

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Internment: the sequel

The wartime internment of many thousands of Jewish refugees by the British government (see last month's issue of the *AJR Journal*) probably arouses more heated and divergent reactions than any other single event in the history of the refugees in Britain. Since the 1980s, the facts about internment have been made widely known by historical studies, such as those of Peter and Leni Gillman and Ronald Stent, and are no longer the subject of much dispute. Instead, it is the conflicting views of internment that have taken centre stage in more recent years.

Even in the immediate aftermath of internment, the judgments passed on it varied greatly. Many of the younger internees – single men – soon came to recall the months spent on the Isle of Man almost as a kind of enforced holiday to which they became reconciled once they had accustomed themselves to it. Older refugees, concerned about their families, found the anxieties and frustration of detention harder to bear; some experienced serious mental crises. They found it far harder to put the experience of internment behind them.

But in the post-war years the great majority of the refugees developed a remarkably forgiving attitude to internment, which went hand in hand with a strong sense of loyalty to Britain and of pride in their association with their adopted homeland in its wartime defiance of Hitler. Some refugees went so far as to defend internment as an understandable measure not incommensurate with the national emergency facing Britain in 1940; it was impossible for the British authorities to be certain that there were no German spies among the refugees, they argued, so the unprecedented national emergency justified the internment of them all. For Leo Kahn, writing in *AJR Information* of September



Eleanor Rathbone MP, parliamentary champion of the refugees

1960, the experience of internment on the Isle of Man paled into insignificance when compared to the Nazi camps: 'It was a great shock at the time. Now that we have lived through the perils of total war and have had to bear the unspeakable horror of Hitler's Final Solution, this affair of our internment seems trivial enough. Was it not rather ridiculous to take it as seriously as we did?'

More common among refugees was the view that internment was a misconceived, unjust and stupid measure taken in panic and implemented inefficiently, but that events had soon caused the British government to reverse its policy and that relatively little serious damage had been done – even when the nation was fighting for survival, British liberalism had reasserted itself. Many refugees had been astounded to learn that the House of Commons had debated internment for nearly six hours on 10 July 1940, with the Nazi onslaught on Britain imminent, and debated it again on 22 August 1940, as German bombs fell on London. The outraged opposition to internment among liberal

sections of British opinion was expressed by such champions of the refugees in parliament as Victor Cazalet, who called it 'this bespattered page of our history', Josiah Wedgwood, and, above all, the tireless Eleanor Rathbone.

This view of internment as ending in a triumph of British liberalism is epitomised by Judith Kerr's semi-autobiographical account of the internment of her brother, the future Sir Michael Kerr, in her book *The Other Way Around*, the sequel to *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*. The parents in the book, desperate to secure the release of their son, write to the editor of a newspaper that had published an article sympathetic to anti-Nazi émigrés. They are astonished to receive a reply from the editor personally, informing them that he had been so moved by their letter that he had passed it on to the Home Secretary, who had promised to look into their son's case immediately – and this as newspaper headlines were ominously proclaiming 'Invasion Barges Massing in Channel Ports'. With his son's release now assured, the father exclaims admiringly: 'The English really are extraordinary. Here they are, threatened with invasion at any moment, and yet the Home Secretary can find time to right an injustice to an unknown boy who wasn't even born here.' The injustice of interning an innocent Cambridge student in the first place is forgivingly glossed over.

Other refugees retained a sense of severe and lasting bitterness. Walter Eberstadt, who later served with distinction as an officer in Normandy, was a student at Oxford when he was interned. Though he was impressed by the way in which the government had been brought to abandon an unjust policy, internment permanently coloured his view of Britain and contributed to his post-war decision to emigrate to

continued on page 2

INTERMENT: the sequel continued from page 1

America: 'Still, since internment I have felt different about the English. No doubt it was my fault that I had foolishly fancied that a few years at public school and a year at Oxford had made me part of them.'

The judgments passed on internment by modern historians, often left-wing academics strongly critical of British government policy, differ sharply from those of the majority of the refugees, including most of the internees themselves. When F. I. Wiener returned in 1957 to Hutchinson Square, his place of internment 17 years previously, he described his time there in an article in *AJR Information* with humour and affection, concluding: 'What has been the final judgment on that time? Few were really hurt and deeply offended, most accepted internment as a necessary evil, a government screening operation. From this point of view internment on the Isle of Man was just an inconvenience.' For this, he and Leo Kahn were accused by David Cesarani and Tony Kushner, editors of the volume of essays *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (1993), of 'sanitizing internment into a jolly jape'.

The implication here was that the refugees had refused to face up to the truth about internment, fearing to confront the reality of their treatment by the British government. Carefully avoiding any serious analysis of why the process had been instituted by the British state, the refugees had deliberately refrained from any criticism of Britain and the British government. In

the view of Cesarani and Kushner, articles like Kahn's and Wiener's demonstrated the refugees' reluctance to criticise British policy, for fear of reawakening the slumbering forces of British antisemitism and xenophobia.

This arguably falls into the error of imposing the historical model of Anglo-Jewry onto the refugees from Central Europe, a model dominated up to 1945 by Anglo-Jewry's overriding fear of arousing antisemitism. Hailing mostly from Tsarist Russia, Anglo-Jewry had had little experience of successful assimilation in its lands of origin, whereas the Jews in the German-speaking countries had known over a century of gradually advancing integration; some of them maintained even after 1933 that Hitler's rise to power was an unaccountable lapse into barbarism on the part of an otherwise highly civilised society. Consequently they did not believe that gentile societies were irredeemably infected by vicious antisemitism – Britain less than most – and they were not prey to a consuming fear of it.

In reality, the underlying issue here was not the rights and wrongs of internment, but two contending views of Britain as a homeland to immigrant groups. Historians like Cesarani and Kushner do not believe that internment was a temporary aberration from the mainstream of British liberalism. For them, it stood in an established tradition of repressive hostility to small and defenceless minorities at times of war and crisis, exemplified by the Aliens Act of 1905

aimed at Jews from Eastern Europe, the internment of 'enemy aliens' in the First and Second World Wars, the detention of Arab suspects during the first Gulf War, and the anti-terrorist measures adopted since 2001. Behind the complacent fiction of Britain as a generous haven for the persecuted, they perceive a series of illiberal and discriminatory measures taken against 'alien' immigrants and minorities.

Refugee commentators, by contrast, mostly saw internment as a passing and exceptional episode that was rapidly overturned once public opinion had reverted to its traditional values; an underlying sense of fair play and tolerance had, they believed, reasserted itself, overcoming the illiberal prejudices that had led to the initial injustice. Their view of Britain was conditioned by confidence in its democratic institutions and trust in the basic decency and humanity of its people. Given the gulf between these two views, it is hardly surprising that the refugee historian Ralph Blumenau adopted a tone of mild bafflement when reviewing Cesarani and Kushner's volume for *AJR Information*:

And yet it seems to this reviewer that there is something awry when the book makes illiberalism and injustice so much more central than the idea, conveyed by so many Jewish ex-internees, that in the end they were more impressed by the liberalism and fairness which ended their ordeal. This reviewer is inclined to align himself with the quotation in the book from Lord Beloff: 'The reaction of the refugees themselves proved considerably more understanding than that of the historians who were not even born at that time, or were infants then.'

Anthony Grenville

Seventy years of history

In 1937-38 I was a pupil at the Jewish Girls' School in Wolfratshausen, near Munich. This April I was invited back for an 'Oasis of Peace' exhibition organised there. Seventy years of history. My friend Rolf Weinberg and my daughters Eva and Susan accompanied me on this nostalgic visit.

The Ladies of the History Association in Wolfratshausen had organised the event very well. There were three of us 'old girls' of the school, all of us living in England now.

The exhibition is named 'An Oasis of Peace', but it was more a life of isolation and reality. Part of the school's



curriculum was preparation for Palestine. We knew emigration had to come in the near future. After Kristallnacht, the school was closed down and the few girls and teachers left were forced to leave within two hours.

Ruth Young

AJR Directors
Gordon Greenfield
Carol Rossen

AJR Heads of Department
Marcia Goodman Social Services
Michael Newman Media and Public Relations
Susie Kaufman Organiser, AJR Centre

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

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

We are not refugees!



Those of us Jews who came to Great Britain in the 30s were a proud folk. Yes, we had to flee the Nazis, but not to the squalor of the East End! That part of London was for those who had fled the Cossacks in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Most of them were uneducated, unskilled, and mainly working in the *shmatte* business. We came from middle-class families that had been to university. We were doctors and lawyers!

Most of us settled in Hampstead, Belsize Park and Swiss Cottage. We walked around Primrose Hill feeling vastly superior to those Jews from Stepney and Whitechapel. OK – so they didn't speak English with a foreign accent, but even that gave us a cachet. The Cosmo, the Dorice – they were our continental coffee houses. We'd sit there for hours over one cup of coffee (we couldn't afford more), playing gin rummy or dominoes like we did in Berlin and Vienna. Not for us the East End sweat shops. And yet – weren't we doing exactly what the early-twentieth century Jewish immigrants had done? Weren't we creating our own *shtetl*, our own ghetto – in NW3 as opposed to E1?

But we felt we were Super-Jews! When the war ended, we were confident we would take our rightful places in the English middle class – or perhaps go even higher. So why, after being in this country for nearly 70 years, are we still willing to be known as 'refugees'? What happened to our pride, belief – even, you might say, arrogance? Well, I have decided the time has come for us to drop the word 'refugee'. 'The Association of Jewish Refugees' is a complete misnomer.

The name should be changed to, for example, 'The Association for the Families of Holocaust Survivors'. This would show the inclusion of not only Holocaust survivors like myself, but also my children and grandchildren. In any case, the word 'refugee' now has all the wrong connotations. Are refugees illegal immigrants? Are they

asylum-seekers? Are they economic migrants who believe they will make a better living in the UK than in the country of their origin? We fled the Nazis because they wanted to kill us. A total of 70,000 of us came here before the outbreak of the Second World War, including 10,000 on the Kindertransport. (Admittedly, many did move on to America or Palestine/Israel at the end of the war.) The AJR now has some 3,500 members, several hundred of whom are camp survivors. There are less than 10,000 Holocaust victims still living in the UK. I am told that their average age is about 82, with 70 per cent older than 76, and 20 per cent older than 86.

In general, the UK took in refugees from Nazi Germany as economic migrants, but allowed in only those who could be of benefit to this country. Compared with other countries, the figure of 70,000 refugees was not an ungenerous quota. But – I say it again – this was around 70 years ago and we are no longer, in any way, refugees. The AJR has done a brilliant job. It must survive. But it cannot survive with its current name.

The *AJR Journal* is a must read for all of us! The social side is prospering. The AJR has done a great job in helping us make our claims to the respective countries of our birth so that we are given at least a small portion of what was taken from us by the Nazis. But how can the AJR survive with the age of its members as it is, and with the claims now nearly all settled? We must bring in our families! They should be made to feel that the Association belongs to them as much as it does to us. We must never forget why the AJR was set up in the first place, but now is the time for change.

Goodness! I am 72 but I was told by the Austrian Embassy that I am the second youngest Holocaust survivor on their record books. That's sad – really sad. Bring on the youth!

Peter Phillips

NEWTONS

Leading Hampstead Solicitors
advise on
Property, Wills, Family Trusts
and Charitable Trusts

French and German spoken

Home visits arranged

22 Fitzjohn's Avenue,
London NW3 5NB

Tel: 020 7435 5351

Fax: 020 7435 8881

 JACKMAN
SILVERMAN

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

26 Conduit Street
London W1R 9TA

Telephone: 020 7409 0771

Fax: 020 7493 8017

AUSTRIAN and GERMAN PENSIONS

PROPERTY RESTITUTION CLAIMS EAST GERMANY – BERLIN

On instructions our office will assist to deal with your applications and pursue the matter with the authorities

For further information
and an appointment
please contact:

ICS CLAIMS
146-154 Kilburn High Road
London NW6 4JD

Tel: 020 7328 7251 (Ext. 107)

Fax: 020 7624 5002

A week in Wroclaw (Breslau)

It was about time to visit the home town of my parents and grandparents. I had lectured in Birmingham and at the annual Limmud study week on the history of Breslau Jewry, but without ever having set foot in the city.

The reasons for the omission lay in family history. Although 14 relatives perished in the Holocaust, my immediate family escaped, paradoxically, because my parents were early victims of persecution. My father, Ernst J. Cohn (d. 1976), became the youngest law professor in Germany, but almost immediately was prevented from lecturing by demonstrating Nazi thugs, suspended from his post, and then dismissed along with other civil servants in 1933. He left via Switzerland for England in 1934 and retrained as a barrister. In 1935 he married my mother, Marianne, née Rosenbaum. Naturalised in 1938, he then stood guarantor for the immigration of many family members, though at the cost of severe insomnia. My mother, today aged 92, was only 19 in 1933 when, driving a friend's car, she was pushed off the road by a large vehicle filled with six drunken SS men, who later threatened her with violence if she reported the incident. This persuaded her father to agree at last to finance her emigration to England, for she too wanted to escape.

After the war my father refused to return to Breslau as long as it remained under Polish rule. Respecting his wishes, I suppressed my curiosity until, some years after 1989, the Polish authorities slowly changed their attitude towards the city's German past. Fifty years of stringent polonisation gave way to recognition that Wroclaw had always been a multicultural centre for numerous migrations. The German and Jewish pasts were something to celebrate – and an attraction for tourists from Germany.

My wife Loretta and I took one of the many cheap flights used by young Poles returning home. As tourists, we focused on the sites of my family's past.

We stayed in a small central hotel in old houses charmingly restored by the Polish Association of Architects. While there are some new buildings of the 1920s and more recent times, many beautiful old houses and public buildings in the large central square, the Ring (now Rynek), and nearby have



The Stork Synagogue

been, or are being, restored to their former glory, or indeed in some cases when badly mutilated by previous restorations, recreated to the original design. We avoided the southern residential suburbs, destroyed in the Soviet siege of 1945 and replaced by Stalinist blocks. In the Ring we admired great-grandfather Nathan Berger's men's store (now selling canned music), a little further away the apartment block he let out, and, round the corner, grandfather Rosenbaum's pharmacy, now dealing in foreign exchange. Polish law prevents us from laying claim to these buildings, which were forcibly auctioned at knock-down prices by Nazi decree.

Nearly as large as the famous medieval square in Cracow, the Ring and adjacent squares and streets are a magnet for people to patronise the many restaurants and cafés and their extensions onto the pavements, but without as many tourists as overwhelm other Central European cities. The Wroclaw botanical gardens and Japanese garden have regained their role as havens of beauty and tranquillity, as have the islands in the River Oder, especially the one (long ago attached to the mainland) on which sit the cathedral and other religious foundations.

The eighteenth-century *aula* of the university where my father studied and, all too briefly, taught has regained its former state. The university museum, albeit extensive and interesting, reflects an incomplete coming-to-terms with

the past. The achievements of German scholars up to the early twentieth century are celebrated, including ten Nobel Prize-winners, most of whom were Jewish, as are the Polish professoriate who fled from universities in eastern Poland incorporated into Russia, but the period of late Weimar and the Nazis is passed over. Similarly, in the national museum, the fine collection of Silesian art from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century is matched by numerous Polish paintings of later centuries imported as surplus to Warsaw's requirements, but the meagre pickings of European art of recent centuries suggest that the collection was once larger, though where it might be now is problematic.

Jewish Breslau, once the third largest community in Germany, is a shadow of its former self. A commemorative plaque marks the site of the 1872 New Synagogue (Reform), the second largest in pre-war Germany, where my family had worshipped – some more regularly than others – but destroyed on Kristallnacht. It is some consolation that the land is not occupied by a high-rise block of flats but is the playground of a school.

The courtyard of the surviving Orthodox synagogue, the Stork Synagogue, has a plaque indicating that this was where the many thousands of remaining Jews were rounded up between 1940 and 1942 for deportation to their fate. At least services are now held in a small prayer room overlooking the site.

Post-war history explains the incomplete restoration of the fine synagogue dating from 1829. The community grew to 2,500 souls who came from the camps and the rest of Poland, but by 1968 the authorities had become so antisemitic that most Jews fled to Scandinavia, Israel and Western countries. The Communist city government then allowed the building, which had survived Kristallnacht and the war unscathed, to decay.

After 1989 a third community began to trickle into the city and now numbers 250 persons. On the urging of the Catholic archbishop, the city supported some initial restoration, but the shell of the large synagogue is used only on high holy days and for well-attended monthly concerts of Jewish music. The

continued on page 11

What we did in the holidays

We did what every Jewish middle-class family in Vienna did every summer: pack trunks with three months' worth of clothes and household gear and move into a rented house that had to meet three conditions – to be by a lake, in the mountains, and within easy reach of the Salzburg Music Festival. Total bliss was taken for granted; a lid for the wooden seat over the cesspit was a desirable extra.

For me, bliss started even before we reached our destination, at a railway junction called Attnang Puchheim, two words that gave me the giggles and can raise a smile even today. How Austrian they sound: funny and useless. On arrival, my mother and assorted helpers started to equip the near-empty house – typically the solid winter quarters of a local peasant family who would move next door into their ramshackle 'summer house', often no better than a hayloft above the stables. I couldn't wait to get into my lederhosen, stiff and smelly with age. At night they stood empty by my bed, ready to be stepped into in the morning. Once a week I had a proper wash – a hot tub in the public baths. Otherwise, swimming in the lake took the strain.

The company we kept was finely layered. At the bottom were the locals, the solid base, living their hard lives among their beasts. Up one step came the bohemians, some of them permanent residents, some like summer's swallows, mainly actors 'resting' between engagements and Communists resting between bouts of tribal warfare. Nude bathing provided the bond between them. Our kind came next – broad-minded professionals, with half-tamed children and untidy marital arrangements. The real bourgeois, whom we despised, were stolid Viennese, who had their local garb made to measure in Salzburg, drank the waters, and went for healthy hikes.

Top of the heap were the local aristocrats. Those who could, fled to their stately homes in Germany, letting their antler-studded villas to the more prosperous among the seasonal invaders. I remember my mother looking for suitable accommodation for the Freud family and watching

recognition dawn on the owner's face: 'Sigmund Freud', he said. 'Of course, the well-known psychopath.'

So much for the natural order. Came the holiday season, everybody changed places: the invading psychoanalysts donned dirndls and lederhosen, becoming peasants overnight; the locals moved in with the bohemia, posing for the painters by day and sharing their beds at night, while the actors dabbled in psychoanalysis in the vacuum left by the pros.

I dabbled in drawing, smuggling myself into an impromptu life class, showing more zest than talent for

The company we kept was finely layered. At the bottom were the locals, the solid base, living their hard lives among their beasts. Up one step came the bohemians, some of them permanent residents, some like summer's swallows, mainly actors 'resting' between engagements and Communists resting between bouts of tribal warfare.

rendering pubic hair with bold strokes of charcoal. My teacher's scant claim to fame was as a portraitist of Viennese bankers, working from photographs. He never lost out: when he failed to make the sale, he added a beard, changed the nose, and palmed off the result on some Zionist organisation as a likeness of Herzl. *Ummalen auf Herzl* occupied much of his time.

The magnet that drew us (and the more famous such as Felix 'Bambi' Salten, Jakob Wassermann, Carl Zuckmayer, Freud and his mainly American camp followers) to this paradise was the scenery, brooding and forbidding though it could be at times. Its beauty awed the bold and liberated the timid. Its heart beat in the songs of the people. At night, at home, or in the many inns, there was always singing and dancing, accompanied by the syncopated clapping known as *poschen*: once you had mastered it, and learned to savour the

bawdy of the patter songs, you could claim to belong. This well of folk music, centuries deep, drew on the rhythm of the loggers as they swung the axe and echoed to the swish of the scythe as the women made hay in the fields. None of it had ever been written down until Konrad Mautner, another Jew in lederhosen, made it his life's work to record words and melodies. No wonder we regarded them as 'ours' and prided ourselves on understanding the strange patois.

There were terrors too: ear-splitting, tree-splitting thunderstorms, the lake in white-capped uproar. Even at peace, the lake threatened: I knew my father expected me to swim across, because my sister had done so. And I dreaded the tiring mountain walks. What I liked best was to get on my bike very early in the morning, before the mist had cleared and anybody was about, and fish for small trout in the forbidden streams that fed the lake. As the sun rose, I felt the warmth of pure happiness.

As suddenly as it had started, the merry-go-round stopped. My mother folded away her dirndls, the trunks were packed and taken to the station in horse-drawn coaches, the psychoanalysts put on hats, coats and thoughtful expressions, the actors rang their agents. The locals reverted to the laboured High German they reserved for day trippers; my hayloft playmates looked sheepish as I begged a last kiss. Attnang Puchheim beckoned, and then it was over for another year.

And then it was over for ten years. In 1946 we discovered that Eichmann had made our paradise his temporary hiding place at the end of the war. My father never set foot there again. I did, year after year, with my own sons and mixed feelings, but drawing the line at lederhosen. The lake and mountains were the same, but paradise was lost.

Victor Ross

Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street (off New Bond Street)
Tel: 020 7629 7578
Fax: 020 7491 2139

CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

REMEMBERING INTERNMENT

Sir – Anthony Grenville's article (July) brought back mixed memories of two years' internment in Huyton, the Isle of Man and Canada. Let me supplement his informative article by clarifying the situation in which nearly 1,000 Jewish refugees in Leeds found themselves.

The Leeds Tribunal, contrary to most others in the country at the beginning of the war, routinely classified most, if not all, Jewish refugees as 'B' (enemy aliens). This caused strong protests, including questions in the House of Commons, and, as a result, a Review Tribunal was installed, which started re-hearing cases at the end of March or early April 1940 and re-classified virtually all as 'C' (friendly aliens). They heard cases in alphabetical order and had reached the letter 'G' by 16 May 1940, when all category 'B' aliens were interned. As a result, those refugees living in Leeds whose names started with the letters G-Z were rounded up on 16 May. The others were, of course, later interned under the 'collar the lot' decision. With hindsight – or Heinz-sight – perhaps I should have changed my name to Aaron.

Heinz Skyte, Leeds

Sir – My late husband, Josef Goldschmidt (Goldsmith), was born in Munich and arrived in England on 15 March 1939 with the Kindertransport. He was sent to Kempton Park, Huyton and then on to the Isle of Man. From there he went to Canada on the *Sobieski* and was interned in Ripples Camp, Trois-Rivières, where he remained until 1941. I am deeply touched that this episode in my husband's life is not forgotten.

(Mrs) Sarah Goldsmith
Newcastle-on-Tyne

THANK-YOU BRITAIN?

Sir – Further to your interesting article (May), I would like to add a footnote that Werner Behr received a CBE in recognition of his work on this worthwhile cause. He was a close family friend of my parents, Ernst and Lotti Cohn, who were great supporters of the Fund. It always struck me as a shame that some other refugee friends so resented the fact that they were interned that they did not lend their support.

Ronny Cohn, London NW3

Sir – 'Thank Britain'? Nothing of the kind! In my conversations with Leonard Cheshire about 60 years ago, it was clear that Britain knew exactly what was going on, but Anthony Eden and the Foreign Office would not allow the RAF to do anything about it!

Also, 'Bomber' Harris said he would have been delighted to take part in a raid – say on extermination facilities at Auschwitz – which were known to be on the edge of the camp, but Eden stopped any such efforts.

Yes, some German Jews did find refuge in England. Big deal! But please do not forget the ships *Patria* and *Struma*, which were prevented by the Royal Navy from approaching Palestine and were told to go back where they came from (i.e. Romania). Then the people on board the boats blew themselves up and sank in the Mediterranean. Stick to the truth and nothing but the truth.

Roman Licht, London NW8

LET'S BE FAIR TO THE AUSTRIANS?

Sir – Peter Phillips's article 'Let's Be Fair to the Austrians' (June) is puzzling. Like him, I lost many members of my family – 44-47 to be precise. In around 2002 I met Hannah Lessing and had no idea she was Jewish. Nevertheless, she was General Secretary of the National Fund and still is. When Peter Phillips says 'It is not her fault' for not receiving the Settlement, whose fault is it? Why was she unable to combat the CICA and why can the Fund distribute only \$210 million instead of the early sum of \$480?

Maybe some persons have received a payment. However, I am beginning to think that the Austrian government has now decided: 'These people are getting a pension. So far as we are concerned, that is enough!'

Peter Chapman, Isle of Man

'THE PITY OF IT ALL'

Sir – I would like to congratulate you on your well-considered leading article, 'Cultural Legacy' (June).

May I add that by no means all German Jews belonged to either of the two camps – emancipated Jews steeped in German culture and Jews who clung to their religion. Thus, my own parents contrived to have a foot in both camps, for they were practising Jews living mainly in the local Jewish community but they nonetheless felt at ease with Goethe and Beethoven and German culture in general. I suspect there were many like them – having the best of both worlds. We celebrated Chanukah in the traditional way but we also had a Christmas tree. No wonder my parents thought the evil that had befallen Germany in 1933 would soon blow over. 'The pity of it all' indeed!

Leslie Baruch Brent, Emeritus Professor
London N19

'NICHT MEHR HIER'

Sir – On reading the May issue (Letters), I find I made a mistake about Theodore Bikel's performance with my mother. The play was Sholem Aleichem's *Shver tsu zayn a yid* ('Hard To Be a Jew') and it was performed in Vienna, not London. Theodore Bikel was 13 years old.

My son David and I went to Vienna to attend the World Congress of Jewish Theatre on 19-23 March this year. Theodore Bikel gave an extraordinary concert of songs in various languages. When he came off-stage, I introduced myself to him as 'Ruti Meisels', which was how he knew me as a child. It reminded both of us of the good old days in Vienna.

The conference was called *Tikkun Olam* (Healing the World) and David and I were performing a programme called *Nicht Mehr Hier* (No Longer Here). My father had written an article under that name after going in 1955 to the International Pen Club, held in Vienna, when the Russians had only recently left. My father wanted to find out what had happened to the people and places he had known before the Anschluss. Whenever he enquired, the answer was always 'Nicht mehr hier'.

David and I put on a performance based on the article and my memories followed by a discussion. Part of the reason we were there was to help the new Austrian-Jewish theatre (under the charismatic director Warren Rosenzweig) in their campaign to reclaim the Nestroyhof, home of the Yiddish theatre in Vienna before the war, where my father and mother had both appeared (we knew it as the Reklam).

It was particularly affecting to see Yiddish returning to Vienna, often with non-Jewish performers (the actress who performed with us in Yiddish sings for a klezmer band called Goyim!) and to see that Jewish/Yiddish theatre does have a future in Vienna.

Ruth Schneider, London N8

BLATANT RACISM

Sir – Having just returned from a River Danube cruise and alighting from the pier in Budapest, we were confronted with such slogans as 'Jewish [sic] go home!' Even more disturbing was a large swastika daubed on a beautiful memorial commemorating the Roma's deportation. We brought our concern to the attention of the management of our ship and they promised to speak to the customs authority due to visit shortly. Nothing, however, was done during the two days we were in port.

I intend to bring the matter up with my MEP. Hungary is now a member of the EU and should comply to eliminate such blatant racism. Budapest may be a beautiful city, but these sentiments quite spoiled our visit.

U. Rosenfeld, Manchester

STOLPERSTEINE: 'A FAIRLY OBVIOUS QUESTION'

Sir – I would like to ask a fairly obvious question: Why not place the stones on (or in) the walls of the adjacent buildings? This

would meet the objections about walking on the stones being a form of desecration, or the risk of dogs fouling them, and the inscriptions would probably be read by more passersby – I don't imagine very many people bend down to read the inscriptions on the plaques in the pavement.

Alan Hercberg, Petach Tikva, Israel

Sir – I wonder whose inane brainchild is the word *Stolperstein*. The thought behind it is noble, recalling a tragic part of our history, but the word is ill-chosen. *Stolpersteine* translated literally means 'stumbling stones' according to Collins *German Concise Dictionary*. *Gedenksteine* (memorial stones) would be a much more appropriate word and these could be erected or fitted to walls, similar to what one finds on the walls of London houses.

Anthony Goldsmith, Wembley, Middx

AJR DIVERSITY

Sir – I read with great interest the letter of Professor Pavel Novak (May) and responses by Bob Norton and Bronia Zelenka Snow (June) and have often thought on similar lines. I was born in and grew up in Prague. However, I must agree with Mrs Zelenka Snow that the fault may lie within ourselves. Why indeed don't we write? Are we so modest?

The above contributions made me think a little further afield. Since the borders of East European countries have been open and since these countries joined the EU, we have been witnessing an influx of immigrants into the UK. Perhaps most of them are here to make money for their families at home. In several of these countries antisemitism is not unknown. Aren't there among these immigrants some Jewish people who might have fled for other reasons, private or political? Could they be refugees like we were a long time ago?

Hana Nermut, Harrow, Middx

ISRAEL UNDER ATTACK

Sir – Caroline Salinger states (July) that I 'want to talk about historical expulsions'. Yes, I do. In this case, it was those that happened in Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War. Apparently Ms Salinger does not. All we get from her is a kosher red herring from the 1936 diary of Ben-Gurion.

The lady is not so naïve as not to realise that if you threaten your neighbour with murder and throwing them into the sea and you lose the ensuing conflict, you can hardly expect to return to the *status quo ante*.

No doubt Ms Salinger has a British passport. If she uses her imagination, she will find it is stained with the blood of native North Americans (Indians), Australian and Tasmanian Aborigines, Maoris from New Zealand, Zulus from South Africa, and others. Besides doing these people out of their lands, to this day we still hold on to Gibraltar, part of mainland Spain.

May I suggest to Ms Salinger that she reads some books on the British Empire and the Palestine Mandate and concerns herself

with the hundreds and thousands who die every day in Dafur and Iraq. She may then acquire a modicum of objectivity regarding Israel.

Ernest G. Kolman, Greenford, Middx

Sir – Ms Salinger quotes in the May issue of the *Journal* a letter apparently written by a group of IDF officers saying that Israel has a policy of 'expelling and starving an entire people'. Does such a letter exist? If so, when and where was it published and to what precise circumstances does it refer?

Ms Salinger quotes an obscure passage from Ben-Gurion. Why does she also not quote what Arab leaders have been saying since the establishment of the State of Israel to the present day? Their aims have been clearly and openly expressed – they do not want the Jewish state to exist.

It seems that Ms Salinger is little more than an Arab propagandist. To her, Jews can do no right, and Arabs no wrong. She complains about where the separation wall has been built, but I detect no hint of condemnation of the suicide bombings which caused the wall to be built in the first place.

M. Storz, London N16

Sir – With regard to those soul-searching letters about the way the IDF counters terrorism, perhaps a residential stint in Kiryat Shmona or Sderot would modify some of those views. We don't have to justify every response of the IDF, but perhaps we could see it as did Henry V before Harfleur: battles are about winning. As a teacher of mine once said: 'We Jews have the same right as everyone else to behave badly.' International law did not protect the Armenians or the Marsh Arabs or the Kurds or the Jews.

Robert Waller
Astcote near Towcester

CONFESSIONS OF A SCHNORRER

Sir – How words change their meaning! I recently gave a talk to sixth-formers in Bury St Edmunds and introduced myself as an alien. I assured them I was not from outer space, but they seemed unconvinced and that strange accent and my un-English *ponim* made them revise their idea of an alien being.

A month earlier, the much-travelled Myrna Glass told me about a wedding in California she had just been to. To me, a *chassene* was a joyous event attended by the parents and a few friends and defined by the restriction that you could sit on one with only one *toches*. This American version was of a different dimension altogether and needs a new word. Having been a *schnorrer* most of my life, the cost of the flowers alone would have provided me with a standard of living I would have liked to have become accustomed to. I suggest that all-day extravaganzas of this type attended by hundreds be called a *super-chassene* – with no restrictions as to the number of *toches*'s present.

Frank Bright, Ipswich

ARE YOU ON A LOW INCOME AND IN NEED OF HOMECARE HELP?

AJR might be able to offer you financial assistance for cleaning, gardening and caring.

Members who might not otherwise be able to afford homecare please contact:

Estelle Brookner, Secretary
AJR Social Services Dept
Tel: 020 8385 3070

Leo Baeck Housing Association Ltd

Clara Nehab House Residential Care Home

All single rooms with en suite bath/shower. Short stays/Respite and 24 hour Permanent Care. Large attractive gardens. Ground Floor Lounge and Dining Rooms. Lift access to all floors. Easy access to local shops and public transport.

Enquiries and further information please contact:
The Manager, Clara Nehab House
13-19 Leaside Crescent, London NW11 0DA
Phone: 020 8455 2286



SPRING GROVE

214 Finchley Road
London NW3

London's Most Luxurious RETIREMENT HOME

- Entertainment – Activities
- Stress Free Living
- 24 Hour Staffing Excellent Cuisine
- Full En-Suite Facilities

Call for more information
or a personal tour
020 8446 2117
or 020 7794 4455

enquiries@springdene-care-homes.co.uk

Simon R Rhodes M.Ch.S. STATE REGISTERED CHIROPODIST

Surgeries at:
67 Kilburn High Road, NW6
(opp. M&S)
Telephone: 020 7624 1576

2 Pangbourne Drive
Stanmore Middx HA7 4QT
Telephone: 020 8958 8557

Visiting chiropody service available

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

On the 50th anniversary of the death of David Bomberg, the **Boundary Gallery** is showing 32 paintings and works on paper from their own and private collections. Recognised today as one of the greatest Jewish Expressionists, Bomberg, born in 1890 to an immigrant family, gained little recognition in his own lifetime, although his students at the Borough Polytechnic continue to cherish his legacy.



Michael Simpson by Paul Emsley. Oil on canvas

A graduate of the Slade School of Art, Bomberg became a Cubist but his Palestine paintings, in the early 1920s, reveal an incipient Expressionism and show the contrast between the Palestine of his time and that of today. His views of Jerusalem and Siloam, or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, are of places of calm geometry: he, like most painters, fails to capture the elusive light of Jerusalem, but this geometric formalism offers a view of solidity and neatness, of things in their rightful place.

Bomberg, who was a pupil of Sickert, remains close to his Cubist origins. Mothers and children share this solid connectedness – linear, static, slanted shapes into which he injects character, tenderness and movement. Whether he paints a family

group or captures a furtive embrace, figures become virtual abstractions, lending humanity to formal perspectives. In one self-portrait, he sports an arty shirt and waistcoat and peers out cynically from under a brimmed hat. Other charcoal self-portraits reflect Bomberg's gift for reductionism, in which hands, legs, plinths are all linear objects playing for attention.

I really liked his pen and inkwash, *The Actress*, in which the subject retains a solid, planted stance, staring insouciantly into the distance.

It is always a joy to visit the **National Portrait Gallery**, in which four portraits will be chosen in the BP Portrait Award 2007. The Gallery still celebrates its love affair with photo-realism, as can be seen in most of the winning entries.

Tamara, by **Johan Andersson**, is a soft-focus study of a shy blonde who had to be persuaded to pose nude for no perceptible reason. **Paul Ensley's** portrait of fellow artist *Michael Simpson* is a super-realistic portrait in which the gridwork of facial lines down to the papery pink eyelids is so picture-perfect that you can't see the brushstrokes. Super-Realism, which briefly emerged in California in the 1960s, of which Stephen Hopkin, Oscar Z. Acosta and Nicola Wood were the chief exponents, often featured the perfect rendition of meaningless objects such as cars, in which the chrome finish and colour shone more brightly than

the original. Many of those artists later retreated into Surrealism, having decided that optical realism, in which the subject was seen through a lens rather than through the human eye, rendered the work style-less and chilling, lacking the life and vigour of, for example, an Expressionist portrait.

Thomas Leverett's portrait of A. C. *Grayling*, the philosopher, is more surreal, placing the subject in a spotted coat which disperses into a great swath of loud spots in a gaudy nod to pointillism. Swirling hills are formed of words and a keyboard appears at his feet.

News just in that the BP Nat Portrait Gallery winner is Paul Emsley. He wins £25,000 and there was a record entry this year.

REVIEWS

Unthinking habits

LEONARD WOOLF: A LIFE
by Victoria Glendinning
Simon and Schuster, 2006,
530pp. hardcover

While the Bloomsbury set has attracted more biographers than any other artistic circle, the one member of the group who has not received much publicity is Leonard, the husband of Virginia, the famous novelist. Victoria Glendinning has sought to remedy this situation. Particularly interesting to Jewish readers is the light her book sheds on the small group of middle-class Jews who were established in this country before the influx of penniless immigrants from Eastern Europe.

Not as grand as the Rothschilds, yet well-to-do, Leonard's family owed their affluence to the father, a successful barrister. He brought up his nine children with the help of two nurses, a governess, a cook and scullery maid, a parlour-maid and two or three housemaids. This happy state came to an end with his untimely death, obliging the family to move from Kensington to the less salubrious Putney. Nonetheless, Leonard was sent to St. Paul's School, where he was bullied. Compton Mackenzie describes how he stuck down the lids of the desks of Jewish boys with gelatine so that they would come up sharply and 'strike a Semitic chin'.

Leonard was emerging as a clever but insecure young man who defended himself against hostility by a 'carapace' of indifference. On the strength of a minor award he went up to Trinity College, Cambridge. There he met the young men who were to become well-known in many fields such as Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, G. E. Moore and Maynard Keynes, and was elected to the prestigious Apostles group. In 1903 he met Vanessa and Virginia Stephen briefly when they came up for the May balls. Thoby Stephen told his sister Virginia that Leonard 'hated the whole human race'.

After Cambridge the family finances made it necessary for Leonard to get a job straight away. However, he was offered a post in the British administration of Ceylon, an unlikely venture for a Jewish young man who had never previously travelled further than France. Starting as a lowly cadet, he became an efficient administrator, one of whose duties was to assist at hangings. He had

described himself on arrival as a 'very innocent unconscious imperialist', but he became increasingly uneasy at the role he was supposed to perform and relieved when, after seven years' service, he was granted home leave.

Meanwhile, Virginia, who had turned down several offers of marriage, was 'available'. Lytton encouraged Leonard to propose to her - 'You must marry Virginia. She's the only woman with sufficient brains' - while Vanessa advised Virginia not to make too much of the fact that he was Jewish. After many false starts, his proposal was accepted and they were married in a registry office. His mother, to her chagrin, was not invited to the ceremony. Leonard had already resigned from his post in Ceylon.

Theirs was not a conventional marriage, but Leonard was to become Virginia's loving friend and nursemaid during the many bouts of mental illness she suffered between periods of creativity. Together they started the Hogarth printing press. Following Virginia's suicide Leonard lived on for many more productive years. One of the paradoxes of his loving relationship with Virginia is the continued antisemitism she expressed in letters to friends. Glendinning writes that 'she shared the unthinking habits of most gentiles, expressing freely her distaste for Jews, including her in-laws, their accents, their voices and their food'. Has anything changed, one wonders.

Martha Blend

Classic of Holocaust literature LAST WALTZ IN VIENNA

by George Clare

Pan Books, 2007, 322 pp. paper

I first read this book in 1981 and had forgotten how beautifully written it is. It combines history with the lives of the Klaar family from the 1800s to 1946, when George's Uncle Paul describes the 'incredible luck at being able to return to Austria, their home' and re-establishing contact with his two sons, both by then living abroad. Like many Austrian Jews, the Klaars were always aware of antisemitism but saw themselves as Austrians first. Uncle Paul survived Theresienstadt although feelings of guilt never left him. He died in 1948.

Great-grandfather Ludwig left the east, with its kaftans and beards, for Vienna, where he qualified as a doctor in 1842. He joined the Army Medical

Corps, rising to the rank of regimental surgeon first class, possibly the first Jew to attain the rank. Since it was impossible for a practising Jew to be commissioned into an Austrian regiment, his achievement is remarkable. He became a 'Jewish Austrian military gentleman - quite a new species'.

George's father Ernst, a banker with the 'Imperial and Royally Privileged' Austrian Landesbank, was born in the same year as Adolf Hitler. The bank's governor didn't draw anything as common as a salary but was paid an annual fee in gold coins. The bank's employees were humble and had to obtain the bank's consent before marrying. Reasons for refusal were never given. But employees travelling on business were allowed money for 'wine, women and song' as long as the amount was not too great.

When Georg Klaar became George Peter Clare in 1943, courtesy of the British army, he felt more assimilated, although sad to lose his family name and its associations. The family's world had disappeared for ever.

This new edition includes a post-war letter from Dr Paul Klaar, written in 1946 to a friend who had escaped to Scotland. It contains news of survivors, those who were arrested, deported, murdered or left to die in concentration camps, and those who had been orphaned or lost their partners or children. The book has been described as a classic of Holocaust literature. If you read it first time round, read it again or recommend it to those who haven't.

Laraine Feldman

THEATRE

Wit and sophistication
FROM THE HART: THE LIFE
AND LYRICS OF LORENZ HART
devised and compiled by David
Kernan; directed by Caroline Clegg
New End Theatre, North London
(to 2 September)

Lorenz Hart was an unusual lyricist for Hollywood's Golden Age: the love story was often playful, even biting, as his sense of irony considered the ups and downs of the relationships game. His collaboration with Richard Rodgers produced 28 musicals and 550 songs in 1919-43, when Hart, depressed and alcoholic, died, preceded by Rodgers's new collaboration with Oscar Hammerstein. Hart's admirers prefer his

wit and sophistication to Hammerstein's trite, if warmer, more optimistic lyrics. Hart was born in 1895 into an affluent German-Jewish immigrant family in New York, and no doubt his Jewish irony and his talent derived in part from this background.

From the Hart is delivered with verve and style by a team of excellent singer-dancers, who give us the old favourites - *Blue Moon*, *Manhattan*, *My Funny Valentine*, *Mountain Greenery*, *Bewitched*, *Bothered and Bewildered* - that have entered the lexicon of Hollywood vocabulary. My father used to sing them in the car or hum them at home; they survived well into the post-war era. They are a light-hearted, if serious, gutsy and nostalgic glance at life between two world wars, and as such demonstrate the pinnacle of Hollywood's toe-tapping era.

Hart is said to have had an unrequited passion for the heterosexual Rodgers, but such hints, like his sexual ambivalence, if they exist in the script, are so subtle you'd miss them if you coughed. The plot fizzles and dances away like the show itself, and somehow you want to know more. There are spirited performances by an immensely gifted team: Louisa Maxwell, Lucy Kerans-Hunt, Matthew Barrow and Peter Straker with Neil McArthur on piano and Dave Berry on bass. Nigel Hook's set is a medley of manuscripts, notes and paraphernalia suggesting Hart's haphazard creativity.

John Guerrasio portrays the diminutive Hart with self-deprecating humour. He has the air of watching from the wings and failing to be surprised at anything. His successor, Hammerstein, may have looked on the brighter side, but for many it is Rodgers's collaboration with Hart that generated the greatest songs - give or take a touch of Hollywood blandness.

Gloria Tessler

CINEMA

Overcoming adversity
LA VIE EN ROSE
directed by Olivier Dahan
starring Marion Cotillard as Édith Piaf
at selected cinemas

My late mother-in-law, a survivor of Auschwitz originally from Slovakia, was often heard singing Édith Piaf songs.

Reviews continued on page 10

REVIEWS continued from page 9

It was the determination to overcome adversity that united the two women, born within a year or two of each other but from such different worlds. Indeed it is suffering that dominates this impressionistic portrayal of the singer's life, released in the English-speaking world under the title of one of Piaf's best-loved songs but originally entitled *La Môme* – brat or kid – the depiction given to the future star singing in the streets until 'discovered' by impresario Louis Leplée.

This 'kid' captivates our heart. Taken to her paternal grandmother, a brothel-keeper, as her circus contortionist father goes off to war, she encounters tenderness from Titine, a prostitute from whom Edith is loath to be parted when her father returns to reclaim her.

All this is viewed in seemingly random flashback as the film is dictated from the perspective of the dying Piaf, a virtual octogenarian in the body of a 40-something-year-old, ravaged by a cocktail of narcotics and despair. The kernel of the film is the central love of Piaf's life, her affair with a married boxing champion whose death in a plane crash inspires that most evocative of her songs, *Hymne à l'amour*.

The technique of impressionistic recall delivers a powerful, moving film. There are a number of memorable set-pieces, not least the scene where Édith is instructed by her father to 'do something' to entertain the onlookers on the street his act has failed to engage. When the terrified child burst into a rendition of the *Marseillaise*, I couldn't stop my tears.

The downside is an inevitable sense of confusion. The mosaic of memory-flashes includes a husband and a dying child but there is little sense of context. And then there is the third Louis with her till the end – Louis Barrier, I later discovered. But who is he – manager, lover, both?

These are only a few of the questions the film fails to answer. But despite this, and the omission of Piaf's sometimes ambiguous role in the French Resistance during the war, the film, enhanced by an Oscar-worthy performance by Marion Cotillard, is unmissable.

Emma Klein

CAFÉ

The real taste of Viennese coffee

CAFÉ VIVE ITERUM

1a Hamilton Road, Dollis Hill, London NW10



My love-hate relationship with the Vienna Kaffeehaus goes back to my boyhood days in Vienna. On Saturday afternoons I reluctantly accompanied the rest of my family to the Kaffeehaus and was told that if I behaved myself, there would be special treats for me on the Sunday. It was only when the Herr Ober brought the hot chocolate and cream that I felt good. The rest of the family were able to select their beverages from the many varieties of coffee on the menu. With each drink came the traditional glass of water, replenished immediately it was empty. Some people would sit there well into the evening with just one cup of coffee. There were also newspapers available. I often wondered how the Kaffeehaus proprietors kept going.

There are not many traditional Kaffeehäuser left in Vienna. A few Viennese-style coffee houses opened in London just after the war. They gradually disappeared, not being financially viable. So when it came to my notice that a coffee house was to be opened in the North-West London cosmopolitan district of Dollis Hill, I wanted to see what it was all about.

Clearly, neither the name – Café Vive Iterum – nor some items on the menu were Viennese. Nor was the background music. However, all was not lost, for the décor and furniture were what one would expect from such an establishment. I don't know if the Sachertorte was as the original or whether the Apfelstrudel couldn't have been improved on. But one thing is for sure: the coffee was absolutely Viennese! The trade name, Meindl, is respected throughout the world.

Then there was the friendly way in which Anita Reitschammer, the enterprising owner of the café, receives her guests: my companion and I were made welcome as soon as we sat down. Everything was spotlessly clean. The pity is there is only limited accommodation: it was cold and wet so the outside terrace couldn't be used. Maybe these days people will not want to sit all day with just one cup of coffee. Perhaps the café will become popular with local folk as well as those of us who remember the old days.

Whatever the case, I will certainly come again, if only for the real taste of coffee. Oh yes, and not forgetting the comfy armchairs as well as the works of a local artist which are displayed on the wall.

Otto Deutsch



A society in which no individual is above the law

Whatever the eventual outcome of the plea bargain arrangement reached by the lawyers acting for former President Katzav and Israel's Attorney-General, the Israeli public has proved that it cares.

It cares about justice. It cares about the principle that everyone is equal before the law. It cares about not letting persons suspected of criminal acts get away with them, no matter how elevated their station.

The news of the plea bargain broke on Thursday morning. On Saturday night over 20,000 people – men and women of all ages and political persuasions – participated in a demonstration against the decision to let the ex-president off lightly. This spontaneous display of outrage was exceptional for Israel. It sent the message that the public would not tolerate the attempt to allow the actions of a person suspected of having committed serious crimes to be swept under the carpet. This was not a political demonstration with busloads of supporters of a particular party being brought from various parts of the country. Youth movements were not mobilised to augment the crowd. This was a genuinely grass-roots demonstration of support for the principle of equal justice for all.

One of the arguments made in favour of accepting the plea bargain was that sending a former president to jail (after all, one of the initial crimes of which Katzav was accused was rape) would bring Israel into disrepute. Quite the contrary. Letting him off lightly would have brought Israel into disrepute. This seems to have escaped the understanding of the Attorney-General and his advisers.

Other countries have punished senior officials, and even presidents, who have been found guilty of serious offences, whether these were financial or involved brutality against sections of the population. Sexual offences warrant arraignment, no matter who commits them. The Israeli public has made it clear that it is not prepared to accept a society in which certain individuals are above the law.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Cultural legacy: some reflections

The two articles by Anthony Grenville in the June issue of the *Journal* prompt me to add my own contribution to these subjects. As the years go by, I feel increasingly the lasting effect of the values I inherited from my origins. Thankfully, while short-term memories leave much to be desired, my distant past remains vividly in my present.

We can justifiably be proud of our heritage, which we brought to the countries that gave us refuge. Most of us repaid this generosity with the knowledge with which we were endowed, by adding value to Britain – in many cases far above the norm. However, this contribution will end in the next few years, with our successors inheriting the mantles which clad us.

Alas, the cultural legacy which we have stored within ourselves will inevitably die with us. The new generations, not having had the education and experience with which we were endowed, aligning themselves with this country's youth in what is termed the 'multicultural environment', will

*We can leave this
changed, new world in
the sure knowledge that
we at least were fortunate
to have inherited the
cultural legacy of
our forefathers.*

have lost that which we have held most dear – our cultural background. While we were proud to follow in our parents' footsteps, the new generations mostly discarded this quality. Though some try hard to assimilate themselves, most of us view with some disdain that which has superseded our cultural legacy.

I am reminded of a personal contribution to the AJR Afternoon Entertainment some 20 years ago. I opted to play taped records of a number of songs by bygone German and Austrian artists, providing short

introductions and interspersing them by reciting German poetry. The artists included Joseph Schmidt, Hans Albers and Marlene Dietrich and I even played German beer-cellar songs. The poems were Goethe's *Erlkönig*, Fritz Grünbaum's *Mein Begräbnis* and Schiller's *Die Bürgschaft*. The two ladies then in charge of the Cleve Road Centre disapproved of my choices on the grounds that they were all in German and that they could not understand them! Nevertheless, I managed to entertain the members on a further education – in German.

Eighteen months ago I was in Vienna for the inauguration of the Stones of Remembrance project. I suggested that we see *Nathan der Weise* at the Burgtheater and was joined by a number of others. Having seen the play at the same venue as a young boy, I abhorred the 'modern' production and we all walked out at the interval! The management told us that most productions were now of the same type. Not only must the Jewish directors of that eminent theatre be rotting furiously in their graves when contemplating what became of their lives' work.

I recently went to see *La Traviata* at the Volksoper in Vienna only to witness a lifeless, misconceived 'modern' production – Violetta dying on the bed, which was the sole ever-present piece of scenery, with Alfredo bewailing her death behind a lace curtain on another part of the stage. What romance! Oh for the past glory of the theatre and opera!

We can leave this changed, new world in the sure knowledge that we at least were fortunate to have inherited the cultural legacy of our forefathers. It will be buried with us.

Fred Stern

WEEK IN WROCLAW *continued from page 4*

recent award of the 2012 European football championship to Poland and Ukraine induced Wroclaw as a chosen venue to promise further regeneration, including the final restoration of the synagogue.

The Jewish community was also favoured when in 1993, after many attempts, it received the school, hospital, offices and other property of the pre-war community, now too extensive for its needs. From the proceeds of lettings, community facilities of every kind are maintained, including free kosher lunches for all – including us tourists! The new young, friendly Orthodox American rabbi regrets that few families of the pre-war Jewish residents have yet visited. He encourages all Poles who genuinely want to become members of the community, even if they are not fully halachically Jewish.

One young university student with a Jewish grandparent helped us to look for my uncle Jakob Cohn's grave, which is listed in the remarkably preserved records of the 20,000 graves in the New Cemetery, though in vain, because that section is still overgrown. He recruits weekly 10 Catholic priests and 10 Polish

soldiers to clear the cemetery, and recently 50 young Americans touring Poland were persuaded to devote a day to this work. The municipality looks after the better-known Old Cemetery; among its 12,000 gravestones we found famous persons like Ferdinand Lassalle, the socialist politician, and Heinrich Graetz, the historian of the Jews, as well as the monumental family vaults of many secularised Jews who prospered in the heyday of Breslau Jewry.

I regret the passing of that era, when undoubted assimilation was also matched by Jewish cultural activity of every kind, but the time has come to accept that Wroclaw now has a new Jewish community, just as Germany itself has acquired a large one of 200,000 and more souls, mostly from Russia. We have always been a migratory people and those who escaped Germany have enriched other countries and other Jewries. *Am Yisrael chai* – the people of Israel shall live!

Henry J. Cohn

Henry J. Cohn is Emeritus Reader in History at the University of Warwick and Vice-Chairman of the Leo Baeck College, London

WANTED TO BUY German and English Books

Bookdealer, AJR member,
welcomes invitations to view and
purchase valuable books.

Robert Hornung
10 Mount View, Ealing
London W5 1PR
Email: hornungbooks@aol.com
Tel: 020 8998 0546



INSIDE the AJR

Sheffield: 'Memories of Mitteleuropa'

The theme 'Memories of Mitteleuropa' gave us an opportunity to relate our personal humiliations and sufferings. It also helped us to get to know each other's past, thus forming a more cohesive group. Chaired by Susanne Green, our ever-appreciated co-ordinator, we went home feeling we had spent a worthwhile social-educational afternoon.

Steve Mendelsson

Next meeting: Sun 21 Oct

Hendon fabulously entertained

We were fabulously entertained at our first anniversary meeting by pianist Annette Saville, who played a magnificent programme of nostalgic melodies from the pre-war years up to the present time. We also celebrated Irene White's 90th birthday.

Hazel Beiny

Next meeting: Mon 6 Aug. 'Israel Update'

Wessex: legal reminiscences

Following a short talk by Marcia Williams, Head of AJR Social Services, and an excellent lunch, catered by Katrina Webb, Myrna Glass introduced our speaker, the solicitor Peter Summerfield, who had arrived in England from Berlin just before the war. Peter reminisced about several of his cases, which had involved acting in major marine and aircraft accident cases as well as in cases in France.

G. M. Ettinger

Ilford: the story of the bagel

Frank Miller gave us the story of the bagel – a fascinating tale of the siege of Vienna in 1683 when a great Muslim army suffered a great defeat. The Austrian victory inspired a local baker to produce a bread roll in the shape of a stirrup – *Bügel* in German. This epic piece of history was followed by a delicious lunch of bagels with various fillings. A most enjoyable morning.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: Wed 1 Aug. Celebration of fourth birthday

Pinner: camouflage in war

James Taylor, from the Imperial War Museum, gave us a well-illustrated talk on the history of camouflage. The

military adoption of techniques for concealment, distortion and deception dates from the late nineteenth century, when long-range weapons (rifles) came into general use and, later, aircraft. Various artistic methods were used, for instance Cubism.

Paul Samet

Next meeting: Thurs 2 Aug. Annual Garden Party

Essex and Edgware lunch together

Edgware members were warmly welcomed at the Westcliff Synagogue by Essex Group Chairman Otto Deutsch. Following a buffet lunch, Otto gave us an interesting history of Westcliff and Southend before taking us on a tour of both places, including stop-offs at the famous pier and the statue of Queen Victoria.

Edgar Ring

Wembley Continental Friends second meeting

Over 20 people attended our second meeting. We were given the opportunity to introduce ourselves and to get to know each other a little better. Fred Stern provided a list of useful telephone numbers of, among others, recommended decorators, plumbers and electricians which will be sent to all members.

Myrna Glass

Next meeting: Wed 8 Aug. Pls contact office for further details

Norfolk: nothing can stop us now

Nothing can stop us meeting at Norwich – even if the Board of Deputies gets in the way. Erika had just celebrated her 90th, Myrna had been to a *super-chassene* on Sunset Boulevard (see Letters), another member had been from Prague to Berlin along rivers and canals. What excitement, not to mention the nosh!

Frank Bright

Next meeting: Thur 23 Aug. Summer lunch/ discussion

Harrogate: discussion about present preferred

The August Get-together in London aroused strong comments. Some wondered if one session might have been devoted to discussions about the present and the future instead of reminiscences. Rosl shared with us extracts from an educational correspondence she had with an Austrian schoolgirl and entertained us with amusing snippets.

Inge Little

Next meetings: Wed 22 Aug at home of Rosl and Mark in York; Wed 31 Oct at usual venue in Harrogate

Brighton & Hove Sarid: eighth birthday

We celebrated our eighth birthday with a Get-together, enlivened by contributions from members and even a sing-along. As the original founder of Sarid, I felt privileged to see many of the people who have been with us since its inception.

Fausta Shelton

Next meeting: Mon 20 Aug. Social Get-together

Cleve Road: thinking happy

Bettine Le Beau told us that to be happy we must like ourselves. We are all born with the basic instincts of self-preservation and procreation, but we have to programme our brains to think happy. Every cloud has a silver lining but to get rid of depression, we must use all the five senses, especially touch.

David Lang

Next meeting: Tues 21 Aug. Eli Benson of Magen David Adom

Edgware: the Wiener Library

Howard Falksohn told us that the Wiener Library contains records of many elements of Jewish life during the Nazi period, as well as the postwar Nuremberg trials and the trial of Adolf

Scottish and Newcastle Annual Get-together



Some 40 Scottish and Newcastle group members met in the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation's Synagogue Hall to view *Testimony*, the Scottish Holocaust Memorial Exhibition developed by Heartstone to incorporate testimonies from former refugees and Holocaust survivors who came to, or are now living in, Scotland. Paul Tyack indicated that the Anne Frank Trust was now looking at the development of small exhibits for distribution to schools. Members also took part in discussion groups on 'Legacy' and 'Education'. The day ended with excellent musical entertainment by Gica Loening.

Philip Mason

Eichman. Most records have now been microfilmed or computer-stored; copies have also been passed to Yad Vashem.

Edgar Ring

Next meeting: Tues 21 Aug. Michael Anvoner, 'Aspects of the Law'

Cambridge: current affairs discussion

A lively discussion of current affairs, led by Myrna Glass, was much enjoyed. The wide range of subjects covered many matters, including global warming, information technology, and the welfare system.

Keith Lawson

Next meeting: Thur 16 Aug. Shilpa Shap, 'Global Warming'

Leeds HSFA: a man wrongly imprisoned

Amjad Hussain told us about the arrest and imprisonment of his brother, mistakenly accused of the murder of a taxi driver in Pakistan and sentenced to death. He said his brother was not embittered by his experience and had been sustained throughout his imprisonment by his faith, the possibility of appeal, and his knowledge of the efforts made on his behalf by his family and British public figures.

Martin Kapel

Weald of Kent: 'Three-State Solution' Meeting in Tunbridge Wells, we were very interested in what Myrna told us about the functions of the Board of Deputies. We also talked about a 'three-state solution' in the Middle East. The all-important refreshments were ably taken care of by Richard and Ella Levi.

Inge Ball

Next meeting: Tues 28 Aug

North London: Churchill's life

James Taylor concentrated on Winston's quips and humorous asides, showing a facet of the great man's character not generally known. A well-researched, interesting talk. *Herbert Haberberg*
Next meeting: Thur 30 Aug. Celebration of sixth birthday

Essex outing to Wiener Library

Wiener Library Archivist Howard Falksohn related the history of the Library, following which Katharina Hübschmann gave us a tour of the Library and of its thousands of testimonies, newspaper cuttings and documents from all over the world. We must make sure that future generations never forget the atrocities that befell our families. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Library's staff and volunteers.

Miriam Stein

OTHER AUGUST MEETINGS

East Midlands (Nottingham) Wed 22 Aug. Lunchtime Get-together

Cardiff Wed 29 Aug. Lunchtime Get-together, with Susannah Alexander on 'A History of the Jews in England'

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

Bradford Continental Friends
Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

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

Bristol/Bath
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

Cambridge
Anne Bender 01223 276 999

Cardiff
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Dundee
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

East Midlands (Nottingham)
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

Edgware
Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

Edinburgh
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

Essex (Westcliff)
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

Glasgow
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

Harrogate
Inge Little 01423 886254

Hendon
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

Hertfordshire
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

HGS
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

Hull
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Iford
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Leeds HSFA
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

Liverpool
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Manchester
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

Norfolk (Norwich)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

North London
Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

Oxford
Susie Bates 01235 526 702

Pinner (HA Postal District)
Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

Sheffield
Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

South London
Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

South West Midlands (Worcester area)
Ruth Jackson 01386 552264

Surrey
Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

Weald of Kent
Max and Jane Dickson
01892 541026

Wembley
Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

Wessex (Bournemouth)
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

West Midlands (Birmingham)
Ernest Aris 0121 353 1437

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

KT-AJR

Kindertransport special
interest group

Monday 6 August 2007
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

Hermann Hirschberger
'My Trip to Karlsruhe & Kempton'

Reservations required
Please telephone 020 7328 0208

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday
9.30 am - 3.30 pm

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS
CLOSED ON TUESDAYS

August Afternoon Entertainment

Wed	1	Guyathrie Peiris & Bill Patrick
Thur	2	Nicola Smedley
Mon	6	KT LUNCH - Kards & Games Klub
Tue	7	CLOSED
Wed	8	Paul Coleman
Thur	9	Jack & Rita Davis
Mon	13	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	14	CLOSED
Wed	15	Evelyn True
Thur	16	HOMESHARE - TALK
Mon	20	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	21	CLOSED
Wed	22	Michael Heaton
Thur	23	Douglas Poster
Mon	27	CLOSED - BANK HOLIDAY
Tue	28	CLOSED
Wed	29	Jen Gould
Thur	30	B I N G O

DIARY DATES

7 August Northern Get-together,
Leeds

9 Sept AJR Tea at Watford Hilton

For further information about any of these events, please call us on 020 8385 3070.

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

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

Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups Co-ordinator
020 8385 3070

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

Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator
0151 291 5734

Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator
020 8385 3070

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Births

Congratulations to Andrea and Philip Goodmaker on the birth of their grandson, Joel Oliver.

Congratulations to Helena and Stephen Reid on the birth of their twin grandchildren, Jasmine and Zachary.

Thanks

Many thanks for your good wishes on my 100th birthday and for putting my little 'output' into your journal. I never thought I would make it, but it turned out a memorable day for everyone who shared it. Debra Kadisch.

Death

It is with great sorrow that the family of Inge Elting announce her sudden death on 30 May 2007. A truly selfless lady who is deeply missed by her family and all her friends.

Classified

Live-in caregiver wanted to look after elderly disabled lady. All accommodation and food provided, West Finchley. Tel 0208 446 6343.

Part-time driver required for private car, London N6 district. Would suit retired person. Clean licence and at least five years' driving experience essential. Box No. 1268.

Paul Balint AJR Centre

Chiropodist Trevor Goldman at the AJR Centre Wednesday 8 August 2007, 10-11.30 am.

Colvin Home Care
Care through quality and professionalism

Celebrating our 25th Anniversary
25 years of experience in providing the highest standards of care in the comfort of your own home



1 hour to 24 hours care

Registered through the National Care Standard Commission

Call our 24 hour tel **020 7794 9323**
www.colvin-nursing.co.uk

SWITCH ON ELECTRICS

Rewires and all household electrical work

PHONE PAUL: 020 8200 3518
Mobile: 0795 614 8566

AJR TEA

SUNDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2007
at 2.30 pm, HILTON HOTEL,
ELTON WAY, WATFORD

A ticket application form is inserted into this issue of the Journal. Kindly complete the form and return it to us as soon as possible.

We look forward to seeing you at the AJR Tea.

Should you require further details, please phone 020 8385 3070.

BINGO

30 August 2007

Why not join us at the Paul Balint AJR Centre when we will be playing BINGO after lunch

Please contact Susie on 020 7328 0208 for reservations



A grandchild is a wonderful blessing to have. If you would like to spend more time with them then you need to call **CORRECT COMPUTERS**. Imagine being able to see your family whenever YOU want. We teach complete beginners to use a computer and will show you how to have video conversations with any of your family. That's as easy as making a telephone call but one hundred times better, Call us now on 020 7449 0920.



HOMESHARE – TALK
THURSDAY 16 AUGUST 2007
at the
Paul Balint AJR Centre

Please call Susie
on **020 7328 0208**
for reservations



building a hospital for the children of Jerusalem

Please help us build Jerusalem's first dedicated Children's Hospital. A donation of just £20 will buy one of the vital building blocks of our children's future. Call the number below or go to our website for more information on how you can help.

020 8201 8933

www.shaarezedekek.com/buildingblocks



Shaare Zedek UK, 766 Finchley Road, NW11 7TH
Registered Charity No. 26270

ACACIA LODGE

Mrs Pringsheim, S.R.N. Matron
For Elderly, Retired and Convalescent
(Licensed by Borough of Barnet)

- Single and Double Rooms.
- Ensuite facilities, CH in all rooms.
- Gardens, TV and reading rooms.
- Nurse on duty 24 hours.
- Long and short term and respite, including trial period if required.

Between £400 and £500 per week
020 8445 1244/020 8446 2820 office hours
020 8455 1335 other times
37-39 Torrington Park, North Finchley
London N12 9TB

PillarCare

Quality support and care at home

- Hourly Care from 1 hour – 24 hours
- Live-In/Night Duty/Sleepover Care
- Convalescent and Personal Health Care
- Compassionate and Affordable Service
- Professional, Qualified, Kind Care Staff
- Registered with the CSCI and UKHCA

Call us on Freephone 0800 028 4645
Studio 1 Utopia Village
7 Chalcot Road, NW1 8LH

Obituary

Bob Rosner, 1930-2007

Bob Rosner's early life was not radically different from that of other Jewish children growing up in the thirties in a comfortable middle-class life in the 1st district of Vienna, where his father was a skin and venereal disease specialist. Then, on 11 March 1938, the whole of this 'normal' life vanished, replaced by a Nazi life-style, which was constructed in just a few weeks (and sometimes days). In this brief period, expulsion from school, from one's flat and from one's profession became the new norm of Jewish life, with all the attendant cruelties – sometimes practised by yesterday's 'friends' – that became the hallmark of the Austrian experience.

Following Kristallnacht, Bob arrived on a Kindertransport in Hull in June 1939 and was adopted by Leo Schultz, a remarkable man, later to become Lord Mayor, who was to have a huge influence on Bob's later years, especially in the field of human rights.

In 1946 Bob had the extraordinary experience of discovering that his parents had survived, having been hidden in the countryside for two years by a professional colleague of his father. (Out of 45,000 Jews alive in Austria on 1 September 1939, barely 2,000 survived the war.)

Bob graduated as an architect from Durham University, served in the army, and went on to build a prestigious international practice, specialising in marine development, town planning and landscape design.

But it was in 1988, with his visit to the 'Anschluss' exhibition and, even more, to the first Kindertransport Reunion, that a seminal change in his life and preoccupations occurred. Having lost contact with each other for many years, we came together that year and remained closely in touch. He was particularly concerned that young people should learn the history of early years and draw appropriate conclusions. Subsequently, he became a passionate supporter of, and lecturer at, the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre. Indeed, he died a few hours after his last lecture.

A week before Bob died, I told him of a sentence I had recently come across which he might find useful. The sentence ran: 'If 27 January is to be Holocaust Memorial Day, then the other 364 days of the year should be Holocaust Prevention Days.' His comment was: 'That is what we ought to be about, and I would like to use it.' I have no idea if he did, but it was certainly what *he* was about!

Bob is survived by his wife, Olive. May his memory be for a blessing.

Fred Barschak

Central Office for Holocaust Claims Michael Newman

Nuremberg art archives

In an initiative to identify former owners – and rightful heirs – of artworks looted from Jewish families in the Holocaust era, the city of Nuremberg has issued an appeal to people to make available to the City Archives 'personal records or photos of flats in Nuremberg and of stolen cultural assets from their family property'.

By unveiling the 'Lost Art' project, the Nuremberg City Archives are attempting to facilitate the return of cultural objects, including paintings, graphical works, furniture and craftworks which were subsequently acquired over the local art trade by the city of Nuremberg.

Although it is acknowledged that it is not always possible to determine the details of former owners, the project will draw on the documentation already available in the Nuremberg City Archives as well as the Germanic National Museum and the Bavarian State Archives.

The Commission for Looted Art in Europe, which has helped recover thousands of artworks lost, stolen or confiscated in the Holocaust, is offering advice and assistance to potential claimants. The Commission can be contacted on 020 7487 3401 or via their website: www.lootedartcommission.com

Claims Conference negotiations

At its annual meeting with representatives of the German government, the Claims Conference was able to secure improvements to several programmes which provide financial assistance to Holocaust survivors.

As well as reaching an agreement that will enable more Holocaust survivors to receive the monthly payments from the Article II and the Central and East European Funds, the Claims Conference is hopeful that negotiations will result in further improvements to the homecare programme.

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

New website reunites families separated by the Holocaust

A new website reunites families separated by the Shoah: www.ShoahConnect.org. ShoahConnect provides a tool to associate email addresses with the more than 2 million Pages of Testimony on Yad Vashem's website (www.yadvashem.org), matches people associated with the same Pages, and facilitates contact between them.

A discussion of ShoahConnect, including an interview with its creator, genealogist Logan Joseph Kleinwaks, can be read at <http://shorashim.blogli.co.il/archives/235> (English) or <http://shorashim.blogli.co.il/archives/236> (Hebrew).

For more information, visit www.ShoahConnect.org or contact logan@ShoahConnect.org

Search Notices

Kurt Friedlaender, possibly associated with the Jewish Refugee Committee, and wife **Berthl** lived at 35 Shoot Up Hill, NW London in 1940s-50s. Kurt helped people with restitution claims. I believe the Friedlaenders are related to my **Salmonsohn** ancestors. Any info pls to Rose Marie Whalley at whalley@total.net

Olga Hlawatsch, who lived at Obersdorferstrasse 7, Wolkersdorf, Austria, was murdered by the Nazis. Her son, **Dr Kurt Hlawatsch**, born 1909, has been in London since 1949. Any info, pls contact david.lang119@btopenworld.com

There were three DP children's centres at **Kloster Indersdorf, near Dachau**, in 1945-48. The first was led by UNRRA Team 182 (Principal Welfare Officer Greta Fischer). The second, the 'Jewish Children's Kloster Indersdorf Centre', was led by UNRRA Team 1066 and contained kibbutz organisations from Poland and Hungary. The IRO and Kibbutz Dror were in charge of the third. If you have memories of this time, pls contact Anna Andlauer at andlauer@onlinehome.de

Mansfield College was a Jewish girls'

boarding school which existed from 1894 to 1958 mostly in Hove with a period in North Wales in the 1940s. In its last 30 years it was run by two of my mother's sisters, Dr Nancy Hart and Mrs Enid Alfandary. I am writing a book on this. Pls share your memories with me, Jane Manaster, at janeman@earthlink.net

My aunt **Edith Robinsky** taught music at the Jüdische Volksschule in Berlin until early 1942. If you knew her pls contact Prof Steven Robins at robins@netactive.co.za

The two **Schonthal families** of Godollo, Hungary boasted 16 children between them – 8 boys and 8 girls. There are known descendants in the USA, Canada and Hungary seeking family members in Switzerland. Due to name changes there may also be family members under the names of, e.g., Szepvolgyi or Komlos. Any info pls contact Catherine (Schontal) Adam at cia@interlog.com

WWII evacuation of refugees in the UK I am working on a research programme for Reading University. If you have any info, pls contact Dr Eva Roman on 0208 462 5030 (evenings).

Courageous service in Britain's armed forces

Remembering Peter Leighton-Langer

Men and women of German nationality who volunteered for military service in the armed forces of Britain and her allies during the Second World War faced an additional hazard. Legally classified as 'enemy aliens', their new affiliation was tantamount to committing high treason against their country of origin. Yet, as the late soldier and author Peter Leighton-Langer pointed out, even in the not unlikely event that the British would lose the war, 'Every one of us knew this and was proud of it. Everyone accepted the attendant risk for him or herself, voluntarily.'

German nationals put on military uniforms on the side opposing their legal government before any others, and German and Austrian soldiers served in the British army virtually from the word go. Most of them were Jews and individuals whom the Nazi laws had turned into Jews, but a fair number were also gentiles, some of whom had left Germany for political reasons while others who were not politically minded at all opposed the Nazis and wanted to fight for freedom.

A not inconsiderable number of 10,000 Germans, Austrians, Czechs and others volunteered to join the British forces. From 1939 to 1943 most served in the 18 Alien Companies of the Pioneer Corps, but after 1943 almost all branches of the services were opened to them. An additional 5,000 served in the forces of the British Empire and Commonwealth, a further 14,500 in the forces of the United States, and certainly no fewer than 10,000 in France and Palestine. This makes a total of at least 40,000 – the great majority of them Jews – who risked their lives with conviction and distinction in the armies of the Western Allies.

Peter Wilhelm Langer, who died recently, was an Austrian who was commissioned into the British Army. He was born in Vienna in 1923 and had three Jewish grandparents. His father held the second highest rank in the Austrian civil service, but was

reduced to the status of a dustman after the Anschluss. Peter's baptismal certificate offered him no protection, so in September 1938 his parents put him with other baptised Jewish children on a Kindertransport organised by the Society of Friends for 'non-Aryan Christians'. He became a farmer's boy and in 1941 volunteered for the Pioneer Corps. When after 1943 Pioneers were allowed to join fighting units, he changed his name to Leighton and was commissioned into the Royal Artillery and sent to India in 1945. His father was murdered in Auschwitz, but his mother survived and eventually came to London. Back in Civvy Street, Leighton-Langer became a manager in Marks & Spencer, subsequently becoming finance director for Bata shoes in Germany and settling in Düsseldorf.

On retirement, he dedicated himself to documenting and recording as much as possible about his fellow refugees who had served in the British forces in the Second World War, because, as he said, 'everybody is always so surprised that the story of the German and Austrian refugees who bore arms in the forces of the British crown is hardly known at all'. Joining an army opposed to Germany was, in his view, the only sensible way in which any German opposed to Hitler could proceed with some hope of succeeding. He believed that the Germans should be proud of the refugees' successful opposition to the Nazis, and that for the Jews these co-religionists did not allow themselves to be led to the slaughter, but carried arms and used them to good effect.

Leighton-Langer's main contribution, and now his epitaph, is his book, intriguingly entitled *The King's Own Loyal Enemy Aliens: German and Austrian Refugees in Britain's Armed Forces: 1939-45*, which is published in the UK by Vallentine Mitchell (tel 020 8952 9526) and was launched by Peter at the Austrian Embassy in London last November.

Anne Frank Park opens in French capital; new documents pertaining to diarist released

An Anne Frank Park has opened in Paris. Among those who attended the opening of the park, which is located close to the Jewish Museum in central Paris, were the historic district's Mayor, Pierre Aidenbaum, Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, and the Director of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, Hans Mestra.

In a separate development, Anne Frank's cousin has released thousands of letters, photographs and documents which, archivists say, will reveal details about the diarist's background. Bernhard 'Buddy' Elias, 82, had kept the documentation in his attic before permanently lending it to the Anne Frank House Museum.

Auschwitz renamed

The official title of the Auschwitz death camp has been changed to include the name 'German' in response to diplomatic pressures from Poland. A Unesco spokesman said that in future the camp would be referred to as the 'Auschwitz-Birkenau German Nazi Concentration Camp 1940-1945'.

Medal for Salvadoran official

The government of San Salvador is to seek a posthumous medal for diplomat Jose Arturo Castellanos who gave citizenship certificates to as many as 40,000 Jews during the Holocaust. Mr Castellanos was the Salvadoran consul-general in Geneva in the early 1940s.

Germany's Jews in warning to Israel

The leaders of Germany's Jewish community have warned Israeli PM Ehud Olmert they will request the German government's help in preventing Israel from encouraging Jews settled in Germany to emigrate to Israel. The warning was sent following Israel's decision to extend the jurisdiction of Nativ, the government body in charge of promoting immigration from the former Soviet Union to Israel.

Polish-Jewish museum progresses

Supporters of a new museum on Polish Jewry are hoping to draw in the final funds to finish what aims to be Europe's largest Jewish cultural attraction under one roof. Calculating that 50-75 per cent of the world's Jews trace their ancestry to Poland, museum officials estimate, according to a *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (New York) report, that some 500,000 visitors will visit the museum annually. The museum still needs 10-15 million dollars to support its permanent galleries, said its deputy director, Ewa Wierzyńska.