

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Three perspectives on Venice

Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee;/And was the safeguard of the West: the worth/ Of Venice did not fall below her birth,/ Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.' So begins Wordsworth's poem 'On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic' (1802), written in reaction to the Napoleonic occupation which in 1797 had marked the end of the proud city's independence. Wordsworth's lament for the fall of 'La Serenissima' recalled the city's dominance over the

trade routes to the East on which its fabled wealth and power were founded. He also used the 'democratic' elements in the Venetian constitution – the Doge owed his office as head of state to election, not royal birth, and his powers were constrained by the city's central body of government, the Signoria – to depict Venice as a freedom-loving victim of Bonapartist tyranny, and thus as an example to Britons fighting to preserve their freedoms from the French.

The British have been captivated by Venice – from Turner, Browning and Ruskin to John Julius Norwich and Jan Morris – and so have the Germans, who have tended to associate the city with concepts of art, beauty and perfection of form. Goethe visited Venice during his Italian journey (1786-88), the model for the many voyages of discovery made by German writers and artists seeking inspiration from the Classical culture and civilisation of the Mediterranean South; Wagner, who died in the Palazzo Vendramin overlooking the Grand Canal, loved and was inspired by Venice.

The most famous evocation of Venice in German literature is, of course, Thomas Mann's novella *Der Tod in Venedig* (*Death in Venice*) (1912), widely known through Luchino Visconti's 1971 film, starring Dirk Bogarde. Mann drew on his own visit to Venice in 1911, but could also build on an established tradition of German writing about Venice, notably the finely crafted



St Mark's Square, Venice

collection of sonnets, the *Sonette aus Venedig*, by the homosexual poet August Graf von Platen (1796-1835), who visited the city in 1824.

The subject of *Death in Venice* is art – art and its striving after beauty, both seen as deeply ambiguous and double-edged phenomena. For when the writer Gustav von Aschenbach encounters the beautiful Polish boy Tadzio at the Hôtel des Bains on Venice's Lido and falls prey to a homosexual infatuation that lays low all his powers of resistance, moral and ultimately physical, he is also encountering, incorporated in human form, the ideal of perfect formal beauty that he has been struggling to recreate as an artist in his works. In other words, it is perfect beauty of form that destroys Aschenbach; it is art that kills him, not the cholera epidemic that struck Venice in 1911.

The opposition of art to life is the central theme running through Mann's early works, where 'healthy' life and conventional morality are contrasted with art, crime, disease, immorality, perversion and death, all seen as 'unhealthy' aberrations from the path of solid bourgeois normality. Aschenbach had in his younger days indulged in the moral relativism typical of 'decadent' writers of the *fin-de-siècle*, with its potential for undermining established moral values. To escape this risk of immorality, he aspires in later years to create

works of art that achieve a Classical perfection of form, a formal symmetry and beauty that carry the edifying appearance of purity, nobility and harmony, thus seemingly exerting a morally elevating effect on his readers; extracts from his later works are duly reprinted in school textbooks, a bitter irony in view of the truths revealed in the course of the novella.

For the impact of pure beauty is not moral at all. Formal beauty is conveyed to us through our senses: its appeal is sensuous and its effect

aesthetic; it cannot be judged by moral criteria or pressed into the service of moral values. Aschenbach's ideal of art is therefore at best morally neutral; it can easily lurch into moral ambivalence or even downright immorality. Aschenbach begins by deluding himself into believing that he is admiring Tadzio disinterestedly, purely as an exemplar of formal beauty; he ends by following him through the litter-strewn, fly-blown, disease-ridden alleyways of Venice in a degrading state of voyeuristic sexual obsession.

Setting the tale of Aschenbach's downfall in Venice is Mann's masterstroke. For Venice is renowned for its beauty, but also for the corruption that lurks beneath its surface. The magnificent façade that the city presents to those who approach it by sea is deceptive, its seemingly uplifting nobility of aspect concealing a hinterland of decaying buildings and cutthroat commercialism, as well as a longstanding reputation for libertinism and sexual licence. In the novella, this element of hidden corruption is epitomised by the cholera that is breeding unseen in the stagnant waters of Venice's canals, a lethal menace tainting the very heart of its diseased beauty, and the worse for the fact that the municipal authorities are covering the epidemic up to protect their tourist trade. Aschenbach senses a complicity in crime,

continued overleaf

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON VENICE continued from page 1

recognising that the city's guilty secret makes it the appropriate backdrop for the illicit passion to which he has himself succumbed.

Mann memorably describes Venice as the 'flattering and suspect beauty' ('die schmeichlerische und verdächtige Schöne'), as a city 'half fairytale, half tourist trap'. He also highlights the Byzantine influence on its architecture, which he uses to characterise the city as one of the ports where the East gained entry to Western Europe. Apart from evoking Venice's history of relations with the East, this also refers to the route taken by the cholera epidemic, which spread from its sources in the Ganges delta in India via the trade routes of Asia to the coastal cities of the Mediterranean.

But this incursion of the East into the settled realm of Western civilisation also has a mythical dimension: the tigers that Aschenbach imagines lurking in the miasmatic undergrowth of the delta swamps are also the tigers that drew the chariot of Dionysos, god of wine and intoxication, on his path from India to Greece. Dionysos, however, represents the elemental, irrational, instinctive forces in human nature that can erupt, as they do in Aschenbach's case, overwhelming the rationality and disciplined moral order of Western civilisation; art, too, for all its ordered beauty, originates in the deeper, chaotic well-springs of inspiration and intuition. The cholera finds its way to Venice, as the tigers of Dionysos find their way to Aschenbach.

Jewish links with Venice

The Jewish perspective on Venice is very different. For Jews, Venice carries strong negative associations of stigmatisation and marginalisation alongside its aura of beauty. It was in Venice that the world's first ghetto was created, in 1516, to house the city's Jewish population separately; an influx of Jews fleeing from persecution in Spain after 1492 probably caused the city authorities to take this step. The area, in the Cannaregio district of the city, took its name from a foundry, 'geto' in Venetian, that had been located there. Jews were confined to the ghetto at night and had to wear identifying marks when they left the ghetto by day. The name was subsequently given to areas throughout the world where Jews were confined, and the practice of requiring Jews to wear distinctive badges or caps also became widespread. As the Jewish population of Venice grew, reaching over

5,000 in the mid-seventeenth century, the ghetto expanded from the original 'ghetto nuovo' ('new ghetto') to the confusingly named 'ghetto vecchio' ('old ghetto', though dating only from 1541).

Venice's association with antisemitic attitudes and prejudices is reinforced by the most celebrated work of fiction to which it gave rise, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. The figure of Shylock – model for so many antisemitic caricatures – and the raw antisemitism expressed by the play's Christian characters, remain deeply problematical, even disturbing, for Jews seeing or reading the play. For all the evidence in the play that Shylock is what a hostile gentile environment has made him, for all the eloquence of his plea for Jews as human beings – 'If you prick us do we not bleed?' – there remains in him, the Jew, an apparently irreducible core of villainy.

Readers of this journal may be interested to know that two Jewish scholars who had fled to Britain from Germany after 1933 produced memorable studies of Shylock after the war. One was the drama critic Hermann Sinsheimer, who had made his name in pre-Hitler Berlin. The other was Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum, who took Shylock's unwavering confidence in the sanctity of a legally binding contract – the contract guaranteeing him his pound of flesh, should his loan not be repaid – as the basis for his arresting characterisation of Shylock as 'the tragic champion of the law'.

By the Second World War, the Jewish community in Venice had greatly declined in numbers. Following the surrender of Italy to the Allies in September 1943, the Germans occupied Venice and deported some 200 Jews to the extermination camps. The names of the victims are commemorated on a monument in the ghetto; though two synagogues in the ghetto remain in use, Jews now live scattered across the city.

Anthony Grenville

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Bettine Le Beau, pictured here with fellow actor Robert Rietti, was a guest speaker at the annual show-business charity event organised for fans of *The Prisoner*, the 1960s science fiction TV series starring and co-created by Patrick McGoochan. Bettine appeared in three episodes of the cult series playing Lucette. At the event, which took place in Portmeirion, Bettine was invited to speak about her experiences and sign photos for the fans.

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY – SEPTEMBER

Mon 8 Dr Fred Rosner 'Busybodies and Champion Schnorrers: From Josephus and Jud Süß to Bruno Kreisky and Lord Levy' Club 43

Wed 10 Dr Frank Beck 'Kindertransport from Vienna to London and Minehead in 1939' Memorial Hall, Wincanton, Somerset, 7.00 pm. Talk sponsored by Wincanton and District Museum and History Society. Contact Derek Hudson on 01963 31663 or at derek.hudson@mail.com

Sun 14 Join the party at the third annual **Simcha on the Square 2008**. Trafalgar Square, London, 1-7 pm. Contact Geraldine Auerbach MBE, Director, Jewish Music Institute, or Di Robson on 020 8909 2445 or at jcu@jmi.org.uk

Mon 15 Dr Thomas Willimowski 'How a Berlin Journalist Kept Literary and Artistic Exiles from Hitler Together' Club 43

Sat 20 (9-10 pm), Sun 21 (10.30-5.30 pm), Mon 22 (7-9.30 pm). 'When Speech Forms a Bridge'. A Second and Third Generation Workshop. At Wiener Library. Email Katherine Klinger at k.klinger@wienerlibrary.co.uk

Mon 22 Jens Brüning 'Über Hans Jaeger: Sekretär und Präsident des Club 1943 (von 1946-1975)' (in German) Club 43

Mon 29 No lecture (hall not available) Club 43

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

Many kisses from little me'

An article I wrote for the magazine earlier this year has brought me much good fortune: I have found family all over the world I never knew I had. I was also put in touch with a group of people in my home town of Wolkersdorf after I had had no contact there since my parents and I were made to leave after the Anschluss. The group was mounting an exhibition –



First meeting in May 2008 with two of Charlotte Lang's newly found cousins, Kathleen Pearce and Bernard Brady. Charlotte is in the centre

'Wolkersdorf 1938' – about the Jewish families who used to live there, to which I contributed documents and photographs. On top of that, I have been in contact with pupils of the Wolkersdorf grammar school. They attended a memorial event this May at the Heldenplatz in Vienna 70 years after the Anschluss in remembrance of the Austrian Jews, including my grandparents and my uncle, who perished in the Holocaust. A placard was put up with my message to the people of Austria which included these words: 'How could such evil happen in a civilised country like Austria? ... I hope and pray that such evil will never happen again.'

By an amazing coincidence, shortly before this event I was put in touch with a genealogist in Vienna who had been contacted by a man in Perth, Western Australia, who turned out to be my second cousin: his mother and my mother were first cousins who had come to England in 1939 but then lost touch. Now, this branch of the family has been reunited with me.

My Australian cousin has siblings here and we met for the first time recently and formed a close friendship. He has also introduced me to a cousin in Sweden and to one in California, with whom I am in regular touch.

My new cousins had a letter which I did not know existed. It had been sent just before the war by my mother to their mother when they first came over here. At the end of the letter I had written 'Many kisses from little me'. Now, after all these years with almost no family, it is wonderful to be part of such a loving family again.

Charlotte Lang

My father's past: Searching and researching

My father died at the age of 38 in Vienna just after the Anschluss. Shortly after his death, I left for the UK with my HaShomer Hatzair group. We travelled with the Kindertransport. I never heard from my mother and sister again.

Now, in relaxed retirement, I developed a strong urge to explore my linkage with the past. I knew nothing about my father except that he was born in August 1901 in Luky in Slovakia and that he grew up there. What could I dig up?

In those days, Slovakia was part of Hungary and Jews enjoyed life under a relatively benign government as compared with the ghettos in the Russian Pale of Settlement. Records suggested that Luky did have a functional Jewish community.

It was a meagre starting point – the time had come to visit Luky. Together with my son David and with guidance from Dr Maros Borsky, head of the Slovak Jewish Heritage Centre, we met the present mayor of Luky, who was generous with his time. Over the fireplace in his office hung a picture of the old synagogue, a sizeable building demolished in the Communist era to make room for new housing. We were given access to a large



David, Meir Weiss, Anton Hrebik, Mayor of Luky. A picture of the former synagogue is in the background

ledger of births and deaths, a register which had survived two world wars.

We visited the Jewish cemetery, serenely located on a green hillside, tombstones scattered, not so much destroyed as gently decayed, some of the inscriptions still legible. The mayor has plans to preserve the area.

Luky as we saw it was an old, but not impoverished, village of some 900 inhabitants nestling in a fairly wide valley surrounded by forested hills.

What I have learned suggests that Luky was not a bad place to grow up in. Our trip has added a little to our family history and our son will keep it alive.

Meir Weiss

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Plucky little Belgium

Nowhere does Anthony Grenville mention my name or comment on the contents – especially the von Bargaen telegrams – of my letter entitled 'A gift of life' (July) in his August article 'The sorrow of Belgium'. Neither he nor Emma Klein in her response to my letter seems to have read the chapter on Belgium in Sir Martin Gilbert's *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust* (only 30 pages!). Ideally, they could have borrowed, from the Wiener Library, the video or DVD of *As If It Were Yesterday* by Myriam Abramowicz and Esther Hoffenberg (Belgium, 1980), whose parents were hidden. There is nothing more authentic. The Jewish and gentile Resisters of the Committee for the Defence of Jews (CDJ) who appear in it – Yvonne Nevejean, Yvonne Jospa, Maurice Heiber, David Ferdman, Andree Geulen among others – were closely involved in the rescue and placement with Belgian gentile hidiers of 3000+ of the 4000+ rescued children. This film inspired Nicole David to organise with rescued friends the First World Gathering of Hidden Children in New York in 1991.

An April 1991 *Newsweek* article mentioned just 500 participants. The gathering was a miracle of organisation; participants who were hidden in occupied Europe came from all over the world. The only hidden child I had met was Nicole David in London one month before the gathering. Now, I was among 1,600 'siblings'! Along with my arrival, on 5 December 1942, in my foster family and the liberation of my hiding town, Sint Niklaas, in East Flanders, on 9 September 1944, it was the happiest event in my life. I met Marcel Choinacki, who had been with me in the Wezembeek Home when we 56 children were taken by the Gestapo on 30 October 1942 to Dossin camp for deportation the next day. The gentile housekeeper telephoned Yvonne Nevejean, the director of the National Agency for children which financed the home and was secretly involved in the CDJ, created under the auspices of the Independence Front, which acted in solidarity with all Belgian resistance groups (including the famed Fidelio Brigade in Antwerp). She alerted Queen Elisabeth who, with utmost urgency, interceded with the German High Command. A large ransom was also paid to the SD chief by David Ferdman and, in the early hours of 31 October, we were freed as lone children along with eight children left in the camp when their parents and siblings were deported. An

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'assurance' was given to Queen Elisabeth that lone children would no longer be deported. That day, 137 children with their families were transported to Auschwitz. All were murdered.

The seven AJB (Association of Jews in Belgium-Judenrat) children's homes were opened from 1942 – Jewish orphans like me during the occupation were in gentile homes before then – because many children went astray, were hidden in cupboards or under beds etc when their parents were raided. After Wezembeek was raided, the CDJ realised that children had to be separated, without the knowledge of the official AJB, from the parents who sought help from the AJB, given new names and birth certificates and enabled to live as gentile children. They were hidden in 262 institutions (Sylvain Brachfeld's 2006 figure), mainly in convents or by parish priests and in over 700 private homes. The parents could then be more easily hidden. The CDJ also hid over 10,000 adults.

The children in the AJB homes, regularly inspected for numbers by the SS, were hostages. A week before Brussels was liberated, in late August 1944, an order to deport the 517 children in the seven AJB homes and the 800+ residents of old people's homes with their respective Jewish staff was intercepted by the Dossin commander's half-Jewish secretary, who alerted the CDJ. During the night all the homes were emptied and residents hidden in churches and schools. Andree Geulen, a Righteous Belgian and now, aged 87, the last CDJ member, told me this in 1995.

The film was again shown last year at the Gathering in Jerusalem of Children

Hidden in Belgium, which 300 attended. We had pride of place at the Yom Hashoah commemoration at Yad Vashem. Two days later, at a Yad Vashem ceremony, Andree Geulen was made an Honorary Citizen of Israel.

Historical novels only reflect events. If these reflections are through a distorting mirror, that is the creative author's prerogative. The discipline of history is based on verifiable factual evidence from witnesses and documents.

Emma Klein sought to evade blame for the title 'A questionable claim' (May) which – by not revealing that her defamatory quotation was an anonymous opinion – her insinuations prompted. She should have rectified this in the June journal.

Anthony Grenville omits mentioning that 94 per cent of Jews in Belgium were non-citizens and that the AJB (Judenrat) notables signed, and had 10,000 orders distributed (3,908 were obeyed), to report to Dossin camp for 'work in the East' and – apart from in Antwerp – had the yellow stars distributed in June 1942 (they were soon discarded by wearers!). The yellow stars had to be worn from the age of six (I wore one while still in the Wezembeek Home, before I was hidden). This greatly shocked the Belgian population. He reverses the numbers of Jews in Brussels and Antwerp. According to Maxime Steinberg (a hidden child like Sylvain Brachfeld), 52 per cent of Jews, mostly secular, lived in bilingual Brussels, in seven districts; in Antwerp 38 per cent, mainly very orthodox, lived around the station. The pre-invasion socialist mayor of Antwerp, Camille Huysmans, fled to England – he was reinstated after the Liberation. Léon Delwaide usurped his position. The number deported – 25,475 (not 28,500!) – included 330 Roma. Over 34,700 Jews survived hidden (I omitted the 3,000+ unregistered). Belgium was created in 1830. The vast majority of Belgians were patriotic – young adults, if unemployed, were conscripted for compulsory work in Germany. Very many 'refuseniks' joined the Resistance. The Belgian Catholic Church was exemplary in its rescue efforts. Over 5,000 of Belgium's Jewish children were murdered – the 4,500+ child survivors were saved through this Jewish-gentile Resistance. The estimated 100,000 child survivors in occupied Europe – when 1,500,000 children were murdered – are alive due only to our rescuers' selflessness, courage and spirit of common humanity.

Bronia Veitch

My beloved Quaker school

Delia Walker (née Ruhm)

I had always thought that although I experienced some family tragedies, my life during the Nazi period was not worth recording in this journal, compared with the heart-breaking and horrendous memoirs written by others.

I come from Berlin and I thought that my only claim to fame was that I daily rode on the tram that Emil and the Detectives used! However, I was prompted to write something after reading the very moving article on the Quakers in the July issue of the journal.

I began my 'education' in the Volksschule – a fairly nasty experience. Luckily, most of my memories have been blotted out.

I next went to the local Rudolf Steiner school, which was wonderful. The teachers did their best to protect the Jewish children from the horrors that were going on around us and to make us feel part of the class. I remember a tearful occasion though, when it transpired that Jewish children were not allowed to join the *Ausflug* into the country. I think the teachers were more upset than the children!

All schools had a quota of Jewish children which they were not allowed to

exceed. Our teachers regularly broke this rule and many other rules too. Most of them ended up in prison. A brave and exceptional group of people.

My elder sister, Beate Ruhm von Oppen (*inter alia* editor and translator of James von Moltke's *Briefe an Freya*), was by then living in England with a Quaker family. She herself had been to the Eerde Quaker School and she urged my parents, who were still stuck in Germany, to send me there as well. I then spent the next year in Eerde, which I loved most dearly. Eerde made the wrench from home and family not only bearable, but turned it into a beautiful, educationally inspiring, exciting and maturing experience. I think all of us children who survived felt this in some measure. This was due mainly to the loving and intuitive staff. We were the lucky ones. I knew Ernst-Rudolf Reiss and Klaus Seckel and all the others, of course (see below), and mourn them deeply.

In the Christmas holidays in 1938 I was unable to go back to Germany from Holland to be with my parents. The Quakers arranged for me to spend this vacation with an English family in Surrey.

We have been close friends ever since.

My parents managed to get to England in February 1939. I visited them from Eerde for my summer holidays in July 1939. At that time, Holland was still neutral and I was clamouring to go back to my beloved Eerde, but fortunately my parents decided to keep me in England. It is quite possible I wouldn't now be writing this if I had gone back.

Some years ago, I went to a reunion of Old Eerdeners, which was sad because of many absent faces. But it was wonderful to see my beloved music teacher, Billy Hillsley (Hildesheimer), who had inspired me to take up music professionally.

The school is now an ordinary boarding school. In its grounds there is a memorial for the children who died. I wrote to the headmaster as I thought it would be good for the children to know about this period, but he didn't reply.

There is an excellent book by Hans A. Schmitt, himself an old Eerdener, entitled *Quakers and Nazis: Inner Light in Outer Darkness* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997). It contains several sections on Eerde and a lovely photo of Klaus Seckel.

The 14 Eerde children murdered because of their ethnic origin, by date of death

Kurt Rosenthal	25 July 1941	Mauthausen (1)
Otto-Edgar Rosenstern	18 September 1941	Mauthausen (1)
Steffi Pinner	23 July 1943	Sobibor (1)
Ursula-Lore Bein	24 September 1943	Auschwitz (2)
Bernd Leffmann	24 September 1943	Auschwitz (2)
Rosemarie Oppenheimer	24 September 1943	Auschwitz (2)
Klaus Metz	5 December 1943	Auschwitz (2)
Walter Vohssen	8 January 1944	Auschwitz (2)
Ernst Binswanger	7 February 1944	Auschwitz (2)
Klaus Herzberg	1 October 1944	Auschwitz (3)
Hermann Isaak	21 January 1945	on Auschwitz-Gleiwitz transport (2)
Klaus Seckel	Date unknown	on march from Auschwitz (2)
Ernst-Rudolf Reiss	26 January 1945	shot during evacuation of Auschwitz (2)
Ulrich Sanders	10 July 1945	in Enschede hospital following ill-treatment (4)

- (1) Had gone from school to parents or relatives, captured in round-up or similar
- (2) Had gone to Vught Camp from De Esch in accordance with order of occupying power
- (3) Accompanied his parents to Westerbork in good faith
- (4) Beaten almost to death after twice escaping from prison



'Keys against Forgetting' Servitengasse 1938

A memorial project launched by citizens of Vienna's 9th District seeks to trace the fate of the Jews who lived in one street – Servitengasse – before they were driven from their homes. The aim is to create a visual symbol in their memory, restoring their rightful place in the district's life and history.

Servitengasse is representative of many streets in Vienna's 9th District. Before the

Anschluss, it was not unusual to find that more than half the residents in such streets were Jewish.

A total of 462 'Keys against Forgetting' – representing 462 people who once lived there – were placed in a glass showcase and embedded into the pavement. The memorial, designed by Julia Schulz, was unveiled earlier this year.



Details of the history of Servitengasse, the inhabitants and the project itself can be found in Birgit Johler and Maria Fritsche (eds.), *1938: Adresse: Servitengasse* (publ. Mandelbaum, ISBN 978-385476-233-1).

For further information, please contact: Peter Koppe 1090 Servitengasse 6/14, email: servitengasse1938@gmx.at website: www.servitengasse1938.at



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

SUPPING WITH THE DEVIL

Sir – In response to Anthony Grenville's article, based on my book *Dealing with Satan: Rezső Kasztner's Daring Rescue Mission* (Jonathan Cape, London 2008), Susan Pollack (August) calls Kasztner's rescue of some 1,600 Hungarian Jews from the Nazis a 'remarkable achievement', but adds that 'further factual recounting of that period is necessary for evaluating the difficult tasks facing the Jewish Council and others.'

The question of what the Jews of Hungary knew about Auschwitz and why Kasztner did not publicise the Vrba-Wetzler report is too complex to be answered in a few lines. I discuss it at length in my book and have no intention of discussing it here. I must, however, take issue with Mrs Pollack's allegation that 'Some 1,600 Jews paid Eichmann for their lives and liberty . . . Mr Löb and others were in a position to do so as well as Mr Kasztner's [Kasztner's] family and were allowed to escape the fate of the other 435,000 victims.' Mrs Pollack is entitled to her opinions, but this is simply untrue and potentially harmful.

Mrs Pollack cites Anna Porter's book on Kasztner, published in Canada a few months before mine and in the UK shortly after. Both my book and Porter's explain that most of the ransom paid for the group as a whole was provided by about 150 wealthy individuals. In addition, my book makes it clear that my father and I were among the majority who had no money and did not pay for their rescue. Mrs Pollack's failure to follow her own advice about the proper study of the facts is bound to cast doubt on her evaluation of Kasztner or of anything else.

Professor Ladislaus Löb, Brighton

AUSTRIA AND AUSTRIANS REVISITED

Sir – As a refugee from Austria fortunate enough to leave Vienna in July 1938, albeit on an odyssey that took me to Yugoslavia and Albania then via Germany to England in April 1939, I have had good reason to hate Austria and its people for the way they joined Hitler's persecution of the Jews. I thus read with great interest Anthony Grenville's July article 'Reflections on Austria'. He eloquently describes how Austria continued after the last war to perpetuate the myth of having been the 'first victim of Nazi aggression', which had its roots in an Allied declaration. Dr Grenville states that it was only in 1991, with the Chan-

cellor's formal statement acknowledging Austria's share in the Nazi atrocities, that Austria began to make amends for its evil deeds. However, this is not entirely true: there were earlier signs of atonement.

The Austrian government introduced soon after the war a generous pension scheme for Jewish refugees which counted as if we had contributed over the war years and thereby boosted our pension entitlement, which I personally much appreciate.

Also, Austria's Central European location made the country a safe haven for asylum-seekers. Austria accepted in the 1970s about 250,000 refugees, most of them Jews, from Eastern Europe. These refugees were accommodated in large camps while assisting their emigration to Israel, America and elsewhere; many of the Jewish refugees settled in Austria and obtained citizenship.

Even when Austria still denied its Nazi complicity, the government was prepared to offer Jews in need a helping hand. The back-to-Vienna reports highlight the change that has occurred in Austria in the past 20 years. One of my friends who also returned to Vienna last May told me she had never been comfortable on previous visits to Vienna because of the memories that haunted her. 'However,' she added, 'given what I have seen and heard during this week in Austria, my feelings have changed. It convinced me that among Austria's young generations there is now a sincere mood of regret and a strong wish to make atonement. I personally believe that I experienced a catharsis of emotions during that week.' Austria now deserves our recognition of these laudable changes.

Dr. T. Scarlett Epstein OBE, Hove

Sir – Dr Anthony Grenville's excellent article was most interesting. I agree with all he says about the Austrians. I had to leave in 1934 and have lived in London since 1935. I am concerned that Austro-Fascism should not be forgotten. Parliament was dissolved, trade unions were forbidden and their leaders imprisoned. There was a civil war with about 2,000 dead.

Still, there are mitigating aspects about the Austrians. I respect a small country which took in a great number of refugees after the 'Prague Spring' and the Soviet invasion as well as after the Hungarian uprising. Furthermore, I love the mountains in Austria – and the food.

Wolf Suschitzky, London W2

Sir – I wonder how many of your correspondents giving almost euphoric accounts of their visits to Vienna walked along the Path of Remembrance in the old Jewish quarter of Leopoldstadt and looked at the former home of Alfred Adler. A plaque commemorates the fact that from this house 70 people were deported and only six survived. On the other side of the street stands a car service station advertising its speciality: 'Vergaser'. Enough said?

Herbert Haberberg, Barnet

Sir – I am not a German- or Austrian-Jewish refugee but I have childhood memories of Vienna I would like to share. I was deported to Auschwitz from Hungary in 1944. The camp was chock full at that time and the cattle wagons were sent to Austria. After a long journey we got out of the cattle wagons in Strasshoff, Austria. There was a selection camp: the able-bodied were selected for slave labour.

My family and several others were taken to Vienna's 21st district, Floridsdorf. We were placed in a large building – apparently a disused school. The floor of the classrooms was covered with straw. We were issued with army blankets and wooden clogs.

Every morning at daybreak the grown-ups left with SS guards to work in factories in Vienna. Every sunset we children were marched on to the streets of Vienna with our SS guards and forced to scrub the pavements. We cleared snow from pavements in winter and broken masonry after air raids.

Several times we noticed a woman – a tramp look-alike – on those streets. Covered in a thick shawl and carrying a wicker basket, she tried to signal to us when the SS guard wasn't looking. She placed the basket on the edge of a window of a house we were passing and disappeared. One of us always managed to steal the contents of the basket – delicious sandwiches and hot drinks. I don't know who this woman was. She was certainly risking her life by helping us starving, freezing children.

Marianne Laszlo, Edinburgh

Sir – I too have a mixed attitude to Austria. Shortly before my departure to England in September 1938, I was walking in central Vienna on an important errand. I knew of the danger of being stopped and having to scrub the pavement. And I was stopped – by an SS man in black uniform. He asked why I wasn't wearing a swastika. I told him I was a Jew. He asked me to follow him. He led the way to a nearby house and opened the door to a room which was totally bare except for a bucket of water, a scrubbing brush and (thoughtfully) a chair. I sprinkled water on the floor and sat down. It wasn't long before the SS man appeared again. 'You may go now!', he said. And I did.

Herta Schenk, London NW3

INTERNATIONAL SWIMMING HALL OF FAME

Sir – I thought readers might be interested in the following extracts from a letter I received from Debbie Bonaminio in the USA:

'I am now finishing a second Masters degree and have been an intern at the International Swimming Hall of Fame in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. My supervisor lent me a DVD. Because my dream is to work for the Olympic Games, he thought I would find the film interesting. I was so moved after viewing *Watermarks* that I immediately began researching more about Hakoach, the Anschluss and the 1936 Berlin Games.

I wish to tell you of my great admiration for you and your fellow Hakoach team mates. As a female trying to make a career in the sports industry, I have been subjected to discrimination, but my inconveniences are not worthy of mention compared to all you and your family had to endure! Thank you for standing up for what you believe in but, most importantly, for who you are.'

Anne Pisker, London SW15

LOYAL GERMANS

Sir – Anthony Grenville's article 'From police chief in Berlin to refugee in Britain' (May) has stimulated me to convey to you a parallel experience: my elder brother, Horst Jonas, was the police chief in Communist East Germany – but without Bernhard Weiss's ultra-patriotism.

Horst was sentenced to four years for political activity/high treason in 1935, to be released on 3 September 1939. From prison he wrote a desperate letter to my parents and me to arrange for him to join us in South Africa. My younger brother, Werner, vowed he would not leave the country unless Horst was released. Werner paid dearly for this heroic sacrifice and later perished in Auschwitz. However, Horst was prevented from leaving due to the outbreak of the war. He was sent to a concentration camp, survived to be recognised for various work qualifications and, after his release, was elected police chief of Thuringia and later promoted to mayor of Neubrandenburg. He died in 1967, presumably from the after-effects of his ill-treatment. A memorial book was published. Here again, there seems to be a replica of the loyal Germans.

Alfred Jonas, Macclesfield, Cheshire

QUAKERS AND REFUGEES

Sir – Since your publication of my piece on the Quaker Tapestry Centre in July, I've been amazed to hear about the number of people helped by the Quakers, including people connected with our Weald of Kent AJR group.

Netta Murray Goldsmith, whose book *Magda and the Rat Catchers* you recently reviewed, wrote to me: 'I was very interested in your article in the latest *AJR Journal* and saddened, though not surprised, to read of the fate of so many members of your family. What a waste! I

was struck too by the references to the Quakers. A Quaker family took my husband's brother into their home in Dover in 1937 after he was stoned by thugs and his father sent him to England. He is about to celebrate his 90th birthday and would never have got that far without the Quakers.'

Also, since I wrote my article, the Tapestry Centre has uncovered a document explaining how the Quakers tried to save the Jewish children at the Eerde school through dialogue with the Nazi authorities (obviously unsuccessfully).

Janet Weston, Westerham, Kent

ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

Sir – Critics of Inge Trott's alleged trivialisation of the Holocaust and lack of assiduous consideration of foreign crimes in societies such as Burma and Darfur seem to stray from the point, which is 'a Jew criticising the policies of other Jews', i.e. criticism of her own people. Nationalist Zionists should not confuse 'apples and pears' comparisons in their arguments attacking her views.

K. G. Speyer, New Barnet, Herts

Sir – Reading the correspondence in your July issue from Ernest G. Kolman and others, I wish to claim the honour of belonging to Inge Trott's ilk. Evidently she is a brave woman, daring to express an opinion which is not blindly pro-Israeli. The excesses of the Israeli military and the settlers are not enough – your correspondents expect her to accept responsibility for Darfur, Burma and Zimbabwe. I am an ex-German-British Jew. I don't hate myself, I don't hate your correspondents. In fact, I can't think of anyone to hate.

Heinz Grünewald, Pinner, Middx

Sir – At the end of the Second World War, the Poles annexed a part of Eastern Germany, expelled the local population and settled their own people there. The United Nations and the great powers did not try to pressurise the Poles to return these occupied territories.

The Arab countries attacked Israel at its birth and in 1967 were again poised to attack and destroy the Jewish state. After its miraculous victory in 1967, Israel should also have annexed the conquered lands and expelled the Arabs. Tiny Israel absorbed 700,000 refugees from the Arab countries and the vast oil-rich Arab countries could easily have absorbed the expelled Arabs. Then there would have been no rockets launched at Israeli civilians, no terrorist attacks inside Israel and no talk of 'settlers'.

Henry Schragenheim, London N15

Sir – I find the sections on the refugees and their history fascinating. However, I feel that this magazine is an inappropriate place for the Israel/Palestine debate.

*Rose Marie Whalley
Montreal, Canada*

GETTING TO KNOW THE NATIVES

Sir – Edith Argy's amusing article (August) reminds me of the almost identical beginning of my own career. My first secretarial job – after escaping from domestic service – was with a Hatton Garden jeweler, a kindly Jew (himself a refugee of an earlier period of Jewish immigration to this country). I became his secretary after his 'proper' was called up for war work.

One of the first letters he dictated contained a word sounding like 'bonefied'. I sat puzzling over this word, fearing I would get the sack for inefficiency till I thought of writing it down. And lo and behold – our old friend 'bona fide' appeared to my great relief! My boss never found out what agony I had been in. I was lucky enough to get a job in the Foreign Office when the propaganda war started – a position I was more suited to, as it turned out.

*(Mrs) Marion Smith
Harrow, Middx*

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

Sir – I am not very well but Victor Ross cheers me up. His mention of Conrad Veidt (July) brought back fond memories. He is good at that and the Journal refreshes my memory bank. Thank you, Mr Editor.

Edith Harris, Stanton, Staffs



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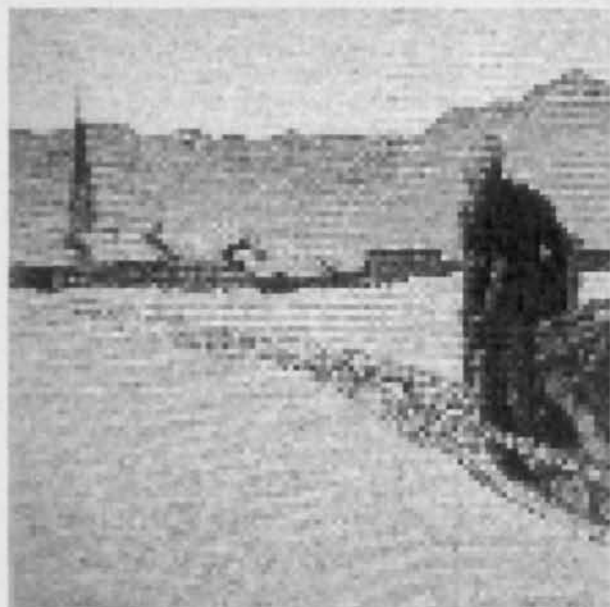


ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Light falling in a grid over rice paddy fields, anarchist marchers, angelic mothers and wild, wicked women – the Italian Divisionists say it all at the National Gallery's **Radical Light** exhibition. Linking the discovery of optical science and the physics of light to the technique of dividing thin lines of colour, they also politicised their subject matter.

Divisionism dawned at the end of the nineteenth century with the unification of Italy and the promise of social change.



Giovanni Segantini (1858-1899) *Return from the Woods* 1890 © Segantini Museum, St Moritz

Artists like **Vittore Grubicy de Dragon**, **Giovanni Segantini**, **Gaetano Previati**, **Angelo Morbelli** and **Emilio Longoni** led the movement whose aim was to fuse art with idealism. By the early twentieth century, as thousands of rural workers migrated to the countryside, artists responded with such bucolic masterpieces as Grubicy's eight-canvas *Winter in the Mountains*. The new working class helped the Divisionists shape their ideas of modernism. But the early work is limpid and pastoral: a shepherd sleeps amid his flock in Segantini's *Alpine Meadow*. There are omens too: a pink cloud implies death to Morbelli's young girl in a deckchair. Both he and Segantini drift towards Symbolism, with soft light emanating an ethereal quality

in their painting. The latter artist – who once virtually painted every single blade of grass – devoted himself totally to Symbolism, with work like *The Vanities* and *Narcissus*.

Longoni's *Alone*, in which a black-clad young woman lies beside a coffin bearing lilies, has an unforgettable, morbid beauty. The work, so evocative of pre-Raphaelite doom, was inspired by the loss of his nine-year-old niece.

A different light illumines the sombre, Nordic vision of another Symbolist, **Vilhelm Hammershoi**, in his first UK retrospective, **The Poetry of Silence**, at the **Royal Academy**. Hammershoi's Copenhagen home – with wife, table, window, piano, china tureen – are domestic metaphors for an interior landscape as beautiful as it is gloomy. His subtle portraits of his wife capture her deep introspection too, as

we watch her gracefully age. Seen from the back, the soft and wispy tendrils on the nape of her neck have a tender eloquence.

Hammershoi decorated his home starkly in white and grey, from which a furtive light throws up minute dust motes, so we can guess the time of day and the seasons of the year. He has been compared to James McNeill Whistler for his limited palette and formal simplification. When he finally has to move from his home, he paints its sombre exterior; he paints the clouds edged with darkness, and it is in these that you sense the violation of his lonely spirit.

Rainer Maria Rilke and Emil Nolde both remarked on Hammershoi's mysterious melancholy, at odds with the avant-garde of his time. But his domestic paintings of women strikingly echo Vermeer. Outstanding among them is his portrait of his younger sister, Anna. Here is the missing vitality, for not even the girl's simple, black dress can diminish the youthful energy and charm of this portrait, so full of natural beauty, promise and intelligence.

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

The Jews of Linz

JÜDISCHES LEBEN IN LINZ 1849-1943

BAND 1: INSTITUTIONEN

BAND 2: FAMILIEN

by Verena Wagner

Linz: Wagner Verlag, 2008, 2 vols.
1,476 pp.

The Jewish community in Linz was never very large, numbering just under 1,000 members at its peak in 1923 and now down to about 50. It may be surprising therefore that it can provide sufficiently fascinating and well-researched material to cover two volumes and almost 1,500 pages. The author is an Evangelical teacher who took an early interest in Judaism and the Church's role in the antisemitism which eventually led to the *Shoah*.

The first volume covers the early history and various institutions which made up the small, but very active, community in Linz. These ranged from the religious, predominantly Liberal, synagogal organisations to B'nai B'rith, sport clubs and Zionist parties of left and right. The results of elections to the community council are quoted and show the diversity of views represented. The community was not without its internal conflicts and these were evident from the mid-nineteenth century to its post-war revival. It is encouraging, however, to note that there is again a synagogue in the city. For the benefit of non-Jewish readers and researchers, the author has also included an overview of the Jewish religion, including its life-cycle events and festivals.

Subsequent chapters describe the varying relationship between the Church and Judaism and discuss the growth of pre-war antisemitism, which eventually facilitated the actions of the Nazis. The last chapter of this volume covers in considerable detail the fate of the Linz community after the Anschluss, the forced sales, Kristallnacht, emigration and deportation. Sadly, the last page discusses antisemitism even after the war.

The second volume deals in greater detail with the histories of many individual families, from the beginning of the community up to its destruction during the Nazi period and its difficult post-war revival. One of the most interesting stories is that of the Bloch family. Dr Eduard Bloch was one of several Jewish doctors in Linz. Among his patients in 1907 was Klara Hitler. Although she eventually died, her son Adolf expressed his appreciation to Dr Bloch, even giving him one of his paintings. An entire chapter is also devoted to the Taussig family, who were prominent in the community from its foundation. Among those mentioned is

Viktor Taussig, who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, attended the Linz Realgymnasium. There is also a passing reference to a fellow pupil: Ludwig Wittgenstein. Surprisingly, this is the only mention of the future philosopher, although elsewhere a rather controversial book has been written about him (Kimberley Cornish, *The Jew of Linz* (1998)).

The text is supported by numerous impressive and evocative photographs as well as reproductions of documents, posters and letters which bring the pre-war community to life. Both volumes are well referenced and indexed and there is a list of victims of the *Shoah* giving dates of birth and deportation, including final destination. Although the books are in German, the introductory chapters of both volumes are also translated into English.

These attractively produced volumes are clearly intended for libraries, universities and research organisations rather than private homes, but would undoubtedly also be of great interest to anyone having connections to Linz.

George Vulkan

A note of hope

THE SEVENTH WELL

by Fred Wander

Granta Books, 2008, 192 pp., £12.99

SENTENCED TO LIFE: THE STORY OF A SURVIVOR OF THE LAHWAH GHETTO

by Kopel Kolpanitzky

London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007, 288 pp. paper, £14.50

IN THE SHADOW OF DESTRUCTION: RECOLLECTIONS OF TRANSNISTRIA AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION TO ERETZ ISRAEL

by Yosef Govrin

London: Vallentine Mitchell (tel 020 8952 9526), 2007, 116 pp. paper, £16.50

RECOLLECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

by Jack Brauns

London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007, 283 pp. paper, £13.50

I was sitting on a bench on the Croisette in Cannes reading *The Seventh Well*. 'I'm longing to read it,' said the friend who had come to meet me. Indeed, Fred Wander's 'novel' – a semi-fictional representation of what he experienced during the Holocaust years in a number of camps, including Auschwitz and Buchenwald, and on a 'death march' – has received much acclaim from the great and the good of the literary world. Elegantly translated by Michael Hoffman from the 1971 East German version, what stands out in this unusual narrative is the anonymous narrator's focus on those he comes across in the course of his

tormented wanderings rather than on himself.

Can a non-fictionalised Holocaust testimony attain a similar level of literary merit? I would have thought not, having come across a number of less than felicitous texts. And certainly some of the 'literary' touches Wander employs cannot be replicated. Rather than using chronology to chart his storyline, for example, Wander's narration darts back and forth in time and place in a manner which sometimes proves confusing for the reader but has the virtue of concentrating more attention on the individual whose unique personality and untimely end are being highlighted.

To my surprise, the three books from Vallentine Mitchell's Library of Holocaust Testimonies were perfectly readable. Kopel Kolpanitzky's *Sentenced to Life*, in an excellent translation by Harold Jacobson, even contains the odd poetic touch, as in a lyrical description of the Lahwah of his childhood. What stands out in his book, however, is the sheer element of adventure. From his survival of the destruction of the Lahwah ghetto, his struggle to join a partisan unit, his success as a doughty fighter, his induction into the Red Army and his elevation as an officer, to his eventual decision to desert and emigrate to 'Eretz Israel', the reader is kept on tenterhooks.

The randomness – or, perhaps, the miracle of survival, as Yosef Govrin puts it – is a factor common to all these testimonies, although in Kolpanitzky's case, an element of ruthlessness was necessary. Govrin and his mother were interned in the Mogilev ghetto, where they struggled to survive for nearly three years after the German and Romanian armies invaded Bessarabia and north Bukovina. A few years after reaching 'Eretz Israel' following a period of detention by the British navy, Govrin joined the ministry of foreign affairs. Returning to Romania in 1985 to present his credentials as Israel's ambassador to President Ceausescu was a particularly powerful experience, movingly described in his book *In the Shadow of Destruction*. Govrin has based this book on the oral evidence he gave in a video interview with researchers from the Yad Vashem institute.

Govrin confesses to not having returned to Mogilev 'so far', unable to face the unbearably painful memories each vista there would have aroused. Kolpanitzky had hoped to revisit Lahwah to mourn at the mass grave where his mother, brother and sister would have been interred after returning from Germany with the victorious Red Army. He never managed to and says it would be 50 years before he was there again.

Subsequently, he makes an annual visit. But he has been haunted throughout his life by the vision of massacred Jews

lining Lahwah's Rynkova Street and this vision serves as a relentless refrain all through his book.

Before writing his memoir *Recollections and Reflections*, Jack Brauns, a survivor of the Kovno ghetto, the Stutthof concentration camp and Dachau, revisited Kovno from the United States, where he lives, to make a documentary film about the ghetto, accompanied by his wife and Martin Gilbert, a personal friend. Indeed, Sir Martin has written a special foreword to Brauns's volume, as well as a brief foreword to all the volumes in the Vallentine Mitchell series.

While each book contains its quotient of horrors and privations, the intensity of friendships forged with fellow prisoners or Jews on the run provides an element of leavening. Particularly remarkable in Brauns's testimony is the humanity of some of his German captors in Dachau. Most striking is Hans Schmidt, a *Volksdeutscher* from Yugoslavia, who confessed to hating the National Socialist Party. Indeed, the positive contribution of non-Jews during the Holocaust years has often been underrated, unless the person in question has been recommended as a Righteous Gentile. Kolpanitzky recounts the generosity of numerous Byelorussian villagers who, in contrast to the residents of Lahwah, who had rejoiced in the annihilation of their Jewish fellow townsman, fed and housed him and other persecuted Jews. He ends his book with a 'Letter of Thanks to the Byelorussian People'. Brauns tells of the Japanese consul general in Kaunas who saved several thousand Jews. He was also befriended by a Ukrainian and, in Italy after the war, felt blessed by the warmth he encountered during his years as a medical student.

While all three books bring the reader up to date with their protagonists' lives, almost half of Brauns's volume, subtitled *How I Turned Despair into an Appreciation of Life*, is devoted to life after the war. The romance which brought him his beautiful wife, Joyce, is particularly heartening. Indeed, in a photograph showing Brauns, his wife, his three daughters, his son-in-law and his grandson, it is virtually impossible to make out which lovely woman is the mother! Another highlight is the way he managed to obtain permission for his parents to emigrate from Soviet Lithuania to the USA at the height of the Cold War.

All three testimonies finish on a note of hope. *The Seventh Well*, ending with the liberation of Buchenwald, depicts a beautifully written tableau of sickness, death and life as the narrator, in a typhus-infected delirium, lies in the children's barracks between a beatific dead man and a group of small brothers, with 'the sense of being bedded on roses and magnolias'.

Emma Klein

Reviews continued on page 10

Each Yom Kippur, during the *Yiskor* service, my mother would cry. After her death, as with every family, I had to sort out her possessions. In a large old brown envelope, hidden at the bottom of her cupboard, I discovered letters. But there was something very different: they were not written on what one would regard as writing paper, but on flimsy tissue, graph and large notepaper. There were no envelopes. I admit to a nervousness as I carefully looked at each letter. They were dated January 1940 to March 1942 and were from her parents, sister and brother-in-law. I know they were sent from Germany, probably Berlin, but there were no addresses, or even clues, as to where they had originated – just markings that indicated they had been censored.

When I had had the letters translated, it became apparent that they had been sent to my aunt and uncle in America, which was not yet at war with Germany, and from there to my parents in England. The contents revealed very little – meetings with friends, work, the weather, references to the writers' health. Of course, there were many questions, such as 'How is

THE LETTERS

Harry Hurst

...? Have you seen ...? Is it possible to get an affidavit ...?' There were also many poignant sentences – none more than after I was born: 'Let the dear Lord keep the little one in good health ... Please kiss his left earlobe for me, his aunt.' Every time I read the letters I get a lump in my throat. I wonder how many times my mother took them out – it must have been so painful for her to look at them.

Unfortunately I know very little else of the life my family had during the period the letters were written. One can only assume that they lived in fear for they often expressed gratitude to God for another day. My grandfather wrote in one letter in October 1941: 'Everything has two sides. One does not know which is the bad side.'

But the bad side was still to come for the correspondence ended after March 1942. It must have been at this time that they were all taken to the

Warsaw Ghetto. From my research, which differs slightly from what I was told, my grandmother died in the Ghetto and the rest of her family was deported to Auschwitz in February 1943. One letter said: 'May God grant us the chance to have a chat face to face again one day!' They never had that chance.

My mother spoke very little about whether she knew more but then, I never asked.

I can only say to others: find out about your family history, even if it's painful. Ask your parents and grandparents before, as with me, it's too late.

Why My Mother Wept A Dedication

I did not really understand, a child
so long ago
But as the years went slowly on, the
hurt I got to know
And why my Mother wept.

The silence all around me was there
for me to hear
Except the sound of gentle sobs I
picked up with my ear
As my Mother wept.

It was always on that Holy day, so
meaningful and sombre
Remembering those we all had loved
and with us now no longer
For whom my Mother wept.

This special time must have recalled a
life she once enjoyed
The fun, the games, the laughter, the
loves cruelly destroyed
Whilst my Mother wept.

Into the Warsaw Ghetto, a family torn
apart
To streets of starving people and
bodies on a cart
So my Mother wept.

Then their final train to hell, into the
Holocaust
Her mother, father, sister too – the
lives they had were lost
How my Mother wept.

Now I light an extra candle, and
watch it faintly glow
A flickering memory for the lives I
never got to know
And because my Mother wept.

When names are read on Yom Kippur
those moments re-appear
Her head bowed down, a
handkerchief, wiping another tear,
I know why my Mother wept.

REVIEWS continued from page 9

A shattering picture of corruption

ADDRESS UNKNOWN

by Kressmann Taylor

first published in *hardcover in the USA in 1938 by Simon & Schuster; British edition published 2002 by Souvenir Press Ltd, reprinted 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007*

This is a shattering and moving book. It makes one gulp. A work of fiction, it is in the form of a correspondence between two German friends, partners in a successful art dealership in San Francisco. In 1932 the gentile partner returns to live in Germany and writes to his Jewish friend and partner in America. The dialogue, as in a good play, slowly reveals the changing situations of the two men – the change in their characters and actions and the change in their relationship as the gentile is seduced by the Nazi scene. For the gentile, Herr Hitler, 'our Gentle Leader!', will pull Germany out of its misery and poverty and restore its dignity, self-respect and optimism. And he will play a star role in that historic process, the violent antisemitism being in fact quite salutary in the revolutionary situation. There is enormous tension in this dialogue as one fears first for the integ-

riety of the gentile, then for his fate – as also for the fate of the actress sister of the Jewish partner who is missing in Berlin. And one fears for the friendship of the two men. I will not reveal the development of the dialogue, or its outcome, as that would tamper with the reader's reception of the book. This review is essentially a recommendation to read it.

Kressmann Taylor, born in Portland, Oregon, in 1903, was profoundly concerned about what was happening in Germany and wanted to make her countrymen aware of the horrors that were being perpetrated there. Her name was Kathrine Kressmann Taylor, but the story was thought 'too strong to appear under the name of a woman' so she adopted a pseudonym.

There is an afterword by the author's son and there are details on the internet about this remarkable work – about, *inter alia*, the genesis of the book, its long and varied history of publication, and her other writings, on this and other subject matter.

No clearer, more incisive picture could have been drawn of the corruption which Hitler's government machinery wrought on German society. To me, this slim volume encapsulates what happened to us. And to them.

Peter Zander

My mother was 19 years old when she moved from Berlin to Vienna to marry her cousin. Berlin versus Vienna has always been a subject for mutual derision – Prussian rectitude against easy-going Habsburg. My future parents were perfect stereotypes: she, serious, motivated by the moral imperative from an early age – at 15 she volunteered for work in an institution for ‘fallen women’; my father, playful, witty, at home in the literary and musical culture of the day. He opened my mother’s ears to Wagner and Schoenberg and her mind to treasures of German literature from Goethe to Stefan George. And, although the visual arts loomed smaller in his sights, he had eye enough to have his writing paper and bookplate designed by a prominent artist and his house decorated and furnished by the iconic Adolf Loos. But his interests reached beyond the arts to the beauty he saw in the harmony of numbers, in great feats of engineering, and he wondered about the new psychology taught by Freud – so much so that he attended Freud’s lectures while studying for his law degree and asked for his views on the marriage of first cousins. Unfortunately, Freud’s letter in reply – my birth certificate as it were – was not kept by my parents, but he did not advise against, confining himself to the opinion that it might reinforce in their offspring the characteristics common to both parents.

At the time of my parents’ marriage, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, their closest friends in Vienna were the family Scheu: husband Gustav, an advocate, far richer and more successful than my father; his wife, Helene Scheu-Riesz, a minor literary figure but a major society hostess who maintained a salon in which artists, writers, intellectuals and politicians met and sparkled. It was in their home that my parents met Vienna’s finest such as Kokoschka; Eugenie Schwarzwald, the noted educatrix; Alban Berg, the avant-garde composer; Max Reinhardt, man of the theatre; Loos, the architect; and even literary figures from abroad, Thornton Wilder among them.

Once war broke out, my father quickly joined up (anything to get away from lawyering), but the Scheus were able – for a time at least – to carry on life as before, Gustav being too old (or too clever) to be called up. My mother was left behind with



her first child and no longer on the A-list for the big parties. But when she found out that the Scheus were giving a dinner for Loos, a notorious party animal, she asked Helene for an invitation. It had, after all, been the Scheus who, having had their villa (still a place of pilgrimage for students of architecture in Vienna today) built by Loos, had suggested to my parents that they have Loos design the interior of their house, which my grandfather had bought as a wedding gift for the young couple.

Helene had worked out her seating plan and there was no room for my mother. Seeing her disappointment, they hatched a plot whereby my mother was to dress up as one of the waitresses, in black with a white apron and cap, so that she could be present during the meal and miss none of the dinner-table conversation. My mother was up for the joke and had no sense of what I, many years later, interpreted as a subtle, possibly even unconscious put-down on the part of Helene Scheu. Everything went swimmingly – too swimmingly perhaps – since at a crucial moment my mother managed to spill a whole sauceboat of zabaglione, painting Kokoschka’s shirt front a bright yellow.

‘Exactly the colour I would have chosen to go with my jacket!’, exclaimed Kokoschka. There was a great deal of laughter, which increased when my mother discarded her disguise and joined in the general merriment. Later, when she had helped to clean him up, Kokoschka, after a few more jokes about his ruined clothes, asked her if she would stand model for him as a caryatid for a painting he was working on. My mother was very tempted, as you can imagine, but, after sleeping on it, decided

to turn down the chance of a lifetime. Kokoschka had a reputation for exacting services beyond the purely artistic from his models, and my mother felt strongly that it would be wrong to invite the possibility of gossip reaching the ears of a husband fighting at the front. Her friends thought her foolish – an over-scrupulous Prussian, who chose to forego a touch of immortality for fear of a whiff of scandal.

Twenty years later, there appears to have been an odd sequel: Kokoschka’s *Werkverzeichnis*, a catalogue of his works, lists in his own hand ‘Portrait of Dr. Valentin Rosenfeld’, painted around 1933. Neither of my parents ever mentioned the portrait; my father was neither grand nor vain enough to commission a painting of himself. I have never seen it and only heard about it a few years ago, long after both my parents were dead. Its origin and whereabouts are a mystery. If anyone out there has it hanging on their wall, I am willing to make a totally inadequate offer for its acquisition.

Victor Ross

Holocaust Memorial Books

The AJR groups in Scotland as well as in Sheffield and the Midlands are collating registers of names from people in their areas whose family members perished in the Holocaust.

The names, together with photographs, where possible, and short histories, will be included in Memorial Books which will be on permanent display (locations yet to be decided). Copies of the books will be distributed to members and used for education, ensuring that those who perished will be remembered by future generations.

It is hoped to launch the South Yorkshire and Midlands Memorial Book at the National Holocaust Memorial Day event in Coventry in 2009. It is planned to launch the Scotland Memorial Book on either Holocaust Memorial Day 2009 or on Yom Hashoah in April 2009.

The Imperial War Museum considers the AJR Memorial Books to be ‘important historical records’. Yad Vashem and other museums and libraries have requested copies of the books for their archives.

If you require further information or would like your family names (parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) to be included in the Scotland Memorial Book or the South Yorkshire and Midlands Memorial Book, please contact: Agnes Isaacs (Glasgow) 0141 620 1292

or Philip Mason (Edinburgh) 0131 445 3437
Anthony Kaddish (Sheffield and Midlands) 0114 2367958

Bob Norton (Midlands) 01159 212494

We can help you complete the forms for however many names you have – on your family page we can include 1 name or 50 names.

Replies must be collected by the end of September 2008.

INSIDE the AJR

Bromley CF inaugural meeting

The meeting was held in Chislehurst, with Gerda James as our gracious host. Having been introduced by the AJR's Hazel Beiny, all present provided vignettes of themselves, including place of birth and war/Holocaust experiences. Future meetings and other activities were discussed and tentative plans made.

Robert Shaw

Ilford: Jewish Care briefing

We welcomed back Richard Shone, now General Manager at the recently renamed Redbridge Jewish Community Centre, who gave us a resume of the numerous ways in which Jewish Care serves the community.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: 3 Sept. Fred Rosner, 'The Fate of Court Jews'

Pinner: 'Survival of the Next Generation'

As a 20-year-old in a team at Belsen in 1945, our speaker, Helen Bamber, was shocked to see how quickly compassion dies in organisations faced with brutality. Her current concern is how the younger generation have been affected by their parents' experiences.

Paul Samet

Next meeting: 4 Sept. George Vulkan, 'Holocaust Remembrance'

Cardiff Get-together

Besides enjoying the delicious food, we talked about our early lives. We were especially happy to meet Susan Plessner, daughter of the late Tony Plessner, who is a violinist with the Welsh National Opera.

Myrna Glass

Norfolk Get-together

Wishing Frank Bright a speedy recovery, we enjoyed lunch brought by Myrna. We shared memories and spoke of the need to set these in concrete form for future generations.

Claudia Pim

Lively meeting in Wembley

We had a lively meeting, ably led by Myrna Glass, who once again provided excellent refreshments. We heard about an interesting new project initiated by Brent recording the lives of immigrants in the borough.

Tom Heinemann

Next meeting: 10 Sept. Social Get-together

Current affairs discussion at Cleve Road

A very interesting current affairs discussion led by Ronald Channing included such topics as: Israel after 60 years; dependence on oil; also knife crime; and the influence of Jewish schools.

David Lang

Next meeting: 23 Sept. Stuart McIntosh, 'From Broom Cupboard to Bush House'

Edgware: The Cairo Geneziah Collection

Dr Friedrich Niessen, from Cambridge University library, gave an erudite talk about the 192,000+ manuscripts the library holds. The collection includes, *inter alia*, documents in Maimonides's original handwriting.

Edgar H. Ring

Next meeting: 16 Sept. Alan Bilgora, 'Great Jewish Opera Singers'

Essex: The Bank of England

Christopher Bailey, BoE agent for the South East and East Anglia, told us, among many other things, that it costs the bank 3p to produce each £20 note and that the silver strip

St Annes holiday

Once again the CF Northern Groups had an enjoyable holiday in St Annes, ably organised by Ruth Finestone and Susanne Green.

A truly memorable event was meeting Ron Ibbitson, a second-generation family man from Windermere. Ron discovered his mother's remarkable history as a survivor of Auschwitz after her death by studying the contents of a shoebox full of documents she had never talked about. Several of those present helped him in his researches, and the originals of his treasures plus some translations we made are going to the Wiener Library.

Dorothy Fleming

seen in the note is not silver but 3% nickel – the rest is plastic.

Ken Ward

Next meeting: 9 Sept. Clare Ungerson, 'Kitchener Camp'

West Midlands (Birmingham) Garden Party

Some 25 of us enjoyed our annual Lunchtime Garden Party, at the home of Eileen and Ernst Aris with its delightful gardens. The main course was generously provided by Eileen and Ernst and members contributed salads and desserts.

Philip Lesser

East Midlands (Nottingham) Lunch

A successful meeting with a splendid lunch was held in the lovely period home of Ruth and Jurgen Schwiening in Market Bosworth. Esther Rinkoff's happy personality added to the party spirit. Bridget McGing, from the Wiener Library, spoke to us about the history of that organisation.

Bob Norton

HGS: Coram's Children

Foundling Museum volunteer Jane King said Thomas Coram set up an institution for abandoned children and the hospital was granted its Royal Charter in 1739. Until its closure in 1954, it looked after over 27,000 children. Its famous art collection was started by Hogarth, its musical tradition inspired by Handel.

Laszlo Roman

Next meeting: 8 Sept. Suzanne Lewis (Ben Uri Gallery)

Radlett memorabilia

Maurice Collins brought several 'eccentric contraptions' to our meeting. We were challenged to identify their purpose – a task which required imagination and some deductive thought. A most entertaining meeting.

Fritz Starer

Next meeting: 17 Sept. Genealogist Alice Joseph

South London:

'Great Jewish Opera Singers'

Alan Bilgora began his presentation with a beautiful 1904 recording by a soprano of Russian-Jewish origin. We were also given plot outlines of the varying operas and details of the international careers of the featured soloists.

Edith Jayne

Next meeting: 18 Sept. Ross White, 'Anne Frank Trust'

Temple Fortune: Bertha Leverton

Bertha was 16 when she left Germany accompanied by her younger brother. They were fostered by a couple in the countryside – her three years with this family were 'very unhappy'. She emphasised how guilty she felt that her close family had been saved. Bertha told us she had never envisaged the 'enormity' of her idea of a Kindertransport reunion.

Rosette Wolf-Vecht

Next meeting: 18 Sept. Clare Ungerson, 'Kitchener Camp'

Brighton & Hove Sarid:

Kasztner – a 'Jewish Schindler'

It was very interesting to hear Prof Ladislaus Löb, one of 1,684 Jews who left Hungary by train for Switzerland in 1944, a journey made possible by negotiations between Reszö Kasztner and the Nazis. He based his talk on his book *Dealing with Satan*. It made me realise how little we know after all these years.

Susan Dyke

Next meeting: 15 Sept. Travels in Argentina

Welwyn Garden City: Jews and jazz

Though I initially had little interest in the 'Jewish Influence on Jazz', Alf Keiles's illustrated talk soon had me hooked. We were all very impressed.

Susanne Graham

Next meeting: 25 Sept. Kurt Wicks, 'The Jews of Shanghai'

Veteran's Lunch for 'Enemy Aliens'

Hosting a Veteran's Lunch for former 'Enemy Aliens', Dr Helen Fry showed us a Meridian TV film on refugees from Nazi oppression in the British forces. It included excerpts from the film *Lift Up Your Head, Comrades* by Arthur Koestler about 'aliens' in the Pioneer Corps as well as ex-Pioneers who subsequently served in other units throughout the forces. Twenty-four of us attended, including some of the veterans featured in the TV film.

Kingston CF made to feel welcome

Susan Zisman made us feel very welcome at her New Malden home. We were delighted to meet a potential new AJR member (originally from Poland), who came with her Egyptian-born husband.

Jackie Cronheim

Weald of Kent talk on Ashkenazi Jewry

Our well-attended meeting enjoyed an interesting talk by Ivor Richards about the history of Ashkenazi Jewry.

Inge Ball

Next meeting: 24 Sept. Ross White, 'Anne Frank Trust'

Hendon discussion

We discussed the impression made on Austrian schoolchildren when a party went to Vienna to talk about their experiences under the Nazi regime.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: 23 Sep. Visit to Wiener Library

OTHER MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER

Edgware and Temple Fortune 2 Sept. Outing to Kew Gardens

Wessex 16 Sept. Details sent out

From Kew Gardens to Moravska Ostrava, via East Finchley

Hazel Beiny took a party of AJR members to Kew Gardens. The guide, Judith Lawson, told Hazel about her synagogue's involvement with Czech refugees. Kingston upon Thames synagogue has a *sefer torah* on permanent loan from the Czech Memorial Scrolls Trust and this scroll came originally from Moravska Ostrava. Judith's husband David and colleagues have been researching the history of Ostrava and its Jewish community – see <http://www.kingston-synagogue.org.uk/group.php?c=50>

That is how David and Heinz Vogel, who arrived from Ostrava as an 11-year-old, came to meet Anna Grant in her flat in East Finchley. Anna was born in Moravska Ostrava. Her parents were Salomon Fink and Helena (née Bergofen). David had prepared family trees for the Fink and Bergofen families and Anna was able to add to them.

If you are interested in this project, contact Hazel on 020 8385 3070 or at hazel@ajr.org.uk or David Lawson on 020 8390 8142 or at lawsonassoc@btinternet.com

Refugees in St Annes

by Lisa Wolfe

The AJR holiday each year is run by our Motherhens Ruth and Susanne at the Inn on the Prom not far from the pier in St Annes, near Blackpool, in Lancashire. Our group, refugees from Nazi oppression, have come here six years in succession. All have unique stories, but the same refrain: Their families were torn apart, never to meet again.

Some had no childhood, were robbed of their youth, had to grow up in a hurry, mixed up and confused.

Some were adopted, thus did rather well, most were exploited and suffered hell. Friendships were formed, we bonded together

For life - our history binds us forever. It's our common past we share today. Of horror and hardship, now far away. All of us old now, need sticks to walk and yet we are young again as we talk of happiness long ago, in faraway places. Remembering our loved ones' faces. Hear their voices bidding us farewell, but these are the stories we now have to tell

Of new beginnings, creating new lives. Talking of children, their husbands and wives

We kvell when photos of grandkids are shown

Confirming that Hitler has not won. Through hardship and heartache we have proved our worth. That Jewish people are the strongest on earth.

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

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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Joint outing to Hatfield House

Hazel Beiny organised a trip for Cleve Road, HGS and Hendon group members to this ancient house. She also arranged for us to be given a private guided tour by a most competent and enthusiastic guide. We saw the glorious state rooms, rich in world-famous paintings, fine furniture, rare tapestries and historic armour. After lunch we were free to enjoy the delightful and spacious gardens, now in full bloom.

Max Sulzbacher

DIARY DATES

Sunday 21 Sept
AJR Tea at Hilton Watford

Sunday 26 October - Sunday 2 Nov
Eastbourne Holiday (Lansdowne Hotel)

For further information, please call us
on 020 8385 3070

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 17 September 2008

Marilyn Rose

'The Jews of Brazil'

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 8 September 2008

Kurt Wick

'The Jews of Shanghai'

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Tue	2	CLOSED
Wed	3	SIMON GILBERT
Thur	4	GEOFFREY STRUM
Mon	8	KT LUNCH AND KARDS & GAMES KLUB
Tue	9	CLOSED
Wed	10	MADELEINE WHITESON
Thur	11	RONNE GOLDBERG
Mon	15	KARDS & GAMES KLUB
Tue	16	CLOSED
Wed	17	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	18	JILL & JOHN
Mon	22	KARDS & GAMES KLUB
Tue	23	CLOSED
Wed	24	MARGARET OPDAHL
Thur	25	MIKE MIRANDI
Mon	29	KARDS & GAMES KLUB
Tue	30	CLOSED
Thur	28	DOUGLAS POSTER

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

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

Marriage

Congratulations to Andrea and Philip Goodmaker on the marriage of their son Nick to Sally-Anne.

Deaths

Stent, Professor Gunther S. (born Stensch in Berlin 1924) died 12 June in Haverford, PA. An early researcher in Molecular Biology, then neurology and behaviour and finally he turned to philosophy of science. Always a polymath.

The **Wiener and Godfrey** family have been overwhelmed and touched by the many messages of sympathy received on the recent deaths of Rosi Wolff ('Auntie Rosi') and Gerda Wiener ('Mummy and Omi'). We would like to thank everybody for their support, which we value very greatly at this time of great sadness. I would also like to take this opportunity of thanking the AJR for its valuable work in connection with former refugees, including my aunt and my mother. The AJR has been a lifeline for many. Marion Godfrey

CLASSIFIED

Susan Poole was cleaner, shopper and companion to our aunt for 31 years and enabled her to live happily and independently in her own home until her death last December aged 95. Susan is in her 50s and is a warm, kind, helpful, reliable person whom we recommend highly to anyone seeking steadfast support for an elderly person. Anyone in NW London who is interested can telephone ELP or MFC on 020 7431 7136 or Susan direct on 020 7431 9908.

AJR CENTRE

Chiroprapist. **Trevor Goldman** at the Paul Balint AJR Centre Wednesday 3 September 2008, 10-11.30 am

Pamela Bloch at the Paul Balint AJR Centre Clothes sale, separates, etc. Wed 24 Sept.

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Please contact Carol Rossen or Lorna Moss on 020 8385 3070 ASAP as numbers are limited

THE HOLOCAUST CENTRE INVITES AJR MEMBERS TO THE POST-OPENING VIEWING OF 'THE JOURNEY' AT BETH SHALOM, THE HOLOCAUST CENTRE in Laxton, near Nottingham on Sunday 14 September 2008

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

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

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

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

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

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 Mobile: 0795 614 8566

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.

HELP WITH PAPERWORK

Would you like help with paperwork (letters/bills etc) in your own home? Please call **Nicholas** on 07726319867 or email him at nyfranklin@hotmail.co.uk
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OBITUARIES

Lilo Anderson

Liselotte 'Lilo' Anderson (née Winter) MBE passed away peacefully at her home in Wembley in June, 98 years after her birth in Königsberg, East Prussia.

Nazi laws prevented her from continuing her legal studies and she came to the UK in the late 1930s with her mother, joining her brother Rolf.

The German legal profession's loss became the gain of the British charity sector, especially Cancer Research and Wizo. She put her exceptional eye for detail, super-charged drive and organisational ability to good use raising funds for numerous charitable causes, including several in Israel. She was awarded an MBE in 1998.

Her other great contribution to her adopted homeland was tackling red tape and slipshod work wherever she could. Council officials and many others felt the sharp end of her tongue.

In the 1920s Lilo's family became one of the first in Königsberg to own a car. Despite being born into privilege and then losing everything, she always worked hard to improve her situation.

Although she never qualified as a lawyer, Lilo played a huge role in the legal battle fought by her lawyer husband Kurt Anderson to secure compensation from the German government for the loss of the family mill and

house, which later became a Russian naval headquarters in Kaliningrad. When the money came through, she immediately bought her first car in England. The husband-and-wife legal team helped numerous friends and relatives with their compensation battles with Germany.

Family was always extremely important to Lilo: she kept in contact with cousins around the world, from Israel to Venezuela. She was immensely proud when the paintings of one of her relatives – Elsa Berg – were discovered in Holland, to much artistic acclaim in the 1980s. Lilo's fierce determination helped ensure that she and her family in England were recognised as the rightful heirs.

Lilo was at the centre of an immense network of friends, many of whom had also fled Germany. Music was one of her greatest pleasures: she was a regular visitor to the Wigmore Hall.

Lilo left a strong impression on everyone who met her, and the world, and north London in particular, is a poorer place without her. She is sorely missed by friends and family alike.

Jo Winter



Martha Schlesinger-Bendoff

Martha Schlesinger-Bendoff (née Bieler) was born in Vienna. Her Galician father, Joachim, was a businessman whose fortunes waxed and waned erratically. Her mother, Gittel, hailed from near Lemberg.

Martha grew up in a religious bourgeois household. The eldest daughter of five surviving siblings, she was educated at the Schwarzwaldschule. Though showing early artistic talent, she enrolled to study dentistry at Vienna University, but did not complete her studies when the family's fortunes hit the buffers.

She left Vienna in July 1938. With her younger sister, she entered domestic service for a Bolton GP. In 1941 she married Adalbert (Bela) Schlesinger, whom she had known in Austria. They settled in Manchester, where they had two sons, Ernest and Philip.

Martha was the heartbeat of the family. In often hard times, she did many jobs and, much later, became secretary of the Manchester Jewish Homes for the Aged.

The Schlesinger home was for long the hub of a voluble refugee culture. When Bela's parents left Hungary in the late 1940s, she gave them a home. She also took in displaced cousins. For a long time, she was the fulcrum of an extended family, as her sisters Bertha and Sonia also settled in Manchester.

On retirement, Martha rediscovered her

talent for painting. Her work was exhibited widely in Manchester and London, winning prizes and commissions.

Bela died in 1974. After years of widowhood, Martha remarried in her late sixties. She moved south to join her new husband, Hyman (Ben) Bendoff, in Streatham, where she became a pillar of the local Jewish community. The couple were devoted to Martha's two granddaughters and to her wider family. After Ben's sudden death in the mid-1990s, Martha kept up her numerous friendships and undertook even more charitable work.

In 1999 she fell and fractured her hip. Combined with the deaths in rapid succession of her two younger sisters, her loss of full mobility sapped her spirits. She took up residence in Nightingale in Clapham, where she continued to paint.

Though Martha's last years were robbed by vascular dementia, traces of her determination and humour would unexpectedly appear. Much loved by her carers and treasured by her family, she died peacefully shortly after her 95th birthday.

Ernest Schlesinger
Philip Schlesinger



AJR REPORT

Michael Newman

Kindertransport pensions

After a long campaign spearheaded by former KT Chairman Hermann Hirschberger, certain Kindertransport refugees who fled to Britain, and whose parents were of German nationality, may be entitled to an increase in their German retirement pensions following a change in British pension law announced by the Minister for Pensions Reform, Mike O'Brien.

Following a ruling at the European Court of Human Rights, in the 1990s the German state pension system was opened up to Kindertransport survivors, enabling those without pre-war German insurance contributions to 'buy in' to the German system provided they applied for, and were granted, German nationality.

However, the contributions they had made to the British social insurance system before 1948 had the effect of reducing the value of the German pension. Owing to pan-European rules on how periods of insurance in different countries affect each other, the German retirement pensions were reduced for every year of contribution made in Britain between 1939 and 1948. Kinder who began making contributions in 1939, until 1948, therefore received no German retirement pension, whereas some-one who began paying contributions in 1943 would receive approximately 4/9 of the retirement pension.

The amendment now tabled by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will enable Kinder who wish to apply to have their UK pre-1948 credits removed from national insurance records. In most cases, this is likely to boost the value of their German pensions. The change could affect Kinder who entered employment between 1939 and 1948 in Britain.

Around 150 Kinder affected by the present rules are said to be known to the DWP and it is anticipated that others will come forward once the amendment becomes law. When applying for the proposed increase in their pensions, it is envisaged that Kinder will also be able to claim for up to four years' back-pay.

It is expected that the Pensions Bill including the proposed amendment will receive Royal Assent in late autumn and further information will be published in the Journal when it is available.

Kinder wishing to enquire about the possibility of receiving an increase in their pensions are advised to contact the DWP International Pension Centre on 0191 218 7777 and ask to be referred to the claims department. The department can also be emailed at TVInternationalqueries@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk Once registered, a case worker will make contact to advise the next steps, which will include having the claim transferred to Germany for processing.



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



The problem of acute cognitive dissonance

Hardly surprisingly, a recent survey found that most Israelis have little confidence in the country's political leadership. They have slightly more confidence – but still not much – in such institutions as the courts, the police, and the attorney general's office. The current president, Shimon Peres, is perceived as being better than his predecessor – though, again, coming hard on the heels of a serial sexual offender, that can hardly be difficult.

So whom do Israelis trust? The answer – the IDF and the media – is rather strange for someone brought up to believe in the inherent benefits of the democratic system. It is true that Israel's communications media, both printed and electronic, invest a great deal of time and effort in endeavouring to show the true face of the country's leaders. But that is just another facet of what journalists the world over do, whether genuinely in search of the truth or in order to boost circulation or ratings. After all, scandals are good for sales, and the juicier the better.

The IDF, for its part, is one of the great levellers in Israeli society. It takes in a large proportion of the country's 18-year-olds, trains them in a variety of skills, gives them responsibility, and in many cases enables them to overcome the disadvantages of an underprivileged background. Not all Israel's soldiers serve at the front, and many emerge after three years of service as mature, well-rounded individuals.

Israelis have always been fairly cynical about their politicians. When I first came to Israel, in the sixties, the epitome of corruption was one Kalanter, whose name had become a synonym for political dishonesty. The gentleman had had the temerity to cross the floor of the Knesset and join a different political party, apparently for personal gain. No one bothered to point out that no less a personage than Winston Churchill had done pretty much the same (he moved from the

Conservatives to the Liberals in 1904, and back again in 1924), though for loftier motives. How tame the opprobrium attached to 'Kalanterism' seems today, when party allegiance is as stable as the latest opinion poll results.

In Israel today you cannot open a newspaper or watch the news on television without being regaled with tales of the latest bribe-taking scandal, sexual offences or political shenanigans of Knesset members, cabinet ministers, religious leaders, income tax officials, bankers, civil servants, industrialists or members of the legal profession. If you are planning to become a public figure, expect to have salacious details of your finances and/or your private life held up for public display.

Israel's political system is inherently flawed, its system of proportional representation inevitably preventing any party from gaining a clear majority. A system of government based on coalitions provides ample room for political blackmail. England's system of representation has its drawbacks, but at least you generally have one clear winner.

High school students in Israel have to pass an exam in Civics in order to obtain their full *Bagrut* (school-leaving certificate). Students are required to prove their familiarity with Israel's system of government, legal system, social institutions, demographic makeup and history.

I don't envy anyone who has to teach that subject. The theory is so far removed from actual practice that a clash between the two in the classroom is inevitable. Israel's political system undoubtedly needs a thorough overhaul. I suspect that what eventually happens is that the students, who are in their last year or two of high school and about to go into the army, suffer from acute cognitive dissonance. One way of coping with this is to become cynical, and that doubtless explains the results of the survey.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Newsround

German citizenship test includes no reference to Holocaust

German-Jewish community leaders have criticised the Interior Ministry's planned citizenship exam for new immigrants for featuring a questionnaire that makes no mention of the Holocaust. Stephen Kramer, of the Central Council of Jews, said that omitting any Holocaust-related questions reflected a 'strange understanding of history'.

Jud Süß screened in Budapest

The 1940 Nazi film *Jud Süß* has been screened publicly in Budapest by a neo-Nazi organisation. The screening attracted protests from, among others, a lawyer who said that many of his family were victims of Nazism. Speaking on condition of anonymity, he told a Hungarian newspaper that he would initiate legal proceedings against the organisers.

Haider set to resume leadership of far-right party

The executive board of Austria's Alliance for the Future of Austria has designated Jörg Haider as its new chief. The decision is expected to be approved shortly at a special party meeting. He is set to replace Peter Westenthaler, who was recently convicted of providing false testimony about a brawl involving his former bodyguard. Haider handed over the party's leadership to Westenthaler in 2006.

Bodyguard describes Hitler's everyday life as 'banal'

Rochus Misch, 91, who became Hitler's chief bodyguard, reveals his own impressions in his book *The Last Witness*, just published in Germany. In the book he describes Hitler's everyday life as banal and writes, among other things, that 'At no time did [Hitler and his entourage] speak about the camps and what happened there.' An English-language version of the book is expected for the end of 2008.

Ukrainian monument vandalised

A Holocaust monument has been vandalised in the city of Poltava in central Ukraine. It was daubed with Ukrainian nationalist symbols and anti-Semitic graffiti. The monument remembers more than 3,000 local Jews who were killed by the Nazis on 23 November 1941.

Mass conversion to Judaism in Uganda

More than 250 Africans have taken part in a mass conversion to Judaism in Uganda. The conversion was supervised by Gershom Sizomu, Africa's first native-born black rabbi, and other Conservative rabbis from the USA. The ceremony, in the Abayudaya village of Nabogoye, included converts from Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria.