ast month's front-page article was devoted to the Jewish refugees who came to Britain on Kindertransports. Far less attention has been focused on another group of refugees, who were admitted to Britain for menial purposes and whose image does not tug at the public heartstrings as does that of the rescued children: the thousands of Jews from Germany and Austria, predominantly women, who were admitted to Britain as domestic servants. Many of them were young women barely older than the Kindertransportees.

The British authorities permitted refugees who had found positions as domestic servants to enter the country to work. Consequently, especially under the conditions of intensified persecution of 1938-39, Jews from the Reich sought desperately to find domestic positions, for themselves or for daughters too old to qualify for the Kindertransport. Advertisements appeared in large numbers in the Jewish Chronicle and in papers like The Times appealing for positions in British households for Jews trapped in Germany and Austria. They make pitiful reading today because of the evident desperation of those advertising their services, who were sometimes middle-class, mature and educated people prepared to clutch at any straw, however demeaning, to escape the Nazis.

Unlike the Kindertransport children, the admission of domestic servants can hardly be seen as a humanitarian gesture as it was plainly aimed at satisfying the demand for domestic labour in British middle-class households. Professor Tony Kushner has argued this point forcefully in his aptly titled article ‘An Alien Occupation – Jewish Refugees and Domestic Service in Britain, 1933-1948’, which appeared in the volume Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom (1991).

Kushner estimates that as many as 20,000 refugees came as domestic servants.

Responsibility for refugee domestic servants rested with the Ministry of Labour until late 1938, when it was taken over by the Home Office; as the latter was less influenced by trade unions wishing to keep immigrant labour out of Britain, the change benefited the refugees. But the wage rates for domestics remained paltry: many refugees were paid the fixed minimum of 15 shillings per week. The task of administering the admission and allocation of refugee domestic servants passed to Bloomsbury House, where the Domestic Bureau coped as best it could; it is not fondly remembered by its former clients.

Domestic servants endured some of the worst treatment experienced by refugees, resulting from their lowly status in the households in which they were employed and from the work they had to do there. Many of them were from comfortable middle-class homes and found the indignities of life as a domestic intolerable, though they were probably treated no worse than other servants, including servants in middle-class households in Vienna or Berlin. Underpaid, underfed and overworked, they were exposed to callous and inhuman treatment by employers who, ignoring the emotional trauma of their flight from their homelands and their separation from their loved ones, simply saw them as skivvies. Domestics were notoriously at the mercy of their employers, isolated as they were within the confines of a household not their own. Refugees alone in Britain experienced such conditions almost as a form of imprisonment.

The memories of those who came as young girls frequently dwell on specific experiences: living in unheated and insanitary rooms or sharing rooms with no private space; struggling to survive on wages below a pound a week; having only one free afternoon a week; suffering constant hunger; and having to empty chamber pots and perform other degrading tasks. Above all, they suffered from the sense that their employers saw them as second-class human beings, oblivious to their feelings and sensitivities at a time when they were desperate for human warmth and support. These features of thankless drudgery, of acute loneliness and homesickness and of being barred from participation in normal family life and activities, like joining in a Christmas meal, remain central to most memories of domestic service.

Many of these young women were wholly unprepared for domestic service. This is certainly true of two former domestics known to me personally, whose experiences are probably fairly typical. Hortense Gordon, who came from Breslau in 1939 aged 19, was the daughter of a well-to-do doctor's family who had found her a job with an affluent British family in Surrey; they kitted her out with an evening dress and parting instructions to learn bridge, the key to social life in England. But the two and a half years she spent as cook-general in Farnham were
more reminiscent of the servants’ quarters in *Upstairs Downstairs* as she toiled from dawn to near midnight to supply a series of copious and frequent meals and was treated strictly in accordance with her status in the kitchen.

Edith Argy, who came from Vienna in 1938 also aged 19, recalls:

I had never so much as held a broom and I was supposed to keep a fairly large house clean, and heaven knows what else I was meant to do. I wasn’t used to eating in the kitchen – poor though we were, we had had all our meals, except perhaps for a hasty breakfast, in the living room – nor was I used to eating alone. I found the food hard to swallow – quite tasteless – and I had never had malt vinegar before. I was cold in bed. I missed my duvet. The thin blankets seemed to provide no warmth at all. I was desperately homesick. I wanted to die.

So desperate was she that she even applied for a German passport with the intention of returning to Vienna.

Like many domestics, Edith Argy had a string of short-lived jobs, most of which she remembers with undiminished bitterness. It was common for refugee domestics to try to escape poor conditions by switching jobs, but change seldom brought improvement.

Some of the worst experiences they endured were at the hands of British employers who had lived in the colonies, where they had learned to treat servants as an inferior breed of human being, or had worked in organisations like the police force, where right-wing, hierarchical views fostered anti-Semitic attitudes. Some refugee domestics were mothers with small children; they had to display particular flexibility and initiative in order to remain in regular contact with their children, feats of fortitude and self-sacrifice that have often passed unsung.

A considerable number of refugees sought employment in Jewish households in Britain, where they were for the most part treated no better than domestics in other British households, as they often recall with some bitterness. But Edith Argy was treated well by British Jews. After her disastrous first domestic job, she was taken in by a rabbi who looked after her like one of his own children; and during her time as a mother’s help to a Jewish widow in Stamford Hill she was for once treated as one of the family. My predecessor Richard Grunberger, a Kindertransportee from Vienna who spent an unhappy period as a handyman with an upper-class English family, was then taken in by an Anglo-Jewish family who offered him a tailoring apprenticeship and gave him a new start in life.

Lotte Humbelin, Viennese-born but now a Swiss citizen, experienced three types of employers – Anglo-Jewish, British and refugee Viennese – in the few months that she spent in England before re-emigrating to Switzerland in summer 1939. On her arrival in December 1938, she was taken to an Anglo-Jewish family where the lady of the house, on learning that she had a domestic permit, tried to engage her as a servant. Lotte Humbelin was dismayed at the total lack of interest in her plight as a refugee – hardly what she expected from a fellow Jew – and refused the offer.

Her first, short-lived position, with a young British journalist, involved a manageable amount of work, but she was affronted at being treated as if she did not exist as a human being, commenting that it was in ‘democratic England’ that she came to understand what differences of class and status really meant. She then spent a month in London’s Golders Green with an emigre family from Vienna, Jewish and Social Democrats, who expected her to work 15 hours a day indulging their whims and those of their guests. A typically depressing story.

The outbreak of war in September 1939 initially had a severe impact on the refugee domestics, who became ‘enemy aliens’ and often lost their jobs in consequence. But as men were called up for the forces, the demand for female labour to replace them increased massively. The vast majority of refugees left domestic service at the earliest possible opportunity, happy to take almost any other position on offer and delighting in their new-found freedom; many found employment in jobs that contributed to the war effort. Though domestic service left bitter memories, the integration of refugees into the war effort and into British society generally meant that it could be consigned fairly rapidly to the past. By the 1960s, refugee households, newly prosperous, were themselves often employing au pair girls, charladies or daily helps.

Anthony Grenville
Among Friends at a Quaker School

It was never part of any 'career plan'. Indeed, I had never intended to go into teaching at all. By a strange irony, it was only by spending a gap year after university, teaching at the Gymnasium Eppendorf in Hamburg, that I became convinced this was the path for me.

There were those Jewish friends of the family, mostly English-born, who could not understand why I, the son of Austrian-Jewish refugees, should choose to go to Germany at all, let alone teach there. Some of their misgivings were confounded when during that year I found myself going on tour to Israel as a member of the Sondernchor of the Hamburg State Opera to give four performances of Schoenberg's Moses und Aron in Caesarea.

But to my surprise and eternal gratitude, after 15 years of teaching German and French in this country, I was appointed Head of Sibford, a Quaker school near Banbury, in 1990, and then Head of another Quaker school, Leighton Park, in Reading, six years later.

What is it about Quaker schools that proved so attractive, then and now? First and above all else, their tolerance and their readiness to accept that no faith has a monopoly on the truth, or indeed on God; their openness to new insights from whatever source they may come; and their constant and admirable determination to work towards a more peaceful and non-violent world. Why should a Jew not feel entirely at home in such an atmosphere, especially recognising the importance that both Judaism and Quakerism place on education and social justice?

By another strange irony, it was a Quaker couple, the Woods of Leeds, who made it possible for my maternal grandparents to come to this country from Vienna, in 1938, after my grandfather had suffered incarceration and worse in Dachau and Buchenwald. The Woods, together with Mary Glasgow or the Arts Council, and many Quakers elsewhere, were instrumental in effectively saving the lives of several Jewish refugees by acting as guarantors in the United Kingdom.

Leighton Park, too, did its bit, by taking in a number of Jewish boys without charge as boarders once they arrived in this country. One of those was Ernst Eberstadt, who later became a Quaker and a lecturer in education in Birmingham, where he had a profound influence on the thinking of a brilliant young Muslim student from Brunei, who was to become that sultanate's minister of education in the 1990s.

Another was Karel Reisz, who discovered film while at school and became one of this country's most distinguished film directors (The French Lieutenant's Woman among others). Young Karel came to Leighton Park because in his uncle's view it was the least barbaric of the public schools: 'At least they don't beat the children with sticks.' Quaker schools have, of course, never had corporal punishment! In Karel's own words: 'The headmaster made a quick decision. Seeing the nametapes on my socks with the machine-embroidered CHARLES REIZS, he said it was absurd to call me "Charles". I was to remain Karel. I have been grateful for this decision ever since.... Later he took me into Reading in his Rover. And he bought me a bicycle.... A good beginning. And happy years followed.'

Because Quaker schools recognise and respond, as Quakers do, to 'that of God' in everyone, young people of all religious backgrounds and none can live and work in a spirit of true equality and natural respect. And the silence, on which Quaker worship is based, overcomes any exclusiveness that may arise from the words of liturgy and ritual and unites everyone. As The Independent wrote a couple of years ago, they provide the moral compass of a faith school, but without the dogma.

It is time for them to be seen as a model of how the world, one day, might truly and peacefully be.

John Dunston
I have been trimming the family tree as a leaving present for my sons. It brings home to me that there is now no one left to ask who was who. My father, who had an orderly mind and an interest in genealogy, left me a sketch of the trunk and main branches. What the tree does not reveal is where the skeletons are buried (we maintained a regular ossuary), but it shows how the family has shrunk with the passage of time. The tree stands upside down, with the branches getting shorter as we approach the present. And another thing: we are losing distinction. Each generation appears a little drabber than the one preceding it. If you wanted to read about my grandfathers, you’d look in the great newspapers of New York, Berlin and Vienna. If you wanted to read about my mother, you’d be safe with any biography of Sigmund Freud.

If you want to know about me, you need to google back issues of the AJR Journal – a steepish downward slope for which emigration and decimation cannot be held solely responsible. We’ve run out of personalities. The generation of my mother’s parents was stuffed with characters, worthies and rogues.

One of the most colourful was my mother’s uncle Max, born in Iasi in 1862. He had studied chemistry and throughout his life was known as Dr Schiller although, as far as I know, he never practised any profession. His forte was the conquest of languages and women. When the Schillers moved to Berlin he was sufficiently fluent in German to review the occasional play in the popular press. The entrée was provided by my grandfather, whose brother-in-law he had become. My grandfather was a showman with interests in the theatre and music hall and always in need of puffs and good reviews. A member of the family – particularly one adept at producing copy in German, English, French, Italian and Yiddish – would be a useful resource. At that time, my grandfather had the two most stellar performers of the day under contract: Eleanora Duse the actress and Yvette Guilbert the chanteuse. A modern equivalent would be Garbo and Dietrich in one’s team at the same time, with Marilyn Monroe on the bench.

How Uncle Max got close to Duse, competing for her favours against crowned heads, millionaires, political superstars (D’Annunzio among them), is just the sort of question I would like to ask, but of whom? Maybe mythical creatures need a good press like lesser mortals. But there is no doubt that Uncle Max was one of her many lovers, scoring a notable double when, while touring America with Duse as her minder, the command came ‘Join me in New York at once.’ My grandfather had made elaborate preparations for Yvette Guilbert’s New York debut when the blow fell: the most important critic of the day, probably the man from The New York Times, fell ill and my grandfather was warned that a stringer would be taking his place – one who had no French, no interest in foreign singers, and had not undergone the softening up that my grandfather had invested in his illustrious colleague. Grandfather, ever helpful, told the editor that he happened to know of a journalist, recently arrived in America, possessed of perfect French and English, who would be only too happy to supply a review for the editor’s consideration. This saviour was, of course, Uncle Max. He duly wrote the review, dictated by grandfather before the performance, had the American idiom checked, and submitted it long before the stringer had a chance to hand in his copy, having been detained by grandfather in the bar. The editor must have liked what he read; Yvette was enchanted by the understanding and appreciation shown by Max, who notched up another conquest. He transferred his allegiance from la Duse, but this time it was for good because lover became adoring husband, set to live happily ever after.

I did not get to know Max and Yvette properly until they were an old couple, and I was a schoolboy in Paris, a regular visitor to their flat in the Rue de Courcelles. They had no children of their own and regarded me with critical interest, telling my mother that whereas my French was impeccable, my table manners were not. By that time – the early Thirties – Yvette’s star had begun to wane, but they still toured, still had their court of admirers. My grandfather was long dead and Uncle Max became his wife’s manager, dresser, agent. I had, of course, never seen Yvette in her heyday but I did attend her last concert at the Wigmore Hall; by then she had become a fat old woman, wheezing her way from dressing room to concert platform on the arm of the ever-faithful Max, but, once on stage, she floated two inches above the boards; she danced, she sang, she enchanted, seduced, made us laugh or cry, played a soldier, an innocent milkmaid, a whore, a brokenhearted seamstress, whatever the song demanded, with only one prop – a green silk scarf. Yvette once asked Freud, an admirer long before she met him through my mother, whether her gift lay in being an empty vessel into which she was able to pour different characters plucked from her imagination. Freud replied that far from being an empty vessel, her appearance on stage allowed her to release the multi-varied drives and personae deeply layered in her unconscious. Her art consisted of summoning them at will and giving them irresistible form.

Although their glory was fading, their grandeur remained. When in London, Max and Yvette stayed at the Carlton, now a cinema in the Haymarket. When I was invited to dine with them (my table manners having improved), I would be bidden up to their suite, kiss Yvette’s hand. Max would ring for a man to summon the lift and hold open the door so that Yvette would not have to stand while buttons were being pressed. Uncle Max would then take his hat from a stand and carry it in his hand while we descended to the restaurant on the ground floor. He would hand the hat to a flunkey and we would proceed to our table. At the end of dinner, the process was reversed, the hat collected against a tip of half-a-crown, we would go up in the lift, and Uncle Max would put away his hat that was the acme of style, and half-a-crown was a week’s pocket money. Max’s grand notions were not always helpful. When I wanted to become a journalist, he gave me an introduction to the editor of The Times, when I wanted to go into films, Korda was pressed into service and, when it came to advice about acting only Conrad Veidt would do. More humble contacts might have
Christmas in Vienna, 1937

by Hedi Schnabl

Christmas. Christmas Eve, not Christmas Day. I am eight years old and I quiver between dread and delight. I know what will happen because it happens every year. Dr Richter from the next-door apartment will come to take me to see the enormous tree, which has been brought into their dining room and decorated with silver tinsel and silver balls and silver candle holders and white candles.

I shall have to go next door without my parents because that is the routine. They will come later to take me home. Dr Richter, whom I love, will lift me up to see the angel on top of the tree and I will smell the pine. Then she will take me to the window and point to a far-away light and tell me, as she tells me every year, that if we look hard we can see the Christ child coming. I know it isn’t true, but it disturbs me to hear her say it. And I know that she feels sorry for me because I look sad. She misunderstands but I am too choked to say anything. I only feel sad because I am not going to have any of the chocolate wrapped in silver paper hanging from the tree; and I particularly covet the pipe, matches and tobacco, all made out of marzipan and covered in red cellophane, which lie at the foot of the tree. My mother has explained to these kind people that we do not keep Christmas, that we do not have presents.

I understand that too, and already have some pride in being different. Yet I will finish up in tears of confusion. I do not believe in St Nicholas or the baby Jesus, but Christmas is the focus of weeks of preparation at school, in which I take no part, and my sense of exclusion is sealed by this annual viewing of the alien sparkling tree.

We are not religious. But I am religiously taught never to doubt what other people believe. I learn the Bible stories because they are good stories and I learn my parents’ version of being Jewish: a people, a race – Semitic like the Arabs – and with a history. I am encouraged to state firmly that I am a Jew. Later, I have to be forbidden to mention it.

Most of the people I know are Jews: family, friends, my father’s colleagues. They all talk about books, go to the theatre and the opera. They have subscription tickets to the Vienna Philharmonic dress rehearsals. They play chess and bridge. They meet in coffee houses and, when they take me, it is a special treat for an only child: hot chocolate with whipped cream and watching the grown-ups.

We are not well off but I appreciate that we are ‘cultured’. A term much used in our circle. We have a live-in maid. We do not own a car but on my birthdays we hire a taxi to take us to the Kahlenberg in the Vienna Woods. We could get there on the trams, but the taxi is the essence of the outing.

We don’t go on holidays. I have never seen the sea or the mountains. Instead, twice a year, we travel to Czechoslovakia to see our relations. My mother’s small, nervous family with another only child who is my age, and with my grandmother, who is my treasure. My father’s large, confident family with my other grandmother, who cooks rich food that I have to be coaxed to eat. Everyone is Jewish. No one from either family has ever married out. When I see them for the last time I do not know it is the last time.

The children in my school are not all Jewish. I am the only Jewish child in my class. Herman is one year behind and Hugo is two years ahead. We three go together to Hebrew class on Saturday afternoons, when we learn the language parrot fashion: the alphabet, the sounds, the prayers, line by line with the translation into German. At school, we are not allowed to stay in the classroom for ‘Catholic education’. I sit in the cloakroom with two Protestant children and wait until the lesson is over.

I take sandwiches every day for the mid-morning break and I take extra ones for Gertrude, who comes from a poor family, the teacher says. I like Gertrude. She is tall and bony with black, lank hair and ringed, dark eyes. She comes to my house but I am never asked to hers and I never meet any of her family.

My father’s secretary is not Jewish. She spends a great deal of time with us because, my mother says, she is a lonely person, without a husband or children. So the secretary becomes my best friend. ‘Fraulein’ plays with me, reads to me, takes me out, talks to me about her hard life. My mother says that Fraulein has patience, an admired quality in our more restless household.

Our neighbours are not Jewish. They are decent Austrians. They are not anti-Semitic. The doctor’s elderly parents are ‘solid’, my parents say. Her sister is considered to be more flighty, and confirms this view when she marries a member of the National Socialist Party. But that comes later. Now, the apartment next door is homely and I am welcome any time. There are always baked biscuits and apples from their own tree. The doctor’s mother lets me watch while she cooks; it doesn’t make her irritable as it does my own mother, and I like to watch. I also like to watch the doctor’s father while he works in the garden. I trail around after him. He gives me his attention but we hardly speak.

This Christmas is exactly like all the others. As soon as it is dark, Dr Richter rings our bell, I am ready, I open the door, I take her hand and cross the hall to my family. The children in my school are not all Jewish. I am the only Jewish child in my class. Herman is one year behind and Hugo is two years ahead. We three go together to Hebrew class on Saturday afternoons, when we learn the language parrot fashion: the alphabet, the sounds, the prayers, line by line with the translation into German. At school, we are not allowed to stay in the classroom for ‘Catholic education’. I sit in the cloakroom with two Protestant children and wait until the lesson is over.

I take sandwiches every day for the mid-morning break and I take extra ones for Gertrude, who comes from a poor family, the teacher says. I like
THE KINDERTRANSPORTS 70 YEARS ON

Sir - I read with great interest your November leading article ‘The Kindertransports 70 Years On’ and was particularly gratified that you mentioned ‘the distress of parents forced to send their children away as the only means of saving their lives’.

On 28 October 1938, my father was arrested by the Gestapo and, with the first transport of Polish Jews, was deported from Berlin to Poland, leaving my mother alone to cope with three young children and the forced sale of my father’s business and their home.

In February 1939, my mother took the courageous and selfless decision to put my older sister Ruth and myself on a Kindertransport train bound for Belgium, although we did not have the necessary passes and were not expected by anyone. At the Belgian border in Aachen, a policeman entered our compartment and asked to see our passes. As we did not have any, he shouted ‘Descendez!’ My sister, five years older and very mature for her age, told me to sit still and wait. Some very anxious 30 minutes later, the policeman returned to our compartment and said ‘Continue!’

Late that afternoon we arrived at the assembly point in Brussels, where all the ‘Kinder’ except us were met by their foster families and we were welcomed by one of the Committee members with the words ‘Legale haben wir genug, illegale brauchen wir nicht’ (We have enough legal children - we don’t need any illegals). It was only a short time ago that I learned that Belgium had restricted the number of Kindertransport children to be admitted to 600 (hence the Committee’s distress at having two more to care for) and I pray that no children were sent back because of us.

Three weeks before the outbreak of war in August 1939, my mother finally obtained a visa for England as a domestic servant and, on her way to this country, came to see us at our hostel near Brussels together with my younger sister Bronia. She was not allowed to take Bronia with her to England as the Committee insisted (probably correctly) that if she arrived in Britain with a young child, they would both be sent back. Too young for our hostels, Bronia was sent to an orphanage and was eventually rescued from deportation by a wonderful Belgian family who saved her life at the risk of their own.

When Belgium was invaded in May 1940, the person in charge of our hostel was able to secure two goods wagons leaving for France - a miracle in view of all the refugees fleeing from the Germans - and we ultimately arrived at a small village near Toulouse. At the end of 1942, my sister joined a Jewish resistance group and in September 1943 arranged for me to escape across the border to Switzerland, where she escaped to Spain via the Pyrenees.

Throughout the six terrible years, my mother had been totally alone in London, not knowing the fate of her husband (sadly my father perished in Belsen in January 1945) or children. She worked day and night to earn enough money to make a home for us if we survived. I was finally reunited with her in October 1945. Of course, the ‘Kinder’ suffered, but what about the suffering of the parents - it should not be forgotten!

(Mrs) Betty Bloom, London NW3

Sir - Your leader ‘The Kindertransports 70 Years On’ is a real tour-de-force. You have managed to capture an amazing array of complicated issues in two pages - my congratulations. What a pity the article is unlikely to reach a larger readership than members of the AJR. You have explicitly told not only the facts behind this historic event, and the traumas it involved for so many, but also the unpalatable truths of government indifference and unwillingness to act when action was paramount. We readers of the AJR Journal are privileged to have access to such erudite writing.

Henry Kuttner, Edgware, Middx

Sir - I am always impressed by Dr Grenville’s scholarship and the clarity of his writing. I hope therefore he will accept the following comments regarding his Kindertransport article.

It was the 1937 permission for Spanish children to come to England to avoid the Civil War for its duration that was accepted as a precedent for the Kindertransport. We were allowed to come ‘in transit’.

Re Nicholas Winton: There was no ‘defying the Nazis as a private individual’ and there was no risk. He went to visit friends with whom he had intended to go on a skiing holiday. He stayed in Prague for two weeks and assisted admirable people like Chadwick and Barazetti in their valuable, arduous and ongoing work with the children. In March 1939 he returned to England, where he benefited from, and became part of, the Kindertransport organisation that had already been set up by people in this country in November 1938, as you explained. He was a valuable link, but to call him ‘Britain’s Schindler’ is totally inappropriate.

Bea Green JP, London SW13

Sir - The holiday camp at Dovercourt referred to by Anthony Grenville was not a Butlins operation (letter to me from Butlins dated 26 August 1993). However, I remember seeing one or two Warner signs during my stay at the camp in December 1938 perhaps left there by the owners when preparing the camp for the refugee children.

Gisela Eisner, Buxton, Derbyshire

SUPPING WITH THE DEVIL

Sir - I am a contemporary of Thomas Edmund Konrad (November issue) and we appear to have been in the same place at the same time, i.e. in 1944 Budapest. I consider it incumbent upon me to share my own recollections of those turbulent and bloody days and, in so doing, attempt to clarify events of which we were both a part.

Samu Stern was not alone in not wanting to believe the menace of Auschwitz: he was part of the vast majority of Hungarian Jews who felt certain that whatever befell their co-religionists further east, this could not happen to them. My own father was convinced that, being a faithful and patriotic Hungarian, the nation to which he considered he belonged would never treat him the way Jews in the east were treated. This notwithstanding my mother’s direct knowledge gained from interviewing and helping many from Poland and Galicia.

The Yishuv levied much criticism, after the event, of Hungarian Jews in general and Rudolf Kasztner in particular, for not resisting their own extermination. Yet I am not aware of any initiative from that quarter to suggest even the possibility of resistance. With the absence of most Jewish males between the ages of 21 and 50 on military labour service, this may not have been a practical possibility but, in any event, it was simply not considered an option at the time.

Mr Konrad seems to suggest that Kasztner’s train was one on which tickets could simply be bought. This, I am afraid, was not the case. ‘Passengers’ had to have a Palestine immigration permit, the gift of which was not in Kasztner’s hands.

While there were undoubtedly individuals on the train who contributed to the bribes Kasztner had to pay the SS, the majority paid nothing and were selected strictly on the basis of their Zionist merits. There were, of course, suggestions that Kasztner profited from these contributions. Suffice it to say that when he and his family arrived in Israel they lived in a one-room flat in Tel Aviv and he had to eke out a living working for a Hungarian publication.
It is perhaps relevant if I quote my family’s experience of Kasztner’s activities. We were taken from a Budapest suburb to a brickworks preparatory to being loaded on to an Auschwitz-bound train. Our name was announced, together with the names of five other families, and we were all loaded on to a lorry and taken to a special camp in Budapest, where we found hundreds of Jews from various parts of Hungary similarly rescued. We soon found out that the sole criterion of this rescue was one or more family members’ Zionist activity. There was no mention of any financial contribution from any of us. We were simply there awaiting the next train to Palestine, which, of course, never came.

George Donath, London SW1

A NON-REFUGEE COMPLEX

Sir – I have no refugee status. However, I do have what can perhaps be described as a ‘non-refugee complex’. This manifests itself as a distinct feeling of guilt that I was spared what was for so many simply the consequences of being born a Jew.

When acting as a convenor during Holocaust events for schoolchildren, the question is always asked ‘If it had been you…?’ In these sessions, people are able to imagine how they might have reacted in situations similar to the ones they have heard described by survivors. Jewish Counselling Service, from the chair of which I have just retired, is privileged to have several second-generation survivors among its clients. Perhaps there is one among your readers who has an answer to my guilt. Yes, I have learned to live with it. But it does somehow make me feel a part of - or is it apart from? - the AJR members’ Zionist activity. There was no mention of any financial contribution from any of us. We were simply there awaiting the next train to Palestine, which, of course, never came.

Francis Deutsch, Saffron Walden

IN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL

Sir – I found the letters on the Israel-Arab situation in the November issue most instructive. I learned from Rubin Katz that what I had understood to be a massive defensive wall between Israel and the West Bank was just a fence. It sounds quite endearing. I also learned from him that if you are religiously inclined, like the Hebron settlers – sorry, re-occupiers – you have carte blanche to ‘do anything you wish regard as being in accordance with your credo.

Also from him and from G. J. Fisher and Alex Lawrence I learned that I must not be critical of Israel unless at the same time I criticise the Iranians, the Arabs and just about everyone else who has ever committed an injustice. It reminds me of the argument used by British Nazi sympathisers like Sir Arnold Lunn before the war that it was out of order to criticise the Nazis unless one had previously criticised the Communists.

From Trudy Gefen I learned that there is no Palestine because the name is only some 10,000 years old and because the Palestinians because they all came from elsewhere. So I cannot be British because I came from Germany and, by the same argument, the Jews cannot be Israelis because they originally came from Egypt via the now defunct land route across the Red Sea.

Finally, having read this letter, your correspondent Dr Emil Landes from the same issue will think me a right proper nutcase.

Peter Jordan, Manchester

HATE SLOGANS

Sir – I refer to Henry Herner’s hate slogans (October, Letters) and would like to forward some from the ‘other side of the fence’. As an Austrian refugee in occupied Poland, I remember some of the many rhymes made up to help our morale. The one in German went like this: ‘Wir wollen keinen Maier von Gottesgnaden, Wir wollen essen und fressen wie Feldmarschall Goring.’ Needless to say, we couldn’t sing them while marching the streets!

Judith Wolmuth, Harrow, Middx

AN ORDERLY QUEUE OF ONE

Sir – One of the more admirable characteristics of the British is the habit of queuing, which I adopted as soon as I landed. I even formed an orderly queue of one on many occasions. It is fair, classless, disciplined and – so I thought – efficient. Now, a professor of mathematics at Tel Aviv University has shown, using game theory (whatever that is), that changing at the check-out and pushing your way to the cashier can shorten waiting time. Or maybe it will get you a black eye. He didn’t make it clear whether his findings were of universal application or applied only to Tel Aviv.

Frank Bright, Ipswich
Two male portraits - one dreamy and romantic by Palma Vecchio, the other introspective and intelligent by Titian.

But occasionally excess, sometimes leading to physical repulsiveness, is crudely unmasked. The face of Emperor Rudolph II, depicted by Giuseppe Arcimboldo as Vertumnus, is engorged with fruit and vegetables, presumably for a harvest festival. Most hideous of all is Quintin Massy's voyeuristic Ugly Duchess, a portrait of an elderly, unfashionable woman with partially exposed, ageing breasts and huge ears. The poor lady probably suffered from Paget's Disease or some other malformation of the bone and this bleak warts-and-all portrait exemplifies the cruelty with which that society viewed its misfits.

There is an intriguing small bust of a laughing young boy by Mazzoni, thought to represent the young Henry VIII. In the preceding room, you can see the girl who got away. Billed to be the Tudor king's fourth wife, the young widow, Christina of Denmark, looks almost androgynous in Holbein's striking full-length portrait of her in a long, black fur-trimmed cloak. Henry commissioned the work before proposing but, fortunately for her, he changed his mind! Sponsored by AXA, the exhibition runs until 19 January 2009.

Colour and vitality leap out of Sandra Berzon's paintings at London's Spiro Ark. Known for the soft palette of her landscapes, her solitary boats and tree studies, Berzon has expanded her scope to include more exotic studies, such as New Delhi or Egyptian market scenes, or simply the menace of a tropical storm. Contrasting with the vibrancy of her primary colours, solitary figures lurk everywhere - in markets or under Waterloo Bridge. It is a jagged message: the more inviting the scene, the more distant the characters. In a rare portrait, Jane After the Swim, the distance, the loneliness is absolute. Some of the trees in Berzon's work share this dissonance: some appear to dance; others are gaunt,emanding rhythms - with the drums invoking the clatter of skeletons.

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**Annely Juda Fine Art**

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

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**REVIEWS**

**MUSIC**

In memory of Kristallnacht
KADDISH COMMEMORATIVE CONCERT
Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, conductor John Axelrod
The Barbican, London

Kristallnacht calls for silence, as Stephen Smith of the Holocaust Centre observed at a commemorative concert at the Barbican last month. Originally, it was felt that no music at all should be heard on this most painful anniversary. However, the Barbican Hall echoed with the weight of Leonard Bernstein's impassioned Symphony No 3, Kaddish, subtitled 'A Dialogue with God' and written in the last months of the composer's life. The piece, augmented by the Philharmonia Chorus, the Trinity Boys Choir and soprano Kelly Nassief, resounded to a full house with the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra expressing the anguish of Kristallnacht and the coming terror, which shook the Barbican to its mod­ernist rafters.

Kaddish, a dazzling blend of symphony, tone poem and oratorio, includes a new text written and narrated by Auschwitz survivor Samuel Pisar at Bernstein's behest. Pisar's lament is basically a rant at God, but it is the music which articulates this requiem, its power and its fury, with Pisar's narrative wavering between a calling to account for heavenly negligence and a longing for heavenly forgiveness. Though God is effectively put on trial here, it is music of a religious character that most influenced the composer - namely Mahler's Resurrection and Bach's Passion, with a possible touch of Prokofiev thrown in for good measure. Sometimes the choir was reduced to a vigorous hum or sung prayer, and sometimes Bernstein's 12-tone visceral sounds filtered chaotically through the chorus and orchestra - jagged, fright­ened rhythms - with the drums invoking the clatter of skeletons.

The mourner's Kaddish, written in Aramaic, is an ironic leitmotif to the score. Its elegiac phrasing simply praises the Creator. In his text, Pisar, who believes the Shoa eclipsed Dante's Inferno, said he could never recite the Kaddish because he had no dates of his family's death, which occurred when he was a child. The soprano evokes the voice of Pisar's grand-mother, who sang to him lullabies of praise, and here a sense of celestial peace, an inner

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**NOTES**

Gloria Tessler

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feminine tranquillity, contrasts with the masculine anguish of the score. Pisar’s tirade ends with a plea for conciliation although Pisar himself remains torn between ‘belief and doubt’.

Bernstein was already a successful composer and conductor when Pisar, then a young Harvard scholar, entered his ‘magic circle’. The piece was first performed by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in 1963. Three weeks before the concert, President Kennedy was assassinated and his compatriot dedicated his symphony to him.

Bernstein was not satisfied with his own text for the score (said to have been an even angrier rant at God) and he turned to the poet Robert Lowell among others. But it was the authentic voice of the survivor that he sought and he called on Pisar after reading his autobiography. For Pisar, the request was fraught with emotional problems. He felt his lyrics could never equal ‘the grandeur of his music’ and he was not prepared to revisit his once ‘stormy relationship with the Almighty over his perplexing absence, silence and passivity during those cursed years’.

John Axelrod, who studied under Bernstein, conducted Kaddish with energy and sensitivity. It was preceded by another piece evoking the heroism of the fallen – Beethoven’s Egmont Overture. Based on Goethe’s eponymous play, the piece recalls the sixteenth-century uprising against Spanish dominance in the Netherlands. Symbolic in some ways of the twentieth-century Holocaust, Egmont describes the triumph of courage over evil. Axelrod evoked the full majesty of Beethoven in a well-paced performance in which every note was emphasised, achieving a final crescendo of strings and woodwind trumpeting glory in the face of death. Earlier, Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto was played with a contrasting staccato tempo and lilting phrasing by Israeli violinist Itai Shapira.

The AJR joined the Holocaust Centre, London Jewish Cultural Centre, CST and JMI SOAS in supporting this commemorative concert.

Gloria Tessler

A righteous Jewess
CECILIA RAZOVSKY AND THE AMERICAN-JEWISH WOMEN’S RESCUE OPERATIONS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR
Bat-Ami Zucker
London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008, 224 pp., cloth £50.00 paper £19.95

For those of us who were too young to understand the mechanics of our rescue from the Nazi peril, this book is an eye-opener: it really is a case of but for the grace of a few concerned people. Cecilia Razovsky was one of those. She worked tirelessly in the United States on behalf of refugees, being one of the first to realise the danger facing European Jewry.

A poignant chapter in the book concerns child refugees. Initially, the idea of bringing over to America unaccompanied children, who, it was believed, would arouse less antagonism in so far as they would not compete with other Americans for jobs, was regarded as outrageous. But, as Nazi oppression in Germany intensified, the idea was again put forward.

Yet there were unexpected obstacles to this plan, which needed to be fully funded so that the children were not a charge on the American taxpayer. The US being in the grip of a depression, it was hard to find families willing to take on such a responsibility. It proved particularly difficult to place Orthodox children in suitable homes. There was also a fear in the Jewish community that too much publicity for fund-raising might exacerbate the anti-Semitism which was rife in the America of the 1930s. This accounts for the small numbers involved.

Yet those who were admitted seem to have enjoyed greater personal care from Cecilia Razovsky and others than those of us who came to England in larger numbers. She took an interest in their progress through personal contact. On the one occasion I was visited in my foster home, the lady visitor cast an eye round the room to see if it was clean and commented on my hairstyle but made no attempt to speak to me in private.

For adults desperate to obtain admission to the United States the story was even more complicated. Due to the immigration laws of 1917 and 1924, proof of ability to support oneself had to be achieved by means of an affidavit. The word is burned into myself had to be achieved by means of an affidavit. The word is burned into...
FILM
Naming the names
STUMBLING STONE (STOLPERSTEIN)
directed by Dörte Franke
Swiss Cottage Odeon, London

According to German artist Gunter Demnig, it is not enough to con­fine the testimony of Holocaust victims to Jewish museums. His idea is much more radical: disturbed by the history of his homeland, he decided to create individual paving stones bearing the names of those forced from their homes and deported to their deaths. And, by placing each stone outside the victim's front door, he ensures that passers-by will understand to whom these homes once rightfully belonged.

Dörte Franke's documentary film, whose London screening was sponsored by the AJR as part of the Jewish Film Festival, had already won the Golden Beaver Trophy at this autumn's 31st Biberach Film Festival, following its world premiere at the Locarno International Film Festival. A documentary in the style of a road movie, the film shows the artist working on the pavements of Germany and Austria and travelling from Berlin to Vienna and Budapest, where he is constantly challenged by surprised onlookers.

Stumbling stone may not be a strictly accurate translation of Stolperstein, but the image conveyed is powerful enough to disturb his compatriots. Since Demnig started making these stones, their numbers have grown to nearly 18,000 and there are plans to take them to Poland and the Baltic states.

The dedication with which Demnig quietly creates each stone from concrete, faces it with brass and painstakingly grinds it with the name of each victim attracts particular sympathy from a group of German women forced to come to terms with what their parents' generation had – at the very least – allowed to happen. They take it on themselves to polish each stone carefully so that the name cannot be missed. As one woman bitterly remarks: 'It should be our parents standing here, not us.' Others in the film argue that walking over these stones might be considered trampling on the memories of the dead – tantamount perhaps to destroying their lives once more. It is a view firmly rejected by Demnig.

Because the Nazi death machine was based on a production line of enslavement and death, Demnig has hand-made each tribute stone individu­ally. Yet it was in Munich, the cradle of Nazism, that the idea met its most fervent opposition. Neo-Nazis campaigned against it and the mayor joined Jewish leaders in rejecting the idea in favour of the new state-of-the-art Jewish museum. But Manchester-based relative Peter Jordan, in London for the screening, is wholly supportive: he wants a memorial to his parents where everyone can see it. Another nagging point is that museums and disused synagogues in Eastern Europe virtually realise Hitler's cynical desire to commemorate a dead culture in the final days of the Third Reich.

The documentary, developed by Dörte Franke in the Discovery Campus Master-school 2005, gives a moving portrait of the desire of one man to make a difference. The film might have benefited from tighter direction and even the clarity of a narrator's voice, but perhaps its unusual message is best left in the raw.

Gloria Tessler

EXHIBITION
A long way from Starbucks
VIENNA CAFÉ 1900
Royal College of Art, Kensington, London

The history and culture of Vienna are related not only to its famous buildings, music and art but also to the vibrant social life based on its café society. As a meeting place for discussion and relaxation, the Kaffeehaus has been an integral part of Vienna for over a century and a half and has been enjoyed by a wide spectrum of society. AJR members fortunate enough to have heard one of Otto Deutsch's recent talks on this subject will have an idea of its importance and flavour.

This October an exhibition was held at the Royal College of Art entitled 'Vienna Café 1900'. The exhibition was part of a wider 'Vienna Café Festival', which comprised a number of cultural events across London, including a screening of the iconic The Third Man.

In fact, the exhibition covered the history of the Vienna café from its beginnings in the nineteenth century to the present day. The Kaffehäuser were not just for drinking coffee but were also used for playing billiards, chess or cards and, for the price of a coffee, one could sit all day and read the papers. The exhibition displayed many prints and photographs showing the facades and interiors of famous cafés such as the Landtmann, Demel and Central used by important figures in literature, art, psychology and politics to air and exchange their views. The displays also covered the more popular cafés in the Prater and in the suburbs used by the general population for gossip and social life.

A film showed how the cafés were publicised for their innovations and modernity in the early 1900s. An amusing extract from a silent movie showed how they were also used for secret assign­ments together with the sometimes rather embarrassing consequences.

Several well-known cafés were owned by Jews, and the exhibition used documents to cover the forced sale of these by the Nazis in 1938. Rather surprisingly, it did not include any of the numerous photos available showing the notices which suddenly appeared outside all cafés and restaurants indicating Jews were not admitted.

The exhibition included an actual representation by Demel, serving Viennese coffee and pastries. Austrian newspapers were also available but not on their traditional reading frames. This aspect of the exhibition was disappointing as the atmosphere could not be reproduced and the prices were rather excessive! Also, the service was poor. When would-be customers complained, Herr Ober responded 'This is a Viennese café!' – a response delivered with more arrogance than humour, one felt.

Overall, 'Vienna Café 1900' provided a pleasant and nostalgic look at what some of our parents must have known and contrasted sharply with today's Starbucks and its earnest users of laptops and mobile phones.

George Vulkan

A nostalgia cookbook
OMA GOODNESS!
AUSTRIAN MAGIC IN AN ENGLISH KITCHEN
by RosI Schatzberger
Jessie's Fund, 15 Priory Street, York YO1 6ET; tel 01904 658 189, 257pp., £15.25 (including postage and packing within the UK); foreword by Victoria Wood; illustrations by Yvonne Wise

If you're feeling nostalgic for the food that mother gave you and if you're fed up with sophisticated recipes that require ingredients from 20 specialist shops, then this is the cookbook for...
A Yiddish Yishuv in Silesia

In 1945, in a little-known episode, an entirely new Jewish community of 50,000 people was established in Reichenbach (Dzierzoniow) and Breslau (Wrocław) in Lower Silesia, now incorporated into Poland. Beginning with a petition by the few concentration camp survivors led by Shimon Balicki, the entire project was conceived and supported by the few concentration camp survivors, all these edicts with poignant echoes of the recent past: ‘German houses in Lower Silesia must be designated by white flags; Germans must wear white bands on their left arms; a German meeting a Jew on the pavement must step aside; Germans repatriated to Germany can take only 16 kg of personal belongings ... All other possessions are to be left intact in their homes, which will be occupied by Jews from the concentration camps and repatriates from Russia.’

Although wildly popular with concentration camp survivors, all these edicts except the fourth were rescinded six weeks later at Warsaw’s behest.

Egit and his fellow members of the newly formed Central Committee of the Jews in Lower Silesia set about creating a yishuv (settlement) amid the postwar chaos and received support from the Committee of Abrasov, a local Jewish governor, issued edicts with poignant echoes of the recent past: ‘German houses in Lower Silesia must be designated by white flags; Germans must wear white bands on their left arms; a German meeting a Jew on the pavement must step aside; Germans repatriated to Germany can take only 16 kg of personal belongings ... All other possessions are to be left intact in their homes, which will be occupied by Jews from the concentration camps and repatriates from Russia.’

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Egit and his fellow members of the newly formed Central Committee of the Jews in Lower Silesia set about creating a yishuv (settlement) amid the postwar chaos and received support from the Committee of Polish Jews in Russia, then numbering some 200,000 souls. As the community rapidly developed, it encompassed returning Jews with new skills such as coalminers and engineers, as well as the more traditional textile workers. Many established cooperatives. In 1948-49 there were 250 families in 150 farms around Reichenbach. Youth centres, schools, orphanages, banks and all the institutions of modern life sprang up.

But all was to end in tears. Polish anti-Semitism had never disappeared and by 1948 the support of the former Polish government for the concept had evaporated. A proposed Jewish pavilion in a major exhibition in Wroclaw was required to be dismantled as being too Zionist, and the next year Egit was forced to stand down as Secretary of the Central Committee of the Jews in Lower Silesia. The project collapsed under the new anti-Semitism emanating from Moscow as well as locally. The majority of the Jews emigrated to Israel. Egit himself went to Canada.

David Rothenberg

REVIEWS continued

Even after Hitler’s enthusiastic welcome to the Austrian Jews, my father continued to believe that no harm would come to our family. But Kristallnacht finally woke him to the real danger facing the Jews of Vienna. So, aged 10, I was sent on the Kindertransport to Brussels, where a warm welcome from the Neumann family, Viennese-born Jews, awaited me. Miraculously in August 1939 my parents were allowed into England as butter and cook, but I remained in Brussels. In January 1940, Britain already at war, it became clear to my foster parents that neutral Belgium would fall to the Nazis and they wrote to my parents saying they could no longer take responsibility for me. So, on a bitterly cold night in February 1940 I arrived in Folkstone and was later reunited with my parents. In May 1940 the Germans occupied Belgium.

I learned that the entire extended Neumann family survived, suffering various degrees of hardship hidden in Belgium or France. The father was eventually deported to, and liberated from, Buchenwald. This supports anecdotally Anthony Grenville’s analysis (August) that Jews in French-speaking Brussels fared better than those in Holland and Flanders.

John Farago

Fleeing the Nazis: Belgium in wartime

I worked in a Jewish children’s home, first in Wezembeek then in Linkebeek in Brussels.

In Linkebeek, the Gestapo came to my dance studio and rang the bell. My pupil told them she didn’t know me. When they came into the studio they asked who played the piano. She said she did (though she couldn’t play a note) and they left without asking any further questions. I left the studio immediately and phoned the Jewish community. I was told to go to Wezembeek.

I arrived in Wezembeek at the same time as a transport of 18 children from Malines concentration camp. There were two babies and four children up to four years old; the rest were up to 14 years old. We had to delouse them. We worked about 16 hours a day, with night duty every three days. There were three of us doing this work. I have never worked so hard in my life.

Several weeks later, we had about another 20 children with lice and it started all over again. Once we had 100 children we moved to Linkebeek, where we had four nurses (myself included) to do all the work with the children. I taught them singing, dancing and climbing trees. I was the only trained teacher in the place and was paid 500 francs a month by the Belgian authorities.

Stella Mann
Pinner outing to Bletchley Park
The fact that our guide, Ruth Bourne, was herself a WREN employed at Bletchley Park during the war helped bring her story to life. In 1883 the philanthropist Herbert Samuel Leon bought Bletchley House and lived there for many years. Shortly before the Second World War, the property was rented to 'Captain Ridley' and 'friends'. This was Colonel Deniston of M15, who, with 250 people, many of them German-speaking Jewish refugees, started the Government Code and Cipher School (known as the Golf and Chess Society). By the end of the war, 8,000 people were employed there with a further 4,000 in out-stations. The Enigma story has been well documented. What is less well-known is that in 1944 the Colossus computer at Bletchley cracked the German Lorenz cipher and was instrumental in fooling the German high command about the exact location of the D-Day landings, which probably shortened the war by two years.

Next meeting: 4 Dec, 2.00 pm

Bradford special Get-together
Friends of the Bradford AJR group had lunch at the Salts Diner at Salts Mill, Shipley. We had a table of 14 and, despite the noise in the restaurant, an interesting and animated conversation took place. Everyone who attended enjoyed this special Get-together and looks forward to next year when, hopefully, Susanne Green will arrange a similar event.

Lilly Waxman Next meeting: 10 Dec. Chanukah Party for whole of Yorkshire in Mornington Hall, Bradford Hebrew Congregation Synagogue

Temple Fortune: Jazz with a Yiddish 'tarn'
Alf Keiles was born in Germany but managed to get to South Africa before the war. Now 81, he has been interested in jazz since the age of eight and in South Africa he and his wife Esther were jiving. Alf spoke about great Jewish jazz musicians and played recordings such as When You're Smiling and Alexander's Ragtime Band. A very enjoyable afternoon.

Next meeting: 18 Dec. Early Chanukah Party, 2.00 pm

Brighton & Hove Sarid: Golden Ring of Russia
Wendy Funnel's beautiful slides of Russia were accompanied by an informative commentary. The architecture of the golden domes of the many churches in Moscow, Zagorsk, Novgorod and other cities showed Byzantine influence. The Kremlin and St Basil's Cathedral dazzled with amazing colours and shapes. The Hermitage and palaces of the tsars in St Petersburg were full of gold decorations and treasures. Though most of the churches became museums, the demise of the Communist regime ushered in a religious revival.

Ceska Abrahams
Next meeting: 15 Dec. Early Chanukah Party, 10.45 am

Liverpool: The 2002 Moscow theatre siege
A well-attended meeting was enthralled by a talk by Sidika Low on her experience of the Moscow theatre siege in 2002. Only time prevented many more questions being put to her and everyone was amazed how well she had coped with a most terrifying experience.

Guido Alis
Next meeting: 11 Dec. Early Chanukah Party

Hendon: 'An actor's life for me'
George Layton, a second-generation immigrant, gave a fascinating account of his life as an actor and TV scriptwriter (Doctor in the House, On the Buses, and That's Life). He has written three books for children and he read us two stories in a Yorkshire accent.

Annette Saville
Next meeting: 22 Dec. Chanukah Party

Cleve Road: History of the Bank of England
Roger Beales, from the Bank of England Agency for Greater London, gave us a wide-ranging talk about the Bank from its formation in 1694 to today's unprecedented banking situation. He also told us about security measures intended to prevent forgery. For further details, visit www.bankofengland.co.uk

David Lang

Harrogate: A poignant occasion
In view of the time of year, our meeting was a poignant occasion. Thoughts went back 70 years and we shared never-to-be-forgotten memories. Susanne talked about her recent visit to Beth Shalom and Eugene shared his experience when, visiting Gelsenkirchen, he discovered that his two sisters did not perish in the gas chamber, but were killed by a British bomb while working in a labour camp and prevented from going into air-raid shelters. Susanne reported on past events and informed us about future ones.

Next meeting: 2 Feb 2009

Inge Little

Kingston CF Social Get-together
Fourteen AJR members attended a meeting at Susan Zisman's house in New Malden, among them Kitty and Mo Gale and Trudy Russell in Vienna. Delicious home-baked cakes were a feature and good companionship prevailed. We planned possible outings to the Wiener Library and Kew Gardens. Edith Jayne
Next meeting: 21 Jan. Coffee morning

North London: 'Divinity of faiths'
Her talk accompanied by slides, Rabbi Daniella Baum spoke about the beliefs and religious symbols of different faiths. A most interesting subject well presented.

Herbert Haberberg
Next meeting: 18 Dec. Chanukah Party + Quiz, 10.30 am

Sheffield CF
A record number of friends, meeting at Dorothy's home, were led by Steve into an interesting discussion on 'The Rescuers: Help and Sympathy Received from Non-Jews in Nazi Europe'. We also heard reports on The Journey, an exhibition for children recently opened at the Holocaust Centre in Laxton with AJR support. Though Susanne sadly couldn't be with us due to illness, thanks to modern technology she was able to give us a progress report on the Sheffield and East Midlands Memorial Book, which is nearing completion.

Dorothy Fleming
Next meeting: 15 March

Cambridge: A treasure on our doorstep
A treasure on our doorstep, the Jacques Mosseri Genizah Collection in Cambridge University Library was the subject of an enthralling talk by Dr Ben Outhwaite. About 200,000 written documents relating to Jewish life in Egypt between the ninth and nineteenth centuries have been restored and catalogued and are now kept in climatically controlled conditions at the University. One marvels at the expertise and scholarship involved in securing this historical collection.

Keith Lawson
Next meeting: 18 Dec. 'The Bank of England', 10.30 for 11.00 am

War Veterans meet again at Cafe Imperial
Another lively morning at the Cafe Imperial in Golders Green, with the company of authors, publishers and businessmen, all with a common theme: War Veterans. Never a dull moment. Hazel and I are honoured to have been welcomed into their company.

Esther Rinkoff

ALSO MEETING IN DECEMBER

Weald of Kent 2 Dec, Alan Bilgoma, 'Jewish Opera Singers', 10.30 for 11.00 am

Ilford 3 Dec. Harry Harris presents 'A Morning of Musical nostalgia', 10.30 am

HGS 8 Dec. 'A Jewish Schindler?; Ladjus Lüb', 10.30 am

Edgware 16 Dec. 'Naomi Hyamson Entertainers Again', 2.00 pm

Essex 16 Dec. Community Chanukah Party – details being sent out

Wessex 16 Dec. Joint Pre-Chanukah Party – details being sent out

Reddlett 17 Dec. Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith, 'The Leitz family', 10.30 am

Wembly 17 Dec (not 10 Dec). Social Get-together, 2.00 pm

Oxford 23 Dec. Chanukah Party and 'Naomi Hyamson Entertainers', 10.30 for 11.00 am
brought more success, but those were the people he knew.

When war broke out, their illusions were successively dismantled. First, they believed that Paris would be safe, France secure behind the Maginot line; then that the Nazis would be benign occupiers, the rumours of brutality just fear-mongering. Next they counted on broadcasts from the local ferry after a day’s work, spending the cold and sometimes hungry. One or two friends still supported them, and indomitable Yvette earned a crust of lunch in a restaurant near the Madeline and dinner in the hotel, no doubt taking his hat to go downstairs, putting it in safe-keeping for the duration of the meal, and redeeming it against a tip he could ill afford before returning to his room. He died there in 1952, aged 90, in his bed, holding a faded photograph of a young Yvette.

**2009 TRIP TO ISRAEL**

Following our highly successful trip to Israel in 2008 we are arranging a further trip next year from Thursday 24 March to Tuesday 2 April 2009 (9 nights)

For further details and/or to add your name to the list, please call Lorna Moss or Carol Rossen on 020 8385 3070

PLACES ARE LIMITED

PLEASE BOOK EARLY

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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 Linser 01702 300812
Glasgow
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620
Harrogate
Inge Little 01423 886254
Hendon
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070
Hertfordshire
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070
HGS
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425
Hull
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734
Ilford
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063
Leeds HSFA
Trude Silman 0113 2251628
Liverpool
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734
Manchester
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091
Newcastle
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339
Norfolk (Norwich)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077
North London
Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033
Oxford
Susie Bates 01235 526 702
Pinner (HA Postal District)
Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833
Radlett
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077
Sheffield
Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666
South London
Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926
South West Midlands (Warwick area)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070
Surrey
Edmée Barta 01372 727 412
Temple Fortune
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077
Weald of Kent
Max and Jane Dickson 01892 541026
Wembley
Laura Levy 020 8894 5527
Wessex (Bournemouth)
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434
West Midlands (Birmingham)
Ernest Aris 0121 353 1437

**AJR LUNCHEON CLUB**

Wednesday 17 December 2008

Our Speaker will be

Baroness Neuberger

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

**KT-AJR**

Kindertransport special interest group

Monday 1 December 2008

Raymond Sturgess

‘My Experiences in Court’

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

Reservations required

Please telephone 020 7328 0208

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS CLOSED ON TUESDAYS

December Afternoon entertainment

Mon 1 KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub

Tue 2 CLOSED

Wed 3 Jill & Jack

Thur 4 Simon Gilbert

Mon 8 Kards & Games Klub

Tue 9 CLOSED

Wed 10 Ronnie Goldberg

Thur 11 Madeleine Whiteson

Mon 15 Kards & Games Klub

Tue 16 CLOSED

Wed 17 LUNCHEON CLUB with Baroness Neuberger

Thu 18 Douglas Poster

Mon 22 Chunukah Party with Toni Green

Tue 23 CLOSED

Wed 24 CLOSED

Thur 25 CLOSED

Mon 29 CLOSED

Tue 30 CLOSED

Wed 31 CLOSED

**‘DROP IN’ ADVICE SERVICE**

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

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

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FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Birth
Congratulations to Carol and Adrian Rossen on the birth of their grandson Tamir in Israel.

Diamond Wedding
Congratulations to Bertha and Solly Ohayon on celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary on Monday 14 November 2008.

Death
Gillian Schuman nee Davies died on 2 October after losing her battle with cancer. She will be greatly missed by her mother, brother, husband Martin and her two boys, Jonathan and Laurence. May she rest in peace.

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY — DECEMBER

Mon 1 Dr Gwen Williams ‘Fairy + Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century English Literature (Part 2)’ Club 43

Thur-Fri 4-5 CARA (Council for Assisting Refugee Academics) ‘In Defence of Learning: The Past and the Present’ Conference at British Academy (tel 020 7021 0860)
3 Dec Key Note Lecture by Dr Ralph Kohn, ‘Nazi Persecution: Britain’s Gift’ at Royal Society, 6-9 Carlton House Terrace, SW1, 6.00 pm RSVP info.cara@lsbu.ac.uk

Mon 8 ‘Kristallnacht and its International Aftermath’, a workshop at the British Academy, 10.30 am to 5.30 pm. Co-ordinated by Prof Christian Wiese, Director, University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies, and Prof Edward Timms FBA, Research Professor at the Sussex Centre. Speakers will include: Prof Raphael Gross (Frankfurt) on ‘Eye-witness Testimonies at the Wiener Library’, Prof Susannah Heschel (Dartmouth College) and Prof Doris Bergen (Toronto) on ‘The German Churches’ Response to Kristallnacht’, and Prof Gulie Ne’eman Arad (Beer Sheva) on ‘America’s Responses to Kristallnacht’. Concluding panel discussion, chaired by Prof Peter Pulzer (Oxford) on ‘International Responses to Ethnic Conflict, 1938-2008’. Registration: Penny Collins (British Academy) tel 020 7969 5283 email externalrelations@britac.ac.uk

Mon 8 Hans Seelig, ‘Some Musical Anniversaries of 2008’ Club 43

Wed 10 Prof Stefanie Schuler-Springorum (Institute for the History of German Jewry, Hamburg), University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies ‘War as Adventure: The Condor Legion in Spain, 1936-39’ at Wiener Library, 7.00 pm. Tel 020 7580 3493 email info@leobaeck.co.uk

Mon 15 Informal Channamas Get-together Club 43
Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7-45 pm. Tel Hans Seelig on 01442 254360

DO YOU REMEMBER THE DAY WW2 BROKE OUT?
We are making a TV documentary to commemorate the outbreak of WW2. We would like to hear from anyone who remembers 3 September 1939 and was at that time in Poland, Germany or already in the UK with family still in any of these places. We are also keen to hear from anyone who has photos or home video from around this time. Please contact: Alexandra Lowe Specialist Factual and Arts 22nd Floor, London Television Centre Upper Ground, LONDON SE1 9LT alexandra.lowe@itv.com

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OBITUARIES

Irene Bruegel, 1945-2008

A potential perpetual refugee, always a foreigner, not quite belonging is how Irene Bruegel described herself in a paper she presented to a conference in London just two weeks before she died at the age of 62. Inspired by her parents, Irene was a truly charismatic woman, campaigning, teaching and researching throughout her tragically too short life for equality and social justice, across a huge canvass of ethnic, gender, human and social rights. Most recently, she had become determined fully to understand her own identity, as she put it 'not just subjective identity, but ethnic identity imposed through political power'.

She was born into a personal and political maestro on 7 November 1945 in London to parents who as Jews, albeit highly assimilated non-believers, were Czech nationals of German mother-tongue. Her father returned to Prague to work in the first post-war Czechoslovak government, taking with him his somewhat reluctant doctor wife and tiny baby Irene, only to have to flee to England less than two years later, with the impending rise of Communism. Irene was stranded in Prague before being reunited with her parents in London. These experiences influenced her personal and political curiosity and hybrid identity.

She grew up in Golders Green in an intensely political family, speaking German at home and going first to Henrietta Barnett School then to South Hampstead High School for Girls. Her career spanned education, policy research and local government. In 1990 she was appointed to London South Bank University, becoming Professor of Urban Policy in 2000.

Her passion became support for Palestinian rights as a pre-condition for a just settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, in 2002, with her lifelong partner Richard Kuper, she founded Jews for Justice for Palestinians. She was also instrumental, in 2004, in the establishment of its charitable arm - the British Shalom-Salaam Trust - which supports education, housing and human rights projects in Israel and Palestine.

She was diagnosed with a degenerative autoimmune liver disease, for which the only treatment was a transplant. Sadly, she did not survive the preliminary operation that she hoped would give her renewed energy to turn her dreams of a more peaceful, socially and economically just world into a reality. She died quietly on 6 October 2008, surrounded by her family - her partner Richard, her children Dan and Jo, and stepchildren Martin and David. 

Miriam David

Gerd Martin Nathan, 1925-2008

Gerd came to this country in the first Kindertransport on 2 December 1938, found himself in Dovercourt Camp, and was selected by Anna Essinger to join her co-educational boarding school in Kent. He was an only child and his father had died two years earlier. The responsibility this placed on his young shoulders made it hard for him to be happy with the constraints of boarding school, which he left after completing his School Certificate. While holding down a job with the Road Research Laboratory, he took a part-time degree in physics and in 1954 succeeded in combining his interest in music, mathematics (in which he was greatly gifted) and physics by joining the disc recording department of Decca. In 1965 he was transferred from the recording studio to the recording department, where he improved the quality and level of standardisation of record production. He soon joined the British Standards Committee (BSC) dealing with disc records and a little later was elected UK delegate to the relevant sub-committee of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). He was chairman of the BSC dealing with sound recordings on disc and tape, and leader of the British delegation to a committee of the IEC. In 1980 he was elected a Fellow of the New York-based Audio-Engineering Society and, after his retirement, was awarded the Distinguished Service Certificate by the British Standards Institute.

Gerd lived alone all his life. He was modest about his achievements and very gentle, except when his ire was aroused by bureaucratic incompetence. His main hobby was recording television programmes that interested him and he amassed a vast, eclectic collection. He could have been an excellent maths teacher for he successfully tutored children and grandchildren of his closest friends.

Gerd was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer less than two months before he died and accepted the news with much stoicism. Fortunately, he was still well enough to relinquish his organisation visit to the city of his birth, Hamburg, shortly before his diagnosis (see October issue of the Journal). Many of his friends, spanning three generations, attended his funeral.

L. B. Brent

AJR REPORT

Michael Newman

70th anniversary of Kristallnacht

To commemorate the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the AJR sponsored a special ceremony, organised by Liberal Judaism, at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood, London, on 9 November. The service included special readings and music sung by a combined choir of voices from Liberal Judaism synagogues.

Also to mark the anniversary of Kristallnacht, the Holocaust Centre (formerly Beth Shalom) organised, with AJR support, a commemorative concert at the Barbican Hall in London. The main part of the programme, performed by the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra to an audience of 1,200 guests, was Leonard Bernstein's Kaddish Symphony (see review, pp. 8-9).

Stumbling Stone

The AJR was proud to sponsor two screenings of the documentary film Stumbling Stone (Stolperstein; director Dörte Franke) as part of the Jewish Film Festival. The film is a combined portrait, road movie and story of the largest decentralised memorial in the world, the focus being on Gunter Demnig, who has set 12,000 names of forgotten victims of the Nazis in concrete on Europe's pavements. The film follows the artist on his controversial project to lay small memorial stones outside the former residences of Holocaust victims (see review, p.10).

Extension of Manx museum sought

During the early period of the Second World War, many AJR members were interned on the Isle of Man. Now, the AJR has lent its support to a campaign to develop the Manx Ancestry Centre in Douglas, the island's capital.

The proposal will provide island residents and visitors with the digitalisation of their Manx family history sourced from, inter alia, newspapers, photographs, oral history recordings, and film collections.

Despite being held in detention on the island, the refugees from Nazi-occupied Central Europe were able to develop there a remarkable array of educational and cultural activities. In recent years, many of our members have greatly benefited from records kept by the Manx National Heritage Library.
**LETTER FROM ISRAEL**

Kristallnacht memorial project

A few months ago I was put in contact with an organisation in Jerusalem called the Synagogue Memorial Organisation. It is engaged in preparing a volume or volumes in English which will commemorate all the Jewish communities of Germany which were attacked and destroyed in what is known as Kristallnacht, the pogrom of 9-10 November 1938. The Synagogue Memorial Organisation estimates that there were over 1,500 such communities.

The organisation, whose office is in Jerusalem, is run by a small team, headed by Professor Meier Schwarz, Emeritus Professor of Agriculture at the Bar Ilan and Hebrew Universities, a former member of Kibbutz Hatfetz Hayim, an expert on Torah and science, and a former president of the World Association of Religious Jewish Scientists. Born in Germany in 1926 but brought up and educated in Israel, he is currently engaged in overseeing the Synagogue Memorial project. Although most of the funding for the undertaking comes from the US, Yad Vashem and other organisations are also involved.

The team in the office is aided by a small cohort of outside writers who undertake research into the communities allotted to them. The job of the writers is then to scour the internet and other sources, most of them in German, for information about their communities. A website listing basic information about all the former communities is maintained by the Synagogue Memorial Organisation. It is engaged in preparing a volume or volumes in English which will commemorate all the Jewish communities of Germany which were attacked and destroyed in what is known as Kristallnacht, the pogrom of 9-10 November 1938. The Synagogue Memorial Organisation estimates that there were over 1,500 such communities.

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Each article must be written in accordance with the instructions issued by the Synagogue Memorial Organisation, specifying the date when the community is first mentioned, its size in 1953, the various aspects of its history, and of course the events of the pogrom of 1938. No article may exceed 255 words, which is quite difficult given that some sites (e.g. Alemannia Judaica; http://www.alemannia-judaica.de) abound in information about each community, its synagogue, history, and population, and in some cases even include contemporary newspaper reports. Many of these communities dated back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and suffered from discrimination and persecution of various kinds and intensity throughout their history. Of course, the ability to read and understand German, extract the main points from the often wordy text, and present them in the required form and in good English is essential.

Before embarking on the job of writing up a community, writers are instructed to look at the relevant entry in the German Wikipedia. There one suddenly sees history coming to life. Many entries show photos of idyllic villages, where Jews once settled and presumably made a living; and rustic houses adorned with typical German timbering set in beautiful countryside with verdant fields and lush woodland. There are pictures of rural markets with bustling housewives and robust farmers. One can easily imagine these scenes as being not very far removed from those that presented themselves to the eyes of our forebears many centuries ago.

All that ended in 1938, when the remaining Jewish population left or was deported to concentration camps. Almost all the synagogues were destroyed, together with their contents, though a few were preserved because they had been sold at a considerable loss and converted into, for example, beer halls or fire departments. The devastation of all the communities was complete. In recent years, some villages and towns have erected memorial plaques to their former Jewish communities.

Although it is sometimes agonisingly painful to do the work, I feel privileged to be associated with this important and worthwhile project.

Dorothea Shifer-Vanson