

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

The sorrow of Belgium

The history of the Jews of Belgium during the Second World War has received surprisingly little attention, especially considering the exceptionally high number of Jewish children who survived the Holocaust in hiding there. Michael Marrus's *The Holocaust in History*, to take just one example, contains a few scattered passages on Belgium, and that is pretty typical. My interest in this subject was sparked by Marrus's passing reference to the fact that the only known attack by a resistance group on a train deporting Jews to the extermination camps took place in Belgium.

But then, Belgium has become a byword for obscurity among the ignorant British, who like to amuse themselves by being unable to name ten famous Belgians. (Jan van Eyck, Peter Paul Rubens, the Breugels, Rogier van der Weyden and David Teniers make a good start, and that is just among painters.) Hugo Claus, Belgium's most famous contemporary writer, who died in March 2008, was also virtually unknown in Britain as he was from Flanders and wrote in Dutch. A strong contender for the Nobel Prize, he never won it, though his masterpiece, *Het Verdriet van België* (*The Sorrow of Belgium*) (1983), seems to me to be at least the equal of such novels by British Nobel Prize laureates as V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* or Doris Lessing's *Golden Notebook*.

The Sorrow of Belgium is available in English, but I would recommend Alain van Crugten's excellent French translation, *Le Chagrin des Belges*, to those who read French. Claus's semi-autobiographical novel, set in a Flemish town in the years immediately before, during and after the Second World War, describes the passage of its hero, Louis Seynaeve, from childhood through adolescence over some eight years. It shares its title and, to some extent, its scurrilous, aggressive, unsettling, but brilliantly imaginative narrative style with



Jews humiliated at Dossin Barracks

a striking painting by the enigmatic artist James Ensor of Ostend, best known for his *Entry of Christ into Brussels* (1888).

One of the novel's main themes is the susceptibility of some Flemish-speaking Belgians to extreme nationalistic and Nazi ideology, leading to a considerable degree of collaboration during the German occupation (1940-44). Claus brings out the resentment felt by Flemish speakers at their treatment as second-class citizens by the French-speaking ruling elites, which sharpened their feelings of Flemish nationalism; some of them rejected the Belgian state, hankering instead after an independent Flanders or integration into a larger 'Germanic' unit, separatist anti-French dreams the occupying Nazis were only too willing to foster.

Admiration among right-wingers for the supposed superiority of Führer-style dictatorship over parliamentary democracy was reinforced among Flemish speakers by their sense that the Belgian parliament was merely a corrupt instrument for imposing the political interests of French-speaking parties on underprivileged Flanders. The Catholic Church, extremely influential in rural Flanders, tended to see Hitler as a bulwark against 'godless Bolshevism', while its notorious demonisation of Jews as 'killers of Christ' helped to prepare the ground for racial antisemitism. One of the nuns who runs Louis Seynaeve's first school, for example, claims to have seen a Jewish pupil,

who has 'insinuated himself' into the school as a 'normal' child, secretly desecrating consecrated bread with an expression of 'indescribable hatred' on his face.

While French-speaking Wallonia produced Belgium's most notorious Fascist movement, Léon Degrelle's Rexists, as well as a Walloon Waffen SS Division, it was in Flanders that collaboration with the Germans ran deepest, as it had during the First World War. Seynaeve himself briefly joins the Flemish National Socialist youth movement, while many of his elders admire and work with the occupying Nazis and younger men join units like the Flemish Waffen SS Division Langemarck. Far-right and pro-Nazi groups sympathetic to the Fascist concept of the 'New Order' abound in the novel, most prominently the Flemish nationalist Vlaams Nationaal Verbond.

The linguistic divide in Belgium, which remained highly sensitive politically after the war, was one factor that tended to deter historians from addressing the Holocaust there. Another was the post-war focus on the controversial role played by the Belgian king, Leopold III, who in May 1940 had ordered his army to capitulate prematurely to the Germans without the approval of his government, had chosen to stay in Belgium instead of going into exile in London, and had married the daughter of a suspected collaborator. The Holocaust in Belgium was consequently slow to receive the attention it merited: the first major history of it, Maxime Steinberg's three-volume study, appeared only in the mid-1980s, and it was not until the 1990s that scholars fully grasped the importance of the hidden Jewish children in Belgium.

Whereas names like Drancy, the transit camp in France from which Jews were deported to Auschwitz, or Westerbork, its Dutch equivalent, are widely known, far fewer have heard of Breendonk in Belgium, or know how the Jews of Belgium were

continued overleaf

THE SORROW OF BELGIUM continued from page 1

summoned by the Germans to Malines/Mechelen, midway between Brussels and Antwerp, there to be incarcerated in the Dossin Barracks and deported to the extermination camps. It was from the Dossin Barracks that the train attacked by the resistance on 19 April 1943, Convoy XX, set out on its way to Auschwitz.

In 1939 Belgium had a Jewish community of some 70,000, about half as many as the 140,000 Jews in Holland, but far more than the 8,000 Jews in Denmark. Yet, because of Anne Frank and the rescue of Danish Jews by boat to Sweden respectively, the public profile of the Holocaust in those two countries is much higher than is the case with Belgium; the first histories of the Holocaust in Holland appeared back in the 1950s. Even allowing for the fact that occupied Holland was run by a Reichskommissar, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, who gave the SS a free hand, whereas Belgium was until July 1944 under a military governor, Alexander von Falkenhausen, who was out of sympathy with Nazi ideology, the difference in survival rates for Jews between the two countries is remarkable: of the 60,000 Jews still in Belgium when the deportations commenced, almost 55 per cent, over 30,000, survived, while over 75 per cent of Dutch Jews, some 110,000, perished, compared to 28,500 Belgian-Jewish victims.

The crucial difference lay in the number of Jews who survived in hiding: in Belgium, this was exceptionally high, at some 25,000 (about 40 per cent of the Jewish population), whereas well under 20 per cent of Dutch Jews survived by being sheltered. Putting it another way, the proportion of Belgian

Jews who were sheltered was, at 40 per cent, almost as great as the 45 per cent who perished. As a letter in our July 2008 issue stated, some 4,000 Jewish children survived in Belgium by being sheltered, often by Catholic institutions and other gentiles, but also by Jewish orphanages, which continued to operate throughout the period.

Even these figures, however, mask the impact of the regional/linguistic divide: in Antwerp, the largest city in Flanders and home to some 54 per cent of Belgium's Jews, 65 per cent of Jews registered by the authorities were deported, whereas in French-speaking Brussels, where 38.5 per cent of Belgian Jews lived, only 37 per cent were deported. Whereas in Brussels the police refused to take part in rounding up and deporting the Jews, in Antwerp the municipal authorities collaborated fully, from the distribution of yellow stars in June 1942 by city officials (they put a helpful asterisk in the municipal register by the names of Jews who collected a star, thus marking them out for future 'actions') to the active participation of the city's police in round-ups of Jews.

The particular victimisation of the Jews in Antwerp had its roots in pre-war times; in the 1930s, high levels of antisemitism, arising from a culture that combined ethnic Flemish nationalism with Catholic intolerance and accentuated by sympathy with Nazi Germany, led to physical attacks on Jews, culminating in anti-Jewish riots in late August 1939. Under the German occupation, the Jews of Antwerp came under severe pressure, partly as a result of the attitude of the municipal administration under Mayor Léon Delwaide in complying

Michael Newman appointed a Director of the AJR

We are pleased to announce that Michael Newman has been appointed a Director of the AJR.

Michael joined us in 2001, originally to head our Claims Office, giving assistance to members with their reparation and compensation claims. He later took on the responsibility for organising our media coverage, PR and marketing, and then our Regional Groups programme. His duties will remain largely the same as at present. We wish him well in his role.

with German directives and partly as a result of antisemitism among the population, which led to a pogrom-like eruption of violence against Jews on 14 April 1941 (see the review article by Dan Michman of *Yad Vashem*, 'Why Did So Many of the Jews in Antwerp Perish in the Holocaust?', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 2002, accessible on the website of the Shoah Resource Centre).

Civilian attitudes in Antwerp differed from those in most of Belgium; fewer people helped Jews there, the Church in particular being less helpful, the local authorities and the police collaborated more energetically, and markedly fewer Jews survived in hiding. After the war, the investigation carried out into the role of Mayor Delwaide and the municipality was seriously inadequate, and the question of official collaboration in Antwerp was largely left untouched. Only in October 2007 did Mayor Patrick Janssens offer a formal apology for the part played by city officials in the organisation of the deportation of Antwerp's Jews.

Anthony Grenville

Austrian refugees honoured

Two distinguished British-based refugees have been presented with decorations by the Austrian Ambassador to the UK, Gabriele Matzner-Holzer, in the Austrian Residence in London.



Wolfgang Suschitzky

The decoration Goldenes Verdienstzeichen des Landes Wien was awarded to the Viennese-born photographer and cameraman Wolfgang Suschitzky.

Wolfgang Suschitzky was born in 1912. Having travelled in 1934 to England, where he joined his sister, the photographer Edith Tudor-Hart, he became a cameraman for Paul

Rotha, the British filmmaker, film historian and critic. Among his credits are *Ulysses*, directed by Joseph Strick, and *Ring of Bright Water*, directed by Jack Couffer.

The decoration Grosses Silbernes Ehrenzeichen für Verdienste um die Republik Österreich was awarded to the British historian of Austrian origin, Professor Peter Pulzer.

Professor Pulzer, one of the most outstanding political scientists and historians in Britain, has also worked extensively on Austrian history and politics and has published numer-



Peter Pulzer

ous internationally recognised studies, including *The Rise of Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria*.

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Getting to know the natives

The English: *Are They Human?* is the title of a book by a Dutchman called Gustaaf Renier published in the early 1930s. Well, are they? My first real chance to get to know the citizens of my host country came in the spring of 1942 when, a fresh-faced 22, I arrived in Maidenhead. Up to then, since my deliverance from domestic servitude, I had shared a room with a relative, but now I was to live in a completely English ambiance in a boarding house owned and run by a formidable lady – aptly named Miss Bull – who presided over breakfast and dinner with great decorum.

Most of my fellow-boarders worked for firms that had been evacuated from London. There was Hibbs, the wag, with his grey-haired, grey-faced wife. There was middle-aged, overweight Helen with her aged parent – in her case, her mother – over whom she fussed and worried endlessly. There was sylph-like Edna, who was having a hopeless affair with her boss. And there was Mrs Smith, a business-woman.

From their point of view, I was at best a Jewish refugee, at worst an enemy alien. Either way, I was *foreign*, and they might have been forgiven if they had treated me, if not with hostility, at least with reserve. In fact, they did not just accept me but welcomed and even spoilt me.

Work, too, was agreeable. As a shorthand typist in an engineering firm, I was now officially 'helping with the war effort'. (Misquoting the government, the workers' mischievous slogan was 'Give us the job and we'll finish the tools.') I shared an office with a few other girls and, apart from the usual office intrigues, we got along fine. I had long since adopted the shorthand typists' motto 'What you can't make out, leave out' or 'What you can't make out, make up.'

There were aspects of the English that puzzled me – some amusing, others less so. Everyone I met was conservative, both with a big and a small C. Even charladies voted Tory because 'With them you know where you stand.' And only the most

exclusive private schools were public. Also, why should a man put in seven years' hard work to become a Dr only to study for several more years to revert to being a plain Mr? And where else would a public employee end an official letter as 'your obedient servant'?

The attitude of the English to dentistry also bewildered me. In Vienna, even in the thirties, the emphasis had been on saving teeth. Here, 'having one's teeth out' was as much of a treat as going to the pictures. My dentist, who had an excellent reputation, was scathing about the dangers that lurked beneath the Continental crowns and bridges. He also refused to fill wisdom teeth. I lost three of mine to his zeal; the fourth escaped and survived for another 50 years or so.

But what really shocked me was that, in the middle of the twentieth century, English children were still subjected to ritual beatings in schools and, even worse, that judges were still able to sentence offenders to physical punishment.

So, are the English human? Renier doubted it. But they are – of course they are. I'm fully aware that anti-semitism and xenophobia have always existed in this country. I still remember the ads in local papers in the fifties when 'gentiles only' were considered desirable tenants. And even now the BNP, if not exactly thriving, is making its presence felt. And yet. I can't help loving the inhabitants of 'this sceptred isle'. I've always admired their stoicism, their dry sense of humour, their understated decency. Perhaps I've been extraordinarily lucky, but I have never encountered anything but courtesy, tolerance and friendship in my dealings with them.

Edith Argy

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What is a Jew?

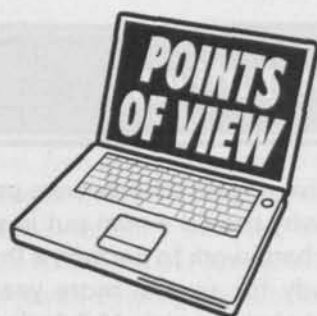
Britain is a hotbed of anti-Israel sentiment,' says Ron Prossor, who has been the Israeli Ambassador to Great Britain since last November.

In my local newspaper, the *Watford Observer* (6 June), a Mr Keith Douglas praises Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JJP) for agreeing with the concept that the 'Zionist regime has become very squalid indeed.' He continues that it is 'small wonder that more and more Jews are joining Jews for Justice for Palestinians' and gives us their website address. In the same issue of the *Watford Observer*, a Mr Mike Barnes maintains that the JJP is a growing concern because British Jews are critical of 'Israel's actions against the Palestinians over the last 60 years and want a change.' Also, a Mr Simon Colbeck writes that the JJP is an organisation that 'honestly recognises the roots of the conflict': 'Israeli state terror inflicted on the Palestinians', 'the continuing confiscation of Palestinian land', 'apartheid laws', and 'monopolisation of natural resources'.

Wait a minute! Where are Messrs Douglas, Barnes and Colbeck getting their virulently anti-Israel and anti-Zionist material? From Jews!

The group which calls itself Independent Jewish Voices is a bunch of academics and 'celebrities', mostly left-wing, who sign petitions attacking the state of Israel for its so-called injustices towards the Palestinians. They claim to be a 'sizeable' part of the British Jewish community. Sizeable is such a meaningless word that it is difficult to dispute this claim. One per cent perhaps? Harold Pinter, Stephen Fry, Nicole Farhi, Janet Suzman, Zoe Wanamaker, Mike Leigh, Jenni Diski, Jacqueline Rose, Tony Klug, Anne Karpf – yes, all the usual suspects – signed up to attack Israel in advertisements in the British press because of 'Israel's human rights record' and 'relentless expansion'. It is difficult for the British – or anyone else for that matter – to differentiate between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. I put it to you that these signatories, probably thinking of themselves as unbiased Jews, do not realise the ammunition they are giving to the antisemites. To antisemites, Israel means Jews. To them, any attack on Israel is welcome, particularly if made by Jews themselves.

When I was a student at Oxford University in the early-mid-fifties, I noticed that one or two of my fellow



Jews denied being Jewish, particularly when asked to join the university Jewish Society. At the time, I despised them for this but, today, I think it is, if anything, preferable to turn your back on your people than to attack them.

Let me make it clear. I believe our first loyalty has to be to Great Britain. I agree with Norman Tebbit's test for deciding how English one really is. He asked the Black and Asian communities whom they backed at cricket. Most admitted it was the countries they had come from. I was born in Vienna but I do not back the Austrians at any sport. Nor, for that matter, do I back the Israelis. However, after Great Britain it is to Israel that I show allegiance. The country is made up of my fellow Jews and I am proud of what they have built in 60 years.

Israel is surrounded by enemies. Iran wants it swept into the sea. The Arabs, on the whole, hate Israel (Egypt and Jordan are friends only because they have been bribed by the United States), and now we have British Jews setting themselves up against the state of Israel too. Are memories really that short? Great Britain has never liked the concept of Israel. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin wanted to send the Holocaust survivors to Cyprus, Uganda or Madagascar – anywhere but Palestine – and he put embargoes on ships carrying them there. Britain abstained in the vote on the partition of Palestine. They used Israel to further their own ends (unsuccessfully) at Suez. And, until the Six-Day War, they nearly always sided with the Arabs. Does Great Britain need further grounds for disliking Israel? Do these so-called well-meaning British Jews not realise the damage they are causing? Look at the way the antisemitic Chelsea football supporters treated their Israeli coach Avram Grant. They even managed to persuade a Jew, Roman Abramovitch, to fire him. Also, why do the do-gooders think it alright for the Palestinians in Gaza to launch missiles into Israel but not for Israel to retaliate?

This brings me to your correspondent Inge Trott. She leads with her chin by asking in the June issue of the Journal

whether she should be classed as antisemitic for belonging to Jews for Justice to Palestinians and Alternative Jewish Voices. Depending on how you interpret antisemitism and if you believe, as I do, that anti-Zionism breeds antisemitism, my answer has to be yes.

Peter Phillips

A question of misrepresentation

In his letter in your June issue, Howard Turner distorts what I wrote in an earlier issue (February). He implies that I said that Palestinians have no right to live in the land, but I said no such thing.

I did not discuss who has the right to live in Palestine. I merely tried to examine how the country came to be given this name and why the Arabs living there are now always referred to as Palestinians. I also stated that any Middle East agreement would have to take into account the political aspirations and humanitarian needs of the people involved – which hardly suggests that I think the Palestinians have no right to live there.

Incidentally, the PLO Charter refers to the Arab Palestinian people – namely people of the Arab race who live in Palestine – which is more or less what I indicated. It also refers to Palestine as an indivisible part of the Arab homeland and to the Palestinians as an integral part of the Arab nation. No mention is made of, or recognition given to, the Jewish historical connection with Palestine, or the Land of Israel, as it used to be called.

I also pointed out that the Jewish connection with the land commenced centuries before the Arab Muslim invasion in the seventh century and that Jews have only one homeland – whereas the Arabs have over 20, all of which, with the exception of Arabia, their original homeland, were acquired by invasion and conquest.

Mr Turner then quotes with approval the remarks of Amos Elon – that the Jews are forced to rely on the Arabs forgetting their memory of past history. On what does he base this assertion? The Arabs will certainly not forget their history and it is highly unlikely that many, if any, Jews want them to do so.

In fact, the Arabs *should* remember their history: that they started out from their homeland, Arabia, and invaded and conquered most of the Middle East and North Africa, lands with which they had no previous connection; that they invaded the Indian sub-continent; and

DARFUR REFUGEES FIND SAFETY IN ISRAEL

A group of AJR members recently spent an excellent week in Israel. One evening we heard a moving account by two Darfuri refugees who had found safety in Israel.

The two refugees had been persecuted by the Sudanese government, which had strongly supported the Janjaweed, an Arab militia of nomads, in committing genocide. Arab Muslims deny that black African Muslims are fellow Muslims. Villages are burnt; men, women and children are raped and murdered. Escape is hazardous, as we heard from these two members of the self-aid organisation Beit Darfur.

In 2002 our first speaker, Ismail, a big, strong man, saw his father burnt alive in his hut with most of his fellow villagers. He fled with his wife and young children to the mountains and managed to get his eight-year-old daughter, who was shot in the head, to a hospital in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. There he was accused of being a rebel, imprisoned and tortured. A friend bribed the prison staff, smuggled him out, and changed his passport, enabling him to get to Egypt. He taught English in a Union of Churches African learning centre. The Red Cross found his family in Darfur – they joined him in 2005. They applied to the UN for 'refugee status'. A group of Darfuri refugees outside the UN building in Cairo was attacked by Egyptian government forces. Many fled to Chad or the Central African Republic. Ismail heard there was a possibility of seeking refuge in Israel, though Muslim refugees thought of Israel as 'the devil's hell'.

In June 2005 Ismail, his wife and four

children walked from Sinai to the Israeli border, where the Israeli army gave them water and blankets. After they had stayed five days in a refugee camp, student volunteers supplied food and



Ismail and Ali

medicine and found hosts for 53 refugees, including accommodation for Ismail's family. Two hundred and seventy Darfuris formed the B'nai Darfur self-help organisation. Communication was a problem. At present, there are over 800 Darfuri refugees in Israel. They have permission to work for one year.

The second refugee, Ali Malit, a tall man with dreadlocks, was from the Massaleit tribe. He too told us of the slaughter perpetrated by Arab Bedouins in black Muslim villages, including 40 members of his family killed in one day. Ali managed to escape and hide with his children, including a baby. He was caught, accused of opposing the government, jailed and tortured. Eventually, he reached Khartoum and Egypt, applied to the UN for 'refugee status', waited 18 months, and was deported back to Sudan. Hearing of Israel as an asylum, he too walked for

three days to the border and was received by 'the kind and gentle army'. Asked why he, a Muslim, had come to Israel, he replied that 'after the Holocaust the Israeli can understand – Arab Muslims cannot.' A kibbutz received him and his family. It is now his third year working with the B'nei Darfur organisation.

In the discussion afterwards, we heard more about the atrocious Darfur situation. The population of Darfur comprises 15 per cent Arab nomads, 85 per cent black Africans. The government has an Arab majority. Following a drought and consequent famine, the government rejected international aid. The war began in 2003 with a rebellion; ethnic and tribal conflict escalated. The government jailed and murdered witnesses, arrested journalists, and refused the UN peace-keeping force entry. The African Union is not strong enough, and the rest of the world not united enough, to deal with this crisis. In 1956 the British colonial administration created artificial borders which helped cause later political problems. China and Russia are interested in the oil reserves and support the Sudanese government, which displaces populations to develop the oil fields. Amnesty International drew attention to the Darfur conflict as early as July 2003. The 2007 documentary film *The Devil Came on Horseback* graphically describes the situation in Darfur, as does *Instant Karma: The Amnesty International Campaign to Save Darfur* (also 2007). Can people of goodwill be effective? We all hope for peace in the world.

Elizabeth Rosenthal

POINTS OF VIEW *continued*

that in later years their fellow Muslims, the Ottoman Empire, invaded the Balkans and got as far as the gates of Vienna. They should also realise that these invasions have resulted in some of the worst tensions troubling the world today, such as between India and Pakistan, the situation in the Balkans, and, of course, the dispute over Israel/Palestine.

It is the Arabs who want to deny the Jews – apart from possibly a nominal

minority – the right to live in Palestine. It is also the Arabs who want all memories of the Jewish association with the Holy Land to be erased, as if the history of the Holy Land only began with the Muslim invasion. Their thoughts are clearly set out in the PLO Charter and in the manifesto of Hamas. It is true that the PLO Charter was meant to have been repealed under the Oslo accords, but this does not appear to have been implemented.

When dealing with pro-Palestinians, it is usually the case that they ignore facts pointed out to them. It is probably true that Israel sometimes treats the Palestinians badly and pursues bad policies. But this is not the real cause of the dispute – which is the Arabs' objection to Israel's existence, their denial of the right of most Jews to live in Israel/Palestine, and their refusal to acknowledge the history of the Jewish association with the Holy Land.

Mendel Storz

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

THE PAST SHALL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN

Sir – The Archivist at the Wiener Library, Howard Falksohn, would like to receive the original documents relating to our lives, while still living on the Continent or journeying here – letters, certificates, photographs, artefacts. One should of course keep photographs. One day in the future our children will be clearing out our house. They don't understand German and won't appreciate the rarity and value of these old papers.

As both of us were born in Berlin, we have given all ours to the Archivist (Dr Aubrey Pomeranz) of the Berlin Jewish Museum after hearing him give an address at the Kindertransport lunch.

We attended two 'workshops' at the Berlin Jewish Museum. Our documents had been studied by students from Berlin University, who gave dissertations on some of the original material. There were three subjects of discussion, including one on Theresienstadt, where a cousin kept a secret diary. She wrote: 'For my 82nd birthday the best present I received was half a potato from a fellow inmate and on three occasions I waited for hours in the open air en route to the gas chambers of Auschwitz – only to be rejected at the last moment as the train was full.' She survived the war and lived into her nineties. Also discussed were memories of the Kindertransport. We still had the original numbered label tied round each child's neck. And the identity card with 'J' for Jude printed on it and the extra middle name of Israel inserted. The third subject was Jewish lawyers before the war under Hitler who were forced to stop work in 1938.

We were the first Jews these youngsters had encountered. Perhaps they will now realise more clearly the terrible, murderous deeds their grandfathers were witness to or, more likely, were willing participants. The past shall never be forgotten.

*Kurt and Renate Treitel
London NW11*

SUPPING WITH THE DEVIL

Sir – I was very impressed by Dr Anthony Grenville's article (June) about Rudolf Kastner, based on the book by Ladislaus Löb. My late husband spoke to me about this issue many years ago. The information available at the time made him conscious of the dilemma facing this poor man. We were both aware of the devious machinations employed by the Nazis. Thus we sensed he had been unjustly vilified. As you imply, at the time too many Jews, especially in Israel, had a black-and-white perspective relating

to the years of our persecution: one was either a hero or a villain. Whilst this attitude has now abated, as you mention, it still reverberates among some right-wing fanatics, with dreadful consequences.

Let us revere the memory of this brave man, who tried, and succeeded, to save so many Jews in desperate circumstances. His murder was a vile deed.

Laura Selo, London NW11

Sir – In recent times, an attempt to re-examine the 'heroic' activities of various functionaries, in particular the role of Rudolf Kastner (Kasztner) during the Hungarian Holocaust, was initiated by Anna Porter's book *Kasztner's Train: The True Story of an Unknown Hero of the Holocaust*.

Some 1,600 Jews paid Eichmann for their lives and liberty. We are all grateful that Mr Löb and others were in a position to do so as well as Mr Kastner's family and were allowed to escape the fate of the other 435,000 victims. This was a remarkable achievement. But further factual recounting of that period is necessary for evaluating the difficult tasks facing the Jewish Council and others.

Irrespective of the claims of some historians that there were many opportunities for the majority of provincial Jews to know of their impending destruction, this was not the case. The few who escaped from Slovakia perhaps warned those who lived close to the borders of the transportations etc, but this information did not filter through. Nor could the BBC World Service in Hungarian be transmitted without severe censorship of the known extermination camps.

Dr Grenville asks: How could Kastner have helped to save those deported? By distributing the information on Auschwitz written by Vrba and Wetzler, the two great heroes who managed to escape that camp and speedily prepared the *Auschwitz Protocol* to warn Hungarian Jews of the extension of the gas chambers awaiting us. This document was collected by Kastner when he was in Bratislava. We may well remember Professor Ian Kershaw's view that 'History is not a one-way path along an inevitable course.'

Susan Pollack, London NW11

ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES

Sir – On reading Anthony Grenville's 'Reflections on Austria' in the July issue, I was taken back the 70 years to Vienna and the Anschluss.

I was one of the lucky ones. My parents – my father, the playwright and journalist Abisz Meisels, and my mother, Klara Meisels

– were born in what was the Austro-Hungarian Empire but became Poland after the First World War. This meant, according to the rules that existed at my birth, that I took on Polish nationality, the nationality of my parents, even though I had never been to Poland. It was our Polish citizenship that saved our lives.

As some of your readers may know, most of the Jewish organisations in Vienna had been infiltrated by covert Nazis working as administrators and the like. My father, most of whose plays had a Zionist leaning, belonged to the Zionist organisation, where the secretary was one of these 'Nazis'. She, however, was a great admirer of my father and informed him that he was down for arrest in a few days' time, on 9 May. We booked an outing to Brünn (now Brno) in Czechoslovakia for Sunday 8 May. My mother and I were wearing three dresses and three lots of underwear, but my father only took Theodor Herzl's book *Altneuland* with him (I still have the copy). Being Polish citizens, we were allowed to pass freely over the border. On arriving in Brünn, we couldn't believe it – no flags with swastikas and no beatings of Jews. We had escaped the Nazis thanks to a Nazi.

Ruth Schneider, London N8

'A GIFT OF LIFE'

Sir – Further to the letters in your July issue, in my personal experience the actions of the Belgian authorities – the border police, the home office, and particularly the helpful assistance shown at local level – following liberation from the camps are commensurate with the exemplary rescue missions they were involved in.

I was liberated from Mauthausen. After a brief 'home' visit to Hungary to see who else had survived, the search for a safe place occupied my mind and those of hundreds of other teenage boys. Without any documents or guarantees, the town of Terwagne near Namur and later Linkebeek housed us and gave us pastoral care. Not 'a gift of life' perhaps – but a much-needed trust in humanity helpful towards the rebuilding of a new life.

Abraham Pollack, London NW11

THE BRITAIN WE LIVE IN

Sir – I was somewhat disenchanted by Jussi Brainin's article (June) in which he praises Britain excessively. Yes, quite a few German Jews found refuge in Britain. Yes, Britain fought quite well against the Germans, though they started the invasion of Continental Europe very late. Also, at no time should we forget to mention the *Patria* and the *Struma* as well as the *Exodus*. What has to be highlighted is the fact that Russia lost over 20 million people during the Second World War. If it weren't for the Russians, Göring might have been working from 10 Downing Street.

Roman Licht, London NW8

STOLPERSTEINE DETAILS SOUGHT

Sir – Readers of the *AJR Journal* will know of the German *Stolpersteine* project. These are commemorative stones placed outside

houses where Jews who were deported had lived. This is to make the present inhabitants realise the horrors of the Nazi period.

I have received the following request from a German friend who lives at Berlin-Schöneberg, Gosslerstr. 21. In her house lived Martha and Gabriele Scheff, who were deported in 1941. Next door lived Max Klein and Alfred Wagner, who died in Lodz in 1942. My friend wants to know more about these four people. She knows that the author Werner Scheff (1888-1947) emigrated to England in 1937. Can any of your readers help in tracing their relations?

Peter Prager, London N12

NEW SQUARE FOR VIENNA

Sir – An event of great importance for the history of all the distinguished refugees from Austria recently occurred in Vienna. There an important square, facing the United Nations building, has been named Mohammed Assad-Platz. The initiative for this was taken by a Muslim city councillor.

Mohammed Assad was my step-brother. He was born in Lemberg/Lwow, the son of the lawyer Karl Akiva Weiss, a member of a prominent line of rabbis; his name was Leopold Weiss. He converted to Islam in 1926 and became one of the founders of Pakistan. I have deposited important material in the Wiener Library and am now also in possession of the latest newspaper reportage of the recent event in Vienna, including DVDs. I do feel that the honour awarded such a person would be of interest to all our readers.

M. Goldenberg, London N6

HEIL DEMOCRACY!

Sir – Recent events in Zimbabwe remind me of what happened in Austria in 1938. The Schuschnigg regime, on its last legs, was going to call a plebiscite but Hitler invaded Austria in the meantime. However, the plebiscite was still going to be held – Nazi-style. The voting forms ran as follows: 'Are you in agreement with the National Socialist Party? There will be a large circle for "Yes" and a small one for "No".'

Jews were not allowed to vote of course. An Aryan acquaintance told me that at the polling station an SA man stood behind each voter, pointed to the large circle, and said 'Put a cross there!' No wonder the plebiscite was almost 100 per cent in favour of the Nazis.

(Mrs) Annette Saville, London NW4

SECOND GENERATION

Sir – I watched the three episodes recently screened on BBC4 entitled *Jews* with my non-Jewish husband, who summed the series up most effectively as 'not doing the "Jews" any favours'.

The programme's creator advertised in the *AJR Journal* as she was interested in interviewing members of the 'second generation' for an episode in the series. We spoke briefly on the phone and exchanged emails and, although she explained that she was unable to use my comments, I eagerly awaited the screening and imagined that I would hear, see and subsequently

empathise with fellow children of survivors. Not!

The programme appeared to be cleverly edited to include only negative narrative. My wonderful 89-year-old mother still 'survives' today. My mother taught her children well – we were made aware of her horrific experiences as soon as we were old enough to understand. Contrary to the programme's portrayal, we had a wonderful loving, caring upbringing. Although perhaps cossetted and protected more preciously by our parents than our 'English-Jewish' friends, our childhood was filled with fun and laughter. We felt happy and secure and certainly not alienated. Our mother lost her parents and entire extended family apart from her sister and brother, but in so doing bestowed upon her children all the 'surplus' love in her heart. It's a pity that the programme creator's narrow interpretation gave out such a sombre message.

It would be interesting to hear how fellow second generation members perceived the programme and if, like me, they feel cheated.

*Sue Rutherford,
Hemel Hempstead*

See 'Burdens of the Second Generation', page 10 – Ed.

ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

Sir – All parties to a war behave badly at some time or other. Israel is not the only one. Let us therefore face reality and accept these sad facts of life and either stand up for all countries which have suffered as a result of war or shut up. But do not single out Israel for condemnation!

Perhaps Inge Trott would care to pass on this opinion to the Jews for Justice for Palestinians society and to Alternative Jewish Voices.

This brings me to the report that Archbishop Tutu strongly condemned Israel's actions in Gaza and, in passing, only disapproved of Hamas's shelling of Israel. I do not know whether this was biased reporting by the media. Nor did I hear reports of the Archbishop voicing a word of criticism of Mugabe! Are the media reports a true reflection of the facts?

Alex Lawrence, Marlow

Sir – May I be permitted to put forward a solution to the problem faced by your contributors in the July issue whose blood pressure rises when dealing with Jews who espouse the Palestinian cause?

On the Viennese/Bohemian side of my family was a well-to-do banker who had had the foresight to opt for Czech citizenship in 1918 and was thus able to rescue himself and his fortune by emigrating to England unscathed. His sayings were not only amusing but were repeated like holy writ by the more impecunious members of the *mishpoche*. One of them was 'Mit meshuggene soll man nicht disputieren' (Don't argue with nutters). Another of his sayings was 'Mit metzies verzettelt man sein ganzes Geld!' (With bargains, you fritter all your money away).

Frank Bright, Ipswich

Sir – Sadly, some Jews do not know that the Palestinians do not want two states: they want only *one* state – an Arab state. Any survivors from Europe can remember the slogans shouted to us before the war: 'Jews, go back to Palestine!' Everyone knows we are from Israel, renamed Palestine.

Clare Parker, London NW3

DEADLY WEAPON

Sir – I owned until recently a cosh of exactly the type that Victor Ross describes in his article 'Berlin Days' in last month's issue of the *Journal*. But I then sadly decided to dispose of it as these days one never knows when the police may search your house – and it is a deadly weapon. So it is now merely a memory. I inherited it from my late father, Victor Ehrenberg, but it didn't look as if it had ever been used.

Professor Lewis Elton, Guildford

IN TOUCH WITH THE PAST

Sir – I value and enjoy your little magazine very much – keeps me in touch with the past.

Brita Wolf, London NW3

Sir – The *AJR Journal* always makes very interesting and informative reading. Many thanks.

Mrs H. Hillman, London NW3



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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The **Ben-Uri** celebrates its magnificent – but largely unseen – collection this year in a trio of retrospectives from the years 1888 to 2008. It is a vast artistic legacy, spanning Impressionism, Expressionism and Modernism up to the growing bank of



R. B. Kitaj, *Moses Contra Freud* 2005. Oil on canvas, 21.5 x 28 cm (103) © The Estate of R. B. Kitaj, Courtesy Marlborough Fine Art, London

contemporary art which remains hidden in storage while the hunt for sizeable premises continues.

The Gallery also celebrates Israel's 60th birthday with **Israel and Art: 60 Years Through the Eyes of Teddy Kollek**. Jerusalem's philanthropic mayor, who died last year at the age of 97, raised billions of dollars for cultural and civic development programmes during his 28 years in office. He is depicted by several artists in all his moods, including a dreamy **Oskar Kokoschka** charcoal study and one of brooding intensity by his daughter, **Osnat Kollek-Sachs**. Other works capture aspects of Jewish or Israeli life, including two peace doves and the head of a sheep by **Menashe Kadishman**. **Reuven Rubin's** ruminative self-portrait, bearing the allusive title *1893 Romania – 1974 Israel*, in a sense tells the refugee experience with a kind of silent vigour.

This year's **Royal Academy Summer Exhibition** has been hijacked by the arty glitterati. Although some 10,000 works

were submitted, you'd have a job to find anything that didn't bear the brushstroke of celebrity, or at least the mark of a Royal Academician.

A smiling **Tracy Emin**, coffee cup in hand, invited the press into her boudoir, where she'd had only a month to hang an entire room, and wanted to be on the side of provocative. So – surprise! – she chose erotica. She was particularly excited by her discovery of Israeli artist **Sigalit Landau**, whose video shows a naked, bleeding girl playing hula hoop with barbed wire. Other sexually charged images carried an RA health warning.

The 97-year-old **Louise Bourgeois** offered a white painted sculpture of bronze and steel, **Gary Hume's** painting resembled Bart Simpson, and there was a clutch of black totemic sculptures with a nod to Giacometti and the mosques of Istanbul.

The Academy maintained its tradition of honouring a deceased member. This year, Jewish-American artist **R. B. Kitaj** was given an entire room, curated by Marco Livingstone, in tribute to his work over the last 50 years.

A train journey is the subject of his *Jewish Rider*, with its Nazi symbolism, including the smoke of the crematorium, and a crucifix. The vibrancy, colour and allusiveness of this tragic artist – he took his life some three years ago after being diagnosed with Parkinson's – clearly moved Livingstone, who described his disparate voices, his allusions to religion, and his rediscovery of his Judaism.

Super-realism shines again at the **National Portrait Gallery's** BP Portrait Award, won by **Craig Wylie** for *K*, his girlfriend. But this is not the romantic portrayal you might expect from a lover. It is the sombre face of someone whose mind is elsewhere. *Amanda Smith* by **Simon Davis** was runner-up in another ruminative study.

There is a grinning portrait by **Tom Phillips** of Sir Jeremy Isaacs with all the cultural tools of his trade around him, from Channel 4 to the Royal Opera House.

Gloria Tessler

REVIEWS

THEATRE

Love in the time of reason

HANNAH AND MARTIN

by Kate Fodor

directed by Pat Garrett

Courtyard Theatre, London

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger was so rooted in his concept of *being* that he failed to resist – or even recognise – the Nazis when they came knocking on his door. Resistance, of course, would have threatened his status as rector of Freiburg University and so the acclaimed author of *Being and Time* moved seamlessly into the Nazi embrace. Dissembling, equivocal, the man who exalted the Germany of Wagner, Beethoven and Schubert *über alles* and who wrote 'Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of beings,' eventually fell from grace and stood accused of infecting a generation of students with Nazi ideology.

The brief but passionate affair with his Jewish student Hannah Arendt in 1925 fires this intelligent, perceptive play, which examines the political conditions which can move some to greatness and others to moral cowardice.

Fodor's play, tautly directed by Pat Garrett, was acclaimed following its off-Broadway production last year and is now premiered in London. Less an analysis of academic differences and more a breakdown of love in the face of reason, the play starts out with the Nuremberg Trials, which Hannah, having escaped to America, is covering for an American paper. There are flashbacks to the affair between the two lovers in a Europe whose Enlightenment ideals are inexorably crushed by the machine of war.

Mesmerised by her mentor, Hannah at first embarked on a career translating his letters, but was to discover that Heidegger was a man of straw. While he analysed *being*, she had to focus on *doing*. 'I wanted to be both German and Jewish, but I soon learned it was not possible,' she said. Their affair ended and in 1930 she married a Jewish philosopher involved in Zionist politics, but they divorced and her second husband was a German political refugee. Hannah became politically active and, years later, when reporting the Eichmann trial for a US newspaper, she coined the phrase 'the banality of evil'. As for Heidegger, he was soon discredited by the Nazis and sent to dig trenches.

Yet it is Hannah who rose to the occasion as a passionate Zionist campaigner and academic. She rescued Jewish children, berated Jewish collaborators, and finally forced her former mentor-lover to confront his Nazi past – for which he never apologised.

Vivienne Rowdon as Hannah, and Greg Patmore as Heidegger, engage in an ideological battle in which, ironically, both

share the same romantic and political visions. The difference is that Arendt is a Jew and has to act practically, both to save her own skin and that of others. Heidegger, played with lofty intent by Patmore, has nothing but job and status to lose, yet he loses both.

The award-winning playwright sensitively evokes Heidegger's cultural obsessions and political confusion which allow him to believe the Nazis can restore dignity to a Germany broken by the First World War.

Some analysts read a weakness in Heidegger's thinking which made him vulnerable to such casuistry. Yet it is he who observes that 'Life is easy for sheep, but for a fully developed, reasoned being, it is difficult.'

However, in a gesture to her past love, Hannah fights for Heidegger's reinstatement at university despite the efforts of her high-minded student, Alice, energetically played by Sarah Savage, to persuade her otherwise.

Patmore as Heidegger conjures the perverse longing of this flawed character for the sublime, the ineffable, in the German *Zeitgeist*. And in Rowdon's credible portrayal, we see Hannah grow from gawky, love-lorn student to a self-possessed and courageous intellectual. Sarah Savage as Alice, Hannah's student, brilliantly hints at Hannah's own, younger self in her moralistic outrage.

Gloria Tessler

The 'other' Germans

AUS TEUTSCHLAND DEUTSCHLAND
MACHEN: EIN POLITISCHES
LESEBUCH ZUR "WELTBÜHNE"

by Friedhelm Greis
and Stefanie Oswalt

Lukas Verlag, Kollwitzstr. 57, 10405
Berlin, www.lukasverlag.com 540 pp.
29.80 Euros hardback

Until its suppression in 1933, the *Weltbühne* was the foremost left-leaning weekly of the Weimar republic. It had been founded in 1905 by Siegfried Jacobsohn, originally as the *Schaubühne* devoted exclusively to the arts, but entered the political arena with the outbreak of the First World War, when it developed a critical attitude towards the war which, at one point, caused it to be banned by the imperial censor.

Siegfried Jacobsohn ensured that the *Weltbühne* provided a forum for the free expression of dissent as well as of more conventional opinion, its objective being the truthful rendering of views – often enlightening, sometimes misguided, always challenging. Following the political and cultural stagnation of Imperial Germany, this flowering of free expression attracted the collaboration of Germany's foremost authors, critics and commentators, littering the *Weltbühne* with contributions from renowned writers such as Kurt Tucholsky, Carl von Ossietzky, Erich Kästner, Erich Mühsam, Kurt Hiller,

Lion Feuchtwanger and Julius Bab.

This book might well be subtitled 'The Other Germany'. It displays, in more than 200 reprinted contributions, the variety, richness and controversy which first defied and subsequently overcame the German paranoia for conformity. The 79 authors (out of over 2,000 contributors) whose views are represented in the selected articles are culturally and politically at the pinnacle of what a democratic Germany achieved in the early twentieth century. They show clearly what Germany and the world lost in creativity, originality and free expression during the dark years that followed.

The book's selections are drawn from among the 48,000 pages which make up the 29 years of the *Weltbühne's* publication. The book is divided into nine chapters with titles such as 'Against War, Militarism and National Delusion', 'The Fight for the First German Democracy', and 'The Rise of Hitler and National Socialism'.

One chapter of 55 pages is devoted to 'Judaism, Zionism and Antisemitism'. Jacobsohn was himself scathing about those who sought to obscure their Jewish origins. Many of his contributors were Jewish even though, in their writings, they did not necessarily concern themselves with Jewish topics. Many felt they were fully integrated into German society and thus left unresolved the issue overshadowing much Jewish thinking at the time – were they Germans of the Jewish faith or were they Jews who happened to be living in Germany?

The roots of German antisemitism go back many centuries and are certainly no invention of the Nazis. In the pages of the *Weltbühne* there was outrage at the smear campaigns purporting to denounce Jews as cowards when thousands were fighting, and dying, for Germany in the First World War. The debate in the twenties on whether Jews necessarily needed to be Zionists and how a Jewish state could find an accommodation with the Arabs occupied the minds and writings of many contributors, and the fate of Jewish asylum-seekers from Eastern Europe especially concerned Jacobsohn himself since he perceived the Westernised Jews of Germany as largely unsupportive in welcoming their impoverished co-religionists. More predictably, he expressed dismay at conservative Jews who supported nationalistic Jewish organisations, while Tucholsky was withering in his condemnation of Jewish military leagues.

The days of Weimar have gone. But in the pages of this remarkable collection of writings all the vigour, optimism, ingenuity and resourcefulness of the fatally wounded republic come alive, to give the reader a glimpse of those 'other' Germans who sought, but could not find, the road to a stable democracy. In the history of Germany the Weimar years are often seen as years of failure – failure to keep the nationalists, the militarists and the racists in check, failure to control the forces of reaction, and failure to provide the economic conditions in which democracy might have flourished. Whatever the truth

may be, they were also years of immense richness in culture, artistic endeavour and political thinking and this book, perhaps more than any other, provides an understanding of the magnitude of the achievement and of the task which faced those longing for a democratic Germany.

Eric Bourne

THEATRE

Jewish mother in a fast-changing world

MOTHER/SON

written and performed by
Jeffrey Solomon

New End Theatre, Hampstead, North London

The path to coming out as gay and proud of it is strewn, it seems, with the good intentions of a Jewish mother. The confessional urge to come clean about one's orientation and the relief at getting it off one's chest are one thing. Acceptance is quite another. But consider the shock of such a salvo right to the heart of the Jewish would-be grandmother.

So, when New York Jewish actor Jeffrey Solomon sat down to write a one-hander about a son's changing relationship with his mother, he clearly entered an emotional minefield. In this tribute UK debut performance, Solomon mainly manages to steer clear of both melodrama and mawkishness. He gives us a moving and funny semi-autobiographical play which cleverly alternates the roles of mother and son. At first, I felt that Solomon's portrayal of the mother, who leaves shrill voice-messages about suitable girlfriends and the like, could have stepped out of a Jackie Mason gag. Amusing, earthy, but we've seen and heard it all before. However, once he has gently persuaded the matriarch that the object of his affection will be a guy, not a girl, this is where things start getting interesting.

Will mum die of shock – or will she turn up trumps and become supportive, compassionate, persuasive, wholly validating of her beloved son? Interestingly, it is mothers who seem to bear the brunt of the agony over the receipt of such knowledge – at least in drama. Fathers are kept well away, apart from a snoring shape under the bedclothes. But that's a whole other story.

Solomon's mobile, sensitive face yields instinctively to the maternal questioning anxiety of his mother and finally, when she is dying and he finds that all her irritating messages have been wiped off his machine, whose face is it that stares back at him in the mirror? And who predicted this transformation? In some ways, the piece is less about the son's need for acceptance and more about the role of a Jewish mother facing a tough truth in a world changing too fast for her.

Exactly how much fiction and how much autobiography can be read into this play we cannot know, but we can empathise with a dilemma so delicately conveyed. No

Continued on page 10

Viennese tart

This is *not* a recipe for something sweet although it is about 'Das Süsse Mädel'. It is probably the first article in this publication about pornography.

Some time ago I was asked by a friend of a friend to help her clear the house of a German scientist who had died, as she was the executor and knew no German. I think it was really to help decide what should be done with technical books and papers but there was also quite a varied collection of books. Many of these have now found homes in educational libraries.

One book intrigued me. I had vaguely heard of it but had never seen a copy. This was *Josefine Mutzenbacher*, subtitled *The Autobiography of a Viennese Prostitute As Told By Herself*, published anonymously. I am not an expert in this type of stuff and have often been told that it's really rather dull and repetitive. After all, there is a limited amount that even the most fertile imagination can produce about sex. I looked at some of it and extended my vocabulary. The nicely brought-up, average-middle-class eight-year-old Viennese boy is not normally exposed to the words used here. I wonder

whether my mother knew these words as she was Hungarian. If my father (brought up in Leopoldstadt and the Austrian army) knew them, he never uttered them in my presence. There is an entertaining glossary at the end entitled *Beiträge zur Adöologie des Wienerischen* and written in phonetic Viennese, which taught me some more.

The text was originally published in Vienna in 1906. This particular edition, proudly stating that it is the full and uncut text, was printed in Munich in February 1970 and gives its publishing history as '1st impression of 5,000 copies October 1969, 2nd impression of 30,000 copies November 1969, 3rd impression of 20,000 copies February 1970'. Clearly, selling like hot cakes. On the back of the title page is a statement to the effect that the purchaser has assured the bookseller that he is over 21, has promised to keep it away from young persons and all who might be adversely influenced by the text, and will not lend it to anyone.

A newspaper cutting dated February 1971 was inside the book, reporting that a Munich court had ruled that this book, as well as a companion volume and one by

Apollinaire, had been found to have no artistic merit or social-history value and was to be banned. This was more than a year after the citizens of Munich had started buying it in large numbers. It was also more than ten years after the Lady Chatterley trial in the UK had decided that D. H. Lawrence had written a literary work that could be read by the general public, in spite of its four-letter words. I had not realised that the Germans were so prude in comparison to Britons.

The editor's foreword was very instructive in another way, as it told us about the author of this anonymous text. Imagine my surprise when the originator was revealed as Felix Salten. I have probed a bit and my literary friends tell me that Felix Salten, who was born Siegmund Salzmann in Budapest but grew up in Vienna, was actually quite well-known for his pornography, written under a variety of pseudonyms (always with the initials FS). Certainly, his children's book *Bambi*, about a young fawn, should perhaps be viewed in a rather different light! I have not kept the book but given it away ...

Paul Samet

REVIEWS continued from page 9

doubt Jeffrey's mum would be proud of this artfully sketched and endearing tribute to a woman who loves and values her son – even if she will never see grandchildren.

Gloria Tessler

TELEVISION

Burdens of the second generation

JEW: THE NEXT GENERATION

by Vanessa Engles

BBC4 25 June 2008

I only caught the second of Vanessa Engles's three programmes in her BBC4 series *Jews*. Focusing on children of refugees from, and survivors of, the Holocaust, it was a beautiful, sensitive filmed programme, whose content rang many bells for me – as I'm sure it did for other 'second-generation' viewers. This means it was probably quite uncomfortable or even distressing viewing for 'first-generation' viewers.

The interviewees seemed to have been selected to show that being a member of the second generation carries with it painful burdens, burdens which include constant awareness of one's Holocaust-related family history, an almost obsessive need to care for and ensure the happiness of one's parents, and a propensity to high levels of anxiety, especially about security and the need to trace one's family history. Religion was mentioned only in the case of the sole male interviewee, whose father had been Jewish. He had decided to convert, as had his non-Jewish wife.

The interviewees spoke eloquently and movingly about their experiences. How could you *not* be affected by the long dark

shadow of the Holocaust, one person asked. Very striking were the few comments from the camp-survivor mother of one participant – she had had a stroke and said she got on with life and didn't look back. It was very difficult to read the expression on her daughter's face when she said this, but I thought I saw bewilderment.

This is an important piece of work, one from which we can all learn. However, I do regret that it didn't show the many other aspects of being second generation, which can have far more positive and forward-looking elements. Just think how many second-generation people work in the caring professions, with today's refugees – or, dare I say it – as comedians in the entertainment industry!

Barbara Dresner Dorrity

Barbara Dresner Dorrity is an AJR Northern Region Social Worker and a member of the Second Generation Network and the Association of Children of Jewish Refugees.

THEATRE

The 'return' of Golda Meir

GOLDA'S BALCONY

written by William Gibson

directed by Scott Schwartz

starring Tovah Feldshuh

Shaw Theatre, London

Tovah Feldshuh's one-woman show – the longest-running in the history of Broadway – gives us insight into the passions and conflicts of Golda Meir, a 'matriarchal figure of undeniable courage [with] an undeviating love of the Jewish people and its land', as an unattributed quotation in the theatre programme puts it.

Having read Golda Meir's autobiography some time ago, I found this production a chance to re-acquaint myself with a most remarkable woman. Golda felt she simply had no choice – she was passionate about Israel and knew she could make things happen. She showed she had *chutzpah* when Ben-Gurion sent her to Chicago on a fund-raising mission. It was sad that when he had a few extra shekels in his pocket, her devoted but hen-pecked husband Morris came home to her when they lived in Jerusalem – after persuading her to leave the kibbutz – with a gift of a pink silk tassled lampshade. Instead of recognising his love for her, Golda hit the roof and that moment became the turning point in her career.

Tovah takes us through Golda's early memories of Kiev and pogroms to her adolescence in Milwaukee, when she ran away from home to live with her sister in Denver. There she continued her education and met Morris, also an immigrant from Ukraine. Through him and his circle Golda learnt about Zionism and socialism and this kindled the fire which burned throughout her life.

From two balconies – one in her home, the other overlooking the nuclear plant in Dimona – we are privy to the conflicts in Golda's mind, which range from 'sacrificing' the young men called up to fight in the Six-Day and Yom Kippur wars to her private world, in which she sacrifices her marriage and her children to her devotion to the state of Israel.

Following the 90-minute performance, Tovah Feldshuh hosted a 20-minute question-and-answer session. Judging by some of the questions, the audience were so convinced by her performance that they almost believed they had Golda Meir sitting in front of them!

Maisie Holland

The most unforgettable character I ever met

This was the title of a long-running series in *Reader's Digest* magazine, presenting pen portraits of the good and the odd. Long after we killed it, people still talked about these articles with the affectionate derision reserved for our most popular offerings: the jokes, advice on health, the easy Word Power tests, the sanitised pieces on sex.

One character who deserved to feature as unforgettable but never did was DeWitt Wallace himself, founder and owner of *Reader's Digest*, a man imbued with the conviction that he could render a profitable public service by selecting the most important articles appearing in other magazines, paring down their surplus verbiage and republishing 30 of them in a pocket-size monthly. In its heyday, it attracted 100 million readers in 15 languages.

I worked for Wallace for 29 years and propose to rectify the omission. Like many a visionary, he was autocratic, enigmatic, unaccountable to anyone. One of his unendearing traits was a streak of cruelty. Every year he invited his cronies to a poker marathon for which he hired a private train that steamed all the way down to Florida from upstate New York and back again without the players ever leaving their carriages. One year, Wallace issued the usual invitations but, when his eager companions arrived at the station (appropriately called Pleasantville and servicing mainly the *Reader's Digest's* headquarters), he handed out mops and pails, saying that the ticket office and platform looked neglected, and put everybody to work, himself included, on a day-long spring clean. He could also be arbitrarily generous. A week after my chief had reported an unusually profitable year's operations, he found a Cadillac in his drive which had been quietly delivered during the night, with a velvet bow holding together the cellophane in which it was gift-wrapped.

Every senior editor had a major work from Wallace's art collection in his office: paintings by Bonnard, Cézanne, Modigliani, Monet were everywhere. On my first visit to this paradise, I was put up in the 'Guest House'. Coming down to eat breakfast under

a charming little Corot, I found a note of welcome from Wallace enclosing two 100-dollar bills 'to help acquaint yourself with the pleasures of New York's musical theatre'.

I had heard all about 'Wally's' nasty side

Next day I got official confirmation of my appointment. Frankly, I don't think it had much to do with our poker session. I have already mentioned that Wallace was not overfond of the British, and to set a Viennese Jew above them as guardian of the grail was the sort of joke he liked to play.

– his ruthless rotation of courtiers, his excruciating practical jokes, his ambivalence about the English, his dabbling in racism – but when we were alone together, he made me feel that I possessed star quality. In turn, I became an admirer and diligent student of his publishing skills. He tended to show me favour but was always ready to dismiss ideas without ceremony. Over the years, the companies I led made millions, but money impressed him only as a vindication of his mission. His highest praise for me came when a colleague sent him a note I circulated in the British company, complaining that I was left to turn out the lights at night when everybody else had gone home, which I considered both wasteful and unmannerly. Wallace thought this one of the finest internal office memos he had ever read, and had it printed on parchment and sent to every manager in his international empire. He was no slouch at writing beautiful memos himself. His rejection letters were works of art. Considering

whose work he turned down on occasions – John O'Hara, Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woolcott, J. B. Priestley – they *had* to be. Like the magazine itself, they were written to make the reader feel good, magicking disappointment into a favour bestowed.

When I was chosen to head the British company, there had to be a confirmatory interview with Wallace. Despising any form of corporate formality, he decided that the interview would be over dinner at the home of one of the directors, followed by a game of poker. Poker reveals character. The stakes were low, no doubt out of consideration for me, but also because Wallace was careful with his small change. I was a seasoned player and had to guard against letting on. As evening stretched into night, the game became more serious, the stakes higher, and consideration for weaker brethren fell by the wayside. On the last deal, I built myself a reasonable hand, and soon only Wallace and I were left in the betting. It was a tricky moment because I was fighting for the pot and for a job: winning the former might lose me the latter. He too was in conflict, wanting to win, but not on the strength of having the deeper pocket. I thought that gave me an edge and I raised Wallace by an amount that surprised him. He thought hard and raised me in turn, millionaire against *nebbich*. I was pretty sure I had the better hand and knew that the only way to end the auction without tears was to turn it into a joke.

'My semi-detached in Golders Green, four bedrooms, bus stop at the corner, against High Winds, to see me,' I offered. High Winds was the name of Wallace's palatial home, set in the finest piece of real estate in Westchester County, NY. He squinted at his cards, gave me a quizzical look, then threw in his hand. There had been tension around the table, but everybody rose with relief and the evening was over.

Next day I got official confirmation of my appointment. Frankly, I don't think it had much to do with our poker session. I have already mentioned that Wallace was not overfond of the British, and to set a Viennese Jew above them as guardian of the grail was the sort of joke he liked to play.

Victor Ross

INSIDE the AJR

Manchester: 'The rebirth of Jewish life in Germany'

Some 40 of us welcomed Dr Benny Peiser, a social anthropologist, who spoke to us about the Jewish community in post-war Germany. As he himself had lived in postwar Germany for more than 30 years, he was in an ideal position to deliver a most informed presentation about the rebirth of Jewry in that country.

Werner Lachs

The Jews of Oxford

Victoria Bentata, a member of the Oxford synagogue and an official guide for the Oxford area, gave a highly interesting presentation on the history of the city's Jewry.

Anne Selinger

Next meeting: 19 Aug. Lunch at home of Susie Bates

Ilford: Early life of youth leader

Redbridge Community Youth Leader Revital Shloman told us about her early life in Tel Aviv, where she was born. Her family have roots in both Greece and Turkey. We found her talk inspiring.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: 13 Aug. Celebration of fifth anniversary

Pinner: 'Put pen to paper!'

BoD speaker Jerry Lewis quoted a list of statistics on the 300,000 Jews living in the UK. To counteract the frequently one-sided reporting of affairs relating to Jews and Israel, he urged us to write to the authorities whenever and wherever such injustice came to our notice.

Walter Weg

Next meeting: 7 Aug

Wembley CF: Food for thought

When is it not in the news? When it's good news for us! The media were never even-handed. In Vienna we used to say: 'Who is at fault? The Jew and the cyclist.' The discussion was lively. An idea was mooted: offer your grandchild the gap year in Israel. Food for thought!

Fred Stern

Next meeting: 13 Aug

Cambridge: Diversity of faiths

'The Diversity of Faiths' was the subject of a superb talk by Rabbi Daniela Thau. We were captivated by her explanation of the major religions of the last 7,000 years, whose tenets and emblems she summarised.

Keith Lawson

Next meeting: 14 Aug. Bertha Leverton

Brighton & Hove Sarid:

'Cradle of Ashkenazi Jewry'

Ivor Richards talked about his visit to the 'cradle of Ashkenazi Jewry': Mainz, Worms and Speyer, towns which gave us community sages such as Rabainu Gershon, the author of the law against bigamy, and the famous Rashi.

Ceska Abrahams

Next meeting: 18 Aug. Godfrey Gould, 'The First Marquis of Reading'

Bradford members getting to know each other

An animated discussion took place: now members are getting to know each other, their recollections are becoming more personal and informative. Susanne Green seems to find former refugees and survivors of whom we - who have lived in the area for years - have never heard!

Albert Waxman

Next meeting: 23 Sept

HGS Middle East briefing

The Israeli Embassy's Robin Hamilton-Taylor gave a most informative update on Israel and the Palestinians and Iran's nuclear ambitions. It is increasingly absurd to deny that Iran is working on the development of nuclear weapons and that, if it were to succeed, it would use these against Israel.

Laszlo Roman

Next meeting: 11 Aug. Geoffrey Perry, 'When Life Becomes History'

Edgware: Kitchener camp

Prof Clare Ungerson gave some of the audience a chance to relive their time after coming to this country as refugees. The first residents in Kitchener camp, in Sandwich, Kent, were young men who kept it going; no family members could join them. Each man had to contribute to the wellbeing of the camp, whether by physical work or cultural activities.

Felix Winkler

Next meeting: 19 Aug. Ivor Richards, 'The Science of G-d'

Radlett: 'Berlin Today'

Second-generation Berlin resident Ronnie Goldz gave us an illustrated talk on life as a Jew in Berlin today, including an overview of synagogues, Jewish schools and the city's numerous Holocaust memorials.

Margaret Arenias

Next meeting: 20 Aug. Walter Woyda, 'The Rothschilds - a Musical'

Surrey: Hospitality much enjoyed

Twenty-plus of us enjoyed once again the hospitality of Jutta and Vernon Saunders. The bonus of holding the coffee morning indoors was that one could admire Jutta's lovely paintings in detail.

Hans Meyer

Welwyn afternoon of chat and refreshments

We enjoyed an afternoon of chat and refreshments at the home of Monica Rosenbaum. We were very pleased to welcome Myrna Glass making a rare visit.

Ruth Tuch

Next meeting: 26 Aug. Social Get-together

Temple Fortune: The Wiener Library

Howard Falksohn gave an informative talk on the Wiener Library's development up to the current day. Some of the key figures involved in its evolution were mentioned and unusual pictures and documentation from the archives shown.

Evelyne Frank

Next meeting: 21 Aug. Michael Anvoner, 'Wills'

Liverpool lunch

Members from Liverpool, Manchester, York and Blackpool met up at the Liverpool group annual lunch. Emeritus Professor Leslie Brent

gave us a very interesting talk on 'From Intolerance (Racial) to Tolerance (Immunological)'. After lunch we visited the Klimt exhibition at the Tate North at Albert Dock.

John Goldsmith

Cleve Road talk by Helen Fry

Our speaker, Helen Fry, and I first met during the production of the book *The Lost Jews of Cornwall*, of which she was an editor and to which I contributed. This led to her next book, *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens* - on Austrians and Germans who fought for Britain in WW2. A highly recommended read.

David Lang

Next meeting: 26 Aug

Wessex at HMD conference

Twenty of us attended the third annual HMD conference at the Pavilion. Mark Goldfinger gave a memorable keynote speech on his early life. Rev Vernon Oder, the son of an SS man, spoke too.

Suzy Ellis

North London: Coram's Children

Thousands of babies were abandoned until Thomas Coram established the Foundling Hospital in 1739. Jane King gave an often heart-rending account of the work of this institution. It was especially interesting to learn of the involvement of Hogarth and Handel, among others, in raising funds.

Hanne R. Freedman

Next meeting: 28 Aug. Celebrating 7th anniversary

Kingston CF enjoyable afternoon meeting

We had another enjoyable afternoon meeting at the home of Joe and Margot Allan. Twelve of us, including new members Eve and Susan, exchanged news and experiences and discussed plans for future meetings.

Alfred Kessler

Newcastle upon Tyne: Return visits

Two members described visits to the places of their birth. Edith Kronenberger was invited to Vienna as part of the 'Letter to the Stars' project, whereas Walter Knoblauch's visit to Munich was privately arranged. We also reviewed the Yom Hashoah commemoration, including the excellent Janusz Korczak exhibition.

Kurt Schapira

Next meeting: 21 Sept

Hendon: A 'hidden disability'

Audiologist Robert Beiny told us loss of hearing affects people of all ages. Though 50 per cent of the over-60s need hearing aids, there is much resistance to the idea of wearing them. Unlike blindness, deafness is a 'hidden disability'.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: 18 Aug. 'Safety in the Community'

Afternoon tea in West Midlands (Birmingham)

At our meeting back in March, Ilse Schlesinger, one of our members, most generously entertained us to afternoon tea in her home. Thank you, Inge!

Philip Lesser

Radlett members brief Herts police

To: Esther Rinkoff

Dear Esther

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the AJR members, Eric Newman and Bruno Muller, who spent their time to visit us at Borehamwood Police Station. The account portrayed of the suffering by so many people was both emotional and informative.

The Safer Neighbourhood Team based at Borehamwood in Hertfordshire comprises 17 Police Officers, 24 Police Community Support Officers, and numerous Police Staff, covering eight wards housing a population of over 48,000. The role of the Neighbourhood Team is to provide high-visibility policing to increase public reassurance and to address crime and disorder issues within the district. This includes long-term problem-solving and the engagement of partners and the community in this process.

Our role covers many aspects of diversity working and the input of the AJR will help to improve our quality of service.

Thank you once again for the time you spent with us.

Philip Tuck, Hertfordshire Police

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Radlett regional get-together



Broadcaster and TV personality **Esther Rantzen**, with **Gisele Winton** (left) and **Lea Rodkin**. Esther was guest speaker at the first summer regional get-together in Radlett, where 125 members, representing a dozen AJR groups, were present. As well as listening to anecdotes from Esther's colourful career, members enjoyed lunch, participated in discussion groups, and met up again with friends and acquaintances.

ALSO MEETING IN AUGUST

Essex 12 Aug. Alan Bilgora, 'Great Jewish Opera Singers'

South West Midlands 17 Aug. Lunch-time Get-together

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

Bradford Continental Friends

Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)

Fausta Shelton 01273 734 648

Bristol/Bath

Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

Cambridge

Anne Bender 01223 276 999

Cardiff

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Dundee

Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

East Midlands (Nottingham)

Bob Norton 01159 212 494

Edgware

Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

Edinburgh

Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

Essex (Westcliff)

Larry Lisner 01702 300812

Glasgow

Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

Harrogate

Inge Little 01423 886254

Hendon

Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

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Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

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Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

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Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle

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Norfolk (Norwich)

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

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Temple Fortune

Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Weald of Kent

Max and Jane Dickson

01892 541026

Wembley

Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

Wessex (Bournemouth)

Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

West Midlands (Birmingham)

Ernest Aris 0121 353 1437

Paul Balint AJR Centre

15 Cleve Road, London NW6

Tel: 020 7328 0208

KT-AJR

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Monday 4 August 2008

Alex Faiman

'The Jews of Ukraine'

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Tue 19 CLOSED

Wed 20 Toni Green

Thur 21 BINGO

Mon 25 CLOSED - Bank Holiday

Tue 26 CLOSED

Wed 27 Nat Paris

Thur 28 Douglas Poster

DIARY DATES

Sunday 21 Sept

AJR Tea at Hilton Watford

Sunday 26 October - Sunday 2 Nov

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Members requiring benefit advice please telephone
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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

Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator
020 8385 3077

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Get Well

The Management and Staff of the AJR would like to wish Andrew Kaufman a very speedy recovery.

Birth

Holden/Gorb To David and Nicky a son, Benjamin Stefan, born on 18 June 2008 to the delight of grandparents Edith and Herbert Holden.

Barmitzvah

Congratulations to Linda Kasmir on the occasion of the Barmitzvah of her grandson Avi.

Marriage

Congratulations to parents Eleanor and Tim Angel and grandparents Anne and Theo Marx on the occasion of Daniel's wedding.

Congratulations to Carol and Nigel Hart on the occasion of the wedding of their daughter Emma.

Anniversary

Congratulations to Hanni and Max Abraham on the occasion of their platinum wedding anniversary.

Deaths

Levy, Martha, passed away 25 June. Sadly missed by her devoted husband Ludwig after 60 years of happy, loving marriage, as well as by her cousin Barbara and other relatives and friends.

Spear, Lotte, passed away soon after her 85th birthday on 10 June. She exuded goodness and kindness. It was a privilege to be her friend, Lore Selo.



Eric Sanders

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

in Laxton, near Nottingham on Sunday 14 September 2008

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

To reserve a place, please contact Susan Harrod at AJR head office on 020 8385 3070 by the beginning of August.

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

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

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

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KINDERTRANSPORT 70TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION ELY EVACUEES

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

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

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BUILDING BRIDGES TO BERLIN

Earlier this summer, I was invited to Berlin to take part in an editorial meeting concerning the publication of a book on the architecture and history of the Jewish Boys' Orphanage in Pankow. My allotted role in the preparation of this book was to elicit from 12 former pupils accounts of their life histories, their memories of the orphanage, and their feelings towards modern Germany. The book will be published in early November, to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht, an event that looms large in many of the accounts.

While I was in Berlin two poignant events took place. The first was a celebration of the life of Alex Deutsch, who, now in his mid-nineties, had lived in the orphanage in the 1920s and had survived two years in Auschwitz. Professor P.-A. Albrecht, the Director of the Cajewitz-Stiftung, a charitable trust that bought the orphanage building in the 1990s and renovated it, had invited Alex to a celebration in the former Betsaal, or synagogue, now used for lectures, concerts and discussions.

Alex spoke of the need for tolerance and reconciliation. After 30 years in the United States, he returned to Germany in 1978 and has since spent much time and energy talking to schoolchildren about the need to build bridges. The German government recently recognised his sterling work by conferring on him the Bundesverdienstkreuz (erster Klasse). A moving video of his life was shown on this occasion to an audience numbering about a hundred.

At the end of this event a touching

ceremony took place, involving three adolescent girls from the nearby Rosa-Luxemburg-Schule. One of them read out the names of the 50-odd orphanage boys and some of their teachers, including that of Dr Kurt Crohn, the Director, who were sent to their deaths in 1942, and for each name the other two girls placed two red roses in a vase. Having spent the last two years of my life in Germany in the orphanage, I found this a deeply moving but also chilling experience – I could so easily have been one of those boys.

The other touching event was the unveiling of a plaque fixed to a house in Pankow that used to be a *Judenhaus*, in which Jews were obliged to live before their deportation. Dr Inge Lammel, the indefatigable historian of Jewish life in Pankow, had done some careful research and the plaque recorded the names of six men and women and the dates and destinations of their transports. The local policeman saved the day by providing a loudhailer in the windy conditions.

My very personal act of remembrance was to visit the three *Stolpersteine* dedicated to my parents and my sister, in Charlottenburg and Eichkamp respectively. I was taken there by Wolfgang Knoll, who is responsible for the *Stolpersteine* in Berlin and who had made all the arrangements for mine two years ago. They were in good condition and I gave them a loving polish.

And so the process of remembrance and commemoration in Berlin goes on ...

Leslie Baruch Brent

Search Notices

I wish to contact the heirs or representatives of **Cohn, Kaethe** (1907-81), née Gassenheimer, wife of Ernst Cohn, born Eschwege, Germany. She moved to Berlin 1925. Author of *Escape from Berlin* (Victor Gollancz, 1944, under name Catherine Klein). Any info pls to M. Hughes, 4 Becmead Avenue, Harrow HA3 8EY, tel 0208 907 6387, email humann@mannan.eu

Duchesne, Michelle and/or brother lived above family shop in Les Baux. Their mother was Jewish. Michelle possibly worked for underground with Donald and Marianne (Mano) Purslow, owners of Hotel de la Reine Jeanne. Donald and Mano fled France 1944. Any info pls to heikef@yahoo.com

Fränkel, Lisbett, detained in Gestapo prison in Tarnow, transferred 28 November 1941, destination unknown. Until September 1938 lived in Berlin with husband Georg Fränkel. Any info pls to her brother at leo2004@rcn.com

Glaser, Rudolf Marcus, a Kind, born Liegnitz, Germany 25 April 1924, died Sheffield 25 February 2008. Any info on his journey pls to his daughter Sonia Glaser-Rogers at sonia@rrrogers.fsnet.co.uk

Hirsch, Betty, blind German-Jewish educationalist from Hamburg, worked with Manfred Vanson, British Jewish Blind Society. Any info on London years 1934-47 pls to John Churchill, 20 Chiltern Hills Road, Beaconsfield HP9 1PL, tel/fax +44 (0) 1494 672 118, books@beaconsfield-publishers.co.uk

Katz, Erich, my father's cousin, born 1900, lived in Berlin, taught music at Freiburg Uni-

versity before the war, was sent to Dachau before the war. Then came to England, where he worked at the Anna Essinger School at Bunce Court School, Wem, Shropshire. Any info, pls contact John Martins at Johnwmartins1@hotmail.co.uk

Kitchener Camp 1939 to early 1940: I am seeking contact with anyone with recollections of that time, particularly regarding Max Bomze. I have old barracks photo, willing to share. Pls contact Ellen Minkwitz at the_minkys2@verizon.net

Kohn Stephanie, the late mother of my newly-found cousin Tom Brady, who lives in Australia and knows little about her, was born in Vienna in 1911 and came to England in 1939 as domestic to work in Cassio Park Avenue, Watford. Her friends then were Rosa, Walter, Paula. Stephanie married a soldier, Edward Brady, in 1941. Tom was born in 1942 in Watford. Any info pls to Charlotte Lang at david.lang119@btopenworld.com

Kunfi, Eva, my mother, born 1924 in Breslau, left Vienna, where she lived with her parents, Anna and Tibor, for England in 1938 via the Kindertransport. Any info pls on her short stay in England (she joined her parents in Shanghai before the outbreak of the war in the Pacific) to Eric Ekvall at corpstratcom@gmail.com

Vogel, Edith, born 1912 (in Ukraine?) was piano Wunderkind in Vienna. Arrived 1938 in London, where she died 1992. Her parents died in a camp. Many recordings for BBC Radio 3. Any info about her pre-London years for an essay I am writing pls to Oyvind Aase, a former student of hers, at oyviaase@online.no

AJR REPORT

Michael Newman

The Ghetto Fund

In response to problems concerning the processing of applications for a ghetto pension (known in German by the acronym ZRBG), the German government has introduced a Humanitarian Fund in acknowledgment of 'Ghetto Work without Force'.

The Ghetto Fund makes a one-time payment of 2,000 Euros (approximately £1,600) to Holocaust survivors who worked in ghettos, but not under force, during the Second World War.

It is estimated that 50,000 Holocaust survivors worldwide will be eligible to apply. Of the 70,000 claims previously submitted for a ZRBG pension, 61,000 have been rejected. Survivors who previously submitted a claim for a ghetto pension are eligible for the 2,000 Euro award, but those in receipt of such a pension are not entitled.

Because the Ghetto Fund provides compensation for work voluntarily performed in a ghetto, survivors who received awards from slave labour compensation from the German Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future are also entitled to apply.

Survivors who have already submitted an application form to the Bundesamt für zentrale Dienste und offene Vermögensfragen (BADV), the government department handling claims to the Ghetto Fund, do not need to submit a new application form or to re-apply, even if they have recently received another form in the post.

The BADV can be contacted at 53221 Bonn, Germany or by telephone on 0049 22899 7030 1324. The Central Office is able to assist with completing and notarising these forms. Claim forms and further information about the Fund are also available at www.badv.bund.de

Enquiries seeking advice and clarification on Holocaust restitution and compensation matters should continue to be sent to Michael Newman at 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



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



Theresienstadt martyrs remembered

Every year the Theresienstadt Martyrs' Remembrance Association holds its annual general meeting at Beit Theresienstadt, located in Kibbutz Givat Hayim-Ihud, where there is a museum and archive devoted to the Theresienstadt Ghetto. Every three or four months a newsletter is sent out to members and during the year educational activities are held there for schoolchildren from all over Israel.

I have kept up my late father's membership of the association because I feel that this is one way in which I can maintain some kind of connection with the memory of my grandmother, whom I never knew. Regina van Son perished there a few months after I was born in London, a thousand miles away from where she was incarcerated.

The annual meetings of the association are not mournful occasions of remembrance, though obviously the commemoration of the dead does play a part. The participants are of all ages, and the sight of several hundred people, some of them former inmates (albeit fewer and fewer every year), alongside members of the second, third, and even fourth generations, all sitting together on a sunny Saturday morning to hear the committee report on its activities, is heart-warming. The drive to the kibbutz, through the fields and orchards of the lovely Hefer Valley region, also constitutes an enjoyable outing into Israel's countryside.

This year the annual general meeting was particularly festive. It marked the opening of the new permanent exhibition in the renovated museum, the dedication of a new classroom and a performance of the children's opera *Brundibar*, given by children from schools in the region. The libretto of the opera was written by Adolf Hoffmeister and the music by Hans Krasa in 1938, when both were still in Prague.

Later Krasa was sent to Theresienstadt, where he managed to reconstruct the score. The fact that cultural and educational life continued in the inhuman conditions of the camp represents the triumph of the spirit that inspires us still today. *Brundibar* was performed at Theresienstadt 55 times by a group of children under the guidance of Krasa, bringing pleasure and hope to the starving, tormented prisoners. Most of the audience as well as many of the young performers were later sent to Auschwitz and murdered.

At the initiative of Hanni Ricardo, a spirited and caring music teacher in several schools in the Hefer Valley region, the opera has once again been brought to life, after many years in which few people in Israel were aware of its existence. Accompanied by a talented young pianist from nearby Zikhron Ya'akov, the youngsters sang and acted the Hebrew translation of the original Czech text with gusto and sensitivity, throwing themselves wholeheartedly into the spirit of the story. The message of the text, which tells of the triumph of good over evil and the power of unity in overcoming adversity, was as potent today as it must have been when it was originally performed.

But the pinnacle of the event was what happened once the main performance was over. In the audience were three well-dressed ladies who, it transpired, had all participated in the original performances given in Theresienstadt. They were called to the stage and each one was asked to say a few words about herself and her life. Then each of them joined their young counterpart to sing their role in the opera. The original participants sang in Czech while the youngsters sang in Hebrew, but the music was the same. The adult and youthful voices blended perfectly, inspiring all those present with admiration and joy.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Newsround

Turkish-German scholar dismissed for 'unacceptable' remarks

A Turkish-German academic has been fired for likening his community's problems to those of the Jews under Nazism. Faruk Sen, Director of the Essen-based Centre for Turkish Studies, argued in an essay that Turkish immigrants were the 'new Jews' of Europe. He later expressed regret for making the 'unacceptable' comparison. Sen was defended by Stephan Kramer, Secretary-General of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, who stated he had always been a good friend of the Jewish community: 'He neither downplays the Holocaust nor is an antisemite,' Kramer said.

Spaniards asked to extradite former Nazis

The Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Spanish NGO Nizkor have asked the Spanish government to extradite four former Nazis, currently facing deportation from the USA, who allegedly murdered numerous Spaniards in concentration camps. The four are John Demjanjuk, Johann Lepprich, Josias Kumpf and Anton Tittjung.

Tajikistan's Jews to lose only synagogue

Tajikistan has demolished its only synagogue to make way for a new presidential palace. The nineteenth-century building is due to be replaced by a park adjoining the new palace for President Imomali Rakhmon. Leaders of the 350-strong Jewish community deplore the demolition of their synagogue – a wooden, one-storey house. 'At the moment, the existence of Tajikistan's only Jewish community is under threat,' Rabbi Mikhail Abdurakhmanov said. 'It's also a threat to the elderly people who come here for help.'

A majority of Israelis feel safer as Jews in Israel

According to a poll conducted by the Jerusalem-based B'nai B'rith World Center, the vast majority of Israeli Jews – 76 per cent – said they believed it was safer to live as a Jew in Israel than in the Diaspora. Only 10 per cent believed the Diaspora was safer. The poll was conducted among a sample of 500 Jewish Israelis aged over 18.

Germany celebrates recognition of letter B

The letter B has finally received official status following a century-long struggle for recognition. It has been officially accepted as a lower and upper case alphabet figure by the International Organisation of Standardisation, which has granted it status in its club of 'special consonants' found in western European languages.