

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Past glories

The *AJR Journal* has always prided itself on the high quality of its literary, artistic and cultural content, including the reviews it publishes. Among the Jewish refugees from Hitler, with their rich cultural heritage, were a number of highly knowledgeable experts in various fields of culture, on whom the *AJR Information* was able to draw for the erudite and polished reviews of books, plays and films that graced its pages. But reviews are by their very nature ephemeral, and reviewers who delight one generation can all too easily be forgotten by the next.

It is therefore a pleasure to welcome the appearance of a book devoted to the work of the renowned reviewer and critic Paul Marcus, commonly known by his initials PEM (the 'E' being included for euphony only). The book is *PEM: Der Kritiker und Feuilletonist Paul Marcus*, edited by Jens Brüning, a longstanding champion of refugee writers forgotten in Germany. Brüning worked for many years to restore the works of Gabriele Tergit, a leading refugee writer and frequent contributor to *AJR Information*, to their rightful literary status; he was responsible for the recent reprint of the original version of Tergit's 1931 bestseller *Käsebieter erobert den Kurfürstendamm* (reviewed in our June 2004 issue).

Like Tergit (born Elise Hirschmann), Paul Marcus was a young Jewish intellectual drawn irresistibly to the rich, dynamic and innovative cultural scene of Berlin during the Weimar Republic; like Tergit, he had to flee the Nazis, eventually settling in London. Marcus was born in Beeskov, not far from the capital, in 1901, into an assimilated Jewish family; his father was a businessman. Against his father's wishes, Marcus opted for a career in journalism, specialising in cinema and the performing arts, then a particularly flourishing section of Berlin's artistic world. He started by writing for minor journals of varying degrees of repute, but also for the *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, and graduated to the *Neue Berliner Zeitung-Das 12 Uhr Blatt*, for which he wrote until



Paul Marcus

he emigrated in March 1933.

Marcus went first to Vienna, where he hit upon the idea of publishing a weekly newsheet to keep his fellow refugees informed about the activities

and whereabouts of Jews and others from the cultural world who had been forced into exile. So *PEM's Privat-Berichte* first appeared in May 1936, drawing on the extraordinarily wide knowledge its author had acquired during his years of reporting on Berlin's cultural scene. From October 1936, it transferred with its author to London, where it continued until August 1939, reappearing in 1945 as *PEM's Personal Bulletins*. These formed the basis for PEM's much-loved column in *AJR Information*, 'Old Acquaintances', which appeared regularly from January 1948 until his death in April 1972.

PEM's reports demonstrate his encyclopaedic knowledge of the world of theatre, cinema, cabaret and, later, television in which actors, producers, directors, film stars, authors, composers, screenwriters and others from the German-speaking lands were active. He was ideally equipped to keep his refugee readers informed about the successes and failures, the travails and tribulations, the anniversaries and, sadly, the deaths of those they had admired and adored in pre-emigration days. Brüning's edition of PEM's writings brings this out very clearly; it nicely complements Thomas Willimowski's biography *Emigrant sein ist ja kein Beruf: Das Leben des Journalisten PEM* (2007). PEM himself produced one bestseller, *Heimweh nach dem Kurfürstendamm: Aus Berlins glanzvollsten Tagen und Nächten* (1952), which, as its title implies, conveys the author's 'homesickness for the Kurfürstendamm' and his memories of Berlin's 'most glittering days and nights'.

Marcus's journalism before 1933 reveals the enormous energy and enthusiasm with which he threw himself into his chosen field. He made it his business to know, or at least know about, everyone in the film business, the theatre and the popular performing arts. He revelled in the freedom to populate his pieces in the *Feuilleton* (the arts and entertainment section of a newspaper) with exuberant and sharply observed snapshots of people

Rt Hon DAVID CAMERON MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION February 2010

Holocaust Memorial Day Event

It was a privilege to attend what was an especially moving event at the Guildhall, to mark Holocaust Memorial Day and the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Events like this are hugely important. Just looking at the pictures of the survivors with their children gave me immense hope that we can do better in future. That was the message of the event itself, and has been the constant refrain of the survivors. Most memorable of all was the chance to meet some of the survivors: hearing their life stories, and seeing their courage in telling others, was one of the most moving things I have ever witnessed.

It is to the great credit of the survivors and their families that they have contributed so much to the creation of a cohesive society, by promoting the need for vigilance against prejudice and the importance of tolerance and mutual respect. We must determine to pass these lessons to each new generation.

I would like to congratulate members of the Association of Jewish Refugees for all they have done to achieve this, and to wish you well for the future.

David Cameron

See 'The Legacy of Hope', page 13

continued overleaf

PAST GLORIES *continued from page 1*

and productions, spiced up with tidbits of news about the performers. He was among those who elevated film reviews from mere advertisements for films to serious film criticism. Yet at the same time, his articles are often set in the racy nightclubs frequented by Berlin's actors and directors, or the offbeat cabaret establishments where rising comedians, satirists and singers made their name.

Before 1933, PEM ignored political affiliations. His series of articles entitled 'Wir trafen gestern' ('Yesterday We Met') profiled both people who fled Germany after 1933 and people who stayed, both Jews and future Nazis. The series featured, among others, Robert Siodmak, who went on to direct the classic film noir *The Killers* in America, the actress Mady Christians, a star who also emigrated to the USA and appeared in the anti-Nazi play *Watch on the Rhine*, and the composer of songs and cabaret shows Friedrich Holländer, famous for the song known in English as 'Falling in Love Again', sung by Marlene Dietrich in the film *The Blue Angel*.

But the series also included politically more dubious figures, like the Austrian Gustav Ucicky, who during the Nazi period was to direct *Heimkehr*, a dreadful piece of Nazi propaganda. In 1931 Marcus even wrote a piece, 'Jannings führt sein Fräulein Tochter aus', with a sympathetic account of the actor Emil Jannings, who had played the lead in *The Blue Angel* but later became a notorious Nazi, introducing his daughter to Berlin nightlife. As late as 1934, in a piece on the Viennese cabaret star and comedian Fritz Grünbaum, a Jew who was to die in Dachau, Marcus listed Ucicky alongside Kurt Gerron, the Jewish actor/director who created the role of Tiger Brown in the Brecht/Weill *Threepenny Opera* and was later forced to make a Nazi propaganda film about Theresienstadt concentration camp, whence he was deported to Auschwitz.

However, after his emigration to Britain and in the wake of the incorporation of Austria into the Third Reich, Marcus employed his prodigious store of knowledge to assail the falsehoods and dishonesty of those who had gone over to the Nazis. In an article for the *Pariser Tageszeitung*, a refugee paper, in 1939, he exposed the mendacity of Emil Jannings's autobiography, showing how it was fabricated to meet the criteria of Nazism. The great director Ernst Lubitsch, in whose film *Dubarry* Jannings had first found international fame, was not mentioned, as a Jew who had long since settled in Hollywood; nor was Erich Pommer, who had produced *The Blue Angel* and restart-

ed Jannings's career; nor were the writers of that film, Robert Liebmann, a Jew who was to disappear in the Holocaust, and Carl Zuckmayer, whose play *The Captain of Köpenick* had made him persona non grata in Nazi Germany.

This exposure of those who had colluded with the Nazis was one of many fascinating features of PEM's writings after 1945, for his knowledge spanned the pre- and post-Hitler eras in a way few could equal. His principal target was Veit Harlan, director of the notorious anti-Semitic film *Jud Süß* (1940), followed by Leni Riefenstahl, and he did not hesitate to express his disgust when the Austrian actress Paula Wessely, who in 1941 had uttered the words 'Ich kaufe nicht bei Juden' ('I don't buy from Jews') in Ucicky's *Heimkehr*, metamorphosed into a half-Jew driven to suicide in the 1948 film *Der Engel mit der Posaune*.

PEM's column in *AJR Information* brimmed with the names of emigrants from Germany and Austria who became famous in exile in Hollywood or London: directors like Otto Preminger, Fritz Lang, Berthold Viertel and Billy Wilder, producers like Erich Pommer, and agents like Paul Kohner – PEM had known Wilder (*Double Indemnity*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *The Seven Year Itch*, *Some Like It Hot*, *The Apartment*) well in younger days of shared poverty. Actors who featured regularly included household names like Peter Lorre, Fritz Kortner, Ernst Deutsch, Fritzzi Massary, Elisabeth Bergner, Oskar Homolka, Anton Walbrook and Lilli Palmer, with whom PEM was invited back to Berlin for the 1957 International Film Festival. Names from the world of (light) music – PEM had a fondness for operetta – included Mischa Spoliansky, Hans May and Robert Stolz.

PEM made a point of promoting German-speaking actors whose careers flourished in Britain: Martin Miller, Lucie Mannheim, Albert Lieven, Karel Stepanek, Frederick Valk, Sybille Binder and Wanda Rotha. He praised the work of the cameraman Otto Heller, admired

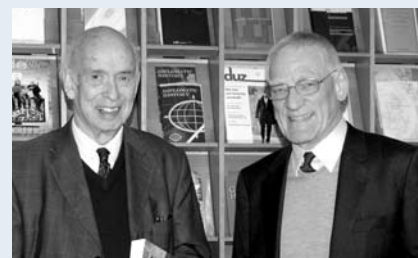
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Book on Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria launched in London



Dr Anthony Grenville and Lord Moser at launch of book chronicling history of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria

PHOTO BY BEA LEWKOWICZ

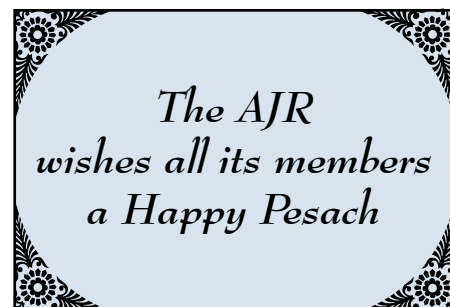
Dr Anthony Grenville spoke about his book *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain, 1933-1970: Their Image in 'AJR Information'* at its launch at the German Historical Institute in London at the end of January. He was introduced by Professor Andreas Gestrich, Director of the Institute, and Andrew Kaufman, Chairman of the AJR.

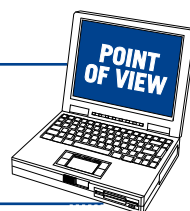
Dr Grenville is Consultant Editor of the *AJR Journal* and Co-Director of the AJR's *Refugee Voices* audiovisual testimony project.

Copies of the book are available at £45.00 hardback and £19.95 paperback from the publisher Vallentine Mitchell (tel 020 8952 9526), via the AJR (tel 020 8385 3070), from selected bookshops and from Amazon.

the films Emeric Pressburger made in partnership with Michael Powell (*The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *A Matter of Life and Death*, *The Red Shoes*), publicised the highbrow foreign films screened at Georg Hoellering's Academy Cinema, and was a close friend of the great cartoonist Vicky (Victor Weisz). He kept his sharp eye on youthful talent, drawing attention to young performers like the actor and singer Agnes Bernelle and the actor Renee Goddard, whom he saw in 1954 in John van Druten's play *I Am a Camera* and who later rose to senior positions in Associated Television and Channel 4; she is one of the few living links to PEM and his era.

Anthony Grenville





The Day of Reckoning

This spring the people will have their say. Will it make any difference? Has any election ever produced the miracle promised? This one certainly will not, as we all know. Moreover, how many will bother to register their X? Last time, it was 60 per cent. This time, probably not even that.

The people have become disillusioned with Parliament, realising at last that the law-makers are not concerned about *our* lives, but *theirs*. We have witnessed the spectacle of all of them burying their snouts in the trough. Of course they are furious *at* having their sordid ways exposed for all to see. One would expect this sort of behaviour in a banana republic – but in a country where democracy is a way of life? The UK even tries to export it – so far without much success. It was the great W. C. himself who said 'Democracy is a bad system, but I don't know of a better one.' What would he say today? Words might fail even *him*.

For that matter, what is Britain still doing in far-flung colonies when at the same time it is audaciously telling Israel to get out of the hostile territories surrounding it? Note: Britain also voted against Israel again recently in the UN. There was a time when Great Britain boasted it had colonised one-quarter of the earth. Even America! We remember the pink areas in our school atlases. None of those countries, thus subjected, ever threatened the existence of this country. All this in the name of Democracy and Commonwealth! Whose wealth?

No wonder millions of the indigenous population are seeking a better life elsewhere, vacating their properties and making way for even more millions of immigrants who cost us billions. By emigrating, the Brits escape the inevitable onslaught on their pockets resulting from

the demands of the creditors, who are owed one and a half trillion pounds! This debt can never be repaid. The sins of the fathers are visited upon their children and children's children.

First, our prudent ex-chancellor, turned incapable prime minister, together with our flipping Darling, 'borrowed' our money to rescue the discredited bankers without asking our permission. The price of everything rocketed overnight – and not by just a few per cent. More taxes were levied and the bank rate was dropped to near zero, thus eliminating any interest on savings. The value of properties dived sharply and so did the shares. However, much worse is in store. The IMF has its sights on the defaulters who cannot pay back what they have borrowed. The UK still basks in the glory bestowed on it by its triple-A rating. However, if a future chancellor does not satisfy this august body by introducing the harshest measures ever visited upon the citizens, this accolade will be withdrawn and a lower rating will inevitably be set, with disastrous consequences. The pound will sink like a lead balloon. We will join the list of poor countries. Either way, the people will be the losers. Even Cassandra could not discern the depth of the abyss into which we would fall.

All would not be lost, however. There *is* a way for us. It is away from these shores. We have escaped the murderers and must now escape the robbers, liars, cheats and, above all, the terrorists, who would not be here if the British were not there. There is hardly a country where the sun shines less and where snow causes more chaos regularly. The Costa del Sol is the Brits' favourite area; the Wienerwald has not yet succumbed to multiculturalism, although even Eilat has just allowed 17,000 African non-Jews into a population of 60,000!

However, who would want to wait until the pound is worth a fraction of a euro? The currency exchange will certainly take place. Whilst the foreign pension would buy more, the value of the British one – among the lowest in Western Europe – will fall and so will that of any property, with disastrous effect. Act while you are still able to. It is later than you think! Don't leave your fate to others. Vote with your feet. Bring forth The Day of Reckoning.

Fred Stern
(from the Costa del Sol)

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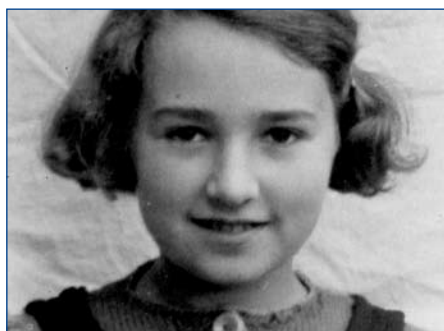
EMIGRATION

The day of departure. We are leaving the country. My father is back from prison. He has served his sentence for criticising the race laws – in an ordinary prison within the city walls; it is still there. He has not been tortured. He has allowed himself to be humiliated but he has refused to obey an order to slap the face of another Jew. He survives to tell the tale. He has been saved by an officer, who knew him as a lawyer, and orders him to remain in prison on the day of his promised release. It is the day of Kristallnacht in Vienna. When my father finally comes home, the majority of his friends and colleagues have disappeared.

My quiet, retiring mother has faced embassies and consulates to find us a refuge, and she has faced the Gestapo to have my father freed. When he is, we are given an ultimatum to leave the country within 12 weeks. This is extended because we already have an affidavit and a quota number for America as well as a guarantee from England. We only lack an English visa. We need it in order to be able to stay in England, with our guarantor, until it is our turn, under the quota system, to go to America. I am versed in these intricacies. I am also learning English, while my parents take elementary courses in how to be a butler and an English cook. This will be the only work available to them. The courses are organised by the remnants of the Jewish Council in Vienna.

There is not a great deal of packing when the visa is issued by the British embassy. No household goods – we have none left. No jewellery – that has been confiscated. I couldn't understand why 'they' would want my tiny Star of David on the fine gold chain, but it has been explained to me: It will be melted down with other Jewish artifacts. Our books have been given away. I can take Susie, my favourite doll, and the watch I have just been given for my tenth birthday. Everyone is allowed to take one watch. But I have to leave my skates – the skates I've been unable to use since Jews were forbidden to go on the ice rink. In the end, we have only two medium-sized suitcases. We don't want to overburden ourselves with too many clothes. Our bedding will follow in a wooden box.

We have two English pounds, seventeen shillings and six pence, all the money we are allowed to take. We have new passports with new photographs, which show our left ears. We are told that is how criminals have to be photographed. We have new names: my mother and I are both Sarah and my father is Israel. The only two names Jews may use, they are written into our passports as insults



The author on arrival in England, July 1939

and stamped onto our birth certificates. I feel vindicated when my first grandchild is called Sara.

The good Dr Richter comes to say goodbye. She has stood by us but is afraid to be seen with us. She is afraid when I need to go to hospital to have my finger stitched, four weeks before we leave. She takes me where Jews are not admitted. She says my name is Elfi Binks and I am her patient. I am given a mild anaesthetic and, when the stitching is done and I am still drowsy, the surgeon asks me my name. I don't betray Dr Richter: 'My name is Elfi Binks.' Dr Richter will not see us off. She has to support her parents; she cannot do more.

The most painful goodbyes are those we cannot say. My grandmothers, aunts, uncles, cousins are in Czechoslovakia. Negotiations to get them out are under way. This has also been explained to me. I leave my relatives behind with my toys.

Our leaving is not unmarked. Fräulein, my first love, my father's secretary, comes to the station to see us go. We are formal with each other; we don't know what to say. We wave to her as the train draws away. She has a list of my father's debtors. After the war she collects the money and keeps it. In due course, my father forgives much, but he never forgives that.

Our journey will take two days and a night. We are going the longer way – through Aachen and Brussels and Ostend – because the shorter route through Holland costs more than we have left. Our carriage is full of refugees. The seats are made of slatted wood. No one has room to stretch out, but I am the only child and I am encouraged to make myself comfortable. My father is too restless to sit; he walks up and down the corridors.

Until we cross the border at Aachen we are not safe. We have yet to be searched. We have yet to go through passport control. We have yet to go through emigration. There are stories of people stopped at the borders.

Some of the women in the carriage begin to exchange information. The men do not speak. One woman boasts about

the jewellery she has managed to hide. It is sewn into her clothes; it will not be found. My mother becomes possessed. She accuses the woman of putting the whole train-load of Jews in peril. She insists that the jewels are removed from the clothes and thrown out of the window. The other women in the carriage become agitated. The men remain silent. My father is in the corridor. I watch as the woman with the jewels tears at her coat, finds scissors and cuts and tears until gold and precious stones fall on the floor. Someone opens the window and the woman throws out her jewels just as we cross over a river on a railway bridge. I imagine that the gold and precious stones sink in the water and that the river is the Rhine.

Perhaps my mother has really saved us; the search at the border is thorough. We are stripped and our clothes are minutely examined. I am asked whether my parents have hidden anything inside me. I am baffled and believed when I say 'No.'

After the searches and the controls we are in the train again and we are waiting. We do not know why. We do not know what has happened in the rest of the train. Everyone is back in our carriage but we wait for an hour. My father gets on and off the train looking for news, and my mother, who was heroic about the jewellery, is hysterical about my father. The train moves off without any warning but my father is on it. As the front of the train passes the border, a man leans out and shouts: 'Hitler verrecke!' Our carriage is towards the back of the train and we are still in Germany. A last stab of fear and then we are also across the border and we also shout. I think we go to sleep. I am too sleepy at Ostend and Dover to register my first sight of the sea.

It is July. So far, freedom is cold and wet. The seats in the train from Dover are not wooden. I think I know some English but I don't know what these people are saying to me or to each other. We arrive at Victoria Station. We do not need a porter for our meagre luggage and we cannot afford one. When a porter approaches, my father waves him away. But the man stays close to us. He takes a shiny coin out of his pocket. It is a new, yellow threepenny bit with six edges. He holds it out to me and I hear him clearly when he says: 'For luck in England, Miss, for luck in England.' The coin has lost its shine and it has been obsolete for a long time. I kept it in a child's red-and-white leather pouch with an edelweiss pattern round the edge and a draw-string to close it until my grandson went to Africa for his gap year. Then I gave it him 'for luck in Africa.'

Hedi Argent (Schnabl)

SURVIVING CHRISTNUKAH

It's nearly spring, and spring cleaning has produced a Chanukah card from the back of a drawer. I have no idea who sent it, but then the thought of Chanukah always gives me a bad conscience because I have ignored it all my life. I suppose I started off on the wrong foot by being put in the Catholic stream in my primary school. The error was soon discovered, but the priest was reluctant to let me go – I made such a bright little Catholic. But my father wouldn't even let him borrow me *pour encourager les autres*: he was a godless Jew, an ardent Zionist, who annulled his baptism when he was old enough to realise what his well-meaning parents had considered a smart career move in imperial Austria.

My father was a militant atheist. In the 45 years or so that I lived with him or he lived with me, I had never known him to visit a synagogue. We celebrated Christmas, of course, like so many bourgeois Jews, but the angel at the top of the tree was a decoration, not a declaration, just as our Turkish rugs didn't make us Muslims. Christmas was a festival of light – everybody's light – with the nightly glow from the windows in our street painting the snow red and gold, live carp sold from barrels full of icy water, and hot chestnuts and music on every corner.

My father took music seriously and, when we children were at last allowed into the drawing room, into the presence of the huge, silver-spangled tree and the pervasive odour of hot candle wax and fir, he was seated at the harmonium to play my very favourite carol: 'Es ist ein Reis entsprungen'. We all sang, my mother's clear voice soaring above ours, and even the servants, standing shyly to one side, joined in when it came to 'O Tannenbaum' and, inevitably, 'Silent Night'.

A moment of stillness would follow, but then there was no holding back as we looked for our presents under the sheltering branches of the tree. High above us, my father stood ready to douse the occasional flare-up when the flames got too close to the needles, or the sparklers, suspended by their copper spines, caused small conflagrations.

There were two or three presents for each of us children: one big, two smaller – nothing like today's hideous overload of parcels and packets whose wrapping gets ripped off in an unseemly frenzy, making a pile of waste bigger than that of the presents. Year in year out, I could count on one gift for certain: the latest volume of *Dr. Doolittle*, which I started on then and there and had usually finished by midday on Christmas Day.

Years went by, tectonic shifts of language, culture, geography, and I still hadn't looked a *menorah* in the eye, until I watched Benno Elkan at work on the great seven-branched candelabrum that stands in front of the Knesset, symbolising the seven days of the creation and, incidentally, my immortality. The more important symbolism can be read up in Exodus; my contribution came about like this: Elkan,

I found Christmas crackers, mottoes and paper hats hard to stomach, but cards presented a real culture shock. They kept coming – from absent friends, people next door, the plumber wishing me more blocked drains, arch-enemies from the office, and in-laws who saw my wife every day. Each card set a problem of taste, text and retaliation ... Sometimes, when I felt really aggressive, I just wrote the figures 3761 on a plain card to show how much longer we have been going than they.

on the strength of two candelabra he had wrought for Westminster Abbey, was commissioned to sculpt the Great Menorah at a time when I shared a house with him in north London. Each branch was alive with figures from Jewish history and one day he needed a model to hold a certain position while he captured it quickly in plasticine. Would I mind taking my clothes off and oblige? I thought I was reasonably good looking, so why not?

'The Jews enslaved,' said Elkan. 'I must make it a really scrawny figure. Your head I don't need.' Still, immortality of sorts, since a bit of me is there, on one of the arms, for ever I hope, and Elkan has not done badly either, with his each-way bet: Abbey and Knesset.

That was many years after 'O Tannenbaum', when I had children of my own, born in a country that celebrated Christmas in broad daylight and believed that carp tasted muddy. One year I had a really bright idea for celebrating Christmas. I had just got my commission as a second lieutenant and was hanging around Catterick Camp waiting for a posting. Why not round up enough Jewish private soldiers and NCOs to

take over guard duties during Christmas? I put the idea to the senior sergeant major, an archetypal warrant officer, who, like all his ilk, thought newly-commissioned officers a threat to good order and military discipline. 'You mean to have nothing but Jews running the camp?'

I explained that it was not so much a take-over – more a matter of letting the Christmas faction get on with their dinner. The idea was put to the camp commandant and approved. I found it easy to round up enough volunteers by going through the nominal roll, looking at the names. At 6 pm on Christmas Eve, my little band paraded and was very thoroughly looked over by the sergeant major. He couldn't find the words to express his misgivings. All he came out with was 'No gambling, mind. And this is live ammunition you've got.'

Two hours on, four hours off, is not the most entertaining way to spend 24 hours, but we had a constant stream of visitors during the night to marvel at the all-Jewish guard and offer mostly good-natured encouragement. The sergeant major spent a restless Christmas, looking in every two hours in case we had absconded with the stores or sold the camp to a property developer.

'Did you run out of Jews?,' he asked when it was all over. 'Becker missed his Christmas dinner.'

'I thought Becker was Jewish. He never said a word.'

'He tells me he's baptised,' the sergeant major said. 'Anyway, your lot can have next Christmas off,' he added, still not in full possession of the point.

I found Christmas crackers, mottoes and paper hats hard to stomach, but cards presented a real culture shock. They kept coming – from absent friends, people next door, the plumber wishing me more blocked drains, arch-enemies from the office, and in-laws who saw my wife every day. Each card set a problem of taste, text and retaliation. Was it fair to recycle a Chanukah card, received as a freebie from a Jewish charity, to go with a tip to the dustman? Should I show up my neighbour's appalling taste with an exquisite card of my own or outdo him in kitsch? And how could I keep religion out of it without appearing ridiculously bland? In the end, I relied on the usual reproductions of old masters, charity cards painted by mouth, winter landscapes that anticipated climate change. Sometimes, when I felt really aggressive, I just wrote the figures 3761 on a plain card to show how much longer we have been going than they.

Victor Ross



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

HOLOCAUST AND OTHER GENOCIDES

Sir – Ruth Barnett (February, Letters) castigates those who consider the Holocaust ‘the property of Jews’. She also says that ‘The Jews suffered, and so did many others.’ This is oversimplification and smacks of revisionism.

The ‘Final Solution’ was about Jews. The six death factories were built for Jews. Only Jews died because they were Jews. Who would have thought we would hear such things uttered in our lifetime and by people who should know better. We live in an age when nothing is sacred and anything can be debunked – all in the interest of universalism. Ruth Barnett says there have been 50 genocides since 1945 – teach them all and none will be remembered.

It’s beyond me why some ‘Kinder’ side with the enemy – not just of Israel, but of Jews. I can understand they wish to mend the world, but why turn against your own? I once confronted Suzanne Weiss, who had the gall to equate Jenin with Warsaw. More recently, Heidi Epstein joined Galloway’s Hamas road show to Gaza. Demonising Israel engenders the anti-Semitism which resulted in the Holocaust.

Rubin Katz, London NW11

Sir – Ruth Barnett mentions the terrible treatment of Armenians by the Turks in the First World War, though I am not convinced that this atrocity was a genocide in the sense of a deliberate attempt to exterminate the whole Armenian people.

As I understand the situation, the Armenians, as Christians, were, at the very least, sympathetic to the Russians, whose army was attempting to conquer Turkish Armenia from its base in the Caucasus and a minority were actively supporting that invasion. This led the Turks to deport Armenians from the border regions. That these displaced people were subject to disgraceful treatment and many died of starvation and exposure, and some were massacred by lawless Muslim tribes with the connivance of Turkish troops, is a blot on Turkey’s name that it has, to its shame, not been willing to acknowledge to this day.

The Turks may have been paranoid about the Armenian masses and acted in a wholly disproportionate manner, but they had some reason to believe the latter were behaving as a fifth column in war time. Labelling it a genocide has only had the effect of strengthening Turkish intransigence, which has made it more difficult for them to admit they acted improperly and offer any apology. Clearly a great wrong was done to the Armenians, but I fear that using the term genocide is counterproductive.

Martin D. Stern, Salford

Sir – Mary Rogers asks (January) the views of AJR members on the current tendency of Holocaust memorial services to commemorate victims of genocides other than the Shoah.

In correspondence with the Rt Hon Jack Straw when Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) was first instituted, I was assured that its dual purpose was to remember and, through education, to work towards avoiding in future generations such atrocities as were endured by the Jewish people at the hands of the Nazi regime.

It is self-evident that genocide is not yet a thing of the past. We Jews therefore do well to recognise that, horrifically unique though our own relatively recent tragedy is, we do not have a monopoly on suffering, and that HMD is an occasion when *all* victims of atrocity are appropriately remembered. Yom Hashoah is the day on which the Jewish people remember relatives and friends whose lives were destroyed in 1930s Europe.

Barbara Dean, Birmingham

Sir – On the recent correspondence regarding the Holocaust in relation to other genocides, and whether other genocides should legitimately be included in HMD, perhaps referral to the etymology of the two words will help. The word *holocaust*, from Greek, means whole burning or sacrifice, i.e. systematic killing. The word *genocide*, also from Greek, means murder of race or tribe, i.e. systematic killing.

It is mass murder in both cases, but the German genocide was unique in that it was done on an industrial scale and involved burning – hence the word *holocaust*. It is pedantry to distinguish between methods and appropriate to memorialise this ghastly human propensity, in whatever form, on HMD.

(Dr) Emil Landes, Highgate

SAYING KADDISH

Sir – With regard to Otto Deutsch’s letter (February), many of my family, including small children, were taken from Teresin to Maly Trostinec. I have documentary evidence that they were put into those special gas wagons. I have not visited the site because we too are in our eighties. But on several occasions, when my son and son-in-law took vans of supplies to the needy Jewish families in Minsk, they *did* go there and were most moved by that wonderful memorial. They never failed to say Kaddish – not only for our family but for everyone who died and was on arrival thrown into that ravine. So, Mr Deutsch, please feel that it was said on your behalf for all your family.

Nina Hofman, Lugano, Switzerland

‘RIGHTEOUS GENTILE’

Sir – In 1939 my mother’s life was saved by Ernst von Harnack, who, well known for his part in the resistance, was executed after the failed 1944 plot against Hitler. I was only eleven at the time, too young to be accepted as a witness by Yad Vashem.

Another family was saved before the war: Fritz and Gertrude Schönbeck and two sons (last known address: 116 Salmon Street, London NW9). They were interned on the Isle of Man. Carl Sachs, a Jewish businessman, was helped to escape to Switzerland.

To the best of my knowledge, no one has applied to Yad Vashem for Ernst von Harnack to be honoured as a ‘righteous gentile’. Renate von Harnack, his daughter, died recently and the family, united at the urn setting, asked me to try again. If any readers have further testimony to support the application, could they please contact me.

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Richmond upon Thames, TW10 6QY
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WMDS ON ENGLAND IN 45 MINUTES?

Sir – We witnessed the dire spectacle of the Iraq inquiry which deliberately omitted to ask TB *how* SH would have deployed WMDs on England in 45 minutes. Any answer would have indicted him, releasing a torrent of lawsuits from which this country could never recover. The whitewash, which was also applied to the errant parliamentarians who got away unscathed or had their repayments reduced, had been prepared beforehand. A new set of MPs will make no difference unless real reforms are introduced. It would be appreciated if, instead of logical deduction, contributors would desist from besmirching these hallowed pages with their nonsense.

Fred E. Stern, Wembley, Middx

MIXED – NOT DILUTED

Sir – I am baffled by Fred Stern’s equation (February) that adding cultures together subtracts. I am a product both of Jewish diaspora and English Protestant backgrounds. I consider myself mixed – not diluted.

Lydia Thornley, London EC2

LIFT VANS

Sir – Liesl Munden’s letter reminds me of an episode in *Four Girls from Berlin*, a wonderful book by Marianne Meyerhoff. Her best childhood friends in Berlin were three non-Jewish girls, who stood by her after the anti-Jewish laws had come in. Her parents managed to send her to America, but they remained behind. Her wonderful friends continued to visit her parents and to help them and one of them, at great risk to herself, agreed to hide a box with some precious family possessions.

Her family did not survive. In 1945, after the war, the writer received a large mysterious box in which she found these family treasures – silver candlesticks, letters, photograph albums and so on. These items enabled her to remember her past. As her friends in post-war Germany were now starving, she, in turn, was able to reciprocate their kindness by sending them wonderful food parcels.

*Bronia Snow
Esher*

Sir – It was April 1939 in Vienna when the day came for the lift to be closed. We had a Jewish firm of movers who packed the items we were allowed to take and checked them with a copy the Nazis held. My mother had plates of sandwiches, pastries and, of course, bottles of beer on a table next to the door. She gave the shipper a small bag of her jewellery and asked if he could slip the bag into the lift. He said it would depend on which Nazi inspector came to check.

The doorbell rang and the Nazi inspector entered the flat. The Nazi and the Jewish mover hugged each other and joked: 'Quick, close the lift and let's have something to eat!' The lift was closed and sealed. The mover gave my mother a sly wink. Of course, we didn't know if the bag of jewellery was actually in the lift. Months later, when the lift was unpacked in Bombay, the jewellery was there. I only hope the kind inspector who risked his life survived.

Henry Rado, Harrow, Middx

BRITISH FIRST, JEWISH SECOND?

Sir – For Peter Phillips to say he is British first and then Jewish makes little sense. I came to England on a Kindertransport and I love the British for their compassion and having saved my life. The vast majority of Britons consider you a Jew and then a Briton for whatever reason and it is like that in every country.

The German Jews also thought they were German first ... I speak with some authority, having lived in some 20 countries. The most important thing is not what *you* consider yourself, but what *others* consider you!

Henry Herner, Caracas, Venezuela

CORE BELIEFS

Sir – For Henry Schragenheim (January), belief in the ten plagues and the 'splitting' of the Red Sea are core beliefs of the Jewish religion. The plagues are convincingly explained by fallout from the volcanic eruption on Santorini within nine years of 1609 BC and the retreat, and then surge, of the Red Sea by a resulting tsunami. Google 'Siro Trevisanato' (PhD Microbiology).

George Landers, Crete, Greece

SECOND GENERATION REFLECTIONS

Sir – I belong to the second generation with regard to my father, who fled on the Kindertransport from Wiesbaden in 1939, and to the third generation with regard to my grandparents, who escaped via Portugal to Britain in 1940. Some articles in recent issues of the Journal – and many readers' opinions – seem rather outmoded to me, but I was very pleased to read Mr Grenville's article 'Reflections on German reunification' and Mr Phillips's article 'Jew against Jew', both in the February issue. I agree with every word.

To Mrs Shefer-Vanson's 'Letter from Israel' on Viktor Klemperer and the composer Erich Korngold, also in February, I would add that Korngold's opera *Die tote Stadt* is being performed not only in France but also in Germany, as it was in 2008 in Bonn.

I too recommend Viktor Klemperer's diary, which greatly helped me to get a feeling of what life was like under Hitler – but, unlike Mrs Shefer-Vanson, having read it, I didn't have to travel to Israel to recover. Poking around in

Germany today is sufficient to 'shake off the gloomy mood aroused by that book' – see Grenville's abovementioned article.

Lorenz S. Beckhardt, Bonn, Germany

'THE MOST IMPORTANT DIARY SINCE PEPYS'

Sir – I would like to add a few points not mentioned in Dorothea Shefer-Vanson's February 'Letter from Israel' on Viktor Klemperer's diary *I Will Bear Witness*.

I bought the book when the English translation was published, as one critic described it as the most important diary since Pepys. Having read it, I wouldn't rate it so highly but it was very interesting for Jewish readers born in Germany.

One most important point of Klemperer's identity is that not only did he marry a non-Jew but he himself converted to Christianity. Conversion, of course, did not save him from the anti-Jewish legislation although, like many others who married non-Jews, it did protect him initially from deportation.

Another point is that he was the son of a rabbi who was first an Orthodox rabbi but later a Reform one.

Klemperer could also be described as a self-hating Jew – hence his conversion to Christianity. Of course, he had to mix with other Jews and attend Jewish funerals. Some time during the Hitler years, he was asked to rejoin the Jewish community, which he steadfastly refused, stating he was now a believing Christian.

Incidentally, his diary was not published by himself but by his second wife, who found it after his death. I believe the diary created a sensation when it was published in German in 1996. The English translation by Martin Chalmers came later.

Max Sulzbacher, Jerusalem

AN ADDITIONAL BERLIN MEMORIAL

Sir – I think one item could be added to those mentioned by David Wirth in his article on memorials in Berlin (January). The Bayrische Viertel had its own synagogue in the Münchener Strasse – it was not a building standing on its own but was situated in a Hinterhaus (rear of a building), adjoining blocks of flats and not directly accessible from the street.

There is now a memorial in the street consisting of slabs of concrete (one depicting a *menorah*) and a metal plate inserted in its base, which explains the reason for the memorial. It reads: 'There was a synagogue here from 1909 until 1956. Due to its position adjoining a block of flats, it was not destroyed during the Pogrom-Night of 9 November 1938. After the expulsion and destruction of the Jewish fellow citizens by the National Socialists, it had lost its function and was demolished in 1956.' *Fritz Lustig, Reading*

BACK TO VIENNA

Sir – Is John Lawrence (Letters, January) aware of the Jewish Welcome Service in Vienna and the thousands who have taken advantage of its 30-year existence? If so, he might accept that, for all those who have returned to Vienna under its auspices, including families bringing their younger generations, pride seems to play no part. The whole exercise is carried out by younger Viennese, who took no role in the horrors of 70 years ago and

now seek to emphasise that the world there has changed for the better.

Alan S. Kaye, Marlow, Bucks

Sir – The Stefanie Hotel in Vienna's Leopoldstadt district has become a very smart hotel offering a very nice menu, including an excellent Kalbsschnitzel. The Jewish Welcome Service is making good use of the hotel, inviting ex-Viennese from all over the world including the second and third generations. I had a splendid week there and wish it could have been longer.

Karl Katz, Bexley, Kent

ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

Sir – Eric Sanders is being simplistic when he writes that the Israeli refusal to agree to East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state is an obstacle to peace.

What grounds has Israel for believing *anything* the Palestinians promise? When Ariel Sharon voluntarily gave them the Gaza Strip, and affirmed that Israel only wanted to live in peace with her neighbours, what happened? The beautifully cultivated place the Israeli farmers left behind was destroyed and used as a launching ground for rockets. Hardly actions to induce confidence in peace in the Israelis. If Hamas were to succeed in taking over East Jerusalem, they would have no hesitation in launching rockets over the whole of Israel, which it is their avowed intention to destroy.

Even before the advent of Hamas, when Prime Minister Ehud Barak, hardly a right-winger, offered Arafat most of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and other concessions, the Palestinians did not accept. Where was their desire for peace then?

Mr Saunders further writes that Mr Netanyahu's wish for peace is insincere: 'Words are cheap.' Indeed they are. But we have yet to hear one word of peace from the Fatah government. If only that were the case. In their speeches and television interviews to their people, they constantly reiterate that 'the whole land belongs to them – there is no such place as Israel.' Unfortunately, the media never publicises these speeches. Perhaps they have no Arabic translators.

Thea Valman, London NW11

Sir – If Eric Sanders thinks Israel should give the 'Palestinians' half of Jerusalem, stop any Jewish settlements on land they conquered in a war that was forced on them in 1967, and encourage the establishment of a state of Palestine when one already exists under the name of Jordan and all will be well – he is living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

Hamas, established in Gaza with Iranian help after Israel's withdrawal, has one main and unalterable aim: to write the Jewish state off the face of the earth.

Ernest G. Kolman, Greenford, Middx

Sir – My old friend Hegel used to say that what experience and history teach us is that people and government have never learned anything from history. In your January issue, Eric Sanders suggested in all seriousness that Israel should give up East Jerusalem for peace.

I remember only too well that there was once one Neville of Westminster SW1 who

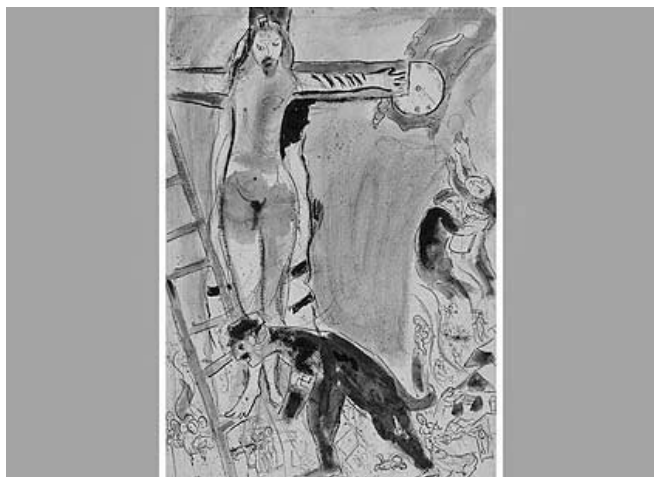
Letters to the Editor continued on page 16

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

If anything positive can emerge from the Middle East conflict, it is the quiet courage of the Bereaved Families Forum, whose members have lost loved ones on both sides but who are dedicated to reconciliation. Their exhibition, **Cartooning in Conflict**, at **London's St Martin-in-the-Fields**, exposes the irony of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the absurdity of war.

A group of skilled international cartoonists present powerful images in which birds, guns and olive branches are recurring themes, alongside the general



Marc Chagall, *Apocalypse en Lilas, Capriccio* (1945-47). Gouache, Lavis et encre de Chine sur papier. Signée en bas à gauche. Ben Uri collection, The London Museum of Art (2009)

rubble and brokenness of war. In one cartoon, an angel and a devil play cards with the fates of men. In another, two women – an Israeli and an Arab – cry the same tears. The message is clear: death is indiscriminate, humans are equal and war is futile.

The **Ben Uri Art Gallery** scored a hit with its much publicised acquisition of a little-known gouache by **Marc Chagall**, *Apocalypse in Lilac*, which it showed at the **Osborne Samuel Gallery** in London. In its wake came a brief window of masterpieces in the Ben-Uri collection, including works by **Auerbach**, **Bomberg**, **Kramer**, **Emmanuel Levy** and that rare pre-Raphaelite **Simeon Solomon**. The Chagall takes its rightful place besides Bomberg's *Ghetto Theatre* and Kramer's *Day of Atonement*.

The newly acquired gouache has its

own sorrowful history. Chagall left France, the country of his adoption, in 1941. Sales of his work dwindled and he was dogged by personal tragedy. Then came news of the Holocaust. And thus the gouache was born – a Jewish, hermaphrodite Christ, bearded but sensual, with Jewish figures climbing up towards him and a Nazi devil with a tail at the foot of the ladder. Here was a riposte drawn from the still anger of absolute betrayal.

David Glasser, Ben-Uri Co-chairman, bought the work for £30,000 and presented it as the pinnacle of a fundraising show to secure London premises for the Ben-Uri's works, which unbelievably remain in storage. Over 75 per cent of the 1,000 works by 300 artists were created by first- or second-generation immigrants.

What could be more moving than the fate of misunderstood genius Vincent Van Gogh? The **Royal Academy of Arts'** new exhibition, **The Real Van Gogh: The Artist and His Letters** (until 18 April), reveals a polymath, a pantheistic nature-poet dogged by mental instability and lack of self-belief. In extremis, he poured his soul into the ear of his financially supportive art-dealer brother Theo, but cut off his own and finally shot himself in 1890 because he despaired at his 'lack of progress'. The letters

let us glimpse Van Gogh's ten-year artistic cycle, including his Japanese phase, which influenced some remarkable portraits. The turbulent clouds, the orchards in which every leaf throbs with energy, the whirling brush strokes and the *Yellow House*, a whimsical and longed-for place of refuge for artists, all reveal the yearning of a restless spirit.

Most poignant are the scenes painted from his iron-barred asylum window at Saint-Remy, through which he could make out a square of wheat in an enclosure from which he could see the sun 'rise in all its glory'.

Annely Juda Fine Art

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

A timely publication

THE WORLD OF YESTERDAY

by Stefan Zweig

translated by Anthea Bell

Pushkin Press, 2009, 505 pp. paper, £20.00

The publication of this excellent new translation of *The World of Yesterday* is timely in so far as there has been a renewal of interest in the author since the recent translation of his novel *The Post Office Girl* and Ronald Harwood's play *Collaboration* on the subject of Zweig's relationship with Richard Strauss during the Nazi period.

Zweig completed this book in 1942, shortly before his suicide. It is not, strictly speaking, an autobiography; his working title for it was 'Three Lives'. The first part, 'The World of Security' (perhaps the most interesting), gives a fascinating picture of his youth – a happy one without any mention of anti-Semitism – in an assimilated, middle-class Jewish family in Vienna. He describes life at a Viennese gymnasium as a dry, cramming education, though the boys lead a rich cultural life, playing truant to attend the theatre, concerts and exhibitions and writing poetry and prose, all under the eye of their tolerant parents. Deciding to become a writer, Zweig submits his first article to the *Neue Freie Presse*, the prestigious Viennese newspaper. The editor, who accepts the article, turns out to be Theodor Herzl, who, Zweig says, 'rose to greet me and unwittingly I realised that the ironic witticism "the King of Zion" had some truth in it.'

Zweig meets well-known cultural figures on his travels in Europe. But, when the First World War breaks out, his dream of a united Europe is shattered. He travels to neutral Switzerland to present his pacifist drama *Jeremiah*. At the end of the war, he returns to Salzburg.

The narration now becomes less personal. Disappointingly, there is little on post-war Vienna – the stream of poverty-stricken Jewish refugees who arrived there during and after the war from Galicia, or the hardships the Austrians suffered. This is surprising as he writes sensitively on the subject in *The Post Office Girl*. It would also have been interesting to hear something about 'red Vienna', when some of the most attractive social housing in Europe was built.

By the 1930s Stefan Zweig is very conscious of Nazism stirring in Munich, just across the border from Salzburg. In 1934 he leaves for England, but no longer feels the famous writer promoting his works, but rather a refugee, albeit a fairly affluent one. He is not in Austria for the Anschluss

and does not mention Kristallnacht. However, he shows his sensitivity when he sees the hordes of Jewish refugees besieging the travel bureaux. This might be an episode from one of his novels: 'There I met a once very wealthy industrialist from Vienna, who had been one of our most intelligent art collectors; he was so old, so grey, so weary that I did not recognise him at first. Weakly, with both hands he clung to the table. I asked him where he was going. "I don't know," he said. "Who asks about one's wishes nowadays? One goes wherever one is still admitted. Someone told me that I might be able to get a visa for Haiti or San Domingo here." My heart skipped a beat: an old, worn-out man with children and grandchildren atremble with the hope of going to a country which hitherto he would not have been able to find on the map, there only to beg his way through and again be a stranger and purposeless!'

Now in Bath, Zweig hears Hitler has invaded Poland and England is now at war with Germany. He fears internment as an enemy alien. Here, I must admit to scepticism. Many eminent aliens were interned and well treated; most were swiftly released. But Zweig procures Brazilian visas for himself and his wife and in 1941 they travel to that country. It is hard to understand his decision – unless he feared Hitler might invade England. His attitude to Judaism is equally ambivalent: 'What was most tragic in this Jewish tragedy of the 20th century was that those who suffered it knew that it was pointless and that they were guiltless.' He argues that their forefathers, killed by the Inquisition and the Crusaders, at least knew they were suffering for their belief. Now, however, Jews were conscious of their Judaism 'rather as a burden than as something to be proud of'.

In Brazil in 1942, Zweig sent his outstanding writings to his publisher and he and his wife then killed themselves. In his suicide note, he said he was too old to begin another life. He was 60. In another three years the war would be over.

Thea Valman

THEATRE

A tale of two conflicts

UNVEILING HAGAR

by Gloria Tessler

directed by Ben de Wynter

New End Theatre, London

In her 'Letter from Israel' this month, Dorothea Shefer-Vanson notes that in the UK Israel is increasingly viewed by Jews and non-Jews alike as the Goliath of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – a shift in opinion caused, she says, by 'a constant and consistent process of denigrating, demonising and delegitimising Israel in

Des Kindes Chronik

Dorle Potten, the author of *Des Kindes Chronik*, a review of which appeared in last month's issue of the Journal, has sadly passed away. Anyone wishing to order a copy of her book should write to her daughter, Mrs Marion Gaze, at Poplar Farm, Silverleys Green, Cratfield, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0QJ.

the international press, including that of Britain.' To a people accustomed to seeing themselves as victims, it might seem inconceivable that another people could, as it were, usurp that role – and blame Israel for its plight.

This highly debatable theme is, in essence, that of *Unveiling Hagar*, a new play by the AJR Journal's art critic Gloria Tessler. Max, a 60-something member of a north London Jewish family, has just lost his wife, who has died after a long illness. Into his lonely life comes Layla, a Palestinian girl half his age. She too was married and now pines to return to her homeland. The two find they have much in common. This being a play about emotions, it's necessary to suspend disbelief as the grey-haired Jewish man, deeply conscious of his people's age-old suffering, and the young Palestinian nationalist girl form a romantic attachment – while Max's sister Joan (Ruth Lathan) expresses strong hostility towards the girl she perceives as an implacable enemy of the Jewish people.

On their wedding night (could it really not have been earlier!), the secret about Layla's husband finally comes out. Max can't cope with what he hears. Layla, abandoning her refugee status in the UK, returns to her homeland. This though is by no means the end of the story.

The tale also includes two characters – Richard, a family friend and lawyer, and Mrs Barnes, a non-Jewish neighbour, played by Barry Davis and Ellie Dickens. While they inject a little more humour into a fraught situation, it's difficult to see that they add a great deal to the action. Likewise, I find it difficult to see that a cellist (Rebecca Hewes), however exquisitely she plays Bach sonatas, adds much to the mood, which is already sufficiently sombre.

But, as the Palestinian girl Layla, Israeli actress Shani Erez is, quite simply, superb. Seductive, sparkling, shifting in mood from one second to the next, she is the complete master of the evening, interacting magisterially with the rejuvenated Max, played with depth by David Sparks. Erez is a 'revelation', as reviewers are wont to say.

Unveiling Hagar has been playing to full-capacity audiences. Its Romeo and Juliet variation may not be an entirely novel one, but it makes for an engrossing evening.

Howard Spier

A controversial thesis

THE INVENTION OF THE

JEWISH PEOPLE

by Shlomo Sand

London: Verso, 2009, 332 pp. hardcover

The very title of this book is provocative. It deals with the age-old question 'Who is a Jew?' Sand's attempt to answer the question is scholarly and detailed.

He begins by asking 'What is a nation?' Is it a community of people of the same race and culture living in a particular country? By that definition, even Britain falls short for there is little racially in common between the Celts of Cornwall and Wales and their Anglo-Saxon compatriots, let alone the Huguenots, Irish, Jews and others who have made their homes here. How much more complicated is the Jewish situation!

Sand describes the Zionist narrative which has dominated Jewish thinking as follows: 'We are the descendants of Abraham and David who lived in the Holy Land and practised the Jewish religion, as recorded in the Bible. The Roman Emperor, Titus, destroyed our Temple in Jerusalem and expelled our people westwards into Europe and into North Africa. The 20th century Aliyah of Jews to Israel is the return of our people to their Promised Land.' To this is added the Christian story of the 'wandering Jew', doomed to be homeless as a punishment for killing Christ.

Sand torpedoed the Zionist narrative, claiming there is no record of a mass expulsion, which was not the Roman practice. There were Jews elsewhere who may have left for economic reasons – there was apparently a sizable Jewish trading community in Rome itself – or for other motives. He claims that the bulk of the indigenous farming population remained in Judea and that their descendants are the Palestinians of today, who later converted to Islam.

So where did our Ashkenazi Jews come from? Sand states that at the beginning of the Common Era there was a good deal of conversion of many Middle Eastern tribes to Judaism. There is evidence that their language was Hebrew and that they practised the Jewish religion. Chief among them he cites the Caucasian Khazars.

On one point, the author seems to me mistaken: he claims that Yiddish was a late adoptive language of the Jews. However, it is fairly obvious that it is the mediaeval German dialect spoken in Frankfurt and it is a historical fact that when the Jews were invited to settle in Poland by King Kazimir they brought this language with them and it became the *lingua franca* of East European Jewry.

So where does this leave our claim to the Land of Israel? Have we no right to be there at all? To this we must ask another question: 'Is our entitlement based on purely ethnic grounds or are there other criteria which apply?'

Reviews continued on page 10

'Untermenschen' and 'Asylum Seekers': A report on a recent symposium

This ambitious meeting, in late January, was organised by Meretz UK, a Jewish pressure group ('Equality, Human Rights, Peace and the Environment'). It was an interesting day but poorly attended, possibly because of the title but probably also because few people are sufficiently devoted to this cause to want to sacrifice a whole Sunday. I had been asked to talk about my life and my autobiography, representing as it were the Kindertransports.

The programme included a touching film, *The Forgotten Refugees*, describing the plight of Jewish Iraqi, Iranian and Egyptian refugees who have had a hard life in Israel. This was followed by a talk by Edwin Shaker, a refugee from Iraq who left that country in the 1970s. David Rosenberg talked about the 1905 Aliens Act in this country and the dire effect this had on Jewish immigration (down from about 500 to three within four years). Subsequent acts placed further restrictions on those who managed to gain entry. All this was in marked contrast to British attitudes in the 1930s – especially, of course, towards the Kindertransports.

Another film – *Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Children of Asylum* – illustrated the appalling treatment meted out to children who arrived more recently in the UK without their parents, e.g. from Uganda – a happy ending for some but not for others, who were repatriated with an uncertain future. Nitzan Horowitz, an Israeli former foreign affairs correspondent with *Ha'aretz* before becoming a Meretz member of the Knesset who has lobbied on behalf of children of migrants born in Israel, was unable to attend. His address was delivered on his behalf, by telephone, by Rotem Ilam, a student who founded the pressure group Israeli Children and works with him on behalf of the children of migrant workers. She spoke about the children born in Israel who regarded themselves as patriotic Israelis but have

been under threat of deportation, despite widespread sympathy among the population. This was followed by Ben Du Preez, formerly of Amnesty International (Refugee Rights), who described the chaotic and constantly changing asylum policy of Israel, though he stressed that Egypt's was far worse.

A very informative talk was given by Maurice Wren, Director of AsylumAid, who analysed the problem of asylum seekers in the UK. It is a sorry tale: policies have been generated largely by expediency and the pace has been forced by the BNP and UKIP, as well as the tabloid press. The system in place now – with the bar set impossibly high – has unleashed waves of people-smuggling, with all the horrors that entails. The policy was essentially target-driven and the claims of torture victims were often met with unwarranted scepticism. Some progress is being made in developing faster and more credible assessment for those seeking asylum.

The day closed with an account by Pauline Levis of her five-year, ongoing battle to secure the future of an Iranian student, and with a gifted young professional singer from the Congo (who had grown up in a refugee family in the UK) singing African songs – a delightful conclusion to an arduous but interesting day which, despite the small audience, provoked lively discussions.

Leslie Baruch Brent

REVIEWS

continued from page 9

That there was interchange of religious ideas and culture among the peoples who inhabited the lands of the Middle East is not surprising. However, what remains of the narrative which is relevant to our claim to Israel is that we are a community who have practised for centuries the Jewish religion, which has its origin in the Land of Israel, and that our sorry history in Christian Europe demands that we have a common land with defended borders, where we can continue to live as a people.

Another part of the book is of more immediate concern: the notion that Israel is a land without people for a people without land has been shown to be erroneous. So what kind of state have the Jews created in that land? Is it a democracy? The answer is doubtful: there is no civil marriage; mixed marriages are frowned on if not actually banned; there is no public transport on the Sabbath; and the Arabs, who make up 30 per cent of the population, do not have equal rights of land or status with the Jews. This, he believes, is a situation which cannot be allowed to continue.

Despite this gloomy picture, if one is not to become too depressed by all the conflicts surrounding our people in Israel, one must give them credit for the many creative and positive activities which are also part of the scene.

Martha Blend

China with a Jewish flavour

by Ruth Barnett

Friends expressed horror when I told them I had booked 'a tour of China with a Jewish flavour'. They asked why I would go to a country with such an appalling human rights record, such a selfish position on polluting the ecosphere, and so seriously curtailing its citizens' freedom with censorship of the internet etc. Couldn't I find enough 'Jewish flavour' elsewhere, they asked.

Of course I had my reasons: my dad spent eight years over the WWII period in Shanghai. After the war, he talked endlessly about Chinese food and customs and related incidents from his legal practice in Bubbling Well Road, but nothing about what it was really like in Shanghai. I wasn't particularly interested in asking questions then. Only since the first Kindertransport reunion in 1989 had I become keen to piece together my family story.

Reading books about the Shanghai experience gave me a disturbing picture of what it might have been like for my father. How would he have felt escaping from Europe just before war broke out, spending six weeks or so on the sea not knowing whether the ship would be allowed into Shanghai or sent back; embarking into the ravages of the Sino-Japanese war with nowhere to go and no money; facing swarms of starving Chinese refugees pouring into Shanghai, their corpses left in the roadside sewers; depending on charity until he had passed exams in English law and got a job; and, finally, being interned by the Japanese in Hongkew, a square mile of ghetto already overcrowded by Chinese, in the most poverty-stricken part of Shanghai, not knowing if the Japanese would succumb to the demands of the Nazis in Shanghai to put all the Jewish refugees in a boat and sink it in the Wangpoo River?

So I wanted to experience Shanghai for myself. I was determined to go with an open mind and save my criticism for the shortcomings of my own government on human rights and carbon footprints. It paid off: we met nothing but disarming friendliness from the Chinese people and eagerness to tell and show us everything we wanted to know. In the cities (although not so much in the countryside) the people wear modern dress – all the latest fashions – and have embraced Western culture and behaviour, even Macdonald's.

Our itinerary began with a ten-hour overnight flight to Beijing, where we spent four nights before flying to Harbin near the Mongolian and Russian borders. After two nights in Harbin, we flew to

continued on opposite page

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY

Mon 1 Gerald Curzon, 'A Strange Affair: Hannah Arendt and the Nazi Philosopher Martin Heidegger' Club 43

Mon 8 Prof Michael Alpert, 'The Jews in the Ottoman Empire, 1492-1918' Club 43

Mon 15 Dr Ian King, 'Kurt Tucholsky and the Struggle against German Fascism' Club 43

Wed 17 B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Ruth Breckman, 'Selected Opera Houses around the World' At Kenton Synagogue Hall, 2.15 pm

Mon 22 Dr Hanne Castein, 'Albrecht Dürer's Self-Portraits (Illustrated)' Club 43

Mon 29 Hall not available Club 43

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

Xian for two nights. From Xian, we had the illuminating experience of a Chinese overnight sleeper train to Kaifeng, where we had two breakfasts but only one night. Our last hop was to Shanghai, where we had two nights before the return journey to London.

We were in excellent hands. Our Jewish Renaissance tour organiser met us in Beijing's impressive modern airport to introduce us to Feng, our Beijing guide, and to Professor Xu Xin, who was to accompany us for the whole tour and from whom we were to learn so much. In each city we had a new guide who specialised just in that city. Our every need was taken care of. We became a unique, intimate group.

All six cities we visited were amazing, with wide, tree-lined boulevards and endless towering blocks of newly built high-rise flats. We learned that traffic was reduced to just manageable in Beijing by cars with certain number plates being banned on different days of the week. Shoals of bicycles, scooters and electric bicycles overtook us at every traffic light and intersect. With remarkable ingenuity, many of the cycles had a variety of vehicles attached at the back; one elderly gent even had his missus attached behind in a wheelchair. Another cyclist was scarcely visible peeking out from a mountain of cardboard boxes piled all round him.

In the Lama Temple in Beijing, built in 1694 and used as a residence for the visiting Dalai Lama, we were enveloped in the haze of incense burning in the five courtyards between magnificent all-wooden temples painted with intricate patterns in four colours – gold for the emperor and the universe, blue for the heavens, green for the earth, and red for happiness. Even the Beijing taxis were gold, sided with blue, green or red tops. The *pièce de résistance* was an 80-metre-high Buddha made out of one sandalwood tree.

The Temple of Heaven, built in 1420 in the reign of Ming Emperor Yongle, is clearly a social meeting and recreation place, as the long, covered walk leading up to it was peopled with card-players, smokers, dancers and a hubbub of cheerful chatter. Dragon kites and numerous other tourist knick-knacks were offered to us. It was good to see a large number of tour groups of Chinese people of all ages exploring their own country. The walk through Tiananmen Square and on through the Emperor's Palace, the Forbidden City, was amazing, as was the 'Bird's Nest' Olympic stadium in its Olympic Village and a coach ride to the Great Wall. In contrast, a bicycle-rickshaw ride through the narrow streets of one of the *hutong* (alley) districts of Beijing gave us a taste of the colourful lantern-lit nightlife around a glittering lake, but in an area of dire poverty.

Further highlights of the tour were vis-

its to the Terracotta Warriors of Xian – their sheer number is awe-inspiring; the tiger park in Harbin – 800 tigers uncaged; and the three theatre shows we attended – the Peking opera, largely mime, the Tang Dynasty Extravaganza in Xian, and the acrobatic show in Shanghai.

Our first Jewish experience was a visit to the lovely synagogue in Tienjin, not far from Beijing but no longer in use. This contrasted with a kosher Chinese dinner the same evening in Chabad House in Beijing! In Harbin, in the Jewish cemetery that

had been dug up and relocated to the outskirts of the town, we learned of its vibrant Jewish community that was denuded by emigration to Israel in 1948 and ended with the Cultural Revolution. We studied its culture and people in the synagogue that had been renovated as a museum of the former Jewish community. In Kaifeng, we were welcomed at the Henan Provincial University by the students and staff of the Department of Jewish Studies, seeking to keep alive the memory of Jews in China through promoting education about Jews. This was the brainchild of Professor Xu Xin, who had already founded a thriving university department of Jewish Studies in Nanjing, and our reception was overwhelming. We learned that the Chinese have no concept of anti-Semitism. Jews are respected for their important contribution to China's financial and cultural development. Apparently, European 'blood theory' of superior and inferior 'races' did not spread to China. Nor did Christianity, with its theology of Jews as 'Christ-killers', get much of a foothold, as the missionaries were expelled when they tried to ban ancestor-worship among converts. Chinese culture reveres ancestors, nature and sages like Confucius. Different parts of China have developed variations of a mixture of Buddhism and Taoism and have accepted Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities as co-existing.

Finally, in Shanghai, we visited the memorial plaque, in Hongkew, to the Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution. In the nearby Jewish Museum, my daughter found her grandfather listed in its database of refugees as 'Dr R. Michaelis 125/5 Hok San Lu, Attorney at Law'. Our guide was

BAD MEMORIES

by Marion Gross

I cried for the baby
Who clung to her mother
Looking with wondrous eyes
Into the focus of a camera

The schoolgirl holding a cornucopia
Of candies as was the custom
I cried for her because she could not
be a child
Spontaneous and free
Happy and forward looking

I cried for her because Hitler raised
his right hand
Opened the flood-gates of hatred
Destroying families

The journey is nearly over
The road bends, I look back
To where I started
What lies ahead I do not know
The child inside me cries
The woman I am tries
To comfort it
Together we must walk
Into the future.



First day at school, Berlin

able to take us to this address. Much of the ghetto has been razed and rebuilt, but a portion has been earmarked to be renovated and preserved and Hok San Lu is in this not yet renovated area. House 125/5 is one of several large tenement houses around a walled yard. One of the Chinese families living there invited us in. Poverty, dilapidation and lack of hygiene were striking – but didn't prevent the occupants from giving us a most friendly welcome. An unimagined climax to what had been a momentous two weeks!

Yes, there was pollution: much of the time, visibility was little more than 200 metres with the horizon hidden in a haze. But the people are amazing and one cannot help but admire their spirit and enthusiasm in welcoming and engaging with foreigners and their rapid emergence into the 21st century. If Jewish Renaissance offer another China tour, I heartily recommend it.

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INSIDE the AJR

Meetings cancelled

Due to the wintry weather, nine January meetings in the South had to be cancelled. Where speakers were involved, it is hoped they can be re-scheduled for later in the year.

West Midlands (Birmingham) Farewell tea for Corinne

Ilse Schlesinger hosted a lovely tea party in honour of Corinne Oppenheimer, a much-loved AJR member who is leaving Birmingham to live near her daughter in London. Corinne and her late husband Paul were co-founders of our local group. She will be greatly missed. *Lia Lesser*

Harrogate A wonderful afternoon in each other's company

Guided by Susanne Green, we spent a wonderful afternoon in each other's company. Eugene told us about his visits around the country attending Holocaust Memorial Day services and acting as speaker. Rosl reported on a service at the Central Methodist Hall in York. In addition, we recalled our first meeting in Harrogate over seven years ago. *Inge Little*
Next meeting: 5 May

Brighton & Hove Sarid 'A meaningful object and its story'

Two ladies, spiritual healers, talked about their introduction to their calling. Others shared their experiences, showing treasured items and photographs of their families. *Ceska Abrahams*
Next meeting: 15 March. Helen Fry, 'Refugees Who Fought in the Second World War'

Bromley CF A friendly afternoon

Gathering at Eva Byk's home, we enjoyed an afternoon of informality and friendliness. *Hazel Beiny*
Next meeting: 15 March, 2-4 pm. At home of Leanne Segal

Edinburgh Not exactly as intended

It was intended to be a Viennese musical occasion but it turned out quite different. Everyone spoke at once, exchanging information – even straying into match-making territory. But we enjoyed every minute of it. We did look through the Memorial Book in search of families from Debrecen. Thanks again to Françoise for being our hostess and providing the scrumptious sandwiches and cakes. *Jonathan Kish*

Oxford The Jews of Ostrava

David Lawson's talk, delivered with slides and anecdotes, was particularly relevant as one of our members came from that area. *Anne Selinger*
Next meeting: 16 March. Rabbi Daniela Thau, 'Main Religions of the World'

Café Imperial

We were enthralled with tales of Willy Field's 80th birthday celebrations. *Hazel Beiny*

Surrey Warm reception

Some 15 of us were warmly received by Edmee Barta at her lovely house in Epsom. Ably assisted by Edith Vanstone, she prepared an excellent buffet. *Alfred Kessler*

Cleve Road 'The Story of a Search'

Shirley Bilgora told a poignant story about finding the final resting place of her uncle Max Mann, who was killed in action in 1944. Shirley started looking for his grave in 2004 and at last located it in the Czech section of the French military cemetery 60 miles from Calais. Eventually she succeeded in having the cross on his grave replaced by a Star of David. *David Lang*

Next meeting: 23 March, 10.30 am. Prof Ladislaus Löb, 'Rezso Kasztner – a Jewish Schindler?'

Radlett Extraordinary experiences

Dr Helen Fry introduced her latest book *Freud's War*, while James Hamilton outlined the history behind the novel *Goodnight Vienna*. *Fritz Starer*
Next meeting: 17 March. Judith Kelner, 'Desert Island Discs'

Churchill's German Army repeated by popular demand



(from left) Willy Field, tank driver, 8th Hussars; Harry Rossney, Infantry, but posted to War Graves Commission as a signwriter; Helen Fry; Bill Howard, RN signals on HMS Bellona; Colin Anson, 3 Tp 10 Cdo

A repeat screening of this TV documentary, at the New London Synagogue, was attended by a large audience. The film is based on the book by Helen Fry, who introduced it. The audience included a dozen of us ex-servicemen and women, who played their part in defeating the Nazi menace. *Harry Gilbert*

ALSO MEETING IN MARCH

Norfolk 1 March. Lunchtime Get-together and discussion

Wessex 9 March. Myra Sampson, 'Abstract Expressionism: Is This Great Art?'

Nottingham (East Midlands)

10 March. Lunchtime Get-together

Bristol/Bath 11 March. Lunchtime Get-together with Peter Suchet speaking about his family

Cardiff 18 March. Lunch and Andrea Cameron, 'The Story of Pear's Soap'

'Everyone always asks how we died – no one ever asks how we lived,' Austrian National Fund leader tells London meeting

'It is one of the biggest challenges to teach the younger generation about the loss in culture and humanity – to make them aware of what we are capable of doing to others, in the hope that the words 'Never again' will have some meaning,' Hannah Lessing told a crowded meeting of the AJR and the Anglo-Jewish Association together with the Austrian Ambassador, Dr Gabriele Matzner-Holzer.



Ms Lessing, General Secretary of the Austrian National Fund and Head of the Austrian delegation at the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, was speaking at the Residence of the Ambassador of the Republic of Austria in London.

The Austrian National Fund subsidised a great variety of projects, she said. It is thanks in part to support from the Fund that there will be an Austrian *Refugee Voices* project comprising a film, a book and an exhibition focusing on the lives of former refugees from Austria.

'Most of the Jewish victims live today in the USA, Israel and Great Britain – some as far away as Malawi, Zambia and Thailand,' Hannah Lessing said. She added: 'We fully understand that the symbolic compensation payment to victims of the Nazis has been received with disappointment. At the same time, these measures show that a new generation of Austrians is recognising the victims of their country's terrible past and at least attempting to compensate that which cannot be compensated.'

'A survivor put it most succinctly,' she concluded, 'Everyone always asks how we died – no one ever asks how we lived.'

SECOND GENERATION MEETINGS

Mon 1 March 'Uncovering Secrets in Everyday Lives – Two Books Triggered by Wartime Documents'. Jewish Book Week in association with Second Generation Network. Rosemary Bailey, Marc Stevens, chaired by Sophie Lewis. At Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, London WC1, 1.00 pm. £8

Tues 9 March 'Free to Have Fun?' Informal discussion evening. Central London. Tel 0781 357 4699 for details

Tues 16 March Talk and Tour of Wiener Library. Evening. At 4 Devonshire Street, London W1. Tel 0781 357 4699 for details

'THE LEGACY OF HOPE' HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY, 2010



AJR service at Belsize Square Synagogue

Guest speaker Dr James Smith, Co-Founder of the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, emphasised the value of such testimonies as the AJR's *Refugee Voices* audiovisual project. At the time of the Holocaust, he said, 'Ordinary people did not do enough. Governments did not do enough. We put barriers up, saying "It's a Jewish problem!"'

During the service, which was led by Rabbi Rodney Mariner, AJR members lit memorial candles and Kaddish was recited.

Glenda Jackson, Member of Parliament for Hampstead and Highgate, said: 'This year's theme, "The Legacy of Hope", was made human and tangible by those I was privileged to meet and speak with. Of course, we were in a synagogue which came into being by the dedication and commitment of Jewish refugees, who, having escaped the horrors of Nazism, gave thanks by never forgetting those who had not. Thank you for all the work you and your association have done, and continue to do, providing that "Legacy of Hope" every day.'

Liverpool HMD



AJR table at Liverpool Town Hall HMD event: (from left) Inge Goldrein, Kay Fyne, John Goldsmith, Susanne Green

As part of the Liverpool HMD activities, many AJR members attended the Service of Remembrance at Liverpool Town Hall,

at which Dr Lola Barnett recalled how she came to be in this country.

Hana Eardley, Inge Goldrein and Sonia Strong spoke to the Liverpool Schools Parliament at the Town Hall Council Chamber, attended by over 200 pupils representing 40 Merseyside junior schools. A school presented Sonia with a book of poetry and artwork by children in Theresienstadt entitled *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. The schoolchildren included their own artwork.

The Liverpool AJR Holocaust Memorial Book, including the DVD *Never Forget*, has been distributed to 100 Merseyside junior and secondary schools. *Guido Alis*

AJR represented at other HMD events

As well as the AJR's service at Belsize Square Synagogue and the national event at Guildhall, AJR staff attended a number of events, including: City Hall in London, hosted by Mayor Boris Johnson; Brent Town Hall; a special commemoration of Czech Scrolls at Westminster Synagogue; a Glasgow City HMD event, attended by members of the Glasgow AJR Group at which the AJR's Scotland Memorial Book was on display; East Renfrewshire HMD with AJR member Eva Clark; events in Newcastle and at Northumbria University; a Cheshire HMD event; and events at the London Jewish Cultural Centre and the Imperial War Museum.

Additionally, the AJR helped find speakers for commemorative events in Darlington, where Sylvia Hurst was the guest speaker, and in Cardiff, where Charlotte Jones addressed an audience at the university student union.

Staff were also present at HMD events sponsored by the AJR: the Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue and Finchley Reform Synagogue educational events, and the Glasgow Holocaust lecture.

Centre for German-Jewish Studies



Freddie Knoller with University of Sussex Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Farthing
Holocaust survivor Freddie Knoller was guest speaker at the Centre for German-Jewish Studies' HMD commemoration.

Paul Balint AJR Centre
15 Cleve Road, London NW6
Tel: 020 7328 0208

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Wednesday 17 March 2010

Sue Mariner
'My Career in Music'

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 1 March 2010

Dr Margaret Brierley
'Non-Jewish Zionism and Filo
Judaism and Unknown History'

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March Afternoon Entertainment

Mon	1	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue	2	CLOSED
Wed	3	Mike Marandi
Thur	4	Geoffrey Strum
Mon	8	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	9	CLOSED
Wed	10	Paul Coleman
Thur	11	Jane Rosenberg
Mon	15	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	16	CLOSED
Wed	17	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	18	Stefan & Arjan
Mon	22	Kards & Games Klub – Monday Movie Matinee
Tue	23	CLOSED
Wed	24	Chris Sausman
Thur	25	Mock Seder Lunch
Mon	29	CLOSED – PESACH
Tue	30	CLOSED
Wed	31	CLOSED – PESACH

The film *Daring to Resist: Three Women Face the Holocaust*, by Martha Goell Lubell and Barbara Attie (USA 1999), was shown and a panel discussion chaired by Professor Christian Wiese, Director of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, took place.

The event was introduced by the Mayor of Brighton and Hove, Councillor Ann Norman and University of Sussex Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Farthing. It was supported by the AJR.

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deaths

Brooke, Henry Died suddenly 5 February 2010. Deeply mourned by his wife Heddy, family and friends.

Sutton-Steiniger, Sonja It is with great sorrow that the family of Sonja Sutton-Steiniger, widow of John Steiniger, announce her death at home in Bayswater, London, at the age of 93. Sonja died as she wanted to, in her own home surrounded by everything she loved. The cause of death was heart failure. She will be greatly missed by her daughter, son-in-law, grandson, granddaughter and her recent great-granddaughter.

In Memoriam

3-4 March 1943 Martin and Lottee Reichenback and the other 281 Dresden Jews deported from Hellerberg camp and murdered at Auschwitz on this night.

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For Northern members, alternatives are flying, train or driving

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PM Tour of Gorbals, where Jewish immigrants settled on their arrival in Glasgow

or

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EVE Dinner with entertainer at Glasgow New Synagogue

Monday 10 May

AM Trip to Loch Lomond with lunch

PM Burrell Collection – contains over 9,000 works of art

EVE Dinner at L'Chaims Kosher Restaurant

Tuesday 11 May

AM Garnethill Synagogue and Jewish Archives

PM Kelvingrove Art Galley and Museum Holocaust Section with Deborah Haase

EVE *Laughter in the Rain* – a musical by Neil Sedaka at The Kings Theatre

Wednesday 12 May

AM Giffnock Synagogue and Queens Park Synagogue Stained Glass Windows by John Clark.

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OBITUARY

Carl Theodore Marx Born 1920 in Frankfurt, died 2010 in London



Theo Marx was a man whose actions spoke far louder than his words: throughout his life he put the needs of family, community and society before his own. His understated generosity touched the lives of everyone he met as well as those of many who never even knew of his existence.

Theo was born on 10 March 1920 in Frankfurt, Germany, the son of Erna and Erich Marx. From the start, he was surrounded by close family ties on both sides and throughout his life it was his profound belief in the importance of family that fuelled his actions.

He was a quiet yet effective man, who hid his light not under a bushel but behind an enigmatic smile, a succession of carefully chosen bow ties, and a love of all things chocolate.

He was 14 when he was sent to school in England. His father, already alert to the threat Hitler posed, decided that an English education would be best, though it was three years before the family moved and Theo travelled back and forth during school holidays.

One of Theo's early strengths was an ability to accept life's events without bitterness. This stood him in good stead when he arrived in 1934, as a boarder, at Mill Hill School in north-west London without having previously spoken a word of English. He thrived, winning prizes for essays in history *and* learning a number of other languages. He became fluent not only in English and French – and, of course, German – but also spoke creditable Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and Italian. His parents finally arrived in London in 1937, settling in Wembley Park, which meant a return to normal family life, though he remained a boarder.

Not only a natural linguist but also a gifted historian, Theo was expected to qualify as an engineer, so he switched to matriculating in science and gained a place to study mechanical engineering at City and Guilds College (now Imperial College).

During his three years at City and Guilds, he made life-long friendships and was elected secretary of the student union. He remained involved with Imperial College throughout his life. He was unable to sit for his finals as the hysteria surrounding foreign nationals came to a head two weeks before his exams and he, along with many members of the German-Jewish community, was interned on the Isle of Man. At Onchan Camp he started the English University, teaching English to the internees.

On his release from the camp, Theo was seconded to an aircraft factory and later joined his father, who had started an engineering company, helping with war work. Due to the need to support his father and the family business, he was unable to return to college at the end of the war to finish his degree. He successfully ran the

family business, Erma Limited, until it was sold in 1985. He became an active member and treasurer of his electro-technical trade association BEAMA and was for many years involved in committee work at the British Standards Institution.

Theo's commitment to his German-Jewish heritage and unshakeable belief in community was selfless and multi-layered. He emerged as a quiet, understated leader, supporting the displaced and drawing people together from all over the world.

These qualities led to Theo's becoming deeply involved with the Association of Jewish Refugees. Elected its Vice-Chairman in 1974, he became its Chairman from 1976 to 1994, continuing as a trustee until 2008. He transformed the organisation from one serving only a small and diminishing part of the refugee community into one which continues to this day to serve the changing needs of refugee families. He built up the social services department and chaired the house committees of two of the retirement homes for which the AJR was then still responsible. Major innovations he introduced include the move from Hannah Karminski House and the establishment of the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre.

Following retirement, Theo devoted even more time to the AJR, in 1990 launching the Residential Care Appeal in conjunction with the CBF – a successful project to raise £4 million for 21 new sheltered accommodation units, 13 new rooms with toilet facilities (!), a further 102 rooms with toilet facilities, and 15 rooms to offer nursing facilities. He reduced the age of those on the executive committee to an average of 51, over a generation younger than those in the homes; oversaw the Thank-Offering to Britain Fellowship given annually by the British Academy from monies raised by the AJR; served on and off as Chairman of the Otto Schiff House Committee; and played a substantial role in the *AJR Information*, providing both editorial and technical assistance.

Theo's interest in history and his cultural heritage led him to become an active council member of the Wiener Library, where he could help focus international scholarly attention on the Holocaust and the plight of Jewish refugees. He also helped the community to set up the now thriving Centre for German-Jewish Studies at Sussex University.

Theo played an active role in organising events at the West London Synagogue (WLS) during the war. His gift of being able to connect people found expression

through the junior membership group and their journal *Focus* – an original Facebook – which allowed everyone, in whatever theatre of war they were found across the globe, to keep in touch with each other. Not surprisingly, it was through WLS, at a dance he organised, that he met the woman with whom he would spend the rest of his life, Anne Marie Kohnstamm.

Theo also loved the calm, quiet things of life and was at ease in his own company. He had a disciplined, enquiring mind and a prodigious memory, which, together with his love of order, made him a natural and gifted collector. He spent enjoyable years compiling comprehensive collections, all allied to his interest in European history – from stamps of a number of European countries, rare coins and historical atlases to ephemeral items such as bus tickets and tube maps. His cataloguing was Victorian in its scope and endeavour and there was a determination in him that enabled him to see any task through. Theo's love of unity and order was both a comfort and a motivation for him, but he liked nothing more than to share these gifts and skills with others.

His exceptional ability to catalogue, coupled with his sociability and interest in people, found their ultimate expression in the compilation of his wife Anne's family tree. Spanning 600 years, it included nearly 4,000 people, encompassing every continent and including detailed historical notes on each period, a history of the Jews in every location, and individual snapshots of everyone featuring who they were, what they did and how they lived. The enterprise took Theo and Anne around the world and was completed before the advent of the internet. Theo was also on the committee of the Leo Baeck Institute and the results of this research are lodged with the Institute in New York. He subsequently organised an international reunion in New York and Germany for over 140 family members.

Theo's beliefs in continuity, tradition and community translated into a lifelong commitment of giving back, improving the society around him and drawing people together. But through all his achievements he preferred to let others take the limelight, taking pride in their achievements rather than his own.

Theo took pride in tradition, his culture, community and the wider society and his profession but, above all, in his family, his children (Caroline, Eleanor and Geoffrey), and his seven grandchildren.

He was truly a man who understood that everything – no matter how small – was part of a bigger whole.

Theo died peacefully in his sleep, after a long illness, at Hammerson House in north London on 6 January 2010. His work and his gifts will live on through all those whose lives he touched.



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



Believing in miracles a necessity

At a recent event entitled 'Any Questions', organised by the British Zionist Federation and the Israel, Britain and Commonwealth Association, a panel replied to questions submitted in advance by members of the 400-strong audience who had come to Jerusalem from all over Israel.

Most of the audience and the panel consisted of representatives of Israel's English-speaking population. The attraction was the presence of the British Ambassador to Israel, Tom Phillips, on the panel. The questions, which were read out by Zionist Federation Chairman Andrew Balcombe, related to a variety of subjects which concern Israelis today. These included the negotiations for the return of kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit, Iran's nuclear ambitions, the attitude to and repercussions of the Goldstone report, and concern about the growing influence of NGOs both inside and outside Israel.

But the question which stirred up the most interest (and reactions from the audience) was the one which related to the growing groundswell of anti-Israeli opinion among both the Jewish and the general public in the UK. Ambassador Phillips tried to play down this trend,

citing the consistent support of the British government for Israel irrespective of which party is in power, the strong trade links between the two countries, and Britain's advocacy of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian problem. Nevertheless, he could not deny that there was a constant and consistent process of denigrating, demonising and delegitimising Israel in the international press, including that of Britain.

When the ambassador referred explicitly to 'the occupied territories', several audience members protested, while others tried to suppress the hecklers. Miri Eisin, former international media advisor to ex-Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and a member of the panel, rebuked the protesters for failing to display the courtesy to the speaker that the situation required and order was quickly restored.

Ambassador Phillips expounded his view of what influences the tenor of opinion in the UK, noting that the British generally tend to support the underdog, and this is how they now perceive the Palestinians. This was in stark contrast to the general perception of the situation prior to the Six Day War in 1967, when the British public tended to sympathise

with Israel. Now, the David and Goliath situation is regarded as having been reversed, and the climate of opinion in Britain has shifted accordingly.

This reminded me of what a woman in the street said to me in London last summer, when a pro-Palestinian demonstration went past us. 'What's it all about?', I asked. 'They just want their own country, dear,' she replied. Ah, if only things were that simple.

But to get back to the panel discussion. Replying to the question about the NGOs, Ambassador Phillips said that Israel should be proud of their activities, as they constituted proof of Israel's openness and freedom of debate. He stated that he had visited Hebron as the guest of one of these and had been deeply impressed by the work they were doing in bringing information out into the open. He added that even if in some instances the information they provide is distorted by others and used for anti-Israeli propaganda purposes, their existence is nonetheless admirable.

Of course, no such discussion could end on a serious note, so we were treated to a final question about what each member of the panel would change in Israeli society. The overwhelming majority was in favour of improving the driving habits of the average Israeli. But let's be realistic: that is not very likely to happen. However, as Ben-Gurion once said, anyone in Israel who doesn't believe in miracles isn't a realist.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *continued from page 7*

thought he could trade the land of a far-away people for peace and kept waving a piece of paper about – and look what happened.

If my learned and honourable friend had been a subscribing member of the C of E and had gone to church last Xmas, he would have heard the congregation sing the carol 'Once in Royal David's City', confirming that Jerusalem was built by a king of Israel and is, and has been since time immemorial – irrespective of who occupied it quite illegally – Jewish. All of it. To change the words to 'Once in Palestinian East Jerusalem' just doesn't sound right. *Frank Bright
Martlesham Heath, Suffolk*

Sir – With respect to Peter Phillips's characteristically good-natured article (February), I would like to speak up for those he calls 'Jewish do-gooders' who 'wash their dirty linen in public', on the principle that it is better to wash it in public than not at all.

Peter Phillips asks if Israel has the right to defend itself 'even if, sometimes, with more violence than might be necessary'. The second half of this question can be left to those with a belief in fair play.

The answer to the first part is that, like any other country, Israel has the right to defend itself if it is not oppressing another people and expanding its territory at their expense, which is what it has been and is now doing. No, I do not want to wipe Israel off the map. I want to be able to envisage a post-Zionist Israel in which cultural Zionist and other Jews can live alongside Palestinians in a secular state (as Peter Phillips himself says) in which everyone is free to practise their religion and in which there would be no state religion. This would actually fulfil the terms of the Balfour Declaration, which promised a 'home' – not a state – for the Jews.

This may sound like pie-in-the-sky, but it is not better to work towards than the reality of

present-day Israel, which often makes many of us ashamed to be Jewish?

Nicholas Jacobs, London NW5

Sir – Recently the IDF and the Israeli police have increased their war against human rights activists. Non-violent protests in the East Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah against the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes by extreme right-wingers have met with a violent and disproportionate police response. The IDF have responded with insufferable harshness to protests against the separation fence in the Palestinian villages of Bil'in and Na'lin.

The Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* writes: 'What the police are doing in Sheikh Jarrah and what the IDF is doing in Bil'in and Na'alin should disturb every Israeli, whether right-wing or left-wing, because this is about the very nature of the regime of the country in which we live.' *Peter Prager, London N12*