

# AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

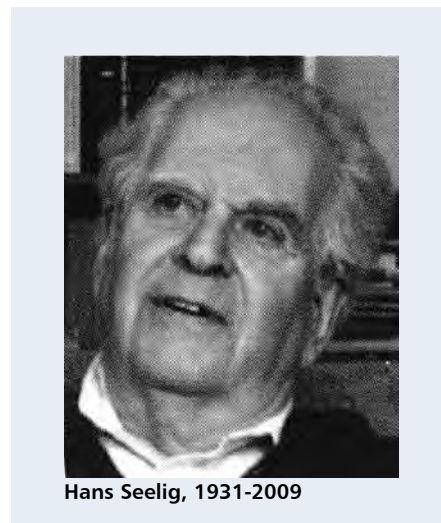
## Club 1943

In December 2011, Club 1943, the venerable and much-loved forum for cultural and political discussion, will be meeting for the last time. Founded by a group of refugee intellectuals, predominantly Jewish, at the beginning of 1943, the Club has been a prominent and distinguished feature of the refugee community in Britain for 69 years, and its weekly meetings, held for many years at Belsize Square Synagogue, have attracted a host of eminent speakers as well as a discerning and loyal audience. But with the death of its last chairman, Hans Seelig, in June 2009, and the inevitable toll taken on the membership by the passing years, it has become impossible to continue the Club's activities. With its passing, the community of Jewish refugees from the German-speaking lands of Central Europe is losing one of its most important institutions. Only the stalwart efforts of Ernst Flesch and Leni Ehrenberg have kept the Club functioning for the past two years.

Those accustomed to the benign, expansive chairmanship of Mannheim-born Hans Seelig could easily have believed that Club 1943 had always been an amiable gathering of refugees, their descendants and British friends, meeting weekly to listen to a talk on a matter of cultural, historical or political interest, followed by discussion, then tea and biscuits. But that was far from the truth. As Jennifer Taylor has shown in an absorbing account of the Club's early years, published in 1995 in *Zwischenwelt*, the magazine of the Vienna-based Theodor Kramer Gesellschaft, it was born in conflict.

Club 1943 came into being as a result of fundamental disagreements within the Free German League of Culture (FGLC), which had been founded shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War to represent the cultural traditions of the refugees from Germany in Britain, and had by 1942 come under strong Communist influence. At a meeting of the FGLC's management board in December

1942, Professor Alfred Meusel, an outspoken Communist, proposed that the FGLC should send a letter to Prime Minister Winston Churchill in support of the call for a 'Second Front now', to relieve the sorely pressed forces of the Soviet Union. This was opposed by the



Hans Seelig, 1931-2009

dramatist Alfred H. Unger, who objected that it was no business of the refugees from Germany to be interfering overtly in British wartime politics. In protest, Unger resigned from the FGLC.

According to Unger, the playwright Hans José Rehfisch, who had also resigned from the FGLC, came to see him on 1 January 1943. When they considered forming a breakaway association, they simply named it after the dawning New Year. The founding members of Club 1943 included some of the cream of the refugee community's intellectual

and artistic talent: alongside Rehfisch, its first chairman, and Unger, these included writers like the latter's brother Wilhelm and Hans Flesch, the painter Fred Uhlman, the journalist and literary scholar Grete Fischer, the theatre critic Monty Jacobs, the lawyer Hermann Friedmann, the theatre owner Arthur Hellmer, the literary historian of the exiled writers Wilhelm Sternfeld and the theatre producer, author and philosopher Karl Wolff (so spelt). Those admitted to the Club early on included the poet Erich Fried, the Goethe biographer Richard Friedenthal, the journalist Hans Jäger and – after a spat characteristic of the Club – the novelist Gabriele Tergit.

Reacting against the politicisation of culture by the FGLC, Club 1943 drew on older traditions of humanism and individual freedom, of culture as an autonomous sphere with its own 'unpolitical' values, and of the democratic heritage of the West that had been suppressed in Germany since 1933. As one of its documents stated around 1947, the Club 'was founded in 1943 by writers, scholars and artists from the German-speaking lands as a free association devoted to the preservation of the cultural tradition' (my translation from the German). The Club continued to emphasise that membership was open to all those of a 'freiheitliche Gesinnung' ('freedom-loving persuasion'). Within that framework of political independence, the Club dedicated itself to its task of maintaining in Britain the cultural

*continued overleaf*

### Ludwig Spiro

It is with deep sadness that the AJR announces the passing of its Honorary President, Ludwig Spiro, at the age of 99.

AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman said: 'We are all deeply saddened at the passing of one of our leading lights and someone whose contributions helped transform and shape the AJR. His values and strong work ethic were an example to all and are evident in how we deliver our services today. Long after his retirement Ludwig passionately continued to follow with keen interest the work of the AJR and we will all miss his genteel, kind and modest manner, his shrewd observations but, above all, his warmth and wit. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends.'

Ludwig Spiro's obituary appears on page 15.

**Club 1943 cont. from p1**

heritage that its members had brought with them from Europe.

The early years of the Club were not without turbulence. It attracted a number of unaligned left-wing intellectuals, a group not renowned for its ability to co-operate harmoniously, and there were numerous internal disputes, arising from both personal frictions and differences over matters of policy. Rehfisch, the first president (chairman), left for the USA in 1946, later returning to Germany, and his successor, Hermann Friedmann, returned there in 1950. Friedmann had played a major role in the P.E.N. Centre of German-speaking Writers Abroad, the London-based organisation of exiled writers from Germany; in 1948 he announced the cessation of his interest in Club 1943, devoting himself to the re-establishment of the P.E.N. Club in Germany.

Under Friedmann's successor, Karl Wolff, a measure of stability was established, and the leading position of the Club in the refugee community assured. His obituary in *AJR Information* of July 1952 stated: 'The death of Dr. Karl Wolff, President of the London "Club 1943" means a grave loss for the refugee community ... In the "Club 1943" he was the leading personality. His numerous talks revealed a widespread knowledge, wisdom and experience. It is in the first place due to his devotion that the Club acquired its position as an intellectual centre for refugees.' In the 1950s, the Club entered on its greatest period, under the chairmanship of Hans Jäger, which continued until his death in 1975. Out of respect for Jäger's achievements, it was only in 1982 that he was formally replaced as chairman by Erwin Seligmann, a rabbi's son who had been a lawyer in Germany.

From the early 1950s, the Club has been characterised by a large measure of continuity: Berta Sterly, who had acted as secretary under both Jäger and Seligmann, succeeded the latter in 1987, and was in turn succeeded in 1993 by Hans Seelig, who had lectured in German at Middlesex Polytechnic. The Club latterly called itself 'an Anglo-German cultural forum', indicating its function as a cultural intermediary between British society and the culture of the refugees from German-speaking Central Europe.

Sources on Club 1943 are sparse: only Jens Brüning – whose death earlier this year robbed us of a leading German authority on refugee writers – has

published a survey of the Club's entire history, which appeared in the 2008 issue of the *Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*. This contains a section on the collective volume *In Tyrannos (Against Tyrants): Four Centuries of Struggle against Tyranny in Germany*, written by Club members and published in London in 1944. Even the venues of its earlier meetings are hard to ascertain accurately. In the immediate post-war years it frequently met at the Jewish Arts Centre at 1 Broadhurst Gardens, NW3 (behind the present Waitrose John Barnes), moving to 57 Eton Avenue (which housed the AJR Club, the Day Centre's predecessor), and then to Hannah Karminski House at 9 Adamson Road (close to where the AJR office was then located), before settling at Belsize Square Synagogue.

The cultural and intellectual distinction of the Club emerges unmistakably from the records of the thousands of lectures and events held under its auspices over the decades and covering the arts, history, literature and politics, as well as issues of Jewish interest and travelogues or slide shows. *AJR Information* of December 1963 celebrated the Club's twentieth anniversary by declaring that it had become 'a spiritual home for all those immigrants from German-speaking countries who, due to their common background, have a common range of interests and a common approach to many problems of our times.'

Club 1943 was above all concerned to meet the high standards of culture to which the refugees from the Continent aspired. In 1955, no fewer than 250 people attended an event commemorating the 150th anniversary of the death of the dramatist Friedrich Schiller, at which Hans José Rehfisch, Wilhelm Unger and Hans Flesch spoke, while the actors Lilly Kann, Li Nolden, Hanne Norbert, Leo Bieber, Gerard Heinz and Friedrich

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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.

## 70th Anniversary Reception for the AJR at the German Ambassador's Residence Tuesday 20 December

To conclude the series of events commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the AJR, H.E. the German Ambassador, Georg Boomgaarden, is hosting a reception in our honour at the German Ambassador's Residence at 22 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PZ on Tuesday 20 December at 3 pm.

Dr Charlotte Knobloch, former President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany and President of the Jewish Cultural Society in Munich, has kindly agreed to speak on 'Jewish Life in Germany Today'.

The event will include the lighting of the candles for the first night of Chanukah. Light refreshments will be served.

RSVP to [membership@ajr.org.uk](mailto:membership@ajr.org.uk) or telephone Karin Pereira at AJR Head Office on 020 8385 3070 if you would like to attend. Spaces are limited.

On acceptance, you will be issued with a postal invitation card. Admission will be restricted to those with an invitation card. The AJR will be providing, for a nominal charge, transport to and from the event for our members.

Valk recited from Schiller's works. A memorial meeting for Albert Einstein was held in June 1955, at which the speakers were Erwin Freundlich, Professor of Astronomy at St Andrews University and formerly a close associate of Einstein, and Henry Fürth, formerly Professor of Physics at the German University of Prague. In October 1955, the Club celebrated the 80th birthday of Carl Jung, and in July 1956 it and the P.E.N. Centre of German-speaking Writers Abroad jointly presented the celebrated German authors Erich Kästner, Marie Luise Kaschnitz and Hermann Kesten reading from their works.

Music was, as always in refugee circles, a prominent theme. A Schubert evening was held in May 1951, with the Austrian composer Ferdinand Rauter, founder of the Anglo-Austrian Music Society, and in May 1956 a memorial concert was held for the conductor Fritz Berend, featuring the Amadeus Quartet among other artists. It is with such world-famous names in mind that we bid farewell to Club 1943.

**Anthony Grenville**

## Relocation of AJR Centre to Belsize Square Synagogue

Opening Lunch and Party,  
Thursday 12 January 2012, 12.30 pm

We are delighted to invite AJR members to a Lunch and Party to celebrate the relocation of the Paul Balint AJR Centre. This event, on Thursday 12 January 2012 at 12.30 pm, will be held at the Centre's new home at Belsize Square Synagogue.

At the same time as re-locating our Centre, we are taking this opportunity to revamp our programme of activities and services. Furthermore, we are delighted to announce a new line-up of regular entertainment which we hope will have broad appeal.

We will, of course, continue to hold our regular monthly Luncheon Club meetings and are thrilled that the former MP and President of the Zionist Federation, Professor Eric Moonman OBE, has agreed to be the guest speaker on Thursday 19 January. The ever-popular Kindertransport Lunches will now be held on the first Tuesday of the month, although the first Lunch will take place on Tuesday 10 January.

Alongside these permanent fixtures in the calendar, members are invited to take part in the monthly Discussion Group and fortnightly Book Club meetings and to enjoy the opportunity to socialise with fellow members. Every Tuesday the Centre will host a Music and Movement class, and on Thursdays a volunteer will give members lessons in using the internet, email and skype so that they can stay in touch with relatives and friends and keep up to date with all the latest AJR news on our website!

Volunteers have also kindly agreed to run an Art Class and a Bridge Club and we will be introducing a dedicated session for Musical Appreciation.

Once a month all members in the North West London area will receive the new AJR Centre Newsletter. The Newsletter, as well as containing details of forthcoming events, will report

on AJR gatherings, celebrations and commemorations, as well as profile members and staff.

A new AJR Centre Planning Committee, comprising AJR members and AJR Head Office and Centre staff, will meet regularly to review the facilities at the Centre and to discuss ways of reaching out to new participants.

We are of course saddened that Susie Kaufman will be retiring as the Centre Manager shortly after we move to Belsize Square. Susie has completed 24 years' work for the AJR at Cleve Road and has become a close friend to many members and colleagues. We will all greatly miss her guidance, expertise and welcoming presence and wish her all the very best for the future.

As has been the case at Cleve Road, we will arrange for transport to and from Belsize Square Synagogue. In addition, members will still be able to purchase snacks and essentials from the AJR shop.

Members attending the AJR Centre will also be treated to a brand new menu of delicious kosher meals prepared by Hermolis caterers, who will also prepare the Meals-on-Wheels. Meals-on-Wheels deliveries will take place once a week on a Friday with a three-course meal costing £7 (plus £1 per delivery). As well as being posted to members in the North West London area, the menu will be available at the Centre, at AJR Head Office and on our website.

**Belsize Square Synagogue is located at 51 Belsize Square, London NW3 4HX, near Swiss Cottage and Belsize Park Tube Stations. The 268 bus, which travels between the O<sub>2</sub> Centre in Finchley Road and Golders Green Station, stops at Belsize Park, near the Synagogue.**

Michael Newman

*At the same time as relocating our Centre, we are taking this opportunity to revamp our programme of activities and services. Furthermore, we are delighted to announce a new line-up of regular entertainment which we hope will have broad appeal.*

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

## Chosen for life instead of death: Kindertransport from Prague to Swanage

March 14 1939. I was 11 and going to England. On a *real* plane. True, I was going on my own – or rather by children’s transport – but my parents had promised the time of separation would be no more than a year ‘at most’. I was cock-a-hoop.

I didn’t tell myself I had been chosen for life instead of death – that realisation came years later. But I knew I had ‘won’ England in the great stakes of emigration. Everybody, but everybody, was attempting to get out of Czechoslovakia. That is to say, my parents and all the rest of the Jews congregated in Prague. And not only those permanently resident there, but those from the German-speaking territories, Austria and the Sudeten (which is where we ourselves had come from), who had fled as Hitler advanced. In that half-year since coming to Prague, my parents had done nothing except chase from consulate to consulate in a vain attempt to emigrate.

Nowadays, when people learn I originate from Czechoslovakia, they tend to congratulate me on the beauties of Prague. But these quite eluded me at the time. There had been, to begin with, my aunts’ flats in large, modern, soulless, decent blocks. Later, when the family was reunited, it was in dingy lodgings. There had been no time for sight-seeing. The most glamorous aspect of Prague to me was Wenceslas Square, its glittering neon lighting, the buffet where, with the drop of a coin, you could choose from an assortment of little open sandwiches, all mayonnaise and titbits.

And now I was going to England. To a place by the coast. And I was going to attend a private school, a thing unheard-of at home. I dare say we would have been equally euphoric had it been any other country. As it happened, it was England. And, as everyone knew, England was populated exclusively by Lords and Ladies or, at least, by ladies and gentlemen.

I myself had a fair idea of what England would be like – hadn’t I seen Deanna Durbin in *Mad About Music* whistling away on a bike at a finishing school in Switzerland? Exchange the bikes for horses and you had England.

My father was more exercised about the fact that I was going to the seaside. What a pity the English Channel had already been swum by a woman. I’d be a mere second or third.

My going was the first piece of luck my parents had had in half a year’s attempt to emigrate. It was to be their last.

My mother had gone to make enquiries about children’s transports, only to be

*I remember departing among a welter of cheer and chocolates. I remember my father running after the plane to take a photograph of it as it took off. But I cannot, try as I will, remember my parents kissing me goodbye. Was there too much excitement to render their leave-taking more than perfunctory?*

told these were full up. We were sitting in our digs and she mentioned the fact to my father. She added with some acerbity: ‘You ought to have gone – everybody feels sorry for you.’ My father’s face was incredibly lined although in happier days he had been known as a joker.

‘Well, perhaps I’ll try again,’ he said hesitantly. ‘Oh, yes, please Daddy, do!’ I begged. And so it was. What my mother, a plump, straight-backed little woman under an optimistically slanted hat, couldn’t achieve, my father, little, thin and lined and accompanied by me, could. ‘Don’t tell anyone I sent you but ...’ We were given Trevor Chadwick’s hotel.

Trevor Chadwick immediately accepted me. What’s more, he got his mother to guarantee for me (until the age of 18). My parents, and indeed I, chose to look on this as a compliment. Now, I am not so sure. I was an incredibly unprepossessing child and I dare say Trevor Chadwick dared not impose me on a stranger.

He certainly was a superman. Tall, handsome and with strikingly Nordic looks. It seems that many others, notably the Quakers and Nicholas Winton, were active in bringing the children out. At the time though, it seemed as if Trevor Chadwick almost single-handedly had killed the dragon and was wafting me away. I was accepted at once. There was to be another interview at which the entire family would be present. This, we realised, was not a little absurd. But, of course, I had to be there, my mother wanted to meet him, my father wasn’t to be pushed aside, and my mother brought my sister along for good measure, hoping her beauty would sway the rule against over-18-year-olds.

We had all dressed very neatly for the occasion. Trevor Chadwick descended the stairs of the grand hotel, dressed in a woollen jersey. We fell over ourselves in

admiration. There’s your real gentleman. He doesn’t need to dress up. But of course Trevor Chadwick could have appeared in a dinner jacket or a grass skirt and we would have been equally impressed.

My stout little mother planted herself firmly in front of Trevor Chadwick, addressing a speech of thanks to his navel. She liked to air her English and I suspect she thanked him ‘from the bottom of my heart’. Trevor Chadwick shuffled his feet.

Before leaving for England, I had seen off a school friend on a previous transport. The children had been gathered in a crowd for the news cameras, while the parents were arranged in a circle around them. The cameras whirred, while the children had waved last farewells to their parents, the parents to the children. I had grinned like a monkey and waved vigorously and had fancied myself a veritable Shirley Temple. Then suddenly the children had gone, and so had the news cameras. But the parents had remained standing. There were tears in their eyes but nobody moved, nobody said a word. Then a voice said: ‘Well, that’s that!’ and slowly they drifted off.

And now it was my turn to leave. I am sorry to confess that my liveliest regret was the absence of those same news cameramen that had so dignified the departure of my school-friend. Trevor Chadwick was there, busy amusing a three-year-old with a glove puppet. My father took photographs, while my mother walked up and down with my sister.

My mother also got talking to another mother (after, I dare say, taking cognisance of that woman’s shoes and fingernails). What’s more, that other mother had a girl of my own age, who, I knew instinctively, was to be an ‘example’ to me. It was regretted that we were not to go to the same place, but we were to write to each other.

I remember departing among a welter of cheer and chocolates. I remember my father running after the plane to take a photograph of it as it took off. But I cannot, try as I will, remember my parents kissing me goodbye. Was there too much excitement to render their leave-taking more than perfunctory?

Certainly, all was happiness and hullabaloo on the plane. Chocolates were passed around, I lent somebody my mouth organ so we had music, and we were much pre-occupied feeling or being sick at take-off and landings. We stopped in Holland and were given the choice of lemonade or milk. We all asked proudly for lemonade,

*continued opposite*

## Alles in Ordnung, Herr Churchill!

Once, as I was telling my son's then girlfriend about my father's wartime service in the British army, I explained that early during the war Jewish refugees were allowed to serve only in the non-combatant Pioneer Corps. She asked me if they were paid at the same rate as soldiers in other parts of the army. I found her question odd and replied that I was sure they were. It was only afterwards that I realised she had thought they might have been placed in the same category as locally enlisted colonial troops. She was quite wrong there. They were, of course, regarded as Europeans. The discrimination was not because of their race but because of their nationality.

What bothered the official mind was that all these people had German passports – they were indeed 'enemy aliens'. I think the people in authority couldn't help wondering if some of the refugees might secretly be hoping for a German victory. Nothing could have been further from the truth. All these volunteers had extremely good reasons for wanting Nazi Germany to be defeated – the sooner the better.

There is something though that the authorities wouldn't have been pleased to know and which I now feel it is quite safe for me to reveal. Whereas the refugees of my parents' generation wanted a British victory, they were far from confident it would ever happen. They were shocked by the amateurish manner in which the British war effort

was being conducted. Used as they were to the motto 'Alles in Ordnung', they were instead confronted by the slapdash 'It'll be all right on the night' approach.

My father experienced an example of this in the Pioneer Corps. He was present at an exercise when some kind of bomb-proof structure was being erected. A layer of cement had been laid down and, after it had set, a heap of copper off-cuts was going to be scattered on top of the concrete before more cement was poured over it. This so scandalised my father that he spoke up to try and prevent this blunder from going ahead.

Unlike the officer, Private Schneider knew what he was talking about. In a previous existence, he had made a good living by knowing a great deal about metals, their use and their precise monetary value. The copper was far too valuable to be used in this manner. Furthermore, the reason why it was valuable was that it was soft and could easily be bent. This quality made it ideal for plumbing, but totally inappropriate for reinforcing concrete.

The officer told my father to hold his tongue and the futile exercise went ahead as planned. What would this private – who couldn't even speak English properly – know about the matter! I expect the officer was using an official army manual and I don't suppose it prohibited the use of copper in exactly those words. (Twelve years later, during my national service, I was well aware of some deficiencies in army

publications.)

I have often wondered what would have happened had my father spoken good English and possessed a civil engineering degree from a British university (he had none from anywhere of course). Much the same, I would have thought. A private publicly telling an officer he is wrong – even when he really *is* wrong – is not good for military discipline.

I hope the structure's bombproof capability was never put to the test. By the end of 1941 things had begun to change. First Russia and then America had come into the war. Victory no longer depended on Britain alone. In Britain, a new professionalism was taking shape. This was accompanied by an increasing number of refugees in uniform being allowed to assume roles appropriate to their talents, irrespective of their passports. The entire war machine became totally focused on winning the war.

An excellent example of this is to be found in the D-Day landings in Normandy in June 1944. A massive overall plan was worked out in great detail with all the components linked together. Each part was thoroughly rehearsed so that everyone knew what they had to do within the entire scheme. In the event, not everything went exactly as intended, but overall the enterprise was an enormous success.

A uniformed refugee might well have said to himself 'Alles in Ordnung, Herr Churchill!'

Erwin Schneider

### *Chosen for Life continued*

like cowboys calling for whisky. Only one boy without shame asked for milk. I looked at him with contempt.

It was dark when we arrived at Croydon. One girl and I went to the 'Ladies' and, alarmed at the sight of knobs on the doors instead of door handles, held the door open for each other in turn. I had visions of being locked for ever in the lavatories of Croydon airport.

We went outside, asked some questions, were pointed to a bus and ensconced ourselves at the back. Suddenly, I heard my name being called. I was not to go on that bus with the rest, it seems, I was to go in a car that was waiting for me. It was at that point that a vast sense of desolation swept over me. It was my real leave-taking of Czechoslovakia. I was pointed to a car. In the front were a husband and wife. At the back, there was one other child from that transport, who was later to become a dear friend to me,

one Hanna Stern. She was only nine and already fast asleep.

Maybe we were being abducted. I cried, softly enough not to alert our kidnappers, loudly enough, I hoped, to awake my sleeping companion. It didn't work. I thought of throwing myself out of the car, making for the coast, swimming the Channel, making my way from France to Czechoslovakia. The thought of the last part of the journey daunted me. I had no money except a lucky half-a-crown piece given to me by Trevor Chadwick or Nicholas Winton. I had no map. I had no French.

We stopped at a roadside café, where I saw my first open fireplace and were given (I believe, warm) milk. I was in no mood at this point to quarrel with milk, however much beneath my drinking habits it was normally. These people were not kidnappers. (They were in fact Hanna's guarantors.)

I was sick throughout the journey.

I hadn't asked them to stop the car, thinking it would be impolite. I believe – and hope – I sicked into my natty little brown hat with red piping.

It must have been a long journey from Croydon to Swanage. Eventually I was deposited at a house, greeted and kissed by a woman who looked to me as beautiful as a model. She must have regretted the kiss in the circumstances.

The next day, it was English daffodils instead of the snow and slush of Prague. It was pretty shells on the Swanage sands. It was also the day Hitler marched into Prague. My coat, eventually, came back from the cleaners, minus my lucky half-crown. My hat was never returned. I wasn't surprised.

Gerda Mayer

*This is an abridged version of an article which appeared in Poetry Review, vol. 88, no. 4, winter 1998-99, 'Requiem for the 20th Century'.*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### A PROVOCATION TOO FAR?

Sir – Peter Phillips (*AJR Journal*, November) may fancy himself as some sort of iconoclast but he hasn't really understood the difference between being truly provocative – which he isn't – and being annoying – which he is. There is so much in his recent offering which is screaming for a response – e.g. his childish observations about *kashrut* and *shechita* – that I'm spoiled for choice. However, let me concentrate on his 'pet hate' of faith schools.

When Mr Phillips makes his wild, unsupported generalisations, I'm not sure which particular faith schools he has in mind. Certainly not the one in which I have spent the past 25 years of my professional life. In my (Jewish) school, we educate our young people to be aware of their dual roles as Jews and citizens of the UK. Our students visit Holocaust sites, Israel, Gateshead Yeshivah and Gateshead Seminary but they also march with AJEX at the Remembrance Parade. They raise funds for a Jewish children's home in Ukraine but they also raise funds for a local hospice and for the victims of genocide the world over. Our graduates lead the Jewish societies of the universities to which they go but they also sit on local councils and in Parliament. Our sports teams – yes, Mr Phillips, sport in a Jewish school! – compete in the Maccabiah Games but they also compete against all other schools and organisations. And our young people lead and host sessions of Holocaust and Jewish education for students from other schools of all faiths and none. Maybe Mr Phillips has experience of other, presumably Jewish, faith schools, which do not function as we do and it is this experience which has caused this outburst. Or, then again, maybe not.

I should, of course, say that much of the above will be true of other Jewish schools too. However, I can't comment because I have direct experience of only one. But what I can say is that our young people emerge from their school as rounded individuals. Their Jewishness sits comfortably on them – it's part of what and who they are. They don't, Mr Phillips, need to announce the fact that they're 'Jewish and proud of it'. It's obvious. It's not a problem for them.

As I write this, I realise that Mr Phillips has won. He's wound me up and got a reaction. But then, when something

irritates you, you have to swat it, don't you? Anyway, you never know, maybe the next time Mr Phillips feels inclined to publish his assorted thoughts, he'll do his homework first.

PS: By the way, Mr P, on this business of Jewish students doing 'well wherever they went', tempting though it may sound, you really shouldn't fall for or peddle this fiction. Young people, whichever school they attend, do well for a host of reasons including, for example, good teaching, careful and caring support, their own commitment, teacher expectations, parental support, school ethos and many, many more. Jewish kids don't succeed because of some kind of genetic osmosis, you know!

David Harris, Harrow, Middx

Sir – At the end of his article in your November issue, Peter Phillips writes 'I am not provocative for the sake of being provocative. I am Jewish and proud of it. I just think that some things need to be said.'

Writing about his objection to 'so-called' faith schools and Jewish golf clubs, he says 'We need to mix. We need to integrate.' Might I point out that the very integrated German Jews unfortunately met the same terrible fate in the death camps as my unintegrated, Polish-Orthodox-Jewish father, who arrived in Berlin just after the First World War and was an honest citizen, keeping all the laws and paying his taxes. Integration alone did not help them!

In saying that the laws of *kashrut* and *shechita* are outdated and that the latter 'probably causes anti-Semitism', has Mr Phillips overlooked the fact that had it not been for these laws, as well as circumcision, there would have been total integration and therefore no Jews left for the anti-Semites to persecute over the centuries?

My husband, on being called up to serve in the Royal Air Force, informed his commanding officer that he would do anything required of him during his service period except take his meals with his fellow Air Force comrades. He still has in his possession a certificate allowing him to have food in his barrack, which is contrary to Air Force regulations. This did not cause any anti-Semitism. Nor did he ever hide the fact that he was Jewish and a proud supporter of the nascent State

of Israel, where he volunteered to serve after being demobbed from the Air Force.

It is not by integration that we will continue to survive.

Betty Bloom, London NW3

Sir – With typical self-importance, Peter Phillips tells us what he believes, like some missionary expounding a new doctrine. Who cares what he believes? Whilst many, including me, agree with some of his stated opinions, what right has he to denigrate in public the sincerely held beliefs regarding *kashrut*, Orthodoxy and education of many of our people? His thoughts on secularism and liberalism among the Jewish community are nothing new. Most members of the AJR are survivors of the Holocaust and we don't need Mr Phillips to pontificate on the importance of Israel to all the Jewish people, or on how and why the Israelis should conduct themselves or run their country.

Bob Norton, Nottingham

Sir – Peter Phillips's article, though intended to provoke, did not entirely succeed. We have crossed swords before, but this time I almost agree with him! Is he perhaps inching to the right?

However, I don't agree with the way he slams the religion. Try and separate an assimilated Diaspora Jew from his traditions and his descendants could be lost to Judaism within a matter of two generations or so! And that's where Israel comes in – it cannot happen there. I am far from being what he calls a 'frummer', but I recognise that this is the cement that bound us together throughout our troubled history and helped us to survive as a people. Mr Phillips is also in the habit of pointing out that *kibbutzniks* were secular, but he forgets they were also staunch Zionists, whether on the right or far left. It was due to their attachment to their historic roots that the Zionist enterprise was successful – in a way that Uganda, Kenya or Stalin's Birobidjan experiment could not have been.

I have to be brief as I'm off to the place where I most feel at home. Mr Phillips likes to inform us that he has avoided it ever since the heady days of Ben-Gurion and even Golda Meir, though she was far less doctrinaire. My long-suffering wife and I plan to go north this time to observe the migrating birds on their way from Europe to Africa. Even these feathered creatures have the intuition and the sagacity to stop over in Netanyahu's Israel – which he so rebuffs.

Rubin Katz, London NW11

Sir – I would like to express my greatest admiration to Peter Phillips on his article. He expressed eloquently the views and feelings of all 'alien' British Jews, who were born outside the United Kingdom and survived the Holocaust.

Marianne Laszlo, Edinburgh

Sir – Just a line to say that I agree with every word Peter Phillips wrote in the latest edition of the Journal. Please do tell him we're not all against him!

(Mrs) B. Bow, Barnet, Herts

Sir – Concerning Peter Phillips's article 'To provoke or not to provoke': he's certainly provoked *me* to write to the *AJR Journal* for the first time. At last the voice of reason and wisdom! Although I am sure many members won't agree with him, I hope many will give some thought to what he says. What Peter Phillips says is thoughtful, sane and a breath of fresh air. More please!

Maureen Dreyfus, London NW3

### SOUNDING OFF

Sir – The correspondence pages of your journal are undoubtedly interesting and informative but – and here I must admit to being broadly in sympathy with Peter Phillips's 'provocative' views (I don't think they *are* really, Peter!) – the majority of your contributors write looking back. 'All my future is behind me' seems to be the motto. This may well be true for us first-generation old-timers, but in general it is such a miserable attitude, isn't it? Most of us who have survived the Holocaust have made good lives for ourselves and our offspring. This was not achieved by bemoaning the past, but by conquering the future. Do not let us provide dismal examples to our 'children' and their children!

Marc Schatzberger, York

### EXHIBITION ON JEWISH REFUGEES IN SOUTH WALES

Sir – I am writing to thank you and all your readers.

In July this year, I contacted the Association of Jewish Refugees requesting your help with our exhibition on the history of Jewish refugees in South Wales, 1933-45.

You were then kind enough to publish my letter in the *AJR Journal*. Since then, the response to our exhibition has been incredible. We have now received enough images to fill all the exhibition panels with some to spare!

I would like to express our gratitude to the AJR for their support, and to all those people who have been kind enough to share their family photographs and memories with us.

The exhibition will run from 9 January to 6 February 2012 at the Civic Centre, Swansea, and then from 21 April to 30 June 2012 at the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea. Other venues have yet to be arranged.

Once again, many thanks for all your kind help and assistance.

Dr David Morris, Archivist,  
West Glamorgan Archive Service,  
County Hall, Swansea Archiflydd,  
Gwasanaeth Archifau Gorllewin  
Morgannwg, Neuadd y Sir, Abertawe  
(tel 01792 636 801)

### 'GRIST TO THE REVISIONISTS' MILL'

Sir – Having read reviews of it in the *AJR Journal* and elsewhere, and even heard a talk by the author, I was determined to read *The English German Girl* by Jake Wallis Simons.

It's a good novel – no doubt about that! The trouble with fiction of this kind, though, as distinct from straight reportage, is that the reader has the task of separating fact from fiction. Gas masks, for example, are worn in the novel throughout the war years, when in fact they were a 1939 panic measure and people had lost interest in them by the second year of the war. For 80-year-olds like me, this deprives the book of authenticity.

More important is the visit, shortly after the war, of the heroine to Bloomsbury House to see lists of concentration camp victims and the dates of their deaths. I made such a visit myself at the time, and the lists on the wall were of survivors and their dates of birth – not victims and their dates of death. Indeed, a moment's thought would have made it clear that the murderers did not employ a registrar to record the date on which they committed each individual murder. The only records in most cases are of the dates on which victims were put on the transports.

All this would matter less if this were just a novel. As soon as there is any pretence to historical reporting, as by appending a list of real-life characters, small errors and inconsistencies are grist to the revisionists' mill. It is a vital requirement of Holocaust literature that it cannot be accused of being fictional, as there are people out there who are only too ready to reject the nub of the story together with the little inconsistencies they find.

Frank Beck, London NW3

### U & €

Sir – We owe our *civilisation* and *culture* to the Greeks, repaying our debt – with interest. *Democracy*, *economy* and *Europe* failed catastrophically. The Greek *tragedy* is spreading throughout the continent unstopably. The € is threatening to disappear with a *mega* reduction of our pensions, causing a financial *catastrophe*: they would be paid in Deutschmarks and Schillings! We can thank the *parasitic*, *inept* and self-seeking *politicians*, *economists* and bankers for the *chaos* that will ensue. Further increasing *taxes*, their usual excuse will be 'with the benefit of hindsight'.

Life began in *paradise* – it may end in *Hades*.

Fred Stern, Wembley, Middx

### SHARING MEMORIES

Sir – I am editing some family letters for possible publication. In a letter dated 13 June 1939, my great-aunt writes to her son in London: 'Hast Du Dr Nathan zufällig gesprochen, er hat einen

Kindertransport nach drüben gebracht' (Have you by chance spoken to Dr Nathan – he took a Kindertransport over there). Dr Nathan returned to Hamburg and met the fate of so many.

From 1912 Dr Nathan Max Nathan (Emmerich, Germany 1879-Auschwitz 24 or 25 October 1944), who was also a rabbi, was secretary (Syndicus) of the Hamburg Jewish Community.

I wonder whether any of your readers was on this transport and might be willing to share some memories.

Professor Max Sussman,

Newcastle upon Tyne,

tel 0191 284 2705

email m.sussman@blueyonder.co.uk

### 'THE KAISER'S HOLOCAUST'

Sir – On reading Ruth Barnett's review of *The Kaiser's Holocaust* in your November issue, I was reminded of an item I heard on 'From Our Own Correspondent' on Radio 4 a couple of weeks earlier. This concerned the return of a number of skulls to Namibia (ref: mg.co.za/article/2011-10-04-namibias-ancestral-skulls-receive-heroic-welcome-home).

Karl Peter Mayer,

Sheffield

### GAINING UNDERSTANDING AND HOPE

Sir – Whatever your views on the moral aspects of the unending conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, I would urge all readers of the Journal (themselves often victims of past racial discord) to read an inspiring book entitled *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey on the Road to Peace and Human Dignity* (Bloomsbury Publishing, £19.99, ISBN 9781 4088 13676, or from public libraries).

It is written with extraordinary humanity by Izzeldin Abuelaish, Gaza-born and a former Gaza resident who studied medicine, became a gynaecologist and specialised in the treatment of infertility. Almost uniquely, he worked in Israeli hospitals, mainly treating Jewish patients.

During the 2009 Israeli incursion into Gaza, a tank trained its gun on his home, where he and his family were sheltering, killing three of his daughters and injuring others.

Yet Abuelaish, who had recently been widowed, has found the strength not to hate but to plead for mutual understanding, respect and – above all – communication between the two Semitic communities, who share so many moral values. Instead of repeated military action and reactions, surely such sentiments must provide a better – or indeed the only – chance of peaceful coexistence.

Readers of this book may not change their long-held views, but they will gain understanding – and hope.

Dr John Goldsmith, Liverpool

# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Three centuries after her celebrated love affair with Charles II, Nell Gwyn's name still flourishes on pubs, street names and upmarket apartments. Paintings of Nell, the first It Girl and one of the 13 mistresses of Charles II, are among 53 paintings in **The First Actresses: Nell Gwyn to Sarah Siddons** at the **National Portrait Gallery** (to 8 January 2012). These superstars of their day, portrayed by artists like **Gainsborough, Gillray, Hogarth** and **Reynolds**, were often educated women who became national tragediennes – only to renounce their careers in favour of marriage to wealthy aristocrats. Whether wife or mistress, ageing – like today – was not an option for those who successfully trod the boards.



John Hoppner *Mary Robinson – Perdita 1782* (detail) ©Chawton House Library, Hampshire

**Simon Verreist's** contrasting portraits of Nell Gwyn are both erotic: one is suggestive, the other provocative. Gainsborough portrays the actress Giovanna Baccelli in a swirling gown and hat against rough clouds. One of the most endearing is Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of a reflective, child-like Frances Abingdon as Prue in *Love for Love*, thumb in mouth. Then you have Hogarth's cartoon of strolling actors dressing in a bar, or James Gillray's *Dilettanti Theatricals*. Another striking example is **John Hoppner's** portrait of the actress, poet and writer Mary Robinson as *Perdita*, a vision of beauty in a powdered wig and feathered hat – she liked to appear dressed in a different style every day, sometimes an

aristocrat, sometimes a peasant. It flowed from the *fin de siècle* days of the 18th century's frothy obsession with dressing up in style.

Their posture describes attitudes towards gender, femininity, the new taste in satire and gossip. Cross-dressing or taking male parts was sometimes seen as transgressing their sexuality. These moral and sexual references also include issues of women's rights, which were published by some of these actress-writers and businesswomen in pamphlets as early as 1798.

A contemporary artist fond of cross-dressing is **Grayson Perry**. Perry's charismatic presence, aided by his ubiquitous teddy bear, Alan Measles, the god of his personal cosmology, is barely contained by the **British Museum**, which has offered him an exhibition: **The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman** (to 19 February 2012). Despite Perry's boisterous, child-like energy, he explores serious subjects – shamanism, magic and holy relics – bringing them to life by juxtaposing motorbikes and contemporary

culture. Here he re-creates and re-imagines museum exhibits beside their originals, which include a massive tapestry map of truth and belief.

Grayson trawled the Museum's vast collection to choose 190 objects corresponding to his very original

imagination and invites us to view these artefacts through his personal lens. Famous for his beautifully shaped and coloured vases with their sexualised images, Perry suggests that these are not there to be viewed as prurient objects but to remind us that age-old fertility symbols were simply regarded as being part of nature.

His chosen objects range from Polynesian fetishes to Buddhist votive offerings, to 20th-century badges – of which he is a massive collector. The undoubted *pièce de résistance* is his new work, *The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman*, an unbelievably ornamented cast-iron coffin-ship bearing his tribute to the long-forgotten artists who filled the British Museum.

## REVIEWS

### The road back to life

ZURÜCK INS LEBEN. DAS INTERNATIONALE KINDERZENTRUM KLOSTER INDERSDORF 1945–1946 (The Road Back to Life: The Kloster Indersdorf International Children's Centre, 1945-1946)

by Anna Andlauer

Nuremberg: Antogo

(www.antogo-verlag.de), 2011, 190 pp., ISBN 978-3-938286-40-1

This is the story of the first international children's centre in post-war Germany, and of UNRRA Team 182, who cared there for many of the thousands of lost, orphaned, uprooted, homeless, hungry, ragged and traumatised children who wandered the streets of Germany immediately after the war. Team 182, all volunteers and truly international in their make-up, were exceptional individuals, all highly qualified in their own fields. But even they, in common with the rest of the world, could not envisage the scale of the tragedy that awaited them.

Anna Andlauer describes the enormous effort it took to make this ancient cloister, requisitioned by the US army, suitable for its new purpose and how the team overcame, throughout the life of the Centre, the severe shortage of essential goods required for the effective running of such a project.

Children began arriving at once, singly and in groups. No child was turned away. They had to be de-loused, subjected to a medical examination, bathed, given fresh clothes and, above all, fed. My aunt, Greta Fischer, a leading member of the team who figures prominently in this book, later remembered that there was a constant request for food, which was plentiful. Nevertheless, it took a very long time before the children could be persuaded to stop hiding crusts under their pillows or cease wolfing down each morsel at lightning speed, in case it was snatched away from them.

There were roughly two groups of children: babies and toddlers under three, orphaned or abandoned, who were undernourished, under-developed, sickly and showing all the classic signs of neglect; and youngsters of twelve upwards, who had survived largely because they were deemed fit enough for work. No Jewish child over three years of age had survived the camps.

There were not only orphaned concentration camp survivors: some had spent the war years in hiding, or had lived in caves and forests with partisans, or had survived in Polish ghettos. Each had a horrendous tale to tell and the team felt it was vital that they be listened to, sometimes over and over, however long it took.

Some non-Jewish children could be repatriated relatively quickly to their



countries of origin, if relatives could be found to take them in. But many of the Jewish ones, despite every effort by UNRRA search teams, had to come to terms with the fact that not a single member of their family had survived – they were alone in the world.



A preoccupied Greta Fischer

The road back to physical health was relatively easy and most of the youngsters, by the end of the life of the Centre, had become more robust and had reached their normal developmental stages. Healing their mental scars proved a much more difficult problem. It took the UNRRA authorities some time to realise how traumatised these youngsters were and to supplement the existing team with expert psychological help. They had been through, and witnessed, the most horrific experiences: they had lost parents, siblings, homes and identities, they had been humiliated, abused and treated as sub-human and had been robbed of their childhood. The healing process would take a very long time.

The older ones, when they first came, were wild and uncontrollable. They had survived only by relying on their wits, by lying, stealing, cheating and, as Greta Fischer put it, by their overriding rage to live. All they had known was the bestiality of the camps; they had no concept of 'normal' behaviour. They were in no mood to accept any kind of restriction on their new-found freedom. The team had a hard time of it.

Some thought that after what these youngsters had been through, they should be allowed to behave as they pleased. Others, Greta Fischer in particular, felt that from the beginning some basic structures and routines must be instituted in order to prepare them for the outside world. This is what happened and was largely successful.

The shortage of suitable staff was an ever-present headache. To begin with, displaced persons waiting to be repatriated were employed, but it soon emerged that they were obsessed with their own problems and worries about their future and scarred by their own experiences of forced labour and were thus unable to provide the emotional support these children needed. Employing Germans, except as domestics, laundresses, cooks or gardeners – i.e. in positions where they would not be in contact with the children – was unthinkable. The team members just had to cope.

Greta's experiences in the wartime day nurseries for traumatised infants of the London Blitz made her the ideal team leader for those caring for the little ones. Those Sisters of Mercy who had elected to stay on helped with the babies and

toddlers, as did some of the older girls, especially if they missed their younger siblings. However, Greta writes in her memoirs of the many nights when she was the only staff member on duty with 30 babies, all of whom had to be fed, changed and comforted, while

she vainly tried to snatch a couple of hours' sleep. With good nourishment and lots of physical contact and mental stimulation, most babies had almost reached their appropriate developmental milestones by the time the Centre was moved and its make-up changed, two years later.

For the older ones, the healing process progressed in very small steps. Greta describes how the acquisition of freely chosen fresh and clean clothes, in particular leather shoes, had an almost immediate impact on a youngster's self-respect and pride. They were encouraged to choose their own room-mates, to exercise as much self-determination as practicable, and to take responsibility for the cleanliness and order of the premises.

These principles were at first strenuously resisted: 'Let the Germans clean up after us – we had to do it for them!' But Team 182 did their utmost to show the children that living with hate and enmity in their hearts was self-destructive. The adults were able to demonstrate that people of different races, creeds and countries of origin could live and work together in harmony, since they were themselves so mixed in their make-up.

Jewish and non-Jewish children were mixed: there were no distinctions. Sometimes it was hard, particularly for those from Poland or Hungary, where anti-Semitism had been endemic before the war. They found it difficult to accept that some of those caring for them, including Greta Fischer, were Jewish.

Strenuous efforts were made to prepare the youngsters for life in the world outside. Schooling was instituted and eagerly devoured. Work experiences for the older ones were found. Sport and drama had a particularly important part to play in the rehabilitation and were encouraged.

The hope that somewhere in the world someone would be found to call their own never died. Anna Andlauer describes individual examples of the heartbreak when it had to be extinguished.

Looking back at this 'Road Back to Life', Greta Fischer observed that those children who had had some sort of secure family life before it was broken up and had experienced a loving environment and good parenting were able to recover more quickly than those who had had no such advantages.

It is impossible to read this book

without shedding tears – especially when, in the concluding chapters, Anna Andlauer describes how cold and unwelcoming was the rest of the world to these orphaned and uprooted children, who desperately wanted to get out of Germany. The USA, the UK and Canada took in a few hundred, a few South American countries opened their doors a crack, but most spent long and demoralising months, even years, waiting for someone who would take them in. Red tape prevented those who had no means of identification from beginning their lives anew. Many of the Jewish children wanted to emigrate to what was then Palestine and under British mandate, but the entry criteria were harsh. Not until the founding of the Jewish state in 1948 were the youngsters welcomed in.

Greta Fischer was employed to accompany a large group of older boys to Canada, to help them integrate into Canadian society and monitor their progress. Another fairly large group came to the UK and became known as 'The Boys'.

Greta Fischer kept in touch with as many of 'her' children as she could until the end of her life. Anna Andlauer has made heroic efforts to trace as many ex-Indersdorfers as possible and has been successful in finding enough of them to organise an annual reunion. Many are now too old to travel, but the stories she has gathered of the lives they have made for themselves in their new homes are truly inspiring.

The last chapter details the milestones of the life of Greta Fischer, who died aged 78 of a heart attack. On what would have been her 100th birthday, over 100 of her former colleagues and friends came together to pay tribute to the many achievements of this remarkable lady. She would have been very proud to know that a special needs school just outside Indersdorf now bears her name and is run in accordance with her ethical principles.

This review is only a sketchy snapshot of the contents of this book. The book is well illustrated with black-and-white contemporary photographs and the copious footnotes attest to the meticulous research which has gone into compiling this valuable historical document.

Hanna Corbishley

## A remarkable couple

CZECH AND MATE

by Margaret Austin and Fred Austin

*History into Print* (tel 01527 854228, email [admin@history-into-print.com](mailto:admin@history-into-print.com)), 306 pp. paperback, £14.95

This book is unusual in that it was written by two authors, not jointly but in alternating biographical chapters which are initially independent of each other but later relate to their joint lives. Fred's story starts when he was Fredi Stiller, a Jewish boy in Ostrava. Margaret grew up in a working class, upwardly striving Methodist family in Cleethorpes.

continued on page 10

## REVIEWS *continued from page 9*

Inevitably, Fredi's story is the more dramatic one as a happy childhood was destroyed by the German occupation of Czechoslovakia and the separation, sadly final, from his mother and sisters. His father had died shortly after he was born. Fredi's mother had been able to arrange for the ten-year old boy to travel to Vienna, and from there he continued on to England accompanied by a young teacher, Philip Austin, who became his unofficial guardian.

Initially Fred lived with Philip's mother but then moved to various parts of the country. He was still mainly dependent on Philip and his family and even took on the Austin name. Unfortunately it turned out that Philip was not quite a guardian angel and that his teaching qualifications were faked. Fred nonetheless recognises his help and on the whole he had a happy time in England during the war years and received a good education. He applied for a university place in 1946 but was disappointed when he discovered that as he was not British he was not eligible for a grant. A year later, he obtained British nationality and was admitted to Leicester University and, more importantly, this led to his meeting with Margaret.

Margaret was born in 1929 and her story, told in a pleasant, chatty style, is more conventional. She describes her early childhood and school life, within a loving family, but inevitably she too was affected by the war and evacuation. Her meeting with Fred at the university is described amusingly by each of the authors, as is their wedding, which followed Fred's graduation with first-class honours. At first, they had to struggle financially, but their greater sadness was discovering that Margaret could not have children. They decided to adopt and were able to lead a happy family life, including four children and ten grandchildren.

After initial difficulties and despite health problems, Fred had a very successful career in education, culminating in his headmastership of Dudley Grammar School and an MBE for his work in education and in support of heart-related charities.

In 1988 Fred and Margaret visited Poland for the first time. This included a visit to Auschwitz, which made a deep impression on them. While in Eastern Europe, they took the opportunity to visit a family in Budapest with whom Fred had stayed on holiday as a child. This is almost the first reference to his origins since the description of his childhood and journey to England in the first 20 pages of the book. In the following two years, Fred and Margaret again visited Eastern Europe, including Treblinka, where Fred's mother and sisters were murdered. Through an aunt in America, Fred discovered there were surviving members of his extended family in the USA, Israel, Poland and the UK and this, together with a series of coincidences, enabled him to find out

more about his early history. This led him and Margaret to visit his father's home town of Nowy Targ in Poland, where they discovered the original family shop still existed. Fred also movingly describes a return to his childhood home in Ostrava, which brings back sad and happy memories alike. These visits also led Fred to join the AJR, despite his having been remote from Judaism almost since his arrival in England.

The main part of the book makes little reference to Fred's origins and could equally be based on the life stories of a remarkable and successful English couple. But what distinguishes the book are the early pages covering his childhood and the relatively brief sections towards the end relating to his roots and family. It is probably these parts which would be of greatest interest to members of the AJR.

George Vulkan

### Facing a precarious future

ELSA

by Mary Brainin Huttner

London: Schuco Publications, 2011, paperback 215 pp., £7.99

**E**lsa is the poignant story of an Austrian-Jewish refugee who came to England before the war. Like so many other refugees, she had to accept work as a domestic in order to enter the country. However, the novel opens during the period after the war, when the refugees were free but faced a precarious future.

In Vienna, Elsa had been a medical student. Her mother had died before she left, but her father had hoped to follow her. This was never to be. Now, after the war, Elsa is living in London's Swiss Cottage area in a house full of refugees like herself. She feels at home but longs to continue her medical studies and, in the meantime, acts as an unofficial GP to fellow lodgers. Returning to medical studies proves impossible and she decides to take up nursing, which she finds fulfilling. But the novel takes an unexpected turn and Elsa's life changes.

Throughout this story we feel completely involved with this young, lonely girl.

Although 28, Elsa is naïve, idealistic and romantic. Without parental support, she manages to behave in the right way in all the difficult situations which confront her. The climax of the novel is bitter-sweet.

The twists and turns of this story keep the reader totally involved. In addition to Elsa, there is a host of minor characters, refugee and English alike, all of whom make this a fascinating and unusual story which the reader will be unable to put down. This post-war period and how the refugees dealt with it has not been documented as much as the war period. It makes us aware that refugees may have faced even greater challenges at this time.

Mary Brainin Huttner is herself an

Austrian-Jewish refugee, but this not an autobiographical novel. Mary managed to leave Vienna with her family and they settled in London. She is a member of the famous Brainin family: her late cousin, Norbert Brainin, was a member of the acclaimed Amadeus Quartet. She has written poetry, prose and autobiographical pieces but this is her first novel. Hopefully, many more novels will follow.

Thea Valman

### Michaela possessed

DANCING WITH CARMEN

by Gloria Tessler

AuthorHouse, 2011, paperback 260 pp., ISBN 9781438970059

**M**ichaela Possessed' might well be the subtitle of this strikingly original new novel by Gloria Tessler, the *AJR Journal's* art columnist. It is Michaela, the 'other woman' in the Carmen legend, who narrates the tale and there can be no doubt that she is possessed from the moment Jose enters her life.

In a powerfully conveyed imaginary Central American republic, Michaela is the daughter of a prosperous oligarch. She first sees Jose when he is 'one of the poor campesino children' who come to stare at the rich passers-by in the village square and rescues him years later when, an army conscript, he shoots a brutal foreman in a sugar plantation.

Carmen enters the lives of Michaela and Jose before they become lovers, when they encounter a group of factory girls on an outing. Dressed in red and black, Carmen is the most arresting of the girls, making her way down the steps outside the factory 'with great dignity' to sing the *Habanera*, a song Michaela has never heard before, and throwing a rose at Jose.

While Jose professes no interest in Carmen, she gradually infiltrates Michaela's psyche. As Michaela and Jose become intimate, Michaela is aware she is making love to a man 'already under the spell of another woman'.

The complex relationship between these three protagonists is vividly depicted. So overwhelming is the effect on Michaela that she is unable to move on in her emotional life. Haunted by Jose and Carmen, she fails to develop a fulfilling relationship with Pedro, who helps her and her family to escape to safety at the time of the ensuing revolution.

Interestingly, a number of 'Jewish' references surface in the course of the narrative. After knifing Carmen, Jose compares his washing away the blood to 'the way they describe those Holocaust victims, forever washing, washing'. And, on a beach in England, Michaela recalls 'a print of an English seaside resort painted by a German-Jewish refugee'; soon after, a troop of Israeli folk dancers arrive, dancing with 'a blend of desert gestures and Hassidic yearning'.

Emma Klein

## Kristallnacht memorial service held at Belsize Square Synagogue

AJR members commemorated the 73rd anniversary of Kristallnacht at a well attended service at Belsize Square Synagogue.

Guest speaker Toby Simpson of the Wiener Library underlined the importance of Holocaust testimony – written and oral alike – while insisting that such testimony must be scrupulously evaluated.

The service, which included a candle-lighting ceremony, was led by Rabbi Stuart Altshuler.

AJR Co-Director Michael Newman paid tribute to Ludwig Spiro, the AJR's Honorary President, who had sadly died several days earlier.



left  
William Kaczynski (left) and Thomas Schneider, German Embassy

below Ruth Jacobs (left) and Josie Dutch light candles

PHOTOS: MICHAEL J. EZRA



Ruth (left) and Arnold Fox, Monica Schubert



Toby Simpson and Katy Jackson, Wiener Library; Gillian Walnes and Marsha Selwyn, Anne Frank Trust UK



Zdenka Husserl, Charlotte and David Lang

## Shall we dance?

Mr Erdstein *did* try – he really did. 'One, two, three, one, two, three, can't you feel the rhythm!', he asked despairingly. I couldn't. Waltz, tango, quickstep – they all eluded me.

Most of my wealthier friends learned to dance at Elmayer's in the first district, but my parents couldn't afford him, nor could my best friend Lisl's. So, at the age of 16, we enrolled at Erdstein's more modest establishment in the second district, aka the 'Mazzesinsel' because of its predominantly Jewish population.

Lisl, a wiry girl who played the piano and had a sense of rhythm, soon acquired admirers. I, on the other hand, was gauche and clumsy and had clearly been born with two left feet. As this was a school each boy had to take his turn with me and, according to their temperament, they bore the infliction with good or ill grace. It was obvious that I was destined to be a perennial wallflower.

That winter Hakoah held its annual ball and my friend and classmate Renee, one of its champion swimmers, encouraged me to attend. The club, in its publicity, assured the girls that they would dazzle whether in a *dirndl* or an evening dress. I was understandably reluctant but Renee was persuasive and I gave in. Claire, my

stepmother, sewed a *dirndl* for me and, for the first time in my life, I had my hair professionally washed and crimped. Despite my misgivings, I set out, full of secret hopes.

Renee looked stunning in a long white dress and young men were queuing to dance with her. My 'happening' was a pimply, taciturn youth who stuck to me for the whole interminable evening. Whatever it was that attracted the opposite sex Renee had in abundance, Lisl in some measure, but I sadly lacked completely. I simply didn't have it.

The next morning Renee teased me about my Ritter Toggenburg. If, according to some, Fanny Price and Edmund Bertram in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* are the most boring couple in English literature, I nominate Schiller's Toggenburg as the most tedious, if persistent, suitor in German literature.

For our last evening at Erdstein's we were to wear fancy dress and our *beaux* were to bring us presents. As I had no expectations whatsoever Claire wrapped up some trifles in two small parcels addressed to me and gave them to Mr Erdstein to save me the humiliation of being left empty-handed.

My 'fancy dress' consisted of grey

trousers, a colourful shirt and a peaked cap, all lent to me by a friend's mother. What was I supposed to be? Possibly Jackie Coogan, the famous Hollywood child star.

And then a miracle happened. A man asked me to dance. Not a boy but a man! Under his expert guidance, I glided across the floor, transformed at a stroke from Cinderella to belle of the ball, the envy of all the girls dancing with callow youths. As I found out later, his name was Hans and he was 20 years my senior. And he was a doctor – not just any old doctor but a proper medical one. If I ever knew what he was doing there that evening I have forgotten. Perhaps he was a friend of Erdstein.

A friendship developed and my parents, although somewhat concerned about the difference in our ages, were reassured by the fact that he was a doctor. If a mature Jewish physician could not be trusted to behave honourably at all times, who could? Well, he did – most of the time.

But, no, I didn't marry him. The good news is that I eventually married a tone-deaf non-dancer so that, subsequently, we were able to decline any invitation to dance politely and in unison.

Edith Argy

# INSIDE the AJR

## **Book Club Discussion, tea and cake**

Having returned to a renovated Joseph's in Temple Fortune, we reviewed *The Novel in the Viola* by Natasha Solomons. A discussion ensued as to whether the heroine's experience was realistic as compared with that of actual refugees. First-timers, come and enjoy the wonderful cake and have a chat with us!

*Hazel Beiny*

**Next meeting: 14 Dec. Book for discussion: Penny Vincenzi, *The Best of Times***

## **Marlow A small but cheerful group**

A small but cheerful group – including two ladies travelling some distance – expounded on our personal background and histories. A musical basis was suggested for next time, when better weather will encourage us.

*Alan Kaye*

## **Brighton & Hove Sarid In search of the Czech Scrolls**

Evelyn Friedlander, Curator of the Museum of Czech Memorial Scrolls, gave a very interesting talk about her quest to find small artefacts and Torah binders in the rafters or under the floorboards of synagogues in German towns and villages.

*Ceska Abrahams*

**Next meeting: 19 Dec. Chanukah Party**

## **First impressions of Edinburgh**

It turned out to be a trip Down Memory Lane – a good way to welcome our new member, Dr Tom Willis, and share stories of life as it was when members first settled in Edinburgh. As always, there was a lovely atmosphere and a beautiful spread by our hostess Francoise Robertson.

*Agnes Isaacs*

## **HGS How to become a Freeman**

Andrea Cameron, a Freeman of the City of London, gave a detailed talk on how one becomes a Freeman. Walking sheep over London Bridge, she told us, is still done even though it was first introduced in 1275 when it was a toll bridge!

*Hazel Beiny*

**Next meeting: 12 Dec. Discussion: 'Someone You Admire'**

## **Café Imperial Doing Churchill proud**

A marvellous turnout: Churchill himself would have been so proud of his Army. 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many. Too few' – as paraphrased by the group.

*Esther Rinkoff*

## **Edgware A family tradition**

Howard Lanning spoke about the film industry, a very interesting topic with

which many of the audience were not very familiar. His career is a family tradition – the younger generation too are involved in films.

*Felix Winkler*

**Next meeting: 19 Dec. Joint Chanukah Party with NL/Radlett/Hendon/TF; entertainment by Stephen Glass**

## ALSO MEETING IN DECEMBER

**Ealing 6 Dec. Historian Mark Perry-Nash, 'The Role of Women in Politics'**

**Ilford 7 Dec. Harry Harris entertains at early Chanukah Party**

**Surrey 11 Dec. Social get-together**

**Essex (Westcliff) 13 Dec. Entertainment by Rob Lowe**

**Wessex 13 Dec. tbc**

**Wembley 14 Dec. Social get-together**

**North London 19 Dec. Joint Chanukah Party – see Edgware report**

**Welwyn GC 20 Dec. Social get-together**

**Oxford 20 Dec. Chanukah get-together, tbc**

## **Hendon A career in costumes**

We found ourselves handling a few of the priceless costumes made for *Dancing on Ice* and many TV spectaculars after hearing Rita Best describe how she had pursued a lifetime career of making costumes for TV and the theatre. Danny La Rue and Dame Edna are just two of the many luminaries she has dressed.

*Shirley Rodwell*

**Next meeting: 19 Dec. Joint Chanukah Party – see Edgware report**

## **Radlett A psychoanalytic case report**

Psychotherapist Hazel Leventhal illustrated the use of attachment-based psychoanalysis with a case report describing the successful outcome of three years' treatment of a middle-aged woman. Her talk generated many questions.

*Fritz Starer*

**Next meeting: 19 Dec. Joint Chanukah Party – see Edgware report**

## **Bromley CF The moving story of Watermarks**

Liane Segal generously offered us her hospitality and an excellent lunch for a screening of *Watermarks*, the moving story of the women swimmers of the legendary Vienna Hakoah sports club. All present, including three 'second generation' guests, enjoyed an afternoon of lively discussion, shared memories and companionship.

*Dorothea Lipton*

## **Cleve Road The Globe project**

Globe Theatre guide Val Alliez told us it was Sam Wanamaker's project to rebuild the Globe Theatre, but he passed away before it was completed and became the success it is today.

*David Lang*

**Next meeting: 20 Dec. Chanukah Party**

## **Liverpool A highly recommended film**

A large group of members met at the home of Inge and Eric Goldrein for refreshments and to watch *Watermarks*, a highly recommended film on the Hakoah women swimmers' team in 1930s Austria. Our gratitude, as always, to Inge and Eric for their hospitality.

*Guido Alis*

**Next meeting: 21 Dec. Same venue**

## **Kent A moving DVD**

We watched a moving DVD of Bruno Mueller's visit to Poland. Bruno went to Crakow, but was unable to visit Auschwitz due to flooding; to Lodz, in particular the ghetto; and to Chelmno, the first death camp for Jews and Gypsies and where his parents perished. The meeting was co-ordinated by Janet Weston, who also provided refreshments. Thank you, Janet.

*Josephine Singer*

**Next meeting: 20 Dec. Chanukah Party**

## **Bath/Bristol**

### **'The Old Lady Discovered'**

Having finally found our way to the new location at the Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation, we were rewarded by a splendid buffet lunch, thanks to Clare Sandrer and Myrna Glass. Stephen Collins, a Bank of England Agent in South West England, gave a fascinating talk on 'The Old Lady Discovered'. At least we now know what 'quantitative easing' is.

*Jane Dickson*

## **Cambridge 'Shops and Shopping in Regency London'**

In his talk, David Barnett gave a vivid picture of the introduction of vast numbers of shops in London, which in turn led to a revolution in selling and customer choice.

*Keith Lawson*

**Next meeting: 15 Dec.**

## **North London Escape from Leipzig**

Renée Tyack read and discussed her book *They Called Her Cassandra*, a tribute to her mother, who managed the escape of her family from Leipzig just before the war.

*Herbert Haberberg*

**Next meeting: 19 Dec. Joint Chanukah Party – see Edgware report**

## **Kingston CF**

### **Wladek Spilman documentary**

We watched a documentary on Wladek Spilman, the survivor on whom the film *The Pianist* is based, and enjoyed the usual wonderful hospitality with excellent home-made cakes from Susie Zisman.

*Hazel Beiny*

## Deadline for Ghetto Fund applications expires at end of year

The deadline to make applications for the one-time payment of €2,000 (approximately £1,700) from the Ghetto Fund expires on 31 December 2011.

The Fund was established in October 2007 following complaints about long delays in processing applications for a ghetto pension (known in German by

the acronym ZRBG). Of the 70,000 claims submitted for a ZRBG pension, 61,000 were originally rejected.

Until July this year, former ghetto workers could receive either a ghetto pension or the one-off payment from the Ghetto Fund. Under the terms of the new directive, it is now possible to receive *both payments*.

Because the Ghetto Fund provides compensation for work voluntarily performed in a ghetto, survivors who received awards from slave labour compensation from the German Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future are also entitled to apply.

Survivors who have already submitted an application form to the Bundesamt für zentrale Dienste und offene Vermögensfragen (BADV), the government department handling claims to the Ghetto Fund, do not need to submit a new application form or to re-apply, even if they have recently received another form in the post.

Anyone who receives a ghetto pension will automatically be sent details and an application form to claim the Ghetto Fund.

The BADV can be contacted at 53221 Bonn, Germany or by telephone on 0049 22899 7030 1324. Claim forms and further information about the Ghetto Fund are also available at [http://www.badv.bund.de/002\\_menu\\_e\\_oben/007\\_english/005\\_ghettowork/index.html](http://www.badv.bund.de/002_menu_e_oben/007_english/005_ghettowork/index.html)

The AJR can assist members with their applications, including notarising the claim forms. Please phone AJR Head Office for guidance.

**Michael Newman**

### Pinner Outing to Westminster Synagogue

We had the opportunity to tour both the Synagogue and the Czech Scrolls Museum. Our visit followed on from a talk earlier in the year by Evelyn Friedlander, a trustee of the Czech Scrolls Committee. Evelyn guided us around the museum.

*Susan Harrod*

**Next meeting: 1 Dec. 14th Anniversary**

### Cardiff 'Jews in Regency London'

David Barnett told us that due to immigration from the Netherlands and Prussia, by the 1800s the Jewish population of London had swelled to over 2,000 from a tiny nucleus in the 1790s. A highly recommended talk by a very knowledgeable historian. *Marian Lane*

### AJR GROUP CONTACTS

**Bradford Continental Friends**  
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**Bristol/Bath**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

**Cambridge**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**Cardiff**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

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

**Dundee**  
Agnes Isaacs 0755 1968 593

**Ealing**  
Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

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Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

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Janet Weston 01959 564 520

**Welwyn Garden City**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**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

## KT-AJR

Kindertransport special interest group

**21 December 2011**

## CHANUKAH PARTY

**KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH WILL BE SERVED AT 12.30 PM ON MONDAYS**

**Reservations required**

**Please telephone 020 7328 0208**

**Monday, Wednesday & Thursday**  
9.30 am – 3.30 pm

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

### December Entertainment

Thur	1	Idit Gold
Mon	2	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	6	CLOSED
Wed	7	Judith Bornstein
Thur	8	Sheila Games
Mon	12	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	13	CLOSED
Wed	14	Robert Wright
Thur	15	Paul Toshner
Mon	19	Kards & Games Klub – Monday Movie Matinee
Tue	20	CLOSED
Wed	21	KT CHANUKAH PARTY
Thur	22	CHANUKAH PARTY
Mon	26	CLOSED
Tue	27	CLOSED
Wed	28	CLOSED
Thur	29	CLOSED

### 'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

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

**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

**FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Death**

**Lubowski, Günter** Berlin 2.7.1931 – London 12.9.2011. Greatly missed by twin brother Martin and Yola, relatives overseas and many personal and professional friends.

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Telephone: 020 8455 2286

**ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY DECEMBER**

**Mon 5** Dr Shirli Gilbert (University of Southampton), 'Forgotten Letters: A Refugee from Nazism in Apartheid South Africa' Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex, Arts B 127, 4.30 pm (tea at 4 pm), booking not required. Dr Gilbert is currently working on a book about Rudolph Schwab's letters as part of a research project on Holocaust memory in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa.

**Mon 12** Irene Lawford-Hinrichsen, 'Wiener Schwung with Johann and Family (accompanied by music)' Last-ever meeting of Club 43

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

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**INTERNATIONAL TEREZIN MUSIC CONFERENCE**

**26-27 February 2012**

**Commemorating the centenary of the birth of Eliska Kleinova**

The Terezin Music Hub at Leeds College of Music would like to invite Holocaust survivors as honoured guests to its International Terezin Music Conference. Survivors will receive free passes for entry to all conference events and for all meals and refreshments. Unfortunately, the Hub is unable to pay for travel or accommodation.

The Ambassador of the Czech Republic, Michael Zantovsky, will open the conference, and the College is delighted to announce that he will be the Honorary Patron of the Hub. The event will commemorate the centenary of the birth of Eliska Kleinova (1912-1999), which falls on 27 February. She was the sister of the composer and pianist Gideon Klein, who played such a seminal role in Terezin's cultural life. Professor Kleinova, herself a Terezin prisoner and Auschwitz survivor, became a greatly respected Prague-based music pedagogue.

Michael Beckerman of New York University, and conductor Murry Sidlin, will be distinguished keynote speakers. Maestro Sidlin will conduct a performance of Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* in Leeds on 29 February. Zdenka Fantlova, Terezin survivor and author of the biographical *The Tin Ring*, will talk about the cultural life of Terezin and her personal memories of Gideon and Eliska. Other conference events include the UK premiere of the documentary *Defiant Requiem*.

Anyone wishing to attend should send their name and contact details to music@lcm.ac.uk stating whether they wish to attend the whole conference, or a part of it. Queries should also be directed to this email.

**Dr David Fligg, Conference Director, Principal Lecturer in Classical Music**

**AJR CENTRE RE-LAUNCH PARTY**

**Thursday 12 January 2011 at 12.00 pm at Belsize Square Synagogue**

Please join us for a party to celebrate the re-launch of the AJR Paul Balint Centre

Entrance is £6, payable in advance and including lunch and tea

Entertainment by Ronnie Goldberg

To reserve a seat, please telephone AJR Head Office on 020 8385 3070 or email membership@ajr.org.uk

**AJR CENTRE AT BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE**

From January 2012, the AJR Centre at Belsize Square Synagogue will be open on **Tuesdays and Thursdays** (and not Mondays and Thursdays as previously announced)

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## OBITUARY

### Ludwig Spiro, born Trier, Germany, 1 May 1912, died London, 3 November 2011, aged 99

Following a very successful career in the UK engineering industry, Ludwig Spiro became on retirement a leader and driving force in the Jewish refugee community, committing himself to improving the welfare of its members for over 30 years.

Ludwig's father was a senior civil servant in the German Railways who later, through promotion, moved to Hamburg and then Berlin. In 1932 Ludwig began a four-year degree course at Munich Technical University studying electrical and mechanical engineering. As part of the course, he spent time with the famous MAN company in Augsburg near Munich. It was there that he met his future wife, Anna Friedman.

He graduated in 1936 as a Diplome Ingenieur and, by his own admission, was less aware of the growing Nazi menace than Anna, who was adamant that emigration to England was their only hope. On 2 December 1936 they arrived in London, with little money and no work. Soon Anna was working as a dressmaker and Ludwig was applying for any job that mentioned engineering. Eventually he was taken on by heating and ventilating specialists, who were very impressed that at his interview he claimed to be an expert on central heating. In reality, he knew virtually nothing, but his English was so poor that he had answered 'yes' to most questions.

His first project was to design the central heating system for the new Marks & Spencer store on the Pantheon site in Oxford Street, working closely with Simon Marks.

From May 1940 to January 1941 Ludwig was interned on the Isle of Man, a topic on which he gave many vivid talks. He appeared with David Baddiel on the BBC1 programme 'Who Do You Think You Are?' when Baddiel was researching his grandfather's internment.

In 1941 he joined the Harland Engineering Company as a design and development engineer. He rose rapidly, becoming sales director and later deputy managing director. This was a golden period in his career, when he travelled the world securing important orders for pumps and electricity generating sets to be manufactured in Harland's plant in Alloa, Scotland. In 1969 Harland was bought by Weir Group and he became Sales Director of Weir Pumps until his retirement in 1975.



Not working was to Ludwig an unacceptable concept and he remained a consultant to a number of engineering companies for a further 15 years. He also threw his energies into charity work for the refugee Jewish community, focusing on ensuring that any of its members who were financially weak, physically frail, socially deprived or medically challenged were supported by their community. He was heavily involved in making sure that, as the number of refugees declined, neither they, nor the reason why they had come to the United Kingdom, was forgotten.

He joined the AJR Executive in 1966 becoming Treasurer in 1976 until compulsory retirement in 1987 at the youthful age of 75. At the AJR, he had the strategic vision and foresight to identify the need for a Day Centre and he drove the project from start to finish. Without his commitment, it would not have happened and the AJR recognised this by appointing him its Life President. The Day Centre provided a meeting place for members and offered meals, friendship and social services to its aging community. Inevitably, as age took its toll, the number able to use the Centre declined and it will shortly close after 25 years and relocate. We are pleased that Dad was not well enough to know about this.

In 1993 he was the first recipient of the Chief Rabbinate's Award for Excellence for voluntary service.

Commitment to one charity was not enough and from 1980 to 1992 he was Chairman of OSHA from 1985 to 1987, running four old-age homes. He joined the Board of the Wiener Library in 1985 and, until the age of 98, worked as a volunteer, coming by public transport

once a week in all weathers to identify and cut relevant articles from German-language newspapers. Our parents were strong supporters of the Library and what it stood for; it is unfortunate that Dad did not live to see its impressive new home in Russell Square.

The arrival of six grandchildren was a great joy to Mum and Dad and they took an immense interest in the upbringing of each of them. In return, the grandchildren realised the wisdom of consulting Dad ahead of their parents, and listened intently to his sound common sense. He was so proud of them and was delighted to act as proof-reader and constructive critic for PhD theses or degree dissertations even if the subject matter was completely alien to him.

His toughest challenge was coping after Mum's death in 1998. We shouldn't have been concerned – at the age of 85, he learnt about the kitchen, housekeeping and the washing machine, areas he had never touched before. He started to take up Mum's interests – going to synagogue, the theatre and concerts.

Dad was a remarkable public speaker and enjoyed being at the centre of attention. His vote of thanks at the annual AJR members' tea was eagerly anticipated. Each year we went through the ritual 'They've asked me to speak again, I don't know what to say.' We talked through a number of ideas and made some suggestions. He then went to the tea and spoke brilliantly, always without notes, about something completely different and far more interesting.

Although he came from a different era, he was completely at home in this one. He enjoyed meeting people of all ages and making new friendships; he had 'people skills' 50 years before the term was invented. He knew how to relate to and motivate people. He had strong opinions and was not afraid to voice them. He had firm beliefs and values and could not tolerate injustice, laziness or incompetence. This was recognised by colleagues in the workplace, who had great respect and admiration for him. He was in remarkable health until March and lived life to the full.

Ludwig Spiro married Anna Friedman in 1938. He leaves two sons, six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

**Stephen and Anthony Spiro**



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL



### On translating Martha Glass's diary

Some time ago I was given a small book, *Jeder Tag in Theresin ist ein Geschenk*. *Die Theresienstädter Tagebücher einer Hamburger Jüdin 1943-1945* ('Every Day in Theresienstadt is a Gift': The Theresienstadt Diary of a Hamburg Jewess, 1943-1945) by Martha Glass, published in 1996 by the Hamburg Department for Political Education with an introduction by Barbara Müller-Wesemann. Martha Glass, a relatively well-off woman from Hamburg, was deported to Theresienstadt at the age of 63 and kept a diary during her imprisonment, or 'exile', as she called it.

Although no one had asked me to do so, I resolved to translate it into English, regarding it as an important and authentic account of a period that must not be allowed to slip into the mists of oblivion or dismissed as hearsay, exaggeration or fabrication. In contrast with my own grandmother, Regina van Son, who was sent there at roughly the same age and from the same city, Martha Glass survived Theresienstadt. I resolved to take the book abroad with me in the summer and make it my 'holiday task', not forgetting to take a pocket German-English dictionary with me.

Thus it was that as I sat ensconced in

comfortable surroundings in the beautiful French countryside, eating wonderful food and drinking good wine, I found myself preoccupied with the hardships of life in Theresienstadt – the diseases, the periodic de-lousing sessions, the crowded and cramped quarters, the deprivation and misery, and, above all, the constant hunger. The threat of further deportation to the east hung over all the inmates of Theresienstadt at all times, and many thousands of them were sent to their certain deaths. Yes, I know that conditions in the other concentration camps were far worse but, at the time Martha Glass was keeping her diary, the grim reality of daily life was her main concern. It became mine, too, as I laboured over the translation.

However, there were some consolations in Theresienstadt, it seems. There was a form of self-government and, because many outstanding Jewish artists and musicians had been incarcerated there, it was possible to conduct something approaching a cultural life. Martha Glass writes on various occasions about having attended a piano recital or a theatrical or musical performance and about the uplifting effect these events had on the audience. She marvels at the ability of

the performers to rise above their hunger and misery in order to bring pleasure to others, and also probably to meet their own artistic needs.

Another consolation was provided by the fellowship among the inmates, and Martha refers to her room-mates as 'ghetto-sisters'. They marked one another's birthdays by writing little poems to each other or collecting paltry items of food – a potato, a piece of bread – and bestowing them upon the 'birthday child'. Most of these 'sisters' did not live to see Theresienstadt liberated.

Martha Glass had another element in her favour. One of her two daughters was married to a non-Jew and managed somehow to survive in Berlin, together with her husband and daughter. It was from that address that small packages containing items of food were sent to Martha every few months, and these obviously played a role in her survival. She also notes in her diary that she shared some of her food with her room-mates.

Although the experience of delving into the sombre world of Theresienstadt while on holiday in Europe was surreal – to say the least – I feel enriched by having been able to view that world through Martha Glass's eyes. It gave me an insight into something of what countless others – including my own grandmother – must have gone through. Now all that remains is to see that this important book gets published.

**Dorothea Shefer-Vanson**

### SEARCH NOTICES

Who remembers **Stella Chapman** from the World Press Service and Ritz Translation Bureau in Manchester in 1938-44? She was very helpful to a family of Austrian refugees from Vienna: Norbert, Sophie and Erwin Roth. Please contact Evelyn Adunka at Deihardsteingasse 18/9, 1160 Vienna, or at adunkacm@utanet.at or adunkacm@gmx.net

If you have info on hard labour during WW2 in Christianstadt (Krzystkowice) for **Die Dynamit Aktien Gesellschaft** or lived in Christianstadt (Krzystkowice) before WW2 please contact Harry Breman at Timorstraat 70, 8022NE Zwolle, Holland or at harmkarstjohannesbreman@hotmail.nl

**Gertmann, Felix and wife Josepha Spitzer** arrived from Vienna in 1940. She, possibly a PhD, died in 1986 in Camden. Any info please to Rosemary Hoffman atrosiehoff@inform.f9.co.uk

I am seeking the names of 12 children at the **Grunewald Children's Centre** in Bad

Saarow (Brandenburg) in November 1938. The children were mistreated on Kristallnacht but eventually returned to their parents or foster homes. One of them possibly went to the UK by Kindertransport. Any info please to Yvonne Stern at yvonne.stern17@gmail.com

London-based film-maker wishes to contact any German-Jewish refugees who came to England via the Kindertransport and had any acquaintance with **Wilfrid Israel** (1899-1943). Please contact Tom Hamilton at thomas.hamilton65@btinternet.com

We are looking for stories for a BBC1 programme. If you experienced life at **Kitchener Camp** or have any knowledge of life there, please contact Lily Davis on 01892 675 649 or at lily.davis@bbc.co.uk

Inspire, an agency dedicated to producing campaigns/events/films, are working with Hasmonian High School on a project on **Rabbi Dr Schonfeld**. I am seeking to locate children he brought primarily over to

the UK. Any info please to Clive Braude at clive@youinspire.me.uk

I am researching a documentary film on the **SS Warszawa**, which brought children from Poland in 1939. Some were in Zpaszyn camp from November 1938 until the last boat left in August 1939. My father, Jack Reich, and his sister Helen Reich came to London on this boat on 29 August 1939. Would members who also came to England on the **SS Warszawa** in 1939 please contact Alan Goldin at alan@goldinfilms.co

We are preparing a film on **what Allied leaders knew about the Holocaust** during WW2 and seeking letters, postcards, telegrams, etc from Jews seeking to emigrate to the UK, USA or elsewhere from Nazi-occupied territories. Please contact Claire Perrier de la Bathie, Cinétévé Production, 4 Quai des Célestins, 75004 Paris, France or on +33 (0)1 48 04 30 00 or at cpbathie@yahoo.fr