

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Wartime heroines and celluloid heroines

Les *Femmes de l'ombre*, the original French title of the film *Female Agents* currently showing in London, invites comparison with Jean-Paul Melville's 1969 classic *L'Armée des ombres* (*Army of Shadows*), one of the finest films about the French Resistance, with a superb performance by Lino Ventura as the principal character and a supporting cast including Simone Signoret and Jean-Pierre Cassel. But where Melville's film is a gripping, realistic portrayal of the underground struggle of the Resistance against the Gestapo and its accomplices, *Female Agents* is an implausible piece of hokum in which a team of suitably gorgeous Frenchwomen is recruited in Britain by the Special Operations Executive (SOE) to carry out a mission in France on which the success of the D-Day landings may depend. Actually, the film reminded me of the Hollywood war movie *The Dirty Dozen* (1967, with Lee Marvin), a rousing piece of box-office escapism in which a team of suitably villainous American soldier-convicts is recruited in Britain to carry out a mission on which etc etc.

Female Agents struck me as an example of the reluctance of the French to acknowledge properly the vital contribution made by British forces to the liberation of France. Like other nations, the French prefer to dwell on the heroic role of their own forces, the Free French and the Resistance, and they freely recognise the part played by the Americans in 1944 – there's no shame in being liberated by a transatlantic superpower. But the contrast between the humiliated France which was defeated in 1940 and occupied until 1944 and the victorious Britain which defied Hitler in 1940 and liberated much of North-Western Europe in 1944-45 is evidently too much for Gallic pride to bear.

So the British contribution to the Normandy campaign is often minimised in



Odette Hallowes, G.C.

French films and documentaries. The female agents in this film, though SOE operatives and therefore under British command, are improbably transported to France from a US Air Force base on an American plane, not on the usual RAF Lysander. The film's plot revolves around the Mulberry Harbours, the floating harbours that were towed across the Channel to the Normandy beachheads, where they were used to land the supplies without which the soldiers could not fight. The name Mulberry Harbour is never mentioned in the film, though it is obvious to anyone familiar with the D-Day landings what the mysterious constructions are.

Instead, the film refers to 'Phoenixes', the name for the harbours' concrete caissons, which it claims to have been constructed by Americans for the 'American invasion'. But as the naval side of the D-Day landings was a British responsibility, the two Mulberry

Harbours were conceived and constructed in Britain; credit for this extraordinary feat of engineering inventiveness must go to the British. It is true that an American naval officer, Edward Ellsberg, played a key part in ensuring that the Phoenixes functioned properly, but he was operating under British command and was effectively ignored by his countrymen. Indeed, so careless were the Americans of the Mulberry Harbour that serviced their beaches that they allowed it to sink in the great storm of 19 June 1944, only days after it had been set up. The harbour on the British beaches continued to function for eight months, and four million tons of supplies, 500,000 vehicles and over 2.5 million men landed through it.

The real stories of SOE's female operatives are in any case more dramatic, more heroic and more heartrending than the lip-gloss theatricals of *Female Agents*. One of the most moving is that of Noor Inayat Khan (Nora Baker), born in Russia of Indian Muslim princely descent in 1914 and educated in France, who was parachuted into France in June 1943 as a wireless operator and was captured by the Germans. When the head of F (for France) Section of SOE, Vera Atkins, went to Europe after the war to search for her missing agents, she assumed that Noor had shared the fate of Diana Rowden, Vera Leigh and Andrée Borel, agents who after their capture were taken to Natzweiler concentration camp in Alsace, where they were drugged and shoved, still alive, into a furnace. Only later did Atkins discover that Noor had survived, revealing nothing to her captors, until September 1944, when she was taken to Dachau concentration camp and murdered.

The heroic stories of the women agents of SOE make compelling reading. The most famous was Odette Hallowes (Odette Churchill), a Frenchwoman married to an

continued overleaf

German-Jewish refugees on the BBC

August 2008 saw two notable commemorations by the BBC of the German-Jewish refugee experience. On 27 August, BBC TV devoted a programme in the series 'Who Do You Think You Are?' to Jerry Springer, born in North-West London in 1944 to Jewish parents who had fled to Britain from Berlin in 1939. The family stayed in London for ten years before emigrating to the USA.

As readers who have seen the programme will know, I made a brief appearance in it, as the AJR's historical expert on the Jewish refugees who settled in Britain after 1933. I filmed with Jerry Springer for about two hours last autumn in Golders Hill Park, trying to recreate his family's experiences in London and to relate their story to the general history of the refugees from Hitler in Britain. As the excellent director of the programme, Sue Hills, effectively let me interview Jerry Springer, I found it a nerve-wracking but rewarding experience.

The Springers were classic German-Jewish refugees. Originally from what is now Poland, the family had settled in Berlin, where Jerry Springer's father ran his own business. Though conscious of their Jewish origins, they had assimilated culturally and occupationally into the German middle class and were probably largely indistinguishable from their gentile environment. They stayed in Germany after 1933 but, with the intensification of anti-Semitic measures by the Nazis after the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1938, the younger family

members sought urgently to emigrate.

Jerry Springer's parents obtained a British visa thanks to a lady who was willing to act as guarantor for them, and arrived in Britain shortly before war broke out. As the programme shows very movingly, the older generation of the grandparents were unable to emigrate and were left defenceless to face their fate under the Nazis. Springer's parents, however, were happy in England, finding life in Hampstead Garden Suburb congenial despite the bombing and the hazards of war. It was only fear of a third world war erupting in Europe that drove them to re-emigrate to the USA; otherwise Jerry Springer would have grown up a good Hampstead Garden Suburb boy.

From Monday 18 August to Friday 22 August, Week 5 of BBC Radio 4's 'Writing the Century' dramatised two sets of letters, one of which was the correspondence between the young Marianne Josephy, a Jewish girl born in Rostock in 1923 who had come to Britain on a Kindertransport in 1939, and her parents back in Germany. The letters were taken from the collection published by Marianne Elsley (the married Marianne Josephy), *Voices in the Night: Letters from My Parents: 1939-44* (Deddington, Oxon: The Old House Press, 1995), and are deeply moving. Franz and Edith Josephy remained in Berlin until 1943, when they were sent to Theresienstadt; they were deported to Auschwitz on 28 October 1944. I am pleased to say that I recommended the letters to the BBC.

Anthony Grenville

WARTIME HEROINES continued from page 1

Englishman, who worked as a wireless operator with Captain Peter Churchill, was arrested near Annecy in April 1943, withstood Gestapo torture and survived Ravensbrück concentration camp; her story was told in the film *Odette* (1950, with Anna Neagle). The exploits of Violette Szabo, born in Paris to a British father, who was twice sent on missions to France in 1944 at the age of 23 and helped organise and lead French resistance networks, were commemorated in the film *Carve Her Name with Pride* (1953, with Virginia McKenna); after her capture in June 1944, Szabo withstood appalling treatment by the Gestapo without talking. She was shot at Ravensbrück concentration camp in February 1945, leaving a small daughter by her French husband, Etienne Szabo, who had himself fallen in North Africa in 1942.

Pearl Witherington, another apparently ordinary woman from an Anglo-French background who proved capable of remarkable courage and initiative, died only last year. Parachuted into France in 1943 as a courier aged 27, she took charge of a thousand Maquisards when her organiser was captured in May 1944, cutting railway lines to assist the D-Day landings and inflicting losses on the Germans that exceeded 1,000 dead. As so often, the story of resistance to Nazism has a Jewish dimension. Amazingly, Vera Atkins, as revealed in Sarah Helm's engrossing study *A Life in Secrets: The Story of Vera Atkins and the Lost Agents of SOE*, was born Vera Rosenberg, a Romanian Jew, and Jean-Paul Melville was born in 1917 as Jean-Paul Grumbach, a Jew of Alsatian descent.

Anthony Grenville

70th Anniversary of the Kindertransport

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

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The proletariat unleashed: Vienna's Jews and the comrades



Victor Adler, a Jew, founded the Austrian Social Democratic Party in 1889 and became its first leader. He died in 1918, to be succeeded by Otto Bauer, also a Jew. Indeed, it was Jewish liberal thinking that shaped much of the party's policies.

Although in 1920 the socialists did not have an overall majority in the country, 60 per cent of the Viennese voted for them, and Red Vienna was born. It was Vienna, a province in its own right, which was to be their New Jerusalem. They started on an innovative municipal building programme, of which the Karl-Marx Hof in Heiligenstadt was the most ambitious example. They reformed and liberalised schools. Kindergarten, nursery care and workers' education classes were all top priorities. Julius Tandler, an eminent physician and also a Jew, who was the city councillor for health and social services, introduced free medical care and greatly improved the city's health. Regular visits to free dental clinics were compulsory for primary school pupils.

The Social Democrats were the natural home for Austrian Jews, although some, nervous about the 'Marxist' element, chose to vote for the Christian Socials, despite the party's inbuilt anti-Semitism.

At the age of 12, spurred on by my best friend, Lisl, both of whose parents were active members of the Social Democratic Party (and were later to perish in the camps), I was briefly a member of the League of Socialist Grammar School Pupils. On May Day we marched along the Ring, singing stirring songs, reminding the working class of the need for solidarity.

Alas, the socialist dream didn't last long. By the early 1930s, with massive unemployment and an acute housing shortage, it had already turned sour and in February 1934, after a brief but bloody civil war, it was ended brutally by the victorious Dollfuss, who declared the Social Democratic Party illegal.

So, what about the non-Jewish comrades? Some of them remained loyal to the socialist ideal, but many joined the also illegal Nazi Party, which swelled and flourished underground between 1934 and 1938.

Sadly, at the time of the Anschluss,

many who had professed to be ardent social democrats, had been on the best of terms with their Jewish acquaintances, and in many cases had shown them great kindness, turned up in Nazi uniforms or proudly wore the badge which only former 'illegals' were awarded. This was true not only of blue-collar workers but also of professionals like doctors and teachers.

What Hitler offered the working class was not just employment and a dashing uniform, but something they found irresistible: power. They, who had been nobodies, often unemployed and ill-educated, were now empowered to despise a whole group of people who, they were told, were not just inferior to them but poisonous vermin, no longer protected by the law. Like all converts, the former comrades had to prove themselves by displaying extra zeal in taunting and humiliating Jews. For the first time, they felt they had truly lost their chains.

The proletariat unleashed was not a pretty sight. Reports of vicious attacks on Jews immediately after the Anschluss, applauded by onlookers, circulated in the foreign press.

There can be no doubt that most Austrians welcomed the arrival of the Nazi era, but the church-going bourgeoisie, who had always supported the Christian Socials, showed greater restraint. They may have been more squeamish or inhibited by their religious beliefs.

The most paradoxical was the attitude of some former illegal Nazis, of which our lodger, Fräulein Oeser, was a typical example. Although a civil servant, she had been a member of the Nazi Party for years – yet it never seemed to bother her that she was living with us, practically a member of the family, at the same time. Like so many others, she had been beguiled by the vision of a Greater Germany led by the Führer with the piercing blue eyes. That *her* Jews might come to any harm had never occurred to her.

Despite everything that happened in Austria between 1938 and 1945, I'm still grateful to all the people, Jews and non-Jews, who made the city in which I grew up a better place to live in.

Edith Argy

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Calling all ex-Hamburgers!

Recently my wife Carol and I accompanied our friend Gerd Nathan on his sentimental journey to Hamburg, the city of his birth, at the invitation of the Senat of the Freien und Hansestadt. It was the latest of a number of visits, lasting the best part of a week, organised for those driven from Hamburg during the Nazi period. Other German cities, prominent among them Berlin, invite their former citizens in the same way as an act of reconciliation and of making amends. This one was organised with loving care and great thoughtfulness by Frau Carola Meinhardt, working in the Senatskanzlei, whose responsibility it is to arrange the visits to Hamburg and to create a meaningful programme of sightseeing, visits and events.

There were 22 of us, though only seven were ex-Hamburgers; the rest were partners or accompanying persons or family members. They came from the USA, Israel, Nigeria and the UK and included one concentration camp survivor with a horrendous history of incarceration. The visits commenced in 1972 and (at the time of writing) there is to be another one later this year. Frau Meinhardt would be glad to hear of any ex-Hamburger who has not yet been on one of these visits and would welcome an invitation. Her address is: Senat der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg, Senatskanzlei-Staatsamt ST 26, Postfach 10 55 20, 20038 Hamburg, Germany. Her email address is: Carola.Meinhardt@sk.hamburg.de

The week was extremely interesting, informative and enjoyable. We were accommodated in a 5-star hotel in the middle of the city, not far from the Michaeliskirche and the Rathaus, and Frau

Meinhardt had arranged a full programme which included, on most days, a few rest periods in the early afternoon. The weekend was free and enabled us to make individual visits, such as to the district in which Gerd had lived as a child – pretty well undamaged in the war and with the house in which his parents had a flat, and other landmarks, left wholly intact. We learned a great deal about Jewish life in the city before the war by visiting the Talmud Tora Schule, which now provides offices for the Jewish community (some 3,000-strong) and a Jewish Kindergarten, as well as the former Jewish Töchtertschule and Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte (Dr Alberto Jonas Haus), where we saw a poignant exhibition illustrating the life and fate of the Jewish population before the war.

We also visited the Jewish cemeteries in Ohlsdorf and Langenfelde, both of which, astonishingly, had been left undisturbed by the Nazis, and several of the ex-Hamburgers, including Gerd, were able to visit the graves of their relatives. (For me, one of the highlights were the 37 magnificent stained-glass windows in Ohlsdorf crematorium, created in the 1930s by Ervin Bossanyi, a Hungarian Jew whose son I got to know many years ago at the University of Southampton.) We met and had discussions with young people from a Haupt- und Realschule who were very interested to hear about individual histories, and met students carrying out research on those Hamburg Jews who had been deported to Riga. This was based in part on close inspection of the *Stolpersteine* laid down for such people. A few of us opted to attend the Friday evening service in a beautiful modern synagogue – an orthodox service

conducted entirely in Hebrew and attended mainly by a smattering of Russian Jews.

Apart from this Jewish dimension, we were taken on a tour of the city, which was immensely impressive with its lakes (the Alster), canals, harbour and trees, on boat trips in the harbour, now a massive container port, as well as on the lake and its canals, and a visit to the Hamburg State Opera to hear *Madame Butterfly*. We were entertained to lunch in the Rathaus and greeted with warmth by the second Bürgermeisterin, Frau Christa Goetsch, who heads the Green Party, which recently formed a coalition with the Christian Democrats. Gerd was accorded the honour on this occasion of expressing our thanks for all this wonderful hospitality. We were taken everywhere by coach, accompanied by Frau Ulrike Schröder, a knowledgeable and empathetic tour guide who spoke excellent English. Our tour of the city included a stop at the site of the Hannoversche Bahnhof, where a large plaque served as a reminder of the deportation of hundreds of Jews to Riga and other destinations.

The Senat covers travel expenses for each ex-Hamburger and one companion, the cost of the hotel rooms and a daily allowance of 25 Euros. Frau Meinhardt is due to retire in two years and, while the programme will no doubt continue, I would advise a visit under her stewardship, as I cannot imagine that anyone could possibly equal her in the excellence of the arrangements.

Leslie Baruch Brent

Sadly, Gerd Nathan died on 12 September. An obituary will follow (LBB).

Old virtues revisited – memories of a school confrontation

Mr Olinski was form master in my third and fourth years at the Volksschule in Elbing, my place of birth. Pupils and parents were in awe of him. He was middle-aged, well dressed in sober suits, short of stature, broad, bald, bespectacled, bull-necked, a dedicated teacher and, of course, an 'aryan'. At times, when too many voices in the class were clamouring for his attention, he might exclaim in mock exasperation 'Olinski hier, Olinski da, Olinski in Amerika!', but deep down we all knew he liked nothing better than to be in demand.

One day in 1934, I was witness to a confrontation. It happened on the school

stairs and involved Mr Olinski and a senior pupil, who was attired in full Hitler Youth uniform, complete with dagger. This young Nazi towered over the teacher by more than a head, adding a certain air of menace. I was never to know the substance of their argument. Suffice it to say that the next thing that occurred was a most resounding smack delivered by Mr Olinski to an ear of the colossus. Only briefly did I marvel at the consummate skill with which the chastisement against a steep 'uphill' gradient was delivered.

My thoughts concentrated on what might happen next. How would the Nazi lad respond? Would he flatten the master with one mighty blow from above or –

worse still – draw his dagger? I need not have worried. After a momentary hesitation, he tamely slunk out of sight. Mr Olinski nonchalantly strode away with a look of 'all in the day's work' written over his face. Whether the Nazi establishment took their revenge in due course, I was never to find out.

What is certain is that the brief scene I have described gave a boost to my morale at the time, though Mr Olinski would have been totally unaware of this particular beneficial fall-out from his action. For this, as for his pedagogic prowess, I keep this teacher of the 'old school' in grateful memory.

Klaus Heymann

This is the true story of my cousin Lisa Pollack (Liza Prylová), born in 1921 in Prague. Her mother – my aunt – died giving life to her daughter, but her paternal grandmother and four uncles gave her a good start in life until her father, hard at work in the capital, remarried so he could ensure Lisa's further development and give her a good education.

Lisa was then five. She and her stepmother became good friends, even more so when Honza, her half-brother, was born. Lisa was adored by all – a gifted child, excelling in sports and languages, with hopes of an academic career. She attended both Czech and German schools and hoped to study languages.

When the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia, entrance to Charles University was denied her. Emigration for the then 18-year-old was no longer a possibility: she had fallen in love with Otto, a newly qualified doctor, and, when Jews had to vacate their homes, her father managed to squeeze 14 people into their small flat, including the young doctor and his mother.

The flat was in a house overlooking the wooden hut to which Jews were brought from all over Prague before boarding the nearby trains to Theresienstadt – all 14 of them having to witness this from their window until it was their turn.

To remain together, Lisa and Otto married and, once in this camp, were 'allowed' to see each other for 20 minutes a day. Lisa took charge of a group of small children while their mothers were at work. Soon the young doctor was told he was needed elsewhere – and he left for an unknown destination. Lisa was informed that if she 'volunteered' for the next transport, she would be reunited with her husband. This meant leaving her parents, her brother and her mother-in-law behind. Fortunately, she was warned by a friend that it was unlikely that she would be able to see Otto and she stayed in Theresienstadt for the time being.

But she didn't escape Auschwitz. Came the time when most adults were transported there, leaving many of their small charges behind. In Auschwitz she shared a bunk with a Moravian girl by the name of Herta – who later saved her life.

In memory of cousin Lisa

by Susanne Medas



Lisa

I was one of the lucky ones – Kindertransport to England in 1939. I knew nothing of Lisa's fate until 1982. We met in Crete and later in Prague. At this time, she began to tell me her life story. She was unable to write it down before she died and now is the time to do so in her memory.

Lisa was on one of the death marches from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen which began in January 1945. People were dying daily. Everyone knew how much time was left to them before they too were bound to die. When the last group of prisoners from Auschwitz arrived, Lisa's friend Herta was among them. She recognised Lisa, who was barely alive. She wanted to give her her own small ration of water, but Lisa wouldn't take it, saying 'Please, Herta, drink it yourself. You stand a better chance of surviving – I only have a few hours to live.'

But Herta insisted on helping her friend and the following day – 15 April 1945 – British troops freed the camp!

With other survivors, Lisa was taken to the hospital which had been used by their captors – clean sheets, nurses in white caps and aprons, loving care. As she recovered, she asked herself over and over again why she had been spared.

On her return to her home town, she

found that all her family, including her husband, had perished – but her little brother, now a teenager, had survived! She decided to forego her opportunity to study languages – her love – to seek whatever work she could to enable her brother to complete his education. Honza was later able to study and is now happily married and lives in Germany.

Lisa, who spoke German, Czech, English and French, found a niche in what soon became communist Czechoslovakia. She remarried but, as a result of her trials in concentration camps, was unable to have children. I didn't know that any of my own family had survived until she gave me good news of four other cousins. With her help, I met them all again in due course.

We got to know each other well. I spent more and more time in Prague and was with her in the summer of 1994 when she became ill with cancer. In January 1995 I phoned her from London, as I did often. Herta answered the phone. It seems that Lisa, now living alone, had begged Herta to come to Prague to look after her at home, which of course she did. Herta told me they were waiting for the ambulance to take Lisa to hospital. Four days later, Lisa died – in the arms of the woman who had saved her life exactly 50 years earlier.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
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AUSTRIANS REVISITED

Sir – I am dismayed to find letters from readers who are eager to embrace the cuddly Lederhosen-clad Austrians, yearn for the Tyrolean mountains, and hunker after such delights as Sachertorte – all this, while survivors are still around. One correspondent praises the country for its laudable changes after only one week's stay there and must be blissfully unaware that Jörg Haider is currently gaining support for a comeback.

I am amazed at the short memories of those who ought to know better. Austria has always maintained it was the victim of Nazi-German aggression yet they were its most enthusiastic supporters as well as some of the most odious war criminals, starting with Hitler himself. Austrians formed only about 5 per cent of the Reich's population yet a vastly disproportionate number of the SS were Austrian by birth.

According to the historian Hans Marsalek, Reinhard Heydrich's department divided the concentration camp system into categories of ascending severity. At the top, way above Auschwitz, were the vicious facilities of Mauthausen and Gusen, situated in densely populated areas of Austria and in full view of the locals, who simply didn't care. To this hell were assigned the 'severely charged, unreformable criminals and asocials', like my poor, gentle father and three devoted brothers. It is also no coincidence that the cruellest SS and Gestapo sadists in my hometown in Poland were Viennese, as was the local camp commandant Zwierzyna, an Austrian with a Polish-sounding name.

I can only think that the difference in this willingness to promote everything Austrian – when it isn't even solicited – lies between those who were happily ensconced in this country during the war and those who were unlucky enough to be trapped in Europe.

Rubin Katz, London NW11

EMILIE LOUISE FLÖGE – ELF

Sir – Austria's most famous fashion designer is probably better known as the companion, or muse, of Austria's most famous painter, Gustav Klimt. In her time she rivalled Chanel, Dior and Schiaparelli for haute couture designs which adorned Vienna's urban elite for over 30 years. Yet little is known about Emilie Louise Flöge – ELF (1874-1952). Had it not been for Klimt's comparatively recent meteoric rise to become one of the world's most prized painters, only the Austrian cognoscenti and students of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna would have known anything about her.

My hope is that one (or more!) of your readers may remember something about this remarkable woman, the dynamic force in the fashion house Schwestern Flöge, which she created with her two sisters in Vienna in 1904.

Located at Mariahilferstrasse 1b in the Casa Piccola building (now opposite the Mariahilf entrance to MuseumsQuartier), their clientele included Clarisse Rothschild, Serena Lederer, Sonja Knips and many more from Vienna's haute bourgeoisie.

Schwester Flöge flourished until the Anschluss. Emilie and her niece Helene Donner (née Klimt) moved to Ungargasse 39, Vienna, but spent most of the war years in Weissenbach, Attersee before returning in 1946 to Vienna, where Emilie died.

I have been researching ELF for a number of years. There are many unanswered questions about her relationships, business and personal alike. If any readers knew her, or know someone who did, please contact me.

Paul H. Simpson
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VIENNESE TART

Sir – I refer to Paul Samet's article in the August issue on *Josefine Mutzenbacher: The Autobiography of a Viennese Prostitute as Told by Herself*. Viewed at its lowest level, this book is a piece of unadulterated paedophilic pornography.

My attention was first drawn to the book some four years ago by an enthusiastic article in the *Kurier* in Vienna and I got a hard-back copy direct from bol.de in Germany.

The author of the book, Felix Salten, moved in the same circles as Sigmund Freud, Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt, all of whom had some interest in pre-pubescent sexuality. At a higher level, the publication could well be regarded as a treatise on the subject and a serious study of this behaviour in children and its effect on adults. Freud in particular describes a number of observations in this context which helped him understand the results of his regression therapy.

What is it about Austrians? Freud and Salten were Jewish, but the others and those in the more recent bits of Austrian notoriety (Priklopil and Fritzl) were not.

Stefan Ruff, York

SHYLOCK A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

Sir – I was particularly struck by Anthony Grenville's comments on *The Merchant of Venice* (September). I read the play with classes several times while I was an English

teacher in a local grammar school. Once, the parents of a Jewish girl in the class objected strongly and wanted the play taken off the syllabus. The school reached an English compromise whereby I continued to teach it but the Jewish girl was excused the lessons on it.

Unlike Dr Grenville, I do not see an 'irreducible core of villainy' in Shylock. In fact, I sympathise with him. He hates the Christians, as well he might. He makes his living charging interest on loans and sees nothing wrong in this, any more than modern bankers do. He sees a way of revenging himself when he strikes a bargain with Antonio. Antonio doesn't take the bond seriously, but Shylock does because he is a man of principle. He follows the law – to the letter. Shakespeare depicts him as a just man, but brings on Portia to say that justice should be tempered with mercy. 'Mercy' is what the play is about. I am not Jewish, though my husband was. Maybe this is why I see the play differently.

Netta Goldsmith
Tunbridge Wells, Kent

HATE SLOGANS

Sir – As a side comment to Eric Saunders's remark (May) that he does not recall certain anti-Jewish hate slogans, I certainly do, having arrived in London as a ten-year-old with the Kindertransport. This is what they shouted:

Heil Schussnig, unser Führer
Das Volk wird immer dürrer
Die Juden immer fetter
Heil Hitler unser Retter.

Henry Herner, Caracas, Venezuela

SECOND GENERATION TV PROGRAMME 'NEGATIVE'

Sir – Like Sue Rutherford (August, Letters) I found the recent BBC4 programme on the second generation very negative. My parents fled Vienna just before the war broke out after a very difficult time. My maternal grandparents fled to Palestine and my mother never saw her father again and her mother only once. As for my father, his parents and siblings perished in Poland. Yet neither of my parents was traumatised. They gave me a huge amount of love and affection. They certainly did not – unlike some of the participants in the programme – speak of not feeling at home here: they always spoke of their gratitude at being allowed to enter the safety of this country and how good people had been to them. No men were interviewed in this programme – I wonder what this signifies.

Thea Valman, London NW11

THE BRITAIN WE LIVE IN

Sir – I didn't much care for Roman Licht's grudging remark 'Yes, Britain fought quite well against the Germans ...' (August, Letters).

With the bulk of Continental Europe in German hands, we fought on alone, at the same time keeping up the spirits of those living under German occupation. The super-human efforts of those involved in the Battle of Britain (airmen and planners alike) stopped Hitler from his invasion plans. Our brave seamen and airmen prevented the

Germans from seizing Malta by supplying her through the convoys which were under constant attack and suffered heavy losses. My husband was torpedoed in the course of such a convoy, but miraculously survived. As if we did not have enough on our plates, we helped Russia by supplying her via the North Atlantic convoys!

Among other things, the country's 'brains' broke the German secret codes and devised radar, all of which helped us to beat a formidable enemy. Throughout these difficult times the people of this country pulled together and, what's more, never lost their sense of humour. The attitude of the British government to the problem of Palestine cannot detract from the fact that democracy was kept alive in this tiny island through superhuman efforts – even before the Americans came to help us.

Bronia Snow, Esher

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Sir – Despite my age of 82, I am not in my dotage and am still able to tell an apple from a pear (September, Letters), unlike your correspondents K. G. Speyer, Heinz Grünwald and the 'brave' Inge Trott, who cannot see that common-or-garden anti-Semitism, while still not *salonfähig*, has progressed in some circles into its new manifestation of Israel-bashing.

Over the centuries, anti-Semitism has changed from the religious to the political to racial discrimination and, in all its previous forms, some Jews have supported our detractors – nothing has basically changed.

*Ernest G. Kolman
Greenford, Middx*

Sir – One does not have to look at events in the immediate postwar period regarding population shifts in Europe as referred to by Henry Schragenheim (September). It is happening before our very eyes – except that the media chooses to ignore it – in South Ossetia/Abkhazia, courtesy of the Russian occupation. And that is the vital difference: the Western media is given full access to every place in Israel/West Bank and relishes its role as so-called protector of the Arab population (aided and abetted by some of your readers, who regard themselves as liberals). The UN as ever is not to be seen – it is too busy condemning Israel for its alleged offences, most of which are trumped-up/stage-managed.

Peter Simpson, Jerusalem

Sir – Henry Schragenheim hit the nail on the head with his common sense and factual comments.

When I took part in a documentary for German TV, the German director also said he could not understand the constant talk about Israel's occupied territories. His family came from a part of Germany which was now Poland. In his opinion, the aggressors had to take the consequences.

If Inge Trott was not so blindly against Israel but prepared to see the faults on both sides and the history leading up to this situation, there would be room for discussion. But one has to be prepared to be even-handed.

Gisela Feldman, Manchester

Sir – Coming from Vienna and having been at Oxford in the early Fifties, I realise that these two facts are not in themselves a guarantee against spreading the right-wing claptrap that is now all the rage. Nor do I need to prove my Zionist credentials, having spent two years in Israel by choice. Nor am I a member of Jews for a Just Peace or Alternative Jewish Voices.

The present label for those who take exception to a particular failure by the state of Israel to observe its own laws is, according to Peter Phillips (August issue), 'Jewish anti-Semite'. Fifteen years ago, it was 'Oslo criminal', a favourite epithet of the right.

Is one a Jewish anti-Semite for denouncing the Israeli army's prevention of 250 Peace Now supporters from visiting Hebron and failing to prevent attacks on them by Hebron settlers? For applauding the actions of Israeli Human Rights organisation B'Tselem in supplying cameras to Arab farmers in the West Bank so they can take pictures of settlers beating them? For drawing attention to the attempts by Professor Friedmann, Israeli Minister of Justice, to emasculate the Israeli Supreme Court in its efforts to maintain human and civil rights in Israel and the Territories?

Hillel said: 'Do not do unto others what you would not like others to do unto you.' If that means being branded a Jewish anti-Semite, so be it.

Fred Barshak, London NW6

Sir – I was more than a little surprised to read Peter Phillips's attack on those who criticise the activities of the Israeli state and the IDF regarding its treatment of the Arab residents of the West Bank. As a son of a refugee who escaped from Hitler's Germany to this country, it is clear that one of the prime differences between the two countries is that, in Germany, attacking the government in any way was an extremely dangerous activity. In the UK, one has only to pick up a paper any day of the week to read attacks on the government and the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's called a democracy. As for suggesting that the Israeli state does nothing that deserves criticism, one of my Israeli cousins has been helping poor West Bank villagers for many years.

Steven Schrier, Hayling Island

Sir – We are aware of Israel's achievements in a wide range of fields. However, it took a wrong turn after the Six-Day War in its policy of establishing settlements beyond the 'Green Line'. Peter Phillips's response – and sadly so much of the Israeli response – to the Palestinian uprising is: (a) We've got to defend ourselves; (b) Much of the world is against us; (c) We haven't got anybody to talk to – the Palestinians have only themselves to blame for the mess they're in. Mr Phillips and I seem to live in different worlds despite our Austrian origins.

Meir Weiss, Reading

Sir – As a signatory to Jews for Justice to Palestinians, I reject Rubin Katz's allegation (July) that we 'espouse the Palestinian cause at the expense of Israel.' We agree

with PM Olmert (*Ha'Aretz*, 29 November 2007) that a failure of the present peace talks will ultimately result in a one-state solution with Jews being in the minority. The extension of the illegal settlements, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the building of the illegal wall in occupied territory, the increase of checkpoints preventing the movement of people from village to village – all these make a two-state solution increasingly difficult. If those who criticise us want the state of Israel to continue, they should join us instead of continuing their doctrinaire support of the government of Israel come what may.

Peter Prager, London N12

Sir – Will you please reduce the publication of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel letters by the same people.

J. Herzog, London SW3

DEADLY WEAPON

Sir – Victor Ross (July) brings back memories of the cosh – exactly as he describes it – and a revolver (and a horse!), which my father brought back from the First World War. My mother wanted to get rid of these items in case our house was searched. We wrapped it all in a newspaper, took it to the River Weser and dropped it in the deepest part of the river, where no doubt it lies today.

Liselotte Southam, Guildford, Surrey



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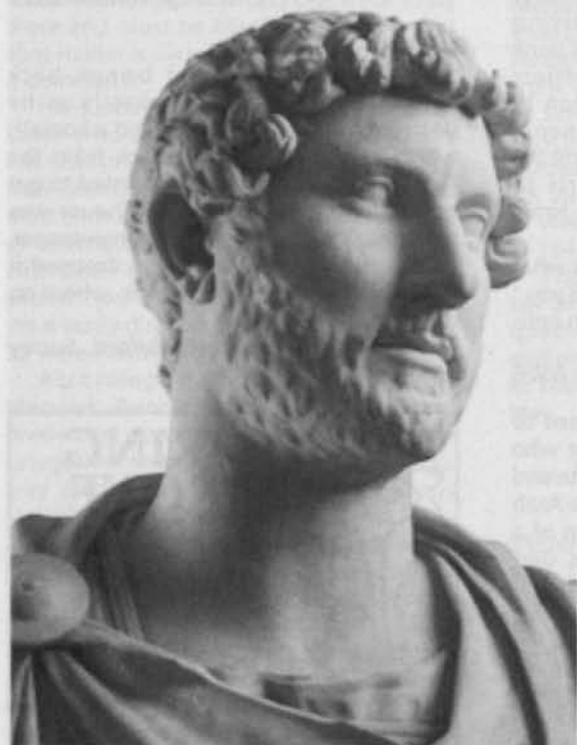
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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

'Hadrian – may his bones rot' was the Hebrew curse against the Roman emperor during Bar Kochba's revolt in AD 132. Sixty years after Masada, Hadrian quashed Jewish aspirations for independence in three short years, killing 580,000 people and razing 985 villages. Countless more were starved and



suffocated in the caves where they took refuge and whose escape route he blocked. To ensure that Judea would never rise again, Hadrian renamed it Syria-Palestina, deepening the country's desolation and economic decline.

The **British Museum** has a natural interest in the man who built a wall from Cumbria to South Shields, the furthest reach of his empire. In **Hadrian: Empire and Conflict** (until 26 October), this man of war is equally a man of culture with a penchant for architecture. Hadrian consolidated, rather than expanded, the Roman Empire, and his Roman Pantheon has been famously copied, notably in the Museum's own magnificent Reading Room, where architectural treasures and sculptural fragments loaned from Israel and Europe recreate an extensive journey back to ancient Rome. There is an impressive model of Hadrian's luxurious villa, the Tivoli Gardens, just outside Rome.

However, the man who freed slaves and grieved at the death of his young Greek lover, Antinous, was to the Jews a hideous antisemite, a Hitlerian prototype. The Israel Museum has provided moving evidence of life for the Jews hidden in the Cave of Letters, west of the Dead Sea, including bronze implements and utensils, rough knives and keys, coins on which Hadrian's head is daringly over-struck with Temple and other Jewish motifs, including a perfect cut glass bowl, all preserved by the climate of the Judean desert. The revolt of Bar-Kochba, Son of the Star, was finally suppressed in AD 136.

Wyndham Lewis was an apologist for Hitler who refused to take Nazi antisemitism seriously. Although he later recanted, his reputation never recovered. An exhibition of his 58 portraits at the **National Portrait Gallery** describes a confused personality of multiple gifts and electrifying personality. He founded the Vorticist movement in 1914 and edited the cult journal *Blast*, in which he attacked Victorian provincialism and prescribed a pure, English art form. A somewhat uncouth Modernist of energy and wit, Lewis wrote ten books and produced paintings in diverse styles in an attempt to recreate the Avant-Garde movement which died in the wake of the First World War. His striking portraits of literary celebs, notably T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Stephen Spender, James Joyce and Edith Sitwell, first marked him as an artist of style, rather than substance. He won

plaudits probably in excess of his talents, particularly from Walter Sickert, who described him as 'the greatest portraitist of this or any other time' for his incisive art-deco drawing of Dame Rebecca West.

After illness and poverty softened Lewis's character, his portraits reflected a kinder, more compassionate artist at work, particularly those of his long-suffering wife, Froanna. Almost blinded by a terminal brain tumour, his final portrait of T. S. Eliot poignantly suggests a mirror of what Lewis might have been – a great artist and Nobel laureate.

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

A moving family memoir

MY FATHER'S ROSES: ONE FAMILY, TWO WARS, THREE GENERATIONS DIVIDED BY FATE AND BOUND THROUGH LOVE

by Nancy Kohner

Hodder and Stoughton, 2008, 304 pp. hardcover

Nancy Kohner's father Rudi came to Bradford before the war from Czechoslovakia, but her mother Olive was a Yorkshire lass. Although Nancy had grown up surrounded by possessions which Rudi had managed to bring over from home, it was only after his death that she began to piece together the story of his family from the many letters, photos and journals she found.

I too grew up in Bradford. Before the Second World War Bradford was the wool centre of the world and many Jewish refugees from Germany and Eastern Europe were grateful to find a new home there. Rudi seems to have put his early life behind him and, as far as I know, had nothing to do with the Jewish community. Both of my parents came from Germany and German was the *lingua franca* the refugees spoke among themselves. When I started school, I was surprised to find that no one there understood German.

Many of the things Nancy mentions about her father are familiar (the Odol mouthwash and the tidily stacked shirts, for instance), but what I found particularly touching was the tone of the letters from Rudi's parents to their children – the rather philosophical exhortations to work hard at school (both boys were sent to school in Prague and had to lodge with friends from the age of ten). I have similar letters from my father, who wrote hundreds of letters to me from all over the world in his capacity as export manager for a textile firm.

Rudi had an older brother and sister. The brother was called Franz after Franz Josef, the Austro-Hungarian emperor. He fought in the First World War and was wounded in Italy. The parents had a shop in Podersam and a beautiful garden. The father, Heinrich, would go every morning to fetch a rose for his button hole, as did Rudi, who was an enthusiastic rose-grower in Bradford. My father did exactly the same thing.

One terrible letter is written by Franz to his wife in 1939, when the Germans had entered the Sudetenland and Edith had taken the children to relatives in the country. Franz, now a lawyer, is trying to tie up his affairs so they can emigrate to Ireland, but he writes of the difficulties of getting hold of the right people and

overcoming the bureaucratic nightmare.

What comes over so strongly in this beautifully written book is the deep affection of the family members for each other and how they try to support one another. Particularly moving are the letters from the mother, Valerie. She was left in Prague and finally died in Treblinka. Her only thought is that her family, who have emigrated, should be well and happy.

Nancy's desire to identify with the family she knew through their letters and photos is compelling. Sadly, she died of cancer before the book was published.

Catherine Reuben

Humanitarian values in the true sense

HIDDEN CHILDREN OF THE HOLOCAUST: BELGIAN NUNS AND THEIR DARING RESCUE OF YOUNG JEWS FROM THE NAZIS

by Suzanne Vromen

Oxford University Press, 2008, 178 pp.

More than 50 Belgian sisters and mother superiors have been honoured by Yad Vashem as Righteous among the Nations for their selfless mission to rescue and hide Jewish children, often infants, from the relentless round-ups of the Nazis.

Professor of Sociology Suzanne Vromen is herself Belgian-born. Her close family having escaped to the former Belgian Congo, she too experienced the sudden dislocation and fearful atmosphere that pervaded the Jewish community following the 1940 German occupation. But this book is not only a sociological study of the organisation of education, health and care for the elderly, all of which was the responsibility of the Church: with penetrating insight, it takes the reader to the heart of those critical days, when one could almost say that snatching children away from their parents moments before the Nazis knocked on the door was the only hope for their survival.

The terse style underscores not only the emotional turmoil of the mother but also the cool, swift reasoning of the escort who secreted the child to an unknown destination with a new name and a new faith, Catholicism.

Vromen reveals a world of difficult choices. By 1942 the round-up of Jews had begun and there was hardly any public outcry from the higher echelons of the churches. The divided population, with the Flemish, many of them steeped in the culture of their National League and with a collaborative fascist ideology, tilted the survival rate of the Jews in favour of the French-speaking population. About half of the 60,000 Jews living in Belgium

went into hiding. The children needed to be placed elsewhere and the mothers became the first rescuers, hoping to find help from neighbours, priests and boarding schools.

The rescue operation depended on an active resistance network which enabled Jews and non-Jews to smuggle the children away and the clandestine Committee for the Defence of the Jews, who were instrumental in keeping a system of Jewish households with children without revealing names and addresses.

The convents, and in some cases orphanages, integrated the children into existing institutions with a new identity. They frequently experienced difficulties in providing additional food in times of scarcity. For the children, the sudden displacement caused much anxiety and Vromen comments on the emotional problems experienced then as well as in later life.

The wealth of information regarding the motivation of the sisters and, in particular, the mother superiors to take risks for the purpose of saving lives makes heart-warming reading. Humanitarian values in the true sense were their guiding principle and these acts instilled a healing process on the lives of the hidden in their adulthood.

Susan Pollack

A question of double standards

RELUCTANT REFUGEE: THE STORY OF ASYLUM IN BRITAIN

by Edie Friedman and Reva Klein

The British Library, 2008, 153 pp. paper, £14.95

We in this country tend to believe that immigration is a recent issue. But this little book shows us that things have not really changed – over several hundred years in fact.

We must first distinguish between 'refugees' – those who leave their homes to escape persecution – and 'migrants' – those who come seeking better economic conditions. An action of the United Nations, in the immediate aftermath of the existence of large numbers of displaced persons, mainly in Europe, was the establishment of protocols for the rights of refugees. The basic principles still apply, but the overall situation is very different. There is much confusion about immigrants, often fostered by the press and politicians.

The first large influx into England after 1066 was that of many thousands of Huguenots at the end of the sixteenth century – Protestants from the Low Countries, France and elsewhere fleeing

religious persecution. In one sense, they were welcomed as they were leaving countries such as France, with which England was frequently at war. A second wave came some 100 years later. When later they were given full legal status there was an outcry, due partly to British protectionism and partly to anti-French feelings, accompanied by rioting. This double standard – offering help to people fleeing persecution while resenting their presence – has continued ever since.

As the authors note, on many occasions a group of settled refugees often resents the arrival of the next wave. Quite apart from the feelings of other residents, Jews arriving in England towards the end of the nineteenth century, largely from Poland and Russia, were not welcomed by Jews who had settled here earlier. Readers of this journal are, of course, familiar with the treatment of refugees from the Nazis. Yes, we were given assistance by the 'natives', but there were also many problems, not least internment. For the government, it was a question of 'What do we do with the Jews?' rather than 'How can we help these people avoid persecution and death?' In 1945 residents of Hampstead organised a petition requesting the repatriation of the 'aliens of Hampstead' to free up housing for returning ex-servicemen.

There have been other, more recent arrivals, such as Ugandan Asians and refugees from conflicts in many parts of the world. Those seeking asylum have a tough job. The tidy minds of civil servants create difficult rules. You must have a valid passport and many other documents: without these you cannot enter the country. Yet if you are fleeing real persecution you may find it difficult to obtain such documents. And if you *do* have all these documents, the immigration officer will often refuse entry because you cannot be a genuine asylum-seeker. Applying for asylum is a lengthy process too. The person seeking entry has to do everything in a hurry but the immigration service often takes weeks, even months, to rule on the case. While the case is being considered, the asylum-seeker is held in a detention centre, at state expense, without money and not permitted to work. Children, who should be at school, are frequently denied such facilities. There is much ignorance too – many people seem to believe that most of the world's refugees are in the UK.

The authors write passionately and persuasively. One shares their anger at the injustices of the UK immigration system as currently implemented. An informative but depressing book.

Paul Samet

Reviews continued on page 10

MONDAY MORNING NEWS

Monday 30 June 2008, the day after a huge celebration by Jewish people on Trafalgar Square for the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel, was marked by deafening silence on television and other media, supported by **our money**. Not a word about the enthusiasm or the speeches by the Chief Rabbi, the Mayor of London and others – instead, an article appeared about a demonstration by opponents! Other news, however, made the headlines.

On that day, Mugabe, who has been sworn in as president of Zimbabwe for the sixth time, was welcomed by African leaders at their gathering in Sharm el Sheikh, once captured and returned by Israeli forces. His continuing tenure of office, following the sham election, could be terminated instantly by sequestering his worldwide bank accounts. Words by British and other leaders have no effect -

but worse, the government generously awards **our money** to African nations which support that monstrous regime.

Also, yet more youths were reported to have been killed on the streets of Britain and more British soldiers have died in Afghanistan – for Queen and country! That state produces the vast majority of the world's drugs, which support and increase the numbers of marauders whom Britain's youth is fighting. Those drugs cost unaccountable lives throughout the world, as well as vast amounts of **our money** in hunting down their users and distributors. The destruction of Afghanistan's odious industry at its source would end this disastrous practice at a stroke.

The media were also celebrating the 60th anniversary of the health service, after earlier predicting its total collapse. All the government's optimistic speeches will not produce any improvements. The surger-

ies and the hospitals are increasingly inundated with people who have not contributed to the cost of running them. The only solution, apparently, is to throw more of **our money** at these institutions.

To cap it all, one bank after another is begging us for billions, responsible for bringing the world's economy to its knees by sheer mismanagement, misjudgement and incompetence and blaming one another for their own failures. They have lost our trust and confidence. With unprecedented audacity they ask us to rescue them with **our money**. They have failed, demonstrating their inability to foresee the obvious consequences, demonstrating their ineptitude yet again. The inevitably ensuing universal turmoil they have created is happening before our eyes. The future is bleak indeed.

The occasional good weather is the British contribution to global warming. Irrespective, it is no wonder that more and more of the indigenous population are leaving this country, making room for others with **our money**. Yet where do we go? Israel is probably the safest country in the world, but language and heat may be problems. At least there is no anti-Semitism, no police surveillance of our gatherings, and my tombstone is not likely to be desecrated!

When, as the only true refugees, we fled to this country from Germany and Austria, we felt free and life was good. But now, as Jews, we are almost insignificant, despite the encouraging words spoken of our disproportionate, yet tremendous contribution to British society and the economy. Let us continue to demonstrate our virtues and our bonds with Israel!

Fred Stern

This is an updated version of a letter which appeared in the Jewish News on 10 July 2008.

REVIEWS continued from page 9

'What we believe we create'

MY HOMETOWN CONCENTRATION CAMP: A SURVIVOR'S ACCOUNT OF LIFE IN THE KRAKÓW GHETTO AND PLASZÓW CONCENTRATION CAMP

by Bernard Offen, with Norman G. Jacobs

London: Vallentine Mitchell 2008, 144 pp. paper

I was privileged to meet Bernard Offen and Norman Jacobs when visiting Kraków in 2001 to research the fate of my paternal grandfather. I will never forget the bizarre experience of arriving in the city for the first time (with all the trepidation one has on such occasions), meeting Norman Jacobs in the Rynek – the central square – and sitting as peaceful as you like in the afternoon sunshine, drinking delicious Polish beer with him and one Bernard Offen, survivor of five concentration camps.

Bernard's account begins with his upbringing in Podgorze, Kraków, in a family of six not materially well off but, as he movingly says, enriched by their family and community links. Born in 1929, Bernard learned a variety of children's play skills that were to help him survive life under the Nazis: finding places to hide, negotiation, and bartering for special treats.

Family life was incrementally affected by the occupation: they had to move when the ghetto area was reduced and then some of his relatives were deported. Bernard describes, often in stark detail, what happened to him, his father and two

brothers and other community members, scarcely referring to his feelings then or in retrospect.

Settled in the USA after the war, Bernard, like so many survivors and refugees, devoted himself to raising a family and putting the past behind him. But on retirement he recognised his need to address his wartime experiences – and relate them to today's world. Some readers may struggle with this part of the book, though I – especially perhaps after having met the author – find it inspirational.

Some paragraphs describe stages of a guided walk Bernard created to show visitors key points in his wartime experiences: his aim was to train young Krakovians to lead these walks themselves. The book contains sufficient historical detail to put his experiences and outlook into context.

Bernard has reached the conclusion that 'what we believe we create', and this is why we live in a world with conflicts and genocidal acts. He is a supporter of dialogue and reconciliation. He is prepared to practise what he preaches, giving talks and participating in discussions in several countries, including Poland and Germany, with survivors of other traumatic events as well as with the descendant of a perpetrator.

A challenging read then and probably an uncomfortable one for those who don't share Bernard Offen's *Weltanschauung*. But in my opinion, this is a book well worth reading and reflecting on.

Barbara Dresner Dorrity



Hannele with Schlagobers

The first-night audience greeted one another like the old friends they were and settled back in their chairs. I could hear the hum of anticipation from the other side of the curtain. There were only about 40 of them in the dining room of our house in Hietzing, but they were of the cream – the very Schlagobers – of Vienna. Taking a forbidden peek, I spotted old father Freud, his daughter Anna, Kokoschka, Alban Berg, the violinist Rostal, Adolf Loos, my mother's aunt Yvette Guilbert, the chanteuse immortalised by Toulouse-Lautrec, Max Reinhardt with a cohort of disciples, and more. They had all been inveigled to watch an amateur performance of Gerhart Hauptmann's *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (Hannele Heavenbound).

Hauptmann, then Germany's foremost living dramatist, considered himself the reincarnation of Goethe, cultivating the master's very looks and locks, and going one better than the old man by being awarded the Nobel Prize in 1912. His social dramas, with their unsparing depiction of proletarian degradation, provided the kitchen sink plays of his day. Later, in his fairy tale plays, he added an element of fantasy to grim reality. *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* was his masterpiece in that genre.

I don't know whether my father was attracted by magical naturalism or whether he thought that this strange mixture made it possible for a very adult play to be performed by children and adolescents. Maybe he was just dragooned by my mother into participating in a 'project' for the young people living as boarders in my parents' house. Many of them attended an experimental school in our back garden, run under the aegis of Anna Freud on the project principle. Which meant that at any one time, the entire school worked on the same subject, each age group according to its capacity. During my brief time as a pupil there, I did Eskimos with a thoroughness that has left me an expert on blubber to this day; there was a rumour that a rich American parent had donated an Eskimo for the older students to dissect.

Casting began. I had my eye on the part of the tailor, small but important, with plenty of scope for hamming it up. Playing

the part of a hump-back, my small stature would be no obstacle. The part of Hannele went to my cousin, who was 14, the exact age of the character she portrayed: she even had the long red tresses called for. My sister, much older than I, played the principal male part of teacher Gottwald; the equally important part of the deaconess went to a young patient of Anna Freud, Minna Mach, who was to enter psychoanalytic history for reasons other than her amazing performance. I learned my lines, rehearsed a grotesque walk in secret, and was duly auditioned by my parents. Nothing was said at the time, but later my mother took me to one side and explained that I was too young for the part and would be given the lesser role of an angel instead. It was the first of many auditions in which I failed to get the part.

Rehearsals started with my father sitting us down and explaining the play. He was in his element. Between delivering psycho-sociological interpretations, he rigged up the complicated lighting which was to mark the difference between raw reality and the dream scenes, wrote incidental music under the tutelage of Alban Berg, rushing back and forth between piano and harmonium to play it, and worked the vacuum cleaner to simulate the storm outside every time the door to the poorhouse was opened. All props were made in the school; I particularly remember the sword of the Angel of Death with flames spurting from it as demanded by Hauptmann, and my cardboard angel's wings, the left irritatingly lower than the right. Only one professional was involved, a make-up artist to age our childish faces. The layout of the ground floor and stairs made the perfect stage. Loos had provided a silk curtain which conveniently divided dining room from hall and staircase, and thus stalls from stage. Only the telephone mounted on the wall struck a false note – indeed spectacularly so when one day during rehearsal it rang just as the deaconess had to speak the words 'Be brief, thou black and awful ghost.' Helpless laughter put an end to rehearsals for that afternoon.

As the first night approached, the tension became almost unbearable. Stage and home

being the same – breakfast in the poorhouse, lunch with the Angel of Death, dinner by the pale light of Hannele's death bed – we lived a theatrical dream. I slept with my wings beside me. We were children, but bewitched and transformed, transcending our limitations in a cloud of Hauptmann's fairy dust. Drunk with elation, I expected the public to tear through the silk curtain and enfold us in its arms. Instead, on the first night, there was total silence as my father drew the final curtain – and then the relief of a detonation of applause.

We gave three performances and could have filled our dining room ten times over. Our Hannele was the talk of Vienna. Reinhardt asked whether we would do the show in his theatre school in nearby Schönbrunn. But Anna Freud, notoriously publicity-averse, vetoed the idea. And Sigmund Freud confined himself to a cryptic compliment addressed to my father: 'Anyone who can produce an anxiety attack with a vacuum cleaner is wasted as a lawyer!' The boy who played the tailor was much better than I would have been in the part.

Victor Ross

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY – OCTOBER

Mon 6 Geoffrey Ben-Nathan 'The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Its History and Achievements' Club 43

Mon 13 No lecture (hall not available) Club 43

Mon 20 No lecture (hall not available) Club 43

Mon 27 Ken Baldry 'The Cross-Swiss Walk' Club 43

Tues 28 Kristallnacht 70th: Kaddish Commemorative Concert Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, conducted by John Axelrod. Programme includes Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 3 (Kaddish). Holocaust Centre in association with AJR (among others) Barbican Hall, London EC2, 7.30 pm Tel Holocaust Centre on 01623 836 627

Mon 3 Nov Gerald Holm 'Karajan 100' Club 43

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

INSIDE the AJR

Leeds HSFA: 'Self-construct as a Holocaust victim'

Mervyn Lebor told us about Sylvia Plath's 'self-construct' as a Holocaust victim. This eminent poet, wife of the poet Ted Hughes, was of German and Austrian descent, but not Jewish. She strongly identified with the victims of the Holocaust and there is much Holocaust imagery in her poems.

Martin Kapel

Enchanting morning in Essex

We were entertained magnificently by Tony Compton on his accordion. Some of the girls even danced to the enthralling tunes. An unforgettable, enchanting morning.

Ken Ward

Ilford fifth birthday party

Twenty-eight people attended our fifth birthday party – Edith Poulsen had the honour of blowing out the candles on the cake. Myrna encouraged members to recall a special party in their lives and we heard some interesting anecdotes.

Meta Roseneil

Wembley CF: Holiday stories

A very well-attended meeting. The Stantons spoke about their recent trip to Brazil, Fred Stern about his holiday in Iceland and Norway, and Otto Hornung about a visit to Mexico years ago. **No meeting in October due to Jewish holidays.**

Irene Stanton

Cambridge: The remarkable Bertha Leverton

Kindertransport doyenne Bertha Leverton told us how she organised reunions to commemorate the 50th and 60th anniversaries of the Kindertransport and spoke about the 70th anniversary reunion due this November. A remarkable lady!

Keith Lawson

Next meeting: 30 Oct. Fred Nissin, 'The Geneziah Collections'

West Midlands (Birmingham) talk on Kitchener Camp

Prof Clare Ungerson showed a film, and gave a talk about, Kitchener Camp, set up in Kent for refugees from Nazism. A number of these refugees later joined the Pioneer Corps.

Joe Seager

Next meeting: 4 November

HGS: A fascinating life

Our speaker, Geoffrey Perry, came to England from Berlin in 1936 and, following internment, joined the British Army. In 1945 he shot and arrested William Joyce in a forest near Hamburg. The following year he left the Army with the rank of major. He had a successful post-war career in publishing. **No meeting in October due to Jewish holidays.**

Laszlo Roman

Brighton & Hove Sarid: A rare treat

It was a rare treat to hear local historian Godfrey Gould speak about Rufus Isaacs, the

First Marquis of Reading. Among many other things, Rufus, born in 1860, became Solicitor General, Attorney General, Lord Chief Justice, Viceroy of India and Foreign Secretary.

Shirley Huberman

Next meeting: 20 Oct. Wendy Funnell, 'Around the Golden Ring of Russia'

Harrogate CF: An emotional trip

Meeting at the home of Rosl and Marc Schatzberger in York, we saw pictures of their recent trip to Vienna as guests of the Austrian government. Rosl also told us about the emotional effect the trip had had on a granddaughter who had accompanied them. We hope to meet again in Harrogate on 10 November.

Inge Little

Hendon police briefing

Two local police officers spoke to us about problems such as mugging, burglary and identity theft. Neighbourhood Watch and Victim Support were very useful in dealing with crime, they told us.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: 27 Oct. George Layton, 'An Actor's Life'

North London discussion

Ronald Channing ably led a discussion on a number of subjects, largely with a post-war perspective, with most members present joining in. Regrettably the clock forced us to call 'time'.

Herbert Haberberg

Manchester power-point demonstration

Wiener Library Archivist Howard Falksohn gave a power-point demonstration on the origins of the Library and the important work it does. The audience was spell-bound. Susanne Green gave a brief report on AJR activities.

Werner Lachs

Pinner tea party

There were three dozen of us at Vera Gellman's house for our annual tea party. The rain stopped, enabling us to spend some time in her lovely garden before coming in for an excellent tea and a good chat.

Robert Gellman

Outing to Bletchley Park, 2 October

Picnic on a wet day in Oxford

On another wet day in August, Susie Bates and her family hosted a most enjoyable picnic in her large conservatory.

Anne Selinger

Edgware: 'The Science of God'

Ivor Richards gave a well presented talk on 'The Science of God'. In the discussion that followed, ideas from the Bible were discussed and names such as Rashi, Nachmanides and Darwin were mentioned. **No meeting in October due to Jewish holidays.**

Felix Winkler

Radlett musical presentation

Walter Woyda gave a presentation on *The Rothschilds – A Musical*. The attractiveness of the music led to a discussion on why, having been successful on Broadway, it had never been performed in the UK. **No meeting in October due to Jewish holidays.**

Fritz Starer



A 'mind-blowing' experience: Guest speaker Suzanne Bardgett, Project Director of the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition, pictured with Peter Kurer, who gave the vote of thanks, at the annual Northern Get-together in Manchester's Stenecourt Synagogue. Over 75 AJR members were present. A member from Ellesmere Port, at his first AJR meeting, remarked: 'It's been mind-blowing!'

Surrey annual garden party

Once again Vernon and Jutta Saunders hosted the summer lunch, having also hosted the spring coffee morning. They served guests in the most charming manner with food, soft drinks and wine, while their granddaughter entertained us with card tricks.

Hans Meyer

Temple Fortune: Where there's a will

Solicitor Michael Anvoner gave us an informative talk on the sensitive issue of 'Making Your Will'. His advice was very well received.

Esther Rinkoff

Next meeting: 16 October. Social Get-together in succah

Dance therapy at Cleve Road

Dance and movement therapist Jacqueline Waltz demonstrated modern dance techniques. Using a variety of props, members saw how dance can help people feel better about themselves – even if one remains seated!

Myrna Glass

Next meeting: 28 Oct. Roger Beales, Bank of England

Essex magical operatic morning

A magical operatic morning spent listening to Alan Bilgora's collection of famous Jewish singers. Alan's presentation never fails to stimulate. **No meeting in October due to Jewish holidays.**

Esther Rinkoff

Welwyn Garden City discussion of past

Once more Monica Rosenbaum extended hospitality to us with warm drinks and super biscuits. We talked about our past, concentrating on our working lives.

Susanne Graham

Next meeting: 23 Oct. Social Get-together at home of Monica Rosenbaum

Leeds CF: A rare sunny day

We held our annual garden party at the home of volunteer Pippa Landey in the pretty nearby village of Thorner. Ruth Rogoff gave a fascinating talk about a recent visit to her maternal birthplace, Siret, in Romania. We enjoyed afternoon tea in the garden on a rare sunny day.

Barbara Cammerman

North London 7th birthday party

Our 7th birthday party was very successful. We were entertained by Naomi Hyamson, ably accompanied by Jenny Gould, with a selection of songs. In between, conversation flowed, as has become customary at our functions.

Herbert Haberberg

Next meeting: 30 Oct. Rabbi Daniela Thau, 'Diversity in Faith - The Nine World Faiths'

ALSO MEETING IN OCTOBER

Kingston upon Thames CF 28 Oct. Social Get-together

Scotland and Newcastle Get-together: A very stimulating day

Some 40 members met for our annual summer Get-together in Edinburgh. The day's programme started with an attractive choice of discussion groups (Legacy, Second Generation or Experience of Childhood in a New Country). After lunch we heard an excellent presentation from Anita Parmar, of the Holocaust Educational Trust. The day ended with musical entertainment by Gica Loening. A very stimulating day.

Philip Mason

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

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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

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Bob Norton 01159 212 494

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Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

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Inge Little 01423 886254

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Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

HGS
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

Hull
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Ilford
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Leeds HSFA
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

PAUL BALINT AJR CENTRE

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NORTHERN SECOND GENERATION MEETING

Our 12th meeting will
take place in Leeds
on

Sunday 12 October 2008,
10.30 am to 4 pm

We will be discussing recent images of
second generation people
portrayed on the television
For further information, please contact
Barbara on 0161 368 5088
or at barbara@ajr.org.uk

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

KT-AJR

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Monday 6 October 2008

Deborah Hass

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October	Afternoon Entertainment:
Wed 1	CLOSED - ROSH HASHANA
Thur 2	Guyathrie Peiris & Bill Patrick
Mon 6	KT LUNCH - Kards & Games Klub
Tue 7	CLOSED
Wed 8	CLOSED - YOM KIPPUR
Thur 9	CLOSED - YOM KIPPUR
Mon 13	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 14	CLOSED
Wed 15	CLOSED - SUCCOTH
Thur 16	Michael Heaton
Mon 20	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 21	CLOSED
Wed 22	CLOSED - SIMCHATH TORAH
Thur 23	Katinka Seiner
Mon 27	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 28	CLOSED
Wed 29	Jen Gould
Thur 30	Sheila Games

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

Members requiring benefit advice please telephone
Linda Kasmir on 020 8385 3070 to make an
appointment at AJR, Jubilee House, Merriion 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

Bieber, Lyddia (Traute) Congratulations on her 100th birthday from all her family.

Stern, Fred Congratulations on your 85th birthday. We all enjoyed the memorable day we spent with you on your birthday and wish you many more years of good health and happiness. Love from all your family and Hetty.

Deaths

Black (née Amiel), Lela Born 15 January 1918 in Salonica, Greece, died 7 August 2008 in London. Daughter Marcelle, son-in-law Jeff, and granddaughters Jacqueline and Danielle would like to thank the staff at AJR for all their support and kindness throughout Lela's illness.

Brainin, Julius (Jussi) We are sad to announce the death of our dear husband and father. Born Vienna 11 August 1919, died Oxford 22 August 2008. He took care of everyone. His wife Liesl, children Carole, Kay (Jack) and Danny (Dany), grandchildren Tom, Ben, Joe, Kira (Iain), Katie, Hannah, Jesse and Julia, great-grandchildren Lilianna and Imogen (see Obituaries).

Clark, May Passed away suddenly on 11 July to the deep sorrow of the Shreir family and many friends. He will be missed always. Shalom.

Panofsky (née Hirschland), Margot Died in Tucson, Arizona on 28 August 2008. She was 88 years old and came to the UK in 1939.

PAUL BALINT AJR CENTRE

Jackie Waltz will be at the Centre on Wednesday 29 October at 11 am for music and movement.

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KINDERTRANSPORT 70TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION ELY EVACUEES

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

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

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OBITUARIES

Julius (Jussi) Brainin

Jussi was the son of Margaret Beck, from a family long established in Vienna, and Sigmund Brainin, from what was then Russia. Both sides of the family were Jewish, but no longer practising, and Jussi himself was firmly secular all his life.

As a youth, he was a passionate Zionist and longed to join the Israeli navy, but his parents wouldn't allow it. In 1937, when he was 17, his father sent him to England to learn the textile trade. Later his parents fled to the United States; most of the rest of his family escaped the Holocaust as well.

In September 1939 Jussi met Liesl Kelsen, also from Vienna, and in July 1940 they married. A week after their wedding Jussi was interned on the Isle of Man. Three months later he was released to join the Pioneer Corps; he ended the war in Intelligence.

In 1948 he emigrated with his wife and small daughter to Canada. There he succeeded triumphantly, building up an insurance brokerage in Montreal and adding a second daughter and a son to his family.

In the 1970s, Quebec separatism affected



his business so badly that he decided to return to the UK. He and his wife arrived in 1978, with little left from their 30 good Canadian years. Undaunted, Jussi soon set up his own management consultancy for insurance brokers. For the second time, he built up a successful business, and this time history let him keep it. He worked until he was over 80, retiring in 1999.

His retirement was darkened by the descent into dementia of Liesl, with whom he celebrated 68 years of marriage this year. But he returned to an old passion – writing – and produced several volumes of memoirs. Having lived most of his life in cities, he enjoyed his retirement in the English countryside.

Jussi Brainin made friends everywhere. He loved history, politics and travel. And food, especially Middle European food. He was the complete Victorian paterfamilias, devoted to his family, never owing a penny. He was extraordinarily brave, pulling his life up by the bootstraps several times over. Above all, he was independent, and would have hated a long decline. When all is said and done, he was a lucky man.

Alice Rischer

Alice Rischer died on 1 July at the age of 100. She had the unusual distinction of surviving the Third Reich and the Second World War in Germany.

Alice lived in Breslau (now Wrocław) with her husband Paul and her mother. Paul was a non-Jew, an upright man of unbending principle who hated the Nazis. When the round-up of Jews began, Alice and her mother were taken to the local prison to await the departure of the next transport for the camps. Paul knew the gaoler and bribed him, so that Alice remained in the gaol. But her mother could not be saved and was deported and never heard of again. Paul eventually got his wife out and she found work in a clothing factory. Paul had been thrown out of the army for refusing to divorce his Jewish wife, which may also have saved his life. Together they dodged the Nazis and the Russian bombardment in 1945, when 70 per cent of the city was destroyed.

When Breslau became Polish, Alice and her husband joined the exodus to the west,

and in time made contact with Alice's brother in England. The only way to get to England for people in their position at that time was as domestic servants. Alice became cook and Paul butler (despite speaking no English) to an aristocratic family in Gloucestershire. They were treated kindly and offered a permanent position and a small house, but they wanted to start a new life. They moved to London and found work, both with small wholesale companies. Paul died at the age of 60. Alice went on working, living alone, but with a circle of good friends and close links with her elder sister in America, her brothers (one in London, the other in Brazil), and Paul's family in Germany.

Alice had an equable temperament, bore no marks of trauma or rancour from her experiences, and was much loved. She lived to the end of her life in her one-room flat in West Hampstead, sustained in her final years by kind carers, uncomplaining, lucid and interested in people and the world until the day of her death.

Walter Gratzner

AJR REPORT

Michael Newman

Austrian Remembrance Grant

To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Anschluss, the Austrian government has announced it will make a one-time 1,000 Euros (approximately £800) Remembrance Grant to certain Austrian Holocaust victims.

Eligibility is restricted to those who have an Austrian Victim's Identity Card (*Opferausweis* or *Amtsbescheinigung*), those who have a Liberation Medal, and those who have received certain 'support benefits' from the Austrian National Fund. You are also entitled to receive the Remembrance Grant if you are in receipt of a victim's pension (*Opferrente*) (this is not the same as the pension paid by the *Pensionsversicherungsanstalt*).

To be entitled to receive an *Opferausweis* you must have been imprisoned for a minimum of three months or forced to leave Austria for more than three and a half years having been a victim of Nazi persecution. To receive the *Amtsbescheinigung* you must demonstrate that you were in prison for at least one year or incarcerated in a concentration camp for a minimum of six months.

For both, you must also hold current Austrian citizenship. If you are interested in applying for Austrian citizenship, you should contact the Austrian embassy on 020 7344 3266. Please note that you must be able to demonstrate that you lived in Austria between 1918 and 1938 or that your father held Austrian citizenship during this time. As well as completing the application form, you will need to supply, as far as is possible, copies of documents such as your birth certificate, proof of your father's residency – and citizenship – in Austria, and your marriage certificate (for women who may have changed their name). You must also submit a copy of the photograph page in your current passport.

To find out if you are entitled to the Remembrance Grant, you can also contact the City of Vienna, MA 40, Victims' Welfare on 0043-1-4000-40782 (contact address: Thomas Klestil-Platz 8/2, 1030 Vienna, Austria). Depending on your wartime experiences, the Victims' Welfare department will send you a letter confirming your entitlement to the Remembrance Grant.

The deadline to apply for *Opferausweis*, *Amtsbescheinigung* or *Opferrente* is 31 December 2008. The deadline to apply for the Remembrance Grant is 7 May 2009.

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



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



Creating a dialogue

The Jerusalem Theatre foyer was abuzz with unfamiliar activity when we arrived for our subscription concert with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra a few weeks ago. Tables were being set up with food and soft drinks. Furthermore, unusually large numbers of young people were to be seen in that generally rather staid environment.

A word is in order at this point about the Jerusalem Theatre, one of the foci of the city's cultural and artistic life. It has several auditoria where plays and concerts are performed and films are shown simultaneously. In addition, there is a bookshop which also sells CDs, a pleasant restaurant-cum-café, and public areas where works of local artists are exhibited. Its streamlined architecture manages at the same time to be warm and friendly. One almost invariably bumps into someone one knows, as many of Jerusalem's 'culture vultures' seem to move in the same circles. It must be said, however, that the audience generally tends towards the upper age range of the population.

On the evening in question, however, it was obvious that the audience was not the usual homogeneous mix. The event that we happened upon was a special reunion performance marking the twentieth anniversary of Peace Child Israel, a venture that brings Arab and Jewish youngsters together.

The aim of the organisation, as stated in its mission statement, is 'to promote and contribute to a life of peace and equality between Arab and Jewish citizens in Israel'. The enterprise, the brainchild of the late Habima actress Yael Drouyanoff, was set up in 1988 as a drama workshop for both Arab and Jewish teenagers. It began in Tel Aviv/Jaffa but has gradually spread to the rest of Israel.

In the framework of the organisation's activities, youngsters from the Arab town of Tira have been paired with their counterparts from Kochav Yair, Ramle with Petah Tikva, Nazareth with Yagur,

and Sheikh Dinun in Western Galilee with Ofek, to name but a few. The youngsters meet regularly, get to know one another, work together on writing a play about their lives, and finally put on bilingual Arabic-Hebrew performances for schools as well as for adult audiences. After each performance the young actors come out onto the stage and engage in a question-and-answer session with the audience, thus stimulating further discussion.

Since this has been going on for 20 years, there are by now many 'graduates' of the programme, adults working in various spheres of life who are eager to share their experience with the younger generation. In addition, many prominent Jewish and Arab musicians and actors in Israel are involved in the programme, donating their time, energy and talents to fostering the youngsters' abilities and aiding them in writing and putting on their own plays.

Of course, the most important facet of the programme is the creation of a dialogue between the younger generations of the two nations, helping them to overcome prejudices and to get to know the person behind the stereotype. There have even been attempts to extend the programme to include Palestinian teenagers from East Jerusalem.

The anniversary event brought together current and former participants in the programme, including singer Shlomo Gronich, who composed the organisation's anthem, and other well-known figures from Israel's entertainment world such as Moni Moshonov and Dan Almagor.

The programme was featured on the BBC World News a few months ago, and is supported by the War Child organisation in the Netherlands. Although some funds were initially provided by the Israeli government, these have now dried up, so that the organisation is eager to raise funds from other sources. More information is available on its website: www.mideastweb.org/peacechild

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Newsround

Nazi records on forced labourers digitalised

The International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Germany, has digitalised over 6.7 million documents relating to forced and slave labour during the Nazi regime and immediate post-war period. The lists contain details of places of residence, employers, employment periods, marriages, births and gravesites.

Rescuer of Slovak Jews celebrates hundredth birthday

Andre Steiner, who was behind one of the most daring – and overlooked – missions to rescue Jews in the Holocaust, has turned 100. As a member of the underground Bratislava Working Group, Steiner engineered a plan to stave off the deportation of Slovakia's Jews through a network of work camps and bribes that possibly saved the lives of thousands. After the war he became a celebrated architect in the USA.

Kafka, Zionism and Israel

The recent discovery of writings by Franz Kafka in a Tel Aviv flat has prompted renewed speculation into his attitude to Zionism. The *New York Times* cites a 1949 letter from Kafka's lover Dora Diamant to his friend Max Brod claiming that Kafka had always wanted 'to make aliyah and come to Israel'. In his new book, *The Tremendous World I Have Inside My Head: Franz Kafka: A Biographical Essay*, Louis Begley quotes Kafka as saying 'I admire Zionism and am nauseated by it.'

Rome mayor's remarks on Fascism condemned

Italian Jewish leaders have criticised Rome's mayor, Gianni Alemanno, for declaring that Italy's Fascist-era anti-Semitic laws – and not Fascism itself – constitute 'absolute evil'. The mayor's remark came in an interview with *Corriere della Sera* while he was on a visit to Israel. Riccardo Pacifici, president of Rome's Jewish community, said, according to a report in the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 'We are awaiting a strong public clarification.'

Painter revisits lost world of childhood

Born in the Polish town of Opatow (Apt in Yiddish), Mayer Kirshenblatt has taken part in this year's Cracow Jewish Cultural Festival. In 1990, aged 73, Kirshenblatt taught himself to paint and began recording the lost world of his childhood town. His recollections of pre-war Jewish life in Apt, conveyed to his daughter, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, were published last year along with 200 of his paintings in the book *They Called Me Mayer July* (slang at the time for 'Crazy Mayer').