

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Suez 1956 – a lesson from history

In autumn 1956, just as the Hungarian uprising erupted (see November issue), the crisis that had been triggered when Egypt's President Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal (26 July 1956) was nearing its climax. Anglo-French military intervention against Egypt proved to be a monumental error; it cost Prime Minister Anthony Eden his job and Britain its remaining position in the Middle East, as well as demonstrating with brutal clarity the hollowness of Britain's claim to be a 'world power' any longer.

Those whose priority is still to ensure Britain's 'seat at the top table', by 'punching above our weight' in purely military and diplomatic terms, ignore the lessons of Suez at their (and our) peril. For decades after World War II, their strategy succeeded only in relegating Britain to a position behind Germany and Japan, the defeated powers of 1945, in terms of real economic strength, and in frittering away the real advantages that might have been secured by tailoring British policy to the country's new position as a regional, European power.

Nasser was the leading figure in the pan-Arab movement, bent on removing the remnants of colonial rule from the Arab world (and bitterly hostile to Israel). His nationalisation of the Suez Canal, owned by companies representing Britain and France, was legitimate – Egypt was willing to compensate the former owners, just as Attlee's Labour Government had compensated the coal-owners when it nationalised the coalmines.

Nevertheless, Eden became obsessed with Nasser, whom he compared to Hitler; a soft line on the Canal crisis became in his mind comparable to Chamberlain's failed policy of appeasement in the 1930s. In reality, Britain's evacuation of its troops from the Suez Canal Zone, begun in 1954, showed that the logic of its position pointed in the opposite direction, to the abandonment of Britain's role 'East of Suez'; with Indian independence in 1947, the Canal had lost its significance as the arterial connection to Britain's imperial possessions.



Ill-fated meeting: Sir Anthony Eden and President Nasser

Eden dragged Britain into a squalid and misconceived adventure. In a secret understanding with France and Israel, he agreed that Israel should attack Egypt and that Britain and France should then send in troops, allegedly to separate the warring parties. Israeli forces invaded the Sinai Peninsula on 29 October 1956 and, when Nasser rejected the Anglo-French proposal to occupy the Canal Zone temporarily, supposedly in order to establish a buffer zone between Israelis and Egyptians, the forces of the two powers invaded Egypt and rapidly established control over the Canal.

However, this was a short-lived success, for the rest of the world saw that military intervention 'to separate the combatants' was a transparently dishonest pretext for retaining Anglo-French control over the Canal. President Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, refused to support their European allies in this version of twentieth-century gunboat diplomacy – greatly to their credit, as they risked alienating the Jewish lobby on the eve of the American presidential elections of November 1956.

Not for the last time, Britain's economic weakness proved to be its Achilles heel: as Sterling weakened under the impact of the crisis and the country's currency reserves drained away, American pressure forced Eden to back down. A ceasefire came into effect on 6 November 1956 and British forces were withdrawn: only 11 years after victory

over Hitler, the limits of British power in the post-war world were exposed, as Britain was whipped into line by the USA.

None of the participants in the brief campaign emerged with lasting gains. Nasser, whose forces had been defeated by the Israelis, nevertheless won a huge political victory through his stand against the Western 'imperialists'. But this was a success built on sand. The union of Egypt and Syria as the United Arab Republic soon foundered, and Egypt's crushing defeat by Israel in the war of 1967 meant that Nasser spent his last years as leader of a profoundly humiliated nation.

Israel emerged from its campaign in the Sinai Peninsula victorious militarily, but with precious little political advantage. Nasser, its foe, had emerged from the campaign with his prestige in the Arab world much increased, whereas Israel had damaged its standing by associating itself with a war of aggression initiated by the former imperial powers. Israeli policy was becoming marked by a pronounced reliance on its military strength – understandable in a small, embattled nation surrounded by numerically superior enemies, but unsuited to the political process necessary for the solution of the central dispute with the Palestinians. France, for its part, failed to halt Egyptian support for Arab Algeria's fight for independence.

The failure of the Suez campaign revealed that Britain, having lost an empire, had yet to devise a foreign-policy strategy appropriate to its new, post-imperial situation. Too weak to be a major player on the world stage by itself, but reluctant to throw in its lot with its European neighbours, Britain fell back on its 'special relationship' with America. Fifty years on, a British prime minister is again colluding in the invasion of an Arab country, again on questionable grounds, and this time not restrained by the wisdom of a Republican president in the White House.

Anthony Grenville

Visiting Terezín

On an overcast day last August, I walked to Prague's main coach station to board a bus for Terezín, where my maternal grandparents had been deported in 1942 from Vienna. I never knew my grandparents, Heinrich and Alice Strassberg, and I knew little of Terezín, or Theresienstadt as I called it, beyond the sparse details provided in lieu of death certificates for my grandparents by the Czech authorities after the war. My mother showed me these documents when I was 19, and so I learned that my grandfather had died at Terezín in February 1943, but that my grandmother had survived until May 1944, when she was deported to Auschwitz. After that, the certificates rested deep in a drawer, out of sight and, so we thought, out of mind.

The map listing the stops on the coach's route gave no indication that Terezín was a special destination, in any way different from the other villages through which we passed. The itinerary simply stated that there were two stops at Terezín. I got out at the first, and was confronted with two signposts, one directing me to the Ghetto, one to the Small Fortress. I opted for the latter, partly because the sign also indicated a memorial there, partly because a family friend had asked me to look for traces of her father, who, she believed, had died there.

The Small Fortress, the 'Kleine Festung' of evil memory, was a prison attached to the larger fortress town of Terezín itself, which had been built by the Empress Maria Theresia. The Nazis used the prison as a place of punishment, for members of the Czech resistance as well as Jews and others. It now stands largely empty, with only a sprinkling of visitors like myself to view the slogan 'Arbeit macht frei' over the entrance, the crude rooms into which a hundred prisoners were packed and the punishment cells. Over it hangs the almost tangible atmosphere of evil and



Heinrich Strassberg (far right) playing chamber music with Albert Einstein, Vienna, 13 October 1931

suffering that still attaches to such places, even though the Nazi guards and their victims have long since left them to silence and memory.

When I walked on to the town itself, I had a shock. The buildings that comprised the ghetto are still standing, town life having resumed after liberation in 1945. Terezín was not a concentration camp, but a ghetto created from an existing settlement to house Czech Jews and (mostly) elderly or distinguished Jews from Germany and Austria. Consequently, the buildings are still peopled with life, unlike Bergen-Belsen or Auschwitz.

At the ghetto museum, to my surprise, a helpful historian produced a death certificate for my grandfather issued at the time of his death. This told the historian, Mgr. Tomáš Fedorovic,* that my grandfather had been accommodated in a makeshift hospital in the former Engineering Barracks. With the help of a map of the former ghetto, I located this building, an imposing, somewhat daunting block now used for communal purposes. As my grandmother's details also appeared, I located the house where she had lived, too, a smaller building with a shop on the ground floor; doubtless there was family accommodation on the upper floor where my grandmother's room had been.

The sudden and unexpected feeling of proximity to my mother's parents, hitherto shadowy figures from a vanished past, unsettled me. I did not go into the house from where my grandmother had set out, alone, on her final journey. Only when I studied a leaflet about the ghetto, on the coach back to Prague, did I realise that I could have followed in my grandfather's footsteps - from the railway siding where he arrived, through the *šlojska* (the sluice, or checkpoint, where inmates were 'processed' on admission),

to the hospital where he died and, finally, to the river Ohre, into which the ashes of cremated prisoners were thrown. Perhaps some of the burdens transmitted to us via our parents are too heavy to shoulder all at once.

Anthony Grenville

* Mgr. Fedorovic, who is very willing to answer questions from survivors and their relatives, can be contacted at Památník Terezín, Principova alej 304, CZ-411 55 Terezín, Czech Republic, or at fedorovic@pamatnik-terezin.cz.

New AJR social workers for North

Eileen Brady, who will be based in Newcastle, will work part-time for the AJR, covering the North of England and Scotland. She will also be continuing her work for the Northumbria University Disaster and Development Centre as well as completing her PhD on the role of social workers in disasters. Eileen previously worked with international NGOs and the EU in Eastern Europe. Recently she was a consultant for UNHCR in Darfur and Pakistan relating to psycho-social programmes for refugees affected by trauma.



Anthony Fagan, who will be based in Manchester, has an honours degree in social work from Lancaster University and an MA in social/community work from Bradford University. His principal work experience involves hospital/community teams providing social-work support for adults with physical and mental health difficulties, assisting with their practical, emotional and financial needs, and liaising with the relevant statutory agencies.



Eileen and Anthony will work alongside Manchester-based Barbara Dorrity.

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My Australian misadventure

When I embarked in Genoa at the end of April 1949 I was no longer the innocent teenager who had left Vienna in 1938. I was twenty-nine and a half years old, and by the time I arrived in Sydney I was five weeks older – well on the way to becoming an old maid. Dressed to kill in my New Look Balenciaga suit and hat to match, I caused something of a stir on landing. There were loud mutterings of 'Look at the Frenchie!'. The New Look obviously hadn't yet reached the Antipodes.

The date was 3 June – so my British Travel Document tells me. (I was still a stateless person.) It rained heavily and there was a general strike on. What on earth was I doing here? I had had an excellent job with the 'Joint', the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, in Paris, close to my family.

Well, it was all Stella's fault. I had met her when we were both working for the US army in Germany, and we had never lost touch. She had emigrated to Sydney from London a year earlier and, in her letters, urged me to join her. One needed only summer clothes there, she said, and the future was bright.

On the day after my arrival, Stella's boss, a Hungarian Jew, took us to lunch. 'There are only two varieties of soup', he said, 'sick or sin'. I opted for sin. His partner needed a secretary, and I was to work for Mr Webster, an Austrian Jew, short of stature and irascible by nature, for the next year or so.

Stella had found us rooms in a pleasant suburb, I had a job I didn't dislike and I made new friends, but I wasn't happy in Sydney. For one thing, it was winter and I was always cold. No one at that time thought of heating homes or offices. The myth was that the city was blessed with eternal sunshine. In fact, it rained almost every day during those winter months, and I took to wearing woollen socks. When

summer finally arrived, temperatures soared to 100 degrees Fahrenheit and above.

The weather, however, was the least of my problems with Sydney. The contrast between its crudeness and the sophistication of Paris was simply too much of a shock for me to absorb.

There was no purpose-built theatre or concert hall or art gallery, hardly a decent restaurant. When Stella and I had lunch at the café next to our office, where the choice was between lamb's fry and lamb's fry, I nostalgically remembered my lunches in Paris at a small restaurant where two elderly sisters cooked and served a variety of delicious dishes. And whereas the French enjoyed their aperitif or glass of wine leisurely, here men lined up their drinks between five, when they finished work, and six, when the pubs closed, and then threw up in the street.

I was homesick – not for any particular country because I no longer could call any country my own – but for the Old World. I dreamt of the view of Paris from the top of Notre Dame; of the tranquil Thames Valley; of the lake in Austria where, aged eight, I had learned to swim. I ached for Europe.

We – I had been married for a year by then – finally left Sydney in July 1951. Without really trying, I had acquired a husband and, with him, British nationality. Not a mean achievement!

Before you start composing indignant letters in defence of Australia, let me tell you that I revisited it for the first time in 1993, and what I found was a vibrant, multi-cultural, confident country. Sydney, of course, has its stunning opera house, Melbourne a splendid arts centre, and I have spent great holidays in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales in hotels that are comparable to any in Europe.

Edith Argy

*The Chairman, Management Committee and Staff
wish all AJR members a Happy Chanukah*

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The North goes South

Around 30 Northern and Scottish AJR members, including members of the Second Generation, came down to London in November on a three-day visit. On our arrival at the conveniently located hotel, we were warmly greeted by Susanne Green, our Northern Region Co-ordinator. At 1 pm we boarded the coach for our first outing, a visit to the Cabinet War Rooms and Churchill Museum.

Hazel Beiny, the Southern Groups Co-ordinator, who ably assisted Susanne throughout the visit as well as acting as our London tour guide, accompanied us on the coach. We were met on arrival by James Taylor, who has a long association with the AJR, having worked on the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum. He gave a very interesting talk about the concept and creation of the Churchill Museum. We were all impressed by the Museum and its use of interactive media.

Back at the hotel, we had a little time to unwind before going on to the White House restaurant in Hendon for the pre-arranged meal. On arrival there, Gordon Greenfield and Michael Newman from AJR headquarters greeted us. Two visitors from the Claims Conference, who are based in Berlin, were also present. Unfortunately Susanne had other AJR business to attend to, but had given strict instructions for us to 'mix together'. This proved a little difficult on account of the seating arrangements but everyone soon got to know their neighbour and conversation flowed readily.

The following morning was scheduled for the Imperial War Museum



Three generations at the Imperial War Museum: Miriam Stein, daughter Rosalind Raphael, and grandson Howard Raphael

itself, where we met up with some 70 members from the Southern and Midlands groups. Michael Newman provided a general update. He also introduced other AJR staff members, before handing over to Suzanne Bardgett, Project Director of the Holocaust Exhibition. Having given us a brief history of the Museum, she told of the many challenges faced in the conception and establishment of the Holocaust Exhibition. We spent almost two hours touring the Exhibition, which was powerful and moving.

Following a superb lunch laid on by the Museum, and a further opportunity to network with Southern members, we tramped down to the Museum's cinema to be addressed by Daniel Finklestein, Associate Editor of *The Times*. He not only has strong ties with the AJR but, as the grandson of the Wiener Library's founder Alfred Wiener, his presence was of special significance to us. His subject, 'How Politicians Influence People', was a master class in political marketing. The relevance was reinforced the next day when we visited the Wiener Library and

were able to contrast the propaganda disseminated by the Nazis with the contemporary witness accounts of Kristallnacht collected by the Library immediately after the event.

At the Library, Katherine Klinger, Education & Outreach, gave members an insight into this hugely important resource. As it is a comprehensive archive of Holocaust material there is obviously considerable co-operation with the AJR. Now we are more aware of the tremendous work being carried out, and its vital relevance to us in particular, this interaction can only be enhanced. We went on to the AJR Centre in West Hampstead, where we met some of its regular visitors. Those of us who had not been before were impressed by the homely atmosphere as well as the caring attitude of volunteers and staff.

After an excellent lunch Rev Fine conducted a moving ceremony in commemoration of Kristallnacht. Several people were asked to light candles, including some from our group, representing three different strands of Holocaust experiences. We recited Kaddish. There was time for an exchange of personal histories with other members there and we all found this an uplifting experience.

Thus ended a wonderful three days, including a super West End show. A great deal of knowledge was gained, and many new friends and contacts made. Our thanks go to Susanne Green for the organisation, care, planning and sheer hard work that went into such a fantastic event.

Walter Knoblauch

Guardian of the Memory

'I would like someone to remember that there once lived a person named David Berger.' This was the desperate plea of the Polish teenager in a final letter to his friend Elsa as he faced death in Vilnius in 1941.

David's wish lies at the heart of Yad Vashem's UK campaign, which aims to ensure that each of the three million people on Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' names is remembered by at least one living person.

Hoping to enlist the help of every member of Anglo-Jewry as well as of non-Jews in this country, Yad Vashem UK is issuing an invitation to become a Guardian of the Memory. Each Guardian

will be asked to light a candle in the named person's memory on Yom Hashoah and to make a small donation to advance the cause of Holocaust education and awareness in the UK. The Guardian's name will be entered in a permanent record symbolising that the victim will be remembered. He or she will also receive a lapel emblem, to wear with pride in recognition of that victim.

Yad Vashem UK also hopes to share the educational resources available in Jerusalem for individuals and organisations in the United Kingdom. As well as the Guardian of the Memory campaign, we are taking a play about

the Holocaust to numerous secondary schools in the London area, and hoping to expand to schools around the country. We are also planning to run seminars for teachers, seeking to incorporate Holocaust education within the core curriculum.

We hope that the Guardian of the Memory campaign will help to ensure that the tragedy of the Holocaust is never forgotten or denied. For further information, please contact us at 6 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2LP, tel 020 7543 5402, email office@yadvashem.org.uk, website www.yadvashem.org.

Linda Paterson

Bonding in Berlin

It all began simply enough. My youngest daughter, who is doing an MA in art therapy, was required to produce a dissertation. Neither my wife, Marianne, nor I had paid much attention to her endeavours until she told us she had been awarded a distinction. We asked the nature of the subject and were surprised to learn that it was 'Second Generation Survivors'.

Marianne asked if she would be interested in making a trip to Berlin. She was enthusiastic, whereupon we asked the two other daughters, who were equally keen. Surprisingly, two of our sons-in-law also wished to join in. For myself, I had visited Berlin twice previously, but I was threatened that if I didn't come along the trip was off.

We stayed at the Hotel Askanischer Hof (a booklet pointed out that there was no connection between the hotel and Ashkenazim!). Time has stood still at the hotel, where the atmosphere of Weimar Berlin lives on. The quirky décor made us feel we were staying with an eccentric great-aunt in her first-floor flat. Kafka had written a book in room 12 and Arthur Miller had stayed there. I rested while the others went to see where Marianne had lived nearby and to admire what was left of the gracious old Berlin apartment blocks.

The following day, we visited the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, located near the Brandenburg Gate. It was built here, in the heart of Berlin, to express its public character. The grid pattern consists of 2,711 *stelloe*, which can be walked through from all sides, leaving it to visitors



The pupil returns: Marianne Hasseck outside the former Kaliski Schule in Dahlem, Berlin

to find their way in and out of the complex. One of our sons-in-law, whose grandfather had been killed in the Nazi era, was disturbed by the memorial, but for me it was too abstract.

I was more disturbed by the rooms in the Information Centre below the memorial. All were occupied by visitors, but what impressed me most was the utter silence. There was an opportunity for visitors to express their views of the memorial. Quite a number had written that what had taken place must never be repeated. I was more impressed by a notice quoting Primo Levi to the effect that terrible crimes had taken

place and therefore *could* be repeated – as indeed they have been.

The day after, Marianne wanted to visit the villa in Dahlem where the Kaliski Schule of which she had been a pupil had been housed. She found the U-Bahn journey from Fehrbelliner Platz to Podbelski Allee nostalgic as she remembered the name of every station – it had been her daily journey to school. The train's final destination was Krumme Lanke, which brought back the words 'Vor zwei Jahren im August'. Im Dohl 1, at the corner of Podbelski Allee, still looks the same but now it is a historical archive.

We visited the Bruecke Museum, a gem tucked away at Bussardsteig 9. The Bruecke movement, founded in 1905, includes such artists as Emil Nolde and Otto Mueller. Opened in 1967, the museum is devoted to the works of the Bruecke artists, who demonstrated the birth of modernism in a unique way. Not one of the delightful 400 paintings we saw could have been shown in the Nazi era.

On our last day, outside Wittenberg Platz U-Bahn station, Marianne caught sight of what at first looked like an advertising poster but turned out to be a list of the names of the extermination camps with the heading 'We Must Never Forget'. She found this most touching due to its simplicity.

It had been four days of family bonding – nostalgia for some, finding roots for others, and understanding for our sons-in-law, one of whom comes from South Africa and the other from Northern Ireland.

Martin Hasseck

Book on Pioneer Corps veterans wins prestigious award

Dr Helen Fry's book *Jews in North Devon during the Second World War* (reviewed in the *AJR Journal's* April issue) has been awarded the prestigious Devon Book of the Year Award. Containing over 300 wartime photographs, the book narrates the story of more than 3,000 German, Austrian and Czech refugees who enlisted in the Pioneer Corps in Westward Ho! and Ilfracombe. It includes a chapter on those who joined the Pioneer Corps on their return from internment in Australia.



249 Company of the 'alien' Pioneer Corps, December 1940, Ilfracombe, North Devon

Helen also devoted two extensive chapters to the Zionist Youth groups at Bydown House near Swimbridge and the community at 62 South Street in Braunton, together consisting of around 100 refugee-youth from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia whose aim was to train for a kibbutz-style life and settle in Palestine. This is the first award ever to be made on a Jewish subject by the longstanding Devon History Society.

HS



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

A STOLPERSTEIN FOR IRMA ZANCKER
Sir – I read with great emotion the article by Dieter Sienknecht in the October issue. *Stolpersteine* are going to be laid in memory of my parents, Siegfried and Trude Würzburger, and my brother, Hans Würzburger, outside our home in Frankfurt, on the 65th anniversary of their deportation to Lodz on 19 October 1941. All is arranged and paid for by 'Paten' (sponsors), self-appointed godfathers in a German Christian organisation, no doubt very similar to the organisation used by Dieter Sienknecht to commemorate the memory of his former Jewish neighbour.

As I only left Germany with the last Kindertransport from Frankfurt on 24 August 1939, I can fully understand how embarrassed ten-year-old Dieter must have felt in 1942 when he was suddenly meeting his parents' former Jewish friend Irma Zancker wearing the Star of David. How relieved he must have felt when she terminated the conversation quickly and, many years later, when he heard that she had perished in the Holocaust, how guilty he must have felt!

Dieter Sienknecht decided to sponsor a *Stolperstein* in Irma Zancker's memory in Hamburg, and I only hope that her son Klaus is still alive and that somebody can trace him so that he, or any other surviving member of his family, will find out about this very kind deed by his former German neighbour.

I am very pleased that hundreds of Christians all over Germany are trying to trace the families of Jews who perished in the Holocaust and place these memorial stones in front of the homes from which they were deported.

Kenneth Ward
Wickford, Essex

Sir – The article 'A *Stolperstein* for Irma Zancker' is in stark contrast with a very different experience I had in Munich. In May 2004 the Cologne artist Gunter Demnig placed *Stolpersteine* for my parents, Paula and Fritz Jordan, outside the block of flats where they had lived

before their deportation to Kaunas, where, together with 998 other Munich Jews, they were shot soon after arrival.

The event had been researched, financed and organised, initially without my knowledge, by two local grammar school girls and their classmates. As the mayor of Munich, Christian Ude, as well as the representatives of Munich Jews were known to be inimical to *Stolpersteine*, the impending event had not been publicised. Nevertheless, a small group of well-wishers and a few journalists and photographers attended the ceremony. Six weeks later, during the hours of darkness and following a council meeting, the *Stolpersteine* were removed by council workmen. This act of vandalism was preceded by a council meeting in which, with the exception of the Greens, all parties, including the Jewish representative, had voted for the removal of the *Stolpersteine*. Councillors of the socialist majority had been forced to vote for the removal by a whipping motion by the mayor. The removal evoked strong protests, including a half-page advertisement signed by many prominent people, in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, but to no avail.

As for the representatives of the Munich Jews, having received considerable financial support from Munich for various projects, they do not, it seems, wish to rock the boat. In the meantime, Gunter Demnig has made many more *Stolpersteine* for Munich. For the time being, they cannot be placed on Munich pavements: they are on public display, temporarily in the Musikhochschule. A final irony: the Musikhochschule occupies the Führerbau, Hitler's former Munich headquarters.

Peter Jordan
Manchester

VIENNA MEMORIAL PROJECT

Sir – In 2005 my wife and I visited Vienna as guests of the city. While there we were invited to various functions. The most memorable of these was with a group of young, non-Jewish people

who were researching the fate of Jews who had lived in the building where they now lived. A memorial tablet was unveiled outside the building in memory of the Jews who had lived in it in 1938. The group have a website entitled 'Servitengasse 1938 Schicksale der Verschwundenen/ The Fate of Those Who Disappeared: A Memorial Project by the Citizens of Vienna's 9th District'. This information may be of interest to all refugees, in particular those from Vienna.

Joe Winroope
Radlett, Herts

OPEN LETTER TO ANTHONY HOWARD

Sir – Whilst I admire Anthony Grenville's brilliantly written and researched article (October issue), I can't help feeling that he has chosen the wrong forum and the wrong time for its publication. This letter should have been sent to the *Times* in July, immediately after *Any Questions* was broadcast, when Israel's attacks on Lebanon made headline news. Also, Anthony Howard is unlikely to read the *AJR Journal*, dear though it is to our hearts, and we ex-refugees know that the systematic genocide of millions of innocent Jews has no parallel in history.

Nevertheless, I who, like most of us, lost close relatives then, including my stepmother, who raised me from the time I was a small child, believe that it demeans her suffering, and that of all who perished in the camps, to wheel out the Holocaust every time Israel needs an excuse for inappropriate behaviour.

Edith Argy
London W9

Sir – It is time you were made aware that a large proportion of your readers does not share your uncritical support of Israel. I prefer to associate myself with them rather than with those who approve what you are pleased to refer to as the 'unplanned and unintended' killings and use of cluster bombs by the IDF in the Lebanon, the theft of Arab lands, the building of the illegal separation wall, and the persecution of the Arab population of Gaza and the West Bank.

It is no excuse to point at war crimes committed by other nations: all atrocities – yes, even those by Britain in the course of its desperate struggle to save us from the Nazis – are an assault on our human values. However much it may infuriate you, the activities of the IDF invite comparison with those of the

Nazis – especially to those of us who have lost their dearest relatives in the Holocaust. It is these activities – not the comparison – which dishonour the memory of Nazi victims.

*Heinz Grünewald
Pinner, Middx*

DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN ANTI-ZIONISM AND ANTISEMITISM

Sir – There is now a very fine – and shrinking – dividing line between anti-Zionism and antisemitism and, when I think of our ilk, only the Neturei Carta and, of course, Gerald Kaufman, Harold Pinter *et al*, can be considered to fall into the first category. The main culprit is the biased BBC, and particularly Channel 4, which is completely lacking in any kind of impartiality, with support from the Manchester *Guardian* and many other left-wing papers. So now we have the antics of Baroness Jenny Tonge, whose outbursts do justice to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Sheikh Hilali in Australia.

*Anthony Goldsmith
Wembley, Middx*

BOMBING OF DRESDEN

Sir – I have followed with interest the article and letters on the bombing of Dresden, and feel moved to comment on one aspect, which seems to have slipped past the arguments. Dresden was described before the war as a jewel of a city. One just has to see the Canaletto paintings to realise this. As such, it was a cultural heritage belonging to humanity as a whole, not just the German people, and especially not the Nazis. The bombing by the German forces of Coventry and Rotterdam – to give just two examples of similar destruction of cultural heritage – does not excuse the bombing of Dresden.

In this world, where beauty and monuments of great human achievement continue to be destroyed – like the famous bridge in Mostar (Bosnia), the giant Buddha statues in Afghanistan – or deliberately damaged in battle – like the great temple complex in Angkor (Cambodia) – we, as cultured, civilised human beings should stand up against all destruction of monuments, which belong to all of us. There should be no excuse. Furthermore, according to the memoirs of Albert Speer, Germany never had more than three months' fuel to run its war machine after the battle of Stalingrad. It relied almost totally on the conversion of brown coal to fuel performed in 17 factories along what is now the Czech-

German border. Although no further for bombers than Dresden, none of these factories was ever bombed. Why?!

*Karl A. Bettelheim
Southgate, London*

'CHILDREN OF THE KINDERTRANSPORT'

Sir – Thank you so much for the postcard showing the new sculpture at Liverpool Street Station. I was also one of the boys who arrived with a suitcase and a violin, so you can understand that I feel especially touched. I am very happy that my brother, H. Edward Levy, is a trustee of your organisation.

*Henry F. Levy
Wollerau, Switzerland*

NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM

Sir – I find Mr Leavor's letter regarding the supply of a Güterwagen to the Railway Museum in York rather confusing. The main consideration is, of course, that the wagon be of the required age and type as that used for the deportation of Jews, preferably with a breakhouse used by the armed guards and the words 'Deutsche Reichsbahn' and 'Standorf' with the wagon number on its side. Some had the number of people forced into them painted in crude white letters i.e. '73 Personen' added. Put 73 dummies into a Güterwagen of the period and it will give visitors to the museum some idea of the suffering of human beings incarcerated in them for days without food or water. A leading manufacturer of electric toy trains has recently produced in HO gauge a truck of this type including sliding doors. It is an exact copy without, of course, the legend '73 Personen' on it.

*Ernest G. Kolman
Greenford, Middx*

'ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH CONTINENTALS'

Sir – Unlike your correspondent Adele Gotthelf (October), I am glad to belong to an Association of Jewish *Refugees* – a reminder to me, my children and grandchildren that we found help and shelter when the need was greatest in a country with a proud tradition of aiding the persecuted. At Passover we are bidden to remember a time of rescue 'as if we ourselves had been saved at that time'. Let our descendents not forget that they owe their existence to those who found 'refuge' in Britain and therefore bore the title of 'refugees' gladly to the end of their lives.

*S. S. Prawer
Queens College, Oxford*

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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

David Hockney has so many faces you can barely recognise them all. From his double portraits to the playful way he paints water as blue or pink swirls of glinting sunlight, to his sketches, photography and experimental works, the quiet Yorkshireman is perfectly on-message. You can find traces of Picasso,



Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy, 1970-1 © Tate. Presented by the Friends of the Tate Gallery, 1971. © David Hockney

Dali, Vermeer and the Impressionists – even a touch of Francis Bacon – and yet each work, painted with detail, assuredness and a pure innocence, is entirely Hockney. The likeness is swift, abrasive to the point of caricature. He gives you sharp contrasts, light and shadow, brilliant colour and looming darkness, either in the pose or the background.

Until 21 January **David Hockney Portraits** at the **National Portrait Gallery** spans 150 works over five decades in a variety of media, all proving he is still on top form. At the preview, he struck a tall, imposing figure in a beige suit and red tie, and with his fine, jutting profile he looked more magnate than maestro. His double portraits are imposing, rigid, often symbolic: in one, his mother sits primly on her chair while his father is bent over a newspaper. Beside a vase of flowers is a mirror in which his father's profile can be

glimpsed. What's this – a metaphor for his filial self?

In the '60s Hockney hobnobbed with the arty glitterati and his famous double-take of Ossie Clark and his wife, Celia Birtwistle, with Percy the cat, is a pure conversation piece. Celia, in a long black dress, faces the viewer while Mr Clark, seated, faces the cat. It is a typical pose; often it is a pause in communication. But it is also neo-classical, evoking the brooding symbolism of the Italian High Renaissance.

A long period of introspection led to a series of self-portraits in 1983. He writes of himself: 'Obviously I had some facility, more than other people, but sometimes facility comes because one is more interested in looking at things – the visual world – than other people are.'

Hockney, for all his fame, remains close to his Bradford roots. Among his many portraits of his mother, one stands out. She is folded into a chair, tiny, cuddly with piercing blue eyes and arthritic hands. You can feel him reaching out to her.

There's shock and awe at the **Royal Academy's USA Today** exhibition, in which 40 young American **Saatchi**-selected artists strut their stuff. It could be the daughter of the 1997 Saatchi/RA collaborative exhibition which produced **Sensation**, where maggots, dead cows, Myra Hindley, flayed skin and genitalia brought in a record number of visitors.

Behind this latest show, 9/11 lurks like the Angel of Death with all the technology of violence – industrial imagery, falling buildings, convulsive abstracts. The materials reflect this too. **Huma Bhabha's** sculpture posed in Islamic prayer is made from wire and black plastic bags. **Adam Svijanovic's** huge installation in which houses and debris fall out of a clear blue sky is disturbing, while **Erick Swenson's** dead deer with antlers peering out of the snow is moving.

REVIEWS

A life without bitterness or hatred

ALICE HERZ-SOMMER: 'EIN GARTEN EDEN INMITTEN DER HÖLLE'. DAS JAHRHUNDERTLEBEN
by Melissa Müller and Reinhold Piechocki

Droemer, 2006, 430 pp., 19.90 euros

Music could always transport Alice Sommer into an autonomous paradisaical world. This helped her when the real world turned hellish under the Nazis. The central part of this book is about those years.

She was born in 1903 into a Jewish, acculturated and German-speaking family in Prague. She started playing the piano at a very young age and at 21 made her debut as soloist with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. In 1931 she married Leopold Sommer; their son Stephan (later to be called Raphael) was born in 1937.

With the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, their lives changed swiftly, with humiliating restrictions imposed on Jews day after day. And then the deportations began. First, in July 1942 her 72-year-old mother was deported to Theresienstadt (and from there to Treblinka). In July 1943 it was the turn of Alice, Leopold and Stephan to be sent to Theresienstadt.

The physical conditions there were grim but a few months before the Sommers arrived the SS had decided to turn it into a 'show camp' for observers from the International Red Cross – and so the deportees were provided with musical instruments (confiscated from Jews) and allowed to arrange their own entertainment. Alice gave many recitals and the descriptions of these are very moving. Stephan, who was musically even more precocious than his mother had been at that age, was quickly roped in to rehearse and perform in *Brundibar*, an opera composed for the children in the camp.

As defeat for Germany drew nearer in the autumn of 1944, the SS, possibly fearing an uprising of the able-bodied men in Theresienstadt, decided to send them to the extermination camps. Alice's husband was among them: she never saw him again. She learned later that he had survived the

death march from Auschwitz to Dachau – only to die there of typhus.

But Himmler still wanted to preserve Theresienstadt as a 'model' camp and to produce it in his defence at the end of the war. Alice had to work an eight-hour day in barracks where slates were broken up to make insulating materials, work which was particularly hard on her hands. But in the evening she would often perform in the concerts that continued to be staged.

In May 1945 Theresienstadt was liberated and in mid-June Alice and Stephan were able to return to Prague and to continue their musical lives there.

But after the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948, it again became dangerous to speak freely. In March 1949 Alice decided to move with her son to Israel, where she was to live for the next 37 years. There her career as a performer and teacher of music continued, while in due course Raphael became a cellist of world stature. After his marriage in 1966 he and his wife were based in London, and there Alice joined him in 1986.

The book ends with the saddest thing that can afflict a loving mother: in 2001 Raphael Sommer died of a heart attack while on a concert tour in Israel. Alice was then 98 and coped with this grief as she had coped with so many other crises in her life, drawing some comfort from music – she still plays the piano three hours a day in her north London home. She has never given way to bitterness; she has always remained life-affirming; her philosophy eschews hatred, whether for Germans or Arabs. Her 100th birthday drew tributes from people from many lands. This moving book is one of them.

Ralph Blumenau

Tour de force

AN ANCIENT LINEAGE: EUROPEAN ROOTS OF A JEWISH FAMILY

by Edward Gelles

London: Valentine Mitchell, 2006, 392 pp., cloth £45.00

Edward Gelles's book is undoubtedly a *tour de force*. It can also be seen as the consummation of a life's work. Apart from referring to him as 'Dr Gelles', the blurb on the book's jacket makes no mention of his career after his graduation in natural sciences from

Balliol College, Oxford. Whether he was to become a medical doctor or an academic, the thoroughness of research preceding the compilation of this book would certainly demand both academic rigour and quasi-scientific enquiry.

For genealogists or researchers, this work is a treasure-trove, with innumerable tables, extensive notes and details of genealogical enquiry. Although I am neither genealogist nor researcher, I should declare a slight interest, having joined the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain when seeking candidates for interview for my book *Lost Jews*. I have also become aware of several generations of my own Sephardi/Oriental antecedents, partly thanks to extensive research by a member of our community, who produced a volume filled with fascinating family trees.

So a complete stranger to genealogy I am not. Which explains, in part, why I have found portions of this work so riveting. Indeed, Edward Gelles claims descent from a most remarkable lineage. On both his maternal and paternal side, the number of distinguished rabbis, as well as eminent entrepreneurs and financiers, to whom he would appear to be connected, either directly or remotely, is mind-boggling. Among the most renowned are the incomparable medieval commentator Rashi of Troyes, the sixteenth-century Maharal of Prague, Rabbi Judah Loew, and an early sage of the Enlightenment, Rabbi Moses Isserles of Cracow. His ancestry spans much of the continent of Europe, including medieval Spain and Portugal, Provence, Italy, Germany, Prague and, later, Poland, Galicia and Vienna.

Various family names stand out: Wahl, Katzenellenbogen, Chayes (from the original Chayot), Safier, Griffel – Gelles's mother's maiden name – Taube and Loew, as well as Gelles. Place names too, which dominated the more recent family history, include Brody, Nadworna and Tarnobrzeg. Indeed, as Gelles claims, he has traced facets of the history of European Jewry through researching the genealogy of his family. Now, as he notes at the end of the book, the family's sojourn in Europe has virtually come to an end. Many perished in the Holocaust, while surviving branches made their home in America and Israel.

Of particular interest are chapters devoted to remarkable individuals, including Jacob Griffel, who rescued thousands of Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe, Viola Sachs, a professor of American literature at the University of Paris, Tad Taube, an American philanthropist, and Lucia Ohrenstein, who became an Italian countess.

For the general reader there is a basic problem with this book, which has been compiled, in part, from numerous articles the author has published in reputable genealogical journals. While Gelles's written style is usually admirably clear and accessible, the welter of detail and invariable repetition of facts and names lead all too often to a sense of confusion as well as surfeit. Given the interesting subject matter, it might have been preferable to summarise and condense, thereby highlighting the significance of this extraordinary family inheritance. Moreover, while there is a glossary, lists of family and place names and an extensive bibliography, the absence of a page-related index is frustrating.

Emma Klein

THEATRE

Times they are a-changin' CAROLINE, OR CHANGE

book and lyrics by Tony Kushner

music by Jeanine Tesori

directed by George C. Wolfe

Lyttleton Theatre, London

There is a moment before the climax of *Caroline, Or Change* when the young son of the Louisiana Jewish family, Noah Gellner, becomes enraged that Caroline, their black maid, insists on keeping his Chanukah money, carelessly left in his trouser pockets. 'That will feed my three kids!', she crows. He tells her that President Johnson will drop a bomb on all negroes. Icily she responds that hell is a place far hotter even than her basement kitchen with all its machinery going and that hell has been reserved for the Jews. Uproar in the audience as the vociferous, mainly black, party to my right broke into spontaneous whoops of joy and applause.

You could argue that the applause was no more than a tit-for-tat response but, where I - probably the

continued on page 10

REVIEWS *continued from page 9*

only Jew in the vicinity - was sitting, it felt extremely threatening. Caroline later redeems herself by seeking absolution from her church for saying such things to that little boy, who is coping with the recent loss of his mother. But what the Jewish author of this musical was trying to expose in that pivotal moment are the painful changes that came with the mid-1960s, affecting both privileged and poor black society.

Caroline, played with great aplomb by Tonya Pinkins, is a kind of forbearing black Mother Courage, balancing her endless washing, drying and ironing with raising a family of three in the wake of the turbulence following the death of President Kennedy and the burgeoning civil rights movement.

Despite all this, the extended Gellman family - clarinet-playing father Stuart (Richard Henders) and grieving son, played by an alternating team of three young actors - manage to put on a Chanukah party vibrant with singing and dancing, using familiar-sounding Jewish rhythms. It's not that the family mistreat Caroline, but her basement drudgery is a metaphor for the seething unrest lurking beneath the unthinking, privileged Southern states. The show has great panache, with an original

musical score, although I felt the drama suffered from lack of clarity in the first act.

Nothing, of course, is resolved, but an uneasy truce blisters through the Gellman home between Noah and Caroline, who grudgingly accepts her role. An excellent cast revs up the action both musically and dramatically.

Gloria Tessler

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Letter from Israel

My friend, colleague and neighbour, Miriam Ron, died last week. Years ago, when I was involved in establishing the Israel Translators Association, Miriam contacted me and offered to help. Like me, she was a translator, though she translated from English and German into Hebrew. Together we spent many evenings compiling lists and stuffing envelopes, and so our friendship grew.

Born in Berlin in 1928, Miriam was brought to Israel in 1934 by her divorced parents. Both remarried but her father committed suicide when she was 17, marking for ever a life disrupted by world disaster and private tragedy. Miriam attended various residential educational institutions, then studied maths and physics at university. Married and divorced twice, she remained on excellent terms with both ex-husbands, but death always attracted her more than life.

Miriam never abandoned the socialism that was inculcated in Israel's youth in the 1940s and 1950s. She accumulated no possessions (except a few books and records) and left a promising career in Israel's civil service to study philosophy. She lived alone and translated numerous books on psychology, philosophy and history, managing to understand the most esoteric of subjects.

With the years Miriam went out less and less and saw very few people. Her kindness invariably got the better of her, however, and beggars would knock on her door knowing that she would never turn them away empty-handed, even if it meant that she went hungry. Material concerns were never Miriam's forte.

Miriam donated her body to science, and so there was no funeral. Some friends gathered at her house later that week. It was a painful meeting for all concerned. Miriam's life could have been happier, more productive, less lonely if only the world had known how to alleviate the sadness that overshadowed her brilliant mind. May she rest in peace.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Arts and Events Diary - December

To 11 Jan 2007 *Absence and Loss*
A photographic Holocaust memorial exhibition Manchester Jewish Museum tel 0161 834 9879

Sun 3 *One of the Hollywood Ten*, film about Jewish director Herbert Biberman starring Jeff Goldblum, Greta Scacchi and Angela Molina. Plus High Tea and Raffle. Ben-Gurion University and Sussex Tikvah. At Ajax Hall, Hove 3.00 pm. Donation £10. Tel 01273 508 323/01273 770 094

Sun 3 Book launch: Bernard Kops's East End. In celebration of the author's 80th birthday. London Jewish Cultural Centre, Ivy House, North End Road, London NW11, 4.00 pm. Tel 020 8457 5000

Mon 4 Peter Retzer, 'Nürnberg Past

and Present (with illustrations) Club 43

Tues 5 Dec to 8 April 2007 *Champion of the Child: Janusz Korczak*. Major new exhibition at Jewish Museum, Camden Town. Tel 020 7284 1997

Wed 6 Linda Melvern, 'The 1994 Genocide in Rwanda: The Motive, Means and Opportunity', Wiener Library, 7.00 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247

Mon 11 Prof Michael Alpert, 'Nineteenth-Century London: A Haven for Refugees' Club 43

Mon 18 An informal Chanumas evening Club 43

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

PROFILE

Howard Spier

Lottie Levy

'I have never objected to hard work'



Charlotte Abraham aka Lottie Levy was an only child in a typically middle-class Jewish family in Bremen, a city with a small Jewish population. Her father, Max, had taken over the family men's-clothing business – modest, shy, perhaps unworldly, he seemed hardly cut out for such a career. Max embraced his parents' German-Jewish orthodoxy and, as the family business faltered, he seems to have felt more at home carrying out book-keeping duties for the local Jewish community. In sharp contrast, Lottie's mother, Else, 17 years younger, was highly businesslike, politically astute, and possessing an infectious sense of humour. As the family's financial position deteriorated, Else assumed the reins of power, converting their house into a successful bed-and-breakfast establishment with a capacity of nine lodgers. Lottie always felt closer to her mother, telling her biographer: 'For me, she was the strong one. She was my example. She still is to this day.*'

In 1937, following a conversation between her parents and the sympathetically disposed headmistress of her grammar school, Lottie decided to take up an apprenticeship dealing with clocks and watches. But Kristallnacht intervened. Lotte remembers SS-men banging on the door that night, ordering them to get dressed right away. Her father was taken with other Jewish men and boys to Sachsenhausen. Six weeks later he returned, a badly beaten, broken man.

The Abrahams applied without delay for a visa to join relatives in America. They obtained the prerequisite affidavit, but not the visa – the competition was too fierce. Desperately, they turned their sights on Manchester, where Lottie had a cousin, seeing England as a stopover until the family acquired the much sought-after US visa. But it was never obtained. In May 1939 Lotte found herself on a Kindertransport. She remained in contact with her parents until November 1941, when they were deported to the Minsk ghetto along with 440 Bremen Jews.

In Manchester, Lottie was, at first,

fortunate enough to live with a Jewish couple who treated her like a member of the family. But then she was obliged to move to another family, who were less kind to her, using her as more of a servant than a domestic.

Following in her mother's footsteps, Lottie trained as a nurse. Having qualified at the end of the war, she took a job in Ascot Orthopaedic Hospital. A year earlier she had married Harry (Hans) Levy, a refugee from Hamburg and, on becoming pregnant, she went to live with relatives of his in London.

On demobilisation, Harry trained as a garage mechanic, took a course in engineering, and eventually found work with a firm which manufactured, processed and sold advertising gifts.

Lottie loved nursing. Only in the late 1940s did she interrupt her professional life – for two years after her children Peter and Susan were born. She worked many years at Edgware Hospital, from where she retired in the mid-1980s. Following her enforced NHS retirement, Lottie worked a number of years for the

private-medicine organisation BUPA. While she found BUPA 'very money-based', it was 'good-quality medicine' and work there was certainly far more relaxing and 'less hassle'.

Harry died in 1989 and her son Peter died tragically in a plane crash in 1994. However, her daughter Susan lives nearby in Surrey and Lottie enjoys a happy family life.

Following her retirement from BUPA, Lottie took up volunteer work with the AJR as a befriender. Currently she sits on an advisory committee deciding emergency grants to members and carries out translations of difficult technical documents from German.

Of enormous interest to Lottie is psychology, on which subject she has attended a number of summer school courses. This interest is not surprising given that her uncle, the psychoanalyst Karl Abraham, belonged to the 'inner circle' around Sigmund Freud, whose works Lottie has read from cover to cover.

One of Lottie's abiding loves is music – she goes whenever possible to classical music concerts. A long-lasting fascination with skiing came to an abrupt end with a hip-replacement operation some years back. On a number of occasions, Lottie has returned to Germany and spoken in schools.

As we spoke in the north-west London home where she has lived since the 1960s, I sensed that Lottie's feelings with regard to her early life remained close to the surface, raw despite the passing of the years. For Lottie, I discovered, it is important to help people out whenever she can. She is highly energetic, displaying a consistently positive attitude towards life, bright, humorous and perceptive. 'I have never objected to hard work', Lottie told her biographer, in what would seem an overpowering understatement.

*Bettina Decke's biography *'Du musst raus hier!'* Lottie Abraham-Levy: Eine Jugend in Bremen (Bremen: Donat, 1998) covers principally the period up to Lottie's departure for England.

INSIDE the AJR

Cleve Road inaugural meeting

Over 20 people attended the first meeting of the Cleve Road AJR Outreach Group. It was agreed that wherever possible the group would meet on the third Tuesday of every month at 10.30 am and that in due course the programme of speakers and other activities would be arranged by a planning group.

Myrna Glass

Next meeting: Tues 16 Jan

Ilford puts world in order

Hazel Beiny gave us a potted history of her life and how she came to work for the AJR. She then posed various current affairs questions and an interesting debate ensued as we endeavoured to put the world in order.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: Wed 6 Dec

Manchester talk on Genizah

Prof Avihail Shvitiel gave us a fascinating lecture on the Cairo Genizah. The lecture, erudite but not without humour, was extremely well received by an appreciative audience.

Werner Lachs

Next meeting: Sun 17 Dec. Chanukah Social

Pinner Mozart commemoration

Our speaker, Brian Moser, celebrated Mozart's 250th anniversary by delighting a large audience with recorded music of that prolific composer, as well as works by his contemporaries, such as the revolutionary Beethoven and the innovative Haydn, so that we could appreciate the prodigiously productive musical flavour of the era.

Walter Weg

Next meeting: Thur 14 Dec

Essex speaker finds new meaning

Roy Barnes had been a rebellious schoolboy, resenting religion and any form of discipline. But one day he found a new meaning to his world, thanks to his excellent teachers, including the late Rabbi Shebson, who had helped him become an enthusiastic member of the Jewish community.

Julie Franks

Next meeting: Tues 12 Dec. Chanukah Party

Brighton & Hove Sarid: 'Ask the Rabbi'

Rabbi Pesach Efuno answered questions about relations between religions, the position of women in Judaism, and changes in Judaism in Britain. He said that our relationship with the outside world should always be one of sympathetic understanding and polite firmness.

Rudi Simmonds

Next meeting: Mon 18 Dec. Chanukah Party

Cambridge visit to see Genizah manuscripts

After our usual pleasant lunch organised by Danka and John Biggs, ten of us went to the Cambridge University Library Exhibition Centre to see the priceless collection of manuscripts recovered from the Cairo Genizah, the gift of Dr Solomon Schechter, then reader in Talmudic Literature at Cambridge, and Dr Charles Taylor, Master of St Johns College. The Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit was set up in 1974 to sort 68,000 fragments of documents and make them available for research. Following a lecture from an enthusiastic member of the research team we saw a selection of the manuscripts, mainly on vellum, including letters and sacred texts.

Ruth Cooper

Next meeting: Thur 14 Dec. 'Holidays in India'

Sheffield teacher of excellence

Susanne Pearson, a founder member of our group, told us how, as a Kindertransportee from Czechoslovakia with no formal education, she had 'drifted' into teaching. She developed a reputation for excellence in south Yorkshire and was awarded an MBE in 1986. More recently she was awarded an honorary degree in education by Sheffield Hallam University. Though retired, Sue is still a favourite for training teachers about the Holocaust and talking to schools about her experiences as a victim of Nazi persecution.

Steve Mendelsson

Milk and honey in Kent

Walter Woyda told us about the only musical so far written about Israel: *Milk and Honey*. We were given the reason why this musical was never performed in the UK and only once in Israel - a great shame, we felt!

Edith Bowm

Next meeting: Tues 19 Dec. Chanukah Party with quiz

Harrogate Continental Friends reunion

Kitty Fantozzi, an ex-Harrogatonian AJR member, had travelled from Gateshead to be with us and meet again a member with

whom she had shared a local refugee hostel over 60 years ago. Suzanne Repton told us more about her recent trip to Paris, where she attended the presentation of an award to the daughter of the family who saved her life. Suzanne's story is part of the BBC2 programme *Hidden Children* to be shown next spring.

Inge Little

Next meeting: Wed 7 Feb

Edgware talk on genealogy

Janette Rosenberg gave us advice on how to make the necessary enquiries. Many details can be found on the internet or, in some instances, local authorities hold records of births, marriages and deaths. It may encourage a few of us to search into the past.

Felix Winkler

Next meeting: Tues 19 Dec. Chanukah Social with Herts

Surrey meet

Once again, we enjoyed Edmee and Tom Barta's hospitality. We discussed the frequency of our meetings to give more members an opportunity to join in: more frequent meetings, but on rotating weekdays, are now being considered. We left happier and, we suspect, heavier!

Vernon Saunders

North London crime prevention talk

PC Tony Powell, Community Crime Prevention Officer in the Borough of Barnet, gave a talk perfectly geared to the age of members present. His main theme was that many people do not use existing facilities, particularly in dealing with callers pretending to represent public services.

Herbert Haberberg

Next meeting: Thur 21 Dec. Chanukah Party

Herts first anniversary celebration

Champagne and cake were the order of the day. At a gathering organised by Monica Rosenbaum in her home, members reflected on a year of new friends and enjoyable meetings. We recalled that Gunter Tuch (of blessed memory) had been instrumental in establishing the group, which is going

In Gratitude for Sanctuary



Helga Brown (née Steinhardt and a 'Cedar Girl') writes: 'Re visits by AJR groups to Waddesdon Manor, I wonder whether they are aware of the plaque at the rear of the building by the "Lion Steps". This was donated by a group of Kindertransport refugees in gratitude to their rescuers, James and Dorothy de Rothschild, in 1993. They originally lived in a children's home in Frankfurt a/M. There is also a seat in the grounds in memory of Lt-Col Julian Layton, who assisted in the group's emigration by dealing with the German authorities.'

from strength to strength. Marcia Goodman, Head of AJR's Social Services, gave a resume of all AJR can offer.

Myrna Glass

Next meeting: Thur 7 Dec. Otto Deutsch, 'Vienna Coffee Houses - Then and Now'; and Tues 19 Dec. Chanukah Social with Edgware

Newcastle talk on Ella Schliesser

Kathleen McCreery spoke to us about Berlin-born actress and activist Ella Schliesser. Through Kathleen's research after seeing a photograph of her in a book on agit-prop theatre, we were introduced to others who knew Ella. Most moving was the sight of a tablecloth made by Ella and her friends in Auschwitz-Birkenau and now in the hands of Kathleen herself. The AJR Memorial Book for Holocaust Memorial Day was also mentioned. There had been a great deal of interest and it had prompted further research by the survivors' families. Well over 40 replies had been received from AJR members living in, or with connections to, Newcastle, recording over 300 names of their family members who perished in the Holocaust.

Deanna Van der Velde

Next meeting: Sun 7 Jan

Hendon talk on Leitz family

Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith showed us slides of the Leitz family, who manufactured first-class cameras and treated their employees well - when the Nazis came to power, they helped 50 Jewish couples to escape to the Americas. The firm was taken over in the 1980s, but Leica cameras are still manufactured.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: Mon 18 Dec. Chanukah Social

HGS visit to Wiener Library

Katherine Klinger told us about Dr Alfred Wiener, who came to London just before the outbreak of war, at a time when his knowledge of the Nazi regime was of great service to the British authorities. The story struck a deep personal chord with me. My grandfather could not be persuaded to leave Ostrava, convinced the Czechs would not allow the Germans to come in. Later I learned that it was Chamberlain who, by consenting to the Munich Agreement, was in breach of treaty obligations and guarantees. My grandfather could not have reckoned with that.

George Tyrrell

FORTHCOMING MEETING

Wessex Tues 5 Dec (tbc)

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South West Midlands (Worcester area)
Ruth Jackson 01386 552264

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**Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups
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020 8385 3070

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

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

KT-AJR

**Kindertransport special
interest group**

**Monday 18 December 2006
11.45 am for 12.15 pm**

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Party**

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Mon 11	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 12	CLOSED
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Thur 14	Margaret Opdahl
Mon 18	KT Chanukah Party - Kards & Games Klub
Tue 19	CLOSED
Wed 20	Chanukah Party with Sheila Games
Thur 21	Ronnie Goldberg
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FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Birthday

Congratulations to Walter Tischler, who will be 100 on 6 December 2006. From family and friends.

Marriage

The Trustees, Management and Staff of the AJR congratulate Susan Lewis on her marriage to David Harrod.

AJR Centre

Chiroprapist. Trevor Goldman at the Paul Balint AJR Centre Wednesday 13 December and 10 January 2007, 10-11.30 am.

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**BBC TV
Second Generation Project**

I have been commissioned by the BBC to make a series of films on the subject of Jews in Britain today. As a second-generation Jew myself, I am very interested in making a film about the second generation, looking at the kinds of psychological issues that they have had to deal with.

I am looking for second-generation Jews who would be willing to talk to me about their lives and experiences. At this point, I am looking to have research conversations, which would not be filmed or recorded. These conversations would inform the shape that a documentary could take. In early 2007, I hope to include some or all of the people I have interviewed in the film itself.

My films evolve throughout the process of making them. This makes it hard for me to predict exactly what this film will be like – it will reflect the people who agree to take part in it. The issue of the second generation's legacy is a deeply interesting subject, which resonates for many people in different situations.

If you would be willing to have an initial conversation on the telephone, please call me at the BBC on 020 7765 2692. If I'm not there, you can phone my colleague Zara Akester on 0207 765 2693. Alternatively, you can contact me at vanessa.ingle@bbc.co.uk.

I look forward to hearing from you, and will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the project.

Vanessa Engle



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Obituaries

Helena Kennedy (née Ilona Hochfelder)

Helena was born in Budapest in 1912 into a close-knit Jewish family. In the mid-1930s she began a college course in fashion, in 1934 spending several months in Paris working for Chanel. Having completed her course, she and a sister-in-law started up in business together. Helena particularly enjoyed designing formal gowns and was wearing one of her own creations when she met her first husband, Istvan Reich.

Following the Nazi invasion of Hungary, Helena was sent to Auschwitz, where, with others, she made clothes for members of the Auschwitz orchestra. In mid-winter the group were marched in freezing conditions over mountainous terrain to Bergen-Belsen. Here Helena had to sew for the wives and girlfriends of Nazi officers.

After the liberation of Belsen-Bergen, Helena and five other women were quartered at a castle formerly used as a residence for German officers. They sewed pillow cases and doctors' coats for the hospital as well as

for British officers. She learned that one of her brothers had survived and together they made their way back to Hungary, where they were reunited with another brother. The siblings found lodgings together and word of Helena's return spread to her former clientele.

In 1947 Helena remarried and she and her husband, Lazlo, had a son, George. In 1956 they approached the British embassy for a visa. The official who dealt with their application told her there was a great need for haute couture in Britain.

In 1957 the family settled in Leeds. Helena built up a new business, soon opening a workshop and taking on four employees. She developed a prestigious clientele. Edna Healey was a client and Helena and her husband visited Downing Street on a number of occasions. In February 2006 Lady Healey sent Helena a copy of her autobiography inscribed 'With much love to Helen Kennedy - who made the suit I am wearing on the back cover - many many years ago'.

Amanda Bergen

Dr Leo Young (né Jung)

Dr Leo Young, an expert on microwave technology, held 20 patents and was the author of 14 books, including *Microwave Filters, Impedance-Matching Networks, and Coupling Structures* (1964), considered 'the Bible' by many in the field.

Born in Austria in 1926 to a prominent Jewish family - his father was a medical doctor - Leo, his parents and his sister Jeanette fled to England in 1938.

Having won a scholarship to Cambridge at the age of 16, Leo obtained a degree in physics and maths and a master's degree in physics. In 1957 he obtained a doctorate in electrical engineering at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and became a US citizen. A Westinghouse engineer in 1953-60, he worked on military radar research and development.

In 1960-73 he was a fellow at Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, California,

where he worked on microwave filter design. He taught at Stanford University and became a consultant for industry. He also taught at the technology institute Technion in Israel during a sabbatical in 1970-71 and joined the Office of the Secretary of Defence as research director in 1981. He retired in 1994 but continued his consultancy work, served on the board of Filtronics, a maker of microwave components, and wrote his memoirs.

Leo Young received numerous awards, among them the Woodrow Wilson Award for Distinguished Government Service from Johns Hopkins, and received a letter of appreciation from the US Defence Secretary of the time, Caspar Weinberger. He was a former president of the Electrical and Electronics Engineering Institute.

Leo is survived by his third wife Jo-Ellen, three children from his first marriage, Philip, Sarah and Joe, six step-children and 18 grandchildren.

Jeanette Frazer

Susan Emily Sinclair

Susan Sinclair was born in Nuremberg in 1922. The middle daughter of Sigmund and Paula Oppenheimer, she grew up in a loving family and comfortable surroundings. This came to an end with the advent of the Nazi era and she and her family escaped to England soon after Kristallnacht.

During the war, Susan attended horticultural college, was a 'Land Girl' and worked on a poultry farm.

In June 1947 she met her future husband, Hugh Peter Sinclair, at the Linguist Club. Shortly afterwards, Peter contracted polio

and Susan helped nurse him back to health over a seven-month period. They married in 1949.

Over the next 57 years Susan and Peter enjoyed a happy and successful marriage, with two children and four grandchildren. As well as supporting her husband and children, Susan maintained a lifetime active interest in the arts - both performing and visual - with a passion for opera and painting. In recent years, she acquired a following of admirers of her watercolours.

Susan always contributed to the community: bringing 'Meals on Wheels' to

Central Office for Holocaust Claims Michael Newman

Austrian restitution website

Austria has created an online database containing information about objects of art and other cultural items likely to have been expropriated following the 1938 Anschluss.

<http://www.kunstrestitution.at> includes works of art that are now in museums and collections owned by the federal government or the city of Vienna. In launching the online database, Austria hopes to identify the original owners of the artworks or their heirs.

The database was put together by the Austrian National Fund in co-operation with museums and special commissions that have been tasked with tracing the origins of artwork obtained during the Nazi era. The origins of some of the items are still in question and it remains to be determined if they were looted.

Hungarian compensation - a reminder

The deadline to apply for the recently extended Hungarian compensation programme is **31 December 2006**. The scheme, sponsored by the Hungarian government, makes lump-sum awards of \$1,800 (HUF 400,000) to the living spouse, child or parent of a Holocaust victim who died due to the 'political despotism of the Hungarian authority or an official person, or if the injured person died during deportation or forced labour'.

In cases where there are no such living relatives, a living sibling is entitled to half of the compensation amount.

Application forms are available from this office and should be returned, once completed, to: The Central Compensation Office, 1116 Budapest, Hauszmann Alajos utca 1. The telephone number is 0036 1 371 8900, fax 0036 1 371 89 12, email information@karpotlas.hu

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

the elderly, working for the Citizen's Advice Bureaux for over 25 years and, more recently, being involved in the creation of a U3A branch in Harrow.

In recent months, Susan experienced complications arising from heart-valve replacement surgery in 1995. She died at the Wellington Hospital on 24 September 2006, following surgery to attempt to correct these problems. She is survived by her husband Peter, sisters Eva and Lisa, children Monica and Jonathan, and grandchildren Amy, Helen, James and Olivia.

The Sinclair Family

Learning the lessons of the Holocaust

Holocaust survivors who spoke about their experiences at schools and universities were joined by leading representatives of the main Holocaust education organisations and professional teachers at a symposium to evaluate the future of Holocaust education in the UK. This special event was sponsored and organised by the increasingly influential Pears Foundation and hosted by the London Jewish Cultural Centre.

Professor David Cesarani, who chaired a plenary discussion on the future development of Holocaust education, asked panelists to consider the danger of engendering 'Holocaust fatigue' and whether they would favour combining study of the Holocaust with that of other genocides.

Dr Stephen Smith, Director of Beth Shalom and Chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, said it was too early to talk of fatigue in Holocaust education. Indeed, following 50 years of amnesia it had been a 'struggle' to bring knowledge of the Holocaust to British society. However, Holocaust Memorial Day now provided an appropriate annual platform for discussion of the subject.

Ben Helfgott, Chairman of the 45 Aid Society, recalled that during the immediate post-war period, which was overshadowed by potential nuclear conflict and the Cold War, survivors were engrossed in trying to rebuild their lives. The collapse of Communism had brought change, but unfortunately this had included an increase in antisemitism. It was of the utmost importance to combat those forces which were attempting to trivialise the Holocaust. Fortunately, younger survivors were 'still around' to relate their experiences.

Karen Pollock, Director of the Holocaust Educational Trust, said that while the media often referred to the Holocaust, inappropriate comparisons were regularly made. It was possible to discuss other genocides and racism in the context of the Holocaust, but it remained vital not to diminish the magnitude of the Holocaust:

'Faced with growing antisemitism, it is essential not to allow the Holocaust to be trivialised.' The Holocaust was now widely taught as a subject on the school curriculum and she doubted that teachers would recognise Holocaust fatigue.

Turning to the development of Holocaust education over the next ten years, Professor Cesarani asked if the Jewish community was in danger of talking exclusively to itself. Stephen Smith preferred to look ahead at least a half-century. The history of the Holocaust was exceptionally well documented, a process that needed to be continued over the next ten years. New questions were to be asked which explored the meaning of the evidence and what we should choose to do with our history. While it was 'an abhorrence to compare human suffering', the causes and consequences should be applied to contemporary events. There was nothing trivial in remembering what happened in the death camps and we should be relating this to loss of life in today's world.

The fact that countries today were threatening the existence of world Jewry, Ben Helfgott emphasised, could not be ignored. Despite this being by far the most important issue, in his opinion we were failing to learn the lessons of the Holocaust. It was even more incumbent on us to make people aware of the attempted annihilation of the Jews.

The Holocaust Educational Trust was certainly not talking to itself, said Karen Pollock, but offering support to schools and teachers well beyond the Jewish community. Its assessment of Holocaust education in the UK was that it was making a profound impact on young people.

Hermann Hirschberger, Chairman of AJR's Kindertransport committee, commented that the most potent tools in Holocaust education were those survivors who recounted their stories. He posed the question as to whether this inheritance, in the fullness of time, could be taken over by 'understudies'.

Spielberg project launched at London school

Memories of over 50,000 Holocaust survivors are being made available to British schoolchildren through a video project devised by Steven Spielberg. The first schools-specific use of the ten-year-old project has been launched at Pimlico School in south London.

Film of Nazi camp found in Devon church

A ten-minute home-made film showing Nazi officers running a Second World War labour camp in southern Russia has been found in a church near Tiverton in Devon. The footage shows prisoners working at gunpoint and officers relaxing and eating cake. It is not clear how the film came to be in the church.

Archives on pro-Nazi bishop opened up

A Catholic seminary in Rome has opened its archives to shed light on an Austrian bishop who supported the Nazis. Alois Hudal, who died in 1963, was the director of the Pan-Germanic College of Santa Maria dell' Anima in 1923-52. Historians from the Institute for Austrian History in Rome found a copy of a telegram he sent to Hitler supporting the Anschluss. The archive also confirms that Hudal helped many Nazi criminals to escape to South America.

Steep rise in far-right crime in Germany

According to Berlin's *Tagesspiegel* paper, quoting German Interior ministry figures, neo-Nazi crime in Germany has risen steeply. Almost 8,000 crimes by the far right were reported during the first eight months of this year, compared with 6,606 for the same period in 2005. About 40,000 people are reported to belong to far-right groups in the country, over 10,000 of them skinheads.

Large donation to Yad Vashem

Hotel and casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, born to a poor immigrant family in Boston, has donated \$25 million to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial institute.

Jewish residents 'expelled' from former Rome ghetto

According to Italian Jewish leaders, Jewish residents are being 'expelled' from the second oldest Jewish ghetto in Europe by wealthy VIPs buying up property. The former Jewish ghetto on the banks of the Tiber dates from 1555. Although it was abolished after the unification of Italy in 1870, many Italian Jews chose to remain in the area.