

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

The Kindertransports 70 years on

Later this month, on 23 November 2008, the seventieth anniversary of the Kindertransports that brought to Britain nearly 10,000 children, most of them Jewish, from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia will be marked by a Kindertransport Reunion. The original organisation representing the former Kindertransport children, the Reunion of Kindertransport, established largely through the remarkable energy of Bertha Leverton, is now a special interest group of the AJR, known as KT-AJR; it has been chaired by the late David Jedwab, Hermann Hirschberger and now by Erich Reich.

It was the so-called 'Crystal Night' pogrom, launched by the Nazis on 9-10 November 1938 against the Jews, that led to the Kindertransport initiative. In this country, public revulsion at the brutal state-inspired violence unleashed against Germany's Jewish community put great pressure on a reluctant British government to respond with humanitarian measures to the desperate plight of Germany's Jews. On 15 November a high-powered delegation from the Council for German Jewry, consisting of Viscount Samuel, Viscount Bearsted, the Chief Rabbi, Neville Laski, Lionel de Rothschild and Chaim Weizmann, called on Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and proposed, among other measures, the admission into Britain of children under the age of 17; the figure of 10,000 seems to have come from a separate offer by the Jewish community in Palestine to take in that number of Jewish children from Germany – an offer unacceptable to the government, which wished to restrict the entry of Jews into Palestine.

Chamberlain had not responded encouragingly to the Jewish delegation, but the Cabinet, meeting on the following day, 16 November, decided that the government must take immediate steps 'to deal with the Jewish problem'. With organised political pressure on the government mounting, a full-scale debate on refugee



policy took place in Parliament on 21 November, during which the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, announced that the Home Office would give entry visas to all child refugees whose maintenance could be guaranteed. The Home Office subsequently dropped the requirement for visas and passports, substituting a single document bearing the child's details, while in 1939 the government also had to take over the financial burden of the children's maintenance from the Jewish organisations, which had initially offered a guarantee that the children would not become a charge on the Exchequer.

The Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, later known as the Refugee Children's Movement, under the joint chair-

manship of Sir Wyndham Deedes and Lord Samuel, was responsible for organising the emigration and, through local committees across Britain, for the allocation of the children to hostels while they waited to be placed with foster-parents, or were old enough to support themselves. On 8 December, former Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin made a broadcast on behalf of the Lord Baldwin Fund for Refugees, which raised the very considerable sum of £500,000 from the public, though not all of it was for Kindertransportees; the Refugee Children's Movement, desperately short of funds, did not receive its allocation of £200,000 until April 1939.

In Germany, the lists of children to travel on Kindertransports were drawn up, under great pressure, by the Jewish communal organisations. It was no mean achievement that the first transport of 200 children arrived at Harwich from Berlin as early as 2 December 1938. The first transport from Vienna, where conditions for Jews were much worse, left on 11 December, largely through the courage and initiative of a non-Jewish Dutchwoman, Gertrude Wijsmuller-Meijer, who had flown to Vienna and on 5 December had confronted a startled Adolf Eichmann; he decided that a transport of 600 children should be allowed to leave, though in the event they left in several parties. The trains left from stations in major cities, like Berlin, Vienna and later Prague, sometimes stopping to collect children from smaller towns, and travelled via Hook of Holland to Harwich, where the children either continued on their way to Liverpool Street Station or were accommodated at camps, like the nearby Butlin's holiday camp at Dovercourt on the Essex coast or Pakefield in Suffolk. A small number came by ship from Hamburg to Southampton.

It is hard to convey in words the distress of parents forced to send their children away as the only means of saving their lives, or that of children

continued overleaf

KINDERTRANSPORT CELEBRATION

We are delighted to announce that
**HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
PRINCE CHARLES**
will be a guest at the
Kindertransport Reunion
on Sunday 23 November
See page 2

THE KINDERTRANSPORTS 70 YEARS ON *continued from page 1*

separated from their parents. All too often, a brief farewell at a railway station was the last memory that the children would have of parents who stayed behind. The Nazi authorities, with characteristic callousness, decreed that the leave-taking must not be ostentatious, claiming that visible public gatherings of Jews and displays of emotion would arouse the righteous wrath of the Aryan population; for that reason, transports often left by night, sometimes from outlying stations. While some children saw the journey as an adventure into new territory, the majority were frightened and deeply distressed. Common to almost all their accounts of the journey are their overwhelming sense of relief on crossing the border to Holland and their gratitude for the warm welcome they enjoyed there, in contrast to the treatment they had endured in Germany.

After the Munich Agreement of September 1938, Jewish children in Czechoslovakia also came under threat, prompting the young stockbroker Nicholas Winton, who had travelled to Prague, to take measures to save them; by defying the Nazis as a private individual, he did so at considerable risk. Starting in early 1939, 'Britain's Schindler' organised eight trains that brought 669 children to safety in Britain. Once the Germans had occupied the remainder of the Czech lands in March 1939, Winton could no longer travel to Prague, but he continued his rescue work from London and the trains continued to leave. The ninth transport, with 250 children aboard, was due to depart on 3 September 1939, but was prevented from leaving by the outbreak of war that day.

The impact that this forced emigration had on the Kindertransportees differed enormously from child to child, varying according to the almost infinite permutations of individual experience, character and temperament, and sheer chance. The Kindertransporters are now celebrated as a success, and to some extent this is justified: 10,000 children – probably not far short of 10 per cent of all Jewish children living in Germany and Austria in 1939 – were saved from the gas chambers, and many of them went on to live happy, productive and successful lives. But one must not underestimate the unhappiness that also affected many of the Kinder in Britain. The strange and often frightening world to which they escaped as young children was, unavoidably, very different from that in which they had been growing up, and many of them never entirely overcame the shock and disorientation of the rupture.

As children, they were also heavily dependent on the adults immediately around them, in foster families, schools or hostels. Young children in foster families sometimes encountered warmth and love; it is hard not to be moved by the pages of grateful tributes to such benefactors published in the brochure that accompanied the 60th anniversary celebration of the Kindertransporters. But equally, other children suffered emotional neglect, even abuse, from unsuitable foster-parents. The pain endured by children who were placed in ill-suited or uncaring homes, thus accentuating the trauma of the loss of their parents, comes across vividly in the books that record their memories, as does the difficulty they had in adapting to the largely indifferent and uncomprehending society around them. The older children accommodated in hostels sometimes fared well; hostels like the cluster that grew up in the Willesden Green area of North-West London could create a happy environment where a supportive communal spirit developed.

The admission of so many Jewish children has come to be celebrated as a triumph of British liberalism and humanity. But that view is not wholly in accordance with what historians have discovered about British government policy and decisions relating to the Kindertransporters, for example the government's refusal to spend public money on the children, which it maintained tenaciously until forced into a reluctant U-turn in 1939. It is often argued that the Kindertransporters were set up as a guilty reaction by Britain to its shameful abandonment of Czechoslovakia at Munich – though quite how the Czechs were to be compensated by the rescue of Jewish children from Berlin or Vienna is unclear.

However that may be, official British attitudes to the plight of the Jewish refugees from the Reich were marked by a degree of unfeeling indifference, bureaucratic obstructionism and a general dislike of 'alien' immigrants, especially Jews, even in the years 1938-39 when Britain was admitting those refugees in considerable numbers. The Kindertransportees themselves, understandably, tend in the majority to emphasise their gratitude to Britain and to praise the generosity of their adopted homeland in rescuing them from Nazism and providing the conditions under which they could build new lives. But that does not mean that the British establishment, too, is entitled to bask in a self-congratulatory celebration of its humanity towards helpless asylum-seekers 70 years ago.

Anthony Grenville

70th Anniversary of the Kindertransport

On 21 November 1938 the British Parliament made a historic decision to allow 10,000 children from Europe entry into the UK. This decision saved their lives.

Join the Kinder, 70 years on, to celebrate this unique event on
Sunday 23 November 2008,
10 am – 5 pm

at JFS School, Harrow
in the presence of

**The Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan
Sacks**
and the

**Home Office Minister of State
The Right Honourable
Tony McNulty MP**

The keynote address will be given
by the eminent historian
Sir Martin Gilbert on 'The British
Government, the British People
and the Kinder'.

Sir Martin recently visited Lady
Thatcher to talk about her
recollections of the Jewish girl to
whom she and her family gave a
home in 1939.

Other highlights of the day
include:

a visit from

HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES
and

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**For Kinder, their next
generations and families, come
and celebrate, probably for the
last time, this special occasion.**

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HOW I BECAME A DENTIST

When we came to the UK in 1937, the wife of the local rabbi and my mother took me to see the headmaster of Bradford Grammar School, then one of the ten best schools in the country. We took my leaving report from my Jewish school in Berlin which showed 1s and 2s – very good marks. In this country, low figures indicate low marks, but we didn't know that. I was nevertheless admitted despite a lamentably low income for the family and eventually put on the classical side.

Having gained a good School Certificate, it was time for me to choose a career. As my father was a dentist it was almost a foregone conclusion that I would follow in his steps. I switched to the sciences but immediately found myself at a disadvantage, having missed out on three years' physics and chemistry. This was not communicated to the masters concerned, who thought I was merely a poor student. When I innocently asked the master at the end of the first term what the difference was between volts, amps and ohms, he said 'Crikey!' – as well he might. With private tuition I eventually scraped through some low pass marks in Higher School Certificate.

In the meantime, my father had paid a visit to the professor of dentistry at Leeds University and they had had a lively discussion about standards of

dentistry in Germany as opposed to in this country. The professor asked me to come for an interview. He enquired whether I was nimble with my fingers and whether I built model aeroplanes. I had to admit no in both cases. As my examination pass marks were low he changed tack and asked what books I had had to read for English literature for school certificate. This was one of two subjects I had failed (the other being history) and any knowledge I might have had of the subject was now three years behind me. I had read *Julius Caesar*. He asked me what Antony said at Caesar's funeral. I have to admit that learning any material by heart was anathema to me. I can remember musical lines but not words and when I sing (as a *chazan*) in synagogue, I have to have the music in front of me.

By chance, this was the one speech in the whole play I had managed to learn by rote: 'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him' That was very good, the professor said – start in October!

On such a tenuous thread hung my entry into dentistry, in which I eventually came to represent a thousand colleagues in West Yorkshire on the negotiating machinery for conditions and fees in the NHS.

Rudi Leavor

Thank you, Radio 4

One of the joys for me is listening to Radio 4. It was once called the Home Service. After the war, my husband and I laughed along with the nation at the antics of Tommy Handley in *ITMA (It's That Man Again)* and similar light entertainers. Also, I just had to hear *Mrs Dale's Diary*, plus *Woman's Hour* in the afternoon. This programme accompanied my housework. No need to feel guilty about wasting time. Thinking back, it must have helped us a lot with understanding English.

We also listened to debates and discussions. We could write and phone without pressing number buttons. Complain too.

Then there was the News. Often one heard about awful goings-on. Otherwise, I suppose, they wouldn't have been interesting. We lapped it all up. We never believed ignorance was bliss. On the whole, we felt the reporting and comments were fair. They helped us integrate as anchorless refugees. There was always the Third Programme, now Radio 3, if one

had to stay in. Often one heard marvellous live programmes, with expert discussions to follow. All this shaped my early positive experiences of living in this country, my home for nearly 70 years.

Due to illness I'm now forced to stay at home. Listening to both Radio 4 and 3 is a great blessing.

Thus I heard a gem as part of the weekly *Woman's Hour* serial this August. It was called 'Writing the Century'. This dramatisation included letters written and received by Marianne, aged 15, arriving on the Kindertransport (just like me). She was taken in by kindly Quakers. Her family were in the medical profession. Her trials and tribulations were so vivid, so familiar. Thanks to the high standard of the acting, I was almost living the despair and agony of Marianne's father, conveyed via his final message on the way to Auschwitz. We were told Marianne was alive and living in Oxford, with her husband. I wrote to the BBC congratulating them on this wonderful programme.

Laura Selo

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Favourite Operettas with Gypsy Violin

Once again, the AJR's prestigious Annual Tea was a glittering success, with some 400 guests packing the Hilton Hotel in Watford.

Entertainment was provided by The Garden Party Singers and Violinist from The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, accompanied on the piano by the AJR's Diana Franklin. The popular programme included many favourites such as the 'Champagne Trio' from *Die Fledermaus* and 'Vilia' from *The Merry Widow*.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAN EZEKIEL, THAT PERSONAL TOUCH



Discoveries in Hesse

In August this year my wife and I were invited to a dinner in Romrod in Germany. One of our hosts told us he had married in Romrod some months earlier and arranged for us to visit the place where the marriage ceremony had been held. The building was a typical small, half-timbered house, neat and tidy, converted into a sort of registry office by the local authorities. The amazing story, however, is that this had been the synagogue of Romrod up to 1935. The house has been tastefully refurbished and traces of the synagogue maintained. The menorah is depicted in the windows, the former ark cavity is clearly visible, and the pillars which support the upstairs area for the ladies clearly belong in a synagogue.

This story so intrigued me that I started looking into the history of this former synagogue and of the Jewish community of Romrod. Although Jews had lived in Romrod even earlier, the Jewish community became established in the late eighteenth century. By 1837 there were some 50 Jews out of 880 inhabitants. They were mostly modest traders in goods and livestock. That year they bought a typical house of the region which had been built in 1722. In 1843 the house had been converted into a synagogue and was consecrated by the rabbi from Alsfeld. The new building contained a mikvah, a school-room, a living area, a prayer and meeting room and an upstairs area for the ladies.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there were 18 Jewish communities and 16 cemeteries in the Vogelsberg region. In the second half of that century, migration from rural to urban areas increased considerably. People wanted to better themselves and the Jews of Romrod were no exception. By 1900 they had to close the schoolroom and by 1920 there were no more synagogue services. By 1935 only four Jewish families remained and they decided to sell the synagogue building to a Christian farmer. Soon after, they too left Romrod. In 1992 the building was bought by the town of Romrod and, with financial help from the European Union and the government of Hesse, the building was tastefully refurbished and is now a protected site.

This synagogue, like many others in Hesse, remained untouched by the Nazis because it looked like a typical farmer's house. All of them are now

protected sites.

We moved to Bad Nauheim the following day. This is a delightful small spa resort, popular with Germans, who have always been great believers in the healing properties of spa resorts. Until recent times, German health insurance organisations would often pay the cost of a stay in such a resort. In the last few years, however, the law has been changed with the result that Bad Nauheim, along with other spa towns, is suffering economically.

The Jugendstil architecture is a feature of the town. The baths, the drink halls and some of the other features of the town were built in the early part of the twentieth century, at a time when spa towns were much in vogue.

Much to my amazement, we found a synagogue – an impressive building in Bauhaus style. There is now an active Jewish community in Bad Nauheim, but we had no opportunity to establish contact.

One of the oldest centres of Jewish life in Hesse was in Friedberg, near Bad Nauheim. There is currently an exhibition in the Wetterau Museum of Friedberg entitled 'Fragments of Jewish History in Friedberg'. One of the exhibits is a Torah crown which originated in Friedberg in 1700 and has been lent by the Jewish Museum of New York. The history of the Jews in Friedberg goes back to the thirteenth century and between 1400 and 1700 it was one of the most important Jewish communities in Hessen. They lived in a ghetto, the Judengasse, and in 1260 they built a mikvah which is still a historical feature of the town.

There are only five other historical mikvahs still to be found in Germany – in Speyer, Worms, Cologne, Andernach and Offenburg – all on the Rhine. The Friedberg mikvah is much deeper than the others: the women had to descend five flights of stairs. The interior is a fine work of mediaeval architecture; one of its fascinating features is that the bases and capitals of the pillars are remarkably similar to some in the town church.

Some old German friends came to see us in Bad Nauheim and took us to an attractive place for *Kaffee und Kuchen*. We drove to Kloster Arnsburg, an old Cistercian monastery, part of which has been refurbished and is now a hotel and elegant restaurant (in the former brewery). We decided to explore. We firstly had a look at the ruins of the

former abbey, which had clearly been destroyed some hundreds of years ago. Behind these ruins, we discovered a beautifully maintained cemetery obviously still in use. The names on the gravestones were primarily the names of German nobility, some having died recently.

We then discovered quite another type of cemetery. What had once been the cloisters of the monastery was now a cemetery containing 447 graves of Second World War victims. Among their number were 81 women and 6 men murdered by the SS on 26 March 1945. These were displaced persons who had been involved in forced labour in nearby factories. Their bodies had been brought here by the German War Graves Association in 1960. A memorial plaque on the site clearly states that these people, from many different countries, had been murdered by the Gestapo. I wonder what else we might discover on our next trip to Hesse.

Ernest Simon

BERLIN KINDER MONUMENT

A monument by Frank Meisler of Kinder, some coming on the Kindertransport, the majority remaining in Germany, will be unveiled at the

Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse
on Sunday 30 November

Some free flights and accommodation have been arranged

For details, please contact
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'SUITCASE'

KINDERTRANSPORT

70TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT AT
LIVERPOOL STREET STATION
2 December 2008

On 2 December, Liverpool Street Station will come alive with stories of children who arrived on the Kindertransport – and those who were there to meet them – in a new innovative play, 'Suitcase'.

Performances are at 10.30 am, 1 pm and 7.30 pm. Tickets are free but MUST be booked in advance through jane@khpl.co.uk or call 020 7503 1640.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

AUSTRIANS REVISITED

Sir – Rubin Katz (October issue) is not the only 'survivor' whose bitterness prevents him from changing his attitude to Austria. His feelings must be respected. So should the feelings of those who see things differently, e.g. mine. His use of coloured language – for instance, 'cuddly Lederhosen-clad Austrians, yearn[ing] for the Tyrolean mountains, and hunker[ing] after such delights as Sachertorte' – is unconvincing. Be honest, Mr Katz. Did the Tyrolean mountains ever participate in Jew-bashing and has any Sachertorte ever proved to be anti-Semitic? Surely a glass of red wine with a slice of Sachertorte is an innocent and attractive experience.

He accuses us of short memories. Short? The seven years of Nazi control of Austria ended 65 years ago. What's short for some is a lifetime for many. The pre-Hitler Austria in which we lived had been a democracy for only 18 years. After the war Austria became a democracy again and has remained one to the present day. Anyone who claims the country has not undergone great changes for the better must be frozen in the ice blocks of the past. There are some 15,000 Jews living in Austria and the numbers are increasing. One of the earliest Jews to settle in Austria was a man called Wiesenthal. True, the extreme right received 29 per cent of the votes cast recently. Even assuming that every one of their voters is a Nazi or an anti-Semite, that means that 71 per cent of the population are not. So, when I visit Austria I can enjoy the company of those who belong to the great democratic majority.

Mr Katz ends his attack with a truly unkind statement: '[T]he difference in this willingness to promote everything Austrian ... lies between those who were happily ensconced in this country during the war and those who were unlucky enough to be trapped in Europe.' Happily? The majority of the 10,000 children who came to Britain in the Kindertransports never saw their families again.

I was much luckier. My parents and I came to England before Kristallnacht and had close English relatives here. I went back to Austria and stayed in Vienna for almost a year in 1946. In uniform. I haven't a short memory but I find nothing wrong with visiting Germany or Austria.

Eric Sanders, London W12

THANK YOU, QUAKERS

Sir – Your recent articles regarding the Quakers reminded me that I really have to thank this organisation for my rewarding

nursing career.

In 1938, during my year at the Goldschmidt Schule in Berlin, I was approached by Mrs Elizabeth Landsmann, who suggested I join a Kindertransport to England. Of course, she also consulted my mother in Dresden. However, I refused the offer as I didn't want to leave my mother and brother.

In April 1939 my mother, my brother and I arrived in England to look after 40 children from Bilbao – refugees from the Spanish Civil War. Whilst there, I was approached by a Mrs Atkinson of Dorchester, Dorset, who had been given my name by Mrs Landsmann in Berlin.

This Quaker lady started me, aged 17, on my nursing career, which lasted until 1983. As, at the time, I was too young to do my general training, I began with my orthopaedic training. That was followed by four years' general training in London during the war. After working as a midwife, a Queen's District Nurse and a health visitor, I moved on to being a nursing administrator. I retired in 1983, rounding off my career in the Department of Health. Thank you, Quakers, for a wonderful career and a good life!

Annemarie Seelig, Teddington, Middx

Sir – Some months ago I wrote to the *AJR Journal* about my father, Edmund Redisch, who was interned on the Isle of Man. My mother and I came to England with the help of the Quakers early in 1939. Father, being Jewish, had to obtain a forged passport before he could join us, which he did shortly before hostilities began.

My father was one of those who volunteered to join the British Army rather than spend the duration on the Isle of Man. My mother then obtained his holiday pay and was allowed to take up paid employment (10d per hour for house cleaning!). Father joined the Pioneer Corps and was happy to serve the Allies and have regular home leave to see his family.

By the way, the British government allowed father to anglicise his name to Edward Redcliffe. I would love to hear, via the *Journal*, from anyone who met him, either on the Isle of Man or in the Army.

(Mrs) Maria Blackburn, Newport Pagnell

THE BRITAIN WE LIVE IN

Sir – I am more than disenchanted with Bronia Snow's reaction (October) to my letter. I recall my correspondence with Lord Leonard Cheshire about 60 years ago. Referring to the concentration and extermination camps, I wrote to him: 'Surely you must have known what was going on – why

didn't you do anything about it?' He responded almost immediately: Yes, we *did* know what was going on and I would have been privileged and keen to have gone on a mission (which was planned) to bomb the outskirts of camps like Auschwitz, but the Foreign Office and Anthony Eden put a stop to any such efforts 'for political reasons'. Yes, I spent the war in camps like Plaszow, Mauthausen, St Valentine and Ebensee. Not once did we see any RAF planes above the camps.

When the Warsaw uprising broke out, the RAF was able to drop some weapons for the fighters. A bit earlier, the Warsaw ghetto uprising broke out. Szmuel Zygelboim, a Polish-Jewish MP at that time in the UK, pleaded vigorously for some help for the ghetto. None came. Out of complete frustration, Zygelboim committed suicide, leaving a letter saying: While I was alive I pleaded in speeches and writings for some help for the ghetto fighters. *Nothing* was done.

The Poles took a major part in the Battle of Britain and certainly a decisive part in breaking German secret codes (see Bletchley Park). Britain, as stated, fought bravely but why was the 'second front' started so late?

Mrs Snow views things through pink spectacles in the country in which she was lucky to find herself.

Roman Licht, London NW8

ALL CREDIT TO VALLENTINE MITCHELL

Sir – Emma Klein writes (September): 'To my surprise, the three books from Vallentine Mitchell's Library of Holocaust Testimonies were perfectly readable.' Let me assure Ms Klein that before publishing my book *German Writers in French Exile*, Vallentine Mitchell and its copy editors went to enormous trouble to ensure my text was accurate and readable. I presume it was VM's partner from the US who changed my 'City' (of London) to 'city'.

Martin Mauthner, Waterloo, Belgium

Emma Klein: I'm glad that Martin Mauthner was impressed by Vallentine Mitchell's copy-writing team and am sure they do an excellent job. My comment about the volumes I reviewed was not intended to cast aspersions on the publishers but arose from my experience of reviewing a large number of books on the Holocaust, some of which have been very poorly written. If all the books in the Library of Holocaust Testimonies are as well presented, all credit to Vallentine Mitchell.

'AWESOME' AJR TEA

Sir – I want to congratulate all AJR staff on a terrific function at the Watford Hilton. I can only begin to imagine what a colossal feat of organisation this event was and marvel at how smoothly everything went. To cope with such huge numbers and the inevitable moans there must have been (!!) was awesome. Great to see Ludwig Spiro in such good form too – his speeches are always sensational.

John Dunston, Reading

Sir – Once again we had a most wonderful Annual Tea and Concert. The choice of musical repertoire was excellent, the

violinist, pianist and singers were all first class, and we all enjoyed the lovely tea. I also appreciate the Cleve Road AJR Centre with their appetising good meals and friendly staff, as well as the musical entertainment and interesting talks at Luncheon Clubs and Kindertransport lunches. Thank you for all the hard work. The outings are also much appreciated.

Josie Dutch, London NW2

HANNELE WITHOUT SCHLAGOBERS

Sir – Believe it or not, I saw the *Hannele* Victor Ross writes about in the October issue. How we came to be asked, I don't know. I was a little boy taken by my father and we were not Schlagobers. My father was a furrier, so *Der Biberpelz* would have been a better choice! I remember how frightened I was of the noise when the door opened: I had no idea it was a vacuum cleaner. There was an old man with a beard to whom I made a bow and clicked my heels – I suppose it was Professor Freud but I can't be sure. Victor Ross has a way of writing that brings it all back to me.

Eric Clammer, London N12

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Sir – Peter Prager quotes the discredited Olmert, who has become the darling of the left, with whose support he had hoped to cling on to his position. Were future leaders to adopt the naïve logic of Inge Trott, Peter Prager *et al*, hardly a 'Jewish dog' would be spared if the Arabs ever got the upper hand. You only have to look at the areas relinquished by Israel to see how they tore down the infrastructure, preferring to brandish guns and subsist on Hamas hand-outs, courtesy of Teheran and European aid agencies.

Witness the strife prevailing in all the countries where Muslims share a land with people of another religion. What about all those non-Arab indigenous people decimated by creeping Islamisation: Copts, Berbers, Chaldeans, Maronites, Zoroastrians, Assyrian Christians and, not least, Jews, who lived in Iraq and in other places before the Arabs.

Peter Prager appears unaware of the Israeli High Court's ruling against house demolition, in spite of the bulldozer atrocities. He has also conveniently forgotten there were suicide bombings before Israel was forced to erect the security fence. He also claims that Jews for Justice for Palestinians have Israel's interests at heart. So why don't they make their voices heard about human rights abuses in Arab lands and about Iran, which blatantly denies the Holocaust and threatens another one?

But Fred Barshak's histrionic letter takes the biscuit. He claims to be a Zionist yet he has a problem with a handful of devout Jews who display a strong attachment to biblical Hebron and whom he labels 'settlers'. There was a time when such people were admired for their idealism – but all that went by the board when the far left abandoned Israel and adopted the Palestinian/Arab cause.

The Hebron community lives under siege in a small enclave, where Jews had always lived, until massacred by an Arab mob in

1929, incited by the Grand Mufti of Hitler fame. Thereafter, they had no access to the Cave of the Patriarchs until after the Six-Day War, when they returned to the homes once owned by Jews. Why should they not be allowed to live there? These dedicated people are the true Zionists of today – were it not for them, there would be no access for Jews to this holy site. And as for the army barring 'peace supporters' from visiting Hebron, they would not have done so without a court order.

The fact is that these left-wing activists regularly bus 'observers' and 'study groups' to Hebron to harass and to gawk at these families behind their iron grilles, as if they were animals in a cage. I saw it for myself and I know how I felt like reacting. And for what purpose do Messrs Barshak and Prager think these activists go there – to offer prayers at the shrine?

Rubin Katz, London NW11

Sir – Your correspondent Fred Barshak should add to the 'atrocities' committed by Israel the much more numerous atrocities practised on Israel. That would make him a more credible Zionist. As for the sad cases of Inge Trott, Miriam Margolyes, Harold Pinter, Gerald Kaufman and company, their hobby of attacking Israel at every opportunity fills me not only with anger but pity – for them.

G. J. Fisher, Bushey Heath, Herts

Sir – Re the letter by Henry Schragenheim (September), I knew a Polish family who lived in the Lvov area from which they were forcibly moved by the Ukrainians and then 'resettled' in the now Polish territory in Eastern Germany. This was done so quickly that the Germans didn't have time to take all their belongings with them!

He failed to mention the forcible total eviction of Germans from East Prussia by the Russians, with considerable casualties suffered by the Germans, and from Eastern Germany by Poland.

All this is forgotten – but the 'occupied' West Bank and the retaliation by Israeli forces, some of it with undue vigour, for the mortar, rockets and suicide attacks by the Arabs is constantly portrayed by the media here as an example of Jewish terrorism.

Some non-Jews I know talk with horror of Arab families being wiped out by Israeli raids. But they are too young to know of Eastern Germany and certainly of what went on in East Prussia – and maybe don't want to know!

Alex Lawrence, Marlow

Sir – Peter Phillips's *cri de coeur* (August) is understandable. His comments relate to a phenomenon in world Jewry, both in Israel and the diaspora, which appears to promote anti-Zionism and thus anti-Semitism in equal measure. It is difficult to explain how and why this has come about, not least because the situation in Israel and the Middle East has, historically, occurred in a complex, multilateral manner, starting with the Balfour Declaration. It would be simplistic to try to explain it simply in terms of colonialism or occupation by belligerents. The

explanation must be sought deep in the Jewish psyche, which has become accustomed for over 2,000 years to fill the role of victim rather than that of conqueror. Those in whom this paranoia manifests itself should try to analyse their motivation and, hopefully, rid themselves of what must surely be a painful experience.

Dr Emil Landes, Highgate

Sir – Recently the *AJR Journal* and *The Guardian Weekly* landed on our doormat. In the *Journal*, Peter Phillips said, more or less, that *Mail*-readers can't easily distinguish between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism (any more than between paedophiles and paediatricians) and that the most convenient course is to respect their confusion and not criticise. Frank Bright urged us not to bother arguing with *meshuggene*, i.e. Jews who espouse the Palestinian cause.

The Guardian Weekly carries an interview with Daniel Barenboim and members of his West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. Amichai Grosz, a viola player, said: 'There is Gaza, the rockets coming out of Gaza, and it shouldn't be like that. But then the way we treat the Arabs is not a solution. Everything you do will come back to you somehow'

George Schlesinger, Durham

Sir – It saddens, and annoys, me to read so many anti-Israel letters in the *AJR Journal*, although it gladdens me to read the responses by fair and balanced pro-Israel readers.

As for the so-called Palestinians, there are no such people, just as there never was such a land – only the false name given to Judea 2,000 years ago by Emperor Hadrian after he had razed Judea and its capital, Jerusalem, to the ground. Gazans are actually 99.9 per cent Egyptians who often visit their villages and families on the Egyptian side of the border. Arabs in Judea-Samaria and mid and north Israel are mainly from Syria, the Arabian desert (now Saudia), even Iraq.

Trudy Gefen, Tel Aviv

Correction

The sentence in the first paragraph of the letter by Fred Barshak in last month's issue should have read: 'Nor do I need to prove my Zionist credentials, having spent two wars in Israel by choice.'

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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Two contemporary artists who never met and whose careers were cut short by the Nazis are now honoured posthumously in a two-woman show at London's **Boundary Gallery**. **Two Berliners** is the intriguing title of this selling exhibition of works by **Margaret Marks** and **Pamina Liebert Mahrenholz**.

Marks, a Bauhaus ceramicist, founded a successful commercial pottery with her husband, exporting to Europe and the USA, but was forced to sell up in 1934 under



Hastings I mixed media 50 x 40.5 cm signed M Marks

stringent Nazi laws forbidding Jews to run factories. Nonetheless, she escaped with a collection of previously unseen works on paper and after the war she exhibited in Britain and the USA. The potter in her is revealed in soft-textured, vogueish portraits, particularly those in pencil and watercolour, which are notable for their volume. In these washy portraits, the flesh is etiolated to reveal the strength of eyes and mouth. I liked her tender watercolour *Mare and Foal* and the charcoal *Head of a Woman*, in which a squiggle suggests a veil.

While neither artist reveals her wartime experience, Marks's *Hastings I-IV* are significant. I saw a hint of the concentration camp in two charcoal drawings of this English resort. The pier resembles barbed wire and the obelisk changing huts give the sense of a watchtower. The accident in art? Who knows whether Hastings, with its famed battle, evoked something closer to home.

Mahrenholz turned to sculpture by chance after a small wood carving of her nephew impressed a successful sculptor, who offered the use of his studio. Awarded the Prix de Rome for her work, she was prevented by

Nazi opposition from receiving it and she reached Britain in 1939. Although she gave up sculpture for a time in favour of abstract painting, the oils and acrylics on show suggest three-dimensional cubist forms, with a strong sense of movement. *Amadeus String Quartet No 1* and its accompanying *Sketch for Amadeus* are semi-abstract works in which you can sense the sawing motion of violins. Of the two artists, Mahrenholz appears the more vibrant and experimental. Her colours are luminous and viridescent: the yellows and reds ripple with sunlight, almost evoking Gauguin. But these contrast with the more sombre mood of the two self-portraits, which tell the story of survival in hard times.

Visitors to the Doric splendour of **Tate Britain** must dodge **Martin Creed**'s Olympic runners to reach the **Francis Bacon** exhibition – which perfectly illustrates art on the move. Bacon's portraits convey the passing moments that illuminate every face with the bitter continuum of life. The artist once told an interviewer that he thought his paintings were horrible – 'But then, you only have to think of the meat on your plate.'

It's true that among 65 works in the first UK retrospective since 1985, only his singular portrait of William Blake – a comparable spirit of gloom – might find a place on your lounge wall. But in the homophobic 1950s, Bacon was vilified for his homosexuality and his male figures are chunky beings hiding their features and their terrible strength from the world, lurking, Quasimodo-like, in dark corners.

Man as meat, nature red in tooth and claw, power itself screaming in terror – this is the vocabulary of Bacon's art. He expresses it in several portraits of Pope Innocent X, inspired by **Velasquez**. Clothed in purple or seated in a gilded chair, the See of Rome becomes in all his papal splendour a caged animal shrieking out his pain, his inability through want or magic, to cure man's inhumanity to man. He and other subjects are often enclosed in boxes or glimpsed through vertical slashes as Bacon experiments with the tensions of space.

Art Notes continued on page 10

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**CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE**

REVIEWS

A mine of information

OUT OF AUSTRIA: THE AUSTRIAN CENTRE IN LONDON IN WORLD WAR II by Marietta Bearman, Charmian Brinson, Richard Dove, Anthony Grenville, Jennifer Taylor
London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008, 270 pp. hardcover

In March 1939 the Austrian Centre was opened in London as a charitable organisation under its first president, Sigmund Freud. In this book, five well-known experts have given us a comprehensive overview of the Centre's activities during the seven or so years of its existence.

Led by people who had played their part in Austria's political life (and had brought their internecine rivalries with them), the Austrian Centre appears to have been the most active of several organisations within the Austrian émigré community. Its mission spread in three directions. First was its support for individuals, ranging from financial help to obtaining work permits and monitoring, and sometimes intervening in, the excesses of internment and deportations. Second was its organisation of social events such as tea afternoons to instill in them the *Gemütlichkeit* left behind. Social activities were also directed towards the British public, with whom the émigrés wished to share their cultural heritage, giving back something to those whose generous hospitality had provided them with shelter. Among the audience were Stefan Zweig, Robert Neumann, H. G. Wells and J. B. Priestly. The numerous references to the Centre in the British press confirm that these events were highly successful.

The third element of the Centre's mission, and perhaps foremost on its agenda, was the political dimension – striving for recognition by the British that the Austrians were not Germans and that they loathed their German neighbours, especially when the latter appeared in Nazi clothing. To this end numerous concerts were arranged in which Austrian artists presented Austrian composers. An Austrian musicians' society was established and it was commented that London was becoming *Mahler bewusst* (Mahler-conscious). The most well-known Austrian émigré in the music world was, of course, Richard Tauber. Plays by Austrian playwrights were performed and Austrian poetry was read to bilingual audiences.

Well versed in political activism, the Centre's founding fathers knew how to set up local groups to further their ends and how and whom to lobby. Their

contacts were instrumental in raising many, often awkward questions in the British Parliament: notes and reports in *Hansard* show that emissaries from the Centre had acquired 'nuisance value'. Whitehall and especially the Foreign Office viewed them with thinly veiled suspicion as Communist activists – which many were. In fact, the political stances of the leaders and patrons (from Social Democrats to Monarchists) often made for heated debates.

At the heart of the Communists' efforts was perseverance and, while they had to lie low at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact, portraying the war as a class struggle rather than a conflict between nations, they were able to raise their head again after the German invasion of Russia.

Together with other organisations the Centre formed the Free Austria Movement (FAM), which took on worldwide dimensions. Their slogan was to free Austria from the German invader: Austrian youth was enjoined to enlist in the British Army, which by 1943 had become possible. But representations to the War Office to sanction the establishment of an Austrian corps similar to the Czech and Polish Fighting Units fell on deaf ears, as did the suggestion to separate Austrian PoWs from German ones.

The October 1943 tripartite Moscow Declaration as good as revoked Britain's recognition of the Anschluss and the Centre's and the FAM's publications came to emphasise the Austrians' revulsion towards their Nazi oppressors during the war years. This was not at all what Austrian Jews had experienced at the hands of their erstwhile compatriots when these jubilantly welcomed the arrival of German soldiers in March 1938. Austria, the message ran, had been overrun by the detested Germans and was the first country to fall victim to Hitler's conquest of Europe. This was rewriting the facts in the opinion of the majority of the refugees, 90 per cent of whom were Jews.

At the end of the war Austrians were exhorted to throw their weight behind the Allies in order to gain their support for establishing an independent democratic Austria. With the end of the war in sight, the question of whether to return or not also came to the fore. Many leaders of Young Austria had been trained as teachers and educators, and several of the Centre's activists attempted an early return to Austria once hostilities had ceased, attempts the British authorities often delayed.

What the returnees found on their return was seldom what they had expected. The much publicised 'resistance' had been minimal and the liberation of Vienna by the Red Army, hailed in

London as a moment of great joy, had been nothing of the sort. While returning PoWs were welcomed home with relief and jubilation, returning émigrés often found life frustrating. Their absence had scarcely been noted and, in the first parliamentary elections, the Communists obtained hardly any seats. Great strides had been made in London during the war years on the social, cultural and political levels, yet, as one of the Austrian Centre's functionaries put it, 'the expectations for our return were probably too optimistic.'

Each contributor to this book presents a detailed account of what was achieved socially, financially, culturally, politically and in post-war planning. The book is a mine of information for the scholar of the history of Austria in exile. The lay reader, too, will recognise much that will bring back memories of his or her early years in this country.

Walter E. Goddard

FILM

From book to film THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS

directed by Mark Herman
with David Thewlis, Vera Farmiga,
Asa Butterfield, Jack Scanlon
at selected cinemas

When I reviewed John Boyne's haunting novel in the February issue of this magazine, I was struck by the strangeness of finding a book on the Holocaust by a non-Jewish author with a young German boy as its protagonist. And, enormously moved by the book, I wondered how such an essentially subtle work could translate into the graphic medium of film.

In the film, an opening sequence juxtaposing the brutal shunting of Jewish Berliners into trucks with the luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by the elite of the Reich, with just a fence in between, sets the tone for what is to come. A young boy, happily playing with friends in the street, is next spotted at a stylish party celebrating the promotion of one of the Reich's leading officials. The boy is Bruno, our protagonist, and it is his father who has been promoted. Two discordant voices disrupt the revelry. Bruno is dismayed that he will be leaving Berlin and his friends, and an elderly woman is heard to utter reproachfully 'That a son of mine ...!'

Her son, the high-ranking official, was, in the book, to become the commandant at Auschwitz, the name memorably captured by Bruno as 'Out With'. The film, however, features an unnamed camp. Similarly, Hitler, who appeared in the book and was described by Bruno as 'the Fury',

is notably absent in the film.

Reactions to the family's new situation are effectively conveyed. Bruno's father (David Thewlis) appears to accept his role in relation to his 'sub-human' captives. His facial expressions, however, sometimes suggest that being a mass murderer may involve some internal struggle. Bruno's mother, beautifully played by Vera Farmiga, is distressed that the camp is in such close proximity to their home. And her horrified reaction when she hears an off-hand remark by the sadistic Lieutenant Kotler, one of her husband's staff, as to the source of the fetid smell emerging from the smoke above the camp implies that she is ignorant of its true purpose. This scene is one of the most powerful set-pieces in the film.

That eight-year-old Bruno is also ignorant is less surprising. And when, contrary to his mother's instructions, he 'explores' the territory behind the family home and approaches a barbed-wire fence, where he meets Shmuel, 'the boy in the striped pyjamas', the film, like the book, finds its core: the deep friendship which develops between the two boys.

Asa Butterfield as Bruno and Jack Scanlon as Shmuel can hardly be faulted. Both are superb in another set-piece scene in which Bruno betrays Shmuel in the presence of the hated Lieutenant Kotler and in the devastating final episode, which the very graphic nature of film conveys with a particular explicitness.

What the film fails to convey – although this may have been director Mark Herman's intention – is the impression of a gradual build-up which permeates the book and gives greater impact to the boys' relationship and the events surrounding it. And while English is, of course, the language of the book, it is slightly disconcerting in the film. It may have seemed more 'authentic' in German, with subtitles – and this from a non-German speaker!

Emma Klein



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Supping with the Devil: Auschwitz, Kasztner and Samu Stern

I have long intended to correct some of the information contained in writings about what happened in Hungary in 1944 following the German occupation on 19 March. Recent correspondence in the AJR Journal makes this even more essential.

In the spring and summer of 1944, I worked as a 15-year-old in the Judenrat offices in Budapest's Sip utca as a messenger boy. My mother, Friederike Konrad, previously chief proof-reader with the Pester Lloyd German-language newspaper, was employed as interpreter in these offices.

One day in April I was sitting in my usual position on a bench opposite the door to the office of the head of the Judenrat, Samu Stern, when I became aware of a commotion in the building. Eventually, two young men were shepherded into Stern's office, where they remained for a while before being whisked away to safety. Some time later, Eichmann arrived with one of his

fellow officers, perhaps Krumei or Wisliceny. They entered Stern's office and soon my mother was called in to interpret. After about an hour the German officers left and a little later my mother came out, tears streaming from her eyes. I asked her what was the matter, but all she replied was: 'I can't tell you!'

In the evening, at home, I kept asking her. In the end she told me the then unbelievable story of the existence of Auschwitz and the gas chambers, adding: 'We are all destined to die there.' Apparently, Samu Stern had confronted the German officers with the information received from the two young men, who were either escapees from Auschwitz or their emissaries sent to Budapest. Eichmann denied everything. Deportations from Hungary had not yet begun.

After the German officers left, Samu Stern made the decision in a hurried meeting not to make public the information received and

everyone present was sworn to secrecy. This decision was made to 'avoid a panicky reaction'.

It was after these events that Kasztner started to negotiate free passage first for one train, then for a second train, to take wealthy Jews to safe Switzerland. My mother tried desperately to get seats for at least me and my sister Angela (later killed in Belsen) if not for herself, but she did not have the necessary funds and was rejected again and again.

In my view, the main responsibility for the meek way in which the Jews allowed themselves to be deported to Auschwitz lies with Samu Stern and his policy of 'appeasement'. Had we all known our planned fate, there would have been resistance. This might have killed many of us, but it could eventually have led to a halt of the deportations to save German casualties.

Thomas Edmund Konrad

ART NOTES

cont. from page 8

Bacon's transcendental view of mankind is bleak, broken by the Second World War, stripped of the gloss of faith. Bacon the atheist sees little difference between man and animal and the view he presents is shocking and repugnant, but one that touches in its daring.

In the 1950s, the violence of his affair with Peter Lacy and the seeping menace of the Cold War are encapsulated in his *Man in Blue* series, in which a dark-suited male figure is isolated in a social or business setting, leaning forward on the point of utterance. In an erotic painting of two figures in the long grass, the couple are a blob but the long grass is alive and potent.

The *Crucifixion* series explores the nature of brutality and fear and later his paint becomes a thicker impasto. His famous triptych of the suicide of his lover, George Dyer, two days before Bacon's major exhibition in the Grand Palais in Paris, is hideously compelling in its veracity. In its power and tragic energy, it stands on the brink of his centenary as Bacon's own supreme epitaph.

R. O. Lenkiewicz (at the Ben Uri) is a figurative artist who paints out of his time and, though he is talented, his work is often garish, his colours vulgar. The son of a German baroness and a Polish horse-breeder who escaped the Nazis to run a Jewish hotel in Cricklewood, north-west London, Lenkiewicz painted the waifs and strays of society and became obsessed with the themes of love, sex and death. It is an excessively gestural art, much of it self-portraiture, in which he comes to resemble Rasputin, with a flowing mane of white hair.

Another perspective on Venice

I read Anthony Grenville's article 'Three Perspectives on Venice' (September) with much interest. In the article, he discusses the particularly negative associations Venice has had for Jews, due largely to their awareness of its ghetto and of the text of *The Merchant of Venice*. In the play, Shylock says to Antonio: 'You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, and spit upon my Jewish gaberdine' and Gratiano curses Shylock with 'O, be thou damn'd inexecutable dog - thy desires are wolfish, bloody, starv'd, and ravenous.' However, when Shakespeare was writing the play, Antonio and Gratiano's anti-Semitism was far from typical of Venice, as Jews were - by the standards of the time - remarkably at ease there. According to Cecil Roth's *History of the Jews of Italy*, and more recent sources, anti-Semitism was then far less prevalent in Venice than in the rest of Italy. Popular anti-Semitic attacks were unknown and Simone Luzzato, a contemporary merchant and rabbi, described the common people as 'friendly and sociable'.

This benign atmosphere was mainly a result of Venice's semi-detachment from the Catholic Church, then the main source of anti-Jewish prejudice. Henry Wotton, the English ambassador to the Venetian Republic in the earlier part of the seventeenth century, wrote that Venice had 'almost slipped into a neutrality of religion' and a local saying went 'We respect St Mark a lot, God quite a lot and the Pope little if at all.'

Of course, there were attempts to whip up anti-Semitism. Christian merchants accused Jewish competitors of cheating the poor and forcing their sexual attentions on their womenfolk. The Patriarch, Venice's top cleric, claimed they stole Christian babies and (foreshadowing the Nuremberg laws) wanted to stop Jewish physicians attending to Christian patients, but he was largely ignored and there were other indications that Jews were treated relatively fairly. For ex-

ample, Jewish students had easier access to the Venetian Republic's academic power house, the University of Padua, than to any other European university. Also, the baptism of Jewish children without their parents' permission was forbidden, unlike elsewhere in Italy, where this could still occur well into the nineteenth century (as in the notorious Mortara case).

Although Jews had to return to the tiny ghetto island every night and, in common with other foreigners, were restricted as to occupation and dress, they mixed freely with Christians during the day. They often frequented theatres outside the ghetto and Jewish musicians and actors were popular performers at carnival time. Jews even visited the parlours of convents and monasteries and Christians visited synagogues at Simchat Torah to see the decorations. The authorities tried to prevent the latter from attending the Purim plays in the ghetto but were ignored and eventually gave up. Rabbis enjoyed high prestige and Christians and Jews attended each other's sermons.

The eccentric English traveller Thomas Coryat described a visit to the ghetto in 1608 in his entertaining book *Coryat's Crudities hastily gobbled up in five Moneths travels in France, Savoy, Italy* He was fascinated possibly because there were then no openly practising Jews in England. To his surprise, Venetian Jews behaved less soberly in synagogue than did English Protestants in church. He noted their prosperity and thought some of the men 'elegant and sweet featured persons, which gave me occasion the more to lament their religion', while many of the women were as 'beautiful as ever I saw, and so gorgeous in their apparel, chaines of gold, and rings adorned with precious stones that some of our English Countesses do scarce exceed them.'

When Coryat met a rabbi who spoke

continued opposite

MY SHOTGUN WEDDINGS

For a boy from my background – Viennese bourgeoisie, religion equated with superstition, divinity manifest in the arts – I was surprisingly familiar with guns. My father had a small-bore rifle (*sans* ammunition) with which he allowed me to play, I had a Diana air gun given to me as a bribe to stop biting my nails. My best friend had a rich father (Heller, the bonbon king) with his own hunting estate not far from Vienna. His son, the complete aesthete even at 12, did not have the killer touch, so I was taken as a substitute companion on hunting expeditions, and became addicted to the thrill of stalking deer at dawn or in scary twilight when strange shapes materialised and dissolved among the trees and the crack of a breaking twig would make my heart skip a beat.

The first thing I learned on arrival in England was that what I called hunting was known as shooting – hunting was done to hounds; the hunters dressed in red coats (referred to as pink to confuse foreigners like me). Shooting was mostly done with shotguns, which I had never handled. I didn't have long to wait. My mother, who started her refugee existence as a charwoman in her

Another perspective on Venice cont.

Latin, he launched into an increasingly heated attempt to persuade him that Protestant Christianity was superior to Judaism and had to be rescued from the furious bystanders. For seventeenth-century Jews to stand up to a Christian, physically as well as in argument, suggests they were more confident than the usual ghetto stereotype.

The rabbi with whom Coryat argued is thought to have been the multi-talented Leone Modena, teacher, preacher, *hasan*, *shadkhan*, poet, playwright, publisher, alchemist, linguist, compulsive gambler and *schnorrer*. The free social intercourse then possible between Jews and non-Jews in Venice is indicated by Modena's membership of a group of radical intellectuals who lived near the ghetto and often met for learned discussions. They included Henry Wotton, William Bedell, his chaplain, and the brilliant Paolo Sarpi, monk, polymath and secret atheist.

The period from the end of the sixteenth to the early-seventeenth century was a good time for the Jews of Venice, but this did not last. In 1636-37 a scandal erupted when two Jews, arrested for receiving stolen goods, tried to save themselves by accusing others of serious crimes. Accusations snowballed and many Jews were banished from the city. In the eighteenth century, Venetian Jews were forbidden to own property, employ Christians or compete with them commercially. By the time Napoleon arrived in 1797, they were mainly scraping a living as rag-and-bone men or in similar menial trades.

Gerald Curzon

cousin's boarding house, shipped me off to a Quaker family for my first English holiday and my first taste of English country life. My hosts were a special breed of Quakers, full of the goodness of their convictions but devoted to field sports, both hunting and shooting. A day without chasing some animal was a day misspent. I gave hunting a miss. The horses didn't look as welcoming of Jewish boys as the daughter of the house. I succumbed to the double seduction of her

I had the good fortune to meet a high-born young lady, the Hon. Lavinia S., just when I was at my most eagerly English – demobbed as an officer of field rank, ready to make my splash in society. In the course of some very agreeable mutual exploration, she asked me where I hunted. When I confessed that I could tell the front of a horse from its backside only in good light, she changed gear to neutral and I was out.

company but also to the solitary pleasure of going out with a gun and a dog, walking up my own small game – rabbits, pheasants, hares – and learning to hit a moving target, so different from the static firing of a rifle at a stag hundreds of metres away.

During the war I learned to handle an assortment of weapons but fired few in anger. In Burma I killed more jungle fowl for the pot than Japanese. After the war, the sporting side of shooting came to the fore once more, but not before a disastrous failure in the hunting field. I had the good fortune to meet a high-born young lady, the Hon. Lavinia S., just when I was at my most eagerly English – demobbed as an officer of field rank, ready to make my splash in society. In the course of some very agreeable mutual exploration, she asked me where I hunted. When I confessed that I could tell the front of a horse from its backside only in good light, she changed gear to neutral and I was out. Soon afterwards I read in the *Tatler* that she had come to the rescue of a faller in the hunting field who turned out to be the Duke of Norfolk. One thing appeared to have led to another, the other being marriage to the premier duke of the realm. I should have learned to ride. I might have been a duke today, lording it over Claus Moser or peering at a distant Weidenfeld. Or doesn't it work that way round?

Still, the perfume of romance also lurks in the acrid smell of spent cartridges. My next conquest was a young woman whose father farmed 4,000 acres in Northamptonshire. He was a man of strong principles, one of which was never to take a drink before breakfast. This caused him to rise early, cook his own porridge in a house full of servants, and go back to bed with a good conscience and a bottle of whisky. I never saw him drunk. My friendship with his daughter Fiona grew in London but blossomed at the weekend when I was a regular guest in her parents' house. This was country life on the grand scale with a lot of nocturnal tip-toeing along unheated corridors and a daytime equally seductive, one's social life revolving mainly around shooting and fishing. The girlfriend was a much better shot than I, having done it all her life, but she was more tolerant of my shortcomings than the future duchess. There were dinner parties and picnics; the one thing lacking was conversation. I think this made me a welcome diversion – except in the eyes of Fiona's brother, who saw me as a Continental fortune hunter. When it was my host's turn to return hospitality received from his neighbour, the Duke of Gloucester (sorry about bringing up another duke), I was not only included in the party but put next to the Duke as an interesting specimen of foreign fauna. We stood in line while the beaters did their thing and the pheasants whirled past in front of us. I tried to engage Gloucester in conversation, but it was hardgoing. When he threw out his upper-class monosyllables and a pheasant approached, he'd briefly look up, bang, down came the bird, and he would continue his sentence without missing a beat. Once, he let a bird pass and shouted 'Yours!' I winged it sufficiently to cause a forced landing. 'Good shot!', said the Duke without irony, displaying the only manners he had ever acquired.

My romance got derailed when I discovered that I fancied mother more than daughter. Not that mama gave me any encouragement, but she may have felt some slight stirrings too for, in a gesture of abandon, she showed me poems she had written, calling them (perhaps revealingly) her 'secret vice'. Unfortunately they were the worst kind of Christmas card rhymes and I advised that she continue to cherish them as her guilty secret. Mother was not flattered, girlfriend began to smell a rat, and brother thought it was time the cuckoo was expelled from the nest. The weekends petered out and the Duke of Gloucester never asked me to any of his shoots.

Victor Ross

INSIDE the AJR

Pinner: Holocaust remembrance and education

George Vulkan in the chair and guest speakers Hermann Hirschberger and Freddie Knoller led a discussion on how to ensure the Holocaust is not just a date in the history books. The Wiener Library provides a superb record and memorials and museums are impressive, but the impact on future audiences may be more immediate using a live speaker. What should be done now to train second- or third-generation survivors or non-Jewish speakers to educate youngsters to help avoid a repeat of such a dark past?

Walter Weg

Next meeting: 6 Nov. Robin Wolff, 'Them and Us: Local Interfaith Dialogue'

Bradford: New members still being found

A very well attended meeting and, again, a very lively discussion. After so many meetings we have enjoyed, there are still a lot of new stories and reminiscences. Amazingly, Susanne is still finding new members!

Albert Waxman

Next meeting: 6 Nov: Outing to Salts Mills (World Heritage Site); 10 Dec. Chanukah Party

Ilford: *Gigi* in the park

We enjoyed seeing Topol in *Gigi* at the Open Air Theatre in Regents Park. A wonderful performance, compensating for our disappointment when rain stopped the performance in August. On this occasion, the sun came out and a great afternoon was had by all.

Meta Roseneil

War Veterans' gathering

A distinguished gathering of War Veterans – including an artist, two poets, an architect and a lord – met at the Cafe Imperial in Golders Green. Helen Fry delighted those present with news of her new book *Music and Men*, on the musician Harriet Cohen.

Esther Rinkoff

Bristol and Bath:

'Jews since Roman times'

An excellent lunch provided by our hosts Mr and Mrs Balint-Kurt was followed by a short talk by Susannah Alexander of the Jewish Museum. Nineteen of us, including two second-generation members, were surprised to learn that the first blood libels took place not in Continental Europe but in thirteenth-century England.

David Kernek

Brighton & Hove:

'Travels in South America'

Mike and Heather Brayshall showed a film of their visit to Argentina: spectacular shots of flora and fauna; a family wedding and tango; a visit to the grave of Eva Peron;

glaciers of the Andes; and the majestic waterfalls on the border of Paraguay.

Ceska Abrahams

Next meeting: 17 Nov. Esther Rinkoff, 'Israel Revisited'

Weald of Kent: Anne Frank Trust

Ross White gave a very interesting talk on the Anne Frank Trust. Their work in prisons and schools helps in conflict resolution, bullying, hate crime and racism and engenders respect for others. At our meeting, it engendered a lively discussion.

Inge Ball

Edgware/Temple Fortune:

Outing to Kew Gardens

Expertly guided by Judy Lawson, we were shown the Palm House, the Waterlily House and the Princess of Wales Conservatory, finishing up at the Orangery for lunch. Later we walked up to and up the new tree walkway. As always, we were well looked after by Hazel Beiny and Esther Rinkoff.

Edgar H. Ring

Radlett: 'Who do you think you are?'

Alice Josephs gave a well illustrated talk on how to trace one's family history. Many people, she stressed, found this a very involving and satisfying activity. Once again, a very interesting and enjoyable meeting.

Fritz Starer

Next meeting: 19 Nov. Helen Fry, 'Refugees in Uniform'

Edgware: Jewish opera singers

Alan Bilgora gave a most interesting demonstration of some of the many famous Jewish opera singers, mostly of yesteryear. The meeting was hosted by Esther Rinkoff.

Edgar H. Ring

Next meeting: 18 Nov. Eve Pollard, 'Jackie Onassis'

HGS: History of the Ben Uri

A short history of the Ben Uri Gallery was given by their Suzanne Lewis. She also described attempts to recover the pre-war art collection of Galerie Stern, Düsseldorf. It is a lamentable story of procrastination by individuals and institutions seeking to prevent the restitution of treasures stolen by the Nazis.

Laszlo Roman

Next meeting: 10 Nov. Bea Klug, 'Life and Times'

Ilford: 'Court Jews'

Dr Fred Rosner gave a brief history of 'court Jews', mentioning, among others, Josephus in Roman times, and, in modern times, Lord Levy. Leon Feuchtwanger's book *Jud Süß* provides interesting insight into this fascinating subject.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: 5 Nov. Revital Shloman, 'Israel-Related Topics'

Essex: Kitchener Camp

Clare Ungerson gave an excellent talk on Kitchener Camp, also known as Hague Camp, in Sandwich. It was built during the First World War to hold 45,000 men. During the Second World War people were trained there for future professions and further emigration.

Ken Ward

Next meeting: 11 Nov. Anne Frank Trust

'The Journey'



Leo, a fictional Jewish child who is sent as a Kindertransportee

A group of mainly Northern members was given a guided tour of *The Journey: Children of the Holocaust*, an excellent new exhibition aimed at younger visitors and sponsored by the AJR at Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, Laxton. It proved a most interesting, and sometimes very moving, day. The gardens provided a welcome respite – and the weather was kind.

Barbara Dresner Dorrity

Newcastle upon Tyne:

Briefing on visit to Yad Vashem

Our speaker was the Reverend James Breslin of the United Reform Church who is also Vice-Chairman of the Newcastle Council of Christians and Jews. He gave a most interesting talk about his visit to Yad Vashem as a member of a group of Christian clergy.

Kurt Schapira

Next meeting: 14 Dec. Pre-Chanukah Party

Cleve Road: 'From Broom Cupboard to Bush House'

Stewart Macintosh had always wanted to be a radio announcer and, before he was old enough to go to school, he made himself a 'studio' in the broom cupboard at his home. After ten years as a telephone engineer, he began to work for the BBC. Since 1994 he has been employed by the BBC World Service.

David Lang

Next meeting: 25 Nov. 2nd Anniversary Celebration

Wessex: The 'Kasztner affair'

We heard an unforgettable report from Professor Ladislaus Löb. Less than 11 years old, he was on a train to Auschwitz which was diverted to Bergen-Belsen. In December 1944, in an agreement between Hungarian-Jewish leader Rezső Kasztner and the Nazis, he and a number of Hungarian Jews were brought to Lake Konstanz and were then able to cross into Switzerland. To this day, there is controversy over how this group of Hungarian Jews survived.

George Ettinger

Hendon outing to Wiener Library

On a visit to the Wiener Library, we were shown a slide presentation on the library's activities and given a guided tour by its archivist, Howard Falksohn. Mirjam Finkelstein, the daughter of Alfred Wiener and one of our members, was among our group.

Bernhard Steinberg

Next meeting: 24 Nov. Maurice Collins, 'Amazing Memorabilia'

Temple Fortune: Kitchener Camp

Our guest speaker, Clare Ungerson, spoke about her research into the history of Kitchener Camp. It was built for the Army during WWI but became derelict between the wars. After Kristallnacht the Central British Fund took it over as a training camp for male Jewish refugees from Austria and Germany. At its peak it housed 4,000 men. Because of the threat of invasion the camp was closed in 1940.

David Lang

Next meeting: 20 Nov. Walter Woyda, 'The Rothschilds - A Musical'

North London: 'Jewish Topics'

Rabbi Charles Emanuel explained the significance of Apple and Honey and spoke about the wider aspects of life. A most enjoyable gathering. *Herbert Haberberg*

Next meeting: 27 Nov. Helen Bamber OBE, 'Survival of the Next Generation'

Welwyn GC: 'The Jews of Shanghai'

Kurt Wick, who with his family fled Vienna in 1939 to Shanghai, enthralled his audience of 22 people with a description of how Jewish and Viennese life endured there in the ghetto despite the overcrowding, the heat, the cold and the poverty.

Marianne Lindford

Next meeting: 25 Nov. Susannah Alexander, 'Jews in England since Roman Times'

Hull CF animated discussion

We had an animated discussion about our various holidays and other AJR events over the summer months. A most enjoyable afternoon - we could have gone on talking for hours.

Olive Rosner

Next meeting: 1 February 2009

AJR GROUP CONTACTS**Bradford Continental Friends**

Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)

Fausta Shelton 01273 734 648

Bristol/Bath

Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

Cambridge

Anne Bender 01223 276 999

Cardiff

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Dundee

Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

East Midlands (Nottingham)

Bob Norton 01159 212 494

Edgware

Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

Edinburgh

Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

Essex (Westcliff)

Larry Lisner 01702 300812

Glasgow

Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

Harrogate

Inge Little 01423 886254

Hendon

Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

Hertfordshire

Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

HGS

Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

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Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Ilford

Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Leeds HSFA

Trude Silman 0113 2251628

PAUL BALINT AJR CENTRE

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South London: Anne Frank Trust

Ross White told us what happened to Anne and her family after Anne's final diary entry. We were also impressed to learn of the Trust's work in schools and prisons.

Jackie Cronheim

Next meeting: 20 Nov. Celebrating 14 years, entertainment with Naomi Hyamson

Wembley CF Get-together

Another pleasant afternoon of conversation and refreshments. Julia updated us on the Brent Oral History Project, while Paul described some of his experiences.

Myrna Glass

Next meeting: 12 Nov. Social Get-together

OTHER MEETINGS IN NOVEMBER

3 Nov Bromley CF

4 Nov Oxford Alan Bilgora, 'Jewish Opera Singers'

4 Nov Birmingham-West Midlands Gerald Abrahams plays the ukulele

10 Nov Cardiff Lunch and speaker

11 Nov Surrey Coffee morning at home of Edmée Barta

17 Nov Norfolk Lunchtime Get-together/discussion

19 Nov East Midlands-Nottingham Lunchtime Get-together at the Nortons

Liverpool

Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Manchester

Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle

Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

Norfolk (Norwich)

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

North London

Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

Oxford

Susie Bates 01235 526 702

Pinner (HA Postal District)

Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

Radlett

Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Sheffield

Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

South London

Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

South West Midlands (Worcester area)

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

Surrey

Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

Temple Fortune

Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Weald of Kent

Max and Jane Dickson

01892 541026

Wembley

Laura Levy 020 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 19 November 2008

Monica Bohm-Duchen

'Why Refugees Settled in the London NW3 Area'

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 3 November 2008

Allon Reich

'Being a Film Producer'

**KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH
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Reservations required

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Monday, Wednesday & Thursday
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**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS
CLOSED ON TUESDAYS**

November Afternoon entertainment

Mon	3	KT Lunch - Kards & Games Klub
Tue	4	CLOSED
Wed	5	Jack Davidoff
Thur	6	KRISTALLNACHT SERVICE
Mon	10	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	11	CLOSED
Wed	12	Mark Rosen
Thur	13	Geoffrey Strum
Mon	17	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	18	CLOSED
Wed	19	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	20	Nat Paris
Mon	24	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	25	CLOSED
Wed	26	David Peace
Thur	27	Paul Coleman

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

Members requiring benefit advice please telephone Linda Kasir 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

Birthday

A Very Happy 85th Birthday to Lothar Weiss. Henry Kuttner

Deaths

Hollander, Paul. Dad had an amazing life. He met Pierre and Marie Curie; was standard bearer and fundraiser for AJEX; was the first head of fundraising for Jewish Child's Day; fought in the Foreign Legion and Pioneer Corps in North Africa; and was an active member of Belsize Square synagogue. Mark Hollander

Jacobowicz, Pearl, also known as Piri. Born 25 June 1925 in Czechoslovakia, died 31 August 2008 in London, the only survivor of a large Hungarian family. She spent some time in various camps, including Belsen, then came to the UK. She had a wonderful affinity with children and will be remembered with affection by friends and past customers and staff at Waitrose, Finchley Road.

PAUL BALINT AJR CENTRE

Pamela Bloch Clothes sale, separates etc. Thursday 13 November, 9.30-11.45 am

Rev Leslie Hardman

The AJR is deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Rev Leslie Hardman and sends its sincerest condolences to his family. Like many AJR members, Rev Leslie Hardman was a witness to the Nazis' inhumanity. As well as carrying out his duties as a Chaplain in the British Army that liberated the Belsen concentration camp, he will always be remembered and honoured for continuing to speak about his experiences at Belsen, which had a profound effect on his life.

Andrew Kaufman
AJR Chairman

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FOREIGN OFFICE MEMORIAL

At the initiative of Sir Sigmund Sternberg, a sculpture commemorating the endeavours of British officials who helped save lives during the Holocaust will be unveiled at the Foreign Office on 13 November. If you – or someone you know – escaped Nazi-occupied Europe through the heroic actions of a British official and you would be interested in attending this reception, please contact the office of Sir Sigmund on 020 7485 2538.

Mitzvah Day UK

Sunday 16 November
1.30 to 5.30 pm

at Hampstead Town Hall,
Haverstock Hill, London NW8

We will be participating in a project with the Jewish Community Centre and the Separated Child Foundation creating welcome packs for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who arrive from Darfur in Britain without any basic essentials.

If you would like to volunteer,
please contact Carol Hart
on 020 8385 3083

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KINDERTRANSPORT 70TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION ELY EVACUEES

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

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

Liberal Judaism with
the Association of Jewish Refugees
would like to invite you to a special service
to commemorate the 70th anniversary of

KRISTALLNACHT

on Sunday 9 November 2008
at 5.00 pm

at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue
28 St John's Wood Road, London NW8

The service will include special readings and music sung by a combined choir of voices from Liberal Judaism synagogues under the baton of Cathy Heller-Jones, Director of Music at the LJS

RSVP Alice Morgan
a.morgan@ljs.org – tel 020 7432 1283
or kristallnacht70@googlemail.com

2009 TRIP TO ISRAEL

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OBITUARIES

Karl Wolfgang Plessner

KW. Plessner, known to us as Tony, was a member of the AJR's Norfolk group from its inception.

He was born in Breslau in February 1923 and came to England in early 1939, not on a Kindertransport but as a result of a private initiative. In early 1939 the governors of Bury Grammar School, on whose board the University of Manchester was represented, invited parents to provide homes for those desperate to leave Germany as their gesture against the persecution of Jews. In Tony's case, the family of a local GP, Dr Maxwell, offered him a home and were helpful to his parents, Max and Lotte, when they were stranded in England by the outbreak of the war on their way to Chile.

Tony studied science in the sixth form, passed the Higher School Certificate with very good grades, and won an open scholarship to Manchester University, where he studied electrical engineering. He was refused the necessary 'town grant' by Bury Town Council because he was 'not eligible' despite his academic achievements. The board of governors of Bury Grammar School awarded him a bursary for three years from



their own funds.

In 1946, while still at Manchester University, Tony married Carla Nagelschmidt from Berlin. They had two daughters: Jane, born in 1952, and Susan, born in 1953. Tony went up to Imperial College, London, where he was awarded a PhD in 1947. For most of his professional life he worked for BICC (now part of Balfour Beatty) on the development of optical fibres, which led to applications in medicine and internet cables, and on low temperature conductivity.

Tony's many talents were not confined to science. He played the piano all his life and, on retirement in Aldeburgh in Suffolk, took up the cello, eventually joining the Woodbridge Orchestra. He attended pottery classes, where he built a kiln and acquired a potter's wheel, an interest he shared with his wife, who died after 37 years of marriage. Tony also grew flowers, vegetables and fruit.

Later in life he remarried and enjoyed an extended family of step-children and grandchildren.

Tony's life was prematurely and abruptly ended by a carelessly opened car door, which threw him off his bicycle, causing a severe head injury. We shall certainly remember and miss him.

Frank Bright

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY — NOVEMBER

Mon 3 Gerald Holm 'Karajan 100' Club 43

Wed 5 Prof Anthony Julius 'Blood Libels' Lecture Theatre B34, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1, 7.00 pm. Tel Wiener Library on 020 7636 7247

Thur 6 Helmut Konrad 'Righteous and Courageous in the Face of Nazism: Austrian Resistance to the Nazi Regime – Myths and Realities' Wiener Library, 7.00 pm, tel 020 7636 7247

Mon 10 Dr Steven Kern 'Refugees from Nazi Germany or Dangerous Enemy Aliens? How Misplaced Were the British Government's Suspicions?' Club 43

Tues 11-Wed 12 'Stumbling Stone' (Stolperstein) Directed by Dörte Franke. Jewish Film Festival. At Goethe-Institut (tel 020 7596 4000) on 11 Nov, 7.30 pm; at Odeon Swiss Cottage (tel 0871 22 44 007) on 12 Nov, 7.00 pm. Sponsored by AJR in association with Goethe-Institut London

Thur 13 Susannah Heschel 'The Aryan Jesus: Christians, Nazis and the Bible' Leo Baeck Institute, 7.00 pm. Tel 020 7580 3493

Mon 17 'Stealing Klimt' Directed by Jane Chablani. Jewish Film Festival. At Odeon Swiss Cottage (tel 0871 22 44 007), 7.00 pm

Mon 17 Dr Ian King 'William McGonagall – the World's Greatest Bad Poet?' Club 43

Thur 20 B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Abbie ben Ari 'Update on Situation in Israel' Kenton Synagogue Hall, Shaftesbury Avenue, Kenton, 8.15 pm

Mon 24 Jim Burtles 'Impressions of Germany with Family and Friends' Club 43

Sun 30 'British and Israeli Music on the South Bank' Three concerts featuring works by, among others, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Paul Ben-Haim, Noam Sheriff; especially honouring Israeli composer Tzvi Avni. 11.00 am to 10 pm. Presented by Jewish Music Institute and Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. Tel 0871 663 2500

Mon 1 Dec Dr Gwen Williams 'Fairy + Fantasy in Nineteenth Century English Literature (Part 2)' Club 43

4-5 Dec 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

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

AJR REPORT

Michael Newman

German deportation list

The German Federal Archive has launched a website containing the names of almost 160,000 Jews deported from Germany during the Holocaust.

The website, 'Jewish Victims of Persecution by the National Socialist Government in Germany, 1933-1945', enables searches in accordance with several criteria, including concentration camps and ghettos to which people were deported (see below). It is possible to search for a person's full name, date and place of birth, and their place of residence when deported. Searches can also be made for the date of deportation, the place to which victims were deported, and the date and place of death.

The site also enables readers to print the search result and to apply for the relevant documents from the German government confirming these data.

The site, which is in German, can be found at <http://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/directory.html>

Leningrad compensation

In an historic breakthrough, the Claims Conference has negotiated one-time payments from Germany for certain Jewish victims of the Nazi siege of Leningrad.

In recent negotiations, the German government has agreed to include these Jewish victims in the Claims Conference Hardship Fund provided they meet the programme's other eligibility criteria. The programme makes a one-time payment of 2,556 Euros (about £2,000) to people who stayed in Leningrad at some time between September 1941 and January 1944 or fled from the city during this period.

This agreement is expected to lead to payments to thousands of Jewish victims of Nazism from the former Soviet Union who are now living in Israel, the United States, Germany and other Western countries. It is the first time that the persecution of Jews who lived through the 900-day siege of Leningrad has been recognised by Germany.

Enquiries seeking advice and clarification on Holocaust restitution and compensation matters should continue to be sent to Michael Newman at Central Office for Holocaust Claims (UK), Jubilee House, Merion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL, by fax to 020 8385 3075, or by email to mnewman@ajr.org.uk



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



New bridge for an old city

After years of construction work that obstructed the entrance to the city and inconvenienced drivers and pedestrians alike, Jerusalem has finally been exposed to the work of the famous Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava in the form of a unique suspension bridge. The cantilever spar cable-stayed bridge, which straddles the entrance to the city and will eventually carry the light railway (another major construction project which has been causing havoc throughout the city and will apparently continue to do so for several more years), cost the Jerusalem municipality and government NIS 220 million – well over the original projected budget. The bridge and the light railway are intended to eventually ease the burden of the ever-increasing volume of vehicular traffic, for which Jerusalem's narrow streets were never intended.

Opinions about the bridge are divided among Jerusalem's residents. As might have been expected, there are those who like it and those who don't. Some people claim that the bridge, which consists of a single 119-meter-high mast supported by 66 steel cables, will not be able to bear the weight of the light railway when it finally begins operating and will collapse, crushing whoever is unfortunate enough to be underneath it at that moment.

Some 'cognoscenti' have voiced criticisms on such lines as 'The bridge is not in the right place because it is obscured by the buildings around it. It would be better if it were placed by a river or on the top of a mountain.' Such views are all well and good but miss the point, namely, that the bridge is needed just where it is in order to span the point where several major arteries converge at the entrance to Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the city doesn't have a

river and over the years buildings have been erected at its entrance.

Personally, I find the bridge a pleasing sight each time I approach Jerusalem. The 119-meter mast dominates the skyline no matter from where it is viewed and, as one gets closer, one begins to see the steel cables extending from it in a fan-shape to the earth below. Depending from where one looks, one can perceive the structure supporting the bridge as a bird about to take flight, a benevolent spirit extending its benediction over the city or even a guardian angel. At any event, the soaring structure seems to symbolise something spiritual and uplifting that is entirely in keeping with the unique mystique of the city.

Another element in favour of the bridge is its very modernity. Jerusalem is associated with much that is old, venerable, ancient and antique. The very name of the city conjures up associations with ancient history, the Bible, ancient civilisations and figures from the past. But Jerusalem is a living, breathing city, with light industry, institutions, shopping malls and cinemas. It is high time it shook off the musty aura of the past and faced up to the reality of the twenty-first century.

The Calatrava bridge has succeeded in providing Jerusalem with an emblem that is both aesthetic and functional, while at the same time imbuing it with a quality that is very much of the here and now. Once the light railway is up and running and Jerusalem's streets are less clogged than they are today, the city will take on a more modern aspect. Although Jerusalem's leaders have not always brought credit to the city, they must be praised for having had the foresight to embark upon this ambitious and courageous undertaking.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Newsround

Historic Viennese school opens

Austria's president, Heinz Fischer, Israeli cabinet minister Isaac Herzog and local community leaders have inaugurated the largest Jewish school in Europe. The 19,400-square-metre complex, built on the playing fields of the restored Vienna Hakoach sports club, houses, among other things, the Zvi Perez Chajes School, a nursing home and a synagogue. 'With this school complex, we have the best infrastructure of all Jewish communities in Europe,' said Ariel Muzicant, leader of Vienna's Jewish community.

New synagogue inaugurated in Germany

A new synagogue has been inaugurated in the western city of Krefeld, seven decades after the original was destroyed by the Nazis. The cost of construction of the synagogue, which can accommodate 300 people, is 12 million Euros. Several synagogues have been restored or newly built in recent years in cities including Berlin, Munich and Bochum.

Berlin memorial to Hitler's failed assassin

A memorial has been put up in Berlin to Georg Elser, who attempted single-handedly to assassinate Hitler and his top aides in Munich in November 1939. Elser was arrested, tortured and murdered at Dachau. A foundation established by a businessman, Ernst Freiburger, paid for the memorial. A plaque in Elser's memory was put up several years ago in his hometown of Koenigsbronn in south-western Germany.

Institute dedicated to Rabbi Loew opened in Prague

An institute dedicated to the work of the sixteenth-century rabbi Judah Loew has been opened in Prague. Rabbi Loew, also known as the Maharal of Prague, is considered one of the greatest Jewish scholars and philosophers and an authority on the Talmud. His tombstone in Prague's Jewish cemetery is visited by thousands of people every year.

Auschwitz said to face risk of flooding

Auschwitz-Birkenau faces the danger of flooding unless urgent action is taken, an expert has warned. Andrzej Telka, former mayor of Oswiecim and a specialist on flood protection, says the former camp, now a museum and memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust, faces the risk of flooding from the Vistula River.