

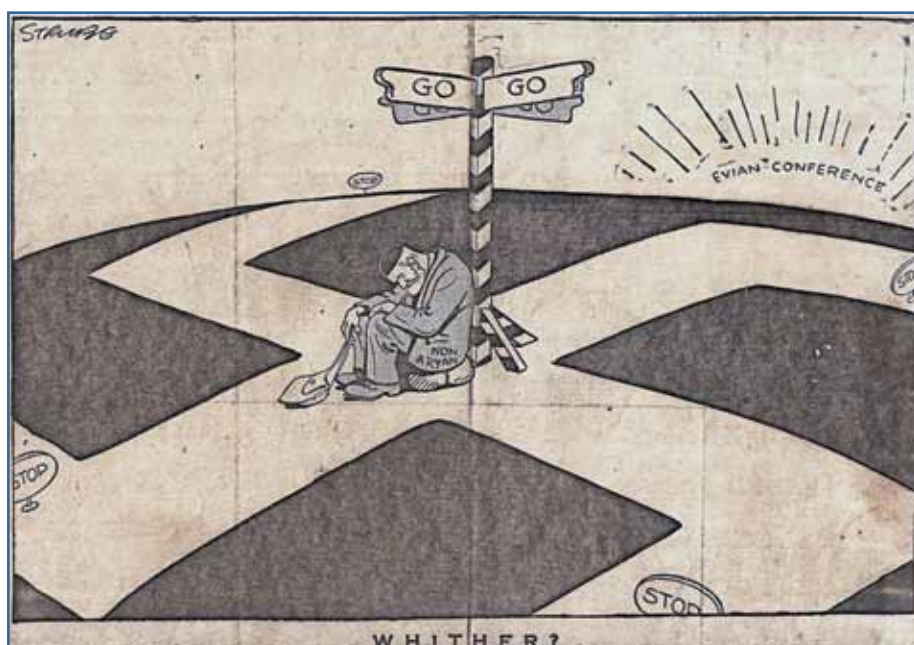


# AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## Looking back at Evian

On 25 November 1936 Chaim Weizmann, testifying before the Peel Commission, declared that the Jews of Europe faced a situation in which “the world is divided into places where they cannot live and places where they cannot enter.”



Cartoon in New York Times, 3 July 1938: ‘Will the Evian Conference guide him to freedom?’

During the last twenty years or so there has been an explosion of interest in the subject of Jewish refugees during the Nazi years. Historians have explored Nazi persecution and British and American immigration policies, from Britain to Shanghai and the Caribbean. Cultural critics have written about every aspect of the great exodus from German-speaking central Europe, from writers and artists to scientists and philosophers. The silence of the 1950s and ‘60s has been truly broken.

There are still interesting gaps, however. This month marks the 80th anniversary of the infamous Evian Conference in July 1938. Look it up in the best general

histories of Nazism or the Holocaust and you will be lucky to find more than a few passing references.

They all agree on one thing, however. The Evian Conference was, in the words of the French historian Raphael Delpard, “The Conference of Shame”. In the first book devoted to the Evian Conference, published just a few months ago, Paul R Bartrop writes, “the immediate results of the conference amounted to nothing of any lasting worth.” The policy of the western powers towards Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria was a scandal. Western democracies largely closed their  
*Continued on page 2*

### SUMMER SUMMARY

This month's issue contains a touching account about *die Blinden* as well as an article on the work of the Claims Conference. We also have a great review of this year's Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy.

Meanwhile here at the AJR we've been busy organising numerous meetings and outings for our members – you can see some lovely photos from our recent trip to Norfolk on page 15.

We hope it makes for good summer reading!

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## Looking back at Evian (cont.)

doors to Jews and the Evian Conference was the worst moment of all. The only people to cheer were the Nazis. Just two months later, at the Nuremberg Rally, Hitler jeered, "no help is given, but morality is saved."

How did it come to this? The story of the Evian Conference is quickly told. Soon after the Anschluss, President Roosevelt called for an international conference to address the growing refugee crisis in central Europe. Four months later the representatives of thirty-two nations met at the Hotel Royal in Evian-les-Bains, on the French shore of Lake Geneva, to discuss the crisis. More than a hundred private refugee organisations were also allowed to make submissions.

There was little optimism in advance. SD Waley, at the British Treasury, wrote in a memorandum, "I am afraid that the Evian Conference is bound to be somewhat of a fiasco. Few governments seem likely to promise to take more refugees than they are doing at present, or to commit themselves to any definite number."

Waley was if anything over-optimistic. Even before the conference took place the British and Americans had agreed on a number of points which made any positive outcome unlikely. The British insisted that the question of Jewish immigration to Palestine must not be raised. An influx of refugees, they feared, would cause chaos.

The Americans, for their part, refused to accept any interference with existing quota restrictions. In his book, *Final Solution*, David Cesarani wrote, "the very invitation to the conference stated that participants would not be expected to admit more immigrants than their laws already admitted."

Neither Germany nor the Soviet Union took part, the German government declaring Jewish emigrants to be an internal matter. Fascist Italy and nearly all countries in central and east Europe were not invited. The conference was to be a talking shop for the British Dominions (Australia, Canada and New Zealand) and a larger number of countries in Central and South America and it would be dominated by the three great powers: America, Britain and France.

What followed at Evian was predictable. There was plenty of empty rhetoric and no action. The delegate from Belgium drew attention to "her traditional reputation as a hospitable people and a country of refuge," while at the same time reminding the conference that Belgium was "a small country with a very dense population." The Australian representative said "as we have no racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one." Ireland said it could "make no real contribution." Switzerland considered it "essential to exercise very stringent control over the admission of any further foreigners." And Peru was obliged to "fix limits to its enthusiasm."

Only two countries pledged any kind of action. The Dominican Republic agreed to take some Jews, though by 1942 only 472 Jews had been admitted at a cost of \$3,000 each, a considerable sum at that time. Bolivia not only spoke of "streams of Jewish emigration" "creating there new centres of civilisation and progress" but between 1938 and 1941 took more than 20,000 Jewish refugees.

Only the delegate from Colombia raised the question of principle: "Can a State, without upsetting the base of our civilisation, and, indeed, of all civilisations, arbitrarily withdraw nationality from a whole class of its citizens, thereby making them Stateless Persons who no country is compelled to receive on its territory?"

How do we explain this reluctance everywhere to help Jewish refugees? First, many countries were aware of the realities of the economic depression of the 1930s. It was not a time for bold gestures. Strong professional lobbies resisted new competition for jobs. There was considerable anti-migrant sentiment in many countries, a fear of being "swamped" by "aliens". There was also widespread concern about the possible expulsion of many thousands of destitute Jews from Poland and Romania. Finally, the conference was careful not to upset Germany at a time when international relations were becoming increasingly fraught. "The British, French, and Americans seem too anxious not to do anything to offend Hitler," wrote the American journalist William Shirer, who attended the conference. "It's an absurd situation. They want to appease the man who is responsible for their problem."

The only achievement of the Evian Conference was the decision to create an Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees to negotiate with Germany an orderly exodus from the Reich. As Cesarani pointed out, "It had no funds and no powers." Norman Bentwich, who attended the conference as a representative of the Council for German Jewry, observed that Evian spelt "naïve" backwards. He was scathing about the democracies: "The more difficult the task, the smaller their will to deal with it radically."

The British, though, considered Evian a success. The demands of Poland and Romania for help in getting rid of their Jews had been pushed to the sidelines. The question of Palestine had been kept off the conference agenda and the British had not been forced into any new commitments. In Germany meanwhile, Alfred Rosenberg, head of the Nazi Party's Foreign Policy Office, published his solution to the German-Jewish refugee problem: Madagascar.

For eighty years the Evian Conference has been a stain on the conscience of the West. It was not just empty rhetoric; they did everything they could to avoid any meaningful actions for Jewish refugees in central Europe. Historians are unanimous. The best that can be said for the delegates is that they could not have anticipated what was going to happen after 1941. As today's refugee crisis deepens we should remember Evian and ask what future historians will say about our politicians.

David Herman

## THANK YOU

In May AJR enjoyed a wonderful event at the Manchester Jewish Museum. Guests included AJR volunteers from Leeds, Liverpool, Bradford, Ilkley, Gateshead and of course Manchester, plus representatives from our partner agencies, such as JVN, The League of Jewish Women, Manchester Jewish Rep Council and The Fed.

Guest speaker Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, recognised

## Welcome back Ros



The AJR is delighted that Ros Hart has joined our Outreach team, replacing Kathryn Prevezer as one of our Southern Region co-ordinators.

Ros, who joined the AJR in 2016 as a Social Work Administrator but left last year when her husband became terminally ill, will be looking after the AJR groups in Bath, Bournemouth, Brighton, Cardiff, Ealing, Edgware, North and North West London, Kensington and Kingston plus the AJR Film Club and Card & Games Club.

## Gena Turgel MBE

The AJR was deeply saddened to learn of the sad passing on 7 June of one of the most prominent survivor speakers. A full obituary will appear in the August issue.

## UP NORTH

the impact that volunteers make to people who are more isolated within our society. He praised community cohesion within Greater Manchester, particularly in the wake of the Arena bombing.

Volunteers were moved by a short film of AJR member Suzanne Ripton, describing how volunteers to her have enhanced her life. The Manchester Museum's expansion plan is being generously supported by AJR.

# Royal school links with AJR

On 22 March 2018, Anthony and Eva Grenville represented AJR at a central London reception organised by Gordonstoun School, in the presence of HRH The Princess Royal.



Tony Grenville and HRH The Princess Royal

The connection between the AJR and Gordonstoun goes back to Dr Grenville's article 'From Schloss Salem to Gordonstoun', in our March 2017 issue, devoted to Kurt Hahn. Hahn was a refugee from Germany, who came to Britain in 1933 and founded Gordonstoun, in Moray, Scotland, in 1934.

The Princess Royal is Warden of Gordonstoun, where her father, Prince Philip, her three brothers and her own children were all educated. She gave a highly entertaining speech at the reception, as did several past and present students. The AJR is hoping to install a plaque at the school in Kahn's honour while Gordonstoun has now invited Anthony Grenville to speak at the school this autumn.

## DESCENDING ON LOCH LOMOND



Scotland 2nd Gen group visiting Loch Lomond

Lunch at the Duck Bay Marina, with views onto the Loch, was the perfect setting for AJR's 2nd Gen Scottish members, some of whom attended for

the first time, to meet and discover their common bond. We look forward to many more events.  
*Agnes Isaacs*

# Die Blinden

Lisa Wade sent us this item written by her father, David Wade. If anyone knows what became of the descendants of *die Blinden* she would be pleased to be contacted at: [lisawade@lisawade.nl](mailto:lisawade@lisawade.nl)

"In 1938, when I was five, Frau Feldt took on the role of servant in our middle class home. She was a largish Austrian lady with plaited hair rolled into tight circles over each ear: a refugee from Nazi Austria – not that I knew where Austria was or who the Nazis were.

Frau Feldt spoke no English, we spoke no German, so I was elected by her to learn German which, apparently, I managed to do within weeks. Finally she managed to convey the fact that she was married to a blind Jew who, lacking the necessary visa, was stuck in the Jewish blind school in Vienna. My usually gentle mother made her way to various official agencies, there to create merry hell in the gentlest possible way, until a visa for Herr Feldt was produced.

He duly arrived at our house, speaking very little English – and so this five year old was again called on to translate. Like his wife, Herr Feldt was very emotional and I was shocked when, for the first time in my life, I saw tears running down a grown man's face.

Apparently there were twelve more blind Jews, with wives or girlfriends, holed up in the blind school in Vienna: couldn't my mother get visas for them too? The truth of what Hitler was up to was beginning to be known abroad and so, armed with a list of all their names, my mother set out on her crusade. I think it probable that what she committed was little short of perjury. She certainly swore several oaths to the effect that all of them were related to her in one way or another. Before I was born, mother had been a very successful actress and I know that a number of theatrical stars were enrolled to back up her cause.

In short order *die Blinden* began to arrive. Up the street would come figures

carrying bundles, white sticks tapping along the pavement, and climbing the steps to our front door. Where Mother put them all I don't know, but they became part of our lives until 1939 when I was evacuated from London, and after that we lost touch with the Feldts and their friends.

My father, who was a very well known actor, died in 1951. Many famous people attended his funeral but most touchingly of all, right at the back of the church was a row of sad-looking people, each one holding a white stick. I never saw *die Blinden* again and I have no idea what happened to them. They must be long gone by now, but I often wonder if their children know what my mother did for their parents all those years ago."



Lisa's grandfather, actor Philip Wade.



The blind school in Vienna.



Lisa's grandmother, actress Alice Mary de Grey, with her sons David and Richard.

# “Yekkes” – German Jews in Israel

We are indebted to *The Museum of the Jewish People* at Beit Hatfutsot, and Ushi Derman's blog, which forms the basis of this article.

Before 1933 Zionism was not widely accepted amongst German Jews. After the advent of Hitler, when they were forced to seek countries that would permit them entry, the most popular choices were America or Great Britain.



Yekkes arriving in Israel

A mere 10% chose to go eastwards to the land of Israel where they were welcomed not only by mosquitoes and swamps, but also by humiliating and condescending attitudes from the veteran Israelis.

They were called “The Yekkes”, one interpretation of which is that it is a Hebrew acronym for “fails to understand”, or simply – stupid. (Amazing, given that, during the 1930s, seven Nobel Prize laureates were German Jews). However, the more likely origin of the word “Yekke” is that the German Jews wore jackets in winter and summer alike, i.e. “Jacke” in German.

Cultural and mental barriers went up between the German immigrants and the Yishuv in Israel. The “Yekkes” were well educated, highly professional, and had high standards of precision and perfection, inherent awareness of aesthetics, and a tendency to choose liberal professions – all of which were despised by the socialist land workers who formed the ideal prototype of the Zionist movement.

Coming from the cradle of Western culture into a desolate, underdeveloped Levantine place was a great come-down for many of the “Yekkes”. They found it hard to fit in and were the ultimate outsiders in the chaotic and careless Zionist culture. And most unforgivable of all – they spoke German, the language of Hitler! The newcomers, who wished to preserve their language, were required to

eliminate all trace of German and German accents from their speech. German-language newspapers were closed and shop windows with signs in German were smashed.

In his book *“The Seventh Million”*, historian Tom Segev describes the sad story of the German Jews in Israel, or “the immigrants” as Ben-Gurion disrespectfully called them. While the second and third Aliyot were considered ideological “pioneers”, the Germans were looked upon as refugees. In the newspapers of the Yishuv their punctilious characteristics were ridiculed time after time. This gave rise to the story that in Nahariya, where many German Jews settled, the building sites were manned by lines of workers passing bricks to each other, saying: “Bitte schön, Herr Doktor”, “Danke schön, Herr Doktor”.

Whereas in their homeland German Jews looked down on “Ostjuden”, in the land of Israel the roles were reversed. Ben-Gurion stated “They have both a superiority and an inferiority complex. On the one hand they say “We are disciples of a great German culture – *Das Land der Dichter und Denker* (the land of poets and thinkers); we had Kant and Beethoven, we read the best literature and studied German philosophers – and here – well, this is merely Eastern Europe. On the other hand, these “Ostjuden” arrived first and managed to do a great deal. They came early and took over everything.”

However, there is evidence of the German Jews’ enormous contribution to the development of the State, especially in cities like Haifa and Tel Aviv. Tom Segev wrote: “The Olim from Germany, together with others, changed the profile of the cities by planning new houses in a practical Bauhaus style, which was then cutting edge in architecture; Tel Aviv, previously a small provincial town, was becoming a world city, and all of a sudden you could see European cafés everywhere.” One of the first of these was the Rivoli Café, where a few over-excited students shattered the windows because they heard the owner speak to his clients in German.

Over time, German immigrants learned to walk proudly, and the Yishuv learned to appreciate their achievements. In later years, new waves of immigration arrived, and Israel became a melting pot for Jews from many countries of origin.

In 1979, a German-born Israeli appealed to the Supreme Court against the screening of a documentary film called “Yekkes”, claiming that the word “Yekkes” was derogatory. One of the three Supreme Court judges was the late Haim Cohen – a proud Yekke himself. By that time, the immigrants from Germany and their descendants had settled in the top echelons of Israeli society, and the word “Yekkes” had ceased to be a curse; Cohen simply did not agree that Yekkes had anything to complain about, so he rejected the appeal.

# Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication.

## HMD REMIT

Further to the responses of members (May) to my impression that the HMD was exclusive to victims of the Holocaust, Jack Straw's additional focus on "continuing instances of genocide and other appalling atrocities" (Barbara Dean) would be fine within limits, and if "the prime focus of HMD remained on the Holocaust" (Colin Rosenstiel) most desirable, but we are being written out of the script altogether. The dilution of the very meaning of what the Holocaust was, by adding unconnected atrocities which differ in every particular, has had a very adverse effect on the understanding of our misfortune.

The theme for the HMD 2019, launched by the HMDT in April, is "Torn from Home". It is exclusively about survivors of the Rwanda genocide. Many Jewish Holocaust survivors were also "torn from home" (I was one of them, with parents, home and contents all gone) but we are only mentioned en passant in order to justify the use of "Holocaust" in the heading.

*Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk*

## ANTISEMITISM AND THE LABOUR PARTY

I would like to congratulate David Herman on his appointment as your new Contributing Editor. Not so on his prominently displayed hatchet job of Jeremy Corbyn in your May issue.

It is safe to say that Mr Herman has not experienced antisemitism the way I have, in Germany and in this country, when it was widespread in Europe and America. These extreme forms have largely disappeared, because the Holocaust is a constant warning to politicians of all persuasions, not to exploit xenophobia and racism for political advantage.

What we are talking about in the UK today is a much attenuated form of antisemitism which barely qualifies to be described as such in the context of a general primitive nationalist xenophobia. Sadly the dying embers of prejudice are still fuelled by some East European governments, but in the UK the fate of UKIP has clearly extinguished its prospects.

Antisemitic sparks will continue to fly from all directions and all political parties, even from the dying embers. They need to be watched, but they are not a serious fire risk. To blame Jeremy Corbyn, as Mr Herman does, for the occasional evidence of prejudice in the Labour Party is to stand on its head the principles of one of the few honest politicians, who preaches non-discrimination and throughout his life has opposed intolerance and injustice. If anyone, it is Corbyn who will quench racism, not just in the Labour Party but in the whole political establishment. I despair of my fellow Jews who fail to recognise their friends.

*Heinz Grünewald, Pinner, Middx*

Sadly, there is no denying that there is racial, ethnic and religious intolerance including antisemitism. However, David Herman's article in the last edition of the AJR newsletter suggests that only in the Labour Party is it widespread, whereas unfortunately it can be found in all sections of society. I also believe the front page is no place for such a prejudiced article.

I am the only survivor of the Holocaust, bar one cousin, in my family. When in 1941 my Parents were deported to their death, my Father left a letter for me. He wrote; "until now I have been surrounded by love and real friendship. I come again to the view that man is good, and everything bad comes from the poor organisation of common life". He went on to say; "Every one of us should have this aim – to be willing and able to help everywhere and everybody." In the nearly 80 years I have lived in the UK, I have been aware that I was the lucky one in my family. Further, despite leading a relatively public life, I am pleased to say I have experienced no antisemitism.

I particularly want to address David Herman's comments about the value of Holocaust education. I have, along with other survivors, talked to many groups about what can happen when hatred and intolerance take over. I would like him to join me when I speak to mixed groups

of schoolchildren, (including at Beth Shalom, the National Holocaust Centre), encouraging them to accept and respect each other's differences. We believe that the experience of listening to a survivor remains with students for a long time.

Recently, I received a Women's Centenary award from our Labour Council for giving talks about the Holocaust. I hope that this, as well as the other voluntary work I have done, would have reassured my Father that I share his beliefs in mankind.

*Susanne Pearson MBE*

I just don't recognise the claims made by the Jewish Board of Deputies, many of whom are members of, and donors to, the Conservative Party. Antisemitism can be found everywhere, not especially in the Labour Party. I am deeply critical of Israel's recent action in Gaza and elsewhere. If that's antisemitism, then I am guilty of that too.

*Gaby Weiner, Lewes*

Can Agnes Kory (June) really believe that there is no antisemitism in the Labour Party? You would have to be blind not to see the antisemitism in the notorious mural entitled 'Freedom for Humanity', with its long-nosed financiers carrying out their deals on the backs of working people, that recently appeared on a building near Brick Lane. Yet Jeremy Corbyn was initially among those who opposed the local council's decision to erase this repulsive piece of work, and a significant number of Labour Party members sprang to its defence.

Overt expressions of antisemitism, i.e. discourse that is hurtful to Jews as Jews, are commonplace on the left of the Labour Party. This is most often seen in the application of the term 'Nazi' to Israel, the Jewish state, and the description of its policies towards the Palestinians as 'genocidal'. Criticism of those policies as unnecessarily harsh, even brutal, is one thing, but comparing the casualties among the Palestinians to those of the Holocaust is quite another. Between 1941

and 1945 the Nazis killed Jews at the rate of approximately 100,000 per month. At anything like that rate, there would long ago have been no Palestinians left alive on the West Bank or in Gaza; instead, the population in those territories has increased considerably since they came under Israeli control in 1967, even under adverse conditions. The occupation by India of part of Kashmir, which has lasted since 1947, has caused casualties on a not dissimilar scale to those in Gaza and the West Bank. Yet anyone who talked of an Indian genocide would be regarded as mildly deranged.

The false notion of a free collaboration between Jews and Nazis over the emigration of Jews from Nazi Germany to Palestine in the 1930s, peddled for years by Ken Livingstone and others, has gained such purchase in sections of the Labour Party as almost to rate as the poor man's version of Holocaust denial. In reality the Ha'avara Agreement was a means by which the Nazis could despoil Jews desperate to escape from Hitler's Germany; it was about as 'free' as the extortion of payment by a hostage-taker for freeing his hostages. To pretend that these Holocaust-related examples of antisemitism do not exist does a far greater disservice to the memory of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust than does the political 'weaponising' of anti-Semitism that Agnes Kory so deplors.

*Anthony Grenville, London NW6*

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Agnes Kory must be living in a parallel universe. It is common knowledge that the Labour Party is currently investigating about 100 cases of antisemitism. To claim these cases are nothing like those of the six million is an insult to all those that died. Antisemitism is antisemitism whatever the degree.

*Gerry Gruneberg, Borehamwood, Herts.*

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#### LETTERS FROM ISRAEL

In response to Mirry Reich (June) it is a widespread misconception among both Jews and Muslims that by recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel President

Trump also recognised Israel's sovereignty over the whole city. As a matter of fact, his speech specifically mentioned the possibility of East Jerusalem being the capital of a Palestinian State. With Palestinians accounting for 38% of the city population can there be any other viable solution?

*Jacob Brauner London NW11*

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Mirry Reich's analyses might have come directly from a political party's manifesto. Not only does she dismiss a two state solution (without offering any other alternatives) but she tries to equate Yom Yerushalayim with Yom Ha'atzmaut and, by implication, with Yom Hashoah. Her article puts the dangerous and specious argument that anyone who chooses not to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim in the same way as she does cannot be either an Israeli nationalist or a patriot.

Mrs Reich can choose to live in a National Religious West Bank settlement. However may I suggest she should not be free to use her status as the daughter of a Kind to promote her simplistic views, with the implication that these can prevent another Shoah. I find this distasteful and offensive to members of the AJR and Kinder who worked so hard to prevent further occurrences of nationalism and racism.

*Arthur Oppenheimer, Hove, Sussex*

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#### ISRAELI PIONEERS

I agree with most things George Vulkan writes (June) but must take issue with his suggestion that the present Israeli Government betrayed the ideas of its forbears. There is no nation whose citizens can maintain selfless idealism indefinitely. All have the right to personal ambitions and to do the best for themselves. Israel reached this stage and her economic standing proves it. The standard of living, education, health-care and welfare enjoyed by her citizens is second to none. The necessary maintenance of an incredibly effective army is coupled with the use of this necessity. If this attracts criticism – so be it. The process accompanies loss of underdog status – no bad thing. Both George and I are lifelong Zionists who have chosen to stay amongst the flesh-pots of the

west rather than follow the dream. We must not deny the pioneers their place in the sun for which they worked so hard, and we must continue to love Israel, warts and all.

*George Donath, London SW1*

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#### FREUD IN EXILE

I was delighted to read David Herman's article on Freud (June) as I studied Psychology and talked about Freud's work with my clients.

Sigmund Freud and his daughter Anna had a huge impact on the modern treatment in psychology and psychiatry. I have a lot of fascinating information about their careers and their personal lives which I would love to share with AJR readers in a future issue.

*Dr. Elena Rowland, London SE18*

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#### 70 YEARS OF ISRAEL:

The *Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft* in Berlin invited my daughter Tania and me to give two presentations: one on the effect of the Kindertransport on our family and the other a short reading from my new play "What Price for Justice?". The event took place in part of the original Anhalter Bahnhof at Gleisdrei-Eck – chosen because many of the Nazi deportation trains left from this station. It was a fascinating opportunity to meet and talk with interesting people, network and make new contacts.

*Ruth Barnett, London NW6*

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#### GIVING VOICE

I was delighted to read that your letters bag has doubled over the past 12 months. However, instead of editing our letters could you give them more space in the Journal? And giving preference to those who do not write often is somewhat unfair. Judgement on what you print should be based on how interesting and relevant the letters are. In your June issue I am mentioned twice in edited form. The first makes sense – "wouldn't it be lovely if the world destroyed these barriers between religions and we all lived in harmony?" The

*Continued on page 8*

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# REVIEW

## BEN HELFGOTT: THE STORY OF ONE OF THE BOYS

By Michael Freedland  
Valentine Mitchell  
ISBN 978 1 910383 15 5

This very special biography should of course now be entitled SIR Ben Helfgott, as Ben's Knighthood was announced in the Queen's Birthday Honours list just days before the book was officially launched at London's JW3. Its author Michael Freedland was interviewed by Daniel Finkelstein in front of a packed audience which included Sir Ben himself and many members of the Helfgott family.

Ben's story as a Holocaust survivor, one of The Boys, Olympic weightlifter and founder of the '45 Aid Society will be well known by most AJR readers. So this review concentrates not so much on **what** happened to Ben (for those not in the know I'd strongly recommend buying the book) but on **why** Michael Freedland chose to write it and **how** it differs from other Holocaust literature.

Having long been fascinated by the horrors of the Shoah and the remarkable achievements of some of its survivors, Freedland decided to deepen his own knowledge by sharing the personal story of someone whom he describes as THE Boy. Eschewing an academic approach, he has produced a richly detailed narrative which gives a real insight into Ben's character as well as bringing to life some seminal moments in world and sporting history.

Freedland, of course, is a self-confessed serial biographer but this is the first time he has written a book about someone who is still alive. Despite considerable

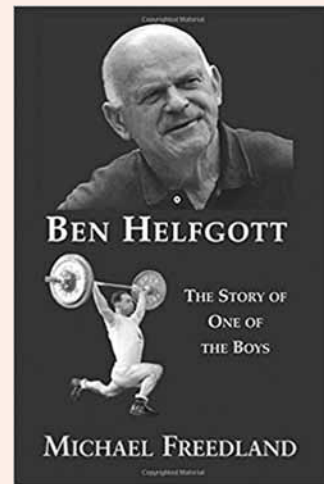
direct input from Ben and his family, this is by no means an autobiography. He compares it to a mirror which accurately reflects the subject's experiences and sentiments, but not in exactly their own words. As Ben's eldest son Maurice said at the launch, this book "... accurately projects Dad's own perspectives. It illuminates, it illustrates and it genuinely reflects everything that he saw, has done and felt."

One of the most vivid incidents in the book describes how, shortly after liberation, 15 year old Ben returned to Theresienstadt to fetch a cousin and reunite him with his family back in their home town of Piotrkow. Crossing the Polish-Czech border with excitement, the two young cousins were duped and then lined up by a firing squad of Polish policemen. It was only Ben's compelling pleas – which Freedman compares to a speech to the United Nations – which saved them.

Freedland's admiration for Ben shines throughout the book. As he writes half way through "I have never met a person of the integrity, determination and unselfish involvement as Ben Helfgott. He is solely responsible to his own conscience."

He admits, however, that he struggles to understand certain facets of Ben's life, most especially his continued love of all things Polish (which does not detract from his unwavering pride at captaining the British team at two Olympic Games). Freedland is clearly in awe of Ben's capacity for loyalty in the same way that he respects his incredible sporting prowess, despite being unable to personally identify with either.

Family is a very strong theme throughout the book, starting with the wonderful love affair that Ben shared with his father, Moische, and continuing through to the caring relationships that he and Arza now have with their three sons and nine grandchildren. Ben's sister Mala – the only other member of his immediate



family to survive the Shoah – also gets the chance to reveal hitherto unknown details about her own story.

Freedland believes this is a book that demands conversation, hoping that it might be adopted by schools and book clubs throughout the country who are attracted by Ben's Holocaust story or sporting achievements or both. He feels that deeply personal stories such as this one make it very hard to deny the facts. He admires all survivors and refugees who – like Ben – have chosen to share their stories.

Freedland's style is very accessible and his skills as a biographer cannot be disputed. Although I struggled occasionally with the flow of the book, it is essential reading. The highlight for me was the back section, in which Ben's sporting and civil achievements are chronologically recorded and extracts from some of his keynote speeches throughout the years are reproduced.

*Jo Briggs*

**This book is available from [www.vmbooks.com](http://www.vmbooks.com) for the special price of £16.95. P&P applies, offer code **AJR18** valid until the end of August 2018.**

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Continued from page 7*

second, however, is rather meaningless out of context. I queried why in some GCSE examinations the History set books on the Third Reich were *Schindler's Ark* (List) and *The Final Days* – both depicting "good Germans". Should children not learn of the atrocious Germans too? This point does not come across in the abbreviated version.

Like your other readers, I look forward to receiving the Journal each month. Please allow your readers to express themselves fully! We need your platform to be heard. I am grateful to you for giving us this opportunity.

*Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts*

## ABORTION

David Kernek, for good personal reasons,

describes abortion as "industrially organised genocide". But what about the many thousands of German women in desperate need after the Red Army had passed through in 1945? Or the many thousands in East Africa or Syria today?

Abortion is surely not a one-fits-all consideration. Every woman should have the right of her personal choice.

*Dr Hans L Eirew, Manchester*



# ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler



**The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition celebrates its 250th year in an ultimate expression of kitsch splendour. And who better to curate it than Grayson Perry, aka Claire, his alter ego, who collected his Turner Prize in 2003.**

Grayson, the potter absolute, famous for his sexy images on Grecian vases, appeared in a pink clown outfit, pink eyeshadow, lime green platform heels with orange laces, and tiny pink party hat perched on his purple bob. He was the main work of art with photographers more eager to snap him than any other exhibit.

Unlike most po-faced curators with their serious, academic pitch, Perry flew us around the show like an eagle on speed, pointing out how you needed a horizontal green painting here and how everything had to match the walls, painted blue, yellow or pink. There were sudden bursts of his manic laughter as he noted something he liked. "People get the words 'dull' and 'subtle' muddled up," he said. "You can be subtle in bright colours."

There were no hidden messages here. Just wit, playfulness, silliness and flamboyance. And lots of political correctness. It was pure statement art. Nigel Farage stares down from a great height, but his UKIP placard is hijacked by **Banksy's** latest creation: *Vote to Love (not Leave)* priced at a cool £350 million. Proclamatory statements about democracy, tax evasion, sexism and

poverty, not only as an ode on Perry's Grecian urns, turned up everywhere. Jeremy Corbyn smiled winsomely from what looked like a flying sports car. A massive bear woven into a Persian carpet, and another playing a harp, are a nod to Perry's love of teddies.

The exhibition extended up into the Sackler wing – though the lift wasn't working and since everything bore the marks of incomplete refurbishment, the going up and down was worthy of a *trompe l'oeil* perspective by Dutch artist M.C. Escher. Downstairs – in the Ronald and Rita McAulay Gallery – the exhibition extended for free, but resembled a publicity stunt for Perry himself; drawings of him popped up everywhere, and since this is the one time in a year when the RA turns truly democratic, offering a chance to appear besides famous RA members like Perry himself, the homage worked.

Up to 800 works are selected from 1900 entries. They are mainly mind-boggling. A robotic sex doll entitled *Tell Picasso the News*; a yellow road sign pointing to the Architecture Room saying: *Unaffordable Housing*, while another says *Rich People Smell* – and a Daily Telegraph poster: *Brawl at Poets Corner; three policemen bitten*.

I liked *All the Rivers that flow through me* by **Mila Furstova** a magnificent androgynous creature in a gold Tudor crinoline with pictures of children and dogs; a black and white Hindu pipe smoker, **John Humphreys'** odd fibreglass perspective of the Queen and **James Butler's** affectionate bronze of the Queen Mum, head slightly askance in pearls and osprey hat

**Yinka Shonibare's** clever fibreglass and steel *Young Academician*, shows a woman with a globe head balancing books by female authors. The wow factor goes to a colourful woollen crochet, felt and fabric sculpture by Portuguese artist **Joana Vasconcelos** in the Wohl Central Hall. Holding the fort in the courtyard was **Anish Kapoor's** *Symphony for a Beloved Daughter*, a red sun on girders poised over blocks of wood.

## Annely Juda Fine Art

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CONTEMPORARY  
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

# LOOKING FOR?

The AJR regularly receives messages from our members and others looking for people or for help in particular subjects. Here are some of the most recent requests – please get in touch directly with the person concerned if you can help.

### BERLIN FAMILY

Matthias Schirmer, a radio journalist in Berlin, is researching the fate of a family who lived in Charlottenburg – Gervinusstraße 20. They include Katie Jacoby, born 17.03.1904, died London 12.06.2003, Erna Baruch née Herrmann, divorced Twelkemeyer, born 10.06.1906. Died Auschwitz 25.02.1943, and Max Martin Baruch, born in March 1910 and deported to Auschwitz in February 1943. [matthias.schirmer@rbb-online.de](mailto:matthias.schirmer@rbb-online.de)

### HOME NATIONS

Writer John Gannon requires information regarding Jewish refugee children and families who were displaced to Wales and Scotland. [john.gannon@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:john.gannon@blueyonder.co.uk)

### FROM VIENNA TO NORWICH

Maureen and Barry Leveton – who are helping to create a new Heritage Centre at Norwich Synagogue – wish to hear from anyone who came (or is descended from someone who came) to Norwich from Vienna in Spring 1939, thanks to a joint initiative by the Norwich Hebrew Congregation and the Quakers of Norwich. [mleveton351@gmail](mailto:mleveton351@gmail)

### JUNE 1939 KINDERTRANSPORT

George Fogelson in Los Angeles is looking for information about a 5 year old girl who came, with his mother, on a Kindertransport from Berlin on 13 June 1939. Other Kinder on the train included Fanny Brenner, Hanna Gibeanska, Marianne Moritz, Ida Lebzelter, Rita Levy and Renate Brodchaundel. [fogelson@berkeley.edu](mailto:fogelson@berkeley.edu)

### LOEFF STOLPERSTEIN

Irving Adler wishes to notify any relatives of Edith Loeff Harvey, (Kindertransportee from Vienna) that in May a stone was placed at the last known residence of her uncle and family in Vienna. [lrv@adlerfw.com](mailto:lrv@adlerfw.com)

## WHY NOT TRY AJR'S MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICE?

The AJR offers a kosher Meals on Wheels service delivered to your door once a week.

The meals are freshly cooked every week by Kosher to Go. They are then frozen prior to delivery.

The cost is £7.00 for a three-course meal (soup, main course, desert) plus a £1 delivery fee.

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For further details, please call AJR Head Office on 020 8385 3070.

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Telephone: 020 8455 2286

## ERRATA

1. In last month's review of *Vienna – London: Passage to Safety* by Marion Trestler, the former Austrian ambassador to Britain, who contributed the foreword to the book, was Dr Gabriele Matzner-Holzer.
2. The film *The Silence of the Lambs* was directed by Jonathan Demme, not Milos Forman.
3. The Letter from Israel in the June issue, written by Mirry Reich, could have been entitled 'Letter from a Jewish settlement in the West Bank'.

## COME TO THE SEASIDE



Tuesday 14 August 2018

Coach Leaving Finchley Road and Edgware. Contact Susan Harrod on [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk) or 020 8385 3078



## BOOK SALE



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# LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



## FLASHES OF MEMORY



I recently visited the newly-opened exhibition at Yad Vashem, which contains a vast array of photographs

and films discovered after the Holocaust by the Allied troops who liberated the concentration camps.

Although Jews were not allowed to own cameras under the Nazi regime, some Jews were permitted to use them if this was within the framework of the work of the Judenrat, particularly in the various ghettos of eastern Europe. And yet, despite everything, there is considerable photographic evidence of what went on in the camps, ghettos and centres of life, whether taken by the Germans for propaganda purposes or clandestinely by Jews in order to create a visual record of what was happening.

For those who came upon the scenes of horror – including the wretched figures of the emaciated survivors – the paramount objective was to record evidence of the atrocities they found, mainly in order to ensure that no future generation could deny that those scenes of horror had ever existed. It seems, however, that despite efforts to the contrary, that message is

being forgotten by later generations with their own axe to grind.

Some of the photos on display are well-known, such as the picture of the Jewish boy holding his hands up in surrender as he leaves the Warsaw ghetto together with its other inhabitants, all of them unarmed civilians threatened by heavily-armed German soldiers. Other photos depict long lines of Jews being marched out of various ghettos, towns and villages. Pictures taken by Germans for propaganda purposes back home show Jews toiling in factories and bear headings such as 'Lazy Jews Finally Doing Some Work,' Photographs taken by Jews tend to focus more on individual victims, seeking to create a record of those who were destined for annihilation.

The exhibition also contains film footage, and in particular the moving evidence provided by the BBC's veteran commentator, Richard Dimbleby, who uses graphic terms to describe the awfulness of the scene he and the Allied troops encountered upon entering Bergen-Belsen. In fact, his account was so graphic that his superiors at the BBC refused to believe or broadcast it, and waited for confirmation of its veracity from other

sources. Eventually, of course, the footage was broadcast, and helped to make the civilised world aware of the atrocities perpetrated by the Germans and their henchmen.

A selection of cameras from the period is also on display, bringing home to the visitor to the exhibition how unwieldy and bulky photographic apparatus was at the time. We who are accustomed to slipping a tiny mobile phone out of our pocket to snap a fleeting image or 'selfie' need to be reminded of the technical difficulties involved in endeavouring to capture a face or figure, or even a group of people at that time. The fact that such images were preserved is testament to the resolve and determination of those few Jews who managed to create that record.

"The camera and its manipulative power have tremendous power and far-reaching influence," was the message conveyed by Vivian Uria, Exhibition Curator and Director of Yad Vashem's Museums Division, and it is the full impact of this aspect that is revealed in this exhibition. After all, no-one who looks at even a fraction of the images on display can fail to grasp the evil, bestiality and total lack of humanity involved on the part of the perpetrators and the helplessness and vulnerability of the victims. Nevertheless, to the credit of the original photographers and the curators of the exhibition it must be said that the impact of the images remains in the visitor's memory long after leaving the exhibition.



Please note the AJR  
**ANNUAL LUNCH**  
will take place on

**SUNDAY**  
**21 OCTOBER 2018**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

# AT YOUR SERVICE: Claims Conference

For over 60 years the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany – commonly known as the Claims Conference – has conducted negotiations with the German government on behalf of Jewish Holocaust victims. It works in partnership with the AJR and other organisations in the UK and around the world that provide essential social services for Holocaust survivors, and who understand the priorities in their communities and how to address them.

A recent survey conducted in the United States on behalf of the Claims Conference found that there are critical gaps both in awareness of basic facts as well as detailed knowledge of the Holocaust. The Claims Conference has been in existence for 67 of the 79 years since the beginning of World War II, but believes it still has much to do.

The origins of the organisation are well known: in October 1951, following a pledge from the German Chancellor to redress material indemnities arising from the “unspeakable crimes committed in the name of the German people”, 23 major international Jewish organisations met in New York to agree how these material claims should be managed. The new organisation that emerged from the meeting – the Claims Conference – had the task of negotiating with the German government a programme of indemnification for the material damages to Jewish individuals and to the Jewish people caused by Germany through the Holocaust. As David Ben-Gurion wrote to its first president, Dr Nahum Goldmann, “For the first time in the history of the Jewish people, oppressed and plundered for hundreds of years... the oppressor and plunderer has had to hand back some of the spoil and pay collective compensation for part of the material losses.”

Negotiating and administering the indemnification has been – and continues to be – a massive task. To date the German government has

expended more than \$80 billion in claims, all negotiated by the Claims Conference.

Greg Schneider joined the Claims Conference team 24 years ago and worked across a number of different functions before being appointed Executive Vice President in 2009. This experience gives him a first-hand understanding of all aspects of the organisation’s activities and its current and future priorities.

Indemnification has always been the number one priority and the Claims Conference has worked hard to achieve eligibility for all Jewish people who directly suffered during the Holocaust. This has meant getting the German government to liberalise and expand their initial criteria to include ‘new’ geographical territories or levels of persecution – for example, while compensation was initially only open to people who had spent a minimum of six months in one of the camps, it now extends to anyone who spent any time in a camp.

Each expansion of the eligibility criteria inevitably paves the way for a host of new claims. In the early 2000s for example, the introduction of compensation for slave labour resulted in over 200,000 new applications that needed to be assessed and processed. Recently, negotiations have opened opportunities for over 50,000 people in Russia, Ukraine and neighbouring countries to seek restitution, while even more recently over 60,000 former Moroccan and Algerian Jews, who were subjected to regulations restricting their freedom of movement due to French



Greg Schneider

collaborationist occupation, are now receiving first-time recognition in the form of one time payments via the Claims Conference.

Other examples include approximately 10,000 people who endured the siege in Leningrad – a territory which was never actually subjected to German occupation, but where Jewish people still suffered tremendously at the hands of the Nazis. As Greg says, “The list is extensive and in recent years 150,000 Jewish people have received some form of one-off compensation payment for the first time. It may be surprising that new cases continue to come to light so long after the Holocaust, but the total amount of compensation paid out has increased year after year for the past decade.”

Additional claims require further administration, and over the years the organisation has had to staff up or down accordingly. The Claims Conference currently employs approximately 400 people of whom 120 are based in New York and 100 are based in Israel. The balance are mostly in Germany although the organisation has representatives in several Eastern European and former Soviet Union countries.

Not all of these staff deal with compensation. Another major focus for the Claims Conference is the welfare of Holocaust survivors and refugees. Separate negotiations are conducted with the German government on their behalf, with funds channelled through organisations

like the AJR that directly provide support services to survivors and refugees.

Much research has been carried out into the welfare needs of this unique group of people. With their families murdered and all their worldly goods looted or stolen, most Holocaust survivors had nothing to inherit and no familial infrastructure to support them. They didn't get the chance to nurture their own parents throughout old age, nor to implicitly demonstrate this to their children. Their harsh backgrounds and the stresses of being one of the few survivors often complicate their relationships with their own offspring. This sets them poles apart from families who have supported each other for many generations in the same country, especially in Western countries.

"As survivors get older they inevitably need more support to enable them to continue to live comfortably in their own homes or elsewhere," explains Greg. "The overall number may be declining but the net need for extra care is growing year after year."

Clearly there will be a date in the future when no first generation survivors remain. But for the time being the Claims Conference's priority is to work with the AJR and similar organisations throughout the world to provide essential services to all Holocaust survivors and refugees, and to ensure that the latter's local communities prioritise their needs.

"In total we work with approximately 300 different welfare organisations around the world to provide survivors with physical, financial and emotional support. Our goal is to ensure that no survivor feels alone, or has to make difficult choices between paying rent and buying food or clothing. Jewish Nazi victims in many countries cannot receive the care they need due to financial constraints. It is unacceptable that victims who spent their youths in camps, ghettos, hiding, or fleeing persecution cannot now receive the best possible treatment available in their old age," says Greg.

The level of support required by survivors varies from country to country. In Russia and the Ukraine, for example, the Claims Conference provides regular food parcels to over 30,000 survivors who would otherwise struggle for nourishment. Here in the UK,

where abject poverty is not such an issue, the needs are very different and the Claims Conference is particularly cognizant of the sophisticated welfare, emotional support and social engagement programmes run by the AJR with its support.

As our readers will know, we have a team of experienced social and care workers who are dedicated to the daily needs of our members. They run a nationwide programme of home visits to assess members' needs and, where appropriate, eligibility for a number of financial support schemes including those available through the Claims Conference.

The third key focus of the Claims Conference's work, in addition to compensation and welfare, is education. This is an increasingly important area, although still approximately one percent of the organisation's total budget is focused on memorialising the people who died and creating a legacy in their memory for future generations.

Funding has been awarded to a large range of Holocaust commemoration and education programmes, ranging from physical facilities at Yad Vashem and the Imperial War Museum in London to multi-media projects such as the 2015 Hungarian Academy Award winner for Best Foreign Film, *'Son of Saul'*. The Claims Conference also provides funding for educational resources aimed at teachers and pupils throughout the world, with a particular focus on reaching out to non-Jews through its various schools programme.

"In the US there is a broad-based consensus that schools must be responsible

for providing comprehensive Holocaust education. In addition, a significant majority of American adults believe that fewer people care about the Holocaust today than they used to, and more than half of Americans believe that the Holocaust could happen again," explains Greg. "We need to work with our respective partner organisations to tackle this head on."

He feels this is as important to individual survivors' welfare and peace of mind as it is to society as a whole. "Most survivors are naturally very anxious to know that their stories are passed on and their experiences are never repeated. They deserve to know that their legacies will be preserved and that the world genuinely believes in 'never again'".

Looking ahead, the Claims Conference uses sophisticated projection tools to anticipate first generation survivors' likely care needs and funding requirements and expects that in twenty years they will be a mere shadow of today's.

"We still have so much we need to do for the first generation, we haven't yet broached how best to support their descendants," says Greg. "We're also very aware that after the first generation survivors pass on, the need for creative, impactful and transformative programmes about the Shoah will be even bigger. This means there will probably always be a role for the Claims Conference and other agencies involved in Holocaust education, such as the AJR."



German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer signing the Luxembourg Agreements in 1951

# Around the AJR

*Most of these reports are summaries of much longer reviews which, due to lack of space, we are unable to include in their entirety. If you would like further information on the actual event please contact either the author or the AJR regional co-ordinator.*

## NORTH LONDON GROUP

This talk was so much more than an account of the (mis-)fortunes of a family in Hungary. Marcus Ferrar gave a most interesting talk about the life of Jews in that country during the war years, where they were not persecuted until 1944, and now live in relative harmony with their fellow citizens.

Hanne R Freedman

## MUSWELL HILL

A group of nine each brought along an object with a special meaning to them. Members shared treasured memories and it was a most moving and special meeting.  
*Susan Harrod*

## PINNER

Nick Dobson entertained us on the subject of Agatha Christie, the author, musician, poet, apothecary dispenser, divorcee, archaeologist and experienced traveller. A most enjoyable hour.  
*Henri Obstfeld*

## NORTHERN REGIONAL MEETING PRESTWICH WEDNESDAY 4 JULY 2018

Our keynote speaker will be  
**Lilian Black, Chair of HSFA**

who will talk about the new Holocaust learning centre in Huddersfield.

To book contact **Wendy Bott** on 07908 156365 or [wendy@ajr.org.uk](mailto:wendy@ajr.org.uk)



Alison Sherrick with Bernd Kochsland and Sir Erich Reich at the Kindertransport lunch

## THE BURIED CROWN

The guest speaker at our May Kindertransport lunch was the children's author Ally Sherrick. Her latest book, *The Buried Crown*, centres around a young German Jewish refugee, Kitty Regenbogen, who has come to England as part of a Kindertransport and is living with her grandfather in Suffolk, where the story is set. Kitty befriends an evacuee boy from London and the pair of them join forces to save a priceless piece of ancient treasure which is at risk of being stolen and taken back to Berlin for Adolf Hitler.

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## JULY GROUP EVENTS

All AJR members are welcome at any of these events; you do not have to be affiliated to that particular group. As the exact timings of these events are often subject to last minute changes we do not include them in the AJR Journal and suggest you contact the relevant regional contact for full details.

Ealing	3 July	Marcus Ferrar – The Budapest House
Norfolk	3 July	Herbie Goldberg – Jewish Refugee Composers
Ilford	4 July	Barbara Nadel – Jewish Istanbul
Pinner	5 July	Alexa Kirk – Victoria & Albert Archives
Leeds CF	9 July	Social get-together
Essex (Westcliff)	10 July	Neil Taylor – Maccabi GB
Harrogate / York	10 July	Social get-together
Birmingham	11 July	Bella Lupasco – My Exodus from Egypt
Wessex	12 July	Annual Summer Outing
Edgware	17 July	Nick Dobson – an illustrated look at Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole
Book Club	18 July	Club meeting
Radlett	18 July	Rabbi Marc Levene – My Jewish Journey
Bradford	25 July	Social get-together
Muswell Hill	26 July	Jono David – Photo Project with slide show
North London	26 July	Claude Vecht-Wolf – The Story of the Haggadah

# Broad's Enjoyment

AJR members from Leeds, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow met for an outstanding five-day holiday in Norfolk.



The whole group in the grounds of Norwich Cathedral



Arriving at Sandringham Church



On the Pippy Line railway between Sherringham & Holt

We visited Sandringham House where the stewards gave us the history of this royal home. Not to be missed were the beautiful gardens and the museum with its exhibits of royal vehicles. Lunch at the Visitors' Centre was a real treat.

Next day we had a wonderful tour of Norwich Cathedral with a guide who was a mine of historical anecdotes and, after lunch at the Cathedral cafeteria, we had a comfortable and relaxing boat trip on the Norfolk Broads.

Our days were very full: on the

Wednesday we went to Felbrigg Hall, a National Trust property with beautiful gardens, built in 1620. We then went to Sherringham for an all too short steam train trip to Holt, where yet more food was on offer in the shape of a cream tea.

We were also taken to the Sainsbury's Visual Arts Centre – and what a treat that was! An outstanding building is home to the collection of Lisa and Robert Sainsbury, which comprises artefacts from around the world – Chinese and Japanese items 'rub shoulders' with vases and busts from other countries, as well as a display of

paintings by Francis Bacon and other renowned artists. At lunch in the cafe we overlooked the wonderful panorama of the grounds and the Sculpture Gardens.

Then, sadly, we had to say farewell to our new friends but we hope to all meet again in 2019. Our sincere thanks go to all the AJR team – Katherine, Eva, Agnes, Basil, Karen, Christine, Wendy and Susan – for their superb arrangements that ensured the smooth running of the holiday.

**Meta Roseneil**

# The Anti-Nazi Movies

Last July we published an article entitled 'Lights...Camera..Action!!! – How Hitler helped Hollywood.' The article explored the impact of German Jewish talent on the rapidly evolving Hollywood movie industry during the early 20th century. Now, one year on, we look at how German Jewish Film Makers transformed the American film industry during WW2 and beyond.

With the threat of war looming in 1939 Warner Bros. released *The Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, while Ernst Lubitsch produced his most Jewish movie since arriving in Hollywood. Both films featured a number of Jewish refugee actors from Germany, initiating a pattern which would continue into the 1940s, especially after the US entered the war. *Nazi Spy* was based on real events relating to the discovery of a Nazi spy network in the US with a cast which included Frances Lederer, Martin Kosleck, Sig Ruman and Paul Lucas along with the Rumanian-born Edward G. Robinson (Emmanuel Goldenberg) as the leading FBI agent in charge of the investigation (director Anatole Litvak, who had first made his name as an editor, then director in Berlin).

At around the same time director Ernst Lubitsch was first developing his film *Ninotchka* which represented another small breakthrough for the many unemployed Jewish (and non-Jewish) refugee actors in Hollywood. In fact, the original project became more Jewish as it developed when Melvyn Douglas (né Hesselberg) was finally cast as the sympathetic romantic lead opposite Greta Garbo's stiff Russian apparatchik. Billy Wilder and Walter Reisch were brought in as writers (along with Charles Brackett) and more Jewish humour was introduced into the original script. This was given further substance by the casting of Jewish émigré actors in the key supporting roles of the inept Russian



commissars in Paris – Sig Ruman, Felix Bressart and Alexander Granach. Even the original references to some dodgy investments in a nickel mine were changed to the more Jewish trade in diamonds, while the evocative background score was provided by yet another refugee from Nazi Germany, the brilliant composer Werner Heymann.

In 1940 Charlie Chaplin contributed *The Great Dictator*, a remarkable satirical attack on the Hitler regime, playing the dual roles of a Jewish barber and dictator Hinkel. And later that year when MGM released *The Mortal Storm* based on a book critical of the Nazi regime, Goebbels responded by banning all MGM movies in Germany. But, prior to 1942, there were relatively few anti-Nazi films produced in Hollywood. This all changed as soon as America entered the war, and it was characteristic of the movie studios and somewhat ironic that they began to employ refugee actors, many of them Jewish, for the first time. They were

much in demand as supporting players in films set in Germany or Nazi-occupied Europe and were often even cast as Nazis.

1942 was the year when the genre of anti-Nazi films was properly launched, with many of the leading studios competing with each other. At the forefront and most interesting of all was *To Be or Not to Be* from Ernst Lubitsch. This brilliant and very Jewish black comedy had as its central theme a scheme devised by a group of Polish and Jewish actors including Felix Bressart and Jack Benny to dress up in Nazi uniforms to fool the real Nazis in German occupied Poland, while the leading Nazi officer, in an inspired bit of casting—“so they call me concentration camp Erhardt”—was played by Sig Ruman. (Alexander Korda co-produced and Vincent Korda was the production designer with Werner Heymann's score nominated for an Oscar.)

Of course, this was also the year of



Casablanca, directed by Michael Curtiz who had first made his name as a director in Austria and Germany in the 1920s, with a supporting cast of Jewish immigrant actors including Peter Lorre, Marcel Dalio, S.Z. Sakall, Ludwig Stossel, Helmut Dantine and Curt Bois. *Berlin Correspondent* from Fox boasted Sig Ruman (yet again), Martin Kosleck and Polish-born Kurt Katch (Isser Katz), while Jules Dassin at MGM directed *Nazi Agent* with Conrad Veidt and Martin Kosleck.

As the genre reached its peak in 1943 there were two films based on the real events concerning the assassination of Reichsführer Heydrich in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. *Hangmen Also Die* was directed by Fritz Lang, scripted by Bert Brecht, produced by Arnold Pressburger and Oscar-nominated score from Hanns Eisler, with a supporting cast including Ludwig Donath and Alexander Granach, while *Hitler's Madman* was directed by Douglas Sirk, co-scripted by Peretz Hirschbein and produced by Seymour Nebenzal with Ludwig Stossel and Wolfgang Zilzer. A somewhat unconventional entry in the cycle was *The Strange Death of Adolf Hitler* based on an original story and script by the leading German actor, Fritz Kortner, who also played in the film. But the acting honours went to Ludwig Donath cast in the dual role

of Hitler and the actor who impersonates him. And finally, in 1943, there was *They Came to Blow Up America*, directed by the Russian-born Edward Ludwig about Nazi saboteurs trying to infiltrate the U.S. with a cast including Ruman, Stossel and Katch.

The cycle then wound down the following year with three last titles of note. *The Conspirators* from Warner Bros. was scripted by Vladimir Posner and Leo Rosten and dealt with anti-Nazi intrigue in Lisbon with obvious echoes of *Casablanca*. A stellar cast was headed by Hedy Lamarr, Paul Henreid, Peter Lorre, Kurt Katch and Vladimir Sokoloff along with Victor Francen and Steven Geray. Over at MGM tyro director Fred Zinnemann was given his best yet opportunity by producer Pandro Berman to film *The Seventh Cross* based on the novel by Anna Seghers about seven men who escape from a concentration camp and are pursued by the Gestapo. (Spencer Tracy was the star, but the supporting cast included Felix Bressart, Alexander Granach and Steven Geray.) Perhaps the most evocative (or provocative) title of all was Paramount's *The Hitler Gang* which dramatised Hitler's original rise to power. Although Robert Watson, Hollywood's Hitler look-alike, was cast in the leading role, the remarkable cast was filled out by a number of Jewish



immigrant actors including Martin Kosleck as Goebbels, Sig Ruman as Field Marshall von Hindenburg, Fritz Kortner as Strasser, and Alexander Granach as Streicher, also Reinhold Schunzel and Ludwig Donath. This film marks an appropriate conclusion to the Hollywood cycle of anti-Nazi movies which was concentrated in the years 1942-44 but overlaps with yet another 1940s cycle of American pictures which involved many of the leading German immigrant film-makers, especially directors, writers and composers, namely *film noir*.



In fact, the experience of the 1940s in particular draws attention to the quality of the many brilliant Jewish character actors: Peter Lorre and Herbert Lom in the 1940s and 50s, also Fritz Kortner and Oscar Homolka, about whom one critic wrote: "His coarse, hound like Slavic features, thick accent and bushy eyebrows made him an ideal heavy in films about foreign intrigue". Similarly, another Jewish immigrant-refugee Jewish actor, Martin Kosleck is described in David Quinlan's book of character stars thus: "He hardly got a nibble at Hollywood films until World War II loomed. Suddenly Kosleck with his sleek, dark, evil looks, and narrow face and eyes, found himself in demand to portray Nazis and sinister villains generally – quite an irony for a Jewish player".

Joel Finler

# OBITUARIES



## Lisl Renate Bohea (née Taussig)

Born Vienna 14 April 1930

Died UK 7 March 2018

**Our Mother, Lisl, was born into a loving Viennese family. Her father, Josef, was a commercial artist and her bilingual mother, Olga, was a talented seamstress. She also had a much loved older brother, Bobby.**

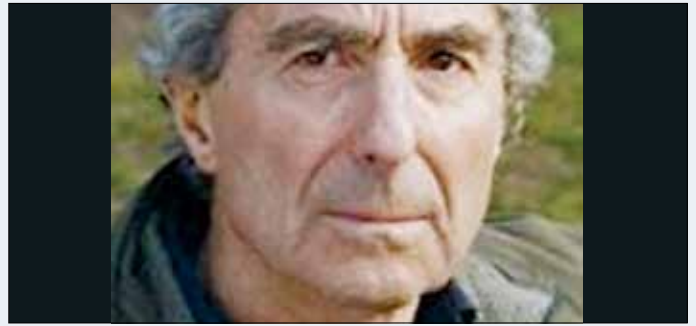
Hers was a very happy childhood until 1938, when jackbooted Nazis marched six or eight abreast through the street where she lived. In June 1939, Bobby left on the Kindertransport to a children's home in Ribblesdale, Lancashire. A few weeks later Lisl also left on the Kindertransport, though sadly they were not reunited: Lisl was fostered by a family near Birmingham, and in 1945 Bobby died of meningitis. Lisl also never saw her parents again: they were sent to Opatow, Poland and later deported to Treblinka. Messages had stopped in 1942 and, at the close of war, Olga and Josef were not listed amongst the survivors.

Lisl attended Bunce Court School where she excelled academically and made many good friends. As soon as she was old enough she travelled to Portsmouth to follow her dream and train as a nurse. It was here that she met and fell in love with Roy. They married in November 1951 and celebrated 65 years of marriage. They had three children, three grandchildren and two (soon to be three) great grandchildren, who gave them much joy throughout the years.

Though she lost her family and her happy childhood to the terrible events of WW2, in 2011 Lisl was at last reunited with a much-loved cousin, Gretel, who had been living in Israel. They remained in regular contact until Gretel's death two years ago.

Having been diagnosed with liver cancer, during her final weeks Lisl was admitted to the Rowans Hospice near Portsmouth. She was made very welcome by all the staff and volunteers and had a lovely room, with a bird table outside her window. Her feathered friends kept her amused, especially during the heavy snowfall in February. On 7 March, with her family by her side, Lisl slipped away peacefully to join Roy (who had died 6 months previously) in their final resting place.

Lesley Roberts



## Philip Roth

Born Newark 19 March 1933

Died New York 22 May 2018

**Philip Roth was one of the great Jewish-American writers, formed by the New Deal and the idealism of the Second World War.**

Roth wrote eloquently about the America of FDR, the war and the GI Bill, and the hard-working Jews of Newark, New Jersey, where he grew up. His first book, *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959) was a book of short stories set in suburban New Jersey. "Green lawns, white Jews", a later Roth character called it. It created enormous controversy among American Jews who consider one of the stories an attack on Jewish values.

His breakthrough book was *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969). Its frank account of sex helped make it a huge bestseller. It sold over 200,000 copies in less than three months and more than 400,000 copies by the end of the year. *Life* magazine called it "a major event in American culture". It made Roth a celebrity overnight.

His writing over the next twenty years took a more literary turn and some have criticised the books of the 1970s, especially, as too clever and playful, though *The Ghost Writer* (1979), in which Roth's alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman, meets Anne Frank, is one of his best novels. Perhaps his greatest achievement during these years was his interest in East European writers who he championed, helping their work to be translated in a Penguin series called *The Other Europe*.

Renewed prominence came with what critics called "his American turn", a series of novels about post-war American history, from McCarthyism (*I Married a Communist*, 1998) to Vietnam (*American Pastoral*, 1997), from Clinton, race and political correctness (*The Human Stain*, 2000) to an imaginary right-wing coup in 1930s America (*The Plot Against America*, 2004). These novels about the dark side of America confirmed his reputation as one of the greatest writers of his generation, though the Nobel Prize always eluded him.

Roth was enormously prolific. He wrote more than thirty novels, several books of essays and criticism. In his last novels, he became increasingly preoccupied with old age and mortality. "Old age isn't a battle," he wrote in *Everyman* (2006). "Old age is a massacre."

David Herman

**A fuller article about Philip Roth and his legacy will appear in the August issue.**

## AJR CARD AND GAMES CLUB



Monday 13 August 2018 at 1.00pm  
 at North Western Reform Synagogue,  
 Alyth Gardens, Temple Fortune, London NW11 7EN  
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### LUNCH

Wednesday 11 July 2018  
 At Alyth Gardens Synagogue  
 12.30pm  
 We are delighted to be joined by  
 Lord Livingston of Parkhead



The fourth generation son of Polish-Lithuanian Jews who arrived in Scotland 120 years ago, Ian Livingston's family owned a factory making flying jackets and police uniforms. He helped to found PC World before joining and subsequently becoming chief executive of BT Group. A Conservative member of the House of Lords, he previously served as the UK government's Minister of State for Trade and Investment.

Booking is essential for catering purposes.  
 £7.00 per person

For details please call Susan Harrod on  
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## AJR FILM CLUB

### NORMAN starring Richard Gere



on **MONDAY 9 JULY 2018 at  
 12.30pm**

Norman (Richard Gere), a New York fixer, knows the right people and can get things done. When an Israeli dignitary named Eshel (Lior Ashkenazi) comes to the city, Norman decides to impress the man by buying him some very expensive shoes. It works and he establishes a strong connection to the man, but a few years later, when Eshel becomes the Israeli prime minister, Norman can't communicate with him anymore, and this threatens to destroy his reputation.

£8.00 per person inc lunch  
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# Events and Exhibitions



## DAVID BOMBERG ON TOUR

A major new touring exhibition (taking in Pallant House Gallery, Chichester; Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle) reassessing the career of David Bomberg will be on show at the Ben Uri Gallery.

Till 16 September, Ben Uri Gallery  
[www.benuri.org.uk](http://www.benuri.org.uk)

## FAMILY HISTORY WRITING COURSE

The author and journalist Nick Barlay, who has been teaching courses on family history writing, is running a new series of one-day courses aimed at turning documentary material, research and memory into engaging narrative.

[www.familyhistorywritingcourse.co.uk](http://www.familyhistorywritingcourse.co.uk)

## 2nd GEN BARBECUE

The Association of Children of Jewish Refugees is holding its annual summer barbecue.

19 August, Pinner  
[www.acjr.org.uk](http://www.acjr.org.uk)

## NATURE BY SAVILLE

London artist Yvonne Saville (née Schon), whose parents were both refugees from Vienna, spent her early years in the Lake District which defines her work: nature translated onto canvas. Her paintings reflect the hugeness of lakes and fells and the thousand greens of England.

Till 9 July, Lauderdale House  
[www.lauderdalehouse.org.uk](http://www.lauderdalehouse.org.uk)

## The Boys

The *Auschwitz to Ambleside Exhibition* is a permanent exhibition now on display at the Windermere Library. On Tuesday 17 July a special talk and guided tour will be led by Trevor Avery BEM, Director of the Lake District Holocaust Project, round the Calgarth Estate. The estate is where 300 child survivors of the Holocaust stayed when they arrived in the Lake District in the summer of 1945.

There will also be an opportunity to see *The Auschwitz Album Exhibition* which is on loan in England for the first time from Yad Vashem.

Entry is free of charge, but tickets need to be applied for. Email: [info@ldhp.org.uk](mailto:info@ldhp.org.uk)



Child survivors in Windermere in 1945



## BIBRING'S LIVE BROADCAST

On 22 May 8000 students across the UK heard AJR member Harry Bibring BEM share his personal experience of escaping Nazi persecution. The webcast was organised as part of the **Stories from Willesden Lane** project, which is supported by the AJR and managed by the Holocaust Educational Trust to help educate London children about the Kindertransport in its 80th anniversary year.

During his webcast Harry Bibring – who was born in 1925 in Vienna and came on the Kindertransport when he was 13 years old – spoke about his family life in Vienna, his

memories of Jewish persecution, Kristallnacht and life as a refugee in England. Students also had the opportunity to ask Harry questions.

Harry had some clear messages for the young people:

**If you get rid of prejudice, you get rid of discrimination.**

**If you get rid of discrimination, you get rid of genocide.**

**Don't be a bystander.**

The full webcast can be seen on <https://vimeo.com/271839218>.

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# A family reunion



The Kleeman family reunion. Natasha is wearing a blue and white spotted dress, third row from the back, behind the woman with the flowery jacket.

Like most Jews living in Europe, my family's history is one marked by displacement and loss. After witnessing the first four years of the Nazi regime in Germany, my maternal grandfather was forced to flee his country in 1937 and start a new life in the UK.

Other branches of the family fled elsewhere, planting new roots in the United States, South America and other European countries, and splintering our family across the globe. Sadly, this trajectory is a familiar one.

On the first weekend of May, however, our family marked an occasion that was anything but ordinary: a family reunion, bringing together over 50 family members from Holland, Chile, the US France and the UK, many of whom had not only never met but, until recently, were not even aware of each other's existence.

The event was the culmination of a year and a half of research, planning and perseverance by my aunt, Ann Antrich. After researching our family tree and making some exciting discoveries about our living relations across the world, she set about making contact with them, and embarked upon the mammoth task of bringing everyone

together in the form of a reunion. While inevitably not all those she contacted were able to attend the event (our family in Israel, for example, was not represented), the general response was one of enthusiasm and warmth. Many who Ann reached out to were willing not only to fly halfway across the world to attend the event, but to contribute generous donations which helped to make the weekend such a resounding success.

The main event was a lunch party, which took place on Sunday 6 May in a beautiful function room in Camden's Holiday Inn, overlooking the canal. The day was an emotional one, featuring speeches, presentations, video footage from those who couldn't attend and, in true Jewish style, generous helpings of food and drink. We laughed, cried, and shared stories of our family histories and our diverse lives.

In addition, Ann organised a whole weekend of activities, beginning with a very moving Friday night service at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue during which family member and Holocaust survivor Robert Hompes gave a poignant speech paying tribute to the memories of those lost in the Shoah, followed by dinner at Harry Morgan's. There was also a group trip to see a concert at the Royal Festival Hall, a visit to the Picasso exhibition at the Tate Modern, and a guided walk of the Jewish East End with award-winning guide Rachel Kolsky.

All in all, it was an extraordinarily full and memorable weekend. It was fascinating to meet relatives from all walks of life, connected by deep-rooted familial ties but living such culturally disparate lives. During the course of the weekend, I spoke to a neuroscientist from Chile, a photographer from Paris, a surgeon living in Manhattan and so many more fascinating and diverse characters. I got to spend quality time with family I hadn't seen for many years, and forge new relationships with cousins I had never met before.

Inevitably, the occasion was tinged with sadness, and an acute sense of all that we have lost. More importantly, however, it was a joyous celebration of resilience and survival. Speaking at the Sunday lunch, Ann stressed the positive significance of the occasion: "I think I know what our ancestors would say about us being here. They would be happy and proud that this reunion is taking place. They would be thrilled that we have flourished, thrilled that those who found refuge have been succeeded by five, even six generations."

Indeed, the reunion was a profound tribute to the power of familial ties, and to the will of the Jewish people to survive, in spite of persecution and adversity. Am Yisrael Chai: Truly the Jewish People is a people that survives.

**Natasha Kleeman**