

## Wilfrid Israel and the AJR

In June 1943, a circular from the AJR, then barely two years old, informed members of the death of one of the Association's closest friends, who had since 1933 worked devotedly for the Jews of Germany: 'We have suffered a great loss when the clipper [airliner] on which our friend Wilfrid Israel was returning from Lisbon was shot down over the Atlantic.' Even amidst the daily toll of lives taken by the war, Israel's courage and selflessness gave his death a special resonance for the Jewish refugees: 'Wilfrid Israel died on a mission connected with the rescue of Jews from the Continent of Europe, a mission which he had undertaken unhesitatingly and fearless of personal danger and sacrifice. His memory will be kept alive amongst us.'

Wilfrid (Wilfried) Israel was born on 11 July 1899 into a Berlin Jewish family that owned the famous department store N. Israel. Berthold Israel, his father, had married Amy Solomon, granddaughter of Nathan Marcus Adler, Chief Rabbi of Britain, and Wilfrid was born in London. He grew up in Germany, but remained deeply conscious of his dual British and German-Jewish heritages. He retained something of the fastidiousness and aloofness that characterised both the British and the German-Jewish upper-middle classes, as can be seen from his appearance in Christopher Isherwood's novel *Goodbye to Berlin* (from which the film *Cabaret* derives) as the fictional character Bernhard Landauer.

Israel was also an energetic philanthropist, supporting humanitarian causes including the Jüdische Waisenhilfe (Jewish Orphans' Relief), which was involved with the children's village of Ben Shemen in Palestine. After 1933, this led to his efforts to secure the transfer of Jewish children to Palestine; working with Lola Hahn-Warburg and others under the aegis of the Berlin-based Children and



Wilfrid Israel

Youth Aliyah, he was instrumental in the immigration of an estimated 10,000 children before the outbreak of war.

Israel took an active role in the Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden, the body set up to represent German Jewry after the Nazi takeover of power. In particular, he played a leading part in the Hilfsverein der Juden in Deutschland, which, working under the Reichsvertretung, was responsible for assisting the emigration of German Jews to countries other than Palestine. Having dual British and German nationality gave him a measure of security, and he was almost unique in the contacts he enjoyed with influential figures in both Britain and Germany working for the rescue of Jews. In this capacity, his services to German Jewry were invaluable.

His courage emerges vividly from an account by the British aristocrat Sir Michael Bruce, who met Israel and Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck when he went to Germany on a secret mission in November 1938 at the request of Anglo-Jewish leaders, to report on the regime's anti-Jewish measures. In his autobiography, *Tramp Royal* (1955), Sir Michael recounts how, as the Crystal Night pogrom raged, he

found a friend who had places on his private plane for Baeck and Israel and begged them to leave for safety: 'Wilfrid said quietly: "I will go when Dr Baeck goes." Dr Baeck looked at him and smiled, and said: "I will go when I am the last Jew alive in Germany".' Bruce recorded admiringly: 'The world is a better place for having given birth to two such gallant men. I am proud and honoured to have worked for a brief space at their sides.'

On 9 November 1938, the department store N. Israel was attacked and wrecked by Nazi thugs. According to an account in *AJR Information* of November 1958 by Werner M. Behr, Wilfrid ensured that the store's Jewish employees were able to leave unharmed, then 'went around and calmed the remaining employees'. His next concern was those Jewish employees and their relatives who had been arrested individually and sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Fearless in face of the Nazis, Israel used his connections to obtain their release. The Nazi authorities were willing to free Jewish prisoners who were ready to emigrate immediately. Discovering that the camp commandant was eager to take cash in return for the release of such men, Israel saw to it that the requisite sums reached the Nazi, who also did his Christmas shopping at the department store (for free). Interestingly, a list of Jewish employees at N. Israel includes the name 'Behr, Werner'.

In May 1939, Israel left for Britain, where he continued to act as a contact between the British authorities, the relief organisations set up by Anglo-Jewry and the Jewish refugees. In 1940 he assisted refugees who had been interned. Then, in March 1943, he flew to Lisbon on a mission for the Jewish Agency for Palestine, to arrange the departure to

*continued overleaf*

**WILFRID ISRAEL** *cont. from page 1*

Palestine of Jewish refugees who had reached Spain and Portugal but were trapped there; behind this lay the hope that if these Jews left, it might be possible for Jews from Nazi-occupied territories to be admitted in their place.

The first part of Israel's mission was crowned with success: on 1 February

1944, the Portuguese liner *Nyassa* arrived in Haifa with some 750 Jewish refugees from Portugal aboard, the largest group of refugees to reach Palestine directly from Europe in wartime. But on 1 June 1943, BOAC Flight 777 from Lisbon to London was shot down by the Luftwaffe with the loss of all those aboard, including Wilfrid

Israel (and the actor Leslie Howard). In his memory, a Wilfrid Israel Hostel was built in the village of Ben Shemen; the German-Jewish settlement of Kibbutz Hazorea was bequeathed his collection of Asian art, now housed in the Wilfrid Israel Museum.

**Anthony Grenville**

## Lost cities of the Mediterranean

**B**BC Radio 4 recently broadcast as its Saturday Play *The White Cham-eleon*, Christopher Hampton's semi-fictional dramatisation of his childhood years in Alexandria, which came to an abrupt end with the Suez crisis of 1956. The play is a moving account of a ten-year-old child's affection for a wonderfully colourful city and its engaging inhabitants, set against the background of the final ebbing away of the British Empire.

The play revolves around the boy Christopher's relationship with the family servant Ibrahim, who runs the household with a disarming combination of loyalty and fondness for the family's drinks cabinet. Ibrahim's attachment to the Hamptons transcends the politics of the time, which pitted the militant nationalism of Nasser's Egypt against the remaining strongholds of British power in the country. In the end, Britain's ill-judged Suez adventure, aimed at toppling Nasser and reclaiming the Suez Canal, succeeds only in destroying the last bases of British influence in Egypt, and at the same time severs the links between the Hampton family and the faithful Ibrahim. Christopher is sent back to school in England and his parents are expelled from Egypt.

The principal lost world is not that of British imperial grandeur, for which Hampton has scant regard, but an Alexandria that was a melting-pot of Mediterranean cultures, languages and nationalities: Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, Maltese, Italians, French, Armenians and Lebanese, with a Sahib class of British. Alexandria before 1956 was one of those luminously polyglot, multicultural cities dotted round the coastline of the eastern Mediterranean that have, one by one, been reduced to monocultures by the spread of nationalism.

A multi-ethnic city like Smyrna, where Greek, Jewish and Armenian communities lived amidst the majority Turks,

became the Turkish city of Izmir after the triumph of Turkish nationalism in the wake of the First World War. Salonika, once a city composed of Jews and Greeks in equal numbers and ruled by Turks, became a monoculture when the occupying Germans deported the Jews to the death camps during the Second World War; but it had started to become a Greek city when it came under Greek rule in 1912 and was exposed to Greek nationalist intolerance of other ethnic identities. A similar process has affected such legendary names as Antioch and Aleppo and, to a large extent, Istanbul (which had been Constantinople for a millennium and a half), as well as Beirut.

Copts, Kurds, Circassians – they all had their place in the fertile amalgam of the Levant. But above all the cities of the eastern Mediterranean provided a place where Jews could mix freely with other groups and make their own particular contribution to the multicultural richness of the whole. The Alexandria of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* (1957-60) or E. M. Forster's history and guide to the city (1922) would be unimaginable without the communities of Jews and Armenians, whose presence gave the city its own inimitable charisma – now displaced in the name of a charmless Egyptian nationalism. London was fortunate in attracting some of Alexandria's Jewish community after their expulsion from

Egypt in 1956.

The great Alexandrian poet C. P. Cavafy, a Greek, created his mythical visions of Ithaca and Alexandria in the city of his birth. Now, after the events that dispatched the young Hampton back to a dreary and xenophobic Britain, myths like Cavafy's are all we have left to remind us of the vanished cultural multiplicity that gilded the Mediterranean past.

**Anthony Grenville**

### 'CHURCHILL'S GERMAN ARMY'

The National Geographic Channel screened the documentary 'Churchill's German Army' in April 2009. Appearing in this unique film were members of the AJR who fought heroically for Britain during the Second World War. We will be showing a screening on **Thursday 21 October 2010 at 2.00 pm for 2.30 pm at Pinner United Synagogue 5 Cecil Park, Pinner**. To reserve your place, please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 £2 charge for refreshments

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

## Germany and the Germans: some reflections

Although I had the misfortune to be born in Germany, I consider myself lucky nevertheless to have been born in the city of Hamburg. Rightly or wrongly, I have always had the feeling that in Hamburg Nazism had less of a hold and that anti-Semitism was less rife there than in any other major city in Germany. I am unaware of Jewish people having been physically assaulted in Hamburg as they were elsewhere in the country. On Kristallnacht, in the part of the city where I lived we were completely unaware that anything untoward was happening. I was not woken up to the fact until I arrived at the Talmud-Thora-Schule, next to the main orthodox synagogue, the following morning. The building of the Tempel, the liberal synagogue, incidentally, survives to this day, complete with Hebrew inscription – doubtless, one has to say, for no other reason than that it was considered potentially too useful a building to be destroyed!

I left Hamburg on the very first Kindertransport and returned, in British uniform, in time to celebrate VE Day there. Some time later, I encountered a good many pre-war 'Aryan' friends and acquaintances, notably my still oldest friend. His family's attitude had been exemplified by the fact that the first thing one saw on entering their flat was an Imperial German flag! His father had insisted he go with me to the local swimming pool, although, probably unbeknown to me, we were no longer allowed to visit it. I clearly recall being politely told about this by other boys there – not being in any way accosted or thrown out but merely warned that I could get into serious trouble.

A lady friend of a friend of my mother had been due to visit England in the summer of '39 but her visit was cancelled due to the obvious imminence of war. My mother's friend meanwhile

managed to escape to England and my mother entrusted her with jewellery to take along. The dear lady carried the package of jewellery with her wherever she went throughout the war years and duly handed it over to me.

Having joined the army in a spirit of aggressiveness towards Germany

and everything German, many of us Jewish refugees soon mellowed in our feelings.

(My mother and many relatives perished in the Holocaust.) Indeed, I have yet to meet a German refugee member of the British forces, subsequently stationed in Germany, who continued to retain the antagonism we all started out with.

A thought I have had for some time will doubtless provoke controversy. There were, of course, two quite different groups of Jews living in Germany: Jews who happened to be living in Germany

and Germans who happened to be Jews. What action, I wonder, would members of the latter group in particular have taken had Hitler and his gang perpetrated their atrocities 'only' against some other group – gypsies or homosexuals, for example? In South Africa there were, fortunately, notable Jewish anti-apartheid activists. I am ashamed to say that, while hopefully not actively encouraging it, there was certainly a considerable proportion of the Jewish population who were quite happy to condone it.

One recognises that it is impossible to imagine that anything like Nazism or the associated violent anti-Semitism could ever have been possible in this great country where we had the good fortune to find refuge. It is not difficult, however, to think of at least two European countries where a Hitler might well have gained power and where his evil deeds might well have found as many eager participants and a population which would largely have condoned it.

One more aspect which I have not

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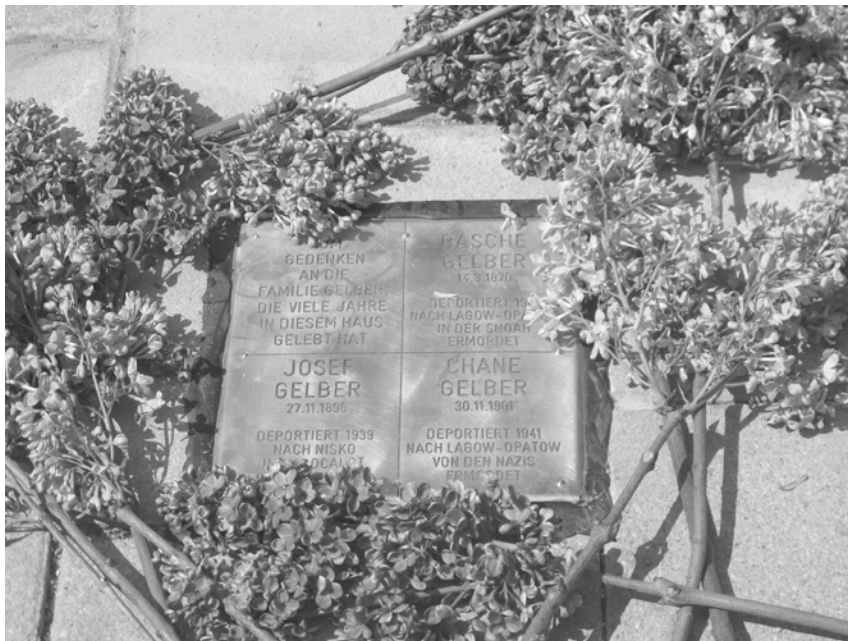
seen mentioned: Germany was, after all, quite a young entity, made up of many much smaller countries which happened to speak the same language (more or less!). In other respects, they are probably as diverse as the English, the Scots and the people of Wales. While it is undoubtedly true that all of Germany, and indeed Austria, accepted the Nazi creed to a greater or lesser extent, one wonders what proportion of the most ardent activists were Prussian.

John D. Phillip

## 21 Neubaugasse

Although we never spoke about it to each other until very recently, several members of my family, including myself, never felt comfortable in German-speaking countries, always looking at old people suspiciously. That was the case until very recently when my brother's family and mine were in Vienna. This time we saw very few old people so did not look at the locals with discontent.

Before 1938 there were 200,000 Jews in Austria, 180,000 of them in Vienna, where they constituted 10 per cent of the population. In some districts or parts of districts such as Leopoldstadt, 50 per cent of the population were Jewish. Our family, the Gelbers, lived from 1917 until their deportation at 21 Neubaugasse in Vienna's 7th District. Neubaugasse was a very Jewish street. Unfortunately, only a few people nowadays are aware of the fact that the Neubau



district was, after Leopoldstadt, the second largest Jewish settlement in Vienna. We know from many a personal history that members of various religious and cultural backgrounds lived closely and peacefully together here. They came from all parts of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, went to the same schools, drank in the same coffee houses, and did their shopping in the same stores. And many of these stores had Jewish owners, like the then very elegant department stores Herzmansky and Gerngross in Mariahilferstraße, just around the corner, which contributed to Vienna's image as a metropolis. In many firms Jews were employed by non-Jews and *vice versa*. Many famous Jewish artists, musicians, actors, singers and writers lived here and were highly esteemed. Number 36, across the street, was the centre of the then booming film industry and was not only the seat of numerous film-related firms and production centres but also of a coffee house correctly named Filmhof.

Hardly anybody foresaw that this prosperous life and peaceful togetherness would end abruptly and that Jewish fellow citizens who lived in this house and in many other houses in Neubaugasse would be expelled, deported and murdered. Stores were demolished and their owners dispossessed. It is unimaginable what atrocities man can inflict upon man.

It is also unimaginable that Austria did not attempt fully to remedy this injustice once the Holocaust had come to an end and ask forgiveness, and that it took decades until one finally began to reappraise this darkest chapter of the history of mankind.

We were in Vienna for a *Stolpersteine* ceremony to honour the lives of my grandmother Basche Gelber, Aunt Chane and Uncle Josef, who were murdered in the Holocaust. Unveiling commemorative plaques where they are publicly visible on the pavement outside the apartment in which they once lived serves as a permanent reminder of the members of our family, who were subjected to the most atrocious injustice, and will be a permanent warning to be prepared to nip possible new threats in the bud. Permission to place the stones had to be obtained not only from the municipal authorities but also from the present owner of the building and the current residents of the apartments and took quite some time.

Co-ordinating this visit with all our

children was not easy for my brother Paul or me as three of our five children either live or work abroad. However, Friday 7 May 2010 was a beautiful spring day and all ten of us, including Alan, my partner, congregated on the pavement outside 21 Neubaugasse.

What amazed us was the number of people who joined us on the pavement of a quite busy road – occupants

of the nearby apartments, passers-by, schoolchildren and a very inquisitive Israeli lady who interrupted the proceedings to find out what was happening! We had thought it would just be a family affair with Dr Elisabeth Ben David-Hindler, who founded the *Stolpersteine* project. However, she was accompanied by the deputy district head councillor of Neubau, Madeleine Reiser, who was not born until after the war had ended. She acknowledged that Austria had lost a great deal

and believed that Austrians were still suffering for what they had inflicted on their Jewish fellow citizens. A class of schoolchildren read texts they had prepared and placed lilac – ironically my mother's favourite flower – round the stones. The children have also sponsored stones for people from a family in which no one survived. One of their inspirational teachers told me it was an honour for them to join us on our very special day. All the students have to learn about the Second World War and the Holocaust because, she said, it was their duty to take care that what had happened to our family and six million Jewish people would never happen again. When I spoke in tribute to our murdered ancestors I was aware of the emotion it invoked. The occupant of the apartment where my mother grew up not only came to the ceremony but said his wife would take care of our stones and keep them clean. To our surprise, he invited us all home for refreshments. The apartment has been maintained in

*continued opposite*

## ‘Somehow yesterday became today’: Return to Little Bramingham Farm

**W**ith so many negative stories about our refugees who were ill-treated at the hands of their employers, I would like to share my happy memories of the first two years I spent at Little Bramingham Farm.

I came to this country on 28 August 1939, a week before war broke out. I was lucky to get a visa via the Zionist movement. On our arrival, we were allocated to a kibbutz in Tringirith but, when war broke out, we were farmed out to Einzelstellen and Jewish children and pregnant women took our place in the kibbutz. So it came about that following an interview with Miss Abbiss, the housekeeper, I went to Little Bramingham Farm as a maid. We were still members of the kibbutz and, as it wasn't too far, Miss Abbiss took me back to visit on several occasions.

The house lay in a beautiful stretch of gardens with a little private wood at the back which was a carpet of bluebells in the spring. The cowshed was very near us and I remember the foreman bringing fresh milk every morning. The eggs we ate were still warm from being

under the hen and our vegetables were from our vegetable garden – but the most important thing was that I was treated and cared for with humanity and compassion. The farm belonged to a widower of about 60 who was very kind



The author outside one of the cottages on Little Bramingham Farm, July 2010. Horace Brightman was one of Cilly's employers

and fair. Miss Abbiss, who was 26, was patient and sat with me every evening teaching me English. She took me every month to the town hall in Luton to write my precious 25 words sent via the Red Cross to my family. I worked with Miss Abbiss, learned how to cook and set an English table, and did general light housework. I spent two happy years at the farm. It had always been my wish to

go back and just see where I started.

Then, after 70 years, the opportunity arose. For that I would like to thank the AJR. I am lucky that my social worker, Maxine Weber, at the request of Volunteer Services' Head Carol Hart, had asked me on one of her visits if I would like a volunteer to come and visit me. As I liked the idea of meeting new people, I welcomed the suggestion and so it was that I met Mike Say. Having visited me several times, he asked if there was anything special I would like to do and so my wish to go back to the farm materialised.

Little Bramingham Farm house was now a home for the elderly and, having made the necessary enquiries, we drove from London to the farm near Luton. But everything had changed beyond recognition except the house itself. There it stood, the beautiful Tudor building which from the outside looked exactly the same as when I was there. I felt very emotional: somehow yesterday became today. Inside, it had been vastly modified and it was difficult to really orientate myself.

The manageress of the care home was very interested in my story and I showed her and her colleagues photos of how the farm used to look. She took me all over the house and we were invited to return for lunch with the residents and give a brief account of my life on the farm, which we did a few weeks ago. It was well received, with some residents asking me questions which I did my best to answer.

For me, it was a very memorable time then and now and I will always treasure how lucky I was to have been with such good people. I do think that it shaped the rest of my life to be positive and count my blessings. After those two important years, I moved away to Gloucestershire to train as a nurse, a course I completed successfully.

*continued*

a time capsule by its present occupants and we could all envisage our family living there in the 1930s.

Many ordinary citizens of Vienna born after 1945 are now living in apartment buildings in which Jews once lived and feel a deep sense of shame about their history. Many have sponsored stones for people who at one time lived in their building and take care of them. Our three *Stolpersteine* outside 21 Neubaugasse are the symbolic gravestones of our Gelber family, who have no known graves. Both present and future generations can reflect on the past and learn to come to terms with it. Walking round Leopoldstadt, where my father's family had lived, on our last evening in

Vienna, I saw a man kneeling on the pavement. He had been cleaning a stone outside his building and the irony of the situation was not lost, knowing how the Jews in Vienna had been made to clean the pavements with toothbrushes. Apparently two weeks before our ceremony was due to take place, the entire pavement outside 21 Neubaugasse had been dug up, but the district engineer gave his word that the work would be completed in time.

We all left Vienna feeling at peace, having experienced a great deal of kindness and feeling very proud to be descendants of those who had lived and died there.

Judith Gordon

Cilly Haar



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### 'UNTIMELY DEMISES'

Sir – Anthony Grenville's wide-ranging article 'Untimely Demises' (August) cleverly takes us from contemporary Britain into German history, as far back as 1888. The resignation of David Laws as an opening device rivets our attention to a recent political event. He suggests that 'Laws with his experience of the financial world ... had seemed to be an almost ideal candidate for the post [Chief Secretary to the Treasury] until a scandal arising from his private life brought him low' (emphasis added). This is a cruel epitaph for the man who was chosen for his specific experience to 'bring down the British government's budget deficit'.

In the opinion of a number of insightful and honest political commentators, and indeed of myself, Anthony Grenville's view sadly reflects the prejudices of the wider community. It is very well documented that the financial and indeed banking world is ruthless in its homophobia, and political careers were never helped by honesty about same-sex orientation. No wonder that David Laws, in order to pursue his career, should have been forced, it would seem, to internalise these prejudices and to have had to deny both to himself and to the world that the landlord to whom he paid rent was, as the press have insisted, his 'sexual partner'. The 'scandal' arguably attaches itself to *The Daily Telegraph* and the press in general who give a voice to the prejudices of the wider community. And it is this wider community which was indeed 'brought low', using Anthony Grenville's words.

Interestingly, the recent Kindertransport survey gave no option in its questionnaire but to declare one's status as being in a 'civil partnership' or same-sex partnered. The authors of the survey, it would seem, could not tolerate the thought that as a refugee one was not either married or widowed. We refugees should know about prejudice and intolerance and we have an obligation to show understanding to others who have suffered so cruelly from persecution.

*Edward Mendelsohn, London W11*

### THE FREE GERMAN LEAGUE OF CULTURE

Sir – I found Anthony Grenville's article (September) intriguing. In the late 1960s-early 1970s, I attended the Leipzig Trade

Fair on a regular basis. One evening I received an invitation to dinner at the press club – although I had no connection with any branch of the media. I was intrigued to find present a large number of fellow refugees who had returned to what was then the GDR and held important positions within the East German press, radio and TV. It has to be said that they were not overly interested in my media input but rather nostalgically wanted to hear about happenings in mainly the Swiss Cottage area and whether Cafe Cosmo was still the haven it had been. My responses did not allay their curiosity.

*Herbert Haberberg, Barnet*

### BRINGING BACK MEMORIES

Sir – Your article about the late Edmund Wolf was of special interest to me as I used to work for and with him after the war in the German Features Section of the BBC in Bush House, where some of his scripts were used in the broadcasts to Germany. He was always very exact and perhaps a little bit too serious, but otherwise it was a pleasure to work with him. Thus your article brought back many happy memories for me.

I vividly remember the Free German League of Culture as my best friend at the time, Marion Grau, joined and wanted me to come with her, but I refused as I had heard it was mainly a platform for Communists. She met her future husband, the lawyer Hans Einhorn, here and they both went back to Germany to rebuild it with their own hands! Later they ended up in East Germany, where she was not as happy as her husband as she missed London so much and actually came to visit us there as well as in Canada.

By the way, I still love your Journal, especially the articles by Dr Anthony Grenville, which I always find interesting and stimulating. I also love 'Letter from Israel'. *Kitty Schafer (née Kaufmann)*  
*Toronto, Canada*

### ALBANIANS AND THE HOLOCAUST

Sir – In her thought-provoking article about the Albanians rescuing Jewish refugees from Nazism (September), Natasha Korn states that the Albanians acted in this way 'when the rest of the world (excluding Sweden and a number of brave individuals) acted in the opposite way.'

As Sweden had not been invaded by the Germans (they did not need Sweden since the Danish and Norwegian coasts were 'Fortress Europe's' defence against Britain and America), the question of risking one's life to help Jews did not arise in that country. It was the Danish people who helped their Jewish compatriots and the Jewish refugees who had found asylum in Denmark to escape to the safety of Sweden when the Germans, three years into the occupation, decided to deport the Jews of Denmark. In this rescue operation, organised by the Danish resistance, the entire population at every level of society was involved as the Danes – not unlike the Albanians – simply would not tolerate what the Germans had in store for fellow Danes.

The story of the fishing vessels ferrying Jews to Sweden (my father and me included) is well known, and the welcome we found in Sweden from the people and the authorities deserves gratitude – but was no more than Scandinavians would expect from one another. Our fellow Jews in Norway were not so fortunate.

*Walter E. Goddard, London SW7*

Sir – Albania proved the only country that would have granted us asylum in 1938 when, along with all other aliens, we were expelled from Yugoslavia at short notice after five very productive years in that country (Yugoslavia having been our first country of exile on emigrating from Germany in the summer of 1933).

We were fortunate in that Britain granted us permission to settle here at what seemed almost the last minute. One of my mother's uncles, long settled here, had come to our rescue. So, fortunately, we didn't have to avail ourselves of Albania's offer. *Margarete Stern, London NW3*

### RECOVERING FAMILY PROPERTY

Sir – I am writing to ask other readers of your magazine whether anyone has tried to repossess properties in Poland previously owned by their families and with what success.

My brother and I have identified and located a house, workshops and grounds where our grandparents lived until their disappearance around 1942. Over ten years ago we engaged lawyers to assist us in our repossession of the site and to gain the benefits of any rents payable by the current occupants. It has been a long struggle through the courts and we have not reached a final outcome.

But we have read of similar instances where other families have been successful in recovering their family's property and we would like to compare notes and see if we can pick up useful guidance.

If any of your readers have any helpful information could they write to us at Endymion, 476 Eccleshall Road South,

Whirlow, Sheffield S11 9PZ or email charles@grunwerg.co.uk.

*Charles Grunwerg, Sheffield*

### 'LOSING THE SYMPATHY VOTE'

Sir – On returning to the UK from Zichron Yaacov, where I live when not in the UK, I read Peter Phillips's piece 'Not the Israel I knew' (July). Initially, it registered no more than any number of diatribes critical of the Jewish state. It seemed in its initial empathy for Israel to carry the well-worn gentile stereotype of the Jew facing extinction, the brave new state fighting for its existence and its survival with the odds against – David and Goliath on a national scale. Who, even among the gentiles, could be unsympathetic? The liberal, enlightened and educated looked on with pity, as they had in the 1930s and 40s, at the inevitable destruction, but were also somewhat comforted by the consistency of the historical narrative of the persecuted Jew about to meet his end.

It didn't play out like that. Israel survives and becomes stronger. And, with that role reversal, loses the sympathy vote. And none of us should shed a tear at that.

However, at that point I realised that, despite his name, our Peter is a Jew. So I do care about his views. And am astonished at his naivety. Oxford University was where he learned that what cannot be seen (God) does not exist? That religious Jews should not have the vote? That parts of Israel should be *judenrein*? Extraordinary, is it not, how all the liberal, pluralistic claptrap goes out of the window where Jews are concerned!

Wake up all you Peters, Israel is the national home of the Jewish people. Even if they wear hats. It is ours. It is strong. It is imperfect. It is real. It is ours because God (yes, Him!) gave it to us. We have very little claim to it but that! Lots of different Jews live there and contribute in their own way, including those embarrassingly religious types who prick our subconscious and teach our children that they are Jews and what that means. And I know it goes against the grain of the last 2,000 years but, if we are threatened, we are going to spill the other guy's blood before he gets at our kids.

And Peter, we do not give a monkey's what your gentile friends think. And nor should you. Why? Because we can do without their Holocaust memorials, their sympathy, their 'proportionate' response, their regrets, their homilies, their encyclicals, their approval and their respectful attendance at our graves.

*Amnon Needham, Zichron Yaacov, Israel*

Sir – As always, the 'Letters to the Editor' in your September issue represent an interesting part of the Journal and, as always, they stimulate thought and provoke argument. Whereas I do not disagree

with Lionel Blumenthal's criticism of Peter Phillips's views, I think he is going too far when referring to the 'betrayal by so many Jews, blinded from reality by the leftist ideology that pervades our political and cultural environment'. It is a biased statement and claims that his reality is the only correct one.

I also doubt his assertion that most of the world is prepared to let Israel go under. My feeling is that most of the world is prepared to let *any* peoples go under. It's still a world of extreme nationalisms, underpinned by huge dollops of bigotry, greed for power and enjoyment of violence – a world of global voyeurism.

I am grateful for Alex Lawrence's reference to Col. Kemp's statement at a UN human rights session although I tend to believe that this Israeli attack [Gaza] was a mistake. As one of the thousands of 'refugees from Nazi persecution', human rights are the all-absorbing issue and I do not believe that they can always be enforced by peaceful means. The nationalistic governments of the UN member-states are, however, not always prepared to take the actions necessary to enforce UN decisions. That, I consider to be a major factor which started Israel's problems. When the UN created Israel it failed to protect the new state from the immediate war waged on it. This failure has continued to the present day.

Nicholas Jacobs goes to another extreme in asserting that the Palestinians were also victims of the Holocaust. That is surely turning the facts upside down. Did not the Mufti of Jerusalem call for a holy war against Britain in 1940 and organise Arab Waffen SS units? The Arabs living in Palestine looked at the Nazis as an ally against the Jews and so did their neighbours.

I cannot agree with Ruth Barnett's statement that 'So-called races are inventions: they are cultural groups'. To me the word 'race' refers to the descendants of a family. It infers genes. That is what makes us Jews and that is why we should be concerned for other members of the family when they are suffering.

But perhaps there is a little hope for peace on the horizon at present?

*Eric Sanders, London W12*

Sir – I take exception to Peter Simpson (September) describing the UK as fascist. This is utter rubbish! Also, I read with interest Bryan Reuben's article in the same issue about the effect of criticism on Israeli policy. Even President Obama has not managed to stop the settlements, although I wish they would listen to him.

*Nicholas Marton, Bromley*

### INTERMENT EXPERIENCES

Sir – Reading your articles about internment in 1940, I was 16 at that time and, together with my father and brother, was interned

in the Hutchinson Camp on the Isle of Man for about four months. Many years ago I recounted my experiences on the BBC website 'WW2 People's War' when they asked persons to recall any experiences of the wartime years.

I had forgotten all about my contribution to the BBC website when, about a year ago, I received an email from a man who had read my article. According to his email, he was brought up in Douglas on the Isle of Man. He told me he would pass our camp every morning on his way to school and that when the guards weren't looking he would throw stones at the internees over the barbed-wire fence as his 'contribution to the war effort'. He had the grace to end his email by saying that he hoped that none of the stones had hit me.

*Freddy Godshaw, Welwyn Garden City*

### DUNERA PASSENGERS

#### 'SAVED BY ILL-TREATMENT'

Sir – Re David Kernek's letter (September), I was an RAF pilot on Coastal Command seeking out U-boats. We were warned that often after a depth charge attack on a U-boat all sorts of debris appeared on the surface, giving the impression that the boat had been sunk. In fact, some U-boats carried such debris in a special water-tight chamber. It was released whilst the boat dived to a safe depth in the hope that the attacking aircraft would go away. This did happen from time to time.

*Alex Lawrence, Marlow*

#### 'THE OTHER GERMANY'

Sir – With reference to the article 'The other Germany' by Erwin Schneider (August), a few years ago I took my wife, two sons and their families to Czechoslovakia, where I was born and spent my early years. We visited Prague, Terezin and my home town of Teplitz, some 15 miles from the German border. This was, of course, Sudetenland, the German-speaking part of the former republic.

Standing outside my grandfather's old house, I was photographing my family against that background when I heard voices speaking German just behind me. It was two couples, with one man explaining in a loud voice that he had once lived just up the road from my grandfather's house. The man asked whether I too had come from the town. 'Yes,' I said, 'That was my grandfather's house.' He replied 'And when did they throw you out?' He was, of course, referring to the Czech ethnic cleansing of the local German population in 1945-46 across the border into Germany. I said 'In 1938.' He looked puzzled and then asked 'Why then?' My answer was 'Because I am a Jew and you threw us out!' His, and his companions' faces were a picture I will never forget.

*Bob Norton, Nottingham*

*continued on page 16*

# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

It is just a single exhibit within a one-room installation in the **British Museum** but it sounds a powerful historical message. **Akan Drum: The Drummer is Calling Me** is curated by playwright and broadcaster Bonnie Greer, whose empathetic installation is the story of the music of the transatlantic slave trade. The drum itself, clad in deerskin, is now a silent witness to its own development of African-American music and its effect on the contemporary musical scene.



The Akan Drum

The Akan Drum is considered one of the **British Museum's** most fascinating pieces as well as its oldest African-American object.

The drum was first introduced to the slave ships from west Africa to Virginia in about 1735. Slaves were kept below deck in disgusting conditions from which up to 20 per cent died before reaching shore. In the belief that fresh air would be good for them, the slaves were brought up to deck and made to dance to its rhythm in a process known as 'dancing the slaves', although they were not allowed to own a drum, or anything else, themselves. The Akan comprise 45 smaller ethnic groups in present-day Ghana.

The right-hand wall of the installation is devoted to the trafficking of west African slaves to the Colony of Virginia

and all their ensuing suffering and displacement. On the left wall you read the story of their music. It is accompanied by large video footage of titans like Martin Luther King, jazz giants like Miles Davis and pop and rock stars like Little Richard, Elvis Presley and Shakira, all of whom can trace their influences back to the slave experience. In fact, from the provenance of the Akan Drum we discover the massive influence of African and African-American music on most popular music from the twentieth century onwards, including jazz, blues, R&B, pop, ballad, reggae, hip hop and rock 'n' roll. Slaves would call to each other on the plantations in what became known as call and response; this developed into gospel, protest music, blues, tap, etc. Even klezmer, whose repressive roots were planted in the *shtetls* and ghettos of middle Europe, is said to have felt its influence. The drum sometimes incited rebellion on the plantations, particularly one in 1739 in Georgia, from which it was subsequently banned.

London's **Ben Uri Gallery** has bought a watercolour of the Second World War, **Interrogation**, by German artist George Grosz, who challenged Germany's decadence in the 1920s by graffiti art, which was later deemed 'degenerate' by the

Nazis. Grosz, not himself Jewish, is considered one of the twentieth century's most influential artists, who used graphic satire as a political challenge.

Daphne Todd has won this year's £25,000 **BP Portrait Award** for a painting of her dead mother, having pipped to the post a record 2,177 international applicants. She describes her work, *Last Portrait of Mother*, as 'a striking image – paintings of dead people are always affecting'. Others who painted death include Leonardo da Vinci, Claude Monet and Lucian Freud.

## Annely Juda Fine Art

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING  
AND SCULPTURE

## REVIEWS

### Valuable insights into Islam

#### FAITH AND POWER: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by Bernard Lewis

Oxford: OUP, 2010, 240 pp. hardback

The publication of another volume of articles and lectures by Bernard Lewis is an appropriate occasion to pay tribute to this eminent historian. Lewis, now at Princeton, was born in London's Stoke Newington district in 1916. He became an expert on Islam and, excluded from Arab countries by being Jewish, became the world expert on the Ottoman Empire. He subsequently became 'perhaps the most articulate and learned Zionist advocate in the North American Middle East academic community' (Joel Beinin, Professor of History and Middle East History, University of Stanford).

He fought bitter academic battles with Edward Said and Noam Chomsky. He took the view that the backwardness of the Islamic world was not due to racism and colonialist imperialism but was a largely self-inflicted condition, resulting from both culture and religion. The decay of Islamic societies was primarily the by-product of internal problems such as 'cultural arrogance' rather than external pressures like the Crusades.

In the hope of maintaining good relations between the religious communities, it is customary to play down the differences between Islam and the other Abrahamic faiths. In these articles, written between 1987 and 2009, Lewis explains the differences. Christians and Jews alike have narratives that have involved disappointment and persecution. Jesus died on the cross and his followers were a minority under Roman rule. They needed to compromise with civil society to survive: 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.' The Talmud laid down that 'dina de-malkhuta dina', the halakhic rule that the law of the country is binding; in certain cases, it is to be preferred to Jewish law. Muhammad, in contrast, achieved worldly success during his lifetime. He became head of a state, soon to grow into an empire. Hence in Islam, church and state are one and the division of powers is meaningless.

This combination of imperialism and religion was a success for over 1,000 years. Under the mediaeval Arab caliphate, and again under the Persian and Turkish dynasties, the empire of Islam was the most powerful, creative and enlightened region in the world. By the sixteenth century, it had spread throughout much of the Middle East, North Africa, Spain and the Far East. Its decline began with the disastrous failure of the second siege of Vienna in 1683. From then on it was downhill all the way. The final indignity was the break-



up of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, leaving Muslims without even the pretence of an Islamic empire.

This defeat was felt particularly deeply in societies that placed such emphasis on shame and honour. There were two responses. One group felt that Islam had failed to modernise. For example, Kemal Atatürk tried to turn Turkey into a secular state. Others felt that there had been too much modernisation. This view was promoted by the Ayatollahs in Iran and the adherents of Wahabi Islam, led by the Saud family in Saudi Arabia. A return to a 'purer' form of Islam was called for, lacking, one fears, the tolerance and creativity of historical Islam.

The perceived humiliation of the Muslim world, however, led to a greater emphasis on the tradition that the pious are obliged to fight to regain any formerly Muslim lands that have been lost (*dar al-Islam*) and subsequently to conquer the lands held by the infidel (*dar al-Harb*). Wars waged against the infidel are the will of God, while opposition by the infidel is the work of Satan. Thus, Muslim terrorism is praiseworthy, while Israeli responses are illegitimate, a viewpoint that astonishingly is increasingly accepted among Britain's non-Muslim population.

Lewis traces this line of thinking through to Osama bin Laden and his campaign against 'Jews and Crusaders'. Bin Laden considers, not unreasonably, that the Soviet empire collapsed because of the Islamic *jihad* waged by the guerrilla fighters in Afghanistan. Having destroyed one of the two last great infidel superpowers, he feels that dealing with the pampered and degenerate Americans will be so much easier. He may well be right.

Inevitably, this collection involves a certain amount of repetition and is better dipped into than read in its entirety. Lewis's earlier book, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (2003), provides a more coherent narrative, but this one still provides valuable insights.

Bryan Reuben

## Theatre

### Four short plays by the Bard of the East End

#### BIBLICAL TALES

written and directed

by Steven Berkoff

New End Theatre, London

A modern take on four seminal Old Testament stories is bound to be edgy and multi-layered if the playwright is Steven Berkoff. The world premiere of these four short plays by the Bard of the East End begins with a libidinous **Adam and Eve**, in which Mark Frost's cheeky-chappie Adam encounters the sparky Eve (Sarah Chamberlain), both in simulated nudity.

Then comes the seductive, silver-tongued serpent (Anthony Barclay), whom Eve rather fancies. Audacity and philosophy fascinate her more than the lewd advances

of the first man on earth, who certainly behaves as though he is just that. Knowledge appeals to Eve: it is tantalising and even erotic and, in a new-born world where physicality slowly surrenders to more subterranean passions, Berkoff offers a witty and refreshing view of humanity, short of a fig leaf or two.

An elegant, dancery quality animates this play just as it does **Samson's Hair** and both represent the author-director's interest in physical theatre. Here Chamberlain in a blue dress is the femme fatale Delilah. Her outbursts of desire for Samson – 'My wonderful, handsome Jew!' (Matthew Clancy) – intensified by their morbidly passionate love ballet, are designed to draw the secret of his strength from him. The hyped-up dialogue is pure Mills and Boon until the comedic touch – a massive pair of scissors – which appears from nowhere and with which Delilah proceeds to shear off his locks, which hold the secret of his power. With Samson now bald and vulnerable to Philistine attack, she counters his protestations of faith with a declaration of loyalty to her own people. Yet Clancy conveys, in this lugubrious dance of death, that Samson is already blind, moving without will and surrendering both to a woman whose truth he doesn't see and to a faith which permits him no questions.

In **David and Goliath** Saul (Alex Giannini), a Mafia-boss type, urges the young David (Anthony Barclay) to take a pot shot at Goliath. This, Saul suggests in a cynical reference to David's love for Jonathan, will assert his masculinity. David counters by calling Saul a dirty old lech. 'Let's get real and talk about taking out Goliath,' says Saul, adding 'The winner takes Gaza!'

I found **Pharaoh and Moses** the most powerful of the plays and the one rightly chosen as the finale. Moses (Alex Giannini) sits guru-like on a prayer rug, pleading for his people as the plagues' effects are mimed by Pharaoh (Mark Frost) and his servant or his son (Matthew Clancy). But finally, after the death of that first-born

### 'Of Exile and Music: A Twentieth Century Life'

by Eva Mayer Schay

In the review in last month's issue of the Journal, we omitted to mention that the book can also be ordered at [www.eurospanbookstore.com](http://www.eurospanbookstore.com) at a cost of £18.95.

son, it is Pharaoh's impassioned praise of the nature gods of Egypt and his damning tirade against the God of Israel which offer a chilling prophecy for the Jewish experience to come.

Designer Lotte Collett and lighting designer Mike Robertson deserve praise for their deceptively simple black-white set, which reflects the moods and colours of each story. John Chambers's haunting score intensifies the atmosphere.

Gloria Tessler

## The Jews of Klatovy

**J**ews in the History of Klatovy is the title of a newly published book by Milan Strnad, a teacher in that town in south-west Bohemia.

The book is dedicated to 'Our fellow Jewish citizens, particularly those murdered in concentration camps and on death marches' and covers the history of Klatovy Jewry from its beginnings to the present day.

The author has undertaken extensive research, contacting survivors and collecting their memories. This hard-back book contains almost 300 pages, including documents and beautiful illustrations, and is a private publication at the author's personal expense.

I feel privileged to have been asked to translate into English a couple of personal memories for Vera Schaufeld, a personal friend of the author.

For me, Milan Strnad is a 'righteous gentile' in the category of Stephen Smith and his family at Beth Shalom in Nottinghamshire.

For further details of the book, please contact the *AJR Journal* on 020 385 3070.

Hana Nermut

## MAY 1939

by John Buck

*i.m. Susanne Franciska Buck (née Schaefer), 18 January 1927 – 27 March 2002*

I can only imagine what it was like joining the Kindertransport at 12 years of age, leaving your parents fearful in Berlin.

Your earliest memory of England? A British sailor, bringing you a mug of tea and a Bath bun for breakfast when you docked in Harwich.

Then a night in London at the home of Hedda and Eugene, your mother's erstwhile colleagues on *Die Dame*.\*

Yes, Eugene, that old rascal, who never tired of reminding me that he had once slept with my wife.

Only joking, of course.

Though why they made you share a bed with him we could never understand.

Next morning, the train to Ayr. You in the care of the dining car attendant,

met at the station by elderly strangers, your faithful guardians for the next six years.

But that first night you cried yourself to sleep not yet knowing about stiff upper lips.

\**Die Dame* – a popular magazine for women published by Ullstein Verlag

## THE PIONEERING SPIRIT

Joining the Pioneer Corps was easy. In the old days they emptied the prisons for recruits; in 1941 they raided internment camps. This is how I came to be digging ditches in Scotland in 1942 while living under canvas, admittedly on the estate of the Earl of Home, which afforded me some excellent fly fishing. When I got to know him much later, after he had resigned as prime minister, I confessed to poaching in his rivers. He was very good about it and even inscribed one of his books for me. No Sassoon wrote poetry about us. Instead, when I shot a rabbit for the pot while on guard duty, I narrowly escaped being court-martialled.

Escape is what most of us had in mind – to Hollywood, to join the commandos, to OCTU (Officer Cadet Training Unit), into the RAF. (The Senior Service was a tough nut for Jewish boys from Vienna to crack.) The greatest escape artist of all was Arthur Koestler, with whom I briefly overlapped in 251 Company of the Pioneers. He must have been, by a Hungarian mile (which is, of course, longer than the standard mile), the most unpopular soldier in the British Army. His proficiency in avoiding the hardships of army life became the stuff of legend, chronicled in a magisterial biography which appeared last year. Koestler, having faced a firing squad and every conceivable hardship of the multiple refugee, had paid his dues and was entitled to swing the lead. He had powerful friends who saw to it that he landed in a cushy billet. A man of heroic intellect but hard to love.

Lacking powerful friends and the Hollywood connection I craved, I set about working my own passage to more congenial employment. For no better reason than that my father had been in the artillery – albeit in a different war under a different monarch – I applied for transfer to the Royal Artillery. You can gauge my innocence from the fact that I volunteered for two specialisations which are, after parachuting and the commandos, responsible for the highest casualty rates in training, never mind combat: despatch riding and anti-tank gunnery – so much so that there was an allowance, respectively, of 1.7 and 1.2 per cent fatalities in training. It meant that the officer i/c of the course was permitted that number of 'kills' before having to face a court of inquiry. I got these figures much later from a friend in the War Office, while enjoying the

relative safety of the Burma campaign.

The despatch riders' course was actually quite jolly – if you survived it. We each had our own BSA 500 cc motor cycle, governed down to a maximum speed of 50 mph. So the first concern was to find a mechanically adept fellow rider able to remove the governor and restore the original speed. Having inherited a fairly clapped-out model, I never got it to do more than 80 mph but

*The greatest escape artist of all was Arthur Koestler, with whom I briefly overlapped in 251 Company of the Pioneers. He must have been, by a Hungarian mile (which is, of course, longer than the standard mile), the most unpopular soldier in the British Army.*

some of my more ambitious colleagues managed to 'do the ton'. We were taught how to negotiate rough terrain, ford shallow rivers, direct military traffic, motor cycle maintenance, and a host of other skills, the most important of which was to remount your bike without complaint after falling off, which happened several times a day. Some of us became reasonably proficient and in the end quite daring. Moonlight motor cycle races became a favourite, strictly forbidden, pastime; the chaps who found ways of accounting for the petrol illicitly consumed were the types who usually got secondment to Bletchley, working on breaking down Enigma.

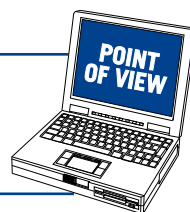
The fun ceased abruptly when we had to put our new skills to practical use, which was the escorting of military convoys, speeding ahead of them, posting oneself at the next junction, and directing them to their destination. This was done by waiting until the last vehicle had passed, then overtaking the convoy, racing ahead to the next point,

and starting all over again. This was all right during daylight hours, though never less than dodgy, because the guns and other trailers had a tendency to swing, or were made to swing by our lorry drivers with a perverted sense of humour. At night it became a deadly game. We were issued with route maps and torches but not allowed to use the latter in the blackout. The lorries had no rear lights and pinpoint headlights. The territory was always unfamiliar. If there was no moon, one had to overtake a long line of vehicles without any idea of how much room there was between them and the ditch or trees lining the side of the road. If one fell off, one either hit a tree or finished up under the carriage of a 17-pounder anti-tank gun. Any rider who claimed he wasn't scared was a liar. The men who drove the big army lorries couldn't see either, but at least they were sitting in their cabs, looking down on us. 'Bloody boy racers,' they called us but we got to the pub before they did, and pulled all the birds.

Anti-tank training easily claimed its statistically predicted share of victims. Firing a 6-pounder with its extension tucked under one's arm was not all that dangerous in training, but guaranteed deafness in later life. When they were replaced by 17-pounders, life got easier. What produced the casualties were the sticky bombs, a round ball of explosive on a handle which one was supposed to attach to an enemy tank under cover of darkness and then walk – not run – back to one's vehicle in the 7-second gap before the charge exploded. A totally mad idea; I don't know whether it was ever used in the field. I hope not. What I do know is that many sprint records were broken by unsung sportsmen who did the 100 m in well under 10 seconds before the record was officially recognised.

Officer training provided a brief respite from these hardships although passing out had a sting to its double meaning. My final act of heroism to earn the coveted single pip of a second lieutenant was to run – not walk – up Snowdon in full kit, with a Bren gun on my shoulder, and then – much harder – to run down the other side. The sergeant instructor's encouragement was grudging: 'Come on, you idle cadet, we haven't got all day!' He knew that the very next day he would have to salute the newly-commissioned me.

**Victor Ross**



## With a heavy heart

I aim to be provocative and I seem to be succeeding! Take the August issue. If Marcel Ladenheim has a problem with the fact that I went to Oxford University and he only went to Manchester University – shame! His letter certainly does not tempt me to accept his sarcastic invitation to attend lectures he gives on Israel.

I said in my July article about Israel that it was written with a heavy heart. Rubin Katz wrote to say that my thinking was muddled. But perhaps it is *he* who is muddled. The Israel of today is *not* the Israel that Theodore Herzl envisaged. It is *not* the Israel that was governed by the likes of David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir. Herzl foresaw a secular state. Israel was one until the Haredim and the other ultra-orthodox were given the power they now have. They are not the Zionists that Herzl had in mind. Many are fundamentalist religious extremists, like Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual leader of Shas, who recently called on God to strike down Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinians by a plague. Rabbi Yosef and his followers are making Israel as unpalatable as some of the lands of its Arab neighbours. How are their laws any better than Sharia? What right do they have in wanting to be the only ones to be able to decide on conversion, and on who is a Jew and who isn't? Fortunately, they failed in their quest.

What's more, Mr Katz questioned the newsworthiness of the desire of the Israeli government to build 1,200 houses for the Haredim on disputed land in East Jerusalem: a 'few houses in dispute' would not be news 'except

when it comes to Jews'. Does he not realise that the Israeli prime minister is supporting this highly controversial building programme merely to keep the religious parties in his coalition, and thereby stay in power?

I also wonder why Mr Katz thinks England is 'descending into a third-world country'. If Israel is displaying so much more 'excellence and innovations in the field of medicine, science and technology', why does he not live there?

Mr Ladenheim asked for the identity of my 'new love' if I am no longer in love with Israel. The answer is in his question. My true love is – and always has been – England. It was England that saved me and my family from the Nazis. For that I will always be grateful and loyal to my adopted country. Adopted? I was born in Vienna.

I am glad that the discussion on who is a 'Holocaust survivor' and who is a 'refugee' is continuing. I asked for definitions in the May issue. Personally I side with Annette Saville and the Holocaust Survivor Centre. If you were Jewish and in Nazi-occupied territory on Kristallnacht you are a genuine 'Holocaust survivor'. Furthermore, I think that all of us who had to flee Germany, Austria or other parts of Europe due to Nazi persecution were 'refugees'.

Now to the September issue. Lionel Blumenthal accuses me of 'prejudices'. He does not agree that the Haredim and Yisrael Beitenu are partly responsible for Israel's low status in the eyes of the world. Has he been asleep for the last few years? Why, also, does he maintain that 'a war of annihilation is being

unleashed against the Jewish people and against the state of Israel in the first instance?' Did he dream this?

Peter Simpson of Jerusalem agrees that Israel is not what it was, but puts this down to secularism. Is he not aware that there are more ultra-orthodox in Israel now than ever before? As for his attack on Britain and English law, I cannot think of a country with a fairer rule of law than the British one. Israel? Definitely not.

Frank Bright is obviously a follower of the 'Honest Reporting' website. The British media, he declares, has it all wrong – only what the Israelis say is to be believed. Is he biased or what? He also defends the hanging of the two British sergeants by saying the British behaved badly over the ship *Exodus*. The British *did* behave appallingly, but does that mean that the Irgun had the right to hang two innocent British soldiers?

Thea Valman gives us what she calls 'facts' about Israel – 'facts' again seemingly gathered from the 'Honest Reporting' website. We would all like them to be facts but they are not. They are, at most, her beliefs. They are her wishful thinking.

Bryan Reuben, in his 'Point of View' column, can only respond to my recent disillusionment with Israel by using the word 'tough'. That's meaningless. Interestingly, he agrees with me about Avigdor Lieberman. Not even I would dare suggest that he is 'not fit to be a bouncer in a clip joint'.

After all these attacks, it's good to know I have a highly respected supporter – Howard Jacobson. In an August interview in the *Jewish Chronicle*, he says 'When I see ultra-orthodox Jews stamping all over Jaffa, or when I see them deciding who is a Jew, I think what's happened to the grand dream of Zionism?' Hear, hear.

Peter Phillips

## ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY – OCTOBER

**Mon 4** Aubrey Rose, 'Arieh Handler: A Modest Hero' Club 43

**Mon 11** Dr Marian Malet, 'The Nazi Occupation of Serbia: An Eyewitness Account' Club 43

**Wed 13** Aubrey Rose and John Stanton, 'Jews in Sport'. B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. At Kenton Synagogue Hall, 2.15pm

**Mon 18** Prof Charmian E. J. Brinson and Prof Richard Dove, **Joint presentation of their recent publication *Politics by Other Means: The Free German League of Culture in London, 1939-1946*** Club 43

**Tues 19** Susan Cohen, 'Eleanor Rathbone: MP for Refugees' UCL Institute of Jewish Studies, Chadwick Lecture Theatre, reception 6.15 pm, lecture 6.45 pm. Tel 020 7679 3520

**Mon 25** Jim Burtles, 'My Association with the Military and Hospitable Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem' Club 43

**Tues 26** Lars Fischer, 'The Socialist Response to Antisemitism in Imperial Germany' (book launch), UCL Institute of Jewish Studies, Chadwick Lecture Theatre, reception 6.15 pm, lecture 6.45 pm. Tel 020 7679 3520

**Thur 28 'Joseph Bau: Painting the Hungry'** A talk on the life and art of the Holocaust survivor (1920-2002) by his daughter, along with a wine reception and opportunity to view his artwork. At Wiener Library, 6 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247

**Mon 1 November** David Simmons, 'Inside – Outside: My Aunt's Little Book' 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*

# INSIDE the AJR

## Happy Birthday, Boris, Doris and Martin!



The Essex Group celebrated the birthdays of four members (Boris Chait, Doris Foreman, Martin Karo and Hans Neumann) with a combined age of nearly 340! Renée Tyack gave an emotional reading from her book *They Called Her Cassandra*, the story of her parents' miraculous escape from Leipzig. The meeting may even have discovered a long lost relative when it became apparent that the family name of Frankenberg was the maiden name of member Susie Barnett.

*Esther Rinkoff*

Next meeting: 12 Oct. Howard Falksohn, 'Children of the Third Reich'

## Liverpool Recollections of a judge

With Harold House closed, we are most grateful to Inge and Eric Goldrein for making available their lovely home for our meeting. Having been fed and watered, we were privileged to hear from Margaret de Haas QC, Senior Civil and Family Judge, how her family fled Germany before the war and eventually settled in what is now Zimbabwe. She also regaled us with humorous tales from her early days at the Bar.

*Guido Alis*

## Ealing 'London's First Hotels'

David Barnett told us that London was the first major city in the world to build hotels. The process accelerated, he said, with the coming of the railways and the growth of, and easy access to, London.

*Leslie Sommer*

Next meeting: 5 Oct. Gerald Curzon, 'Jews and the Mind'

## Ilford morning 'a delight'

We celebrated our 8th birthday listening to music from our youth with the help of Alf Keiles. All joined in reminiscing about the old days, while enjoying delicious snacks. The 8 candles on our birthday cake were blown out by our oldest member, Edith Poulsen, and the whole morning was a delight.

*Meta Roseneil*

Next meeting: 6 Oct. Harry Heber, WJR

## HGS Sad exit of Kerala Jews from history

Edna Fernandez told us the original 'black' Jews probably came to south India at the time of King Solomon, whereas the 'white'

Jews left Europe to escape the Inquisition. A once flourishing community of several thousand has shrunk to a couple of dozen old people. Sad exit of another group from Jewish history.  
*Laszlo Roman*  
Next meeting: 11 Oct. Howard Falksohn, 'Children of the Third Reich'

**Welwyn Jewish trades in Regency London**  
On our fifth anniversary, David Barnett told us that by 1800 the Jews were represented in all trades in England and that they dominated textiles and clothing, including two sons of Moses Moses: Moss Bros. Disraeli's grandfather was one of many fur hat traders.

*Alfred Simms*

Next meeting: 14 Oct. Speaker tba

## Glasgow Book Club 'Memoirs of a Geisha'

We spent a delightful afternoon sitting around the table at the home of Marion Camrass discussing 'Memoirs of a Geisha', followed by a delicious tea. A nice way to spend an afternoon.

*Agnes Isaacs*

## Kingston CF Annual Lunch



Alfred Kessler, Gitta Goldschmidt, Joe Allan

Sixteen of us mingled in Susan Zisman's house and garden, discussing both our pasts and current affairs. The Annual Lunch has become a highlight of our AJR calendar. Thanks to Susan for her efforts and to those who provided salads for what proved a gourmet meal.

*Jackie Cronheim*

## Brighton & Hove Sarid Mission accomplished

Godfrey Gould described his visit to the Soviet Union in 1984. His mission, which was accomplished, was to contact Jewish 'refuseniks', including the brother of Natan Sharansky.

*Ceska Abrahams*

Next meeting: 18 Oct. Scarlett Epstein, 'Rescue in Albania'

## Oxford summer lunch

On a showery day at the home of Susie and John Bates in Abingdon, we enjoyed each other's cooking and friendly company. Thank you from all of us.

*Anne Selinger*

Next meeting: 5 Oct. Helen Fry and James Hamilton

## Edgware Jewish trades in Regency London

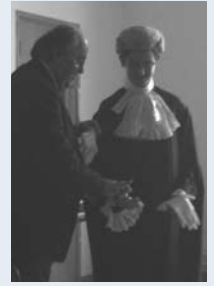
David Barnett had researched his talk in an academic way and we listened most carefully.

*Felix Winkler*

Next meeting: 19 Oct. Mark Menary, 'The Bank of England'

## Dressing for the Bar

Tony Dinkin QC gave the Temple Fortune Group fascinating insight into his work. The highlight of the afternoon though was his description of the items barristers wear as he dressed up Adam, a young AJR volunteer who really does want to become a barrister.



*David Lang*  
Next meeting: 14 Oct. Judy Smith, 'Yoga in the Chair'

## Cambridge Carbon Footprint

A most interesting talk was given by Siobhan Mellon and Bev Sedley of the Cambridge Carbon Footprint organisation on the scale of potential change and individual contributions to avoiding global change.

*Keith Lawson*

Next meeting: 28 Oct. Edna Fernandez, 'The Jews of Kerala'

## Hendon Argentina and immigrants from Europe

The Wiener Library's Howard Falksohn told us Argentina has accepted immigrants from many European countries, particularly Germany. It was very Nazi-friendly during wartime, although there were anti-Nazi Germans as well. Argentina later sheltered many war criminals, including Eichmann.

*Annette Saville*

Next meeting: 25 Oct. Helga Bellingier/Sima Ginsburg, 'Blue Badge Holders'

## Harrogate/York CF Finding our way to the here and now

Meeting at Stefan and Elizabeth Ruff's house within York's city walls, we welcomed new second generation member John King. Yet again we discovered how diverse were the paths by which we found our way to the here and now. Having watched part of the Israeli film *Watermarks*, on the Vienna Hakoah world-beating women's swimming team, we concluded with an amazing array of goodies provided by Elizabeth. We wished Inge Little, who had injured her shoulder, a speedy recovery.

*Marc Schatzberger*

Next meeting: 11 Oct., 2 pm, at home of the Schatzbergers

## ANNUAL GARDEN PARTY



Leeds CF held its annual Garden Party at the home of Pippa and Norman Landey, overlooking the pretty village of Thorner. We enjoyed taking part in a quiz, relaxing and socialising over a sumptuous tea.

*Barbara Cammerman*

Next meeting: 27 October

### Weald of Kent Goodbye to Jane and Max

We said goodbye to Jane and Max Dickson, who were moving from Tunbridge Wells to Taunton to a more convenient property among family and friends. Jane and Max were instrumental in setting up our group in 2003. We owe them a very big thank you for bringing us all together and wish them all the very best for the future.

Inge Ball

Next meeting: 26 Oct. Harry Heber, WJR

### Café Imperial The story of a dagger

Eight members of our veterans' band were shown a decorative officer's dagger from the German army and heard a fascinating story on how it was retrieved. In the ensuing discussion, it was decided that the government coalition was to blame for the showery weather this August!

Hazel Beiny

### Book Club special guest Pat Kavanagh

At our second Get-together, 15 of us met in Costa Coffee in Temple Fortune with Pat Kavanagh as our special guest. We were fascinated by her latest book, *21 Aldgate*. We also reviewed *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*. Our current book is *The Help* – anyone who would like to join us next time please do so.

Hazel Beiny

Next meeting: 27 October

### AJR GROUP CONTACTS

**Bradford Continental Friends**  
Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

**Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)**  
Fausta Shelton 01273 734 648

**Bristol/Bath**  
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

**Cambridge**  
Anne Bender 01223 276 999

**Cardiff**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**Cleve Road, AJR Centre**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**Dundee**  
Agnes Isaacs 0755 1968 593

**East Midlands (Nottingham)**  
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

**Edgware**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3077

**Edinburgh**  
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

**Essex (Westcliff)**  
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

**Glasgow**  
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

**Harrogate**  
Inge Little 01423 886254

**Hendon**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**Hertfordshire**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**HGS**  
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

**Hull**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**Ilford**  
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

**Leeds HSFA**  
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

**Liverpool**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**Manchester**  
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

**Newcastle**  
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

### North London A really lovely morning

We celebrated our 9th birthday with the usual refreshments, all non-alcoholic obviously. Jane Rosenberg provided the musical entertainment, her singing and selection of songs greatly enhancing the celebration. A really lovely morning.

Herbert Haberberg

Next meeting: 28 Oct. Bernard Ecker, 'Catering for a Laugh'

### A VISIT TO THE NEW JEWISH MUSEUM IN CAMDEN

Belsize Square Synagogue  
Outing  
Monday 4 October

As well as the regular exhibitions, there will be a special exhibition 'Illumination: Hebrew Treasures from the Vatican and Major British Collections'

Meet at the Museum at 11.00 am for introductory talk. There will then be time to explore the Museum.

Lunch may be purchased in the cafeteria at £5.

Cost £5

For further details, telephone Dorothy White on 020 8445 6388

### A pleasant afternoon in West Midlands

Maureen Berger, playing her own keyboard, sang a selection of songs from *Fiddler on the Roof*, encouraging us to join in. We are most grateful to Maureen for a pleasant afternoon.

Philip Lesser

### Lively discussion at Glasgow CF

We met for an afternoon of lively discussion. The topic 'British and/or British-Jewish' was hotly debated. There was such

*continued on page 15*

#### Norfolk (Norwich)

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

#### North London

Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

#### Oxford

Susie Bates 01235 526 702

#### Pinner (HA Postal District)

Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

#### Radlett

Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

#### Sheffield

Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

#### South London

Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

#### South West Midlands (Worcester area)

Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

#### Surrey

Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

#### Temple Fortune

Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

#### Weald of Kent

Max and Jane Dickson  
01892 541026

#### Wembley

Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

#### Wessex (Bournemouth)

Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

#### West Midlands (Birmingham)

Fred Austin 01384 252310

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

### AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Wednesday 20 October 2010  
**Andrea Cameron**  
'The Freedom of the City of London'

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 4 October 2010

**Dr Frank Beck**

'What Kind of Job is This for a Jewish Boy?'

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**12.30 PM ON MONDAYS**

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Monday, Wednesday & Thursday  
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**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS CLOSED ON TUESDAYS**

#### October Afternoon Entertainment

Mon 4	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue 5	CLOSED
Wed 6	TOP HAT ENTERTAINMENTS
Thur 7	Jen Gould
Mon 11	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 12	CLOSED
Wed 13	Simon Gilbert
Thur 14	Mark Rosen
Mon 18	Kards & Games Klub – Monday Movie Matinee
Tue 19	CLOSED
Wed 20	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur 21	Judith Bornstein
Mon 25	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 26	CLOSED
Wed 27	David Peace
Thur 28	William Smith

**Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups Co-ordinator**  
020 8385 3070

**Myrna Glass, London South and Midlands Groups Co-ordinator**  
020 8385 3077

**Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator**  
0151 291 5734

**Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator**  
020 8385 3070

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

**Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator**  
020 8385 3077

**KT-AJR (Kindertransport)**  
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

**Child Survivors Association-AJR**  
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

## The ophthalmic specialist and the Serb

Sometimes when reading something, you all of a sudden come across the name of someone you knew well, be it ever so long ago, and it's as though a sluice gate has been opened with memories flooding back.

This is exactly what happened when I came across the name of Professor Oscar Fehr, the ophthalmic specialist, mentioned in the article about internment by Alan Franklin of the Manx Heritage Library in the June 2010 issue of the Journal.

I first got to know Professor Fehr in 1943. He and his two daughters, Inge and Kitty, were living at 9 Adamson Road, London NW3, which was then part of the Sachs boarding house (known as 'Pension Sachs' in refugee circles). I was friendly with the girls, especially Kitty. I never knew Professor Fehr had been interned on the Isle of Man.

Professor Fehr was originally from Braunschweig (Brunswick in English), but had made quite a name for himself in Berlin before coming to England. He had a Harley Street practice but was known for never charging a penny to anyone no matter how well off that person might be. People generally gave him some present instead of money. He was also at Moorfields so that's how he made his living.

I once brought to his Harley Street surgery an 18-year-old Serbian lad, the messenger boy at the Yugoslav military mission where I was working part-time. The boy had been blinded in one eye by the overhanging branch of a tree while helping the Partisans in the forests of Serbia and had become very depressed as a result.

Professor Fehr examined him with me acting as interpreter. Again, no fee was charged but the chief of the military mission never even sent a present or any other token of gratitude. The boy was eventually operated on twice at Mt Vernon Hospital in Northwood. After the second operation, when I took him back to Harley Street and a pair of glasses had been tried out on him, he exclaimed 'I can see!' He wanted to keep the glasses but they belonged to the doctor. A prescription was written out for him but, before the new glasses were ready, he was sent back to Serbia. I wonder what happened next. The boy was so hoping to become a pilot.

Margarete Stern

### SECOND GENERATION NETWORK

Wednesday 20 October 2010

At Wiener Library, 7 pm (refreshments available)

Documentary film director Luke Holland, whose mother was a Jewish refugee from Vienna, will be talking about his work in addressing the complex legacy of the Third Reich, including his engagement with the successful campaign to secure compensation for forced and slave labourers. He will also report on his current ambitious project to address a critical gap in Third Reich testimony – a new and urgent initiative that is being developed for research, education and memorial purposes.

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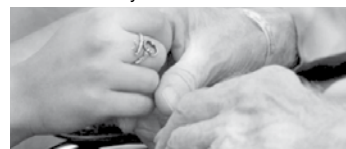
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## OBITUARY

### Gretel Beer, 1921-2010

**M**argarete 'Gretel' Weidenfeld was born into a prosperous Jewish family in Marchegg near Vienna. Her mother, Regina Pisk, died when she was five. Two of her aunts perished in the concentration camps. Her cousin Georg is the celebrated publisher Lord Weidenfeld.



up by the influential Diana Athill, who worked for André Deutsch, and was able to bring out her *Classic Austrian Cooking*, which has been the authority on the subject in English ever since. Her last work, *The QE2 Cookbook*, was published in 1999.

Having become a well-known food and travel writer, Gretel wrote columns in *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sunday Express* and *The European*. She was the author of eight food and travel books, including the titles *Austrian Cooking*, *Eating Out in Austria* and *The Diabetic Gourmet*.

In retirement, Gretel began in July 1993 a monthly cookery column in the *AJR Information* (forerunner of the *AJR Journal*), a column which continued until January 1999. Among the numerous Austrian recipes she provided were *Mohr im Hemd* (rich chocolate pudding), *Guglhupf* (cake) and *Linzer Pasteten* (almond tartlets).

Gretel always retained an interest in things Austrian. She became involved, among other things, in a charity which found homes for orphans and was decorated for her work by the Austrian government.

Gretel arrived in England on the Kindertransport in March 1939 and joined her father, who was living in straitened circumstances. She initially worked as a clerk at Lillywhites department store and as a typist at Rediffusion.

In 1943 she married the late Dr Johannes 'Hansl' Beer, a Viennese lawyer and Catholic convert to Judaism, and, through secretarial work, helped him to pass the English law exams.

Subsequently she moved into advertising and public relations. At the same time, she began to write cookery articles for the *Daily Express* and *Vogue* magazine. Her first cookery book, *Ice Cream Dishes*, appeared in 1952, followed by *Sandwiches for Parties and Picnics* the following year. Her first major break came in 1954, when she was taken

### INSIDE THE AJR *continued from page 13*

a diversity of views that no final conclusion was reached.

Anthea Berg

#### **Cleve Road Argentina a place of refuge**

The Wiener Library's Howard Falksohn spoke about Argentina as a place of refuge for Nazis and Jews alike. The most sordid chapter in Argentina's history was when Peron made Argentina a safe haven for Nazi war criminals. Argentina now has the fourth largest Jewish population in the world.

David Lang

**Next meeting: 26 Oct. Gerald Curzon, 'Jews and the Mind'**

#### **Joint outing to West Lodge Arboretum**

Members from the Edgware, HGS and Radlett Groups enjoyed an enthralling tour of the grounds courtesy of the hotel's managing director. Our guide's passion for the arboretum was evident as he lovingly invested his subject matter

with almost human qualities. A cream tea of the finest quality rounded off the afternoon. Thanks, Hazel and Esther, for a wonderful outing.

**Next meeting: 14 Oct. At home of Judith Rosenberg**

#### **ALSO MEETING IN OCTOBER**

**Bromley CF 4 October. Details being sent out**

**Norfolk 11 October. Lunch. Details being sent out**

**Wessex 12 October. Lunch/Speaker. Details being sent out**

**Wembley 13 October (August meeting cancelled)**

**Cardiff 18 October. Lunch. Details being sent out**

**Ilford 20 October. Outing to Geffrye Museum in Hackney. Details being sent out separately**

**Bristol/Bath 27 October. Lunch at home of Balint-Kurtis. Speaker tba**

## Claims update

### Ghetto pensions update

According to the latest statistics transmitted to the Claims Conference by the German National Pension Board, the total number of cases (claims for a pension for people who worked in a ghetto under German occupation during the Second World War) that have been reviewed stands at 56,432 Ghetto Pension applications. Of these applications, 32,773 have been processed (up from the 30,366 as of April 2010).

A total of 10,958 cases (6,651 approved and 4,307 closed or withdrawn) have been resolved. There are 2,491 provisional deferrals, awaiting further requirements to be fulfilled, such as the payment of voluntary contributions to meet the qualifying period, or the response by the applicant to an inquiry. Applicants are given three months to provide further information requested by the pension offices. We are told that the reasons for a provisional deferral are, among other things, that the victim was not in a ghetto, the ghetto was not in an incorporated or occupied area, the applicant did not regularly return to the ghetto, or the qualifying period (60 months of contribution and/or substitution periods) has not been met. No claim has been rejected to date.

### Bank account scam

Readers are alerted to a hoax email purporting to come from a member of the Independent Committee of Eminent Persons (ICEP), who 'receives and verifies claims of Holocaust victims'.

The recipient of the email is offered the opportunity for a share of several million US dollars as the 'stand-in for the beneficiary of unclaimed dormant accounts' for which there is no heir apparent or next of kin. The recipient is invited to respond by email and provide personal information.

The AJR strongly advises anyone who receives such an email to delete it immediately. If you are unsure of its veracity, please forward the email to us for further advice.

*Written enquiries should be sent to the AJR, Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL or by email to [mnewman@ajr.org.uk](mailto:mnewman@ajr.org.uk)*

**Michael Newman**



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL



### Bird-watching in Jerusalem

As a child in London in the 1950s I enjoyed listening to the radio on the days that I managed to persuade my mother I was too ill to go to school. Somewhere between 'Whistle While you Work' and 'Mrs Dale's Diary' was a programme on which someone with a German accent whose name was Ludwig Koch talked about birds. Today I realise that he must have lugged heavy recording equipment around the British countryside in order to send the sound of birdsong through the ether. It did not seem at all incongruous to me at the time, though looking back it seems almost surreal. Thus, even in the urban wilderness of Willesden I developed an interest in nature.

The Jerusalem Bird Observatory is situated in the geographical centre of the city, behind the government buildings and the Knesset. Tucked away in a quiet corner, it is adjacent to the Wohl Rose Garden and the Sacher Park, and together they form a large green 'island' in the middle of the city. This constitutes a haven for resident birds as well as for the migrating birds proceeding from their winter quarters in Africa to summer homes in Europe (and

back in the autumn). These birds alight there to rest, eat and drink, after having flown hundreds of miles across deserts and/or the Mediterranean Sea.

Bird-watching has long been a popular hobby in Israel, and today it is well-established, with observatories all over the country. The one in Jerusalem now boasts a hide from which one can watch birds as they come to the habitat which harbours the insects and berries on which they feed. In addition, there is a room where visitors can watch volunteers ringing the birds which have been caught in nets that morning. Groups of schoolchildren are taught about bird life, entry is free and the observatory is open all day, so that anyone can come and watch birds whenever they please.

Our group looked on as warblers which had been caught that morning were extracted from the cotton bags into which they had been placed. They were identified, weighed and measured and their age and fat content estimated. Small metal rings were then placed on one leg before they were set free. Unusual or rare birds are photographed, and all the information is recorded and eventually

finds its way onto the observatory's website. We were able to see several black-caps and lesser white-throats, which are relatively common, as well as a rara avis, a wry-neck, which twisted its head around most energetically, as it imitated a snake – its ruse for deterring predators. Hoopoes, which are indigenous to Israel and were recently proclaimed its national bird, prefer open spaces and can sometimes be spotted on the lawns of the nearby Rose Garden.

Over 200 species of birds visit the Jerusalem Bird Observatory each year, with an average of 700 million birds visiting Israel in the course of their annual migration. Some birds make for the Hula area, where many storks, cranes and herons stop to rest. Local farmers and fishermen are not overjoyed about this as the birds wreak havoc on their harvest and catches, but they have been persuaded (or compensated) to bear these losses because of the importance Israel attaches to sustaining the ecological balance.

All Israel's bird observatories are in contact with bird-watching centres elsewhere, including in Arab countries. But why go to an observatory? Just outside Jerusalem brightly-coloured colibris hover above the bougainvillea and jasmine hedge beneath my kitchen window. And, while driving along the highway in May, I saw a flock of cranes over a field, and a lone heron, like me, travelling north.

**Dorothea Shefer-Vanson**

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *continued from page 7*

##### LEGAL MIND NOT NEEDED

Sir – No legal mind needed: 'einmalige Zahlung' (Peter C. Rickenback, Letters, September) means 'one-time payment' – that's all.  
*Alice Fink, Chicago*

##### 'RISCHES'

Sir – I wonder whether you or your readers can advise on the origin of the German-Jewish word 'Risches', meaning anti-Semitism. I have checked with several Yiddish speakers and they didn't know the word.  
*Peter Fraenkel, London EC2*

##### 'NOT AN IGNORAMUS'

Sir – Recently, my wife phoned the Royalty Theatre, a very good small theatre in Sunderland, to ask if they had any productions coming up. The answer

was 'Yes, we have one next week but it contains very strong language!' Any other information? 'Well, it's about two Jewish brothers in Gateshead running a porn cinema.'

'My husband will be interested in that. He's Jewish.' 'He's Jewish? Would you put him on?'

The man's problem was that he was acting one of the brothers and had a Yiddish phrase he could neither understand nor pronounce: 'Kayn amhorets, yingele!' Later, I phoned back with my brother-in-law's translation and pronunciation: 'Not an ignoramus, laddie!'

We went to see the play, *Bones*, by Peter Strangham, who wrote the script of the film *Men Who Stare at Goats*. The first half, in which the brothers were

convinced they had Reggie Kray tied up in the bathroom, was the funniest thing we had seen for some time. The second half went gratuitously gory. The Jewishness, the single Yiddish phrase, the blood, even the porn cinema, seemed to have nothing relevant to contribute – to have been added on as spice.

But there was one pleasant consequence. My brother-in-law presented me with Leo Rosten's *Jays of Yiddish*. He also reminded me that our fathers had had a comic routine which began 'Rachmones (the patient) entered Beth ganev (the ... Hospital). Amhoretz (the chief surgeon) ...'. Unfortunately, neither he nor even, surprisingly, Paul Samet could take it any further. Can any of your readers help?

*George Schlesinger, Durham*