in Palestine would not be a place for Jews to live but rather 'a central organisation of their international world cheating ... a refuge for convicted rascals and a high school for future rogues'.

Who can seriously believe that a Jew-hater of such proportions would do more than flirt temporarily with any plan to encourage Jewish emigration to Palestine? Livingstone, K. would be well advised to drop his ventures into historical fantasy and concentrate instead on his strong points – the propagation of newts, not the dissemination of red herrings.

Anthony Grenville

Quotations from Nazi documents are taken from Karl A. Schleunes, The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews 1933-1939.

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Let's not be beastly to the Germans

I recently came across a most wonderful book – well, strictly speaking, I came across a reprint and a translation of it but it's quite possible that there are still a few readers of this journal who received the original back in 1944 or 1945. I wonder whether any were instrumental in writing it? It clearly reveals inside knowledge of the country and the society ...

Instructions for British Servicemen in Germany 1944 was published by the Foreign Office in 1943 and came out the following year; in 2007 it was republished by the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Whilst in some respects it reflects the social mores of the time it is also fascinating for the view it gives of 'The Germans', acknowledging that not all were Nazis but also warning that those who were actively anti-Nazi would by now have been removed from society, fled or been murdered, and that even young people were infected through Nazi propaganda.

As an Englishman – one could even say a Yorkshireman – who has lived in Germany for 16 years, I can only say that, whereas some things have changed, some things seem still very familiar. Again and again I have been accused by members of Jewish communities of having 'English humour' – this was a negative comment. I thought most of my jokes were actually Jewish and, if Jewish humour comes from Jews, from where does black humour come, eh? A Spanish TV crew once asked me for the difference between English and German humour. 'Well, for one thing,' I began, 'there is English humour ...' But this book discusses different perspectives.

It's always a difficult matter when the soldiers of one country invade another – even in the *Torah* there are rules for dealing with besieged cities and prisoners. The booklet states: 'There will be no brutality about a British occupation, but neither will there be softness or sentimentality.' In contrast: 'You have heard how the German armies behaved in the countries they occupied, most of them neutral countries, attacked without excuse or warning. You have heard how they carried off men and women to forced labour, how they looted, imprisoned, tortured and killed.' The

British, it is clear, would be different.

How different? 'No-one can be a state or municipal servant in Nazi Germany unless Hitler and Hitler's yes-men are convinced of his loyalty to themselves ... down to the Blockwart with the

Of course, many Jews in Germany now come from a Soviet cultural background but the cultural or political differences are minor – there is still the dependence on the 'strong man' who dominates a community and tells people what to do and what to think and how they may pray – and forbids any other options. And who is to be obeyed ...

modest job of ruling a block of flats' (p.17f); 'According to Hitler the State is something above the people. The individual must give up his rights, his liberties, his beliefs, even his religion, for what is held to be the good of the State ... The Christian virtues of kindness and justice are thought to be unworthy of the Master Race, and the Nazis have tried to uproot them ... It seems strange that such wild ideas could impose on a European nation in the 20th Century, but woven into Hitler's doctrine are many deep-seated German "complexes", such as hatred of the Jews, a desire to domineer over others and a readiness to believe that they themselves are being persecuted' (p.19f).

After some political struggles inside Jewish communities I have become increasingly aware of the British concept of a 'Loyal Opposition', which means one opposes without thereby being disloyal to the system. Whereas here: 'for centuries they have been trained to submit to authority – not because they thought their rulers wise and right, but because obedience was imposed on them by force ... That is one reason why they accepted Hitler. He ordered them about, and most of them liked it. It saved them the trouble of thinking. All they had to do was obey and leave the thinking to him. It also saved them, they thought, from responsibility ...' (p.25).

Is this a stereotype? As a rabbi in Berlin, I have attempted to negotiate with synagogue board members, to make suggestions for initiatives, to propose ideas for change. I achieved almost nothing and was accused by some of my supporters of being 'too English'. Now I read this advice (p.43): 'If you have to give orders to German civilians, give them in a firm, military manner. The German civilian is used to it and expects it! And indeed when, in frustration, I have broken down and shouted at somebody – something which, in Britain, would lead to a total loss of respect – I have found that people are actually much more respectful and do what I say! Even though I dislike myself afterwards ...

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The Enlightenment was essentially the discovery of the Individual – until then everyone lived in a collective, be it a Family, a Tribe, a People; they were Subjects of a ruler. Then, the idea grew – in some parts of the world – that the individual was morally and intellectually responsible for his or her own actions. A citizen is not a subject.

The British soldiers were being warned to think carefully and to analyse and not believe everything they saw or heard – and at the same time to see the people they were occupying as somehow responsible for their situation. Despite which, there had to be rules, and laws, and discipline. Where is the boundary between sensible advice and racist or cultural stereotypes? It's a fascinating subject and one which, I am sure, can be discussed for generations to come ...

Walter Rothschild

Rabbi Dr Walter Rothschild was born in Bradford, UK, was ordained by Leo Baeck College, and has lived in Berlin since 1998 serving mainly communities around Germany and Austria.

Rosie and Truus – a footnote in history

As a newly qualified teacher in Bristol in the late 1960s, I worked largely with A-level students at Filton High School. Many later became, and still remain, my friends – after all I wasn't very much older than they were. One of these students was a young and enthusiastic teenager called Derek Pickup. When my new wife, Jane, and I organised a senior school visit to a kibbutz in Israel he was the first of six students to enlist. It was a wonderful experience for us all. Later, when my family moved to the kibbutz for three years after the Yom Kippur War, Derek constantly came to visit and even completed a six-month *ulpan*.

In 1977 we returned to live in London and Derek kept in constant contact. After a while he met, and later married, a young Dutch woman whom he – unsurprisingly – had got to know at a Hebrew-language summer school in Jerusalem. Esther Keller had been a Hebrew-language student at Groningen University and had attended the same course.

Over the years we all met frequently in Bristol, where Derek and Esther made their home, or in London, and watched each other's children growing up. The time came when their eldest child, Rivka – deliberately given a Hebrew name – was to be married, so off we went to the wedding. And it was here that I first met Esther's mother, Truus Sauer. She, of course, knew of us (the Sugarmans) as Esther's friends from London and, with my black hair and beard, she lovingly dubbed me her 'Rabbi'. During the wedding reception she appeared very anxious to talk to me and took me aside to a quiet spot. In her broken English she excitedly wanted to explain why she called her only daughter 'Esther' – something I had often wondered about but never given much thought to. The reason now became tragically clear.

Truus was born in 1933 and grew up in the suburbs of the lovely Dutch town of Arnhem. As a little girl she witnessed the terrible battle there in September 1944 when British Paras tried to take 'A Bridge Too Far' and her family became refugees in their own country, driven out by the Germans. But earlier in the war Truus, then aged about ten, had witnessed something equally traumatic. Across from their house, in a quiet Arnhem street,

lived a Jewish family. Truus's mother had given the mother of the family Truus's ration card so they could at least obtain some food for their children. Then one day Truus saw the Nazis round up and brutally deport her Dutch-Jewish neighbours in broad daylight. Among the family was

It suddenly came home to me that for Truus to remember Rosie's suffering in her last hours such an event must clearly have been deeply hidden in her innermost thoughts and etched within her heart for over seven decades and that it was too painful for her to speak of it except on very rare occasions. And so Rosie's name was on the lips of Truus Sauer as she lay dying.

Truus's best school friend Rosie. The family were never seen again. 'That is why I gave my daughter the Jewish name of Esther!' declared Truus with great passion, 'To remember the Jewish people who were murdered by the Nazis.' We both had tears in our eyes and I hugged her.

Years have gone by and sadly in 2014 Truus became terminally ill. In July 2015 we were visiting the Pickups in Bristol and Esther said she would soon be going to Holland to stay a while with her mum as the end was approaching for her. That day I spoke to Truus on skype from Esther and Derek's home for the first time since that meeting at the wedding and again she called me her 'Rabbi', though now my beard was greyer. She asked me to say a prayer for her. And I did.

Truus sadly passed away in August with her large family around her near her home in Goutum. Of course, on her return we spoke to Esther about what had happened. She told me that the most heartrending part of those last hours with her mother was that prominent among her mum's last thoughts was her Jewish school friend Rosie. In her delirium and the fog of medication, she kept calling out 'Rosie, Rosie, why are they taking you? Why doesn't someone stop them? Why is nobody helping you?' Esther and I wept as she related this to me.

So anyone reading this might ask: why am I telling you the story? It is

because something occurred to me on hearing Esther's testimony. As a teacher for many years in Bristol and London, I was long involved in Holocaust education, particularly serving on the working groups that brought the Auschwitz and Anne Frank exhibitions to London in the early days. I have met, interviewed and befriended survivors and their families, spent much time with the

late, great Sir Martin Gilbert – probably the Holocaust's most gifted chronicler – and, like many readers of this journal, read volumes and watched films on this most awful yet compelling subject. In fact, it is only ten years ago that I discovered that direct descendants of my Dutch-Jewish great-grandmother – those who never came to England – had perished in Auschwitz and Sobibor. We always, of course, remember the victims of this worst crime in history – the special annihilation of virtually all the Jews of Europe; we remember the survivors and their children and their traumas; we remember with varying degrees of disgust and hatred the perpetrators and their cowardly collaborators; we recall the bystanders who did nothing and even profited from the deportation of the Jews, including from as far away as Arab North Africa; and we remember the tribulations and nightmare of the Allied soldiers who experienced the horrors of liberating the camps and saw the death pits. And we recall the urgency of the final need – as if we required any more of a reason – for the rebirth and redemption of Israel as a safe home at last, stolen from the Jewish people over 1,000 ago but now ours once more and for all time.

But we rarely, if ever, give thought to the innocent witnesses who wanted to help the Jews but were powerless, like Truus Sauer in her childhood. It suddenly came home to me that for Truus to remember Rosie's suffering in her last hours such an event must clearly have been deeply hidden in her innermost thoughts and etched within her heart for over seven decades and that it was too painful for her to speak of it except on very rare occasions. And so Rosie's name was on the lips of Truus Sauer as she lay dying.

On Holocaust Memorial Day 2017, I will, of course, be remembering

RESTITUTION OF VIENNA PHARMACY

In 2008 the Guild of Austrian Pharmacists celebrated the centenary of its foundation and published a research project on the history of the regulation of pharmacy in Austria.* The publication includes a very detailed account of the 'aryanisation' of individual pharmacies.

Like so many other refugees, my family had told me almost nothing of the hardships they suffered at the hands of the Nazis and I found out many details of the story only from this book.

Until 1829 there were no regulations relating to the practice of pharmacy by Jews in Austria. On 16 May 1829 a decree by Emperor Franz I forbidding Jews from practising pharmacy was enacted. This law was repealed in 1860 by Emperor Franz Joseph I. In December 1867 a law was enacted that no citizen should be denied access to any profession on the grounds of his religion. This ruling led to a rapid growth in the number of Jewish pharmacists, so that by 1900 10 per cent of pharmacists in Vienna were Jews. In 1938 before the Anschluss there were 222 pharmacies in Vienna, 79 (36 per cent) of them owned by Jews. In Germany 'aryanisation' of pharmacies had been initiated in April 1933 with the advent to power of the National Socialists. Following the Anschluss the Austrians rapidly followed suit with an efficient bureaucracy to plunder Jewish assets.

In 1913 my grandfather, Adolf Metall, and a Jewish colleague, Heinrich Grünberg, had become partners in a pharmacy in the 5th District, the Apotheke zur heiligen Margarethe. Both Heinrich Grünberg's son Fritz and Adolf Metall's daughter, my mother Vilma, qualified as pharmacists at Vienna University and were taken into the business. My grandfather died in 1934 and, at the time of the Anschluss, Heinrich, Fritz and Adolf's widow and daughter each held quarter shares in the business.

According to the official report of 22 July 1938, the business was profitable and free from debt. On that day a National Socialist, who had been a member of the Österreichischen Legion of the Deutsches Reich since 1934, was appointed manager of the pharmacy. With the authorisation of the Asset Transfer Agency (*Vermögensverkehrsstelle*) the pharmacy was 'aryanised' on 18 November 1938, the day after my grandmother, my mother and I left for England. My father had gone ahead in September having also lost his job as

company secretary at Gerngross, Vienna's largest department store, which had also been in Jewish ownership. My mother initially refused to sign the transfer papers and was told that it didn't matter whether she did so then or in Dachau.



My mother, right, in front of her London pharmacy (our name was changed from Lichtenstern to Lester in 1947)

According to the very precise official figures, the prescribed price for the pharmacy was RM 49,210.78, from which RM 29,526.41 'aryanisation' tax was deducted, leaving RM 19,684.27, which was placed in a locked pharmaceutical account (*Sperrkonto bei de Pharmakred*). There are similar precise accounts of the forced acquisition of all the other 78 Jewish pharmacies.

Still we were lucky. My family's partner, Heinrich Grünberg, and his wife didn't leave Vienna. In October 1941 they were deported to the Litzmannstadt/Lodz ghetto, where he worked as a pharmacist. In the words of the authors of the book, 'They did not survive the Shoah'. Their son Fritz, who had a congenital heart disease, was able to escape in 1939 with his wife to La Paz in Bolivia, where he established a chemicals factory. Sadly, partly as a result of the unsuitably high altitude of La Paz, he died of heart disease in 1948 at the age of 37.

My grandmother Adele and my mother Vilma escaped to England in November 1938. My very efficient mother was able to work in a pharmacy in Willesden Green in north London during the day and take an evening course at what was then the Chelsea Polytechnic. She re-qualified as a member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain after only one year. She then became manageress of the same pharmacy. (My poor father, Felix Lichtenstern, who was a lawyer by profession and was interned on the Isle of Man, never found suitable work, but that is a different story.)

During the war the management of the pharmacy in Vienna was transferred a number of times after the original National Socialist manager was called up to serve as Officer Pharmacist in the Army.

In 1947 my grandmother, mother and the widow and son of Fritz Grünberg applied for the restitution of the pharmacy and ownership was restored to them in November 1948. After complex negotiations, which necessitated the return of my mother to Vienna for a lengthy period and ultimately the employment of a lawyer who specialised in restitution, they were finally able to sell the pharmacy in 1952 and transfer their money to England and that of the surviving Grünbergs to the USA, where they then lived.

I don't know what the financial basis of the restitution was but it was sufficient to allow my mother to buy a partnership in a pharmacy in London, where she worked happily and successfully until she was 80. Even after retiring from full-time work, she continued to do 'locum' jobs virtually until her death in 1994.

My mother and grandmother liked to talk to my four children, to whom they were devoted, about their good times in Vienna before the war. I was always reluctant to return to Vienna but in 2009 my children persuaded me that they wanted to see the places in the Austrian capital where we had lived and my parents had worked before the war.

The Apotheke zur heiligen Margarethe turned out still to be a retail pharmacy, although clearly very updated, and six of us trooped inside. I explained to the assistant that we just wanted to have a look since it had once belonged to my family. The assistant became agitated and said he would have to call the 'Chef'. I repeated the explanation to the boss, whose embarrassed reaction was 'It's nothing to do with me!' He was right, of course: in 1938 he had not been born.

Sadly, when my grandmother died at the age of 91 and my parents in their eighties, it was not acknowledged that anything had been to do with anyone in Austria and it was only later that I was offered financial compensation amounting to one tenth of the financial loss that the Austrian restitution authorities had calculated was due to them. For their disrupted lives and their murdered families, there can be no compensation.

Eva Blumenthal

**Alfred Fehring and Leopold Kögler: Die Pharmazeutische Gehaltskasse für Österreich von 1908 bis 1948 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der 'Arisierung' und Rückstellung österreichischer Apotheken*



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

faced no such discrimination.

Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk

Sir – Having been but a 13-year-old schoolchild at the time, I'm afraid I don't know the answers to any of the questions asked by Peter Phillips in your November journal, but they shouldn't be too difficult to find online, I'd imagine, including the value of the pound sterling in those days.

I do remember though that 5s was the maximum amount charged for any item in Marks & Spencer, including a very simple pair of shoes, a swimsuit or a cotton housecoat, and that 6s was the maximum charged for any item at Woolworth stores.

Moreover, my parents, grandmother and I arrived at Croydon Airport on 12 November 1938 on our German passports (I was on that of one of my parents). We were German citizens until we acquired British nationality after the war. Having been expelled from the former Yugoslavia, taking a plane from Zurich was the only option as the French government refused to let us travel through France by train.

Margarete Stern, London NW3

THE JOLLY COPPER

Sir – In part response to Peter Phillips's questions (November), unlike his Viennese doctor father my father was one of the tiny group of Austrian dental surgeons with medical degrees granted visas in early 1939 on condition that they passed the final year and final examination at a British university. For safety my father flew to London immediately. My mother and we children followed later by the boat train via the Hook and Harwich.

With two ex-Viennese colleagues, my father commenced the study year in Manchester. The three were, of course, *in statu pupillari* but were regarded more as staff members able to take on the more difficult cases.

On the outbreak of war a jolly policeman called and told father that he was now an 'enemy alien' and would have to be interned: 'To reduce distress I will call again for you tomorrow. Be ready!' The next day he came with a big grin and said 'You can unpack. You are still an enemy but it has been decided that due to the call-up there will be a shortage of dentists so you can carry on.'

With his other colleagues, father completed the course, learned English, passed the final examination, and joined a well respected practice. The German doctors and dentists who had arrived earlier were not subjected to these conditions.

Our jolly copper stayed for tea, then visited regularly and remained a family friend for life.

Hans L. Eirew, Manchester

Sir – Peter Phillips asks how come his father, a physician, was not interned and how come he could work from early 1941 onwards?

Internment was primarily in areas deemed vulnerable to invasion because of the totally groundless fear of a 'fifth column' among the refugees. Otherwise, Peter's description 'haphazard' is correct.

My efforts to reconstruct the chaos indicate that 249 physicians and medical students were interned – so, at most, only 10 per cent of the medically qualified refugees at the time. I know of no female physician, and only a very few nurses, who were interned. My

father's guarantor, Marjorie Raphael, rang the Home Office to put in a good word for him; finding out how chaotic the situation was, she stood guard over him at his London surgery for a few days in the event the police should call. Guarantors as guardian angels merit greater recognition than they have received until now.

In January 1941, Defence Order 1941 (32B) allowed the registration of foreign medical qualifications in the UK. Thus refugee doctors were able to work without necessarily requalifying. While Nazis were cancelling Jewish medical degrees Britain recognised them, the recognition becoming permanent after the war. Refugees today face great difficulties in requalifying – certainly a lesson for today when refugee skills are under-utilised.

Paul Weindling, Oxford

Sir – I am prompted by one of the many questions Peter Phillips asks: 'Who was it that didn't want Auschwitz bombed?' To me, the evidence points to a singular lack of interest in the fate of Jews when some could still have been saved. Commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day 61 years after deliberately missing opportunities can't change that, but it should be part of the remembrance.

With regard to Peter's question about 'the £50 that had to be paid as a guarantee by sponsors – was that per family or per person?', by the time I arrived on these shores as a displaced person in June 1946, the deposit to the Home Office before they would even consider issuing an entry visa had risen from £50 to £500, an enormous sum in those days, meant to keep out undesirables like Jews, which it did. Fortunately a distant member of my *mishpoche* was a Viennese banker with Czechoslovak nationality who was able to put down such a sum. Even then, the visa turned out to be merely a visitor's one valid for only six months. It also contained the classical wording that I was not to take up work 'paid or unpaid'.

To the six wasted years spent on the wrong side of the Channel I could now add another six months on *this* side of it. After that, and not a day earlier, a permanent visa was granted as well as a work permit. Ex-Ukrainian SS guards

FICTION DRESSED AS FACT

Sir – In company with a number of other AJR members, I attended the gala presentation of *The Pianist of Willesden Lane* recently. A magnificent performance by a gifted piano virtuoso, Mona Golabek, telling the moving story of her mother with emotion and sympathy.

As soon as I returned home I downloaded and read the associated book *The Children of Willesden Lane*, by Ms Golabek and Lee Cohen. The book is fascinating and easy to read. I enjoyed it but I was irritated because it has some serious defects.

It is written in unashamed American English, with American spellings. 'Out the door', 'backyard' and other such expressions are used consistently. Never mind. However, the book needs proofreading. There are spelling mistakes and grammatical errors. The one German phrase quoted twice is incorrect in every detail to the point of being incomprehensible.

This would be of little consequence if it were an accurate reflection of the history. But there are anachronisms everywhere. How did our heroine pay a two-pound debt in 1939 with 'two large coins'? Were the bomb-damaged ruins really rendered waterproof with plastic sheeting? 'Brighton by the Sea'? Quakers speaking in 'thees' and 'thous'? It is clear from the text that the authors were not in England during the war years.

The problem is that there are Holocaust deniers out there. They will argue, quite cogently, that the whole thing is made up and that will include the awful facts that we all know to be

true. If it's fiction, and clearly identified as fiction, that doesn't matter. But if it's history it must be written as correctly as the authors can manage and they should consult all possible sources before publishing their work. The Holocaust can never be documented sufficiently often but fiction must never be dressed up as historical fact.

Frank Beck, London NW3

AJR PLAQUE FOR GOMBRICH?

Sir – In connection with the article in your October issue on Sir Rudolf Bing, you mentioned that commemorative plaques on others have been erected by the AJR. It occurred to me that you might consider one on Sir Ernst Gombrich, who was of considerable influence on the study of art history in this country. Although Austrian by origin, he was related to my family. I always enjoy reading the Journal.

Ilse J. Eton, London NW11

SCARY MEMORY

Sir – I escaped from Berlin in May 1938. The Nazis burnt down my school in Prinzregentenstrasse. My grandparents, who had charge of me, decided I had to be got out of Germany as quickly as possible. They took me, carrying a small suitcase, to the *Hauptbahnhof*, found a Jewish couple going to London, and asked them to take me with them, which they did. Thus was I reunited with my mum. Our journey, via the Hook and Harwich, was delayed for 24 hours by a Nazi *Stichprobe* at the frontier. That was very scary for the three of us and must have been terrible for my mum.

I would really like to meet others who were also pupils at my school – two schools actually, boys attached to our synagogue on the one hand, and girls on the other. My grandfather, Arthur Meyer, an ear, nose and throat doctor and surgeon, died before the Holocaust. Omi and my uncle Uli, his wife Annemarie and little Michael all perished in Auschwitz. I have had four *Stolpersteine* laid in Bamberger Strasse in Berlin.

Tom Jacobs, Twickenham

REFUGEES AND THE SCHMATTE BUSINESS

Sir – Dr Anna Nyburg's letter in a recent issue of the *Journal* asks for information about the contribution made by refugees to the textile and clothing industry in the UK.

My father's cousin George (Gyuri) Schatz, born in Hungary, moved to Berlin in the 1920s and in the 1930s came to England, where in London's West End he set up Barclays Woollen Co, a successful merchant specialising in selling English and Scottish worsteds and woollen textiles, mainly men's suiting. He and his wife took me into their home when I came to England in 1940 (having travelled by the Kindertransport from my home town of Vienna to Belgium in March 1939).

During the war they/we lived in Amersham, also the home of other

refugees in the *schmatte* business, among them:

- Kurt and Else Nathan, whose granddaughter Liz Ison has thoroughly researched and written about her family. Kurt and Else's son, Clemens Nathan, deserves a chapter to himself;
- Gerhard and 'Mieze' Herzberg, whose son Gunter (now living in Australia) ran a textile factory in Keighley, Yorkshire;
- In Pinner or Northwood there were the Hellers (I can't remember their forenames) but their son Walter, also working in their textile business, married my cousin Marietta Kalotai.

My father, Nicholas Farago, after release from internment as an enemy alien in 1940-41, worked for his cousin in Barclays Woollen Co but in 1947 became an independent textile agent. After his death in 1954 my mother, Hilda Farago, took over his business but later switched to wholesaling children's clothes with a business partner, also a refugee. Her address books and some accounts (still in my cellar) could point to many other names relevant to your study.

Between 1948 and 1954 up to 20 refugees in the *schmatte* trades regularly had lunch in the Old Vienna Café on the first floor of Lyons Corner House in Leicester Square, where I joined them occasionally to meet my father. There was a vibrant atmosphere, old jokes were swapped (I wish someone had collected and recorded them), cakes were eaten, coffee was drunk, business was done, and a good time was had. The war had been won, the loss of relatives in the Holocaust was receding in their memories, and the outlook was positive.

In 1954 I joined the paper division of the Bunzl family business, which had moved from Vienna in the 1930s. Of the five Bunzl brothers, one moved to the USA. I believe the others all came to London. Hugo Bunzl was the overall boss and boss of the paper division, which later became what is now Bunzl plc. George Bunzl and Max Bunzl ran the textile business, which included a shoddy mill in Dewsbury, international jute and general textile trading in London, with offices (after the war) in Milan and Vienna. I didn't get much knowledge of the textile side of the Bunzl business except over lunch in the directors' dining room in London, one of the few facilities shared by the paper and textile sides of the business.

Quite a few refugees/survivors worked in Marks & Spencer head office.

Another name that comes to mind is Lord Kagan of Gannex raincoat fame. I know no more than what's on *Wikipedia* and the *Daily Mail* website.

John Farago, Deal, Kent

'ISRAEL MUST NOT BECOME INSULAR'

Sir – Dorothea Shefer-Vanson's 'Letter from Israel' (November issue) should be sent to all Jewish faith schools in the UK and should be read out in assemblies

and pinned on noticeboards so that all students can learn from it! She is so right in her criticism of Naftali Bennett, Israel's Minister of Education, who said it is more important to focus on Jewish studies than on maths and science. How uneducated is this pronouncement! It leads, as Dorothea says, to extremism and ignorance. Students in Jewish schools should beware: Israel must not become insular. Nor should *they*. A Jewish bubble is dangerous.

At the same time, I agree with Margarete Stern (October, Letters): '[C]ouples who opt to sit next to each other in synagogue will obviously not even contemplate attending Orthodox services.' This surely means that 'Orthodox wives do not want to sit next to their husbands in *shul*' – as I wrote. Why is she contradicting me – and indeed herself? More importantly, when are the Modern Orthodox going to allow husbands and wives to sit together, live up to their word 'Modern', and stop segregating women?

With regard to Clare Parker's letter about Hungarian Jews, I am not sure what she means by saying they are 'not so religious': her ladies' gallery *does* segregate women. This is a pity and modern women should not be accepting it.

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts

A TALE OF THREE JEWS

Sir – We too were refugees, in some respects similar to the ones now flooding into Europe. Three Jews, we came to England on the pretext of being voluntary miners: at the end of December 1956, this was the way to come to England. The miners threatened to strike if we became miners and that was just fine for us.

We were taken to Skegness and the Lancashire Miners' Holiday Camp, which wasn't used in the winter. The three of us were a tiny minority among the 750 Hungarian males there. Our £8 a week, less deductions for food and lodgings, was distributed on Friday mornings. Many of the inmates immediately took a bus to the town centre, where they managed to get drunk and often got into fights with their hosts. A few of the more civilised ones, helped by their lack of English, managed to charm the relatively easy English females and reached their goals amazingly fast.

In the naive belief that fellow Jews would be pleased to welcome us, I wrote a letter to the Chief Rabbi. He forwarded my letter to the Jewish community in Leeds. Very soon three men appeared in the camp, looking for us three Jews. The three men were very nice and, like politicians now, promised to get us to Leeds and sort out our lives. This promise was to materialise within a couple of days. We waited patiently. By now, I must admit, I doubt I will hear from them.

To return to my two fellow Jews. One of them was an old schoolmate. Eventually he met a nice Scottish girl

ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

He was the first artist to paint someone eating an apple or being bitten by a lizard and it was this naturalism which brought **Caravaggio** right into our face. The expression of shock



Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio *The Supper at Emmaus* 1601 (The National Gallery, London)

or pleasure on the subject's face, plus the brilliance of the light, marked him out as an artist who was radical in his time for portraying the ordinariness of day-to-day folk.

In **Beyond Caravaggio** (to 15 January 2017) the **National Gallery** brings the great painter into focus, as it does those who came after him. Not all of them are shown here, of course. You could argue that Caravaggio's influence could be seen in the subtle power of Rembrandt's light and the pathos of his subjects; you could consider the volume and physicality of Rubens; you could continue, in fact, into Modernism and Surrealism. But here we are presented with the way Caravaggio took art in new directions, lending his name to the Caravaggiesque movement, lighting the way with the spontaneous innocence of a pied piper. He was radical in his subject choices, favouring the common man in everyday situations, even in his religious paintings, and radical in his daring and vibrant use of light. It is for this reason that he is considered one of the most revolutionary figures in art – for his originality, his ability to paint emotion and convey the narrative.

Note two paintings, hung side by side, one of Christ betrayed by Judas and the other of Jesus being taken by armed guards. The Judas kiss barely touches him – perhaps a metaphor for Christ's vulnerability and untouchability as he faces martyrdom. By contrast, in *The Supper at Emmaus* he is shown fully vibrant, red-robed and gesticulating in intense conversation with his disciples.

Another stunning work is *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness*, in which the saint is an athletic but introspective youth, whose flowing robes barely cover his nudity. Other works by **Orazio Gentileschi**, notably that of his daughter **Artemisia**, whose painting *Susannah and the Elders* projects a personal story of her own rape by an art teacher and the anguish and torture of a trial weighted against her. The token woman in this show, Artemisia, is an exceptional painter in her own right, whose other brilliant works are not shown here.

A painting you could almost describe as Modernist for its unusual luminosity, though produced in the 17th Century, is

Georges de La Tour's *The Dice Players*. Its intense clarity showing men at play is claimed as Caravaggiesque. A darker version of the same subject by **Nicolas Tournier** features the hand dealing the dice as the main focus of the composition but takes a more traditional form in clothes, features and lighting. Other emulators of the great master stand out: **Gerrit van Honthorst's** evocative *Christ Before the High Priest* defines the interrogation with a single candle, playing on the admonitory finger of the high priest, and **Giovanni Antonio Galli's** *Christ Displaying His Wounds* is striking for its metaphysical portrayal of a very physical risen Christ proving his death to non-believers.

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CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

A narrative of exile

TALES OF LOVING AND LEAVING

by Gaby Weiner

AuthorHouse, 2016, 208 pp., ISBN: 9781524635084

This book is about the fragmentation and subsequent reconstruction of the author's family, torn apart – sometimes too literally – by Nazism. It is also about her own journey of discovery, a journey beset with difficulties. She describes some of the many problems she encounters: she started off by knowing very little about her parents and their families; she had difficulties in tracing relatives (especially over 50 years after the end of Nazism); various bureaucracies failed to co-operate in releasing files (MI5 was especially difficult, maybe even more so than the Austrian and Polish bureaucracies); and there was a feeling that on occasions one's Jewishness was not in one's favour. She is seeking to reveal the narrative of her family's exile but such a memoir, involving displacement and dispossession, is inevitably fragmentary.

Then there's the question of how to write such a memoir. Weiner tells us that the book is about her family and their experiences and not about her, but she finds herself – I suspect more than she wanted – writing in the 'I' as *she* is the unifying factor in this book. And, unsurprisingly, she interprets her parents' lives in part through her own experience of them. She eschews a more academic format – she wants the dead to speak for themselves, yet she inevitably has to act as the translator. At points, she uses the technique of imagining what her relatives would say or feel: her striving for reconstruction benefits from such a fictional approach.

Even some of the primary sources, such as photos, have to be interpreted. The marriage photo is not what it seems. It appears as a moment of joy but what it reveals to Weiner, among other things, is how important being integrated into British society had become to her parents and their families and, she comes to realise, how important it was to them to conceal that they were not married and that their daughter, the author, was therefore illegitimate.

When Weiner finds relatives there is no magic moment of togetherness, much though one yearns for the closeness of a lost family. The degree

of Jewish identification separates different branches of her family, as do the widely diverse locations, class and experiences. The dead stand between the living. There's no going back.

Weiner highlights the importance of her Jewish roots – of her grandmother, whom she never knew, one of millions murdered in the Holocaust. Weiner's mother did not talk of her mother, Weiner's grandmother, and knew almost nothing of her. Weiner wants to get to know the grandmother she never met. As do so many of us, she wants to breathe life back into her grandmother's life and so commemorate her. She writes in some historical detail of Brody, where her grandmother's family came from, and of its earlier Jewish community and imagines their daily experience. She writes similarly about her mother, the third major life in her book, and her mother's trajectory, framed by her life in Vienna, with its own chequered political history during the 1930s and 1940s.

Weiner's father was, while Jewish, more political than her mother. In the early twentieth century in Poland, he was involved in many of the political and social movements of the time and was therefore always ready to flee, a pattern which came to dominate – and damage – his personal life, including with his daughter. Indeed, it was only when she was in her twenties that Weiner started to discover some of her father's many secrets. Many secrets continued, however, to elude her despite strenuous efforts. Such is the effect of exile and dislocation.

Weiner's parents, from such distant countries, met as exiles in London in 1942, her father having been expelled from Belgium for being a Jew and a Communist. They moved in together and had a daughter (the author). The story does not end there – both her parents had difficulties in establishing themselves in their new countries (the post-war experiences constitute about the last third of the book). The British state did not gladly yield naturalisation to Weiner's mother despite her attempts. Although her relationship with her mother was close, her relationship with both parents was deeply marked by her parents' histories. The effects of exile and persecution continue on to the next generation.

Writing such an auto/biography is inevitably fraught with difficulty, which Weiner largely transcends. She is hoping to introduce ordinary people to the readership who may know very little about the political circumstances. She therefore provides significant contextualisation and tries

to overcome the consequent slight fragmentation by presenting each person as a separate story. This study is as much autobiography as biography: about how Nazism impacted on ordinary lives and how this leaks into the life of the following generation.

Marilyn Moos

A very valuable addition to the record

PART OF THE FAMILY: VOLUME 1
by Jason Hensley

Self-published in America, 2016, hard cover 401pp.

The subtitle of this book is *Christadelphians, the Kindertransport, and Rescue from the Holocaust* – a little-known but important part of the refugee story in Great Britain. What happened to all those children who arrived at Liverpool Street? Some of them were taken in by Christadelphian families and this book tells some of their stories.

The first part of the book is an (not absolutely clear) explication of the Christadelphian religion and why so many of its adherents wanted to help Jewish children. The second part tells the stories of ten individuals, in their own words and those of the families who took them in. Almost all the families had limited resources and sometimes limited incomes; all wanted to do good. And good they certainly did. Every child here became part of the family and felt indebted and close to them for the rest of their lives. The stories are very moving and especially the letters (translated and reproduced in full) from the parents still in Europe – some never seen again – thanking the fostering parents for the care of their child.

The drawback of this book, however, is that it is self-published and unfortunately suffers the problems that bedevil so many such books. Sad to say, some of the photos, probably not of high quality as originals, are printed so poorly as to be useless (some appear to have been faxes or photocopies); the subtitle of Flora Hertz's photo on p.316 is 'Note the number on her forearm', but none is to be seen. There is too much repetition: we do not need to be reminded in almost every chapter that the family taking in a child was Christadelphian. There is too much emphasis, to the point of sounding defensive, on the fact that none of these families attempted to convert the children to Christadelphianism (though some children chose to convert notwithstanding) and we are too often told why Christadelphians

took in these children: as late as p.317 we are reminded that '[a]part from their beliefs, the Christadelphians had no connection with the Jews from Europe. But they volunteered to have them come to live with them because they believed in the promises made to Abraham.' Too often one encounters that university-essay groaner: repeating the content of a quote more or less verbatim by way of 'elucidation'. On the other hand, for every child Mr Hensley has included a map of Europe, usefully showing his or her towns and cities of importance; every document and historical statement is fully referenced and there is even a glossary of terms at the back of the book, redundant for those with an intimate knowledge of Holocaust matters but helpful to uninitiated readers. Mr Hensley's research has been dedicated and comprehensive; the book wants only a good editor.

Despite its editorial flaws this is a very valuable addition to the record. It is the first in a series of projected books telling the stories of Kindertransport children fostered by Christadelphians and on the copyright page the author asks for any such children (or their descendants) to contact him at iwaspartofthefamily.com. More stories need telling yet.

Tanya Tintner

A remarkable story of survival

UNTERGETAUCHT: EINE JUNGE FRAU ÜBERLEBT IN BERLIN 1940-1945 (Gone to Ground: A Young Woman Survives in Berlin, 1940-1945)

by Marie Jalowicz-Simon

edited by Irene Stratenwerth

and Hermann Simon Fischer,

Taschenbuch, 2015,

ISBN 978-3-596-19827-6, 10.99 euros

This book (not yet translated into English, I believe) is an edited transcription of 77 cassettes, on which Hermann Simon Fischer's wife Marie recorded her life up to 1945. He eventually persuaded her to do so at the end of 1997, when she was 75 years old.

A sensitive reader will soon notice that this account is written not as a book but as a spoken record. The editors have been careful to preserve this 'direct' approach, which often includes witticisms, amusing expressions and direct speech in Berlin dialect, all adding to the reader's pleasure.

Marie Jalowicz was born in 1922 and lived in the eastern part of Berlin,

Reviews continued from pg. 9

which I, another 'Berliner', hardly knew as I was born and grew up in the western districts of Schöneberg and Charlottenburg. A map provided at the end of the book shows the 19 addresses mentioned by the author.

Marie was born 11 years after her parents married and remained their only child. Both families had originally come from Russia and her father and his brother had completed their secondary education with the *Abitur* and gone on to become lawyers. Her mother died in 1938 at the young age of 53. Her father lost his income as Notary Public in 1933 but was able to continue as a lawyer until 1938 as he had been a *Frontkämpfer* (soldier at the front) in the First World War. From then on his income was negligible and Marie had to supplement it by giving coaching lessons to younger pupils.

In 1940 Marie was ordered to become a *Zwangsarbeiterin* (forced labourer) at the Siemens factory in Spandau. She describes in great detail the atmosphere there as well as her colleagues – she thought there were some 200 Jewish women at the factory. Following her father's death in 1941 she managed to leave Siemens but was ordered to work the night shift in a spinning mill. She managed to get out of that by claiming she was suffering from a nervous complaint and was for that reason constantly tearing the threads. Before long she succeeded in having her name deleted from the labour exchange records: a postman asked whether Marie Jalowicz was living in her flat and she replied the lady had been deported. After that she was no longer ordered to do forced labour.

Marie's aunt Grete was deported to Lodz (Litzmannstadt) in the autumn of 1941. Although her aunt tried to persuade her to accompany her voluntarily in order to support her, Marie refused, fearing she might be killed.

In September 1941 a police regulation forced all Jews to wear a yellow star on their clothing when away from their home and the author describes the ways in which many Jewish people managed to disobey this law. Meanwhile, Marie had made up her mind that she wanted to survive, succeeded in avoiding arrest by the Gestapo, and did not comply with instructions to prepare for deportation.

Marie had met a Bulgarian who wished to marry her and she was also in love with him. He proposed to take her

RENOWNED JEWISH WOMEN SCIENTISTS

On Sunday 25 September, HSFA (Holocaust Survivors Friendship Association) members and guests attended a presentation by Bernice Pearlman, a well-known member of the Leeds Jewish community. A scientist herself, it was not surprising that the subject of her talk was 'Women in Science'.

Mrs Pearlman gave an extremely interesting account of seven Jewish women through the ages who, despite much opposition from men, became renowned scientists; two of them also became Nobel Prize-winners. This talk was part of a regular programme of events held by the HSFA.

Barbara Cline

to Bulgaria and she agreed, imagining she might have the opportunity to reach Israel from there. But for the trip to Bulgaria she needed papers, above all a passport. She always met people willing to help her and a woman called Johanna Elisabeth Koch allowed her to use her name for a forged identity card, enabling her to obtain a passport.

Marie and her fiancé reached Sofia but she didn't have the papers necessary to register with the police and her presence in Bulgaria was therefore 'illegal'. Eventually she and her fiancé decided they were not that well suited to each other after all and she managed to obtain a permit to return to Berlin.

It is not appropriate to describe all her subsequent activities in detail but she managed to remain undetected by the Gestapo and obtained help from a number of anti-Nazi Germans. She survived until she was 'liberated' by the Red Army in 1945. Suffice it to say that she subsequently studied at the Berlin University, became a lecturer there and, in 1973, a professor. She died in 1998.

Marie had been friendly with Hermann Simon when they were both at the Jewish High School in Berlin, where they passed their *Abitur* together in 1939. He had subsequently emigrated to Palestine but on hearing that his girlfriend had survived the war, he went to see her in Berlin in January 1946, still a British soldier. Simon agreed to live in Berlin too and they married in 1948.

The book is not only the record of the survival of a remarkable woman but also a thrilling story.

Fritz Lustig



AJR GROUPS ANNUAL CHANUKAH PARTY

All Welcome

Thursday 15 December 2016
at North West Reform Synagogue

Alyth Gardens, Temple Fortune,
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Starts at 11.30 am
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Cost £10.00 per person
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Zap the Magician will perform table magic to amaze and entertain you during lunch

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'From the Front Line: Negotiating with the German Government for Compensation for Holocaust Survivors'

by Karen Heilig

Assistant Vice President and
General Counsel, Conference on
Jewish Material Claims Against
Germany, New York

**Limmud Conference,
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25-29 December 2016**

For decades the Claims Conference has been negotiating with Germany for compensation for Holocaust survivors to provide a measure of justice for the greatest crime of humanity. Hear the insights and first-hand experiences from the negotiating table on the successes, challenges, dilemmas and the way forward in these unprecedented meetings.

For further details, see
limmud.org/conference

A FEELING OF PRIDE – THE AJR’S PLAQUE IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER

Last month, we published an account of the unveiling by the AJR of a special commemorative plaque in honour of the industrialist Lord Schon (1912-95) at the house in Whitehaven, Cumbria, where he and his family lived. Below, Lord Schon’s daughter, Yvonne Saville, reflects on the feelings this event triggered in her.

In March 1939 my father, Frank Schon, and my mother, Trudic, arrived at Victoria Station having narrowly escaped from war-torn Vienna via Prague (where he was working). He pointed to his map and said very animatedly to a passing porter ‘Who am I? Who am I?’

In retrospect, that question may have been more pertinent than ‘Where?’ since they were both completely traumatised. Having lost much of their family to the camps, they were then to be labelled ‘enemy aliens’. They spent one year on the Isle of Man. He spied Cumbria across the sea and, since he thought it might be as far away from Hitler as possible, he decided to settle in Whitehaven and ‘create jobs’, giving a boost to an underdeveloped area of England.

My father had to borrow £10 from his brother-in-law Otto Secher and, together with Fred Marzillier,

they started in a little hut making firelighters. There is a story that when there was a fire in their ‘factory’ everything burned down but the firelighters! Ultimately, Marchon became one of the largest factories manufacturing raw materials in the world, working with Colgate, Palmolive, etc.

As I stood outside the house we had lived in memories flooded back. I now understood the bigger picture. For them to come to another country, not knowing the language, having been hounded out of their home for being Jewish and now to be in a completely strange land, it was no wonder that my concept of our roots was to be buried in an attempt to assimilate. They wanted to forget and even deny – there was no talk of the past. It was too painful. German was not spoken unless with a few immigrants who had also found their way up to ‘Cumberland’. Now, the plaque spells out the very facts they tried to forget and deny – that was ironic and somewhat poignant to me.

However, the overwhelming feeling is one of pride. The alchemy of their strengths, the acceptance and warmth of the Cumbrian people made a



huge difference to both parties. I know this when I look up to the skyline where I used to see smoke belching out of enormous chimneys. Now there is nothing. Marchon is gone. I will always remember how it used to be.

I am most grateful to the Association of Jewish Refugees for bringing home to me very positive feelings about my parents and people, who, despite devastating tragedy, can heal, and indeed find, their intrinsic strengths.

Yvonne Saville

THEATRE OUTING

‘Half A Sixpence’

Wednesday 18 January 2017 at 2.30 pm

Noel Coward Theatre, St Martin’s Lane, London, WC2 4AU

‘Half A Sixpence’ is the iconic British musical adaptation of H. G. Wells’s disguised autobiographical novel *Kipps: The Story of a Simple Soul*, based on the author’s unhappy apprenticeship as a draper at Hyde’s Drapery Emporium in Southsea. This new stage version of the novel is a completely fresh adaptation by Julian Fellowes, Oscar-winning screenwriter and creator of *Downton Abbey*.

Arthur Kipps, an orphan, is an overworked draper’s assistant at Shalford’s Bazaar, Folkestone, at the turn of the last century. He is a charming but ordinary young man who, along with his fellow apprentices, dreams of a better and more fulfilling world, but he likes his fun just like any other – except not quite. When he unexpectedly inherits a fortune that propels him into high society, it confuses everything he thought he knew about life.



Tickets £45 per person – Royal Circle with easy access

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GLASGOW BOOK CLUB Days Gone By and First Kisses

The group agreed that Maggie O'Farrell's *The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox*, though a fictional story, told how the upper classes 'removed' family members who behaved outside the family norms. Group discussion led to reminiscences of days gone by in different countries and of first kisses! We look forward to next month's novel *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon.

Anthea Berg

PINNER A Very Worthwhile Afternoon

We had an interesting session with the AJR's Head of Social Services, Sue Kurlander. She told us about the many services provided to members – not only first generation but also second and sometimes third generation. Many members were taking notes during her talk and a number had one-to-one chats with her after the meeting. Altogether a useful and very worthwhile afternoon.

Robert Gellman

HARROGATE/YORK Brexit and German Passports

Our lunchtime get-together worked out as the perfect time to listen to Michael Newman's slot on the David Vine Radio 2 show discussing 'Descendants of Jewish refugees seeking German citizenship after the Brexit vote'. Indeed, it made for some good discussion along with many other interesting subjects!

Wendy Bott

KENSINGTON AND NOTTING HILL A Leisurely Afternoon

Conversation flowed freely among those who came to enjoy a leisurely afternoon at Peter Wayne's lovely flat. Topics of conversation ranged from Brexit, to travels to and within South Africa, to a talk at Alyth Gardens about the raid on Entebbe 40 years ago, to how to look after pianos. Eva told us of forthcoming events, especially the forthcoming AJR Groups Chanukah Party.

Walter Goddard

BOOK CLUB Unputdownable

We enjoyed a successful meeting and a delicious lunch. The book we discussed was *The Girl Who Wrote in Silk* by Kelli Estes. Everyone thought it was a good read. I personally couldn't put it down.

Gerda Torrence

HULL CF Strong 'Wanderlust'

Veronika gave a wonderful account of her recent whistle-stop trip to Canada. It was wonderful to see her 'wanderlust' is still so strong!

Wendy Bott

COLIN DAVEY V WESSEX AJR

A semi-retired top London solicitor regaled us John Mortimer-style with a Cook's tour of English law, criminal and civil alike. Seemingly the average citizen is remarkably non-litigious. Generously he heard out our personal dilemmas, so we left feeling inspired to stand our ground should injustice ever make an appearance in our lives.

Kathryn Prevezer

NEWCASTLE

Out of Chaos Exhibition

We visited the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle, which is currently hosting a selection of art works from the Ben Uri Gallery in London. As it featured artists of Jewish descent, many of whom fled Nazi-occupied countries, it came as no surprise that most of the paintings dealt with issues such as identity, belonging and building new lives. Thanks are due to Agnes, who organised our outing.

Judith Fodor

LEEDS CF A Real Treat

Leeds members had a real treat when master chocolatier Robert Winterflood gave a talk about the history of chocolate – and, as he spoke, chocolate samples made their way around the room. How any of us had room for Barbara's usual fabulous baking is a mystery but we did!

Wendy Bott

RADLETT Literary Figures and the Tube

Nick Dobson described an imaginary journey on the London Underground with a number of stops at locations related to London literary figures. At each stop, Nick's associate Alison Dabias gave an expert reading of a relevant piece of writing. Thus we came into contact with authors

from Chaucer to Dylan Thomas and were presented with a vivid mosaic of London's past literary life. A most entertaining and instructive talk.

Elfriede Starer

WELWYN GC Screening of *The Sturgeon Queen*

A small but select group was treated to the 2014 film *The Sturgeon Queen*, covering the 100-year history of the four generations of the Russ family, who specialised in the smoked fish trade serving the Jewish community of New York's Lower East Side. After the film we were treated to a superb lunch of bagels and rolls filled with a variety of smoked fish.

Peter Colman

NOTTINGHAM (EAST MIDLANDS) Meeting in the 'Wilds' of Leicestershire

Our last social meeting of 2016 took place in the 'wilds' of Leicestershire in the home of Jurgen and Ruth Schwiening, who laid on a splendid and much appreciated lunch. We caught up on the latest news from London, including planned trips and activities, brought to us by the much welcomed Esther Rinkoff.

Bob Norton

EDINBURGH Meeting of Experts

Vivien spoke about her Scandinavian jewellery, in which she is a world expert; Judy brought samples of her exquisite cushions and pictures of her curtains and upholstery; Pam spoke about her love of playing the piano and reading; my husband David spoke about the textiles he had collected from all over the world; Lilian told us about her stage productions and brought along some of the costumes she had made; Eva told us about learning the piano in Germany as a child; and I told everyone about my passion for foraging, nettles and berries, but especially wild mushrooms.

Maria Chamberlain

CAMBRIDGE Fostering Better Understanding

UJIA's Harvey Bratt explained the philanthropic work the organisation is doing to foster better understanding in and around Israel, for instance in education by creating mixed universities, schools, etc. UJIA also provides free writing of wills to encourage donations and legacy-giving.

Ruth Clapham

DIDSBURY CF Favourite Books and Delicious Food

Members enjoyed a discussion

DECEMBER GROUP EVENTS

Pinner	1 Dec	Chanukah Party
Wessex	1 Dec	Chanukah Tea
Newcastle	4 Dec	Pre-Chanukah Lunch
Didsbury	6 Dec	Social
Ealing/Wembley	6 Dec	Joint Chanukah Party
Ilford	7 Dec	Chanukah Party – Chapel End Players
Kingston/Surrey	7 Dec	Social
Cambridge	8 Dec	tba
Manchester	11 Dec	Chanukah Party
Essex (Westcliff)	13 Dec	Pre-Chanukah Party
Leeds	13 Dec	Chanukah Party
Kent	14 Dec	Chanukah Lunch
Liverpool	15 Dec	Chanukah Party
Brighton	19 Dec	Godfrey Gould: 'Hove's Local Jewish Personalities'

about favourite or memorable books they had read and jotted down recommendations from each other for future reading. Of course no meeting would have been complete without delicious food to accompany it and a good time was had by all.

Wendy Bott

SURREY/KINGSTON Delightful Hospitality

Members were delighted to see each other again and enjoy another dose of Edmee's delightful hospitality on a grey Sunday morning.

Susan Harrod

NORTH WEST LONDON Much Food for Thought

We were all asked in advance to select our favourite piece of music, which was played while we consumed a lovely lunch. Later we had a very lively discussion about an article in that day's *Guardian*, 'Descendants of Jewish refugees seek German citizenship after Brexit vote'. AJR member Harry Heber, who was born in Austria, was quoted in the article as saying he was appalled at the suggestion that he might apply for restoration of his Austrian passport. Much food for thought here.

David Lang

GLASGOW CF From Tom Jones to Pavarotti

Our bring-and-share musical afternoon turned out to be a wonderful social occasion. Members enjoyed a wide variety of music – from Tom Jones to Pavarotti – plus a chance to catch up on everyone's news.

Agnes Isaacs

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Antiques Roadshow Sharing Your Story

The BBC is working with the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation to create a special edition of the *Antiques Roadshow*, looking at artefacts from the Holocaust and exploring the extraordinary stories behind them.

This episode will include artefacts of such historical importance that they are priceless. So, in a rare break with the traditions of the programme, the BBC has decided that items will not be valued.

The *Roadshow* has featured stories and objects owned by Jewish families during the Second World War in previous editions: jewels buried by families fleeing the Nazis, a precious watch that is a permanent reminder of a relative who lost her life in Auschwitz, even a ring a Holocaust survivor kept hidden through several concentration camps.

The *Antiques Roadshow* is now interested in hearing more accounts that tell of this dark period in history. As well as telling the stories of loss and tragedy, they want to discover stories of hope and love for a special episode to be filmed later this year and due to be aired in January 2017.

If you or your family would like to share your story, please contact the BBC at shareyourstory@bbc.co.uk

Rosie and Truus continued from pg. 4

the worst crime in history but I will be especially remembering two little Dutch girls – one Jewish, one Christian – who loved each other and played together but were wrenched apart by the Nazi killing machine. They are together now for all time. Bless them both.

Martin Sugarman
Archivist, AJEX Jewish Military Museum

Author's note: despite kind help from the Dutch-Jewish Community Archives and Yad Vashem in Israel, it has not yet been possible to identify Rosie's family: Truus died before anyone thought of asking her (of course she may not have known). The archives show several possible candidates named Rosie, or similar, from Arnhem, of about the right age and time.

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OBITUARIES

Irma Mayer, born Magdeburg 8 December 1927, died London 9 August 2016

Irma Mayer (née Pessel) was a Kindertransport child. Her journey to safety in England began when her father was offered a job in London in 1938. Her mother had been employed in Germany for a short time by their benefactor, who was married to a French Jewess and, realising the serious situation in Germany, wanted to help the family escape.

Irma's father's offer of employment allowed him to travel to London only to discover the job was bogus but it saved his life and enabled him to make arrangements for his wife and child to

leave Germany.

Aged 11, Irma joined the Kindertransport, leaving behind her mother, who was last to travel. She was met by her father at Liverpool Street Station and taken in by a Jewish family in London's East End. She was later evacuated with her school to Rochdale, spending the war years in Lancashire, where her parents were able to join her after a time.

Some years later she discovered she had a talent for dancing and became a ballet and tap dancer, then a teacher of dance and, in later years, she trained as a keep fit instructor for adults including the over 60s. Another particular pleasure for the family was seeing her perform at the National Keep Fit Festivals at the Albert Hall.

She taught keep fit at the Michael Sobell Jewish Day Centre and many retirement homes and day centres for senior citizens.

Having returned to London with her family after the war, Irma met and married Harry Mayer. He too was a Kindertransport child, having arrived from Berlin alone and

having sadly left behind his parents, who were transported to Auschwitz concentration camp and murdered.

Irma and Harry enjoyed more than 50 years of happy marriage. They settled in north London, raised two children and made many friends. They were fortunate to see the birth of five grandchildren and Irma lived to see the arrival of two great-grandchildren.

Sadly Irma's son, Dr Robert Mayer, passed away from cancer at the age of 48 and, following his death, her health declined.

Irma was able to use her talent for dance and movement to bring pleasure to many people and to inspire her students to take part in numerous fundraising events including tap dancing marathons.

She also felt passionately that it was important to keep telling the story of her childhood experiences. She visited a local primary school in Enfield for several years telling her story to youngsters who were learning about the Second World War for the first time.

In her home town of Magdeburg she also told her story to German schoolchildren. She had a *Stolperstein*, a memorial stone, placed outside the apartment she had shared with her parents in Magdeburg and dedicated to her grandmother Henrietta, who had lived with them and who had been transported to Theresienstadt, where she perished.

Irma was proud of her membership of the AJR and, while she enjoyed better health, attended AJR events. At one such event she met Prince Charles and had her photo taken talking to him.

Irma was my loving mother and she will be remembered for her kindness and generosity to her many friends and extended family.

Jacqueline Steele



FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Death

Young, Ruth (of Sidcup) – we are sad to announce the death of our treasured, much loved mother, nanny, great nanny on 18 October at the grand age of 95. Her strength, love and kindness will continue to inspire her family, all of whom she greatly cherished.

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OBITUARIES *cont. from p.14***Elena Lederman, born Milan 6 October 1917, died London 11 May 2016**

An immigrant from Italy to Belgium, Elena Lederman (née Attias) was a young mother with an infant son, Paul, in May 1940 when the Nazis invaded and began to persecute the Jews. While her husband François fought with the Belgian resistance, Elena took refuge with her son in a forest. They hid in a ravine covered with grass and branches for more than three years living on mainly apples and carrots. She came out only at night and believed her Italian accent saved her life when she encountered German soldiers. Her family were rounded up and shot on the last day

of the war.

After the war, Elena, her husband and son moved to England. She spoke four languages and initially became a secretarial translator. Subsequently, the couple started a business importing Belgian chocolates and opened 40 shops throughout the UK and Europe. Among customers who visited their shop in London was the film star Elizabeth Taylor. In the late 1970s Elena presented a box of chocolates to Katharine, Duchess of Kent, who was with British Prime Minister James Callaghan.

Elena is survived by her son.

**Max Rubinsohn**

Simon Rubinsohn's obituary of his father in your September issue does not include his contribution to public service, which should not go unrecorded.

I first met Max when I became an active member of the Dollis Hill Synagogue. I didn't have the privilege of meeting his first wife, Rachel, but her reputation and the great loss he suffered was there for all to see. Notwithstanding this tragic loss, Max was a hard-working member of the Parents' Association, where I first met him, and, later, a conscientious member of the Board of Management.

During my years as an Hon. Officer of the Synagogue from 1968 to 1988, I knew whom to call on when things needed to be done. After I left the community in 1989 Max took my place as Hon. Officer and, together with Benno Gocman (another Holocaust

survivor), made it possible for that community to continue to function as it declined in size for over 20 years. Without these two gentlemen, the Synagogue would have closed down at least 10 years earlier.

In addition to this, following the formation of the Rishon Multiple Sclerosis Society, of which I was Chairman and later Life President, Max was a volunteer driver for many years, bringing members to our meetings both in his own car and in the ambulance the group owned or borrowed. He made himself available not only to do this but also, when necessary, to drive members to and from the respite home in Melton Mowbray as well as outings we arranged from time to time.

Simon's modesty in not mentioning the above is undoubtedly inherited from Max z'l'.

Harry Bibring

Ruth Renfield

With regard to the obituary of Ruth Renfield (August), I too was a volunteer at Hannah Karminski House in Swiss Cottage from 1982 onwards. Ruth often spoke of her son Herbert and his family while we prepared Meals on Wheels, which other volunteers delivered to members' homes; Milli Mautner and Paul Alexander were two of the drivers. Ruth Anderman was a

personal friend of Ruth as well as our organiser.

Ruth spoke of her time in the Auxiliary Territorial Service as well as the kindergarten she cared for. She taught me so much about her Hamburg origins and the *heimlich* cooking she'd known: her wonderful soups, the Sauerbraten, Rouladen, Rote Grütze with semolina pudding, and the many cakes she made without a written recipe.

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Ruth invited me to her Hendon home, where her cakes were a delight to enjoy. She was a fine, knowledgeable lady, whom I'll always remember as being sympathetic as my mother had died in early 1982. May she rest in peace.

Helen Grunberg



LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

A month of inaction

Virtually the entire month of October this year was taken up by the Jewish holidays – or holy days as they are sometimes called. In Israel that means that the month had only eight working days so that throughout that period schools, offices and businesses were closed (try getting dental first aid in the few days that were not taken up by festivals or weekends!) and the customary daily traffic jams were doubled and redoubled, in both length and breadth.

If you are an observant Jew this probably seems like paradise on earth but if you are not (I suppose you've guessed by now that I am not) it's more like the other place. On those few days when shops and supermarkets are open the goods you want to buy are either old or unavailable, there are long queues at every checkout till, the car parks are full, and everyone is in a hurry to finish their transaction and get on with preparing for the next festival.

I agree that there are some positive aspects to the festivals. When our children (and later also grandchildren) were small we always built a *sukkah* and crowded into it to eat in the shade of the roof made of leafy boughs. The walls consisted of colourful fabrics originally from India (bought in Petticoat Lane) and were decorated with our offspring's original artwork. Orthodox visitors scoffed 'But it's not kosher!' because the walls weren't

long enough or some such nonsense, but the idea of picnicking in the garden (and *schlepping* plates, cutlery, food, etc first in and then out of the little booth) appealed to our sense of adventure. I still have fond memories of our children lisping the little ditties about *Sukkot* that they had learned at kindergarten and hope that they too treasure those memories.

For the Jewish housewife this month of fasting and feasting requires logistical planning and manoeuvring that could unnerve the most seasoned of military top brass. No sooner is one load of shopping unpacked and put away than it has to be taken out in order to embark on the next round of cooking, baking, serving, clearing up, dishwashing, and so on, *ad nauseam*. *Nauseam* being the operative word for the vast quantity of food that has to be prepared if your family consists of more than two generations with the average 2.4 children. Walk along any street in Jerusalem and you will see women laden with shopping bags as they hobble along on what appear to be swollen ankles and aching feet, attesting to long hours spent tending to boiling cauldrons and bubbling pots and pans in the kitchen.

Nevertheless, life in Israel does have its compensations, even for non-believers. The weather is especially pleasant at this time of the year – sunny but not too hot – and there's nothing like a bit of sunshine for

improving one's mood. The fact that many Israelis take the opportunity to travel, either in Israel or abroad, means that our neighbourhood is less noisy than is usually the case and building work has more or less come to a halt. We can even hear the birds sing, though of course they can't drown out the sound of the neighbour's dog barking.

Concurrently, throughout the month dozens of cultural, sporting and musical events are held all over Israel, from the Alternative Theatre Festival in Akko to the Choral Music Festival in Abu Ghosh, bicycle and foot marathons along various scenic routes, multicultural events in Haifa, and exhibitions for all tastes in a myriad venues. Of course, the beach, the national parks and the nature reserves host family outings and picnics. A current attraction is the exhibition of items brought by immigrants from Germany in the 1930s to which my cousin has loaned the by now antique dental instruments his late mother (and my aunt) brought with her after qualifying and coming to pre-State Israel. That particular exhibition, which is in Galilee, is sponsored by Israeli industrialist and former immigrant from Germany Steff Wertheimer. In addition, thousands of people attended the festive blessing by the priests at the Western Wall and tens of thousands participated in the colourful annual Jerusalem March.

As the end of the month draws near, bringing with it the last few days of yet another festival, the country seems to breathe a collective sigh of relief as it gathers up strength to spring forward and resume normal service.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *cont. from p.7*

and they got married. The friendship almost petered out while he worked in Kilmarnock and Sheffield. When they moved to St Albans, it was rekindled. Unfortunately the friendship came to a complete halt when the wife made an antisemitic remark.

Our third Jewish camp mate was older than us and luckier. His father had deposited £5,000 in a bank before the war. As soon as he managed to get his hands on it, he disappeared to London

without even saying goodbye. He was sighted in Soho with a lady on each arm and not quite sober.

Years later I met him at the Hungarian patisserie in Willesden in north-west London. Irresponsibly, I invited him to our flat for lunch. On the day, an hour early, he appeared, carrying a bunch of flowers. From then on he regaled us with his story, which could compete with those of Hans Andersen or maybe the Brothers Grimm. The gist of the tale

was that he was employed by Interpol. His suit and his general appearance, however, did not reflect favourably on Interpol.

And the third Jew? Me. Extremely lucky! I was introduced through my parents back in Hungary to an extremely pretty refugee girl, also Jewish and from Hungary. Irresponsibly, she agreed to become my wife. Presumably she regrets it but after 54 years it's too late.

Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath, Herts

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