

The threat from the far right

The BBC's invitation to Nick Griffin, leader of the British National Party, to appear on *Question Time* last October understandably raised concerns among the Jewish refugees from Hitler in Britain about a potential upsurge of support for the extreme right. Might we not be going back to the 1930s, when Fascism and Nazism were on the crest of their hideous wave, the streets of European cities resounded to the tramp of marching jackboots and anti-Semitism was in full flood?

A historical comparison between the 1930s and the present decade – both times of economic crisis – may help to answer the question, or at least to put it in some perspective. An accurate historical perspective may help, for a start, to reveal some of Griffin's statements on *Question Time* for the travesty of reality that they were. He claimed, for example, that Churchill, had he been alive today, would have been a member of the BNP. Rubbish! As our wartime prime minister, Churchill had no hesitation in imprisoning members of Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) – Mosley was held in Holloway Prison – or detaining them on the Isle of Man, under Defence Regulation 18B, brought in under the Emergency Powers Act, 1939.

From 1940 to 1945, when Churchill was locking them up, Griffin's predecessors had the choice between remaining idle, going to jail, or fleeing to Germany, as did the traitors John Amery and William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw), both of whom were executed by the British after the war, the latter after being captured by Jewish refugee Geoffrey Perry. Churchill recognised that the war against Hitler was not, like the First World War, a war between nations, but a war between ideological systems in which the enemy – in Britain the BUF, the approximate equivalent of yesterday's National Front and today's BNP – was present on both sides of the Channel and was active in virtually every country in Europe – Allied,



The Battle of Cable Street, October 1936

Axis or neutral. In all cases, they were the enemies of this country, and Churchill recognised them as such.

Griffin also claimed that Churchill would have supported the BNP's policy on immigration. Rubbish! Until 1905, Britain operated no restrictions on immigration. In that year, the Aliens Act was brought in, to limit Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. Churchill, who was a friend of the Jews throughout his career, opposed the new immigration legislation. Indeed, it was an issue that played a part in his decision to leave the Conservatives for the Liberal Party. (He returned to the Tory fold in the 1920s, famously quipping 'Anyone can rat, but it takes a certain ingenuity to rerat.')

In 1904, Arthur Balfour's tottering Conservative government – headed for electoral disaster in 1906, a landslide Liberal victory comparable to the Labour Party's triumphs over the Conservatives in 1945 and 1997 – sought to bolster its position through the populist measure of restricting Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. Churchill, who sat for a Manchester seat with a sizable Jewish presence, opposed the immigration legislation, in the name of Britain's liberal tradition as a refuge for the persecuted. 'It violated that tradition of British hospitality of which this nation has been proud, and for the practice of which it has at more than one period reaped a permanent advantage,' he declared. (Arthur Balfour subsequently became foreign secretary in

Lloyd George's wartime coalition government; in 1917, the Balfour Declaration that bears his name designated Palestine as the Jewish homeland.)

Though the recent success of the BNP in winning two seats in the European Parliament, as well as a scattering of seats on local councils across England, has alarming echoes of Mosley's high-profile campaigns of the 1930s, the differences between 1933 and 2010 are very considerable. Mosley was dangerous because he was a skilled political operator who had already enjoyed a promising political career as a rising star of notable gifts and energy; he was also very well connected within the ruling British establishment. Elected to Parliament in 1918 as a Conservative while still in his early twenties, he established a reputation as one of the most accomplished and effective speakers in the Commons.

But in 1924 he joined the Labour Party, as a member of the radical left-wing Independent Labour Party. In the general election of 1924, he chose with characteristic bravado to challenge Neville Chamberlain in the latter's Birmingham constituency, losing a knife-edge campaign by 77 votes. When Labour returned to power in 1929, Mosley became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, a ministerial post, but one that he considered inferior to his merits, as it was not of cabinet rank. A restless radical, Mosley left the Labour government in 1931, when his proposals for combating the effects of the Great Depression were rejected. He formed his own New Party, then, after a visit to Mussolini's Italy, the British Union of Fascists, notorious for the rabble-rousing anti-Semitism that culminated in the so-called Battle of Cable Street of October 1936, when Mosley's attempt to lead his Fascists through the streets of London's East End was thwarted by local resistance.

Mosley's Fascists, for all their black-shirted bluster, never posed a serious electoral threat; they managed to win some

continued overleaf

THE THREAT FROM THE FAR RIGHT *continued from page 1*

20 per cent of the vote in local elections in the East End at the height of Fascist agitation there, but coming a poor second in Bethnal Green was never likely to provide a springboard to power. They were unable to fight the general election of 1935. However, Mosley's ideas found some sympathy in far more influential quarters; before the utter discrediting of Nazism by the Second World War, Mosleyite Fascism seemed to not a few people in positions of influence to represent the path of the future, a replacement for the allegedly worn-out and ineffectual model of Western parliamentary democracy.

Mosley's first wife was Lady Cynthia Curzon, daughter of Lord Curzon, one of the great political figures of his day. Their wedding, in May 1920, was a major social event, attended by members of Europe's royal families, including George V and Queen Mary. Mosley was distantly related to the Bowes-Lyon family, and hence to Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the late Queen Mother. Lady Cynthia was a convinced socialist, but after her death Mosley married Diana Mitford, a fascist and anti-Semite.

Mitford's grandfather, the first Baron Redesdale, was an admirer of the renegade Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who went to Germany and became one of the most important proponents of racial theory; Redesdale translated his *Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century)* (1899), a seminal work in the ideology of 'Aryan' racial superiority, into English. Mitford's father, the second Baron, has gone down to posterity as 'Farve', the amiably eccentric father of the Mitford girls. In fact, he was a fervent xenophobe and anti-Semite. In 1939, he joined the Right Club, whose logo consisted of an eagle swooping on a snake and the letters 'P.J.', for 'Perish Juda'.

A degree of sympathy for Hitler's regime was fairly widespread among the British social and right-wing political establishment, who saw in him a bulwark

OUR HISTORY

The first history of the Jews who fled from Hitler and settled in Britain, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain, 1933-1970: Their Image in 'AJR Information'* by Anthony Grenville, is due to be published by Vallentine Mitchell shortly. The AJR has supported the publication of the book and has agreed with the publisher to make a limited number of copies available to AJR members at a very advantageous rate. **An order form is enclosed in this issue of the Journal.**



against Bolshevism, which they instinctively associated with Jews. They broadly approved of Hitler's alleged re-establishment of 'law and order' and his apparent restoration of German national unity and pride. Kazuo Ishiguro memorably captured this type of thinking in his novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989), in the figure of the politically naïve aristocrat Lord Darlington, who attempts to broker a

deal between the British government and the Nazi ambassador, von Ribbentrop. Ian Kershaw's study of Lord Londonderry shows how a real-life aristocrat and Tory minister supported the policy of appeasing Hitler, while displaying admiration for some aspects of Nazi Germany.

However, Kershaw also shows the limits to Londonderry's sympathy for Hitler. Having welcomed the Munich Agreement of autumn 1938 as the long hoped-for resolution of Anglo-German differences, Londonderry was brutally disillusioned when Hitler broke the terms of Munich less than six months later by invading the rump of Czechoslovakia. Thereafter, like many advocates of appeasement, he abandoned hope of a peaceful settlement between Britain and Germany, if reluctantly. By September 1939, the right-wingers who retained their sympathy for Nazism were the few hardliners grouped in organisations like the Right Club, The Link and the Anglo-German Fellowship. Such support as they had evaporated; Mosley and his post-war successors, Colin Jordan and John Tyndall, never gained any real support among the political and intellectual elites or in the broad centre

ground of British politics.

Griffin, too, barely has a toehold in the politically influential world of the governing establishment and, as *Question Time* amply demonstrated, has little of Mosley's oratorical skill and charisma. The BNP does have a constituency among those disadvantaged sections of the British working class that blame their plight on immigrants. But it seems unlikely that a coalition of those who have lost out in the process of modernisation and internationalisation can provide a solid platform for the party's rise to power. 'Today Barking and Dagenham, tomorrow the world' is hardly a credible slogan.

Anthony Grenville

Holocaust Memorial Day, 2010

Among events commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day will be:

AJR

**Thursday 28 January, 2 pm
At Belsize Square Synagogue**

Dr James Smith, Co-founder of the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, will speak on the subject 'The Legacy of Hope'.

Rabbi Rodney Mariner will lead the service, during which AJR members will light memorial candles and Kaddish will be recited.

If you wish to attend, please complete the form enclosed with this issue of the Journal.



University of Sussex, Centre for German-Jewish Studies

**Wednesday 27 January, 2.00 pm
At University of Sussex,
Chowen Lecture Theatre,
Brighton and Sussex Medical School**

Speaker: **Freddie Knoller**, author of *Desperate Journey: Vienna, Paris, Auschwitz* (2002) and *Living with the Enemy: My Secret Life on the Run from the Nazis* (2005)

The film *Daring to Resist: Three Women Face the Holocaust* (USA, 1999) will also be shown.

Booking not required.

For further information, please contact Diana Franklin at 01273 678771 or 020 8381 4721



London Borough of Barnet

**Sunday 24 January 2010, 1.00 pm
'Legacy of Hope'
At Ricketts Quadrangle,
Middlesex University, the Burroughs,
Hendon, London NW4**

Free entry

Events Dept 020 8359 2493
www.barnet.gov.uk/holocaust

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

Maria

This is not my story. It is about Maria. Maria was a blond, blue-eyed eight-year-old with long plaits who sat next to me in school.

It was late spring/early summer 1938. One day, our teacher, who was either very brave or suicidal – I've never been able to decide which – stood in front of the class and said: 'We are all brothers and sisters because we are all the children of God!' Maria turned to me and said: 'But you are not my sister because you are Jewish.'

That Christmas, the 'must have' present was an illustrated book about a snowman. Maria was the only girl in the class who was lucky enough to be given one. Everyone wanted to borrow it. However, when it was my turn, Maria said: 'I am sorry. I am not allowed to lend it to you because you are Jewish.'

Shortly after this, I had to leave that

Over the past 70 years I have often thought about Maria and wondered what terrible tragedy had befallen her and her family – as surely it must have done – to cause such an extreme change of heart in such a short space of time. But, like so many other things in life, I will never know ...

school under 'Jewish segregation policy'. I didn't see Maria again for a long time. It was 4 July 1939. I was walking across the market square on my way to a friend's house in order to say goodbye for that evening I was going to leave Vienna for England on the Kindertransport. I saw Maria walking towards me and decided to walk past. But she stopped

me and spoke first, saying: 'I am so sorry for what is happening to you but it is not my fault.' She wished me well and we went our separate ways.

Over the past 70 years I have often thought about Maria and wondered what terrible tragedy had befallen her and her family – as surely it must have done – to cause such an extreme change of heart in such a short space of time. But, like so many other things in life, I will never know ...

Lisl Bohea

Sir Nicholas speaks at Oxford dinner

Introduced by Rabbi Eli Brackman, Director of Oxford University's Chabad Society, Sir Nicholas Winton spoke to over 300 students, faculty members and community members on a range of topics. These included his strong opposition to Chamberlain's passivity when the war broke out; his part in supporting the pre-State of Israel after the war by sending 95 per cent of the value of the melted Nazi looted gold from concentration camps to the treasury



Sir Nicholas Winton, pictured at a dinner given by Oxford University's Chabad Society on the 71st anniversary of Kristallnacht

of the Jewish Agency; and, of course, his role in saving almost 700 children on the eve of the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Speaking on behalf of the AJR, Kindertransport Chairman Erich Reich described how his parents, who both died in the Holocaust, were forced to give their child away at the age of four to avoid capture by the Nazis and he captivated the audience with his memories of escaping to England on the Kindertransport.

Mitzvah Day

AJR Centre Organiser Susie Kaufman (right) hands a pack of toiletries over to Sarah Kaiser from the René Cassin human rights charity. Sarah explained the importance of the donations, thanked all AJR members who had donated, and talked individually to Centre members



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A Sandwich resident remembers the Kitchener Camp

Clare Ungerson writes: As AJR members will know, there was a refugee camp for Jewish men funded and organised by the Central British Fund for German Jewry just next to the ancient Cinque Port of Sandwich in East Kent. In 1939 about 4,000 men were housed in an old First World War army camp, known as the Kitchener Camp after Lord Kitchener, Commander in Chief of the armed services at the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries.

I am conducting research on the history of the Kitchener Camp and have given a number of talks on the subject to AJR branches and to groups in Sandwich, where I live. As a result of one of my Sandwich talks, Hilda Keen (maiden name: Kimber) got in touch with me. Mrs Keen remembers well both the camp and a few of the men who lived there. She would love to be in touch with Frank Mandl or his descendants again – for one thing she would like to return his old gramophone record! – and hopes that the person she remembers as Trudi De-ak (she never saw Trudi's surname written down) will also make contact, although she thinks it possible that Trudi went to Australia. We thought AJR members would like to read Hilda Keen's recollections.

One day in 1939 I had got home from school, where I was learning German among other things, and mum called from the shop [Hilda's parents owned the Golden Crust Bakery in the middle of Sandwich – CU]: 'Hilda, you know some German, come and help me with these two chaps!'

Two young men who couldn't speak much English wanted to know what was in some pies that were on sale. I just managed to say 'Fleisch' and my mother mooed like a cow! That was the first we knew about the Jewish refugees fleeing from Germany who had been given refuge in the old huts on the Ramsgate Road.

At the back of the shop were four small tables with a few chairs dotted around. In the summer months one or two people would come in for a cup of tea and gradually, in twos and threes, these quiet, polite men would congregate in the back of the shop, walking up from the Ramsgate Road. They didn't want a pot of tea: they wanted coffee. So we made them coffee – Camp Coffee it was called, from a bottle.



Hilda in new dress made specially for a Kitchener Camp concert

'Mrs Kimber,' said Dr Laski, when he had introduced himself, 'You should make proper coffee – the way we do in Austria. You must buy some ground coffee and put it in a linen bag and infuse it.'

Well, nothing ventured, nothing gained, as mum would say: she would try anything to help trade. So an urn was bought, the ground coffee sewn into a cotton bag, water poured on and brought to the boil. Success!

And word must have got around the Kitchener Camp because numbers increased and the tables at the back of the shop were crowded. Once or twice I trailed home from school at Dover getting home about half-past five, only to have to stand in the kitchen because the table in the living room was full of men drinking coffee and talking mostly in English but occasionally slipping in a foreign word.

We got to know some of them quite well and they became friends. Franz Mandl (we called him Frank) was a medical student who had escaped over the roof of his family home in Vienna and who brought some records with him in his suitcase. It was some of the popular music of that time: 'Wir treffen uns in Hütteldorf am Samstag an der Wien' and an aria from *Pagliacci*, 'On with the Motley' sung in a foreign language. When he played it on our new gramophone, I thought I had never heard anything so sad in all my life. It was the first piece of classical music I had ever heard. I still have that record. 'Turn that row off!', said my mother hurrying through from the shop to the bakery.

We met Otto Knoller and Peggy (my older sister) and I played tennis once with Otto and Frank on the public tennis courts in the recreation ground where there is now a skateboard rink and a children's playground. We wore white clothes, which you had to in those days. Poor Otto slipped and got a green stain on his trousers. He was very worried about it. I realise now that money was very scarce for him, and probably he couldn't afford to have them cleaned. During the course of the game I hit a good backhand and my partner Otto said to Frank 'Sie spielt besser als sie,' meaning that I played better than my elder sister. 'Sh,' said Frank, 'sie versteht Deutsch' (she understands German). I kept a straight face and pretended I hadn't heard but I was happy!

One Sunday afternoon we walked down the Ramsgate Road to the Kitchener Camp to attend a concert given by the refugees. It was held in one of the long buildings and, before it started, someone took a photo of me and one of Peggy. I still have mine – I'm wearing a home-made dress which still, I think, looks rather nice! When the pianist (a woman) started to play, the music disturbed some swallows which were nesting in the rafters – they made quite a noise and flew around creating a great fuss. Some of the refugees felt they should do something about this and arrived with long brooms to sweep the nest and the swallows away. But the audience made it clear that the swallows should be left alone, with cries of 'Oh no! Let them be!' and the like, and we had music accompanied by swallows. We felt very English – a kind-to-dumb-animals feeling!

Most of the refugees were waiting for visas – a new word to me which I didn't understand – but which meant they could travel to America. The camp was for male refugees but, after a while, one or two women managed to escape from Germany. The strange thing was how we accepted these things without querying them. Little Mrs Rosenberg, for instance, a fine-boned tiny lady aged about 30 I suppose, suddenly appeared in the shop lugging a suitcase. We knew Mr Rosenberg already, a quiet shy man, and I suppose he couldn't have known that his wife was able to get away. I think able-bodied men were Hitler's target at first but Mr Rosenberg escaped from Germany, was able to get a message

continued opposite

to his wife as to his whereabouts, and hence her arrival in Sandwich.

What do to do with her? Mum took her upstairs, via the shop stairs, to our new sitting room with its settee and two armchairs and sent me up there to 'keep her company' while, I suppose, word was got through to Mr Rosenberg. I was a shy, gauche 12-13-year-old, totally struck dumb by this lady, with (to me) strong make-up on, sitting with her on the settee with her suitcase next to her. I suppose she took pity on me and opened her case to show me, on the top layer, a tray divided into small compartments in which were rolled-up stockings. I had never seen anything like that before: we had no suitcases, we had never been on holiday.

Mum and dad gave up their bedroom to the Rosenbergs and they slept in what had been the bedroom of Tommy and Harry [Hilda's younger brothers, who had both died of diphtheria in 1937 or 1938 – CU] in the other part of the house. That lasted a week or so until Mrs Rosenberg found employment as a live-in maid (I suppose) with a well-off person in Sandwich. To repay mum and dad's kindness, Mr Rosenberg, a considerable artist, painted a water colour portrait of Peggy and he also went across the road, near Mrs Jones's green-grocer shop, to draw our shop. This was unheard of! That someone should sit on the pavement outside her shop! Mrs Jones showed her disapproval by picking up the worn doormat just inside the door and shaking it thoroughly just to show

When the war came and everyone was moved around we lost touch ... I often wonder where she is and what she is doing, as I wonder about the others – those very nice people who opened my eyes to foreigners, with ladies who had stockings rolled down somehow to below their knees and had bare knees (shocking!), who asked for a glass of water to go with their coffee, and were so very different from us.

Mr Rosenberg that he was invading her territory. We still have the pen-and-ink drawing he did of the shop.

Then Trudi De-ak appeared. She was about the same age as me and her very thick, frizzy hair was in two plaits wound over her head. She was a niece, I believe, of Dr Laski. I don't know how or when she travelled to England or where her parents were. We didn't fully understand what was happening in Europe – and, to me now, the strangest thing of all – we didn't ask! Remember, I was 13 years old at that time!

One Sunday, in summer, suddenly she was in our shop, which was closed of course, and we were expected to look after her for the day. We hadn't been asked. Trudi cried because her uncle had told her she was invited. Anyway, I had my bike and we borrowed Peggy Jones's bike from across the road. It was a real lady's bike and hard to get used to. Trudi and I were given some sandwiches and set off to ride to the bay. On the way, Trudi said she had a bad tummy and we should stop for a while. So we did and she wandered around for a bit clutching her stomach and said that her uncle said it was because of all the things that had happened that she had a bad tummy (she spoke good English). I listened politely, not thinking this girl is in a foreign country uprooted from her family and friends, but only why can't we get on to the bay and enjoy ourselves?

When the war came and everyone was moved around we lost touch. During the war she and I did meet in London, where a pickpocket took my purse in Charing Cross Station, and once, after the war, she came down on the train for the day, but after that – nothing. I often wonder where she is and what she is doing, as I wonder about the others – those very nice people who opened my eyes to foreigners, with ladies who had stockings rolled down somehow to below their knees and had bare knees (shocking!), who asked for a glass of water to go with their coffee, and were so very different from us.

**Hilda Keen
Sandwich, 2009**

From Prague to Ireland via London

My father, Dr J. Weinberg, former Rabbi of Edinburgh Jewish Community and previously of Muizenberg, South Africa, brought the pictured children from Prague to London in 1947 or 1948 when he was a rabbi in Oxford.

I have since learned that they were among refugee children whom Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld brought to Ireland in around 1949, to be housed at Clonyn Castle, Delvin, County Westneath.

My father never gave me details of what happened to these children and I would like to find out more. If any readers recognise themselves in the photograph, could they please contact me at judywarschauer@hotmail.com

Judy Warschauer





LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Sir – Anthony Grenville's remarks about Greta Burkill (November) brought back vividly the memory of a charismatic, hyperactive, tiny lady (born, I believe, in Odessa), who was married to Charles Burkill FRS, a mathematician of infinite patience and goodness who later became Master of Peterhouse College.

My mother, the dental surgeon Malli Meyer, formerly of Düsseldorf, whose husband was murdered by a rival Nazi dentist in Wuppertal-Barmen in 1933, had fled and worked in Brussels until, in 1937, the British government permitted a number of German and Austrian refugee dentists to practise in the UK without having to re-qualify. A patient had given her a letter of introduction to Greta, who became our organiser and guardian angel when, on her advice, my mother decided to settle in Cambridge.

With Greta's help, my mother's dental practice developed quickly, though she remained only partially aware of the eminence of many of her university patients, who included Hermann Lehman as well as many English FRSS.

If there is a heaven, Greta will surely be found there! She did wonders for so many refugees and helped many of the children to obtain a good education – including myself.

Dr Grenville's articles in the *AJR Journal* are always of the greatest interest and enjoyment to me, particularly in recalling a past with which few contemporaries are still familiar. Please continue!

(Dr) John Goldsmith, Liverpool

LIFT VANS OF LONG AGO

Sir – It was my very good fortune that during my first spring in England in 1940 I had two large boxes – known, I understand, as lift vans – sent to me by my parents from Germany. They arrived at my boarding school and the following day were taken to some depository.

It was presumably not until 1948, when I married, that I found out where these boxes were being kept. In 1950 my husband and I moved into our first home and, I guess, it was about this time that I really became the very proud and grateful owner of some precious items from my home in Düsseldorf.

Somehow I was told that to enable my parents to send this cargo to England they had to pay either in duplicate or triplicate for each item. Most of the contents are still treasured by me today and hopefully will be

by my children after I have gone.

Is there anyone who can throw some light on these long-ago events?

*Liesl Munden
Mylor Bridge, Wales*

'SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE'

Sir – The 'bluebirds' of 'The White Cliffs of Dover', like those of 'The Wizard of Oz' (Anthony Grenville, December), are reminiscent of a once immensely popular play by Maurice Maeterlinck. Like the 'Blue Flowers' of German Romanticism, they have a symbolic resonance missing from the 'blackbirds' you offer as a contrast.

What Vera Lynn's classic rendering of the song offered was promise of a better future other than ornithological observation. It was exactly what was needed at the time. And those of us who lived through it will always be grateful for the warm English voice which brought the promise to us. It is good to see a new generation finding it equally congenial.

*S. S. Praver
Queen's College, Oxford*

A CASE OF PERJURY?

Sir – I was saddened by the contributions from Fred Stern and Victor Ross in the December issue. Feeling Jewish rather than British is one thing – as if there was a conflict there! – but the anti-British tone common to both of them I find distressing in people who are not asylum-seekers but once may have been.

I fail to see the logic in Mr Stern's view that the undoubted shrinkage in the Jewish community is due to British government policy and I am distressed by Mr Ross's approach of 'never allegiance, much less love'.

There must be much bitterness in the soul of a man who writes thus, and for that I am sorry for him. And as to allegiance, he might remember that when he got his British nationality, now apparently despised but then no doubt much desired, he swore an oath of allegiance to the Queen or King George. Was that perjury?

*F. M. M. Steiner
Deddington, Banbury*

HOLOCAUST AND OTHER GENOCIDES

Sir – I am rather concerned that Holocaust memorial services and some memorial centres for Holocaust victims now include victims of other genocides, Rwanda for example. This seems to me entirely inappropriate. What are the views of AJR members?

*Mary Rogers
Wigston Magna, Leicestershire*

POLES AND JEWS: A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE?

Sir – In the latter part of 2008, Professor Baruch Brent wrote an article in your journal praising the Polish people for their changed attitude towards Jews. I commented in a subsequent edition that Professor Brent was gravely mistaken in his view.

It has recently come to light that all Jews in Jedwabne, nearly half of the total population, were herded into buildings and burned alive by the non-Jewish population of Jedwabne. At first, Poland insisted that this crime was committed by the Nazis. Subsequently, when all the evidence was available, they had to admit that the crime had been carried out by the non-Jewish population of Jedwabne. They insisted that this crime was a lesser evil than that committed by the Nazis.

Poland refused to make an apology for this, stating that the Jews must apologise to Poland for the crimes committed by the Communists, to which some Jews belonged, in 1939-41. Some change of attitude!

M. Landau, London NW11

ALBANIA'S 'JEW-FRIENDLINESS'

Sir – I wish to echo Dr T. Scarlett Epstein's letter (December) in praise of pre-war and war-time Albania. Like her and her parents, we had found a safe haven – or so we believed – in Yugoslavia, where we had emigrated from Nazi Germany in the summer of 1933. About half a year after the Anschluss, the Yugoslav government under the premiership of Milan Stojadinović expelled us suddenly.

My parents went from consulate to consulate but all doors seemed closed to us – which would have meant our repatriation to Germany (suicide might have been a preferred option).

Albania proved to be the only country willing to grant us asylum. Fortunately, one of my mother's uncles, who had been in the UK since before the First World War, managed just in time to get us the necessary documents for our emigration to the UK. So, on 12 November 1938, we arrived at Croydon airport in a twin-engined Swiss Air Dakota airplane, the French having refused to let us travel through France even by train.

(Mrs) Margarete Stern, London NW3

CHINESE WHISPERS

Sir – Although I agree with some of Peter Phillips's reservations in his December article 'Why am I a Jew?', I would ask him to consider the possibility that some stories, myths and legends may well have had some basis in actual occurrences, which, over the centuries, have become distorted through 'Chinese whispers'.

Could not Abraham, like many pagans around him, have set out to make a human sacrifice but, having had revolutionary ideas about the Divinity, the new phenomenon of a conscience pricked him? He then reasoned, like many *pilpul*-loving students over the years, that the substitution of a ram, with the resultant 'soothing savour', as the Bible and Socrates say, would equally obtain the desired results. Just a thought.

Hans Danziger, London W4

LEARNING FROM THOSE WHO LIVED BEFORE US

Sir – Peter Philips writes (December): How do I know that Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai, which is written in the Torah itself and was handed down from generation to generation, which is tradition? What Rabbi Hirsch wrote is recorded in his writings and, whilst we live in the 21st century, we have much to learn from those who lived before us. Does Mr Philips believe that the Ten Plagues in Egypt and the splitting of the Red Sea occurred? If not, he cannot claim to profess the Jewish religion.

Henry Schragenheim, London N15

AUTOGRAPHED COPY

Sir – I am touched by Peter Phillips's promise (December) to read my forthcoming book *A Time to Speak* and must apologise for the delay in publication, which is caused by technical problems. I am assured by my publisher that these have now been sorted out and the book is with the printers. It should be available in Israel by the beginning of January and in the UK probably a month later.

Unfortunately, I do not have copies available, nor for that matter Mr Phillips's address, so I cannot take up his request for a signed copy. But, if he purchases a copy and sends it to me with a stamped addressed envelope, I will be only too pleased to sign it for him.

Martin D. Stern, Salford, Lancs

FINGERS CROSSED

Sir – My wife and I, and no doubt many other participants who very much used to enjoy the get-togethers at the synagogue in Prentis Road, London SW16, will miss it all. We had some very interesting and educational lectures. We can only hope that the AJR will in future find a suitable venue: Bromley could be fine. We can then carry on where we left off with the pleasant afternoons.

Furthermore, we shall miss the lovely spreads Myrna Glass and Hazel Beiny laid on. We all enjoyed the tasty *Leckerbissen*. Keeping our fingers crossed that it won't be too long and we shall meet up again soon.

*Karl and Elisabeth Katz
London SW16*

THANKS, AJR

Sir – Thank you so much to Susie for your lovely birthday card, thank you to your great team at Cleve Road, and I send my love to you all and all my friends at the AJR Centre.

I have settled down very much here in Israel and I must say I enjoy my life here. I live in a retirement village with all facilities to be busy and stimulated. If any of you come to Israel, do visit me. You'll be amazed how lovely it all is.

*Ilse Friedmann
Protea Village, Tel Mond, Israel*

ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

Sir – The large majority of Jews in the world is concerned for the people of Israel. We are asked to give them our support and we do. But that should not mean that we blindly approve every act and policy by the current government of Israel. Our support has to have a moral basis. I appreciate that

even within that confine there are bound to be differences of opinion. It is not possible always to be sure which measure will have the best long-term effect.

The Israeli government is opposed to the EU considering a plan endorsing the division of Jerusalem and making its eastern portion the capital of a Palestinian state. Israel claims that 'the proposal undermines the future of the peace process by circumventing future negotiations'. Surely the important question is whether it will contribute to peace? Given that this is what the Palestinians are asking for, they are not likely to object, so it must mean that the Israeli government is the obstacle.

It is surely clear to us all that, short of a violent explosion, which will benefit nobody, a partition will take place and not just on Israel's terms. The options are dwindling. A wise Israeli government would anticipate and welcome this new initiative.

The EU proposal also includes the recognition of a unilaterally declared Palestinian state. Again I ask myself: Why should Israel oppose this? After all, a Palestinian state is the aim of the negotiations. And how could Israel prevent such a declaration? By force of arms?

In November, Netanyahu said: 'Now is the time to move forward towards peace. There is no more time to waste.' If he had stopped building settlements when Obama asked him to, he would have shown his willingness to negotiate. Words are cheap. In my personal opinion, he is not representing the real, long-term interest of the Israeli people.

If our support for Israel is to count for something it must be honest. The Jews are my family but 'My family right or wrong' is not a philosophy that I embrace.

Eric Sanders, London W12

Sir – After her lengthy absence from these columns, Inge Trott has bounced back with yet another swipe at Israel (November), accusing it of poaching 'Arab' water and causing West Bank taps to run dry since April.

Intrigued to know how it's possible for anyone to survive so long without water; I contacted an Israeli friend, Dr Oded Sagee, a water conservation expert. We know that since biblical times there have been cyclical famines in the Land of Israel due to drought and the Bible tells us that when this happened they went down to Egypt. They can hardly do so now, so in modern times relief comes in the shape of the IDF, who bring precious water to the Palestinians by army tanker. Israel is not in control of the West Bank; Abbas and his Palestinian Authority are. Incidentally, when Jordan was in possession of the area, there was no relief brought in from Jordan during droughts and the people were simply left to their fate and we never heard any cries of anguish then – but blaming Jews, and Israel in particular, is so easy and very much in vogue.

The problem is that there is hardly any Palestinian water infrastructure in place, with villages relying mainly on wells as they have always done. And when the water table drops due to lack of rain, the wells

dry up, as in Israel. But Israel invests heavily in its water infrastructure, which includes conservation, recycling for agriculture, as well as costly desalination. And in spite of leading the world in water technology, it's not enough, and there is currently a severe shortage. To conserve water, the authorities had to introduce a punitive 3- and 4-fold levy on water usage, which the West Bank Arabs refuse to pay, though the Palestinian Authority receives vast international financial aid. Although Israeli scientists can, for instance, convert rush-hour traffic into electricity, they are unable to reproduce a liquid compound of oxygen and hydrogen, otherwise known as water!

What is rarely mentioned is that Gaza gets its water from the nearby Ashkelon desalination plant, which is the target of Gazan missiles. A direct hit would, of course, hurt Israel, but it would also cut off the flow to Gaza. But this does not figure in their mentality – first you cut the hand that feeds you!

Rubin Katz, London NW11

Sirs – Inge Trott harangues Dorothea Shefer-Vanson (Letter from Israel) to 'spare a thought for the plight of the occupied West Bank's Palestinians [because] many houses have had no water in their taps. Israel takes for itself most of the water of the West Bank.'

Israel not only does not steal water, it actually supplies its neighbours Jordan and the Arab settlements in Judea and Samaria (the so-called West Bank) from its own reservoirs. Like all Middle East countries, Israel suffers a water deficit in its coastal and hill aquifers and the Sea of Galilee due to years of little rainfall.

The amount of water Israel supplies to Jordan and the PA was determined in the Interim Agreement which defines the number of wells Israel and the PA can dig. Co-operation on sewage and environment was also defined and joint monitoring teams established. Israel fulfilled all its obligations under the Agreement and continues to supply the agreed water quotas. Finally, inefficient PA management of water systems is the prime reason not only of shortages ('empty taps') but also sewage seepage into both PA and Israeli water supplies.

Trudy Gefen, Israel

Sir – Inge Trott states that since March 2009 the West Bank's Palestinians 'have had no water in their taps'. Could she back this statement up with a reliable source?

Thea Valman, London NW11

INVITATION TO VIENNA

Sir – In the December issue of the journal, I saw Karl Katz's and Alan Kaye's accounts of their lovely visits to Vienna. Mr Kaye also accused me of having views on Vienna which were apparently based on 'a visit of a few hours'.

Nothing could be further from the truth. I have had to visit Vienna going as far back as 1955, as my clients (Jaguar Car Co) insisted on my presence when inspecting the new Fiat (ex Steyr) plant in Graz. We all stayed in the

Letters to the Editor continued on page 15

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

At the age of 96, **Elisabeth Tomalin**, 'A Searching Journey in Colours' at **Kentish Town Health Centre until 15 December**, can reflect on an astonishing career. The Dresden-born refugee came to Britain in the 1930s and, as war with Germany edged nearer, she joined the Ministry of Information to design propaganda posters with **Abram Games**. She became a successful architectural and, later, textile designer.

She is also a pioneer of the art therapy movement and was invited to return to



J M W Turner, *Moonlight, a Study at Millbank* 1797 © Tate

her native Germany to lecture to the guilt-burdened second generation. The now frail lady with the delicate face and penetrating eyes had lost family members but was prepared to help younger Germans resolve their inner conflicts.

Tomalin's one-woman show of paintings and embroidery is a synthesis of these elements and is strongly Symbolist. Most of her embroidery was done within the last two years and suggests an astonishingly youthful energy. Despite its purity of line, it reflects an obsessive activity: trees, flowers, birds and bright colours circumnavigate the canvas as though the artist is constructing her own parallel universe. Her paintings are dominated by religious themes: christs, buddhas, sadhus, synagogues and crucifixes have an almost childish innocence, but there

are horrific images too – a bound man on a church exchanging glances with an onlooker; flying birds and beasts, whose playful intensity recalls Chagall. It is Tomalin's response to the turmoil of her century.

You could be forgiven for thinking **J M W Turner** a self-centred, competitive artist who just had to be greater than any of his contemporaries. A man who would sneak into the Royal Academy hours before the show to add the finishing touches to his own work, having glimpsed the competition. And you would be right. **Tate Britain** lays bare the artist's insecurities in **Turner and the Masters** (until 31 January). But there are more compelling aspects to the man whose stormy seascapes and sunsets have captured the most ineffable colours in nature. Here is

a young artist pitted against the acclaimed Academicians of his day, struggling with his own vision against the more literal observation of artists like **Claude Lorrain, Titian, Poussin or Canaletto**. This was a conservative era whose standards of grand art were strictly upheld by the Royal Academy. But Turner was increasingly drawn to naturalism and the growing influence of Dutch artists like **Jacob van Ruisdael, Willem van de Velde, Aelbert Cuyp** and, of course, **Rembrandt**. Turner's earlier works often exceeded those he tried to emulate; with deceptively broad brushstrokes, his landscapes are more subtly rounded, blended and almost metaphysical. A sail buffeted by the storm bends and billows with the wind, and you can almost feel its fragility. We are watching an English Impressionist break out of the formalism of his time.

Turner is flawed, however. He cannot paint figures: they desecrate his landscapes. The exception might be his formal, if charmless, portrait of Jessica, Shylock's daughter, in *The Merchant of Venice*. Though an undisputed master of light, the light of Rembrandt puts him utterly in the shade.

REVIEWS

Like a lioness

GLOCKENGASSE 29: EINE JÜDISCHE ARBEITERFAMILIE IN WIEN (*Glockengasse 29: A Jewish Working Class Family in Vienna*)

by **Vilma Neuwirth**

Vienna: Milena Verlag, 2008, 140 pp. paper

I discovered this book – the incredible story of a Jewish family who managed to survive the war in Vienna – on a recent trip to the Austrian capital and was fascinated by it. Although it is written in German and my German is not very good (I escaped from Vienna at the age of six), I found reading it well worth the effort.

Vilma Neuwirth, the youngest of eight children and ten years old when the Germans marched into Vienna, tells of the years of terror she and her family came to endure under Nazi occupation. The family was poor and lived in cramped conditions in the working class district of Leopoldstadt in a tenement inhabited by Jewish and non-Jewish families alike. Her mother, Maria Böhm, was from a strict Catholic background; her father, Joseph Kühnberg, who had three small children from a previous marriage, was Jewish; Maria had an illegitimate daughter; in due course, four more children were born.

Until the Nazis' arrival, we are told, relations between Jews and their non-Jewish neighbours were friendly, unproblematical. As from March 1938, however, everything changed as if overnight. To the author, all the men she saw now seemed to be wearing SA uniforms and boots: prior to the invasion, their unassuming neighbours hadn't even had proper clothes to wear – suddenly they were people to be feared. Jewish children were forced to leave school. Customers at her father's hairdresser's shop began disappearing and eventually the business was 'Aryanised'. Her brothers fled the city; for years no one knew whether they were still alive. Relatives and neighbours were dying in concentration camps. Grandparents unable to accept that their child was married to a Jew had no desire to see their grandchildren. The flats in the block that had been lived in by Jews now evicted were filled with Nazi sympathisers – scum-of-the-earth who kept constant watch on this one remaining Jewish family.

The author sees this memoir as a

monument to her mother, a woman without higher education who recognised the insanity of the Nazi regime. Fighting 'like a lioness', Maria was determined to defend her husband and children through thick and thin. Once, when Joseph was told to scrub the pavement, she went in his place with bucket and brush. On another occasion, she was informed that if she were to divorce her husband, she and her children would be left alone. She took trips to her parents' farm in the country and brought back provisions and money, despite the risks. Her principal aim – to keep her husband alive to die in bed and not in a concentration camp and the survival of all eight children – she achieved against the odds.

Vilma Neuwirth currently works at the Vienna-based Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance. I can highly recommend her book not only to readers but also to their children and grandchildren.

Kitty Gale

'ORT saved my life'

ORT, THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE REHABILITATION OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

by Sarah Kavanaugh

London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008, xix + 156 pp.

The liberation of the Nazi concentration camps presented those fortunate enough to have evaded the genocide with a new set of apparently insurmountable problems. Suddenly at liberty but alone and often far from their homes, many survivors felt the sudden, traumatic realisation of all they had lost and a fear of what lay ahead. Depression and a sense of purposelessness were common. It was in this context that ORT helped Jewish Displaced Persons prepare for the future with renewed vigour and hope, by providing vocational skills and training in the refugee camps. This is among the activities of ORT under scrutiny in Sarah Kavanaugh's monograph, published as part of the ORT network's 130th anniversary celebrations. Hers is the first comprehensive study of the organisation's work with DPs and its contribution to the rehabilitation of Holocaust survivors.

Drawing extensively on World ORT's voluminous collections of reports, photographs and correspondence, as well as other major archives in the UK and USA, Kavanaugh traces the organisation's history from its

foundation in Tsarist Russia. Her study demonstrates that the same ethos continued to drive ORT's work beyond Russia's borders, from ORT Germany's assistance of Jews facing ever tightening restrictions under the Hitler regime before the war to running classes in the Warsaw and Kovno ghettos, where the work permit and better rations enabled by an ORT course certificate saved many from starvation or extermination. Having previously completed her doctoral thesis on the subject of the cultural life of Theresienstadt inmates, Kavanaugh has the necessary expertise for this difficult subject matter. Her narrative continues into the post-war era, with the schools set up by ORT in the DP camps of the British and American zones of occupation in Germany, notably in the former concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen. Thus did the survivors not only recover their dignity and sense of purpose, but also acquire fresh skills that stood them in good stead for their arrival in the newly founded state of Israel.

'ORT saved my life' is the assessment of one of the beneficiaries interviewed by Kavanaugh. Her lucid, well-researched study explains how this was possible.

Paul Moore

Paul Moore is studying for a PhD on 'German Popular Opinion on the Nazi Concentration Camps, 1933-1939' at Birkbeck College, University of London

An optimistic interlude

THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL ORCHESTRA – A MUSICAL MIGRATION

West London Synagogue,
Sunday 8 November

Sandwiched between three powerful commemorations – Remembrance Sunday, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 71st anniversary of Kristallnacht – *A Musical Migration* at West London Synagogue offered an optimistic interlude. The idea was to chart a melodic journey across the map of Jewish Eastern Europe until it reached twentieth-century America with its ragtime, jazz and show-stopping musical hits.

It would take a musicologist to analyse exactly how the fusion of Jewish influence from the mass migrations from Eastern Europe impacted on Hanns Eisler's *Hollywood Songbook*, for instance, but entertaining it certainly was.

The London International Orchestra, launched 25 years ago by accordionist Sarah Aaronson with Dr Soli Aaronovsky, is claimed to have raised millions of

pounds for charity, and here it wove its way between the Old and New Worlds with great aplomb and almost tangible joy.

The concert began with two Brahms *Hungarian Dances*. Melodic as these are, there was an inexplicably brassy sound to them – although the orchestra did succeed in capturing their essential verve. Royal Opera House conductor Paul Wynn-Griffiths elegantly delivered a Johann Strauss *Russian March*, Ukrainian and Hungarian gypsy and Cossack dances and Lehar's Viennese waltzes, plus some rousing balalaika music from Sarah Aaronson, accompanied by Sergei Pachnine and Bibs Ekkee.

Violinist Alex Afia gave a sensitively paced rendition of John Williams's *Schindler's List* and baritone David Stevenson sang songs from *Oklahoma* and *Showboat*. In fact, the orchestra seemed most at home with the American musicals *South Pacific* and *Porgy and Bess* and film music from *Psycho* and *My Fair Lady*, which, it is claimed, contains an Eastern European influence.

Perhaps in such a week, with the lachrymose sound of Purcell's *Dido's Lament* still ringing in our ears from the Cenotaph, the joys of Hollywood were more than welcome.

Gloria Tessler

'FIELDS OF BLUE'

is the true story of an abused East End girl who leaves London to grow up among the magical lavender fields of East Anglia. She returns to London at the beginning of the Second World War to rescue orphans from the bomb sites of the city.

The book costs £12 and is available from the author/illustrator direct.
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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

On reading Julia Pettengill's 'Between silence and screams'

Julia Pettengill's article 'Between silence and screams': *The Refugee Voices collection – seven case studies* appeared in the October issue of the *Journal* (Ed.)

I cannot attempt to share my emotions. Had I perhaps been trained in psychology, or developed poetic faculties ... I will attempt to share some thoughts.

There is an ultimate silence. An absolute, never relativised silence of the experience, such as my mother's in the lorry en route from Chelmno to the woods with the exhaust filling and poisoning the air.

The beginning of this kind of experience – the selection process – included some who survived. Here, the silence is absolute in the uniqueness of the individual's experience but accessible in shared aspects – or so we may think. There is another absolute silence: the silence of those (I restrict myself to my own perceptions) who survived as refugees in Britain, returned to their country of birth, and experienced life after the war and the Holocaust as too horrible to lead to some sort of normality – and took their own lives. Some did so soon after returning. One a little later and one – a camp survivor – years later.

Some refugee-survivors may be able to describe, or hint at, an inner world of hopelessness and meaninglessness which may have been apart, shared with those whose will to end the despair was decisive.

But I turn to the silence left by the great majority – the victims, including more Wiesels and Primo Levis. The post-war temporary silence did not differentiate between stages in the experiences – the step-wise isolation and discrimination, the early instances of terror and its effects. Unique and shared features in changing conditions before and after deportation create the possibility for the silence to be breached. The potential for an 'age of testimony' needs an audience of course. But it also needs some degree of articulation for those who have not survived. And the millions are now added to by those who have not survived beyond the long 'age of silence'.

Can those who have survived both the Holocaust and the long years of silence be given support to rescue the testimony from oblivion? Yes, by developing methods of analysis separating, say, issues of scarcity and hunger, and power and the figure of the Kapo, and by treating unique survivors' testimonies as capable of separating out and turning into tools for analysis of the general and generalisable features. And so with the refugees' testimonies and those of the 'Taucher'. Some literature, especially autobiographical, does exist and an analytical approach need not conflict with the aesthetic value

of these testimonies.

Theorising, if it is to be sound, requires an element of detachment and objectivity, attitudinal features on the part of the theorist, as well as those who share it with him or her and provide actuality to the scientific culture and its ethos. Researchers and scientific workers do not live in isolation. On the contrary, especially perhaps when they are themselves members of the community of survivors, their relatives and the second generation. The experiences and memories of survivors are a prime source for the project of

The experiences and memories of survivors are a prime source for the project of rescuing some aspects of the Holocaust from oblivion. Survivors cannot in principle be expected to share or tolerate a detached and analytical frame of reference. At some point, we are liable to be confronted by an incompatibility between emotion and theoretical detachment. A potential for conflict can be located within the psyche of an individual. Or can it? Was Primo Levi grappling with some such contradiction?

rescuing some aspects of the Holocaust from oblivion. Survivors cannot in principle be expected to share or tolerate a detached and analytical frame of reference. At some point, we are liable to be confronted by an incompatibility between emotion and theoretical detachment. A potential for conflict can be located within the psyche of an individual. Or can it? Was Primo Levi grappling with some such contradiction?

In attending to end the 'age of silence' and introduce the 'age of testimony', those who would offer themselves as the agents of this process have to face this challenge: if they identify with the community of the survivors, they risk being marginalised by the community of science; adhering to the principles of analytical objectivity may alienate some survivors.

Julia Pettengill has registered the fact of camp survivors themselves contributing to the silence. I can confirm this. After

returning to Prague in 1945, I learned (in the Jewish town hall) of the five transports to the Lodz ghetto, one of which consisted of lawyers and their families – my father had been a solicitor. I was given a few addresses of survivors – lawyers living in Prague. I called on them. I was 23 years old and in RAF uniform. What impressed itself on my memory was how identical these encounters were. They were living in digs and the door was opened for me by the landladies. They all seemed to be about ten years older than I, well dressed, sitting at tables. They were very slim and quiet, even withdrawn. I described my parents. They listened and regretted not having met my parents. They asked me no questions and volunteered no information of a more general kind. I was not prepared for the withdrawn, even perhaps forlorn, reception and had the feeling that my visit was regarded as ended. I was awed by sitting opposite a camp survivor and ready to defer to whatever I perceived, or guessed, to be their preference. Which was that I should leave. And that was what I did.

Meeting Dr. Ing. Kohn was a different matter. He came from Teplice, the town where I was born, and in Lodz had shared a flat (or room) with my parents. He was standing next to my mother when she was 'selected'. It was from him that I learned of my father's death. Dr Kohn had heard my request for information about my parents broadcast by Prague radio. I came away from this visit with a lot to digest. Chelmno, or the question of what may have happened to my mother, was not mentioned. I now had certainty about my father. I knew no more about conditions in the ghetto and I made – i.e. invented – justifications for his reluctance: he was protective towards me, shielding me from the horror of the truth. He had no doubt about what I should do with my life. His simple precept, delivered with the weight of the authority of having shared the ultimate experience of Jews and my parents in particular: Zionism. He was giving me his own view. My parents would have been much too deferential to draw a lesson for me. I knew my father's and mother's divergent views, leaving it to me to live my life.

Reflecting now, I am no wiser. I do not know, but the answer may be available: was the particular fate of the people taken away in the course of the *Gehsperr* (i.e. Chelmno) known in the late summer of 1945 to the survivors waking up the Jewish community in Prague? Is it possible that a survivor (taken from Lodz to Auschwitz-Birkenau) did not know and had no ideas?

Henry Schermer

Berlin's other commemoration

David Wirth

The world's media went into overdrive on 9 November 2009 with its coverage of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the celebrations in Germany. The commemoration of another key German event on this day seemed all but forgotten.

Yet only six days previously Chancellor Angela Merkel had given a major speech before both Houses of Congress in Washington with the Wall as its principal theme. She had referred early in her speech to 'the catastrophe that was the Second World War, to the murder of six million Jews in the Holocaust, to the hate, destruction and annihilation that Germany brought upon Europe and the world. November 9 is just a few days away. It was on November 9, 1989 that the Berlin Wall fell and it was also on November 9 in 1938 that an indelible mark was branded into Germany's memory and Europe's history. On that day the National Socialists destroyed synagogues, setting them on fire, and murdered countless people. It was the beginning of what led to the break with civilisation, the *Shoah*. I cannot stand before you today without remembering the victims of this day and of the *Shoah*.'

Later in her speech, Merkel stated: 'A nuclear bomb in the hands of an Iranian president who denies the Holocaust, threatens Israel and denies Israel the right to exist is not acceptable.' And, in an interview with *Bildzeitung* a few days later, she was asked '9 November is the anniversary not only of the fall of the Wall, but also of the burning of the synagogues in 1938 – how can you explain that Germans as a people were capable of both?' She simply replied: 'For burning synagogues and the Holocaust which followed, I have no explanation. It was and remains incomprehensible.'

Whilst Germans celebrated the anniversary of the fall of the Wall, it is possible that a few may have chosen to visit the highly publicised memorials to the *Shoah* such as Daniel Liebeskind's Holocaust-themed extension to the Jewish Museum (only ten minutes' walk from the former Checkpoint Charlie) and the vast Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe with its moving underground museum (near the Brandenburg Gate). If they did, precious little media coverage was given to them as a party atmosphere prevailed throughout the day in the city that had once been the centre of the Third Reich.

It may be worth highlighting some of the many lesser-known Holocaust



Grunewald Station Platform 17

memorials in Berlin, which probably received very few visits on the day. Some may not receive any visits on any day.

The starkest memorial must be Platform 17 of Grunewald Station, a busy commuter interchange. No trains arrive or leave from this platform today. Its track is overgrown with weeds. Alongside is the ramp from which lorries unloaded their human cargo from the Berlin and surrounding area, ready for deportation on cattle trucks to the camps. Along the platform edges today are hundreds of inscriptions in chronological order stating the date and destination of each transport and the precise number of Jews (usually counted in hundreds) deported on each. Most trains, one reads, travelled to Auschwitz, others to Terezin. The last inscriptions record only a small number of Jews, as there were by then few left to deport. There are two memorials outside the station for local commuters to ignore and Jewish visitors to inspect.

Sachsenhausen lies a mile north of the terminus station Oranienburg, a sleepy outer suburb of Berlin where little happens today. Could its citizens really have been ignorant of the human traffic which once passed through? On the walk from the station to the camp, one passes a roadside memorial to the many enforced death marches which started at the camp as the end of the war approached. The use of the excellent audio-guides to the camp means that many visitors can learn of the terrible details (clinic for 'medical experiments', gallows, mass graves, inmates' barracks,



Wannsee Conference House

prisoners' cells, etc.) in respectful silence, distanced from the coachloads of noisy schoolchildren on their annual day out.

A bus ride from Wannsee Station is the Wannsee Conference House, today, as in the past, one of the many impressive lakeside villas of rich Berliners. It now houses a museum detailing the conference of 20 January 1942, when leading Nazis met there to decide the organisational details of the Final Solution. One of the Nazis had probably said 'Come to my villa for the meeting' – so they did. It is likely they discussed in the morning, smoked cigars and ate in the afternoon, and returned to their families and children in the evening. It was very considerate of them to leave minutes of the meeting behind for posterity, a fact which made life easier for the Nuremberg judges a few years later.

Berlin's first Jewish Museum was opened in Oranienburgerstrasse just six days after Hitler's *Machtergreifung* in January 1933 and closed after *Kristallnacht*, much of its collection lost forever. Today, it houses the *Jüdische Galerie*, exhibiting works by mainly Jewish artists.

In the same street is the domed (doomed?) *Neue Synagoge*, opened in 1866 and once Europe's largest synagogue, holding 3,000 worshippers. During *Kristallnacht* the local (non-Jewish) district police chief kept the rampaging SA hordes from setting the whole synagogue ablaze (and was later punished for his troubles). Religious services continued until Allied planes bombed the whole area in 1943 and in 1958 the desecrated and ruined main hall was torn down. Recent reconstruction has enabled visitors to enter, and lectures and exhibitions are often held behind the original facade.

On *Stolpersteine* ('stumbling stones') in the pavement in the same street are

continued on page 15

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INSIDE the AJR

South London Group meets for last time



This was our final meeting as our Group is being replaced by smaller regional groupings, in Kingston and Bromley. Founder members Helen, Lora and Marion paid tribute to Ken Ambrose, who spearheaded the Group's early work. After a delicious lunch we heard a most interesting presentation by David Lawson on the Jews of Ostrava. We ended the meeting with a birthday cake with 15 candles to commemorate the span of the Group's existence.

Edith Jayne

New friends in Harrogate

We 'oldies' welcomed a new friend, Tom Winter. Tom brought his wife, Sylvia, and much of the time was spent getting to know each other. After so many years we were amazed how much more we could learn about and from each other. A wonderful afternoon. Our best wishes to all for 2010.

Inge Little

Next meeting: 3 February

Ealing talk on modern art

Myra Sampson gave an illuminating talk on 'Abstract Impressionism' – some modern art from the 1930s, much of it from the USA. Chosen artists for her power-point presentation were Vassily Kandinsky, Jackson Pollock, Edvard Munch ('The Scream') and Mark Rothko.

Marianne Black

Next meeting: 5 Jan. Helen Fry, 'Churchill's Refugee Army'

Iford: How the mighty have fallen

Freeman of the City Andrea Cameron told us Pears soap was made in Islington for over 100 years. Sadly, one of the last Pears brothers involved with the business drowned when the *Titanic* sank. Then the family business was sold off and today the soap is manufactured in India and imported to England. How the mighty have fallen!

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: 6 Jan. Alf Keiles, 'Jewish Personalities in Jazz'

Eastbourne CF's second Get-together

We met at the home of Marion Gross for our second Get-together. Two new Eastbournites were a source of information

on Jewish community activities in the area. We also now have sources to contact other refugees in the vicinity. Marion kindly read us two of her poems.

Hazel Beiny

'Blue Skies' in Pinner

To ensure a thoroughly nostalgic enjoyment of Bing Crosby's uniquely melodious singing, combined with Fred Astaire's fabulous dancing footwork, our very own Alf Keiles went to immense trouble to present 'Blue Skies' in high-quality sound and vision.

Walter Weg

Next meeting: 7 Jan. Alan Cohen, 'Women of the Bible'

HGS: 'Jews in England, Part 2'

Twenty of us listened with great interest to Susannah Alexander's talk about the Jews in early England, many of whom arrived in cities like Manchester and Liverpool 'by mistake' and lived in crowded areas like east London.

Hilde Davis

Next meeting: 11 Jan. 'The Jews of Kerala'

Essex: A nostalgic visit to Westcliff

Dr Helen Fry spoke about her interest in refugees who fought for the British forces. She was joined by James Hamilton, the author of *Goodnight Vienna*. A nostalgic visit for James, who was brought up in Westcliff.

Larry Lisner

Child Survivors Association – AJR

AJR Social Services Head Sue Kurlander told us about her background and varied experience, both in this country and the USA, and explained how the AJR's services are provided countrywide. Henri reported on the annual meeting of the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors, recently held in Boston, USA.

Henri Obstfeld

Glasgow CF:

A truly splendid afternoon

Some 16 of us spent a truly splendid afternoon at the home of Eva Szirmai, whose charming daughter is our AJR co-ordinator Agnes Isaacs. Agnes welcomed us, telling us we would be enjoying 'Schubert and Strauss – Music for the Soul'. A big thank you to our very diligent AJR co-ordinator and her dear mother.

Alice Malcolm

Welwyn Garden City: 'Deals with the devil'

All members of our Group turned out to hear Prof Ladislaus Löb outline the story of Rezső Kasztner's 'deals with the devil' – Eichmann and co. Enough for many films and fiction-fiction stories.

Alfred Simms

Next meeting: 14 Jan. Social Get-together

Brighton and Hove Sarid:

Avoiding rogue traders

Freelance journalist Janet Weston and Mike from Brighton Trading Standards gave us helpful advice on how to avoid rogue traders who come to the door. Apparently most rogue traders don't come from the locality but prefer to work further afield.

Alfred Huberman

Next meeting: 18 Jan. Social Discussion

Cleve Road Group's 3rd birthday celebration



Liselotte Lawson, aged 93, and Myrna Glass

Myrna welcomed everyone to a very happy celebration of our Group's 3rd birthday coupled with my 75th. We had a lovely cake made in the Cleve Road kitchen. Rob Lowe told jokes and sang songs accompanied by Geoffrey Whitworth on the piano. The meeting ended with a lively rendition of 'Get Me to the Shul on Time'.

David Lang

Next meeting: 26 Jan. Blanche Benedick, 'The Jews of Denmark'

Oxford: 'Women of the Bible'

A splendid presentation by Alan Cohen on how some artists and composers may have envisaged Bible heroines.

Anne Selinger

Next meeting: 19 Jan. David Lawson, 'The Jews of Ostrava'

Edgware journey into the past

Martin Calms spoke very interestingly about Jewish communities in southern Poland. To some of the audience, this was a reminder of their forefathers' past.

Felix Winkler

Next meeting: 19 Jan. Gerald Curzon, 'A Strange Affair'

Lively meeting in Café Imperial

We celebrated Harry Rosney's 90th birthday with cake and good wishes; Willy Field showed us the review of his latest book; and Freddie Edwards showed us the impressive photo album of his early life in Berlin and Hampstead Garden Suburb.

Hazel Beiny

Radlett: Heidegger and Arendt

Prof Gerald Curzon told us about the strange relationship between German philosopher Martin Heidegger and his Jewish student Hannah Arendt. The relationship continued after the war for the rest of their lives even though he had become an active Nazi and she a world-famous liberal author.

Fritz Starer

Next meeting: 20 Jan. Helen Fry, 'Churchill's Refugee Army'

Essex: Rob Lowe entertains

Rob Lowe and pianist gave us a very enjoyable morning meeting. We hope he will come back when, hopefully, the weather will be kinder for more of our members to attend.

Valerie Kutner

Next meeting: 13 January

Wembley discussion on pros and cons of religions

At an afternoon meeting at Harris Court, we had a lively discussion about the merits

– or otherwise! – of the various religions. Yiddish and Ladino were mentioned too.

Irene Stanton

Next meeting: 13 Jan. Social Get-together

Audiologist of the Year at Temple Fortune

We were joined by members of the Edgware Group. Our speaker, Robert Beiny, Audiologist of the Year for both UK and Europe, spoke to us about his work in Harpenden and Romania, where he helps disadvantaged children.

David Lang

Next meeting: 14 Jan., 2.15 pm. Eva Blumenthal, 'The Royal Free Hospital'.

NB: Future meetings will be held on the second Thursday of each month at 2.15 pm

Being cheerful and keeping going in Norfolk

Nine of the indefatigables met to debate the place of women in *shul*; whether can one be a Jew without being Jewish; and supermarket v corner shop. All the while munching our way through the various goodies members had brought. It's being so cheerful that keeps us going.

Frank Bright

Kingston CF: Lovely social gathering

We met at Susan Zisman's home in New Malden and had delicious cakes and a lovely social gathering. There were 15 of us – including three new visitors.

Edith Jayne

North London literary meeting

Helen Fry spoke about the recent publication of her book on Anton Freud, grandson of Sigmund, while James Hamilton gave a brief resume of the characters behind his book *Goodnight Vienna*. Once again, a most enjoyable and interesting morning.

Herbert Haberberg

Next meeting: 28 Jan. Late Chanukah Party plus Bernard Ecker, 'Call My Bluff'

Singing 'light' in Hendon

Alan Bilgora, stepping in for his wife Shirley, who was indisposed, played a 'Programme of Crossovers' – classical singers singing 'light'. A most entertaining afternoon.

Hazel Beiny

Next meeting: 25 Jan. Judy Kelner, 'Desert Island Discs'

'CHURCHILL'S GERMAN ARMY'

The National Geographic Channel screened the documentary 'Churchill's German Army' in April 2009. Appearing in this unique film were members of the AJR who fought heroically for Britain during the Second World War. We will be showing a screening on

Thursday 21 January

at 10.30 am for 11.00 am

at

New London Synagogue

33 Abbey Road

London NW8

Please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 to reserve your place

ALSO MEETING THIS MONTH

Bromley CF 18 Jan. Social Get-together

Surrey 24 Jan. Social Get-together

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

Members requiring benefit advice
please telephone Linda Kasmir
on 020 8385 3070 to make an appointment
at AJR, Jubilee House,
Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

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)

Corinne Oppenheimer 0121 705 9529

Paul Balint AJR Centre

15 Cleve Road, London NW6

Tel: 020 7328 0208

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Wednesday 20 January 2010

John Kaye

'The History of Jewry and the Miracle of Jewish Revival'

Please be aware that members should not automatically assume that they are on the Luncheon Club list. It is now necessary, on receipt of your copy of the *AJR Journal*, to phone the Centre on 020 7328 0208 to book your place.

KT-AJR

Kindertransport special interest group

Monday 11 January 2010

Ralph Koltai

Stage Designer and Sculptor
'The Seven Ages of ME'

**KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH
WILL BE SERVED AT
1.00 PM ON MONDAYS**

Reservations required
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Monday, Wednesday & Thursday
9.30 am – 3.30 pm

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

January Afternoon Entertainment

Mon	4	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	5	CLOSED
Wed	6	Madeleine Whiteson
Thur	7	Douglas Poster
Mon	11	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue	12	CLOSED
Wed	13	Margaret Opdahl
Thur	14	Daphne Lewis & Jack Coleman
Mon	18	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	19	CLOSED
Wed	20	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	21	Mike Mirandi
Mon	25	Kards & Games Klub – Monday Movie Matinee
Tue	26	CLOSED
Wed	27	Roy Bloss
Thur	28	HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SERVICE AT BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE DAY CENTRE CLOSED

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

Agnes Isaacs, Scotland and Newcastle
Co-ordinator
0755 1968 593

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

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Trude Silman 0113 2251628

Liverpool
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Manchester
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY

To 28 February 2010 'A Journey Out of Darkness: Leicester's Collection of German Expressionist Art'. Collection donated by refugees New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester, tel +44(0)116 225 4900

Fri 8-31 Jan 'Absence and Loss'/'Forgive and Do Not Forget'. Holocaust-themed exhibition by photographer Marion Davies and ceramic artist Jenny Stolzenberg. At Space C Gallery, Croydon Clocktower

Mon 11 Ralph Blumenau, 'Marc Chagall (Illustrated)' Club 43

Tues 12 Prof Sigrig Weigel (Berlin) and Prof Michael Löwy (Paris), 'The End of Secular Utopias' In London, time and venue to be confirmed. University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies. Tel 01273 678771 or email d.franklin@sussex.ac.uk

Sun 17 'Belsize Outing' Viennese New Year Celebration A captivating programme of music including works by Mozart and the Strauss family. Performed by the renowned Rasumovsky Quartet. Viennese delicacies included. At Ivy House, 94-96 North End

Road, London NW11. £10, meet at venue. Tel the AJR's Lorna on 020 8385 3070 or Carol on 020 8385 3085

Mon 18 January to 13 February A new play by AJR Journal columnist Gloria Tessler, 'Unveiling Hagar' – an Arab/Jewish romance. A love affair between Max, an aging Jewish widower, and Layla, a young Palestinian woman who is challenged by Max's family. New End Theatre, Hampstead Tel 0870 033 2733

Mon 18 Geoffrey Ben-Nathan, 'The Biblical Samaritans, 750 BC to the Present Day' Club 43

Sat 23 Czech Scrolls Commemorative Service at Westminster Synagogue in conjunction with Holocaust Memorial Day. Tel 020 7584 3953 or email secretary@westminstersynagogue.org

Sat 23 January to 14 February. 'Faces in the Void: Czech Survivors of the Holocaust' An exhibition by poet Jane Liddell-King and photographer Marion Davies. At Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Jordan Well, Coventry, tel 02476 832386

Mon 25 Dr Steven Kern, 'The Perversion of Medical Science in Nazi Germany' Club 43

Tues 26 Professor Geoffrey Swain, Alec Nove Professor in Russian and East European Studies, 'A Spectacle in the Railwaymen's Garden: Remembering the Holocaust in Latvia', University of Glasgow 10th Annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture (in association with AJR), Western Infirmary Lecture Theatre, 6.15 pm

Thur 28 Dr Leena Petersen (University of Sussex), 'Transformations of the Utopian: From Jewish Apologetics to Dialectics of the Enlightenment' (History Work in Progress Seminar), Centre for German-Jewish Studies. University of Sussex, Arts A 155, 4 pm. Tel 01273 678771 or email d.franklin@sussex.ac.uk

Mon 1 February Gerald Holm, 'Fast Food World' Club 43

Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Ernst Fleisch on 020 7624 7740 or Helene Ehrenberg on 020 7286 9698



LONDON VISIT MARCH 2010

As in previous years, the AJR will be organising a trip to London for members who live outside the capital.

This year's visit will be 2-4 March 2010.

The trip will include visits to museums and places of interest as well as a dinner, with a guest speaker, at Belsize Square Synagogue.

Accommodation will be at a London hotel.

Further details, including the approximate price of the trip, will appear in next month's Journal.

NEED HELP USING YOUR COMPUTER?

Do you have a computer, but don't know how to use it properly?

The AJR has volunteers in London who will happily help you to use your computer, including internet access and emailing.

For more information contact **Carol Hart** on **020 8385 3083**



A LOCAL ARTIST HAS WRITTEN A FACTUAL, HISTORICAL NOVEL 'L' FOR THE DISCERNING JEWISH BOOK WORM.

This book is set in the last, remaining years before the expulsion of the Jews in 1290.

The book is illustrated by the artist. It costs £12 – 'L' is obtainable direct from Laura Levy – the artist.

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BERLIN'S OTHER COMMEMORATION *continued from page 11*

inscribed the names of former Jewish residents of adjacent flats and the dates they were deported. One wonders what the current residents feel. Nearby, on the Grosse Hamburgerstrasse, is (or rather isn't) The Missing House, a work by Christian Boltanski from 1990. The missing building, formerly home to Jews, was destroyed in the war, hence the 'memorial space dedicated to absence'. The signs on the nearby walls indicate the names, dates of birth and death, and professions of the former residents. An unusual memorial, yet the questions 'Where is it?' and 'Where are they?' are absolutely the right ones.

Otto Weidt had employed Jewish workers, mostly blind or deaf and dumb, in his broom and brush factory in Rosenthalerstrasse. When they were arrested by the Gestapo in 1942, Weidt had a number of them returned and he hid them until the end of the war. The 'Blind Faith' exhibition in his former factory is today a branch of the Jewish Museum.

The Topography of Terror in Stressemannstrasse documents the activities of the Gestapo, which had its offices here.

Next to a playground in Koppenplatz is 'The Abandoned Room', a sculpture created in 1996 – simply a table and two chairs, one upturned as if its occupant had left in great haste, all on a mock parquet



The Abandoned Room

floor; the Holocaust reduced to a small human scale.

There is a huge 'Mirror Wall' in Steglitz containing the names of 1,723 murdered local Jews, which merges significantly with reflections of nearby everyday street life – schoolchildren, parents with prams, commuters, pensioners, couples, shoppers, all imprinted with the victims' names.



Steglitz Mirror Wall

So today again, German passers-by going about their business ignore the Jewish victims straight in front of them, even as this very scene is reflected back to them.

There remain many other sites of Shoah interest, too numerous to describe. These include the former Jewish Hospital in Auguststrasse (later housing the pre-war Jewish Cookery School, the Chevrah Kadisha, the Jewish Children's Home, the Jewish Children's Aid Agency, and many others) and the derelict Jewish Girls' School in the same street, forcibly closed by the Nazis in 1942. Now that both buildings have been returned to the Jewish community, one hopes they will soon be repaired and restored, either as memorials or, even better, as living Jewish institutions.

It has been stated that 9 November was never designated a public holiday in Germany after 1989 because of the Kristallnacht association, although this seemed largely forgotten in the festivities of the day. Perhaps it is time for this public holiday to be proclaimed a meaningful time for both sadness and celebration – reflecting that the freedom which the fallen Wall has granted must always mean the freedom to make the world a more tolerant and caring place.

The author has recently led a number of guided tours of Berlin for sixth-form students.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *continued from page 7*

Imperial Hotel. I also visited Vienna several times to see my father, who spent a holiday there and had a heart attack.

I am astonished that Mr Kaye did not have the pride to refuse the invitation to visit Vienna at Austria's expense. This invitation was refused by many people, including my late wife, who was due to be presented in parliament with an open apology for the wrongs done to her when she was 'barred' for refusing to go to Berlin as a swimmer, as were her two colleagues.

I wish to assure Mr Kaye that my opinion of Vienna and the Austrians is based on experiences gathered over a long period. The cost of 'invitations' should have been credited to the Compensation Fund, which paid out ridiculously petty amounts to the survivors.

John H. Lawrence, London SW15

A HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE

Sir – On reading the December issue of the *AJR Journal*, I was intrigued by the letter from Karl Katz about Vienna and interested to see that he and Mrs Katz had stayed at the Hotel Stephanie in Leopoldstadt in the 2nd District. This was at the time – and I believe still is – the Jewish area.

I wonder if he was told that the Hotel Stephanie also had a Yiddish theatre before the Second World War, where Yiddish actors from Vienna, including my father and mother, Abisz and Klara Meisels, performed alongside visiting stars (mostly American) from abroad.

I thought your readers and Mr Katz might be interested in this historical footnote.

Ruth Schneider, London N8

A BELATED COMMENT

Sir – Recently Tony Grenville regaled us with a perceptive account of the impact of the 60s on the social scene of this country, and our refugee community in particular.

I found an ingredient of this history missing, arguably the most important one: the enormous expansion in wealth accompanied by a substantial increase in disposable income beginning in the latter half of the 50s and epitomised by Macmillan's election slogan 'You've never had it so good.' It reached a peak in the mid-60s, continuing into the 70s and 80s.

House and car ownership expanded rapidly and more advanced kitchen equipment relaxed women's ties to the home. Youth found itself with increased employment opportunities and disposable income as well as greater access to higher education. This loosened the economic dependence of youth on the older generation and the release of decades of pent-up feelings caused by the economic tribulations of the 20s through to the 40s. The popular music scene became dominated by youth bands and, in politics, restless youth expressed itself in student riots throughout Western Europe, Paris and Berlin in particular.

Not that the UK was immune to student

unrest, earning itself the soubriquet 'revolting students'. Talking with many overseas postgraduate students I was lecturing, they seemed confined not only to Europe and the USA. Chinese students informed me of conditions in their homeland and it seemed clear that they too were subject to 'youth revolution', no doubt due to rapidly improving economic conditions. Only there this unrest against the older generation was exploited by Party officials and turned into the 'Cultural Revolution'. In the USA, many of these student revolts turned against the Vietnam War and led to its ending.

The aftermath of this era persists in guitar-toting youth bands and aging trendies (beatniks, hippies). I can't help wondering what effect this current reversal in global wealth expansion should it – God forbid – persist will have on the social scene.

Walter Fulop, Broxbourne, Herts

IMMUNITY FROM SWINE FLU

Sir – I have it on good authority that over time, from the expulsion from Paradise to the present, Jews have acquired immunity from swine flu. The reasoning is simple: no swine, no flu. What is not clear is whether that applies to all Jews who are Jewish or only to the ultra-Orthodox, the Orthodox, the Liberals, to those of Ashkenazi descent, those of Sephardi descent, to Zionists or, as a *chacham* has suggested, only to those permitted to enter Jewish schools.

Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



A refreshing pro-Israel voice

You must read this,' a friend said, thrusting some typed pages into my hand. They contained the text of a speech given by Elena Bonner, the Jewish widow of former Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, at the Freedom Forum held in Oslo, Norway, in May 2009.

I read the typescript with growing astonishment. Elena Bonner spoke out bravely and unequivocally in favour of Israel, berating her hosts and the representatives of other countries for applying a double standard to Israel when it came to the issue of human rights. After giving a brief account of her own personal history – left parentless at age 14, father executed, mother imprisoned and exiled, brought up by grandmother, orphaned again by the Second World War, married Sakharov, exiled – the 86-year-old Bonner summed her life up as 'typical, tragic and beautiful'.

She quotes some of the statements made by her late husband: 'Israel has an indisputable right to exist;' 'Israel has a right to existence within safe borders;' and 'With all the money that has been

invested in the problem of Palestinians, it would have been possible long ago to resettle them and provide them with good lives in Arab countries.'

After referring to the wars and terrorism which have targeted Israel since its existence, Bonner notes that a new motif – 'two states for two peoples' – has become fashionable. She claims that it sounds good and that there is no controversy on this score in the peacemaking quartet made up of the US, the UN, the EU and Russia, adding with regard to the last, 'some great peacemaker, with its Chechen war and its Abkhazian-Ossetian provocation!' Without making any attempt to fudge the issue, she states that the demand for the return of the Palestinian refugees from 1948 is simply another way of working to destroy Israel. She shows that the statistical record has been distorted since the very beginning, with the connivance of the UN. She describes a 'judenfrei Holy Land' as 'Hitler's dream come true at last'.

Bonner also cites the case of Gilad Shalit as showing up the hypocrisy of the human rights activists, saying: 'You

fought for and won the opportunity for the Red Cross to visit Guantanamo. You know the prison conditions, the daily routine, the diet ... The result of your efforts has been a ban on torture and a law to close this prison ... But during the two years that Shalit has been held by terrorists, the world human rights community has done nothing for his release. Why? ... I can find no answer except that Shalit is an Israeli soldier and a Jew ... This is conscious or unconscious anti-Semitism. It is fascism.'

Ms Bonner concluded her remarks by stating that when she first visited Oslo in 1975 to represent her husband at the Nobel Prize ceremony she was in love with Norway, but today she feels both 'alarm and hope' (the title of the essay written by Sakharov in 1977 at the request of the Nobel Committee). Alarm because of the anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment growing throughout Europe and even further afield, and hope that countries, their leaders and people everywhere will recall and adopt Sakharov's ethical credo: 'In the end, the moral choice turns out to be also the most pragmatic choice.'

How refreshing to come across a voice which openly expresses support for Israel in these days of inveterate Israel-bashing wherever one turns.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

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Closing date for entries is Wednesday 6 January 2010.

INFORMATION ON AJR ACTIVITIES BY EMAIL

From time to time, the AJR circulates by email information of activities, events and projects which may be of interest to members. To receive these notices, please send an email to info@ajr.org.uk and we will add you to the distribution list.