

AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Sigmaringen's secret story

Karl Marx's famous dictum, in his essay *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852) – that history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce – can aptly be applied to the two occasions on which the small German town of Sigmaringen made an appearance on the stage of modern European history. Sigmaringen is an attractive small town of just under 20,000 inhabitants, situated on the upper reaches of the River Danube in the south-western *Land* of Baden-Württemberg, south of Tübingen and about 25 miles north of Lake Constance.

The town is dominated by Sigmaringen Castle, which was built on the Schlossberg (castle hill) high above the Danube and was until 1850 the seat of the house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. The house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was a cadet branch of the Hohenzollern dynasty that ruled first Brandenburg, then Prussia and finally, after 1871, the German Empire. The house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was Catholic, in sharp contrast to the imperial Hohenzollerns, who were closely associated with the Protestant state of Prussia. That Catholic faith briefly propelled the house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen into the limelight, when it played a small but significant role in the events leading up to the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) and the unification of Germany under the Prussian crown in 1871; that historic development was engineered – brilliantly if ruthlessly – by Otto von Bismarck, Prime Minister of Prussia from 1862 and Chancellor of the German Empire from 1871 to 1890.

Under Bismarck, Prussia had in 1866 defeated Austria, its longstanding rival for primacy among the German states, and had established its dominance over the North German Confederation, comprising all the states of northern Germany. Bismarck now prepared for war with France and for the incorporation of the southern states into a united Germany. The pretext for hostilities arose when Queen Isabella of Spain was forced to abdicate in 1868 and the Spanish throne became vacant. It was proposed that Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, a Catholic, should take the throne. This alarmed the French, who were already dismayed by the



Sigmaringen Castle

stunning Prussian victory over Austria and the emergence across the Rhine of a powerful Prussia ruling over the greater part of Germany; they now faced the prospect of a relative of the King of Prussia, Wilhelm of Hohenzollern, taking the throne of Spain across their southern border.

Leopold accepted the Spanish throne, and France and Prussia prepared for war. But when Count Benedetti, the French ambassador to Prussia, approached King Wilhelm of Prussia on 11 July 1870 at the spa of Ems and asked him to refuse his consent to Leopold's candidature to the throne of Spain, Wilhelm consented, agreeing to order Leopold to withdraw. This appeared to be a triumph for France and Emperor Napoleon III. But the French ministers overplayed their hand, by instructing Benedetti to seek another audience with the Prussian king and to secure from him further guarantees and an undertaking that Leopold would never be allowed to assume the Spanish throne, assurances that on 13 July Wilhelm refused to give.

When Bismarck, in despair at Prussia's apparent climb-down in face of French pressure, received a dispatch from Ems to Berlin reporting on this second meeting, he seized his chance. He issued a cunningly doctored version of the dispatch to the press, making it appear to the German public that the French ambassador had approached the Prussian king in a high-handed fashion and to the French public that the Prussian king had abruptly rebuffed the French ambassador. With public opinion in both countries inflamed, war became unavoidable. The Prussian armies advanced into France and won a decisive

victory at Sedan (1 September 1870). Napoleon III was taken prisoner and abdicated. On 18 February 1871, in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, King Wilhelm of Prussia was declared German Emperor, and the unification of Germany was complete. No prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen ever sat on the Spanish throne.

In September 1944, Sigmaringen became the setting for an extraordinary episode in the Second World War, when it witnessed the final days of the Vichy government that had ruled that part of France not occupied by the Germans in 1940, until it fled in face of the Allied invasion of France in 1944. Marshal Philippe Pétain, the head of the collaborationist Vichy state, Pierre Laval, his prime minister from April 1942 until August 1944, along with a number of their political associates, were evacuated from France by Hitler and sent to Sigmaringen, where their government-in-exile lived out its final months. The farcical spectacle of a government with no country to govern and ministers with no ministerial powers to exercise combined bizarrely with the poisonous cocktail of fascism, collaborationist adulation of the Nazis and virulent anti-Semitism that constituted the politics of the Vichy elite. This band of vipers was housed in the castle at Sigmaringen, where Pétain, sulking in his tent, refused to take any part in politics or to have any contact with Laval, with whom he was by then united in mutual loathing.

The story of Vichy's last months in Sigmaringen, from September 1944 until April 1945, is the subject of Pierre Assouline's novel *Sigmaringen*, published by Gallimard in Paris in 2014. The novel, which is perhaps of greater historical than literary merit, is narrated by Julius Stein, butler to the Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen and in charge of the castle's household arrangements. So wedded to his function is he that he seems, like his model, the butler Stevens in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, to have little character beyond it. Through Stein's eyes, we observe the daily life of the Vichy politicians and their hangers-on, their intrigues, their self-deluding hopes of a triumphant return to France on the coat-tails of a German victory, and their gradual descent into desperation as the Allied

Sigmaringen's secret story continued

armies approach.

With Pétain maintaining that he was being held prisoner in Sigmaringen and with Laval also refusing to exercise his functions, the leadership of the Vichy government-in-exile, officially called the French Governmental Commission, fell to a second-rank figure, Fernand de Brinon, previously Vichy's representative to the German High Command in Paris, who became President of the Commission. He was condemned to death after the war and executed. Among those vying for influence and position was Jacques Doriot, an ex-Communist who had founded the far-right Parti Populaire Français in 1936. Doriot was an activist; he had fought on the Eastern Front with a unit of French volunteers in German uniform and after September 1944 sought to secure a leading role for his party in the government-in-exile. Doriot was not based in Sigmaringen; on 22 February 1945 he was killed on his way there, when his car was attacked by Allied aircraft.

A rival to Doriot was Marcel Déat, who had been appointed Minister of Labour and National Solidarity when Laval formed his government in 1942. Déat, an ex-Socialist, had created a political party, the Rassemblement National Populaire, in 1941; it was collaborationist, anti-Semitic and fascist in its ideology, though less extreme than Doriot's PPF. Déat maintained close relations with Otto Abetz, formerly the German Ambassador in Paris, who remained an influential figure in Sigmaringen. Déat was sentenced to death after the war but fled to Italy, where he was hidden by a religious order, the Institution Jeanne-d'Arc in Turin; he lived there, surrounded by nuns, until his death in 1955. The head of the RNP's youth wing, Roland Gaucher, was also in Sigmaringen. Sentenced to five years in prison after the war, Gaucher was later one of the co-founders of the Front National, with Jean-Marie Le Pen, in October 1972. He soon fell out with Le Pen, whom he considered too moderate; ironically, the recent electoral successes of the Front National owe much to the rejection of Le Pen's extremism by its current, seemingly more moderate leader, his daughter, Marine Le Pen.

A third significant figure in Sigmaringen was Joseph Darnand, who had played an active role in extreme and violent organisations of

AJR unveils plaque to honour Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck

The AJR has unveiled a plaque in memory of Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck. The plaque was unveiled at Colmore Court, 283 Watford Way, London NW4 4TQ. Rabbi Baeck lived in a house on this site from 1945 until his death in 1956.

Rabbi Baeck was President of the umbrella organisation of German Jewry, the Reich Representation of German Jews, from 1933 to his deportation to Theresienstadt in 1943. He refused various offers from the US to escape Nazi oppression and was quoted as saying 'I will go when I am the last Jew alive in Germany.' After the war he moved to London, where he became Chairman of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

AJR Trustee Frank Harding said 'It is an enormous honour for us to commemorate the life of Rabbi Baeck, one of the principal Jewish thinkers of the 20th Century whose work has helped shape the British-Jewish community.'



(photo from left) Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg; Joanna Millan, AJR Trustee; Vivienne Kaye, great-niece of Leo Baeck; Rabbi Colin Eimer; Jim Dreyfuss, great-grandson of Leo Baeck; Michael Newman, CEO, AJR; Ellen Dreyfuss, wife of Jim Dreyfuss; Rabbi Harry Jacobi; (behind) Emma Watts, Notting Hill Housing (NHH); Rabbi Deborah Kahn-Harris; Ellie Desborough, NHH; Leonie Bartlett, NHH; Councillor Alison Cornelius, Deputy Mayor, Barnet; Frank Harding, AJR Trustee

the far right in the 1930s. Darnand founded the collaborationist militia known as the Milice (see Louis Malle's 1974 film *Lacombe Lucien*), which conducted operations against the French Resistance. Darnand, who held the rank of an SS officer, was captured in Italy, sent back to France and executed. Among the hangers-on in Sigmaringen were Vichyite literati like Lucien Rebatet, author of the anti-Semitic pamphlet *Les Décombres* (*The Ruins*) (1942), who was sentenced to death after the war but had his sentence commuted to a spell of imprisonment, from which he was freed in 1952 thanks to the amnesty of 1951. Now regarded in some quarters as a major literary figure, Louis-Ferdinand Céline was already famous before the war for his novel *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (*Journey to the End of the Night*) (1932); sentenced to a year's imprisonment in absentia, after the amnesty he returned to France where, without renouncing his crude anti-Semitism, he published, among other works, a book about his time at Sigmaringen: *D'un château l'autre* (*Castle to Castle*) (1957).

Anthony Grenville

AJR Chief Executive
Michael Newman

Finance Director
David Kaye

Heads of Department
Karen Markham *Human Resources & Administration*
Sue Kurlander *Social Services*
Carol Hart *Community & Volunteer Services*

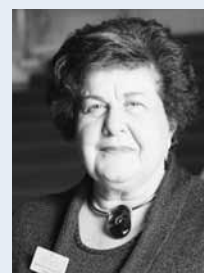
AJR Journal
Dr Anthony Grenville *Consultant Editor*
Dr Howard Spier *Executive Editor*
Karin Pereira *Secretarial / Advertisements*

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

Holocaust survivors recognised in New Year's honours list

Ten Holocaust survivors have been recognised in the Queen's New Year's honours list for their contributions to Holocaust education.

Agnes Grunwald-Spier and Susan Pollack were made Members of the Order of the British Empire (MBE). Lily Ebert, Chaim Ferster, Jack Kagan, Freddie Knoller, Rudi Oppenheimer, Ivor Perl, Renee Salt and Zigi Shipper received the British Empire Medal (BEM).



Agnes Grunwald-Spier has been awarded an MBE for services to Holocaust education

REMEMBERING ELEANOR RATHBONE, 1872-1946

Readers of the *AJR Journal* are no doubt familiar with the name of Eleanor Rathbone, the Independent MP who became renowned for her campaigning on behalf of Jewish refugees in and from Nazi-occupied Europe before and during the Second World War. I make no apologies for her reappearance in this issue of the *Journal* as 2 January 2016 marks the 70th anniversary of her death.

During her working life Eleanor made an invaluable contribution to the betterment of many aspects of British life and society, not least as the architect of the family allowance. In recognition of the latter, a Blue Plaque was placed outside her former home, Tufton Court, Tufton Street, London, in 1986 and she was one of six pioneering women whose image appeared on a set of commemorative stamps in 2008. Her social and welfare work has led to many community and university buildings being named after her in and around Liverpool and annual memorial lectures have been endowed in her name. She and her father, also a social reformer, are commemorated on a Blue Plaque outside the family home, 'Greenbank', in Liverpool, and Somerville College, Oxford, Eleanor's alma mater, are naming a room after her in January 2016. How sad then that her refugee work, and the commitment she made to the rescue and welfare of Jews, people with whom she had no personal or religious connection, have not received the same public recognition at home. Notable exceptions are the new centre at the Jewish Care facility in Friern Barnet, named in her honour, and, thanks to Lesley Urbach's hard work, a commemorative plaque was unveiled at Hoop Lane cemetery in October 2013.

From gaining her seat in parliament



Photo courtesy of Phillip Norton Collins

in 1929 Eleanor became, it has been argued, the most effective backbench politician of her era, continuing the work she had begun in 1897 as the voice of the underrepresented in society, regardless of race, religion or gender.

Eleanor was never afraid to put her head above the parapet and was the first female politician to warn her fellow MPs, in April 1933, of the threat posed by Hitler's newly elected regime. She recognised both the danger to world peace and the threat to the lives of Jews and others, whose only crime, as she described it, was to belong to a 'particular race or religion or profess certain political views'.

A staunch anti-fascist and anti-appeaser, she watched the political situation deteriorating in Europe and protested against the atrocities aimed at German Jewry and the implementation of draconian legislation intended to dispossess and disenfranchise them. In 1935-36 she was party to a campaign that sought to impose an economic and social boycott on Germany but, with King Edward VIII urging the British Legion to go there 'and make friends with the Germans', her efforts were doomed to failure. She saw a human disaster looming ahead, precipitated by the annexation of Austria, the Munich agreement and the occupation of the Sudetenland, but it was the events of Kristallnacht that were the turning point. Eleanor was thrown almost headlong into a new refugee crisis – vastly different from helping rescue children from the combat zone of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. There was no doubt in her mind that Britain had a

personal responsibility towards the Czech refugees and, through her contact with the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia, she travelled to Prague in early January 1939 to personally assess the refugee crisis, returning home to campaign on behalf of the refugees.

Eleanor Rathbone was, above all, an exceptional human being who would never have contemplated being a bystander of the Nazi atrocities and who, in her own determined way, took action. In November 1938 she established, at her own expense, the Parliamentary Committee on Refugees and gathered around her a cross-party, voluntary committee of over 200 members, spearheading their activities and working closely with the Board of Deputies of British Jews, acting as a conduit between them and government officials. She was an active member of numerous other Jewish and non-Jewish refugee organisations, she proposed and led deputations, asked more than 80 parliamentary questions on internment alone, doggedly challenged ministers, visited many of the internment camps, enlisted support from any quarter she thought could help her cause, and took up innumerable individual cases, responding personally and kindly to distressed refugees and their relatives. Her second committee, the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, attempted, unsuccessfully, to obtain news of the atrocities more widely publicised through the BBC and the press and to engage the government in small-scale rescue schemes. The effect on her health was immense and contributed to her untimely death.

It was Children and Youth Aliyah of Great Britain who approached her friend, Elizabeth Macadam, in early 1946, proposing a lasting memorial to Eleanor in Palestine, as it then was. The outcome was Beit Rathbone in Magdiel, inaugurated in October 1949, and the building still stands proudly as a testimony to Eleanor's devotion to the refugees. Plans are underway to re-dedicate the building in 2016, just one of the many events that the Remembering Eleanor Rathbone Group – another purely voluntary committee, but made up of just two individuals – are arranging to celebrate and commemorate Eleanor and all her achievements. Organisations, schools, universities and individuals, including members of the Rathbone family and parliamentarians, are working with and supporting us to ensure that Eleanor receives the recognition she so richly deserves. We hope the Jewish community will embrace this opportunity as we all owe Eleanor a special debt of gratitude. Without her personal sacrifices and commitment, Jewish refugees would not have had such a powerful and humanitarian advocate and ally during the 1930s and 1940s.

Susan Cohen

www.rememberingeleanorathbone.wordpress.com

WELCOME TO BRITAIN? REFUGEES, THEN AND NOW, IN MEMORY OF ELEANOR RATHBONE, 1872-1946, THE 'MP FOR REFUGEES'

An All-Day Conference will be held on World Refugee Day
Monday 20 June 2016
at

King's College, London, Strand Campus

courtesy of the Institute of Contemporary British History
organised by the Remembering Eleanor Rathbone Group
in conjunction with

Jcore • The Wiener Library • CARA • The Parkes Institute

• The Institute of Contemporary British History • Refugee Week • The Refugee Council

For further information, please contact Dr Susan Cohen at drsusancohen@gmail.com
or Lesley Urbach at lcurbach@aol.com

www.rememberingeleanorathbone.wordpress.com

A milestone: 50 years of diplomatic relations between Israel and Germany, 1965-2015

This jubilee, perceived today as self-evident and normal, is interlaced with an intricate, multi-disciplinary structure. The mutual succession of needs, wishes, interests and human nature have almost entirely overcome historical barriers which merely a few years ago would have been considered impassable.

Suffice it to recall the initial vehement reaction with which dialogues over reparations were met just 15 years earlier – mass demonstrations and storming of the Knesset inflamed by Menachem Begin. They were an expression of bitter public reactions caused by the *Shoah* aftermath – this singular calamity in terms of magnitude, agony and human suffering. But by the summer of 1965, things looked a little different: loud protests still sounded and the West German Ambassador, Rolf Pauls, while presenting his charter to the President of Israel, Yitzhak Ben Zvi, was greeted by a clamorous demonstration. But this wave of protest gradually succumbed.

This is an intriguing episode in every aspect: how, in spite of everything, were these two countries able to resolve a framework of relations so rapidly? This question has been contemplated extensively and there will always be those who will devote more time and methodical effort to its solution. But it appears that even as co-spectators we can – indeed we must – relate to its various aspects:

A brief history of time

The great philosopher Yesha'yahu Leibowitz is on record as claiming that in human perceptions, as we know them from time immemorial, nothing has changed except for the awareness of time: we think faster, we absorb faster, and we communicate faster than our forefathers. It is therefore conceivable that sensations of pain and suffering will be repressed faster than subsequent experiences. We have merely to recollect the centuries-old ban imposed by leaders of our community on Spain for its banishment of Jews: any suffering it may have caused is surely dwarfed by the *Shoah* catastrophe.

A leadership of vision

The leaders of both Israel and Germany were men of standing, who were able to transcend past calamities and current distress, squarely face the future and shape an approach of forbearance. Although neither of the two giants – Ben-Gurion and Adenauer – was still in power in the year relations were established, it was their spirit which guided their successors, notwithstanding opposition on the home front in Israel and concerns in West Germany of a likely recognition of East Germany by the Arab states.

A small measure of justice

Siegfried Moses, an advocate and leading member of German Zionism, later Israel's first State Comptroller and President of the Association of German and Central European Jews, laid the legal and moral infrastructure in 1944 for the material claims of the Jewish people against postwar Germany. This was the cornerstone for the establishment of the 'Claims Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany' in 1951, headed by Dr Nahum Goldmann. From the outset, the Conference steered negotiations with Germany over reparations alongside state-level negotiations between Germany and Israel, headed by Moshe Sharett, which effected the 1952 reparations agreement.

Undoubtedly, the meticulous execution of the terms of agreement, which contributed so significantly to strengthening Israel's paltry infrastructure, was to become a valued component in the comprehensive relationship between the two countries.

Realpolitik at play

Both countries prudently recognised the significance of establishing relations in *Realpolitik* currency: Germany, in receiving legitimisation and recognition by joining the family of nations and a developing state with scientific, economic, technological and defence potential and all it entailed; and Israel, which identified the advantages of joining a European state, the capstone of the European Community, an economic and world power, a friendly arena and a faithful and constant partner in a diverse and close relationship.

A cultural and ethical affinity

The cultural and ethical communities of Israel and Germany share a rich and diverse common denominator spanning a tradition of generations of accomplishments. Despite its abrupt curtailment with the rise to power of the Nazi regime eight decades ago, it endured and even produced successors. Their vitality and vigour are the oxygen that nourishes both countries, alongside their growing mutual curiosity. A testament to that are the exchange students, thousands of German youngsters who stay in Israel for extended periods while playing active social roles, studying the language and other targeted studies, and, of course, the fruitful scientific co-operation between the two countries.

A human-pragmatic affinity

An untold number of Israelis have applied for German citizenship devoid of any reticence or inhibitions and thousands are swarming to Germany, finding it a forthcoming host in every respect. Apart from the clear economic advantages

in the welfare country, Israelis enjoy a peaceful and tranquil environment under the auspices of an enlightened constitution – whose first clause declares the irrevocable right of human dignity. The dreadful past, though seemingly non-existent, is far from repressed and is widely commemorated by the German state and many of its citizens by anti-racial legislation and the courageous and enlightened leadership of President Joachim Gauck and Chancellor Angela Merkel. This is particularly salient in light of racist and anti-Israel sentiments engulfing Europe, often whitewashing anti-Semitic expressions.

It is far from my intention to paint a rosy picture. But against the background of such a gloomy reality in Europe, Germany's enlightened and courageous leadership shines. The German and Central European community in Israel played a significant role in building bridges and strengthening ties with 'the other' Germany – a major contribution of the Israeli foreign service. The economic-fiscal guidelines, the framework of the reparations agreements, negotiations and their implementation under the direction of Pinhas Shin'ar and Giora Yoseftal and their peers, were the bedrock for the efforts and achievements in Germany and Israel. Most of our ambassadors to Germany, beginning with Arthur Ben-Nathan, who set exceptionally high standards for the task, were of Central European roots. The same applied to directors-general and senior civil servants of the Foreign Ministry, who also played a cardinal role in shaping relations with Germany. Their intimate knowledge of this arena and its culture contributed significantly to influencing these relations, for which they earned the respect of their German peers.

The German side too excelled in its sensitivity and efforts, acknowledging the unique circumstances and their subsequent obligations. The guiding principles of its administration were commitment and an ethical enactment, without shouldering the guilt but with an underlying sense of responsibility for Israel's destiny and prosperity. It is reasonable to assume that relations with Germany and the staunch co-operation with its leadership will continue to be an indispensable pillar of Israel's foreign policy and its security in the future. This is despite an increasing public outcry calling on the German Government not to overlook the situation in the Occupied Territories and to join vociferous European reservations over Israel's policy there.

Reuven Merhav

This article first appeared in Yakinton, No. 276, Chanukah 2015. Yakinton, based in Tel Aviv, is a bimonthly publication in Hebrew and partly German.

From Chanukah to Purim

We are currently in the intermediate period between the festivals of Chanukah and Purim. Neither is an especially important festival in terms of the *Torah* – which of course mentions neither – in terms of the agricultural cycle, or in terms of the spiritual need for inner review and penitence. But both have a lot to teach us about Jewish history and about the Jewish present – and this is independent of the fact that the actual historicity of neither festival can be asserted. They may be based on myths and legends – one of them is not even mentioned in the *Tanakh* at all – but they explain a lot about how Jews feel. Perhaps especially those in Europe.

Put very, very briefly: The Purim story as told in the *Megillat Esther* describes a plan for a total genocide of all Jews – men, women and children, old and young – to be carried out over an entire empire stretching out over many occupied provinces (including, presumably, the province of Judea, from which Mordechai had been forcibly transported). It really didn't matter who the Jews were or what they had done, or whether or not they were involved in any alleged insult to Haman, the descendant of Agag the Amalekite ... all that mattered was that he wanted to wipe them out, physically, to kill them, to massacre them, and that he had the authority of the government to do this.

The Chanukah story, as described in the First and Second Books of the Maccabees, describes a plan whereby all Jews in the Jewish kingdom should be compelled to acknowledge their human ruler as their divine ruler too. King Antiochus IV of Syria desired to be worshipped as a god – apparently this was quite normal for the times and most of the people he encountered saw no problem with this, just adding the latest king to their list of deities; even many of the inhabitants of Judea were prepared to make this compromise for the sake of peace and stability. After all, we in England see no problem with having an image of the Queen on bank notes and postage stamps, or her picture hanging in public buildings. Only

Alas, the results of both forms of tyranny characterise Jewish life in Germany today. There is very little quantity left and very little quality. In terms of quantity, entire Bundesländer have almost no Jewish communities and those which exist can be counted in the scores or the hundreds but not thousands; in terms of quality, there are few educated Jews, few theologians or liturgists or philosophers working in the field of Judaism and Jewish studies.

a group of rebels from a family of priests were stimulated to rise against what they saw as a heresy – the establishment of a human partner to the only, invisible God.

What relevance does any of this have for us today? Only this: In mainland Europe – specifically in Germany, but one could add Poland and Hungary and the Balkans and the Baltic states and others – Hitler and the Nazis were the successors of Haman: they desired to wipe out Jews, to kill them, massacre them, remove them from the face of the earth and leave them either under it in mass graves or floating as smoke high above it. Whereas Stalin and the Communists formed the successors of Antiochus – they were quite prepared to let Jews live, so long as they effectively gave up their Judaism and raised the Great Comrade to be the equivalent of God – the Party was the fount of all wisdom and their saviour dwelt in the Kremlin rather than in any Temple.

Alas, the results of both forms of tyranny characterise Jewish life in Germany today. There is very little quantity left and very little quality. In terms of quantity, entire *Bundesländer* have almost no Jewish communities and those which exist can be counted in the scores or the hundreds but not thousands; in terms of quality, there are few

educated Jews, few theologians or liturgists or philosophers working in the field of Judaism and Jewish studies. (Of course, there are many others working in culture or science!) There are some polemicists and 'publicists' and chroniclers but few historians (chroniclers are not the same as historians, who not only chronicle past events but also analyse and contextualise them). There are few creative Jewish thinkers and often those few there are get marginalised, don't get the positions in universities and institutions. There is relatively little work on creative liturgies (as opposed to reprinting and transliterating older ones).

The Past dominates our thinking – the pasts of the Hamans and the Antiochuses of the past century. Not surprisingly, this leads also to a concern that future generations will not find in Judaism the answers they will be seeking when coming to terms with the decades to come. (I personally believe the answers are there and can be found – let us not forget that the area now known as Germany was the country not only of Goethe and Heine but also of Rashi, Rabbenu Gershom, Jehuda heChasid, the Tosafists and the Reformers – Judaism lived through regular adaptation and doses of pragmatism allied with idealism and faith.)

Am I being too pessimistic? I hope so. This is, of course, only a personal view and one could argue that we should be grateful the glass is half full rather than grumbling about it being half empty. At annual Limmud conferences some interesting speakers and intellectuals and spiritual leaders may be encountered. The exceptions, perhaps, that prove the rule. With Christianity in Europe now finding itself under threat from radical Islam or 'Islamism', it is going to be interesting to see how Judaism develops too – to define itself and, where necessary, to defend itself!

Walter Rothschild

Rabbi Dr Walter Rothschild was born in Bradford, UK, was ordained by Leo Baeck College, and has lived in Berlin since 1998 serving mainly communities around Germany and Austria.



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

SPECIAL 70TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Sir – The early arrival of the *AJR Journal* was welcome and gave one a chance during the holiday season to follow the interesting resume of the early days. It just shows how far we have come since 1938 and earlier.

But I was disappointed that there was no mention of the war years and of the fact that many – in fact 10,000 men and women, all refugees – gave their youths and their lives to fight for this country.

We willingly volunteered and served for quite a few years despite the fact that none of us had been naturalised but had sworn to serve King and Country.

Just the very fact that these refugees were part and parcel of the British forces was enough to make us feel British and proud to serve. But some of the most amazing events and brave deeds they committed have been recorded in many books, including by the historian Helen Fry (*The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens*) and in some books written by ex-service persons.

I can't be alone in this surely? But after four years of service in the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) and being married to an ex-Army Commando – serving ten years between us – I certainly feel very much at home and comfortable and can hardly believe my past sometimes – especially as my three children, as well as my seven grandchildren, were born here. We are now well retired and settled for the few years ahead of us.

And we are still in touch with the few of our service colleagues still alive, never regretting our past action to take part in the war. This is despite the fact that both our fathers were officers and were wounded in the First World War on the German side and we know they would have been proud of our actions.

Whilst writing, I would like to add that since the early 1930s I have had a number of autographs and photos of, and handwritten cards by, some of the 'notable' people of those days: Erna Sachs, Alexander Girardi, Charles Kullmann and Dr Ernst Lothar, to name just a few. Are there any collectors who would like these? If so, I would be happy

to pass them on.

Alice Anson alice@hwcentregmail.com

Sir – Thank you for the January *AJR Journal* with its many moving insights into our history and the tragedy that befell the Jews of Europe during the 1930s and 1940s – and the heart-breaking stories of the Kindertransport children and their families who suffered and lost so much and so many precious people 70 years ago. We still feel the hurt of all they have endured.

Could I ask that the story of the *Lagerkinder*, such as my husband Alfred and his family and extended family, who too were included in the 'Final Solution', be covered in the *Journal* too? The British Government agreed to 1,000 healthy, under-16-year-old concentration camp survivors coming to the UK. In the event, no more than 730 could be found, my husband being one of them – he arrived here wearing a pair of ladies shorts and a jacket with no possessions.

Could the *Journal* find space to include the stories of the history and achievements of these survivors of the Holocaust? There were not many of them and few survivors remain. It would be sad if their stories were not recorded. The *Journal* could give them a voice.

Shirley Huberman, *AJR Brighton and Hove Sarid Group*

Sir – Congratulations on your Special 70th Anniversary Issue. I enjoyed it very much.

I was particularly pleased to see the comment on G. Schmerling's letter in 1984 – 'typical of that most valued and esteemed breed, the controversial correspondent who delights in arousing disagreement by espousing a provocative point of view'. I hope I have been able to fulfil that role in the last decade or so and would like to continue to do so in 2016.

Let's start with your January 2016 letters' pages. Looking at E. G. Kolman's letter from a British point of view rather than a Jewish one, it makes sense that the Royal Family does not visit Israel for the reason he states: *Realpolitik*. The British cannot afford to upset the Muslim Arab states because we need their oil.

In another letter, Fred Stern criticises Churchill's pronouncement 'Collar the lot!', when it was decided by the British Government to intern refugees. Again, let's look at it from the British point of view. There may have been some German spies hiding among the refugees. How were they to be singled out? 'Collar the lot!' seemed a good solution. Perhaps in the New Year we too should be more careful when letting in refugees. Are there any Islamic fundamentalists and terrorists hiding among them?

Lastly, there is Frank Bright's letter. I think his accusation that the Arabs are as guilty of the murder of his parents as the Nazis is, obviously, an exaggeration. However, I agree with him that the Arabs want Israel destroyed. Thank goodness Israel has an ally in the United States – even with Barack Obama as president. Interestingly, the Democrats have never been as sympathetic towards Israel as the Republicans – remember Jimmy Carter? Yet, oddly, the Jewish vote tends to go to the Democrats. Over here, Israel seems to be a more decisive factor when we vote – which must make the Labour Party, with Jeremy Corbyn as its leader, almost a non-runner for us.

Peter Phillips, *Loudwater, Herts*

REFUGEES ON THE ZEEMANSHOOP

Sir – On 14 May 1940, 46 men and women, probably all Jewish, escaped from the Netherlands aboard the Dutch lifeboat *Zeemanshoop*. They were picked up the following day by the British destroyer *HMS Venomous* and taken to Dover.

Last May, on the 75th anniversary of the rescue, 100 family members from three continents assembled in The Hague. The ensuing publicity in the Dutch media regarding this meeting helped trace a further seven more passengers. However, help is now needed to trace the last eight passengers: Jacob Meier (Mayer?, a 'merchant in London'), Singer, the 'Arnheim' family, the Czech P. Zajicek, and Van Wezel.

If readers have any further information, could they please contact me at the address below.

Bill Forster
billforster@holywellhousepublishing.co.uk

'PECUNIARY VALUE OF JEWISH SCIENTISTS'

Sir – I refer to Sir Arnold Wolfendale's letter in your January issue about the pecuniary value of Jewish scientists.

In the early 1960s I interviewed Sir Ernest Chain, co-discoverer of penicillin, for the BBC. The subject was new penicillins then being developed. Chain

warned forcefully against indiscriminate use: it was obvious, he said, that this would result in the development of resistant strains of bugs.

When I switched off my recording machine he told me that when penicillin had first proved its effectiveness he had asked the British authorities to register the patent. They had refused. A lifesaving drug should be free to all, they said. He had had a long argument and remarks with a clearly anti-Semitic undertone implying 'You Jews always think of money' had been made.

'But you know what happened?', Chain told me. 'An American company registered the drug and millions that should be coming to Britain are now flowing to America!'

And Britain was broke at the time!

Peter Fraenkel, London EC2

REFUGEES IN BRITISH ARMY

Sir – I'm writing an historical novel and would like to appeal to your readers for information.

Did any Jewish refugees from Hitler's Germany or Austria serve in special units like Commandos during WWII? I read somewhere that many of the men of Number 3 Commando who took part in the Dieppe Raid in August 1942 were Jewish. Is this true and, if so, were there British-born as well as refugee volunteers? My cousin Leslie Philip Tobias was killed in the Second Battle of Monte Cassino and is buried in Italy.

Please contact me at henrytobias2646@gmail.com

Henry Tobias, Maale Adumim, Israel

FORGOTTEN FIGURE

Sir – I am giving some talks to AJR groups and elsewhere on Sir Isaac Shoenberg (1880-1963). He played a key role in the development of television broadcasting but his name is largely forgotten.

Sir Isaac was a migrant from Russia who moved to England before the First World War. He helped German engineers get out of Nazi Germany during the 1930s and I wonder if any readers know anything about this?

Lesley Urbach, lurbach@aol.com

BERLIN JEWISH PHONEBOOK

Sir – I'm trying to pull together some research on the Berlin Jewish Phonebook – known as the *Jüdisches Adressbuch für Gross-Berlin* – from 1931. This was reprinted by Arani in 1994, of which I have found a PDF.

I'm interested in finding out more about the book. Why was it put together? Is it well known? Any information on the text, its historical origins and publication would be much appreciated.

Matthew Harle

*Birkbeck College, University of London,
matthewharle@gmail.com*

REUNITED AT LAST

Sir – For just one magical moment, it felt like the intervening 74 years – with all their rich and redolent history – had never happened.

Professor Leslie Brent and his wife Carol entered the restaurant where we were eating before *The Last Train to Tomorrow* in search of my 90-year-old mother, Ruth (née Boronow) Danson.



Ruth Danson and Leslie Brent at last year's AJR Kristallnacht Memorial Service

Although there had recently been some brief correspondence, mainly in relation to Ruth's 90th, for which Leslie had contributed an entry in a book of memories, they hadn't seen each other since 1941 when, as refugees, they had been in the same class at Bunce Court, Anna Essinger's progressive school in Kent, later evacuated to Trench Hall, Shropshire.

They recognised one another instantly and, as they embraced as 'old' acquaintances, it was as if all present were transported back with them to the special realm of the school, about which I'd heard so much, so fondly, so often.

Susanne, wife of the woodwork teacher at Bunce Court, the late Hans Meyer, was partially instrumental in the reunion coming about. She and Leslie were very close and they had kept in touch after the war.

My mother had recently found in her files an old letter from Susanne and Hans and got back in contact. The women had quickly formed a close friendship and, as my mother had been reading, and loving, *Sunday's Child*, Leslie's autobiography, he was naturally a shared topic of conversation.

We have met up with Leslie and Carol since and it is always just lovely. Some may say that, with Susanne's recent death, the 'Era of Bunce Court' is now forever lost. I, however, am not one of them. It lives palpably on in their everyday lives, their values ... and what they teach us, the next generation, through their example.

*Jacqueline Boronow Danson,
Whitehill, Hampshire*

DOUBLY RELATED

Sir – Your journal has been the catalyst of a whole series of unexpected events lately, some of my letters having cast ripples more widely than I had thought.

In the latest event, your publication

in December of an article by Shelley Savage in the *Tring and District Local History and Museum Society Newsletter* – about years I spent in Tring during the war following evacuation from London – has brought me together with a wonderful bunch of relatives whom I have never had the privilege of meeting before. One of them is bound to be well known to many of your members: Diana Franklin of Sussex University's Centre for German-Jewish Studies.

It turns out that Diana's great-grandmother Anna and my grandmother Bettina were sisters and that Diana's great-grandfather Siegmund and my grandmother were cousins as Siegmund and her great-grandmother were cousins married to each other. So we're sort of doubly related!

Diana's father Gert Loewi and his parents lived in the flat above ours in Nuremberg in 1933, just before our emigration to Yugoslavia. We knew each other really well. Reading about our mutual great-uncle Hermann Loewi in Shelley Savage's article rang a bell with Diana. May only good come of it all.

Margarete Stern, London NW3

AJR TRIP TO ISRAEL

Sir – My wife Mary, a member of the AJR, has a strong affinity with those who were caught up in the maelstrom of the Nazi era, so being invited to take a holiday in Israel would have the bonus of meeting those with common experiences.

I avoid air travel as much as possible and was concerned whether I would be able to cope. Fortunately, the AJR arranged all stages from home – airport, hotel and trips – without which I could not have contemplated this trip. We were accompanied by four delightful AJR members of staff: Rosalind, Carol, Rebecca and the one-and-only Jim Sutherland from Scotland.

We soon made up a friendly group, representing Serbia, Austria, Sweden, Germany, the former Czechoslovakia, Romania, the USA and, of course, the UK.

There were five arranged tours – Western Wall and Tunnels; Hot Springs at Tiberias; Jerusalem Supreme Court, then Yad Vashem or Israel Museum; Independence Hall, Tel Aviv; Jaffa – and much more.

I spoke to many people: everyone wanted a discussion. It's difficult to be lonely in Israel but there are the underprivileged, poor and unemployed who exist in every country.

My thanks to the AJR for arranging the trip and for assisting us with kindness, understanding and ability, and to our close friends, Ernest and Anita Simon,

continued on page 16

ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

At a time of intense upheaval in parts of the globe once under the British Empire, it can be an uncomfortable experience visiting **Tate Britain's 'Artist and Empire'** exhibition (to 10 April 2016), where slavery, war and conquest are portrayed by some of the greatest artists of that time, including **George Stubbs**, **Anthony Van Dyck** and **Johan Zoffany**.

In the first room, Mapping and Marking, cartographers charted oceans, coasts, land and resources, featuring an infinitesimal Britain at the centre with all power radiating out to the rest of the world.

The maps defined trade routes to be colonised in the wake of Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch adventurers and it took many exploratory voyages to develop the trading factories and forts built by the East India Company, which became great cities in themselves. They are like an artistic *satnav* of an unending historical journey.

The achievement of Empire was stunning and artists presented it as a panoply of social factors, not least the subjugation and takeover of indigenous nations, including the Aborigines. There is a striking and rare portrait of a Maori chieftainess, *Harata Rewiri Tarapata*, by **Charles Frederick Goldie**, celebrated painter of the Maori.

A seven-foot painting by Pre-Raphaelite **John Everett Millais**, *The North-West Passage* (1874), depicts an old mariner holding his daughter's hand as she reads from a logbook surrounded by maps, flags and historical pictures. It suggests the concept of Empire being handed down to the next generation. The serious stance of the two and the rare inclusion of a woman hint at the coming dangers to home and country. This painting was a gift by Henry Tate to the national collection.

What can the lens of art tell us about this time? It was not all grandeur and vainglory. **Elizabeth Butler's** *The Remnants of an Army, Jellalabad, January 13, 1842* (1879), expresses defeat: a lone, exhausted rider and an expiring horse in a swirling

desert – a single image of human frailty – while others go for the peacock splendour of exotic dress. Look out for **James Sant's** *Captain Colin Mackenzie* (c 1842) in splendid Moghul robes and turban or **Yousuf Karsh's** *Sir John Buchan, 1st Baron Tweedsmuir, Governor General of Canada* (1937), his angular, Scottish features adorned by a massive headdress of Indian feathers.

But the striking painting of a 102-year-old Indian by **Rudolf Swoboda** (1886) in Queen Elizabeth's royal collection is a tragic face that tells another story of British imperialism. There are self-consciously beautiful paintings like **John Griffiths's** portrait of *A Sannyasi – A Religious Mendicant* (exhibited 1882) or a bare-breasted slave girl on board ship by **J. Webber**. Most moving and realistic are the images of men boarding ships for faraway destinations, desperately holding onto the hands of their loved ones.

Contemporary artists have also reflected on the resonance of Empire today. **Sonia Boyce's** *Lay Back, Keep Quiet and Think of What Makes Britain so Great* (1986) has a wallpaper effect of scattered leaves and iconic images culminating in an astonished ethnic face. It represents a two-way momentum. Today's high profile of Commonwealth artists, particularly the Caribbean Artists' Movement, is its heritage.



Charles Frederick Goldie
Harata Rewiri Tarapata (1906)
Medium: oil paint on canvas

Annely Juda Fine Art

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

CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

A vital resource to historians of the Holocaust

PRELUDE TO THE HOLOCAUST:
POGROM NOVEMBER 1938:

TESTIMONIES FROM 'KRISTALLNACHT'
edited by Ruth Levitt

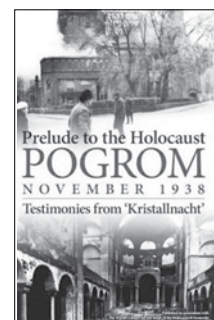
London: Souvenir Press, 2015, published in association with the Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, 754 pp. hardback, illustrated, map, £30.00

At the end of the Kristallnacht Memorial Service in Belsize Square Synagogue last November, the editor of the *AJR Journal* pressed this heavy tome (1 kg. as it turned out) into my hands, admittedly by prior arrangement. The book comprises 356 eyewitness accounts, ranging in length from many pages to a few sentences, of the horrendous events that took place on 9 November 1938 throughout Germany and Austria.

These events clearly did not come about as a spontaneous expression of outrage by the population at the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, an official at the German embassy in Paris, as was claimed by the German Government. Vom Rath had been killed a few days before by a young Polish Jew who was desperate at the plight of his parents, who were stranded in no man's land between Germany and Poland. (Michael Tippett subsequently wrote a deeply moving oratorio about this event: *A Child of Our Time*.)

The pogroms were undoubtedly highly organised and synchronised, with the torching of 1,200 synagogues, the destruction and vandalism of Jewish shops and homes, brutal attacks on Jews both in the streets and in their homes (90 were killed), and the arrest and deportation of some 25,000 men to concentration camps such as Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, where they were treated with the utmost brutality. All was meticulously organised by the German Government and the Nazi Party. (The term 'Kristallnacht' of course derives its name – not liked by everyone – from the heaps of broken glass from Jewish shop windows that filled the pavements. Unbelievably, the Jewish communities were required to foot the bill for their repair, the glass having to be specially imported from Holland ...)

These testimonies, which constitute



an invaluable archive, were solicited and collected by Dr Alfred Wiener, the founder of the Wiener Library, soon after Kristallnacht. By that time, he had already sought asylum in Holland, together with his family and his precious collection of books on anti-Semitism in Germany. These provide powerful, depressing but historically compelling evidence of these atrocities, which presaged the Holocaust. It can indeed be argued that Kristallnacht marked the beginning of the Holocaust, even though the infamous Wannsee Conference took place much later, in January 1942, and the late and much lamented historian David Cesarani, in a posthumous book, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews, 1933-49*, argues, according to a very brief preview in the *Guardian Review* of 2 January 2016, that it was the pressures of war that led to the genocide.

The testimonies were recorded mainly in German, though a few were written in Dutch, English or French and they had been buried in the extensive archives of the Wiener Library. Their format varied. They were provided by professional men – reporters, lawyers, doctors and rabbis – and took the form of interviews, although most were committed to paper as letters or newspaper articles. The mood of the authors varied from anger and fear to defiance and confusion. Whilst the majority were eyewitness reports, some also summarised anti-Semitic actions that had preceded Kristallnacht. They were translated into English by Dr Ruth Levitt, a Research Fellow, assisted by two groups of postgraduate students. The project was made possible through the support of the Dulverton Trust, to which the Wiener Library had been introduced by Sir Malcolm Rifkind.

In his introduction, Ben Barkow, the Director of the Wiener Library, explains how the testimonies were researched and translated. He also gives a compelling account of the origins of the Wiener Library and a profile of the remarkable and farsighted Dr Alfred Wiener. Dr Wiener was a Berlin Jew who, from the 1930s onwards, initiated research into anti-Semitic manifestations in Germany and Austria. He was one of the few who recognised the significance of the rising tide of anti-Semitism and the world owes him a great debt of gratitude for recording and documenting the events that ultimately led to the near annihilation of European Jewry by the German state led by Adolf Hitler. Barkow also expresses his profound gratitude to Dr Levitt, who supervised and brought to fruition this ambitious project despite inadequate funding.

In a further introduction, Dr Levitt recounts how, on 12 November 1938, Nazi leaders assessed the outcome of the operation and discussed further measures for the expulsion, deportation and extermination of the Jewish

population. Kristallnacht therefore marks the beginning of the Holocaust. She goes on to describe how she and her assistants set about the translation of the testimonies. They had been mainly typed, single-spaced, on flimsy paper and some had handwritten annotations. Many had been written in November or December 1938, either from notes or from memory. They had been assigned numbers but not placed in any order and taken to London in 1939, when Dr Wiener wisely decided that Amsterdam was no longer a safe place for him and his precious library.

In the 1960s the reports were bound between red leather boards; they had become increasingly fragile and were on the verge of disintegration. They were microfilmed in 1998. The sheets were rebound in 2008, digitalised and published in German by a German publisher, and a 'November Pogrom' website (www.wienerlibrary.co.uk/novemberpogrom) was created. The future of this vital historical resource had thus been safeguarded.

But what of the testimonies themselves? Numbered from B1 to B2003 (?), they are uneven in terms of content, eyewitness veracity and length. It is clearly impossible to summarise or even quote from them in any depth, but I will briefly focus on B1, written at great length in Delf on 22 November 1938 by 'Herr Oppenheimer, now resident in New York'. His comments go well beyond mere eyewitness reports and include a seemingly well researched and lucidly written account of anti-Semitic actions in the 1930s, including major pogroms and riots, as well a description of the anti-Jewish laws that increasingly restricted the lives of German Jews. (These early riots were totally unknown to this writer who, admittedly, had been ensconced in the Jewish Boys' Orphanage in Pankow-Berlin from 1936 to the end of 1938 and was therefore isolated from the turbulent events of the times.) The question needs to be asked, however, why it was that the majority of my parents' generation proved to be so blind to the dangers that were about to engulf them fatally.

Oppenheimer also describes in detail the ghastly events of Kristallnacht, including the systematic demolition of the Munich synagogue after it had been vandalised and plundered (it could not be burnt because it was closely surrounded by buildings). He stresses the fact that the days between vom Rath's assassination and 9 November had been wholly uneventful and that Hitler, in a major speech, had not referred to the event, thus supporting the view that the pogroms were highly organised in the interval. There is an interesting comment on the reaction of the civilian population to the scenes of destruction all around them: they were generally silent, implying 'a critical attitude'. Those

few who protested were soon silenced by dire threats. This is backed up by B5 (Herr Bettelheim from Aachen), who states that 'the mood of the population was passive ... but abhorring the operation'. Although doors and windows of homes had been smashed, 'there was no looting'.

This book, which covers a wide range of German cities and villages, makes for thoroughly depressing reading: there seems to have been no limit to the brutality of the perpetrators. It is a book that will be a vital resource to historians of the Holocaust and to anyone eager to understand the events of Kristallnacht. Despite some sleepless nights, I feel privileged to have been asked to review it.

Leslie Baruch Brent

A determined struggle for justice

STOLEN LEGACY: NAZI THEFT AND THE QUEST FOR JUSTICE AT KRAUSENSTRASSE 17/18, BERLIN

by Dina Gold

Washington 2015, 270 pp. hardback, \$26.95, ISBN 978-1-62722-970-8

Although the title of this book refers only to the fight for compensation relating to the 'aryanisation' of a large office block in Berlin, this understates the fact that the book covers far more than simply a legal battle. It is also a well researched history of an interesting family.

Dina Gold is the great-great-granddaughter of Heimann Wolff, who founded a fur trade company in 1850. In the first part of the book she describes the rise of the company and the resulting increase in the wealth and status of the family. Although the author herself was born in London in rather different circumstances, she learned about her family's life in pre-war Germany from her mother and grandmother and is able to describe what life was like for a cultured and prominent Jewish family at that time. As well as having a residence in Berlin, the family owned a villa on the Wannsee, of which her mother had many happy childhood memories. Following Hitler's rise to power life changed dramatically. Based on discussions with surviving family members and extensive research, Dina Gold is able to cover in some detail the experiences of her mother and grandparents, first moving to Palestine and eventually settling in England.

Dina's mother Aviva had often talked about a large building in Berlin which had originally been used as head office and storage space for the H. Wolff fur company and was later converted to provide office accommodation for a number of companies. There was a mortgage on the building with the Victoria Insurance Company but after 1933, using pseudo-legal procedures, the Victoria asked for immediate repayments,

continued on page 10

with the result that H. Wolff was forced into selling it at a nominal price. After the war Aviva felt there was little hope of any compensation, especially as the building was now just inside the German Democratic Republic and had become the headquarters of the Reichsbahn. After reunification the building was taken over by the Federal Ministry for Transport.

Dina Gold thought otherwise and, as she had worked in financial journalism and as an investigating reporter for the BBC's *Watchdog* programme, she felt she could put this experience to good use. In July 1990, through an advert in the *AJR Journal*, she selected a firm of London solicitors specialising in restitution claims to assist her. The middle part of the book goes into considerable detail on the battle to obtain evidence that the building had fully belonged to her great-grandfather and had been the subject of what was in fact a forced sale. It also had to be proved

that Aviva was a legal heir. Unfortunately, once the case had eventually been won and damages agreed, there were family disputes which also had to be resolved. One is full of admiration for the author's persistence and courage in pursuing this complex claim, although for many readers there may be too much legalistic detail in this part of the book.

Following the successful completion of the claim, Dina did not stop her investigative work and the final third of the book covers this. She first employed the same determination to establish what had happened to her extended family during the Nazi period and one chapter is headed 'Those who survived and those who did not'. She then concentrates on her great-uncle Fritz, who was not only Jewish but had been a pre-war Communist. He had refused to leave Germany and nothing was known of his fate. With great difficulty she was able to

piece together his story as one of the Jews still in Berlin during the war but eventually joining 1,500 others in March 1943 on the last transport to Auschwitz. He was murdered there shortly after he arrived.

Finally, the author determined to find out more about those responsible for the injustices her family had suffered under the Nazis, and in particular the role of the Victoria Insurance Company. This had many Jewish clients before 1933 and had a Jewish chairman who was replaced by an ardent Nazi supporter, Dr Kurt Hamann. He was mainly responsible for the aryanisation of Jewish property and his company also provided the insurance for the Auschwitz death camp. Despite all this he and the company prospered after the war and Munich University even established a foundation in his name. It took a long time before the Victoria acknowledged any part of its history under the Nazis.

Dina Gold is to be commended for her persistence and determination not only in fighting for the return of her family's property but also in tracing the fate of her relations and exposing the misdeeds of apparently respectable organisations and individuals.

The book contains a very useful 'Cast of Characters' accompanied by a family tree which helps the reader in following the saga of the family. There is also a glossary of German terms.

George Vulkan



Kindertransport

A special interest group of the

Association of Jewish Refugees
SERVING HOLOCAUST REFUGEES AND SURVIVORS NATIONWIDE



JUBILEE HOUSE, MERRION AVENUE, STANMORE, MIDDLESEX HA7 4RL
Telephone: 020 8385 3070 Fax: 020 8385 3080 Email: kt@ajr.org.uk www.ajr.org.uk

Kindertransport Commemorative European Train Trip

Friday 24 June to Friday 1 July 2016

A journey following in the footsteps of *Kinder* from 77 years ago, taking in the opportunity to view Kindertransport statues and places of cultural interest, together with a full schedule of events including:

Flight to Vienna, two nights in Vienna including Shabbat services
Train to Prague for one night • Train to Berlin for two nights
Train to Hamburg for one night • Ferry from Hook of Holland to Harwich
Train from Harwich to Liverpool Street

A fully accompanied trip including all travel, accommodation and meals

We particularly encourage *Kinder* to come along with their children and grandchildren on this historic trip to see your place of birth and share your history and heritage

**To register your interest, please speak to Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070
or email susan@ajr.org.uk**

AJR FILM CLUB

Please join us at our new film club. We will be showing a variety of films and documentaries over the year and will let you know future dates well in advance.

Our first film showing will be at

**Sha'arei Tsedek North London Reform Synagogue in Whetsone on
Monday 29 February 2016 at 12.30 pm**

A lunch of smoked salmon bagels, Danish pastries and tea or coffee will be served first to give you a taste for our film:

The Sturgeon Queen

Four generations of a Jewish immigrant family create Russ and Daughters, a Lower East Side lox and herring emporium that survives and thrives. Produced to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the store, this documentary features an extensive interview with two of the original daughters – now 100 and 92 years old – for whom the store was named.

Booking is essential for catering purposes

**Please call Susan Harrod
on 020 8385 3070 or email susan@ajr.org.uk**

£7.00 pp



ADVANCE NOTICE • ADVANCE NOTICE

Day Trip by Special Train: London to Harwich 1 July 2016

On Friday 1 July 2016 a number of 'Kindertransport 77' special trains will run from London and elsewhere in the UK to Harwich to mark the first anniversary of Sir Nicholas Winton's passing and the 77th anniversary of the arrival in Harwich of his largest single transport of 241 children. It will also coincide with the arrival in Harwich of the group above from Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Hamburg.

A Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving will be held in St Nicholas Church in Harwich together with other events in the town which welcomed many thousands of *Kinder* to safety in 1938-39 and accommodated many hundreds at Dovercourt.

The organisers wish to invite any *Kinder* – not only those on the Czech transports – to attend with their families.

**For further information,
please phone 01908 410450,
email kt@papyrus-rail.com or go to
www.papyrus-rail.com/kt77**

DANGER ON THE STREETS — VIENNA, NOVEMBER 1938

My mother and I are alone at home on the evening of 9 November 1938. Only it isn't really home because that has been requisitioned by a local Nazi family. We are kind of squatting in the apartment of an Aryan colleague of my father who left everything behind when she fled the country, including the keys to her flat on the Schottenring, a rather smart and un-Jewish part of Vienna. And where is my father? Dr Max Otto Schnabl is a prisoner in Vienna's largest prison on the Rossauer Lände, serving a six-week sentence for offending the state.

The morning my father was arrested seemed the same as all mornings. We had breakfast together before he went to work. He had been taken on by a large law firm, unofficially, to help out on a temporary basis. Vienna was rather short of lawyers just then because so many of them had been Jews who were no longer allowed to practise. He bought a newspaper, as he always did, and read it while he drank his tea with lemon. He kissed us goodbye as usual and handed my mother the paper. We watched him from the window with my mother as worried as usual.

Later a friend of my mother calls to ask 'Has she seen the daily paper? No? Well, perhaps she has a paper? Then she had better sit down and look at it!' My mother sits down and looks. There it is on the front page. A small item on the left-hand side in bold print. There is our name – my father's Jewish name. He has defended a man accused of forging a passport and he has told the judge that in a country which legalises persecution, forging a passport to avoid persecution cannot be a crime.

My father has gone to the office but the news item says that he will be arrested. He has read it and said nothing and done nothing. He doesn't believe it will happen. My mother, who is constitutionally anxious, becomes calm and takes control. She will continue to be calm and in control until she breaks.

We put on our coats. We must go out before 'they' come. We go down two flights of stairs in the baroque apartment house. As we reach ground level, we meet two men in black coats. They say good morning, they are friendly, my mother nods to them, and we are outside on the street and walking fast. We think they have come to make the arrest. We find a telephone and my mother speaks to my father. He says that he will not hide, that he will come home this evening.

We walk all day. It is winter but not yet snowing. We are not hungry. We look at shop windows, we see Christmas decorations, I have not seen as much of the city before. We chat about ordinary things. I don't ask about the men in the black coats. I am enjoying myself;

*On 9 November we hear
far-away sounds of smashing
glass and noises made by large crowds
and later we see flames beyond the rooftops.
We are frightened of course. We are used to
being frightened most of the time but this feels
different. We don't go to bed. I am allowed to
stay up with my mother
– an unimaginable treat at any
other time.*

I have my mother's attention. But I am not hungry

In the afternoon we come to a well-known toy shop. The windows, which form an arcade, each represent a theme – a zoo, a fairground, a farm, a classroom, a railway station. There is one celluloid doll with celluloid hair, exactly like my own Susie. I love this doll. The Susie doll in the window is the teacher in the classroom. She is wearing a smart suit and the most wonderful pair of shoes. They are white with black stitching and a strap that fastens with a button. My Susie doesn't have shoes and I have a fierce longing to get these shoes for her. I am also getting into a state because I know this is not the time to be thinking of doll's shoes. My mother takes me into the shop and buys the shoes and hands them to me without words.

When it is dark we go home. The same two men are sitting in the communal entrance hall. They say good evening pleasantly, my mother nods again and we go upstairs. I am carrying the small package from the well-known toy shop. My father comes back soon after us. For a moment we believe that those men have not come for him. But he has made an arrangement. He will not move from home and they will return in two hours. They are court officers; they know my father and they are embarrassed.

It is six o'clock. We eat some bread and sausage and drink tea. I am sent to bed early. My parents need to talk. My

father will come to say goodbye to me. I understand.

My bed is in the dining room. From my bed, by the light of the street lamp, I can see the heavy, carved legs of the table and chairs, almost black wood, with carved snakes and grapes and mythical creatures. I can hear my parents talking but not what they say. I am waiting.

The doorbell rings at eight o'clock. At last my father comes in and hugs me very hard. He has to go now and he cannot tell me how long he will be away. We are not crying and then he is gone. I hear the door of the apartment open and close.

I go to find my mother. We get into the big bed together and in the end we sleep.

My doll's shoes are still in the pretty packet. When I remember them next morning, and put them on Susie, they are a perfect fit. They make me feel ashamed but they are a consolation.

On 9 November we hear far-away sounds of smashing glass and noises made by large crowds and later we see flames beyond the rooftops. We are frightened of course. We are used to being frightened most of the time but this feels different. We don't go to bed. I am allowed to stay up with my mother – an unimaginable treat at any other time. Then the phone starts to ring and, one after another, friends and relatives warn that something terrible is happening. My father is due to be released the next day.

The next day there is still danger on the streets; we do not go out and my father does not come home. We do not know, cannot imagine, that what has happened will probably save his life. As he was leaving the prison on the morning after Kristallnacht, a warden came up to him and said 'Go back, Herr Doktor, it's not safe for you to be out.' The warden hid my father for the next 24 hours and, when he came home, the worst was over and we were given merely six weeks to leave the country. Most of my father's friends and colleagues would never be seen again. We never even learned the warden's name.

Hedi Schnabl Argent

Caution: 'Phishing' emails

AJR members are advised to treat with caution speculative emails they may receive in connection with dormant bank accounts and other Holocaust-era assets.

We have become aware of so-called 'phishing' emails sent by scammers to attract people to respond to what look like authoritative or legitimate approaches in connection with family heirlooms. One member received an email purportedly from the Independent Committee of Eminent Persons (ICEP), which has responsibility for identifying untouched bank accounts in Switzerland.

You are advised to check with the AJR before replying, or simply delete the email.

INSIDE the AJR

YORKSHIRE CHANUKAH PARTY A Wonderful Afternoon Tea



(from left): Rudi Leavor, Bronia Veitch, Martin Kapel, Berta Klipstein, Veronika Keczkas, Suzanne Ripton, Olive Rosner

There was an excellent Yorkshire turnout for our Chanukah Party! Guests arrived not only from Leeds but also from Hull, Bradford, Harrogate and Sheffield to enjoy a wonderful afternoon tea complete with latkes and doughnuts and to tap their feet and sing along with Phil Cammerman and his Klesmer band.

Wendy Bott

KT OUTING Wednesday 10 February 2016 FRANK AUERBACH EXHIBITION AT TATE BRITAIN FOLLOWED BY TEA

In February, instead of our normal monthly lunch, we have arranged an outing to the Frank Auerbach exhibition at Tate Britain.

Frank Auerbach has made some of the most inventive paintings of recent times, of people and urban landscapes. He works every day, constantly returning to a narrow range of subjects: landscapes near his studio in north London and a relatively small number of sitters.

Born in Berlin in 1931, Auerbach came to Britain in 1939 as a refugee from the Nazis. Having attended Bunce Court School in Kent, he moved in 1947 to London, where he has lived since.

After you have had the opportunity to tour the exhibition we will be having a cream tea.

Return coach travel from Stanmore and Finchley Road
Booking essential

For details and booking, please contact Susan Harrod at AJR on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk

We look forward to seeing you

EALING/WEMBLEY A Lovely Chanukah Party

We had a lovely Chanukah Party with excellent food provided by Esther and Kathryn and were well entertained by Richard Stanton with tapes of popular music. We finished off with music from the 'Last Night of the Proms'. A most enjoyable afternoon.

Lesley Sommer

ILFORD Memorable Get-together

We were treated to a most enjoyable performance by the Chapel End Savoy Players. Special thanks to Mark Finkeltaub for organising the programme. His late mother Gerti would have appreciated it greatly, as we all did – above all perhaps the rendition of 'If I Were a Rich Man'. A memorable get-together.

Lucie Bernheim

MANCHESTER CHANUKAH PARTY A Fabulous Afternoon Tea

The Nicky Alliance Day Centre was the venue for AJR members, who enjoyed a fabulous afternoon tea with excellent musical accompaniment by our guest entertainer Jack Maurer. Everyone went home with a smile!

Wendy Bott

PINNER A Delicious Chanukah Party Tea

Seated at tables spread with a delicious Chanukah Party tea to follow the entertainment, we had the pure pleasure of listening to Bronwen Stephens's delightful 'Journey through Opera and

Musical Theatre', including songs from Bizet's *Carmen* and Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*.

Walter Weg

WESSEX Lovely Pre-Chanukah Party

The Group met just before the start of the Chanukah festival. We were delighted Rabbi Jesner could join us. He gave an interesting talk and a lively discussion followed. After a delicious high tea, a fun quiz ended our lovely afternoon.

Kathryn Prevezer

IMPERIAL CAFÉ Memories of Chanuka Past



Imperial Café end of year lunch: (from left) Peter Eden, Harry Stevens, Judy Field, Vera Meyer, Peter Wayne, Helen Fry, Felix Franks, Esther Rinkoff

A lively mob gathered at Giacomo to celebrate the end of another year in the trenches. Memories of Chanuka and Christmas past. Felix Franks was treated on Christmas Day in the army to lunch served by the officers!

Esther Rinkoff

CHANUKAH LUNCH AT ALYTH

About 70 members gathered for our Chanukah Lunch at Alyth Gardens Synagogue. After a warm welcome from Michael Newman and Esther Rinkoff, we listened to Brian Goldich, accompanied by Elizabeth Ellwood on the piano, perform a selection of German *Lieder* in a superbly powerful voice that was a joy to hear. We sincerely thank the AJR organisers and their volunteers, who served up a most plentiful and delicious deli-lunch. Rabbi Colin Eimer lit the Chanukah and we sang 'M'aoz Tzur'. Post-prandial entertainment was provided by Kathleen Linton Ford, who has a most beautiful mezzo soprano voice and treated us to a selection from the shows.

Hanne R. Freedman

LIVERPOOL Fantastic Lunch

Liverpool's own Justine Saville was the star turn at the AJR Chanukah Party. She sang a medley of songs – some from the musicals and some Hebrew ones – and everyone had a good singalong too! All this of course followed the customary



AJR ANNUAL TRIP

JOIN US THIS YEAR IN YORKSHIRE

Sunday 22 May

to Thursday 26 May 2016

Accompanied travel by train from London to Harrogate, plus four nights' accommodation in Harrogate. We will also help to arrange travel from other parts of England to Harrogate.

Highlights of the trip will include York Minster; the Chocolate Factory; a trip to the home of the Bronte sisters; a journey on an old-fashioned steam train; a cream tea at Betty's Tea Room in Harrogate; Harewood House; Harlow Carr Gardens; the Thackray Medical Museum; the Yorkshire Dales and lots more.

All meals and travel included
Places are limited

Please call Susan Harrod
on 020 8385 3070 for full information
pack and booking form
or email susan@ajr.org.uk

fantastic lunch complete with jam doughnuts.

Wendy Bott

WEST MIDLANDS (BIRMINGHAM) An Enjoyable Lunch

Our Chanukah celebration included an enjoyable lunch, prepared by catering staff of Andrew Cohen House. Entertainment was provided by Ali Ince (violin), Lydia Handy (viola) and Miriam Taylor (cello) – a programme of mainly classical music, which was greatly appreciated.

Philip Lesser

ESSEX (WESTCLIFF) Otto Deutsch's Musical Programme

We were highly entertained by Otto Deutsch's musical programme: Joseph Schmidt; Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy; Sophie Tucker's 'My Yiddish Mama'; and finishing on a high note with 'Hava Negilah'.

Esther Rinkoff

KT LUNCH

Lunch with a Chanukah Flavour

Our last 2015 meeting was lunch with a Chanukah flavour. While we participated in a magnificent meal Mark Demza played some lovely piano music. After lunch, Bernd Koschland read from a book about the Jewish Brigade in Italy during the war at Chanukah time. In conclusion, we wished each other

continued on page 14 ➔

CONTACTS

Susan Harrod
Lead Outreach & Events
Co-ordinator
020 8385 3070 susan@ajr.org.uk

Wendy Bott
Northern Outreach Co-ordinator
07908 156 365 wendy@ajr.org.uk

Agnes Isaacs
Northern Outreach Co-ordinator
07908 156 361 agnes@ajr.org.uk

Kathryn Prevezer
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator
07966 969 951 kathryn@ajr.org.uk

Esther Rinkoff
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator
07966 631 778 esther@ajr.org.uk

Eva Stellman
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator
07904 489 515 eva@ajr.org.uk

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Susan Harrod
020 8385 3070 susan@ajr.org.uk

Child Survivors' Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld
020 8954 5298 h.obstfeld@talk21.com

AJR 'LOOKING AHEAD TO PRESERVE ITS LEGACY', REPORTS CHAIRMAN

The AJR was 'in its busiest time and will continue to be so for many years to come!', Chairman Andrew Kaufman told the organisation's Annual General Meeting at Belsize Square Synagogue. It was 'looking ahead to preserve its legacy', he added.

Andrew outlined a successful year of events: group meetings, outings, Kinder lunches and much more. He pointed out that the Social Welfare Department was being extended as demands on its resources became increasingly complex. At the same time, disbursing the Claims Conference grant entailed a larger administrative staff, while the Volunteer Department, in particular where computer lessons and dementia problems were concerned, required 'a huge umbrella of services'.

With regard to general Jewish

communal matters, the AJR fully supported Sir Eric Pickles, who had recently taken over from Sir Andrew Burns as UK Envoy on Post-Holocaust Issues, and the newly formed Holocaust Memorial Foundation.

The AJR continued to support a number of institutions, including the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre in Glasgow, the Manchester Jewish Museum, and the University of Huddersfield's new Learning and Leisure Centre.

A degree of confusion was expressed at the meeting over funding by the Memorial Foundation and by the German Government. It was suggested that an article be published in the *Journal* to clarify this.

Andrew Kaufman, Joanna Millan and Sir Erich Reich were re-elected as Trustees.

FEBRUARY GROUP EVENTS

Kensington	1 Feb	Social at home of Peter and Ruth Kraus
Whitefield/Prestwich	1 Feb	Social Get-together
Ealing	2 Feb	Marion Friend: 'Desert Island Discs'
Book Club	3 Feb	Social Get-together
Ilford	3 Feb	David Barnett: 'The Most Famous Jewish Business in Victorian London: The Story of E. Moses & Son'
Pinner	4 Feb	Ted Adams: 'The History of Green Shield Stamps'
Liverpool	7 Feb	Musical Presentation
Essex (Westcliff)	9 Feb	Details to follow
KT LUNCH	10 Feb	Outing to Frank Auerbach Exhibition at Tate Britain
Cambridge	11 Feb	Musical Lunch
Imperial Café	11 Feb	Lunchtime Social Get-together
Edinburgh	14 Feb	Social Get-together
Brighton	15 Feb	Godfrey Gould, return of one of our regular speakers
Bradford	16 Feb	Social
Edgware	16 Feb	Meet our new Co-ordinator Eva Stellman
Glasgow CF	16 Feb	Theatre outing: <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
Radlett	17 Feb	<i>Churchill's Secret German Army</i> (film)
Welwyn GC	18 Feb	Social Get-together
North West London	22 Feb	Jenny Manson, Author, 'From Pogrom to Public School'
Kent	23 Feb	Kent Fire and Rescue Services
Wembley	24 Feb	David Barnett: 'The Life of Lady Judith Montefiore'
North London	25 Feb	Rabbi Harry Jacobi: 'The Life of Moses Mendelssohn'
Newcastle	28 Feb	Barbara Winton: 'Sir Nicky Winton'
Sheffield	28 Feb	Speaker: Ian Vellins

INSIDE THE AJR *cont. from p.13*

Happy Chanukah and hoped we could celebrate many more years together.

David Lang

KENT Sharing Chanukah Memories

How nice it was to relax and share Chanukah memories over a delicious fish and chip lunch. We talked about the history of the festival whilst enjoying some seasonal jokes as we munched pies over coffee.

Janet Weston

BOOK CLUB *The Lady in the Van*

Meeting at Joseph's Bookstore in Temple Fortune, we discussed Alan Bennett's book *The Lady in the Van*. Though there were mixed thoughts about the book, the film was highly recommended.

Irene Goodman

BRIGHTON AND HOVE SARID

Dispersing the Winter Gloom

Our celebration of the Festival of Light was most enjoyable. With the help of the latest technology we listened to the story of Chanukah and the heroic Maccabians. Traditional songs, jokes and tea, as well as delicious mince pies supplied by Esther, dispersed the winter gloom.

Ceska Abrahams

LEEDS CF Visit to Marks & Spencer Exhibition

First and Second Generation members enjoyed a most interesting visit to the M&S Archives at Leeds University. We were given a guided tour of the exhibition, which traced the company's history

through the decades, and an illustrated talk on M&S through the war years.

Wendy Bott

GLASGOW A Lovely Social Occasion

As in previous years, the Early New Year Party was a lovely social occasion. Everyone enjoyed getting out and socialising over mulled wine and canapes. A most agreeable way to start the holidays.

Agnes Isaacs

EDINBURGH Late Chanukah Party

Edinburgh Friends spent a most pleasant afternoon at the home of Vivien Anderson, who kindly hosted the Late Chanukah Party. A brilliant tea with latkes was enjoyed by all.

Agnes Isaacs



**Visit to St Albans Cathedral and Synagogue
Monday 7 March 2016**

Please join us for a visit to St Albans Cathedral, the oldest site of continuous Christian worship. We will have a guided tour lasting approximately one hour, with some walking involved.

The tour will be followed by lunch in a local restaurant and, in the afternoon, a visit to St Albans Synagogue. Established in 1933 and affiliated to the United Synagogue, the Synagogue contains two stained glass windows by artist and Hebrew scholar David Hillman which are considered among its most cherished ornaments.

Coach travel provided

For full details, please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or email susan@ajr.org.uk

Books Bought

MODERN AND OLD

Eric Levene

020 8364 3554 / 07855387574
ejlevine@blueyonder.co.uk

I also purchase ephemera

**LEO BAECK HOUSING ASSOCIATION
CLARA NEHAB HOUSE
RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME**

Small caring residential home with large attractive gardens close to local shops and public transport
25 single rooms with full en suite facilities.
24 hour Permanent and Respite Care
Entertainment & Activities provided.
Ground Floor Lounge and Dining Room
• Lift access to all floors.

For further information please contact:
The Manager, Clara Nehab House,
13-19 Leaside Crescent, London NW11 0DA
Telephone: 020 8455 2286

PillarCare

Quality support and care at home

- Hourly Care from 4 hours – 24 hours
- Live-In/Night Duty/Sleepover Care
- Convalescent and Personal Health Care
- Compassionate and Affordable Service
- Professional, Qualified, Kind Care Staff
- Registered with the CQC and UKHCA

Call us on Freephone 0800 028 4645

PILLARCARE
THE BUSINESS CENTRE - 36 GLOUCESTER AVENUE - LONDON NW1 7BB
PHONE: 020 7482 2188 - FAX: 020 7900 2308
www.pillarcare.co.uk

FAMILY ANOUNCEMENTS

Death

The Dresner and Dresner Barnes family regret to announce the death, on 13.12.2015 after recent illness, of **Colin Olek Dresner**, much loved eldest son of the late Rolf and Irmgard Dresner, father of Linda, and elder brother of Barbara, Martin and Helen.

CLASSIFIED

JOSEPH PEREIRA

(ex-AJR caretaker over 22 years) is now available for DIY repairs and general maintenance.

No job too small, very reasonable rates.

Please telephone 07966 887 485.



JACKMAN SILVERMAN

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

Telephone: 020 7209 5532

robert@jackmansilverman.co.uk

SPRING GROVE

London's Most Luxurious
RETIREMENT HOME

214 Finchley Road
London NW3



- Entertainment
- Activities
- Stress Free Living
- 24 House Staffing Excellent Cuisine
- Full En-Suite Facilities

Call for more information or a personal tour

020 8446 2117

or 020 7794 4455

enquiries@springdene-care-homes.co.uk

www.fishburnbooks.com

Jonathan Fishburn

buys and sells Jewish and Hebrew books, ephemera and items of Jewish interest.

He is a member of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association.

Contact Jonathan on

020 8455 9139

or 07813 803 889

for more information

OBITUARIES

Ruth Kollner, born Graz 30 August 1914, died London 23 November 2015

Ruth Kollner, née Freudman, was born in Graz, Austria, on 30 August 1914. In December 1938, following the Anschluss and Kristallnacht, she obtained an affidavit to come to England on a domestic permit and was joined several weeks later by her mother. The two worked during the early part of the war as cook and parlourmaid in a number of houses on the outskirts of London. Later she obtained a job in the Jewish Refugee Agency in Bloomsbury House.

Ruth met her husband, Heinz Kollner, towards the end of the war when both were recuperating in a nursing home in Kent and they married in May 1945, three days before VE Day. In 1946 their daughter Kitty was born and they moved to a house in Dollis Hill, where Ruth lived right up to the age of 98.

Ruth worked hard all her life, mainly as a secretary/bookkeeper in the field of scientific and music publishing. In fact, she only retired

from part-time office work when she was 75!

Heinz passed away in 1990 and eventually, with all her strength and determination, Ruth managed to rebuild her life. She learned to play bridge at the age of 80, continued her work as a volunteer for many years at the AJR, and attended classes at the University of the Third Age in history, Jewish history and music, which was her passion.

She enjoyed the theatre, cinema, concerts and opera and loved to travel to new places.

Ruth took huge interest and great pride in her grandsons, Daniel and Nicholas, and then their wives and, later still, her four great-grandchildren. There was a sadness because her younger grandson, Nicholas,



settled in the USA, but again, with all her resilience, she travelled with the family to his wedding in Washington DC at the age of 93! And on her 100th birthday in August 2014, she was able to meet her youngest two great-grandchildren at a party for friends and family.

Always immaculately turned out, Ruth enjoyed the company of friends, took part in many AJR activities, including trips to Bournemouth, and missed the camaraderie at Cleve Road.

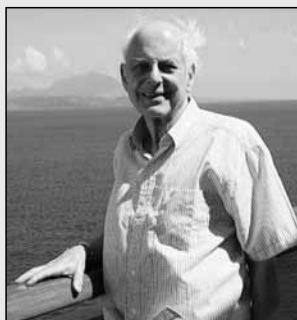
Ruth passed away peacefully at Spring Grove Residential Care Home, London. She is survived by her daughter Kitty, son-in-law Michael, two grandsons, and four great-grandchildren. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

Kitty Brod

Bernard (Bernd) Simon, born Berlin 9 November 1921, died Malvern, Worcestershire 29 September 2015

Bernard had an eventful life. The only child of Wilhelm and Gerty Simon – Gerty was a leading Berlin photographer – he attended Anna Essinger's boarding school in Herrlingen near Ulm. When Anna had the foresight to evacuate her school in 1933 to Bunce Court in Kent, Bernard went with her, becoming a founder pupil. At the same time, his mother moved to England and relaunched her photographic studio in the then unfashionable Chelsea. There, in school holidays, Bernard beheld many notable personages attending the studio and one in particular, Lotte Lenya, became a surrogate 'big sister' to him. She regularly stayed in the Simon household when in London.

Wilhelm managed to escape to London in 1938 but, with the outbreak of war, it wasn't long before he and Bernard were arrested as 'enemy aliens' and sent to the Isle of Man. Wilhelm was released fairly speedily but Bernard was 'transported' to Australia on the infamous *Dunera*, thus becoming one of the 'Dunera Boys'. He suffered all the privations so well recorded but, as a 19-year-old, still found the experience something of an adventure. He



was incarcerated for 18 months in Hay internment camp where, among other things, he helped teach English to many of the inmates, having already mastered the language to an exceptional degree, and was greatly influenced by the musician Peter Stadlen, who introduced him to the world of Beethoven and Schubert chamber music, which became a lifelong passion. He also, surprisingly, fell in love with Australia, which he revisited several times in later life.

Bernard was eventually 'pardoned' and able to return to the UK, enduring strafing Japanese planes in the Pacific and German U-boats in the Atlantic, in order to care for his now ageing parents. He spent the rest of the war in the Armstrong-Vickers armament works in Kingston-upon-Thames, building tanks and fire-watching at night. Despite his unfair treatment he held no grudges against the government, being eternally grateful to this country, and his parents, for having saved him from a stark future in Germany by giving him a new home and life. He was proudly naturalised after the war, dropping his birth name and evolving into the perfect 'English gentleman'.

The chance of university having passed him by, Bernard worked in many capacities, including six months as

a mountain guide in Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland, before landing an important international post with the Time-Life Corporation, flitting between New York and London while arranging European conferences. He eventually retired to Bath but, following heart surgery when 83, became increasingly frail and moved to Malvern to be cared for by his long-term, later civil, partner Joe. Music had always had a prominent place in his life – not only chamber music but almost every classical genre. In 1957 he had driven Friedlind Wagner, whom he had got to know somehow, to the Bayreuth Festival, where he stayed with the entire Wagner clan in Wahnfried – a fairly unique experience, I suspect.

In Malvern Bernard was still able to enjoy to a limited degree attending concerts and opera and even enjoying short holidays until increasing frailty curtailed most physical activity and music was now confined to DVDs and CDs from Joe's vast collection. Now needing 24-hour care, his last months were spent in a nearby nursing home with Joe visiting daily. He died peacefully and was cremated in Worcester, his ashes scattered on the Malvern Hills, which he loved. He had no living relatives but will always be remembered with loving affection and gratitude by me.

Joseph Brand



LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

German-Israeli relations – 50 years on

To mark both the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Israel Museum and 50 years of German-Israeli diplomatic relations, the Museum is currently presenting an exhibition of masterworks from the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin. The exhibition, entitled 'Twilight over Berlin' and showing works from the period 1905 to 1945, provides a fascinating glimpse into the art scene of pre-WWII Germany. It also constitutes an attempt to explain what the Nazis defined as 'degenerate art' (*entartete Kunst*) – as opposed to 'genuine German art' – and to which they devoted separate, peripatetic exhibitions in the 1930s.

The works on display in Jerusalem leave the visitor with a sense of wonder at the wealth and originality of the creative minds that produced them, much of it representing the Expressionist school of painting and by painters affiliated with the Blue Rider and Bridge groups, with only a relatively small percentage being created by Jewish artists. The film screened at the entrance to the exhibition depicting 'a typical day in Berlin' and created in 1927 by director Walther Ruttmann provides a fascinating glimpse into the daily life of the population of the metropolis.

In association with the same anniversary, the Museum is also displaying a selection of German Renaissance prints in an exhibition entitled 'Dürer and Friends', consisting of woodcuts and engravings culled from the Museum's own Prints and Drawings collection. Another allied exhibition, 'New Types: Three Pioneers of Hebrew Graphic Design', is devoted to three graphic designers and originators of Hebrew typography who emigrated to pre-state Israel from pre-WWII Germany. The three 'yekkes' – Franziska Baruch, Moshe Spitzer and Henri Friedlander – lived and worked in Israel for many years, leaving their imprint (sorry about the pun!) on Hebrew typefaces, which they sought to simplify and modernise, each one in his or her individual way.

In addition to these visual feasts, the anniversary of German-Israeli diplomatic relations brought Leipzig's renowned Gewandhaus Orchestra and St Thomas Choir to Israel to perform Bach's Christmas Oratorio. This was an occasion not to be missed and the performance was indeed memorable. The precision and musicality of instrumentalists and choristers alike, some of the latter still very young boys, constituted a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many of us

in the audience. A richly illustrated brochure depicting the musical and artistic delights of the region of Saxony was distributed free in the foyer, evidently seeking to encourage its readers to make the trip to that area, which it described as 'a paradise for music-lovers'.

In one paragraph of the brochure, the phrase 'Elector Augustus the Strong was addicted to porcelain' caught my eye and, on reading further, I learned that this eighteenth-century ruler did much to encourage the manufacture of fine porcelain in his realm, which included Dresden, as well as accumulating the largest, high-quality specialist collection of ceramics in the world.

Fifty years of diplomatic relations have served to foster artistic and musical exchange between our two countries, as well as providing financial reparations, and it is sobering to recall that just over 70 years ago Germans were hunting down and murdering Jews at a rate unprecedented in human history. My own German-born parents refused to ever set foot again in that country, the country for which both my grandfathers fought in the First World War. Today, German tourists and well-wishers come to Israel and I have visited Germany a couple of times (once to be present at the launch of the book of my grandmother's letters published by the Hamburg municipality). To be quite honest, I must confess – albeit with mixed feelings – that I hope one day to visit Leipzig and hear the St Thomas Choir sing in the church where Bach once composed and conducted his sublime music.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *cont. from p.7*

who encouraged us to come along.

Michael Green, Stanmore, Middx

'ISRAEL RIGHT OR WRONG?'

Sir – Since I wrote the piece on 'Israel right or wrong' in your November issue, my husband Mike and I have visited the West Bank. We were taken by various Israeli guides to Area C, the home of approximately 250,000 Palestinians – and experienced shock beyond any expectation.

For the sake of the security and well-being of the ever expanding settlements in Area C, established in contravention of international humanitarian law, some even in contravention of Israeli law, the life of the Palestinians living there is utterly miserable. Most are trapped in small dusty, impoverished villages, cut off in many cases from their own farms and from the local towns to obtain work,

desperately short of water and unable to build or expand their homes.

The Palestinians are subject to military law. This allows for house demolitions for example, for demonstrators to be met with bullets (the two women who organise a women and children weekly demonstration against the military outpost, which cuts them off from their own well, have both been shot in the leg), the arrest of minors and trial in military courts. We visited these and were warned, correctly as it turned out, that we would not be able to forget the passivity of the defendants and their families waiting all day just for a glimpse of their child. There is a significant shortage of defence lawyers who will do the job at a price the Palestinians can afford and most defendants plea bargain. Their neighbours, the settlers, are subject to

SWITCH ON ELECTRICS

Rewires and all household electrical work

PHONE PAUL: 020 8200 3518
Mobile: 0795 614 8566

Israel's civil courts for all offences as a result of a military order to authorise this legal oddity.

Very worryingly, we were told back in Israel that it is no longer safe for Israelis to speak out against what is happening in the West Bank and that there is resistance to hearing the accounts of such organisations as Breaking the Silence, Machsom Watch and B'Tselem. So the message we were given was that the Jews in the Diaspora must speak out. Many internal critics are leaving the country they have lived in and loved all their lives, in total despair.

Jenny Manson, London NW11

Published by The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), a company limited by guarantee.

Registered office: Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

Registered in England and Wales with charity number: 1149882 and company number: 8220991

Telephone 020 8385 3070 Fax 020 8385 3080 e-mail editorial@ajr.org.uk

For the latest AJR news, including details of forthcoming events and information about our services, visit www.ajr.org.uk

Printed by FBprinters LLP, 26 St Albans Lane, London NW11 7QB Tel: 020 8458 3220 Email: info@fbprinters.com