

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Rereading *The Reader*

Bernhard Schlink's 1995 novel *Der Vorleser* (the term means someone who reads aloud to someone else) has been a huge international success, translated into some 39 languages, topping the *New York Times* bestseller list, and receiving the ultimate accolade of nomination by Oprah Winfrey. Sales of *The Reader* will doubtless derive a fresh boost from the film version, which was reviewed in our March issue. The original text of the novel

is markedly superior to the film screenplay by David Hare, whose clunking style and evident lack of familiarity with the Germany of the 1960s do not do justice to the sparse, cool prose of the book, which is interspersed with more reflective and lyrical passages.

The reason for this Holocaust (or, more correctly, post-Holocaust) novel's success is not hard to find: it lies in the acute, psychologically and emotionally convincing portrayal of a teenage boy's affair in the late 1950s with an older woman who turns out to have been a concentration camp guard. The boy, Michael Berg, grows up to become the middle-aged man who narrates the novel; through his narration we are skilfully induced to perceive the way in which his emotional development has been stunted by his affair with the woman, Hanna Schmitz, and by her abrupt departure from his life. Reading plays a singular role in their relationship: she so enjoys his reading aloud to her that it becomes part of the regular ritual that precedes their lovemaking. He becomes her *Vorleser*.

The novel uses a private, intimate relationship as the springboard for an analysis of the ever-troubled question of post-war Germany's relationship with its Nazi past. The key to Hanna Schmitz's behaviour lies in her shame at her illiteracy. As we gradually realise, it is her illiteracy



Kate Winslet and David Kross as Hanna Schmitz and Michael Berg

that causes her to become a camp guard. Offered promotion in the Siemens factory where she is working in 1943, she prefers to leave rather than take a job that would expose her illiteracy; jobless, she is recruited by the SS. The pattern repeats itself in a small German university town (identifiably Heidelberg) some 15 years later, when she meets Michael: offered promotion to an office job, she abandons her existing position as a tram conductor and disappears, with not a word to the lover whose life she thereby permanently damages.

Michael goes on to study law. Some years later, at a trial of former concentration camp guards, he is dismayed to recognise Hanna among the accused. Unable to read any of the documents relating to the trial and the charges she is facing, she is ill equipped to defend herself. The trial focuses on an incident at the end of a death march: the surviving female prisoners were locked overnight in a church and, when this caught fire during an air raid, the guards failed to unlock the doors, leaving the women to burn to death.

Hanna's refusal to betray her illiteracy reaches its highpoint in her damaging admission that she was the author of a report on this incident, an admission that is patently false, given that she can neither read nor write. Once again she conceals her

illiteracy, but at the price of incurring a sentence of life imprisonment (the other accused get off lightly). The novel then recapitulates the theme of *Vorlesen*: Berg sends the imprisoned Hanna tapes on which he has recorded novels and poems that he has read aloud, thus eventually enabling her to learn to read. Many years later, he visits her in prison, and they become reacquainted. By now an old woman, she petitions successfully

for early release, but commits suicide on the eve of freedom.

Schlink depicts his woman camp guard as a human being. He presents us with a normal, plausibly flesh-and-blood woman who is far removed from such monstrous figures as Ilse Koch, the notorious 'Beast of Buchenwald', or Irma Grese, executed in 1945 for crimes committed at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, or Hermine Braunsteiner Ryan, a camp guard at Majdanek who was discovered living in New York and whose trial in the 1970s revealed acts of dreadful cruelty.

Hanna is – her illiteracy apart – an ordinary working-class woman, the course of whose life takes her to Auschwitz as a perpetrator, but without conscious intent; she is no deranged psychopath or sadist, but the kind of person one might encounter any day on the street. Professor Bill Niven of Nottingham Trent University has argued, on the basis of certain surface similarities in their stories, that Hanna is modelled on Ilse Koch, but this overlooks the fundamental difference between the two, deriving from the way in which Schlink has conceived his character.

However, anyone reading *Der Vorleser* from a Jewish point of view may well have serious reservations about the novel.

continued overleaf

REREADING *THE READER* continued from page 1

Astonishingly, Schlink contrives to depict a Nazi concentration camp guard who is condemned to life imprisonment without, apparently, ever having committed any major crime. Hanna first worked at Auschwitz, but we learn almost nothing about what she did there. She then spent some months at a work camp near Cracow, where her most sinister activity was to have young and delicate women prisoners come to her room at night, before they were 'selected' to be sent back to Auschwitz and gassed; it transpires at her trial that she had the women read aloud to her – a blow to the watching Michael, their unwitting successor, but hardly a serious crime.

On the death march, Hanna's crime, that of failing to unlock the doors of the burning church, was one of omission rather than commission. The women who died there fell victim to an Allied air raid, in a rather unfortunate parallel to Goebbels's propaganda image of the British and American air forces as 'terror bombers' raining death and destruction on innocent people in the Reich. Finally, Hanna is plainly innocent of the detail that seals her fate, her alleged authorship of the report on the incident. It would have been more credible if Hanna and her fellow guards had, for example, themselves set the church on fire, or if they had callously killed their prisoners off in some other way. As it is, a former camp guard emerges almost as the victim of a miscarriage of justice – a deplorable piece of unmerited exculpation that is hard to swallow, even in a work of fiction.

A second cause for unease is the use of the Holocaust as a mere backdrop to the troubled psychological and emotional development of a young German growing up in the Adenauer years. Professor Jeremy Adler of King's College London has criticised Schlink powerfully for creating sympathy for the perpetrators rather than the victims, in an article in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 20 April 2004 entitled 'Die Kunst, Mitleid mit den Mördern zu erzwingen. Einspruch gegen ein Erfolgsbuch'; Adler accuses Schlink of engaging in a 'sentimental falsification of history'.

But the prime object of our sympathy is surely the narrator, Michael Berg, whose life has been ruined by Hanna Schmitz. On this reading, it is a young German of the post-Holocaust generation who becomes the

principal victim of the former camp guard, not her Jewish victims during the Holocaust. One reason why *Der Vorleser* has proved so popular with schoolteachers is that their students easily identify with Michael and quickly understand how badly he has been damaged emotionally by the affair with Hanna. But what of the damage done by Hanna to the Jews in her charge, damage that would clearly have been of an altogether different order of magnitude?

Jews, as victims and survivors, play only a peripheral part in the novel. The two Jewish survivors of the fire in the church are known only as 'The Mother' and 'The Daughter', designations that strip them to some extent of their individuality; they remain outside that realm of human society within which the narrator moves with some measure of easy familiarity, permanently stereotyped by their origins and their experiences in the camps as representatives of 'the Other'. The few pages towards the end of the book that describe the middle-aged Michael's visit to the 'Daughter' in New York are among the novel's weakest (though better by far than the corresponding passage of the film).

The sufferings of the Jews under Nazism are made to take second place to the emotional disruption caused to the post-war generation of Germans by the legacy left them by the previous generation, a disruption that cannot begin to compare with the almost unimaginable scale of the misery caused by the Holocaust. Schlink's depiction of the sad plight of Michael Berg's generation comes, when set alongside the Holocaust, perilously close to self-pity, to that narcissistic self-absorption so characteristic of post-war Germany's attempts to come to terms with the burden of its recent history. Look, the novel seems to cry, we are the victims too! See how we suffer for

our parents' crimes! See how our delicate psyches have been wounded by the aftermath of the Holocaust! Oh, the poor things.

Anthony Grenville

AJR leaders in meeting with Bundestag Vice-President



AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman (second from left) and Directors Gordon Greenfield (right) and Michael Newman recently met with Frau Petra Pau, Vice President of the German Bundestag, in London. The meeting provided an opportunity to explain the work of the AJR, especially the Homecare programme, for which the AJR receives a substantial grant from the Claims Conference, provided by the German Government.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of the
ASSOCIATION OF
JEWISH REFUGEES
MONDAY 22 JUNE 2009
11.00 AM

at the
Paul Balint AJR Centre
15 Cleve Road, London NW6

Lunch will be served at a cost of £5. Space is limited. If you would like to reserve a place for lunch, please call Head Office on 020 8385 3070 by Monday 8 June 2009.

Agenda

Annual Report 2008
Hon. Treasurer's Report
Discussion
Election of Committee of Management*

*No person other than a committee member retiring by rotation shall be elected or re-elected at any general meeting unless:-

(a) he or she is recommended by the Committee of Management, or
(b) not less than twenty one clear days before the date appointed for the meeting, notice executed by ten members qualified to vote at the meeting has been given to the Association of the intention to propose that person for election or re-election together with notice executed by that person of his or her willingness to be elected or re-elected.

AJR Directors
Gordon Greenfield
Michael Newman
Carol Rossen

AJR Heads of Department
Susie Kaufman Organiser, AJR Centre
Sue Kurlander Social Services

AJR Journal
Dr Anthony Grenville Consultant Editor
Dr Howard Spier Executive Editor
Andrea Goodmaker Secretarial/Advertisements

Views expressed in the *AJR Journal* are not necessarily those of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.

'Abi me lebt': As long as I'm alive!

These are the words of my Yiddish-speaking *booba* (grandma). How often I have agreed. Never more so than very recently.

I was a guest speaker for the AJR's HGS group on 10 November. In the December issue of the *AJR Journal* there was a letter by Laszlo Roman. I was then told by Head Office that a lady from Manchester had phoned to say she had met me in 1942 and would like to get in touch. Her name was Gisela Feldman. That rang a bell. I phoned her and an old memory was revived.

In 1938 a Mr and Mrs Feldman from Poland came to visit us. Both my parents were Polish – my father left at the age of eight – and one of his sisters had married a Goldschmidt and a sister of Mr Feldman had also married a Goldschmidt. They had one son, Oscar, who was a student in England. They, like my father, were convinced war was imminent and asked if Oscar could stay with us as they were returning to Poland. It was agreed and he became one of our family – my parents, *booba*, two younger sisters and myself.

At the time, we lived in Petherton Road, Highbury and were fortunate to have a radio. Leading up to 3 September, we were all glued to it. In particular, we were struck by the horror of Oscar and my parents on hearing that Germany had invaded Poland. Oscar's parents were there, as was a large, extended family of

my father and mother.

We moved to Golders Green in 1940 and Oscar came with us. Four months after leaving Petherton Road, our house was bombed; a month later a bomb fell on the brook in our garden. The house and its occupants survived, but for days we had no window or chimneys.

I married in 1941 and Oscar moved elsewhere but kept in touch. He met Gisela in 1942 and introduced her to us. I met her and her mother in West Hampstead in 1942. Oscar and Gisela married in 1943.

Oscar's parents survived by walking to Russia from Poland and finally came to live in England. My father's extended family – some 50 of them – perished with the exception of one son of the sister Goldschmidt. I actually met him twice, in Paris in 1947 and in Melbourne, Australia in 1991.

Of my mother's family we knew of only three survivors – one went to New York and two sisters to Israel.

I doubt if Gisela and I will ever meet but we hope to stay in contact by telephone. She, like me, gives talks to schools and communities on the Holocaust in the vain hope that mankind will have learned something of man's inhumanity to man. Rest in peace those who are no longer with us but, as long as we're alive, let's keep in touch!

Bertha Klug

Yom Hashoah – Recalling Anne Frank

On Monday 20 April Pinner Synagogue will host another of its renowned evenings of remembrance of those who perished in the Holocaust. This year's theme is 'Making Hatred History'.

The focus of the evening will be the 80th anniversary of the birth of Anne Frank. Dr Eva Schloss, Anne's 'posthumous' stepsister, will be a keynote guest speaker, as will Rabbi David Soetendorp, founder chairman of the Anne Frank Trust UK.

Anne Frank, younger daughter of Otto and Edith Frank, recorded in her diary her thoughts on the days the family spent in hiding in the annexe in Amsterdam before their deportation. With the exception of Otto, everyone in hiding in the annexe died. Returning to Holland after the war, Otto met Fritzi Geiringer (Eva Schloss's mother), who had also survived Auschwitz.

The evening, beginning with a candle-lighting ceremony, will be attended by a number of dignitaries and West European ambassadors or their representatives. Also, Dr Stephen Smith MBE, Chairman of the UK Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and founder of Beth Shalom, will give an address.

Dr Eva Schloss, born in Vienna in 1929, lived in Holland, where she and her

mother were betrayed, arrived in Auschwitz some months before the Franks, and returned to Amsterdam in June 1945. Her mother married Otto Frank in 1953 and supported his work. Eva moved to England and married Zvi, whose family were also German-Jewish refugees. She published *Eva's Story*, which led to the creation of a multi-media play regularly performed around the world, and in 2006 wrote a second book, *The Promise*.

Rabbi David Soetendorp was born in Amsterdam to a family who had also spent years in hiding. His father, also a rabbi, became a close friend of Otto Frank after the war. While growing up, David got to know Otto well. Rabbi Soetendorp studied for the rabbinate in England and became a rabbi in Bournemouth. He has written about the 'second-generation phenomenon'. Now retired and living in Pinner, he has qualified as a counsellor and psychotherapist.

AJR members are cordially invited to attend and encouraged to bring their friends and members of their families, especially teenage grandchildren. The evening, for which there is no charge, starts at 8:00 pm (refreshments at 10.00 pm).

Brian Eisenberg

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'UNDERPAID, UNDERFED AND OVERWORKED'?

This is the third and final part of a selection of letters responding to the article "Underpaid, Underfed and Overworked": Refugees in Domestic Service' by Anthony Grenville which appeared in our December 2008 issue.

I was 17 years old, from Vienna, the loved, spoilt child of a middle-class family. I had no domestic experience whatsoever. The family who employed me lived in a small house in Finchley, north London. He was a bus driver. They had a girl of six, Celia, and a boy of 13 months. They had never had servants before and I heard the wife brag to the neighbours: 'We have a maid now!' I had to address them as Madam and Sir.

I had to clean the house and wash the nappies, his shirts, her knickers, Celia's dresses. I did everything that was asked of me but it was never right.

My room was in the attic: a bed, a chair, a small table, three coat hangers. No electric light, only a candle. I had one pillow and one thin blanket and I was freezing. I was starving too. I sometimes pinched food off Celia's tray. I was very, very unhappy, longing for my parents and my little sister, my home, my Vienna.

After four desperate weeks, I had my first day off. I took an Underground train, going anywhere and nowhere. As I sat in the train tears rolled down my cheeks. Opposite me was a young man. He asked: 'Why are you crying?' I burst out: 'I am a Jewish refugee from Vienna. I am working as a domestic for a bus driver and his wife who I have to call Sir and Madam. I miss my parents!' I sobbed and sobbed.

He answered: 'I was a student at the University of Vienna. I am a Hungarian Jew. I am married to a lovely non-Jewish Irish girl. She would love to meet you. We have a nice home - I will give you our address. Whenever you have nowhere to go, you must come and visit us.' 'I have nowhere to go now! May I come with you?', I asked. I followed him from the train. It's a long story ...

Hertha Lowy
London NW8

I arrived in Great Britain from Vienna in September 1938 aged 21 and had a domestic job with a family in Leamington Spa, where I spent the years until the end of the war.

The family had a five-bedroom house with a large garden. I had a small but comfortable room. The family consisted of Professor Watson, a mathematics teacher at Birmingham University, Mrs Watson and their ten-year-old son Timothy. I managed everything: cleaning, cooking, polishing, looking after the boy, making fires, lighting the boiler.

I was called 'Fräulein' and treated more as a friend. I was allowed to help myself to food. When my brother arrived with

the Kindertransport, he was invited to stay with us.

Mrs Watson's brother-in-law and aunt were evacuated to Leamington Spa to live with the family. Two charming old ladies were most grateful when I helped them. Yes, I emptied the chamber-pot for the mother-in-law. They asked me not to tell Mrs Watson and gave me two-and-six each time. Mrs Watson encouraged me to go to the synagogue in Birmingham for the Jewish holidays. I was encouraged to do Viennese cooking and was highly appreciated. The wages weren't grandiose but I had so much comfort, freedom and wonderful food that I didn't complain.

I found a domestic job for my brother in Leamington Spa and my father arrived a week before war broke out. Mrs Watson gave me time off to go to the Home Office to speed up my father's application. When he arrived in Britain he was invited to stay with us and lived there several weeks. Meanwhile, the family where my mother worked invited my father to live in the house with her. He came on a visitor's permit.

I left the job and worked in an office as a bookkeeper. I stayed in contact with the family and, after the war, when I was married, I invited Mrs Watson to our home. I would never have been able to manage our own five-bedroomed house if I hadn't had the experience in Leamington Spa.

So, not all employers were bad. It depended a lot on the girls. They should have realised that such a job had saved their lives and should have done their best to please their employer instead of complaining.

Katie Rich
London NW11

Father had been a Rechtsanwalt in Berlin, mother a housewife. In 1939 they were granted temporary permission to stay in Great Britain. The conditions were stringent. They had to re-emigrate. To this end, they had to provide proof that they had a quota number for admission to the USA. They weren't allowed to take up paid employment while in Great Britain. In any case, their German professional qualifications were useless. They were totally dependent on the generosity of their sponsors, one of father's former clients.

They needed an occupation which was internationally portable. They learnt to cook. After father's release from internment in the summer of 1941, there was a shortage of labour and they were granted work permits as cook and parlour maid. Their first job was as 'live-ins' in a doc-

tor's household. They drew on their own experience as employers of domestic staff to establish a *modus vivendi* for their employer and themselves. They were even able to save money, essential for their future life of live-in employment: dismissal meant being out on the street with their suitcases. Friends, generally refugees themselves, helped until they found new employment. They had nine jobs in seven years. They made the most of what was available to them. They fully appreciated that they were living in a free country.

Dr Victor Simons
London NW3

Arriving from Germany in May 1939, I descended with all my worldly possessions on my new employer, a 60-year-old English widow. We took an instant liking to each other and I was treated as her close companion.

In July 1939, when my lift containing a household of furniture arrived, I had no money to pay for storage and she offered to store my belongings for free in her garage. She helped me find accommodation for my parents, who arrived two days before the outbreak of war, and the furniture was put to good use. Living on the coast in Hove meant that all three of us were under the threat of internment. My employer went to the police and vouched for the fact that far from being anti-British, we were grateful to the British people for providing us with a safe haven. We were not interned.

When, in her old age, she entered a care home, my parents, my husband and I sent her a monthly cheque to cover her personal needs. When she died, she left me a brooch and I treasure this memento to this day. Now, at the age of 95, I am grateful that I was able to pay her back in some small measure for saving my life.

Emmy Golding
Edgware, Middx

I too arrived in this country on a domestic permit but I have never noticed any contributor draw parallels with the arrival of mainly Polish Jews after the First World War who had been hoping to find a better life in Germany. These 'Ostjuden' were generally regarded by the native German Jews as inferior and, in many cases, contact with them was avoided.

The kindest thing you can say about the British Jews is that we too were considered 'Ostjuden' by them and were treated accordingly. We, of all people,

continued opposite

Family tree

Though well aware of the current intense interest in family history, I had never expected to pursue this topic in connection with my own family background. Having come as a young refugee from Vienna in 1939, I could hardly expect any help from either census returns or parish registers!

Recently my son wanted to know about the various generations to which he is related. As I tried to tell him what I knew, we both realised that there was a complicated story to be told. I offered to set down as much as I could piece together of the story relying on my own memory for want of any official sources of information.

The first thing I did was to purchase some software so that I could set the whole thing out on my computer. I can now automatically build and amend my family tree and print it out. I have often looked at the various generations as set out and felt that these people, many long dead, now have some kind of posthumous existence. This, to my surprise, I have found strangely satisfying. I suppose that in preserving their memory I feel I am in a very small way undoing some of Hitler's deadly legacy.

With the passage of time I have become more committed to this project. I have a collection of family photographs which I have kept since my mother's death. These I have been matching, where I can, with the people listed on the chart. I have also been fortunate enough to be able to talk on the phone to a second cousin, seven years older even than I am, who lives abroad and has filled in various gaps and corrected a number of errors in



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my understanding. All this is on my mother's side of my family. On my father's side, there is no one I can ask. There I am aware of certain gaps in my knowledge (known unknowns), but there must certainly be other details of which I have no idea (unknown unknowns).

One example of this greater understanding is the extent of inter-

marriage in my mother's family during the first four decades of the twentieth century. The photograph displayed here shows my great-grandmother with all her then grandchildren taken in – I think – 1920. Of those six children, two (including my future mother on the right of the granddaughters) had the full four Jewish grandparents. Two others had three Jewish grandparents and the remaining two had just two Jewish grandparents.

Intermarriage was thus quite common, in my mother's family at least, in the time of my grandparents and my parents. There seems to have been a common source of all this mixing. It appears that over and over again these family members found their partners either as full members of the Social Democratic Party or of its youth organisation. The full extent of this came as a complete surprise to me.

What had obscured this fact from me was that my own parents had met under quite different circumstances. My father had been a keen amateur footballer playing for the famous Hakoah Jewish sports club. My mother met him while supporting the team. When I told my son about this, he immediately said that my mother had been a WAG (wife and girlfriend)! My first instinct was to deny this, bearing in mind how much she had done over the years to minimise the effect on me of the catastrophe that befell us all in 1938. I then reflected that her football-supporting days had been much earlier, during her late teens. So I agreed that yes, indeed, she *had* been a WAG.

Erwin Schneider

'UNDERPAID, UNDERFED AND OVERWORKED'? cont. from page 4

should be free of all prejudices in view of our history constantly repeating itself. But have we learned this important lesson? Are our brothers in Israel not making the same mistake again by treating the Arabs not as their equals?

Marion Smith
Harrow, Middx

A couple of years ago I bought the book *Treasures of Jewish Heritage* (The Jewish Museum, London) and found, to my amazement, a photograph of a form my prospective employer completed in order to employ me.

The family readily agreed that I should bring my three-year-old cousin with me. Sadly, at the last moment, his mother refused to let him go and he died in

Auschwitz together with the rest of the family.

Up to the age of nine or ten, I had grown up with a live-in maid and my plan for the future had been to study medicine. This was not to be. With the start of the war, a month and a half after my arrival in England, my employers were evacuated. I found myself another domestic job in the same area of north London and I couldn't have chosen a more interesting or busier household!

It was very hard and fussy housework, cleaning every nook and cranny of a huge house and doing all the cooking, as well as helping to look after the enormous garden. We also provided resident hospitality for military officers from overseas when on leave, so there were

often ten or more people to clean and cook for.

The little granddaughter learnt to walk 'helping me' by hanging on to the floor polisher and we spent many nights all together in the underground shelter built by grandpa in the garden.

We got in touch again 20 years ago, when the family spotted a piece in the local paper about the 'Refugees from Nazism' exhibition showing a picture of the youngster and me on top of the shelter.

Schmerz dich in deiner Brust
Das harte Wort 'Du musst'
Dann macht dich eins nur still
Das stolze Wort: Ich will!

Hilda Schindler
London N14

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

NICHOLAS WINTON – THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Sir – With regard to Tom Schrecker's letter (February), your readers may be interested in the following information. It is also important for the historical facts that might otherwise get distorted. Here is the transcript from the Kindertransport film interview with Nicholas Winton:

NICHOLAS WINTON: 'I went out round the camps with Eleanor Rathbone at the time and the Reverend Rosalind Lee, who was the head of the Unitarian Church and the people in the camps were those people who'd fled from Sudetenland and hadn't got either friends or relatives to stay with and they were just put into camps. I mean I was talking to Doreen Warriner who was looking after the grown ups and she was telling me that not only from the work but finance and from the personnel point of view there was nobody who could deal with ALL the children who needed to be got out and I said: well if we form a kind of embryo organisation in Prague which could go into operation if I can get the British end organised, so be it.'

SHOT OF TRAIN

NICHOLAS WINTON: 'And the Home Office made no problems whatsoever. They made conditions but no problems and the conditions were that each child had to have a £50 guarantor, which was a lot of money in those days and had to have a family where they could go who would look after them till they were 17. Which was of course quite different and separate to the children who were brought in from Germany who came in bulk and went to Dovercourt. And from there they had to find homes for them. I couldn't bring anybody in until there was a home found for them.'

So my response to Tom Schrecker:

1. I am happy to accept the details about the skiing holiday cancellation.
2. 'On arrival [Winton] saw that nothing was being done for the endangered children and he was told that nothing could be done ...' Factually incorrect – see above. Elaine Blond, daughter of Michael Marks (M&S), was another indefatigable helper with the children. When the Chief Rabbi objected to her finding non-Jewish homes for them, she commented: 'What do you want me to do with them? Send them back?' She was another valuable link.
3. 'Trevor Chadwick and Bill Barazetti were not working to get children out at that time, though later they, and others, did wonderful work in helping to save the children.' Yes – good.

4. They were part of the Kindertransport organisation but Nicholas Winton was a valuable link. That is praise, not a distortion.

Please note: All children had to have the £50 deposit. Some Czech children were sent to Dovercourt and many German and Austrian children had guarantors here, to whom they went direct. I was one of them, as were those on the train with me from Munich.

5. I implied nothing beyond the statement that I considered calling Winton the 'British Schindler' inappropriate. We agree on this without qualification.

Bea Green JP, London SW13

Sir – Regarding Bea Green's letter (December 2008), Mr Winton would be the last person to describe himself as 'Britain's Schindler' – especially as his motives were totally humanitarian and he never even talked about this until many years later.

He never claimed he was in any danger from the Nazis: he did *not* go on a skiing holiday because a friend begged him to come to Prague instead to help getting people out of the country, many of whom had to flee from Germany and Austria for political reasons and were in great danger.

When he realised there was no provision for saving the children he decided to make this his priority. His employer demanded that he return to London after two weeks, which he did.

Due to his dedicated preparations during those two weeks in Prague he was able to continue this work in London, helped by his mother, Barbara Winton, and a part-time secretary.

His mother looked after us teenage girls once we were in Britain. I was privileged to meet Nicholas Winton in 1940 when he came to visit her, still in the Red Cross uniform in which he had served in France before it was overrun by the Nazis.

As far as I know, none of the 669 children was found a foster home by the committee which had brought children from Germany and Austria, although Bloomsbury House helped some of us in practical ways.

In 1945 another 700 children arrived from Czechoslovakia – these were the camp survivors and a remarkable and dedicated lady undertook to look after more than 30 of the youngest children. Her name is Alice Goldberger, a former refugee from Germany. The book *Love Despite Hate* tells the story of those children. *SJM, London*

Sir – Regarding my letter mainly about Sir Nicholas Winton, for anyone who may be interested in fuller information about his

rescue mission and some of the other people involved in it, I strongly recommend *Nicholas Winton and the Rescued Generation* by Muriel Emanuel and Vera Gissing, published by Vallentine Mitchell. The contents were approved by Nicky Winton.

Tom Schrecker, Val d'Isère, France

Sir – There is some truth in what you say about Nicholas Winton taking less risks. If he had been apprehended, he could not have carried out his worthwhile task. His mother, who supported him wholeheartedly, also played a big part in the rescue of many children. That includes the three of us, who were taken in by a lady called Miss Harder. Her brave deed was mentioned in *Hansard*. Mrs Barbara Winton visited Miss Harder's sweet and tobacconist shop in Archway, Highgate. When she mentioned she was trying to place three girls aged 12, 13 and 15, whose mother did not want them to be parted, Ms Harder made her decision. Mrs Winton was amazed and warned her of the responsibility. My book *Three Lives in Transit* tells some of the story.

I have since found out Miss Harder's first names: Bertha Emily. Apparently she was an only child. Her father was a hairdresser, probably also at Bentalls in Kingston. The manager there was her good friend. I remember him coming to the shop. He probably thought: How can she do this?

When we had the first Remembering for the Future event, Nicky, as the 'children' know him, mentioned the debt he owed to Barazetti and Chadwick. He hoped to continue and was very frustrated with the negative attitude of the USA, Australia and Canada.

Laura Selo, London NW11

'GOD ON TRIAL'

Sir – Peter Phillips's article (February) was one of his usual shallow, callous, muddled and ill-informed tirades. Progressive 'rabbis' who don't believe in anything, not even in G-d, who convert non-Jews left, right and centre to their pseudo-religion – they are the ones who make sure we will, G-d forbid, not survive as Jews. What is left of the Jewish religion without belief in G-d and in the Torah! No wonder Orthodox rabbis don't want to share a platform with them. (Mrs) M. Stern, London NW3

MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE

Sir – Jews of all persuasions actively resist attempts by developers in Ukraine, Poland, Russia and other countries to build over Jewish cemeteries. It is particularly distasteful to read Dorothea Shefer-Vanson's (March) dismissal of similar objections to the building of a 'Museum of Tolerance' on a Muslim cemetery in Jerusalem on the spurious grounds that these are the rantings of a known anti-Israeli Arab. Were the German government to announce a plan to build a museum of tolerance on the site of, say, the Berlin Jüdischer Friedhof Weißensee, the public outcry would, correctly, be enormous.

Arthur Oppenheimer
Hove

BERLIN KINDERTRANSPORT MONUMENT

Sir – 'Kindertransporte: Zuge ins Leben – Zuge in den Tod' is the inscription on the plaque of Frank Meisler's evocative monument in Berlin. It was also the heading of a major article in the *Berliner Morgenpost* on 1 December (which I consulted). The monument is not a replica of the Liverpool Street sculpture, which memorialises the Kindertransport to Britain from 30 November 1938 to 31 August 1939, but encompasses all child (Kinder) Holocaust victims – the rescued small minority and the overwhelming majority who were trapped and transported to death camps.

I am therefore puzzled that a postage stamp picture in which little is discernible was substituted for my description of the monument in my article in February's Journal and the words 'Kind' and 'Kinder' were narrowly redefined as the pre-war Kindertransportees (for which, at the time, my two sisters and I, being of Polish parentage, were deemed not to qualify as we had a country, Poland, to go to!).

The monument depicts seven life-sized children on a bronze railtrack plinth. At the back, two neat children in brown bronze, their smart suitcases and violin case upright, look ahead to the West. In front, East-facing, in black bronze, are five anguished children in shabby clothes and laceless boots. Behind them is a huddle of black battered suitcases gaping empty but for a tiny naked baby doll missing one leg in the corner of one case.

I was touched to learn from Lisa Schaefer on 21 December that the pathos of Frank Meisler's masterpiece has so affected Berliners that every day since its unveiling the monument has been covered with beautiful fresh flowers. I feel privileged to have been a participant 'Kind Zeitzuge' (child survivor witness) to its unveiling. May it go on inspiring thoughtfulness and compassion for all who suffer persecution.

Bronia Veitch, Shipley, Yorks

'FAILURE OF A REVOLUTION'

Sir – As usual, I greatly appreciated Anthony Grenville's leading feature in the last issue. His contributions make subscribing to the journal worthwhile in itself.

I should just like to make one comment. At the last moment, in 1932, it must have been recognised that the threat from the Nazis was greater than the rivalry between the KPD and the SPD. I distinctly remember my father taking me aged eight to a great rally in the Berlin stadium – the arena was awash with the red flags of the KPD; we Social Democrats seemed to have occupied seats higher up. Undoubtedly there were speeches, which, of course, I didn't understand. What I do remember clearly is that at the end we all stood up and sang 'Brüder zur Sonne zur Freiheit' followed by the 'Internationale', songs which I knew as well, or better than, 'Hänschen Klein' or 'Alle meine Entchen'.

So there was, after all, belatedly and ineffectively, some coming-together of the forces of the left. This, incidentally, was continued, at least in France, by the

creation of a united front among the exiles, during the premiership of Léon Blum.

Eric Bourne
Milldale, Alstonefield

Sir – I do not agree with the title of Anthony Grenville's article about the events in Germany in 1918/19: the German Revolution did not fail. A democratic republican constitution replaced an imperial autocratic one. That was certainly a major political revolution (and it was not only that either: we need only consider the revolutionary nature of much of Weimar culture). The revolution that failed was the Spartacist revolt of January 1919. I do not accept that only a profound social upheaval deserves to be called a revolution.

Ralph Blumenau, London W11

CONGRATULATIONS TO KATIA

Sir – I would like to add my congratulations to the many that will undoubtedly be showered upon Katia Gould on the occasion of her 90th birthday. It was my privilege and pleasure to work with Katia and Richard Grunberger on *AJR Information* for five years. Although not the kind of person to take any nonsense, Katia always had a keen sense of humour. Let's face it, she didn't sack me so she has to be game for a laugh!

She wasn't a bad-looking girl either, and I see from the photo in the March journal that she's still a bit of a cutie.

Well done Katia, you're a star. Thanks for all the help and encouragement you gave me, and the endless list of good works you undertook for so many people over the years. Can I come to your 120th birthday party?

Maurice Newman, Dublin

SURVIVORS AND SURVIVAL

Sir – I find the *AJR Journal* compulsive reading even though I don't think of myself as a refugee, having arrived in the UK from Prague on VJ Day, when there was no longer anyone to seek refuge from. Recently, I have been entertained by the correspondence in your letters columns which raised the issue of who is entitled to call themselves a 'survivor'.

I spent the war years in Terezin, Auschwitz and associated slave-labour camps, ending up in Buchenwald by way of a 'death march' followed by a week of intermittent travel and snow storms in open rail wagons. None of my family who were deported with me survived.

I am profoundly thankful for the improbable turn of events which enabled me to survive but I take no pride in the fact. Heroism was not a characteristic of camp survival. I am reminded of warning notices regarding Japanese apes that appear in Japan's national parks which advise that looking the males in the eye is a challenge that causes them to attack – that is a pretty exact analogy of how we viewed our guards in every respect.

Everyone alive today is a survivor but there are differences in what they survived.

Professor Felix Weinberg
London SW14

KITCHENER CAMP NOT A PRISON

Sir – Calling Kitchener Camp an internment camp, Ellen Minkwitz (March) implies it was some kind of prison. This gives a completely wrong impression. The camp was a place of refuge made available after Kristallnacht by the British Government to young men from Germany and Austria. They were free to enter and leave the camp at will. I could visit my father there from nearby Minster, where I was looked after by two wonderful non-Jewish English ladies and he could cycle over to see me.

When France fell, the camp was closed as, being in Kent, it was seen as vulnerable in the event of invasion. The men living there were given the choice of joining the Pioneer Corps or internment, mostly on the Isle of Man. My father was older than most of the other men at the camp, having been given special permission to stay there on his release from Dachau. He therefore chose internment but understood why this was then thought necessary. He didn't complain, saying 'After all, many people went to the Isle of Man for their holidays.'

Stella Curzon, Ruislip

ANTI-SEMITISM AT THE NATIONAL

Sir – Before booking tickets at the National Theatre for *Burnt by the Sun*, note the eye-catching paragraph in the promotional leaflet: 'What is the connection between Samson's story, the current atrocities in Palestine, and *Burnt by the Sun*? Terror is the connection.'

In fact, there is no Samson. If ever there was a red herring, this one is outstanding and does not befit the NT. The play is by Peter Flannery about Stalin's atrocities – such as against the Jews. We know that anti-Semitism knows no bounds, is endemic in Britain and is perpetrated by those with a low mentality.

It is the 'in thing' and Gaza is the convenient pretext. The fact that Israel pulled out of Gaza and was forced to return to seek out the murderers firing rockets indiscriminately and hiding their weapons under children's beds does not enter the heads of the *Lumpenproletariat* or those of the upper classes who always wanted to drown Jews in a glass of water, as my father used to say.

The optimists proclaim 'It can't happen here.' If it could happen in Germany and Austria, it certainly can. We, of all people, should have learned this lesson. It is better to get *Burnt by the Sun* than in a gas oven. We must act before it is too late!

Fred Stern, Wembley, Middx

DER HUND MIT DER WURST

Sir – Paul Samet's letter in your February issue reminded me of the alternative words my father sang to the Anvil Chorus from *Il Trovatore*:

Ach ich hab es gleich gesagt
Die Wurst die schmeckt nach Seife.
Ach ich hab es gleich gesagt
Die Wurst hat zuviel Salz.

There must be many examples out there.
(Mrs) Marion Goldwater, London W5

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Does the creative spirit flourish in trauma and alienation? The Ben Uri Art Gallery has collaborated with the Courtauld Institute's new MA teaching module, Arts in Exile in Britain 1933-45, to create an exciting exhibition:



Self Portrait with Red Hat by Marie-Louise von Motesiczky 1938

Forced Journeys: Artists In Exile in Britain c 1933-1945 (until 19 April). Largely drawn from the Gallery's extensive collection, it features the great Modernist and Expressionist refugee artists whose subtle and dangerous odyssey was to project the darkness of their times.

The 90-work show explores the effects of exile and internment on artists trapped in the Second World War and their contribution to British art scholarship. Internees on the Isle of Man continued to create work and hold concerts and exhibitions; lithographers tore up lino from the floor; sculptors like **Pamina Liebert-Mahrenholz** sculpted with bread during her month at Holloway Prison; and the Dadaist artist, **Kurt Schwitters**, used lino, junk and porridge.

Ben Uri chair David Glasser stresses that the exhibition's focus is the exiled rather than the Jewish artist. In his introduction to the catalogue, he explains that complex issues of identity arising from the status of

émigrés are relevant today – such as images of Chinese, West Indian and Cypriot émigrés, portrayed by **Eva Frankfurter** when she worked at Lyons Corner House.

Forced to leave Austria with her mother, **Marie-Louise von Motesiczky** depicts a nude woman adrift with others on a choppy sea in a boat. The vision is bleak and terrifying. Her life-long friend, **Max Beckmann**, who fled Germany after the opening of the notorious Entartete Kunst exhibition in Berlin, echoes this nightmarish theme of being rowed away, in a triptych of brutality. Schwitters's *Ship in the Sea* offers a cubist example of fear and loneliness. Even **Ernst Eisenmayer**'s sketches of Southwark and Kensington pre-fabs and his *Cityscape* have a dark and alien gloom, while **Hans Feibusch**'s *Bomb Damage near St Paul's* carries his own war into the dreariness of shattered buildings overlooked by a less than reassuring cathedral. **Hermann Fechenbach**'s yellow sky with soaring eagles hints at the predatory omniscience of the Third Reich.

The exhibition has prompted the question: is there a Jewish art? The answer lies perhaps in the spiritual otherness of the Jewish artist, rather than the fragmented identity of the émigré.

A glance at the Nash Terraces in Regents Park evokes the graceful symmetry of Palladian architecture, whose eighteenth-century revival in Britain was largely inspired by Inigo Jones. The first exhibition devoted to the architect, **Andrea Palladio**, continues at the Royal Academy in celebration of his quincentenary. Palladio worked in sixteenth-century Vicenza, Venice and the Veneto, remoulding the elegance of classical architecture to the needs of his era. From the great Venetian churches to the Rialto Bridge and the Villa Rotunda, he inspired generations of architects, for whom his Four Books of Architecture were the alpha beta of the profession. The exhibition blends history with technology: large-scale models and fly-through computer animations accompany his original pen and ink drawings, alongside works by **Titian**, **Veronese** and **El Greco** and his 42 sketches of Julius Caesar's battles!

Annely Juda Fine Art

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

CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

THEATRE

The man who defied the killing machine

ARISTIDES – THE OUTCAST HERO
written and produced by
Alice de Sousa; directed by **Bruce Jamieson**; presented by **Galleon Theatre Company**
Greenwich Playhouse

We all owe a debt of gratitude to those extraordinary individuals who rescued Jews and others from the Nazis at great risk to themselves. Their courage not only saved thousands, but to some degree helped diminish the Nazi stain on humanity.

All honour then to award-winning screenwriter/producer Alice de Sousa for bringing to the British public the story of a little-known hero: Portugal's aristocratic wartime consul-general to France, **Aristides de Sousa Mendes**. The career diplomat defied the 'neutral' Salazar regime and issued thousands of visas to the refugees, including orphans and pregnant women, who were clamouring at the embassy gates for an escape route to Portugal. It was 1940 and France had just capitulated to the Nazi invaders.

But Salazar insisted that the visas were intended only for 'clean people' according to the strict 'terms of the Inquisition', and none to 'aliens' of indeterminate nationality, particularly Jews. Through diplomatic treaties between Spain and Portugal, Aristides was in a position to help them escape.

In the few days left to make his fatal decision before it was discovered, Aristides stamped over 30,000 visas for Jews and refugees whose inevitable deaths he could not square with his Christian conscience. Rabbi Chaim Kruger proved a catalyst for his actions, rejecting visas for himself and his family alone because so many more people were in need. Summoned back to Lisbon, Aristides remained undaunted, even stopping en route in Bayonne to issue 1,000 more visas by hand.

But Aristides's own life lay in ruins. Discredited by Salazar (who later claimed personal credit for the visa episode), he was thrown out of his job and denied the possibility of returning to the legal profession. He was even banned from receiving charity. In dire straits, the consul was forced to burn the doors of his mansion for firewood and – in a final irony – to queue up with the poor at kosher soup kitchens.

The man who was born in a palace died in 1954 in a Lisbon paupers' hospital, wrapped in the robes of a Franciscan monk. All his children had emigrated in order to survive, but one of his sons post-

humously rehabilitated his name in the USA by a resolution of Congress. Today, like Oskar Schindler, Aristides is honoured at Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous Among the Nations, by UNESCO, and through museums dedicated to his memory.

There is no question that the drama of Aristides is the drama of a moment. A moment of lucidity and courage in a life that might otherwise have been comfortable but uneventful. Aristides found his religious conviction when he was not looking for it.

Sadly, though, this drama is lacking in Alice de Sousa's play, which is strong on detail but weak on passion. The only tension comes from a tussle with a petty bureaucrat, Seabra (Robert Paul), who tries to dissuade the consul from his mission, but the actors share little dialogue or emotional response and the tone of the play is too declamatory.

Michael Hucks is a dignified and patriotic Aristides but offers no glimpse of the anguish that such determination must have cost him. Barry Davis, so effective in the recent New End production of Steven Berkoff's *Sit and Shiver*, defines the issues for Aristides as the selfless Rabbi Kruger. But if this is the poignant moment in the play, then you can't feel it.

Alice de Sousa has taken a theme close to her heart – her own family fled Portugal for Britain in 1974 – after her mother's controversial campaign for improved education there. She even comes from the same area as Aristides and shares his name. It feels as if her great respect for him has inhibited her creative freedom. There is a point in the play where Aristides's wife Angelina (Sue Broberg) discovers that he has a mistress and fathered her child. Here was an opportunity to explore the conflict between humanitarian conviction and human frailty. Instead, Angelina's shocked outburst sounds like a minor key in this exceptional episode in history.

The playwright mentioned in a Radio 4 Woman's Hour interview that she was planning a film on Aristides's life. Hopefully this will prove more effective.

Gloria Tessler

SCREEN

Heroes successful and failed DEFIANCE

directed by Edward Zwick
starring Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber,
Jamie Bell, George MacKay
at selected cinemas

VALKYRIE

directed by Bryan Singer
starring Tom Cruise
at selected cinemas

What does it take to be a hero? This question merits attention in the context of some recently released films spotlighting the Nazi era. While hero-

ism was little in evidence in Stephen Daldry's *The Reader* (reviewed last month), it is an integral component of both Edward Zwick's *Defiance*, which dramatises the intrepid struggle of the Bielski brothers to rescue fellow Jews and ensure their survival in Nazi-occupied Belarus, and Bryan Singer's *Valkyrie*, the latest film about the Stauffenberg plot against Hitler. It is this elusive quality that provides a link between these very different stories, one set in the forests of subjugated Eastern Europe and the other in the heart of the Reich, thus inviting a further question: do we think differently of heroes who fail as distinct from those who succeed?

That these matters can be raised when the films are based on true stories is testimony to the skill of the film-makers. Although the end result is known, both films are imbued with dramatic tension and enable the viewer to enter into the soul of the central characters.

The protagonists in *Defiance* are Tuvia and Zus Bielski who, with their brothers Assael and Aron, escape the slaughter which claimed the lives of their parents, siblings and many others in their native town and find shelter in the forest. There they join up with members of the Russian resistance, build a virtual village and succeed in rescuing and bringing succour to 1,200 Jews. While this is obviously a tale of heroism, a particularly fascinating aspect of the film are the contrast and rivalry between the charismatic yet restrained and reflective Tuvia, who has to overcome an innate aversion when forced to fight and kill, and the fiery, emotional Zus, a natural warrior. Which of the two is more of a hero? While Tuvia, the oldest brother, played by Daniel Craig, is seen as the natural leader, it is Zus, played by Liev Schreiber, who heads the final rescue mission.

One area in which the film appears to take liberties with reality is in giving the impression that Tuvia and Zus are the elder brothers, whereas Zus was six years younger than Tuvia and four years younger than Assael. In *Defiance*, Assael, played by Jamie Bell, is depicted as a shy, sensitive young man who discovers that he is no mean fighter. The real Assael, as mentioned at the end of the film, was conscripted into the Red Army and fell in the battle of Königsberg – doubtless a hero – whereas his brothers survived to pursue uneventful lives in America.

If death puts the final stamp on heroism, then Claus von Stauffenberg, played by Tom Cruise, can claim to be doubly a hero. Left with one eye and one hand after leading a Panzer division in Tunisia, he is effusively greeted at a reception by the Führer himself, played by David Bamber in *Downfall* mode. The year is 1944. Perhaps it was because of Stauffenberg's impeccable war record that he was chosen by disaffected officers after a previous plot to kill Hitler had failed. Indeed, in the film, in a comparison with the ten righteous men who

could have saved the biblical Sodom, Stauffenberg is told he is the one righteous man who can save Germany. If 'divine election' confers an extra degree of heroism, Tuvia Bielski, portrayed almost as a Moses figure, can be viewed in the same light. As a rabbi tells him, 'I almost lost my faith but you were sent by God to save us.'

A prime concern voiced by Stauffenberg in the film is how Germany should be run after Hitler has been disposed of. For this he proposes to use the national reserve army to take on the SS before negotiating with the Allies. There is mention, too, of 'closing the concentration camps' but no overt reference to 'Jews'. The film emphasises the difficulty Stauffenberg and his fellow conspirators had in dealing with General Fromm, the head of the reserve army. Nevertheless, on 20 July 1944, the plan to kill Hitler with a briefcase filled with explosives seems on course and 'Operation Valkyrie' is launched – only for the terrible news to finally come through: 'Hitler is alive.'

An important factor in both films is that the 'heroes' are portrayed as human. Both Tuvia and Zus hear at different stages of the deaths of their wives and, while both are grief-stricken, they react in very different ways. Both also form partnerships with women they have saved who later become their wives. Stauffenberg is shown as a devoted husband and father and is always concerned about the fate of his family.

While some may complain that a film inevitably trivialises the subject it depicts, this is not my opinion. Both *Defiance* and *Valkyrie* tell stories that are important and for that reason alone are worth seeing. *Defiance* at times seems rather long and there are perhaps too many scenes of violence which lack a certain focus. Yet the acting is to be commended and there are many episodes that are moving or gripping. There has been criticism too, not least from some members of Stauffenberg's family, of having the Scientologist Cruise play the protagonist; nonetheless his facial resemblance to the real Stauffenberg is striking and I found his acting plausible. Good support is provided by other members of a stellar cast, including Kenneth Branagh and Bill Nighy.

And, to answer the question posed earlier, someone who fails is as capable of heroism as someone who succeeds.

Emma Klein

MUSIC

Precious package

DIE MUSIKTRADITION DER JÜDISCHEN
REFORMGEMEINDE ZU BERLIN
Tel Aviv: Beth Hatefutsoth Feher
Jewish Music Center

Dr Hermann Schildberger was conductor of music sung in the Reform Synagogue in Berlin in the interwar years. He emigrated to Melbourne,

continued overleaf

REVIEWS *cont. from page 9*

Australia in 1939 taking recordings of 'his' music with him.

In 1994 Rabbi John Levi taped some of these and took them to Beth Hatefut-soth, the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv, which recognised their immense historical value. The museum edited them digitally to produce two CDs of 41 songs of extraordinary quality. The majority are by, or arranged by, Louis Lewandowski and Solomon Sulzer and other Jewish and non-Jewish composers. Handel is represented by 'Hail, the Conquering Hero Comes' from *Judas Maccabeus*. Contributions by Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann are less distinguished.

All songs are sung in German with a little Hebrew now and again. The choir consisted of professional singers with soloists of international renown: Josef Schmidt, Hermann Schey, Friedrich Lechner among others. The accompanying booklet, running to 100 pages, is the most comprehensive for any CD ever seen, providing, in both English and German, the history of how the records were made between 1928 and 1930 (when electric recording was in its infancy); notes on the artists and composers; the music itself; and personal reflections. Each song is headed not only by its title, but also by the composer, soloist, organist and date of recording, then a brief explanation of the music followed by the complete text in both languages on opposing pages. Starting from the end of the booklet, everything is repeated in Hebrew.

Subjectively it is astonishing how many prayers and their music are a cocktail of quotes from different sources, even within a short prayer, e.g. in the dozen or so words of 'V'Zot HaTora' half are from Deuteronomy 4:44, the other half from Exodus 15:18. In the music there are some minor and major variations, e.g. a suspended note at the end of 'Kol Nidrei' as sung by the writer is missing; a D flat near the end of one of my versions of 'Adon Olam' is a D natural here.

Many songs take a bit from one source and a bit from another. These changes are acceptable depending on usage and may be due to faulty transcription. Less acceptable are some German words, especially if they are relatively unimportant ones like conjunctions or weak syllables of words, which are given accents in the music. But even Brahms is guilty of this in some passages of his *German Requiem*. There are spelling mistakes, e.g. Kleinstrasse instead of Kleiststrasse. One song, 'Harii', sung at celebrations, is out of character: Lewandowski writes mainly in harmonic genre and this song is very contrapuntal, even finishing on a small fugue – so much so that I suspect it was written by a pupil of the master.

As an historic package, this is precious, fortunately saved by Schildberger and produced by a large team of dedicated

experts. To quote from the introduction: the collection is 'an invaluable memorial to one of the most brilliant among these (sic) musical traditions'.

Rudi Leavor

An important and welcome beginning

THE BOND OF MEMORY: POLISH CHRISTIANS IN DIALOGUE WITH JEWS AND JUDAISM

edited by Zbigniew Nosowski
Warsaw: Wiesz Laboratory, Institute for Social Analysis and Dialogue (ul. Trebacka 3, 00-074 Warsaw, Poland), 2008, 64 pp.

This slender, illustrated volume, sponsored by the Polish Council of Christians and Jews, is worth its weight in gold given that it provides incontrovertible evidence of the sea change that is in progress in Poland in defining the relationship between the Polish church and the Jewish minority. It is essential reading for those who remain in denial about change in Poland. Whilst there is still a long way to go towards reaching the Polish population at large, there can be no doubt that the Catholic Church and others are making great and successful efforts to purge Poland of its anti-Semitic past and to build a society that embraces and values its Jewish heritage and present citizens.

The monograph opens with contributions by the Chief Rabbi of Poland, the Polish Ambassador to Israel, and the Jewish Co-chairman of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews. I could do worse than quote these three key players. The Chief Rabbi writes: 'Travelling throughout Poland I have found, in almost every city, town and village, a group or sometimes individuals who are restoring their local Jewish cemetery or synagogue. Why are they doing it?' He believes that it was John Paul II, the 'Polish Pope', who began and encouraged the fight against anti-Semitism and that the Jewish presence, reduced by 90 per cent since before the war, is missed by many, if not all, Poles.

The Ambassador asserts that 'Many Poles, looking around, perceive this man-made emptiness, this absence in the Polish landscape, which hurts to this day like an open wound.' 'We cannot bring back the murdered Jewish world,' she writes, 'but we can, and should, bring back the memory. This living memory gives birth to new bonds between us.'

The Jewish Co-chairman of the Polish Council of Christians and Jews declares: 'I can understand the misgivings of foreign visitors who are puzzled by the presence of Jewish themes in the absence of Jews. Nevertheless, the challenge we face is very simple: we have a choice between oblivion or remembrance. Can anyone have any doubts about which is preferable?'

The monograph consists of a series of essays, some more general such as a description of the Day of Judaism in the Catholic Church, or a discourse on 'Solidarity with the People of Israel'. Most of the essays cover local initiatives in ten cities across Poland – from Lublin to Warsaw and Wrocław – discussing what is being done to remember the past and to forge bonds with the remaining or reconstituted Jewish communities. I was happy to see that in Koszalin, the town in which I was born when it was still the German Köslin, the two activists who have energetically and with a sense of mission revived the memory of the Jewish community before the war in a variety of ways have credited me for having acted as a catalyst.

It is possible that this preoccupation is at present largely confined to members of the Catholic Church and to a minority of the Polish population. But it is an important and welcome beginning which augurs well for the future.

Leslie Baruch Brent

In pursuit of intellectual freedom

THE REFUGE AND THE FORTRESS: BRITAIN AND THE FLIGHT FROM TYRANNY

by Jeremy Seabrook

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 288 pp., with a foreword by John Snow

This eminently readable, well-researched and stimulating book was published to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA). First established by William Beveridge in 1933 as the Academic Assistance Council (AAC), the organisation became the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (SPSL) in 1936. Since its inauguration, CARA, in all its guises, has helped over 9,000 academic refugees, those from 1930s Nazi-occupied Europe being replaced by fugitives from Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe and, more recently, from countries including Iraq, Iran, China and Cameroon.

The charity devoted itself to assisting refugees who could 'contribute to the common stock of learning' and, in the 1930s, the majority of their recipients were, like Max Born, Ernst Chain and Hans Krebs, male scientists of the highest calibre. The arts were also represented, with the names of architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner and the 'father of the history of art' Ernst Gombrich among the AAC's list. Noticeable by their absence in Jeremy Seabrook's study are any of the women refugee academics whom the AAC and SPSL assisted, often in conjunction with the Emergency Refugee Committee of the British Federation of University Women. Numerically these

were a very small proportion of the 2,541 who were registered with the SPSL at the end of the war, but some attention could have been given to them.

Unlike Jean Medawar and David Pyke's study *Hitler's Gift: Scientists who Fleed Nazi Germany*, which concentrates on the achievements of famous émigré scientists in a specific period, Jeremy Seabrook takes a much broader sweep in time, examining, in three sections described as 'Then', 'Until' and 'Now', the experience of forced migration, dislocation, re-establishment as well as the contribution that academic refugees have made to life in Britain from 1933 up to the present day. The 'fortress' of his title is a critique of the restrictive – even draconian – admissions policies faced by refugees and asylum-seekers who sought, and still seek, a safe haven in Britain. He also draws attention to the wider climate of hostility and racism faced by refugees, including that fostered by the media. In contrast, the 'refuge' is a more positive description of a pre-war, war-time and post-war Britain, where the persecuted have been, and continue to be, the recipients of personal acts of kindness and of the humanitarian efforts of the Quakers, CARA and others, and where rules have been bent to help individual refugees. A particular strength of the book lies in the first-hand stories the author has collected, for these are a poignant and personal testimony to the reality of fleeing a homeland and the hostility often faced by, in this case, academic refugees.

Jeremy Seabrook reminds us that CARA's academic refugees have had, and continue to have, an enduring positive intellectual and economic impact on Britain, the host country. He also reminds us that they are human beings who have fled their homes, families, jobs and cultures because they feared for their lives. Fleeing persecution requires courage and tenacity and becoming an asylum-seeker in twenty-first-century Britain is not a soft option, but a journey embarked upon in desperation. That academics are willing to risk their lives in pursuit of intellectual freedom reminds us what a precious commodity the latter is.

Susan Cohen

Honour-shame code

THE SAMARITAN'S SECRET

by Matt Rees

London: Atlantic Books, 2009, 288 pp. hardcover

ILLUMINATIONS

by Eva Hoffman

London: Harvill Secker, 2008, 266 pp. hardcover

Matt Rees was *Time Magazine's* Jerusalem bureau chief from 2000 until 2006 and he covered the Middle East for over a decade. He set his first thriller in *intifada*-torn Bethlehem, his

second in Gaza. His detective is Omar Yussef, a Muslim Arab history teacher in an UNWRA girls' school. Both novels, Rees stressed, were based on fact and focused on Fatah-Hamas rivalries, with a lurking Israeli presence in the background. His third novel is claimed as fiction and brings in another protagonist, the Samaritan community of Nablus (the biblical Shechem) and its high priest.

The Samaritans, of whom fewer than 800 survive, are a sister religion to Judaism, living in Holon and, more importantly, on the slopes of Mount Gerizim. Mount Gerizim is the mountain of the blessing in Deuteronomy xxvii:12 and is claimed by the Samaritans as the place where Abraham bound Isaac, in opposition to the mainstream Jewish claim that it was Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.

In the novel, an ancient Torah scroll belonging to the sect is stolen and the dead body of a young Samaritan is found. Yussef investigates the crime, hindered by the dysfunctional Arab society, in which relationships are governed by the honour-shame code: either one has one's foot on the neck of one's rival – which is honour – or one's rival has his foot on one's own neck – which is shame. Compromise is unthinkable. No conflict can ever be properly resolved. Honour-shame societies are violent and usually keyed into poverty. Yussef treads his way gingerly in the murky tunnels of the Nablus *kasbah*, between the various vendettas, corrupt practices and financial deals. Eventually, as one might hope, he solves the crime.

Eva Hoffman's new novel is a totally different genre, and I mention it here because some of the honour-shame vocabulary from Rees's book recurs. I realised very early what was going on and what the outcome would be. The plot concerns Isabel Merton, a renowned concert pianist. She has an intense, complicated and perhaps self-indulgent inner life involving her music. Her private life is more difficult: she has recently dumped an apparently devoted husband. She is travelling from hotel to hotel on a European tour and reading a journal by her old music teacher, Wolfe. Wolfe not only records his early impressions of her but also of a young cellist, Jane Robbins, who trained with her and is less intense. None of the European cities seems to make much impression on Isabel, but she meets Anzor Islikhanov, a political exile from Chechnya.

The plot is concerned with her relationship with Islikhanov, who seems to follow her around Europe. What is he? Who is he? The reader finds out at the end, while sharing in Isabel's emotional crises, but, because I had read Rees's novel, I found out at the beginning. That is not to subtract from the emotional impact of Hoffman's novel or the sophisticated appeal of Rees's crime story. Both are worth reading for entirely different reasons.

Bryan Reuben

YOM HASHOAH SUNDAY 19 APRIL

Yad Vashem UK is organising the annual Yom Hashoah event at the Logan Hall, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1

The service begins at 11 am prompt and will last approximately 90 minutes

Entrance is strictly by ticket only
Contact AJR Head Office on
020 8385 3070
or at enquiries@ajr.org.uk

'CHURCHILL'S GERMAN ARMY'

This one-hour documentary will be screened on National Geographic Channel on 26 April.

It tells the story of the refugees from Nazism who fought for Britain in the Second World War.

Of those interviewed, all are members of the AJR, based on Helen Fry's book *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens*

From Vienna to London

The Austrian Cultural Forum has hosted the UK launch of *Emigration ins Leben* by AJR member Eric Saunders. The audience included the Austrian Ambassador, Dr Helen Fry and David Freud, as well as the book's Austrian publisher and its editor, Peter Pirker, who had travelled over from Vienna. Eric Sanders and Peter Pirker humorously provided insight into the book's story with comments on its photographs, which were projected onto a large screen.

On Holocaust Memorial Day, AJR member Anne Pisker, a member of the famous Vienna Hakoah swimming team and a star of the 2004 film on the Hakoah swimmers *Watermark*, addressed several hundred girls at Wimbledon High School. On the same day, *Watermark* was shown at the United Nations in New York. The film was also shown at the Austrian Cultural Forum in London.

WANTED TO BUY German and English Books

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INSIDE the AJR

**Due to the poor weather at the beginning of February, three meetings – those at Oxford, Ealing (inaugural), and Ilford – had to be cancelled.*

'Wonderful few days in London'



Bob and Gerry Norton at Belsize Square Synagogue dinner

On the first day of our three-day London trip, 30 of us 'provincials' were driven from our hotel in Finchley Road to the House of Lords, where our host, Lord Barnett, led us via Black Rod's Entrance, the back stairs and the lobbies to the wonderful hall. Our visit was rounded off with a very creamy tea in the Peers' tea room.

The surprise of the day arrived in the shape of Ian Austin, MP for Dudley North, whose parents were in the group and who had arranged a visit for us to 10 Downing Street. There, we were struck by the friendly reception of the duty police and the Downing Street staff. The highlight came when the Browns' two little boys were brought in to view these 'oldies' who had invaded their territory. Later, it was time for *Carousel* – most enjoyable.

The next day began with a tour of the Foundling Museum, with insights into the life of the poor at the time. There followed a walking tour in the East End, with a guide who seemed to know what was going on in every house in Fournier Street and Brick Lane. Little time remained for the Wallace Collection, apart from a few minutes in the special exhibition of jewellery excavated in locations connected with the Black Death.

The day was rounded off with a dinner at Belsize Square Synagogue, where we were joined by 75 AJR members from the London area. Peter Suchet, our fluent and interesting speaker, threw an insider's light onto the background of his well-known family.

On our final day in London, our trip ended at the Paul Balint AJR Centre, where we were made most welcome and had a delicious lunch. There followed a recital by Naomi Hyamson, accompanied on the piano by Jenny Gould, performing songs from Strauss, Schubert and many others. Then tea and cakes were served – a great end to a visit many of us will long remember. Thank you, AJR!

Fred Austin and Bob Norton

Lisa Vincent of Nottingham writes: Having just returned from the Northern holiday in London, I would like to show my appreciation to the AJR for the wonderful few days we spent there. The itinerary was exceptional and I can't praise the organisers enough – especially Susanne Green, Esther Rinkoff and Myrna Glass, who gave their loving care so freely to us 'golden oldies'. I shall treasure those memories for the rest of my days and thank AJR for being the family so many of us have lost.

Pinner learns how to really help the needy

In an address on his experience of helping people in Sudan, Ethiopia and elsewhere, Paul Anticoni emphasised how essential it was to live among the peoples in question to identify the best way of delivering aid. Now director with World Jewish Relief, Paul is involved with Jews in the former Soviet Union and elderly Jewish refugees nearer home.

Walter Weg

Norwich shmooze

Once again, we came together from all corners of Norfolk for a shmooze, solving the world's problems while consuming the goodies Myrna had carried all the way to the cathedral city, where they don't even know what a shmaltz herring is.

Frank Bright

HGS: Harnessing the spirit of resistance – the story of the Jews of Vilnius

A moving presentation on her recent trip to Lithuania by Shivaun Woolfson, a PhD student and herself of Lithuanian extraction, focusing on four survivors now in their 80s-90s.

Carmen Stevens

Next meeting: 6 April. Alan Bilgora, 'Jewish Opera Singers'

Cleve Road: 'My Famous Family'

Peter Suchet, brother of TV journalist John Suchet and actor David Suchet, gave us insight into his famous family. Their father, Jack Suchet, born in South Africa, came to England in the 1930s to study medicine and assisted Alexander Fleming before becoming an eminent gynaecologist. If Peter speaks to any other AJR group, don't miss him!

David Lang

Next meeting: 28 April, 10.30 am. Rochelle Hodds, 'The Anne Frank Trust'



Manchester: 'My Grandfather's Shtetl' Speaking on the theme 'My Grandfather's Shtetl' and supported by a large collection of slides, Professor Howard Cuckle told us about the life, history and tragedy of people who lived in the Minsk area in what is now Belarus.

Werner Lachs

Next meeting: 10 May, at Morris Feinmann Home

Cambridge: 'Jewish History in Britain' Four new members joined our group and will have been impressed by Susannah Alexander's eloquent talk on 'Jewish History in Britain' from Disraeli to the present, including migration, settlement and religious groupings.

Keith Lawson

Next meeting: 23 April. Professor Richard Evans, 'The Third Reich'

Surrey: Old friends and new members We met at the home of Edmee Barta in Epsom. Over 20 members were present from all over Surrey, including new ones. We enjoyed the delicious refreshments while we chatted with old friends and welcomed newer members.

Anne Woolf-Skinner



Presentation of the five Holocaust Memorial Books to the Imperial War Museum North (IWMN) Learning and Access Department. Pictured are speakers at the event. Back, from left: Jim Forrester, Director, IWMN; Sue Kurlander; Dr John Goldsmith, Liverpool; Pippa Landey, Leeds; Werner Lachs, Manchester; Maria Smith, Formal Learning Manager, IWMN; Susanne Green. Front, from left: Deanna Van der Velde, Newcastle; Dorothy Fleming, Sheffield; Trude Silman, Leeds; Angella Carne, Manchester

Brighton and Hove Sarid: Diversity of faith

Rabbi Daniela Thau showed a film of relevant places of worship and symbols, pointing out the similarities in the rituals of most of the monotheistic religions.

Ceska Abrahams

Next meeting: 20 April. Sidney Levine, 'The Yorkshire Ripper'

Weald of Kent: Israel's 'peace village'

Another well-attended meeting, with two potential new members and a visit by the mayor of Tunbridge Wells. Janet Naim gave a most interesting talk about the Neve Shalom 'peace village' between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Inge Ball

Next meeting: 14 April. 'Safety in the Community'

Essex celebrates 7th anniversary

Naomi Hyamson sang beautifully with Harold Lester accompanying her on piano. Special guests were Myrna, Hazel and Helena, accompanied by Esther Rinkoff. No further meeting until May due to Pesach.

Larry Lisner

Radlett: Jewish opera singers

Alan Bilgora played us wonderful recordings by Jewish opera singers, a number of them from a cantorial background. Again, one must admire the enormous contribution of Jewish artists to

European culture in the last century.

Fritz Starer

Next meeting: 22 April. Suzanne Lewis, 'The Ben Uri Gallery'

Wembley CF: Meeting up with old friends

Good to meet old friends again at Harris Court. After tea we split into smaller groups to discuss our changing lives in our part of the North London world. A pleasant afternoon. No further meeting until May due to Pesach. *Laura Levy*

Temple Fortune: The Holocaust Educational Trust

Anita Parmar told us that the HET was established in 1988 and that since 1991 schools must teach their pupils at Key Stage 3 about the Holocaust and take two older pupils from each school to Auschwitz as part of the Lessons from Auschwitz project. After a Q&A session we had a special tea to celebrate our group's first birthday. *David Lang*

Next meeting: 23 April. Alf Keiles, 'The Jewish Contribution to Jazz'

Hendon: A history of recessions

Roger Beales, from the Bank of England, told us there have been five recessions since the War and that the bank rate is now the lowest ever. Nobody knows when the present recession will end, he said. *Annette Saville*

Next meeting: 27 April. David Lawson on 'Nice Nazis'

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

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Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

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Bob Norton 01159 212 494

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Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

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HGS
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

Hull
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Ilford
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Leeds HSFA
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

Edgware: Code-breaking at Bletchley

Ruth Bourne told us that many of the 'experts' at Bletchley Park were former German Jews – the messages they were decoding were of course in German. Ruth, herself a Wren when working there, explained the workings of the Enigma machine. *Edgar H. Ring*

Next meeting: 21 April. Stewart Macintosh, 'From Broom Cupboard to Bush House'

Pinner: Life of a journalist

A full house enjoyed Laurence Marks describing his life as a journalist, comedy script writer and playwright. Many of his best known TV shows were written jointly with his friend Maurice Gran. Interesting revelation: Laurence owns a watch that once belonged to von Ribbentrop, who lived in Pinner for a while! *Paul Samet*

Next meeting: 2 April. Gillian Waine, Director, Anne Frank Trust

Welwyn Garden City: Diversity of faith

Rabbi Daniela Thau began with the first monotheistic religion – Zoroastrianism – and finished with the ninth – Ba'hai. She concluded that members of all faiths can work together locally on aims common to all, demonstrating that underlying the diversity of faiths there is unity in the essentials they all worship. *Fred Simms*

North London: Life of an audiologist

Our well attended meeting enjoyed a talk by Robert Beiny on his work as an audiologist, helping people with hearing deficiencies, and – equally interesting –

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

**PLEASE NOTE THERE WILL BE
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DUE TO PESACH**

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday
9.30 am – 3.30 pm

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS
CLOSED ON TUESDAYS**

April Afternoon Entertainment

Wed 1	Margaret Opdahl
Thur 2	Roy Blass
Mon 6	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 7	CLOSED
Wed 8	CLOSED – Pesach
Thur 9	CLOSED – Pesach
Mon 13	CLOSED – Pesach
Tue 14	CLOSED – Pesach
Wed 15	CLOSED – Pesach
Thur 16	CLOSED – Pesach
Mon 20	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 21	CLOSED
Wed 22	Jen Gould
Thur 23	Arjan & Stefan
Mon 27	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 28	CLOSED
Wed 29	Katinka Seiner
Thur 30	Mark Rosen

his work with neglected Romanian orphans. *Herbert Haberberg*

Next meeting: 30 April. Roger Beales, 'The Bank of England'

Pioneer Corps Veterans: A meeting not to be forgotten

This gathering of ex-members of the Pioneer Corps at the Cafe Imperial in Golders Green was a meeting not to be forgotten. Author Helen Fry was there to greet us; a film crew marked the special occasion; Esther Rinkoff made everyone welcome. Willie Fields and Ken Ward, who had left the PC immediately they were accepted to join fighting units because they had wanted actively to participate in defeating the Nazis, exchanged reminiscences. *Ken Ward*

ALSO MEETING

Ilford 1 April. Alan Cohen, 'Biblical Heroines in Art and Music'

Ealing 7 April. Andrea Cameron, 'The Story of the Pears Family'

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

Deaths

Irene Retford (née Schauer), born Hamburg, died 23 February 2009, aged 87. Always loved and admired and missed by her sister and family.

Irene Retford (née Schauer), wife of the late Henry Retford, died suddenly but peacefully at the Wellington North Hospital. She will be very much missed by all her friends.

Paul Balint AJR Centre

Pamela Bloch Clothes sale, separates etc. Wednesday 22 April 2009, 9.30-11.45 am

HOLIDAY FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS

Sunday 12 July 2009 –

Sunday 19 July 2009

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AJR OUTING TO THE MÉMORIAL DE LA SHOAH, PARIS Wednesday 9 September 2009

We are delighted to offer an opportunity to visit the Mémorial de la Shoah, the Holocaust Museum in Paris. The Mémorial, the largest Holocaust-related institution in Europe, comprises a Museum, an Archive Centre and an Education and Training Centre.

We will leave St Pancras at approx 8.30 am, returning that evening at approx 6.30 pm. Included in the price are return train travel by Eurostar and transfer by coach to and from the Gare du Nord to the Mémorial.

The cost will be around £75.00 but this is dependent on train availability. Bookings and full payment must be received by Tuesday 12 May 2009.

Please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 for further details.

DID YOU ARRIVE FROM GDYNIA ON THE WARSZAWA ON 29 AUGUST 1939?

We are looking for Kinder who arrived at London Docks on 29 August 1939, the day of the last sailing of the *Warszawa* from Gdynia.

A national paper is considering a special feature to commemorate the arrival.

For further details, please contact Andrea Goodmaker on 020 8385 3070

OUTING TO BETH SHALOM HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CENTRE LAXTON, NOTTS

Sunday 21 June 2009

£25 per person including coach fare, entrance, vegetarian buffet lunch
Coach will leave AJR offices in Merriam Avenue, Stanmore at 8.45 am
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Booking essential
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AJR HOLIDAY IN EASTBOURNE

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£420 per week plus £40 per week single room supplement

to include transport from Cleve Road, lunch on outward journey, half-board, outings and entertainment

Book early to avoid disappointment

Please contact Carol Rossen or Lorna Moss on 020 8385 3070

AJR TRIP TO ISRAEL OCTOBER 2009

Dates to be confirmed

We will be flying with El Al from Heathrow. Alternative arrangements can be made for members living outside London.

We will be staying at the Ramat Rachel Hotel in Jerusalem. The hotel is set in beautiful grounds with indoor and outdoor pools open all year round as well as a leisure club. There will be a full itinerary but also free time to see family and friends.

The price, in the region of £1,300, will cover return flights, transfers in Israel, half-board accommodation, and all excursions with a professional guide.

For further details please contact Carol Rossen or Lorna Moss on 020 8385 3070

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Why should we remember?

THE GENOCIDE IN RWANDA

Students from Hampton School, in southwest London, have decided to mark the 15th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide in April 2009 with a unique remembrance project.

After learning about the terrible events of 1994, the pupils were eager to make sure they did something to help the world remember and reflect on what happened in Rwanda. They therefore devised a project which asks people to respond to the question 'Why should we remember the genocide that claimed the lives of an estimated 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu Rwandans in 100 days of killing in 2004?'

The students aim to collect as many responses as possible. The target is 8,000 responses, one for every hundred victims of the genocide. The responses will be exhibited at the Rwanda Memorial and Genocide Centre in Kanyoni, demonstrating the solidarity of the world's people with the survivors of the genocide and remembrance of the victims. The students are appealing for the personal responses of people across

the world, which can be submitted through <http://www.whysouldweremember.org>

To enhance the impact of the project even further, the pupils are approaching companies to donate a penny for every response collected. The money raised will sponsor orphans of the genocide through school and university.

The project will result in a sequel to the short book published by the students in 2008 which included interviews with genocide survivors and reflections from over 50 personalities in the UK, ranging from former Prime Minister Tony Blair to London Mayor Boris Johnson. Proceeds from the sale of the book are being donated to the Survivors' Fund (SURF), which aids victims of the genocide in Rwanda.

The students hope to disseminate their project as widely as possible and believe that even if just one person thinks about and remembers what happened in Rwanda in 1994, then they will have made a difference.

Andy Lawrence

Recording history for the youngsters of tomorrow

www.britishlocalhistory.com, a website launched last year, is dedicated to recording history, especially oral testimonies. It has a special Jewish section that actively encourages Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors to record their experiences and stories as well as those of the families they lost in the concentration camps.

The AJR now has its own entry in the 'wiki' (encyclopedia) of the website. You can upload your story free of charge directly onto the site using the guidelines below. You are free to add as much or as little material as you wish. The project is ongoing: it is hoped that people will continue to add their stories and that it will become the largest such repository for testimonies online.

Whether you have memories as a child during the Holocaust and the war, or you were a veteran who served in the British forces, or were in hiding, or were part of the Kindertransport, or are a child of a Holocaust survivor (the 'second generation'), we would like to hear your story. Through you, the youngsters of tomorrow will learn of the horrors of yesterday.

James Hamilton

James Hamilton is co-author, with Helen Fry (pseudonym J. H. Schryer), of two historical novels, the first of which, *Goodnight Vienna*, is due out in June this year.

The process to upload material is as follows:

- Double click on the Internet Explorer icon
- Type in www.britishlocalhistory.com at top of page
- This takes you to our website

- Double click the green icon TELL YOUR STORY
- At the top of this page you will see a thick green line
- Immediately under this, right of centre you will see ADD YOUR STORY (grey) double click
- Now start writing
- When finished, double click the grey SAVE button underneath and to the left of your work
- Your work is now saved.

Reuniting families:
The DNA Shoah Project

A unique project is underway in Tucson, Arizona, aiming to reunite families torn apart by the Holocaust. The DNA Shoah Project is a non-profit, humanitarian effort at the University of Arizona. It works to build a global genetic database of Holocaust survivors, their children and grandchildren in an attempt to match displaced relatives; provide *Shoah* orphans with information about their biological families; and eventually, when the database has reached sufficient size, assist European governments with the identification of Holocaust-era remains that continue to surface.

The project is the brainchild of entrepreneur and philanthropist Syd Mandelbaum, a scientist by trade and the child of Holocaust survivors. Further inquiry resulted in a partnership with Dr Michael Hammer, a renowned geneticist at the University of Arizona who has a background in Jewish population genetics.

The collection of a genetic sample involves a simple, painless cheek swab and the necessary equipment and forms will be sent out to anyone who requests them, free of charge. Participants' information is held in the strictest confidence; the DNA Shoah Project will not conduct any research on genetic samples and contributors' information will not be shared with any outside entity or organisation.

For further details see www.dnashoah.org

Lynn Davis

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY APRIL 2009

Until 10 May Treasures of the Black Death Gold and silver jewellery found at Colmar in the nineteenth century and at Erfurt in the 1990s. The jewellery was buried at the time of the Black Death in the mid-14th century, almost certainly by Jewish families. At Wallace Collection, London W1, tel 020 7563 9500

Wed 1 Dr Winfried Garscha, 'An Attempt at Justice: New Research on National Socialist Trials in Austria after 1945' At Wiener Library, 7.00 pm. Wiener Library/Austrian Embassy joint lecture. Tel 020 7636 7247 or email info@wienerlibrary.co.uk

Mon 6 Gerald Holm, 'The Surplus Women' Club 43

Mon 13 No lecture (Bank Holiday) Club 43

Mon 20 YOM HASHOAH: AN EVENING OF COMMEMORATION This year's focus: The 80th Anniversary of the birth of Anne Frank. Speakers: Dr Eva Schloss, Auschwitz survivor, stepsister of Anne Frank; Rabbi David Soetendorp, Founder Chairman, Anne Frank Trust UK, close connection to Otto Frank in post-war Holland; Dr Stephen Smith MBE, Chairman, UK Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. At Pinner Synagogue, 1 Cecil Park, Pinner, 8-10 pm

Mon 20 Hans Seelig, 'Musical Anniversaries of 2008 We Missed' Club 43

Mon 27 HE The Austrian Ambassador, Frau Matzner-Holzer, 'The End of the Cold War: 20 Years After - An Austrian Perspective' Club 43

Mon 4 May No lecture (Bank Holiday) Club 43



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



A friend and mentor

The following paragraph in a review of the book *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search For His Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq* by Ariel Sabar, on the internet site of the *San Diego Jewish World*, made me jump:

It was his Hebrew History teacher, Professor Chaim Rabin, who lit the spark to study his own ancient tongue, Aramaic. There were many ancient texts that up until that point were never deciphered for lack of knowledge of the language. Rabin encouraged Sabar to study Hebrew and Aramaic side by side and see how one linked to another.

The book describes the history of the Jewish community of Kurdistan, the experiences of the author's father, Yona, as a youngster growing up in Kurdistan, the family's immigration to Israel soon after the establishment of the State of Israel, and Yona's determination to attend university despite the difficulties encountered by Sephardi immigrants at that time. The author, who grew up in California, was estranged from his father for many years, primarily because of the cultural gulf between them. However, a chance encounter triggered his interest in the history of his father and the Jewish community of Kurdistan, and this helped him to overcome the gulf.

All very interesting and worthwhile, but what interested me was the reference to Chaim Rabin, who died in 1996 aged 79. Chaim was a friend and mentor to me and my family for many years. In fact, when I moved to Israel, in 1964, to study and work at the Hebrew University, Chaim and his wife Batya were among the first to invite me to their home for a meal on a Friday night or Shabbat. In fact, my family's association with Batya, née Emmanuel, goes back to Hamburg, Germany, where her parents and my grandparents lived near one another. But that's another story. Our paths crossed again in London, when Batya, who qualified

as a social worker, worked in that capacity for the Jewish Blind Society, of which my late father, Manfred Vanson, was secretary.

Chaim Rabin had a very distinguished career as Professor of Semitic Languages at Oxford University and later at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was a brilliant man, with an extensive knowledge of ancient and modern languages. He once told me that the way he learned any new foreign language was simply to pick up a detective novel in that language and read it. He was also instrumental in establishing the Israel Translators' Association, as well as the concept of translation studies as an academic subject.

But above all, Chaim was a kind person who never put on the airs and graces or professorial demeanour that are sometimes adopted by persons who have failed to achieve even half the distinction that he acquired. It was always interesting to talk to him, though he never tried to impress his interlocutor by displaying erudite knowledge. He loved to tell a good joke, especially if it had a linguistic twist, and I still remember the one about the French professor of linguistics who complained about the sad, harsh cadences of Hebrew but noted that there was only one word with a happy sound: 'umlala' – meaning miserable.

A few days after reading the book review I attended a meeting of the Jerusalem Translators' Association. The guest lecturer was a specialist in preparing indices for academic books who had studied ancient languages. I happened to mention the fact that Chaim Rabin's name had cropped up in far-off San Diego and, when I described the paragraph quoted above, she said 'You must be talking about Yona Sabar.' The world of Jewish scholarship is both wide-ranging and intimate, it seems.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Newsround

'The most dramatic assemblage of brains ever held under one roof'

In February 1939, some of Europe's most outstanding scientists who had fled the Nazi threat joined with hundreds of their British colleagues at a party to raise money for the refugees. The meeting – described, according to a report in the *Daily Telegraph*, as the 'most dramatic assemblage of brains ever held under one roof' – took place at the headquarters of the Royal Society in Burlington House in London. No record of the meeting was kept: fearful of reprisals against relatives left behind, many of the foreign scientists declined to be named. Now, on the 70th anniversary of this 'secret party', anyone who has information about guests who were present that day is asked to contact the Royal Society at 6-9 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG.

Holocaust teaching in the UK confirmed by Government minister

Following concerns raised after the publication of the 'Teaching Emotive and Controversial History 3-19' Report by the Historical Association as well as a review of the National Curriculum, Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, has refuted claims that the Holocaust has been removed from the National Curriculum. He has also announced renewed Government funding for the Holocaust Educational Trust's 'Lessons from Auschwitz' project, which includes a one-day visit to the former concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau for students engaged in post-16 education.

Polish Government seeks funding for repair of death camp site

Poland's government has asked the European Union for help in maintaining the site of the former concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, which has fallen into disrepair. Polish PM Donald Tusk sent a letter to leaders of EU countries asking them to create a special fund for the benefit of the museum, which requires as much as US\$ 160 million to cover maintenance costs.

Birthday of great Yiddish writer celebrated in Ukraine

Some 50 young activists from the Jewish community of Kiev have celebrated the 150th birthday of the Ukrainian Yiddish humorous writer Sholem Aleichem in his hometown of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky. The trip was sponsored by Limmud Former Soviet Union, which organises Jewish educational events in Eastern Europe and Israel and has chosen Sholem Aleichem as the central theme for its events this year.