

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Underpaid, underfed and overworked: Refugees in domestic service

Last 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 Kindertransports. 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

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REFUGEES IN DOMESTIC SERVICE *continued from page 1*

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 Hübeline, 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 Hübeline 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 émigré 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

'EMIGRATION INTO LIFE'

A copy of the autobiography of AJR member Eric Sanders was presented to Austrian President Dr Heinz Fischer at a reception in his office for a Goethe Gymnasium delegation. Mr Sanders was expelled from the Viennese school following the Anschluss and left Austria in August 1938. In 2005 he unveiled a plaque at his former school in memory of pupils and teachers who were victims of the Nazi regime.

Eric Sanders's autobiography, *Emigration ins Leben: Wien – London und nicht mehr Retour* (Vienna: Czernin Verlag), was published earlier this year and reviewed in the July issue of the Journal.



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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 *Sonderchor* 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 REISZ, 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

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?

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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 to have 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 heartbroken 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 without it having touched his head once. In my youthful eyes, 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

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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



Hedi Schnabl

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. 'Fräulein' plays with me, reads to me, takes me out, talks to me about her hard life. My mother says that Fräulein 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 with her and we go into her festive home. Half an hour later my parents come to collect me. I am tearful and they wisely remove me rapidly, wishing our neighbours a Merry Christmas.

There are no more such Christmases to come.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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THE KINDERTRANSPORTS 70 YEARS ON

Sir – I read with great interest your November leading article 'The Kindertransportes 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 'Continuez!'

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 hostel, 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, while she escaped to Spain via the Pyrenees.

Throughout the six terrible war years, my mother was 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 Kindertransportes 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 scholarliness 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 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. Raphael 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 and I have a suspicion that your readers may like to know about it and possibly comment. *Jack Lynes, Pinner, Middx*

MONDAY MORNING NEWS

Sir – Spare us please extreme right-wing propaganda, especially if, like so much right-wing propaganda, it is such arrant nonsense (October issue, article by Fred Stern). Just to look at the key points:

'[O]ur money': That money can buy power is unfortunately true. We do our best to restrain this by electing governments and local governments and by trying to prosecute bribery and corruption. To present it as a desirable or legitimate use of money is perverse or contemptible.

'African nations which support [the Mugabe regime]': It is positively immoral to suggest that because of our annual few million pounds of aid, we should be able to dictate the foreign policy of some of the poorest countries in the world. Did not most of us condemn both the USA and the USSR during the Cold War for 'buying' allies and encouraging proxy wars?

'[We are] the only true refugees': This would be utter nonsense were it not such a harmful statement. *The Sun* and *The Mail* do enough mischief by conflating

asylum-seekers with economic migrants without your support. What, if not refugees, are the Tutsis who managed to flee from genocide in Rwanda to Burundi or the DR Congo, or the Negro farmers fleeing ethnic cleansing by nomadic, ethnic Arabs in Darfur?

Your editorial material usually upholds the liberal, humane standards from which we benefited. Please keep it so.

Francis Deutsch, Saffron Walden

IN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL

Sir – I find it irritating to read the constant criticism by readers from the comfort of their armchairs in NW6, N12, Hayling Island, etc. Can I remind these 'liberals' that our Israeli brethren are being threatened with extermination by over 1 billion Muslims? The primary duty of any government is to protect the lives of its citizens by all means available. We are fortunate to have survived a Holocaust – do the critics really wish for another?

*Marcel Ladenheim BDS
Surbiton, Surrey*

Sir – Some of our readers' memories are conveniently short. How many remember early June 1967? Virtually every Jew went to a synagogue in the evening, some to pray whilst others were seeking comfort, but we all wanted to show our solidarity with our co-religionists across the sea who were staring in the face of another annihilation.

Our pride soon swelled after their victory – the few against the amassed combined might of their enemies. The Jews were fighters for their right to exist, not quitters.

For those with short memories, look up in your encyclopaedia 'Entebbe and Idi Amin' – his threat to execute all the Jewish hostages. Can anyone recall which nation spoke up for the Jewish hostages? It was the IDF who came to their rescue. We are fortunate in having many doers in our midst, who outnumber the knockers and pessimists. That is how we have survived for so long.

Henry Werth, Edgware, Middx

Sir – We should all support Israel and be grateful that it is there.

Bridget Bow, Barnet, Herts

Sir – I feel Jews like Margolyes, Pinter *et al*, apart from not knowing Jewish history, are trying to show the non-Jewish world they are 'with it' by joining the media chorus of disapproval of Israel and its actions against the Arabs, aka 'Palestinians'.

Alex Lawrence, Marlow

Sir – I strongly believe in a two-state solution, on the basis of proposals which have been agreed by Kadima, Labour and Meretz. Perhaps Rubin Katz (November, Letters) would give an outline of his peace proposals.

Peter Prager, London N12

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 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 2,000 years old and there are no 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 Führer von Berchtesgaden, Wir wollen keinen Maler von Gottesgnaden, Wir wollen kein Eintopf und Hering, Wir wollen essen und fressen wie Feldmarschall Göring.' 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 charging 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

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The hierarchy of Rome lingers on in the National Gallery's current exhibition, **Renaissance Faces: Van Eyck to Titian**. It appears in paintings and sculpture evoking Roman coinage or iconographs, such as **Baldovinetti's** *Portrait of a Lady*, a charming profile of a young girl with an elaborate Roman hairdo. Or in **Desiderio da Settignano's** *Saint Constance* or *The*



Sandra Berzon *Summer Trees*

Beautiful Florentine, probably the bust of a young aristocrat, later thought to be the requilary of the martyred St Ursula.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, fashion became excessive and doges and gentry, merchants and clergymen posed in their finery for artists like **Palma Vecchio**, **Holbein**, **van Eyck**, **Lotto** or **Bellini**. Some overdressed women were portrayed as the Virgin, undeterred by the conflict between their wealth and her simplicity.

Yet the emphasis on high Renaissance fashion highlights the values of the day: friendship, courtship, marriage and politics. Physical beauty was considered the mirror of the spirit and it is impossible to know how true a likeness these artists achieved. Beauty is plentiful, notably in **Botticelli's** *Portrait of a Young Man*, **Ghirlandaio's** touching *Old Man and His Grandson*, and

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, autumnal symbols of an inner silence.

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

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 Pissar at Bernstein's behest. Pissar's lament is basically a rant at God, but it is the music which articulates this requiem, its power and its fury, with Pissar'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, Pissar, who believes the *Shoah* 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 Pissar's grand-mother, who sang to him lullabies of praise, and here a sense of celestial peace, an inner

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

Bernstein was already a successful composer and conductor when Pizar, 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 Pizar after reading his autobiography. For Pizar, 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 domination 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 Ittai 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 my memory as a talking point for Jews in Austria after the Anschluss. Gold dust was a common item compared with an affidavit to enter the United States. I knew then that there were quotas involved and that the Polish quota (my father's) was very small. What I did not know was the elaborate proof of self-sufficiency that was required in order to protect the American taxpayer from incurring any charge.

The sponsor had to be a close relative – cousins were not considered safe

enough – and a detailed assurance of support had to be given. Cecilia Razovsky made use of all kinds of ruses to circumvent these restrictions, obtaining affidavits even from strangers. There were particular problems with doctors as they were deemed to be competitors of the medical students graduating from American universities. Not satisfied with work on behalf of refugees in the United States, Cecilia Razovsky also sought safe havens in South America and the Caribbean. The vessel *St Louis*, refused entry to Havana, was a victim of this attitude. Following its forcible return to Europe, England, France, Belgium and Holland did agree to each take a share of the refugees on board.

The villain of this story is the Evian conference of 32 nations. President Roosevelt refused to change the US immigration laws and other countries followed suit. Canada's 'One Jew is one too many' and Australia's insistence that 'We don't have a racial problem and we don't want to start one' helped scupper any real possibility of assistance for the refugees in a worsening climate in Germany and Austria. How many lives could have been saved had these large countries opened their doors is a subject painful to contemplate. Britain, to her credit, did take in 10,000 children, an amazing achievement when one realises the difficulty of finding homes and sponsors. Many other refugees who managed to obtain entry into the United States despite the quotas owe their lives to Cecilia Razovsky and her helpers. She deserves to be honoured as a righteous Jewess.

Martha Blend

Reviews continued on page 10



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REVIEWS continued from page 9

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 engraves 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 individu-

ally. 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 niggling 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 Kaffehaus 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 Rosl 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 (Dzierżonow) 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 led by Jacob Egit. Egit, like most of those making up the new community, was formerly a Polish Jew who had survived the war in the Soviet Union (in Kazakhstan). 'I was haunted', he said, 'by the thought that here, in this land which the Germans had cultivated for so many years, the Jews could exact their retribution and justice and could repudiate Hitler's 'final solution' by making this former German territory a Jewish settlement.'

Following a conference of survivors held in Reichenbach on 17 June 1945, Egit persuaded the new Communist government to support his idea. Edward Ochab, the Polish Minister of the Interior, supposedly commented: 'Whether it pleases anyone or not, go

and build a new life on that new soil. We will support you in all your endeavours and with all the forces at our disposal.'

Piankowski, a local Polish 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.'

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

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 co-operatives. 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 Wrocław 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

you. It's all there: 'Jewish' recipes such as gefilte fish, chicken soup and chopped liver, as well as a wealth of Austrian goodies – Marillenknoedel, Nockerln, Palatschinken, the real Apfelstrudel (if you have world enough and time), Sachertorte, and many more. The recipes are clearly spelt out, there are useful equivalent tables and, in many cases, stories about how and when the author came to know about them.

The introduction describes the author's progress from refugee to home economics teacher and, finally, after she had gained a social work qualification, to the establishment of a centre for deprived families. A long way from cooking, you might think, but the author clearly regards food as a cement that helps to keep families together.

It always intrigues me that Jewish people who have been so badly treated by society should bother to join the caring professions. Perhaps one day society will acknowledge our contribution. The proceeds from the book go to Jessie's Fund, a charitable organisation in memory of Rosl Schatzberger's granddaughter, which helps severely and terminally ill children to express themselves by means of music therapy.

Martha Blend

Fleeing the Nazis: Belgium in wartime

Even after Hitler's enthusiastic welcome by the Austrians, 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 butler 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 Folkestone 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

I was in Brussels in 1938-44. I arrived there from Vienna via Yugoslavia. I was hidden in a theatre agency in 1942-43, then

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 study 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

INSIDE the AJR

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 MI5, 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.

Ernest Simon

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 'tam'

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 champions. 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.

David Lang

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.

Inge Little

Next meeting: 2 Feb 2009

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 of West Finchley who had met John North 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: 'Diversity 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 Bilgora, 'Jewish Opera Singers', 10.30 for 11.00 am

Iford 3 Dec. Harry Harris presents 'A Morning of Musical Nostalgia', 10.30 am

HGS 8 Dec. 'A Jewish Schindler?: Ladislaus Löb', 10.30 am

Edgware 16 Dec. 'Naomi Hyamson Entertains 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

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

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

Oxford 23 Dec. Chanukah Party and 'Naomi Hyamson Entertains', 10.30 for 11.00 am

UNCLE MAX continued from page 4

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 the protection of the French government. When its members turned out to be eager collaborators, they had to move south to escape. They found refuge in a hotel in Aix-en-Provence. When this was requisitioned, they had to move into an attic room in a small pension, cold and sometimes hungry. One or two friends still supported them, and indomitable Yvette earned a crust with broadcasts from the local station. In 1944 her strength gave out and she died, with Max at her side, as he had been for 50 years.

After the war, Max returned to Paris, once again to live in a hotel. Friends called and sent food parcels from America; my mother, ever conscientious, visited him regularly, catching the night ferry after a day's work, spending the day in his poky hotel room to provide

love, care, laundry, and catching the night ferry back to London to see her first patient at eight next morning. Uncle Max kept up his modest routine of lunch in a restaurant near the Madeleine 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 Tuesday 24 March to Thursday 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

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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

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'

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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
Thur 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 Kasmir on 020 8385 3070 to make an appointment at AJR, Jubilee House, Merriam 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

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 née **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 0880)

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 8.30 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 Schüler-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 Chanumas 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 WWII BROKE OUT?

We are making a TV documentary to commemorate the outbreak of WWII. 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.

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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 maelstrom 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.



PHOTO: RICHARD KUPER

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 precondition 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 auto-immune 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 record factory to the recording studios, 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 relish an organised 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 Hafetz 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 in Germany has been set up by the Synagogue Memorial Organization - <http://www.ashkenazhouse.org> - and it is to this that the writers turn initially. I myself, for instance, was told to write up the five communities from Forchheim to Georgensmund, then to tackle the next ten from Schnaittach to Schweinfurt, and so on.

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 1933, 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 Shefer-Vanson

Newsround

Kristallnacht remnants found near Berlin

A dumping ground the size of four football pitches for the destroyed remains of Jewish property plundered during Kristallnacht has been found in Brandenburg, near Berlin. The discovery was made by Israeli journalist Yaron Svoray, who said it was a coincidence he had stumbled across the artefacts so close to the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht.

Jewish leader in Germany warns against rising anti-Semitism

German-Jewish leader Charlotte Knoblauch has warned against the rise of neo-Nazi parties and said she frequently receives death threats. Speaking in an interview to mark the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht, Mrs Knoblauch called for a government ban on the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party.

Holocaust orphans mark 60th anniversary of arrival in Canada

Jewish orphans of the Holocaust have marked the 60th anniversary of their arrival in Canada. In 1947 the Canadian Jewish Congress persuaded the Canadian government to accept 1,123 Jewish children, most of them from Hungary, who had spent the war in hiding or in ghettos and concentration camps.

Göring's grandniece in visit to Israel

Bettina Göring, grandniece of Hermann Göring, has arrived in Israel, where a documentary about her relationship with a child of Holocaust survivors is featured in the Jewish Eye film festival. *Bloodlines* records Göring's encounters with Ruth Rich, an Australian artist whose brother was murdered by the Nazis. Göring said it was only thanks to her meetings with Rich that she was finally able to break through from a guilt-ridden life.

Belgian far-right leader resigns

The leader of Belgium's far-right National Front party, Michel Delacroix, has resigned after he was shown on television singing a song making light of the Holocaust. Delacroix, a blind senator known for his extremist positions, suggested that a National Front member recently ejected from the party might have played a role in the surfacing of the tape.

Mayor demands end to 'ostracism' of Vichy

Claude Malhuret, mayor of Vichy and a member of President Sarkozy's UMP party, has called for an end to the city's 'ostracism' and constant remarks about its collaboration during the Second World War. 'Lots of Resistance movements came from Vichy and there was a particularly ferocious [Nazi] repression here and in the Allier region,' he said.