



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Two sides of exile

When Judith Kerr died the tributes poured out. “Her stories and illustrations are ageless and timeless, and endlessly uplifting,” wrote *The Daily Telegraph*.



Judith Kerr with OBE for services to children’s literature and Holocaust education in 2012

She was a national treasure. Not just because her books were hugely popular. She wrote almost forty books and, recently, *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* sold its millionth copy. Not many children’s writers are interviewed on *Newsnight* or by Alan Yentob on BBC1’s art programme, *Imagine*.

But Judith Kerr was more than just a popular children’s writer and illustrator. *The Guardian* spoke of “the triumph of good over evil Judith Kerr’s life represented.” Her trilogy, *Out of the Hitler Time*, told of her experiences as a child refugee, fleeing with her family from Nazi Germany in 1933, four days after the Reichstag fire, and coming to London in 1935.

Many have paid tribute to these books but few have read them carefully or noticed how complex they are. They don’t simply tell a tale of “the triumph of good over evil”. The books become darker and contain some extraordinarily moving

scenes. This may seem a strange thing to say but in some ways Judith Kerr is an underrated writer.

Kerr was born in Berlin in 1923. She was the daughter of Alfred Kerr, the most famous theatre critic in Weimar Germany, and his wife, Julia, a composer. He was nicknamed the *Kulturpapst* (“Culture Pope”). Their house in Grunewald was cultured and assimilated. Einstein, Arthur Schnitzler, HG Wells and Bernard Shaw were family friends.

When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit tells the story of how Judith’s family escaped from Germany and spent the next two years in Switzerland and Paris before coming to London in 1935. In 1933 her father left for Prague after a tip-off from a friendly policeman warning him that his passport was about to be confiscated. He and his family got out just in time. Later that *Continued on page 2*

BIRTHDAY HONOURS

We were delighted to see seven AJR members named in The Queen’s Birthday Honours list. You’ll find details of these members on the back page.

As our Chief Executive Michael Newman said, “these richly deserved awards reflect their personal dedication and huge commitment to this critical subject”.

Also in this issue is a very interesting article about the refugee children who were housed in the Lake District during the war, and the first in our new series *Remembering & Reflecting on the Kindertransport*.

We hope you enjoy reading these and other articles as well as looking at the lovely photos from AJR’s recent trip to Nottinghamshire.

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Two sides of exile (cont.)

year his books were burned, his German nationality revoked and his property confiscated.

But exile was a double-edged experience for Alfred Kerr and his family. They escaped but by the time they came to Britain, Alfred Kerr was almost seventy. He had lost his audience and his language. The family were to spend the next thirteen years in poverty.

What do these books tell us about being a refugee? First, that like so many central European refugees, the Kerrs didn't simply escape from Germany to Britain. It was a constant question of choices. First, he went to Prague, then Switzerland and Paris, all popular destinations for Jewish refugees in the mid-1930s. When he decided to leave Paris, he was torn between New York and London but the offer of £1000 to write a film script for Alexander Korda tilted the balance. His sister and her daughter, by contrast, went to Palestine in 1937. He never saw them again. Interestingly, they barely feature in the trilogy.

Second, how crucial the mother was, as in so many families, in keeping the family together, supporting the children and going out to work. Judith's father was elderly, he couldn't write English and couldn't earn much of a living. Judith describes her father in a moving scene:

"In her mind she saw him in his poky room with his typewriter that kept going wrong and his writings that no one wanted to publish, in a country whose language he did not speak."

Later, returning after his death to look at the boarding-house in Putney which had been his last home, she found it demolished:

"The only thing that had been the same was the bench at the end of the street where Papa had sometimes sat in the sun with his pipe. He had eked out the tobacco with dried leaves and rose petals and for lunch he had eaten bread toasted over the gas ring and spread with exactly one seventh of a jar of fish paste."

In so many refugee families the father lost his ability to earn and with that went his authority within the family. Mothers were often better at adapting. Judith's mother spoke good English and got a job as a

secretary. Her struggles with learning to cook and sew are painfully described:

"Then suddenly Mama made a sound with which by now they were all familiar. 'My chicken!' she cried and rushed off to the kitchen."

It was the children who adapted most easily. Judith was twelve when they arrived in Britain, her brother Michael was fourteen. Within four years he was studying law at Cambridge and went on to become a distinguished judge, Sir Michael Kerr QC. Judith, of course, became a famous writer, married to Nigel Kneale, one of the great TV dramatists of the 1950s and '60s (*Quatermass, 1984*).

In the first two books, the saddest stories are about others. Those like "Uncle Julius" who didn't get away, and later commits suicide in Berlin taking an overdose and, above all, Uncle Victor. Perhaps the most powerful moment in the trilogy comes when Anna (the Judith figure in the books) "suddenly realised that there was someone standing outside, staring in":

"The figure at the door was old and quite bald and there was a curious lopsided look about the head which had a scar running down one side. It was dressed in a kind of shift and as Anna looked at it, it moved one hand in a vague gesture of silence or farewell. Like a ghost, thought Anna, but the eyes that stared back at her were human."

Victor's wife, Aunt Dainty, tells Anna that her husband had been in a concentration camp. This is his only appearance in the book, though there is another desperately sad scene later at his funeral.

In the Jewish Restitution Successor Office in Berlin met Herr Birnbaum who has lost fourteen relations, including his wife and three children ("My cousin Samuel," he said pointing.... 'age 36. Last-known address Treblinka.'). He's the sole survivor of his family.

These three men are desperately sad figures. By contrast, the Kerrs seem almost untouched. Increasingly, though, in the final book of the trilogy, it becomes clear that exile has taken a terrible toll on them. Alfred commits suicide with an overdose during a visit to Germany in 1948. His wife, Julia, it is revealed, attempts suicide several times and has struggled hard against

depression. All of this erupts during an angry conversation with her children, now in their thirties. She has moved to Berlin, taken an overdose and her children have flown out to see her. For the first time in the trilogy, she speaks out:

"You had all your lives to come. Whereas I ... All those years I spent in dreary boarding houses worrying about money, I was getting older. It should have been the best time of my life..."

And then the children start to row. While her brother had swanned off to Cambridge and the law, Anna spent all those years worrying about her parents, their poverty, her father's nightmares, her mother's depression.

We are a long way from the happy and very English families in *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* or the 18 Mog books. Read carefully, Judith Kerr offers a dark and disturbing vision of the life of refugees. This is perhaps her greatest lasting achievement.

David Herman

KITCHENER CAMP

The 80th anniversary of the Kitchener Camp for refugee men and boys is being commemorated in two ways this September.

In 1939 nearly four thousand men were given visas to travel to the camp at Richborough near Sandwich, Kent, many of them following imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps.

Eighty years on, a mobile exhibition about the camp has been developed and will be launched at London's Jewish Museum at a special event on Sunday 1 September.

On Monday 2 September a plaque will be unveiled at the Bell Hotel in Sandwich, which was a popular meeting place for the refugees.

For more information about the camp and these events please visit www.kitchenercamp.co.uk

TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR KINDER

AJR has secured tax exemptions for Kinder receiving the 2,500 euros compensation paid by the German government through the Claims Conference.

In a letter sent to AJR Trustees on 7 June, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Rt Hon. Jesse Norman MP, confirmed that the awards will not attract income tax or capital gains tax. "I am pleased to confirm that the Government will be making legislative changes necessary to ensure these payments are not subject to Inheritance Tax," he wrote.

AJR Trustee David Rothenberg said, "On behalf of those of our members whom this will affect I thank the Financial Secretary for this welcome confirmation, and also for his kind tribute to the work of the AJR. To date over 300 Kinder have already received their reparation, and while no amount of money could ever compensate for what our members suffered, this modest gesture recognises their particular experience."

Hay-on-Wye Festival

This year's Hay-on-Wye International Book Festival included a forum: 'Remembering and Reflecting'.

The panel comprised Barbara Winton, Lord Dubs, Renate Collins and Josie Naughton. The very receptive audience all expressed hope that more refugees will find safety in the UK after having to leave their homeland, just as we did eighty years ago.

Renate Collins

A DAY IN DULWICH



Freddy Kosten, Ruth Barnett, and Dr Bea Lewkowicz on stage at the Dulwich Festival

The director of AJR's *Refugee Voices Testimony Archive*, Bea Lewkowicz, recently organised a very special day at the Dulwich Festival.

The afternoon began with a visit by AJR member Ruth Barnett to the Bell House educational centre, where she met local school children and the MP for Dulwich and West Norwood, Helen Hayes. A key theme was the importance of supporting modern-day refugees as well as honouring those who escaped Nazi persecution.

This was followed by an evening screening of the AJR's short film *Continental Britons* and a discussion with former Kinder Ruth Barnett and Freddy Kosten. The audience included a number of second generation Jewish refugees, some of whom had never heard their own parents speak of their experiences during the Holocaust.

Refugee Voices is the AJR's groundbreaking collection of 250+ filmed interviews with Jewish survivors & refugees from Nazi Europe who rebuilt their lives in Great Britain.

Going Sparko



SPARKO event at JW3

Several AJR members were recently introduced to a brand new interactive TV service called Sparko over a lunch event kindly hosted by JW3.

AJR members first heard about our general Computer Help Programme, through which over 40 AJR members regularly receive volunteer help to use their devices and computers. We then welcomed Sender Gross, Project

Manager of Sparko – a special TV channel that allows people to connect easily with local activities, services, family and friends. It's a completely free service which can be added on to your usual TV channels and programmes, without disrupting in any way the shows you love to watch.

A member of the excellent Sparko team will happily come to your home to explain everything you need to know. Please contact them on 020 8012 8257.

AT YOUR SERVICE: Meet the Team

Several new members of staff have recently joined AJR and we are delighted to introduce them all to you here.

Lesley Black

Lesley joined AJR's Social Work team in April. Originally from Manchester, she moved to Australia in 2002. She completed a Master's Degree in Social Work in Melbourne, working mainly with families. She also worked for an Australian Jewish Charity which helps newly arrived Sudanese refugees, and volunteered at the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre.

After 16 years in Australia, Lesley returned to London last year to build a life with her long lost love whom she met at university 23 years ago. She is delighted to be working with AJR's unique and amazing client group.

lesley@ajr.org.uk / 020 8385 3097

Caryn Bentley

Caryn joined AJR in June as Carer Support Co-ordinator. This exciting new role will provide emotional and practical support to unpaid family carers.

She received her Honours degree in South Africa in 2004 and having also qualified as a teacher, she worked in Special Needs and taught Psychology A levels.

In 2014 she qualified as an Integrative Counsellor, having always been passionate about working with individuals in a deeper and more meaningful way. She has been volunteering as a counsellor at the Jewish Bereavement Counselling Service for the past seven years.

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Madeleine Blecher

Madeleine joined AJR's Social Work team at the end of January. She qualified as a social worker in Sweden in 2011 before moving to Israel to focus on crisis and trauma management.

Madeleine moved to London in 2016 where she has worked in rehabilitation and social care for adults



From left: Lesley Black, Caryn Bentley, Madeleine Blecher, Sebe Dlamini, Nicole Valens and Sharon Mail

with physical disabilities.

Madeleine has a close personal connection to the Holocaust, having grandparents who fled from Eastern Europe to Sweden during 1930s and 1940s.

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Protasia (Sebe) Dlamini

Sebe joined AJR as a Social Worker in May. She qualified in South Africa in 2001, providing psychological and therapeutic support for disabled children and their families.

She came to the UK in 2002, working in areas such as child protection, rehabilitation and mental health. Prior to joining AJR Sebe worked in complex care teams in Tower Hamlets.

Sebe is passionate about charitable work. As a young child she helped support children from underprivileged households. She has facilitated and led poverty alleviation and women empowerment projects. She has taken part in several charity sporting challenges, including conquering Kilimanjaro in aid of a South African HIV/AIDS Orphanage.

Sebe's Christian values make her feel a strong connection with the Jewish community. And having grown up under apartheid in South Africa, she identifies closely with Holocaust survivors.

Protasia@ajr.org.uk / 07904 489 515

Nicole Valens

Nicole became the AJR's Head of Social Work at the end of May. She qualified as a social worker in 2006, working in adoption and fostering, hospital discharge and housing and homelessness.

Prior to joining AJR Nicole was Head of

Social Work and Safeguarding at a secure psychiatric hospital in Somerset. She also worked directly with women who have suffered trauma and abuse. She is a qualified therapist in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and also has an advanced Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling skills and is a clinical hypnotherapist. She also worked as a Court of Protection Visitor for the Office of the Public Guardian.

Nicole grew up in North East London and moved to the West Country 12 years ago. As all her family still live in London, and her children have now completed their education, she recently decided to return to London and is very excited to be managing the AJR's wonderful social work team.

Nicole@ajr.org.uk / 020 8385 3087

Sharon Mail

Sharon is the *My Story* Project Scotland and Newcastle Coordinator. She was the Jewish Telegraph Scotland Correspondent for 13 years and also the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council Web Manager.

Now being rolled out throughout the UK, *My Story* tells the life stories of Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors through the production of high quality individual life story books to be kept as treasured memories and tools for reminiscence. The process involves volunteers visiting AJR clients, listening to their experiences, and capturing their messages for future generations.

Sharon is very much looking forward to getting to know the Scotland and Newcastle AJR members, volunteers and staff and overseeing the production of some beautiful *My Story* books.

sharonmail@ajr.org.uk / 07951 796 308.

LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



AN OPERA ABOUT AUSCHWITZ?



I was one of the brave souls who attended a performance of the opera, *The Passenger*, by Mieczyslaw

Weinberg. I did so mainly because a friend of ours was the revival director of the production by the Israel Opera, and not because I'm a 'glutton for punishment,' as I have been accused of being (due to my inordinate consumption of Holocaust literature).

However, I'm not sorry I went. The subject is undoubtedly difficult, if not well-nigh impossible, to convey in any meaningful artistic way, yet the performance left me with a heightened sense of awareness of, and identification with, the experience of life in a concentration camp. The combined impact of Weinberg's music, the text (based on a novel by a non-Jewish Polish woman who was in Auschwitz herself) and the ingenious set, staging, costumes and scenery was greater than the sum of the individual parts. The soloist – a mix of imported and local talent – acted and sang with feeling and skill. It cannot have been easy for Israelis to evoke the experience of being prisoners in a concentration camp or members of the SS.

The author, Zofia Posmysz, wrote the novel originally as a radio script after having heard, while on a visit to Paris, what she thought was the voice of the German woman who had been her

supervisor in Auschwitz. Posmysz was imprisoned there as a young woman for the 'crime' of reading and distributing anti-Nazi leaflets. The idea was taken up by the Polish-Jewish composer Weinberg, and the libretto was written by Alexander Medvedev. Weinberg had managed to reach Soviet Russia before the Germans invaded Poland, but his entire family was murdered by them.

The action of the opera is set in two different places and two different points in time: on board an ocean liner in 1958 and in Auschwitz in 1943. The first staged performance took place in Bregenz in 2010, directed by David Pountney, a British and Polish theatre and opera director. The set, which shows both locations, involves large sections of scenery which move together with the singers and constitutes a combination of imaginative reconstruction and engineering ingenuity. The railway tracks at the front of the stage serve as a constant reminder of Auschwitz.

The prisoners who form the focus of the opera are a mix of women from the various countries conquered by the Germans and each one performs in her own language. As we watch them move and sing, wearing the striped concentration-camp garb, their heads shaven, we are exposed to their touching stories and relationships, to their individual humanity and the comfort they find in their friendships.

Some scenes also expose the mental processes of the SS, managing to convey their diabolical combination of brutality and efficiency – as well as stupidity in some cases. The impossible love between two of the prisoners is shown in a way that is touching without being unduly sentimental,

and the moment when the tones of Bach's chaconne are played in defiance of the commandant's request for a schmaltzy waltz is unbearably moving.

Artistic licence notwithstanding, it seems odd that the presence of Jews is barely mentioned, and when it is (by the woman from Salonika, who points to her yellow star as 'the mark of death') it is misrepresented, as she sings in Yiddish. The Jews of Salonika, who fled Spain in 1492, continued to speak their Judeo-Spanish language, Ladino.

Weinberg's music is not inaccessible to the untrained ear, and in many instances it sounds as if it could have been written to accompany a film, which is in fact what Weinberg did for a living in Russia. He was a friend of Shostakovich, and it is possible to discern some similarities between the music of the two.

Over and beyond the dramatic impact of the opera, the fact that it exists at all, and can – and hopefully will – continue to be performed for generations to come, plays an important role in the task of never forgetting what happened or allowing the Holocaust deniers to prevail. *The Passenger* stands as an eternal reminder of the depths to which mankind sank in order to perpetrate unspeakable horrors against other human beings, as well as the heights which the human spirit can attain in overcoming adversity.

There is no happy end to this opera, which concludes with a lone voice ringing out to assert that we must never forget or forgive.

Amen to that.

Archives Online

An archive containing millions of documents from concentration camps, featuring information on over 2.2 million people persecuted by the Nazis, has now been made available online.

Thanks to a technology partnership with Yad Vashem, the organisation previously known as the International Tracing Service has been able to make its 13 million documents readily available to the public via a sophisticated online database.

The director of the organisation, now called the Arolsen Archives - International Center on Nazi Persecution, is Floriane Azoulay. He

hopes this new technology will enable them to reach out to a larger audience and inform more people about the consequences of antisemitism, discrimination and racism.

The collection can be viewed at www.collections.arolsen-archives.org and an in-depth article about the history and work of the Arolsen Archives will shortly appear in the AJR Journal.

Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication and respectfully points out that the views expressed in the letters published are not necessarily the views of the AJR.

BELSIZE ARCHITECT

Belsize Square Synagogue was the first largish contract that my company undertook under the direction of the architect H J Reiffenberg; Heinrich Stahl House and the United Restitution Offices in Finchley Road soon followed.

Reiffenberg was a typical, old-school German architect and although plagued by Parkinson's disease had an eagle eye for any shortcomings in the reconstruction of the building. One of the columns supporting the roof had a very minor twist in it. He ordered it struck and re-cast as he would not tolerate any imperfections in his building. After the monthly site meeting with the various contractors, all the principals would go to the Cosmo for coffee and cakes. He would insist on paying, saying that he would not let any mistake go through because paying for the afternoon snack might be construed as bribery.

He also had the quaint habit of ringing me any time of day or night when he had an idea about the building which he wanted to explore. Since these conversations usually took place late at night, it rather marred my courting with the young lady soon to be my wife.

There were many stories about H J, mostly complimentary and one could only say about him that "they don't make them like that anymore".

Frank Goldberg, Arundel, West Sussex

THE ROLE OF THE QUAKERS

I was very interested to read David Herman's excellent article "The gift that keeps on giving" (June). During my life in Science I had the opportunity to work for two refugee scientists and met several others. One became a good friend and his son is also a scientist. All of them made major and important contributions in their scientific fields.

Regarding other refugee aspects worth covering, I would like to suggest an article on the role that the Quakers played in helping so many refugees. The "Society

of Friends" (the Quakers' preferred title) never seeks publicity for the work it does. When we attempted to get information from "Friends House" many years ago, we were told that in 1940 they had destroyed the files naming refugees, in order to prevent compromising their safety in case of an invasion.

Walter Wolff, London NW2

RABBI HARRY JACOBI

I was sad to learn of Rabbi Harry Jacobi's passing (Obituary, June). He was a pupil of my mother at the Theodor Herzl Schule in Berlin, and was then the Rabbi at Wembley Liberal Synagogue when my parents and I were members.

Anthony Portner, Chertsey

S.S.WARSZAWA

On the 80th anniversary of the arrival of the 'Warszawa', bringing Polish Kinder from Gdynia to Britain, readers may be interested in the following books on the subject:

"Flucht übers Meer von Troja bis Lampedusa" (Flight across the Sea from Troy to Lampedusa).

By Erik Lindner
ISBN 978-3-8132-0987-7

"Gerettet" (Saved)
by Prof. Eva-Maria Thuene.

ISBN 978-3-955565-280-7
Herbert Haberberg, Barnet

SAFE PASSAGE

I very much welcome Sir Erich Reich's initiative (Letters, June) in suggesting that the £2000 that the German government recently decided to 'donate' to surviving Kindertransportees should, in turn, be donated – by those that can afford to – to support the work of Safe Passage. But I think we should go further. There are only a few hundred surviving Kinder from the thousands that were originally saved. I believe the AJR, and others, should lobby the German government to donate the money it has saved by not offering the £2000 donation to the descendants of

Kinder who have died (and I write as the descendant of two) to organisations such as Safe Passage, who are working to rescue child refugees and to help them build better and safer lives in Britain and elsewhere.

Nick Sigler, London N22

THANK YOU AJR

I was one of the favoured 300 who received a charming telephone call from your team before Pesach. It was a wonderful idea (although I did not subsequently receive the Red Cross parcel of chicken soup I had requested!). My sincere thanks to you and to the lovely lady on whose list I was fortunate to land.

Dr Hans Eirew, Manchester

I would like to express my gratitude to the AJR (especially to Rosemary Peters and Florina Harapcea) for helping me to claim compensation from the Claims Conference. For many years I tried to get this on behalf of my mother, who was very ill, but unfortunately never succeeded.

In the May 2018 issue of the *AJR Journal* I read about support with applications and phoned the AJR office. Florina came to visit me and set in motion with Rosemary the process of applying for compensation, even though I was pretty sure that I would never get any (despite being in a concentration camp with my whole family for five years).

After the AJR had helped me to complete the forms the Claims Conference did acknowledge all I had suffered during the war and the Nazi persecution and I finally got my compensation. This was really a surprise to me and I am very grateful to the AJR for making it possible.

Mary Green, Stanmore

My enormous thanks and great appreciation to Susan Harrod and the team – Karen, Ros et al - for all your efforts for, and on, the AJR trip to Nottingham. I certainly did have a splendid few days, meeting interesting people – and the visits were delightful. Thank you all so much.

Joann Lipsey, Glasgow

A song that resonates

The Song of Bernadette was my mother's favourite book. She identified with its author, Franz Werfel, in his fight for survival. I have recently re-read the book and thought AJR Journal readers might be interested in both my mother and the author.

As was common for teachers in Czechoslovakia, my mother trained at a Catholic College. The family couldn't afford to pay but the college had a small number of scholarships available for non-Catholics. This was an advantage to her when war broke out, as she knew a different world from the close Jewish community in which she grew up. Just like Franz Werfel, she was protected from deportation by some kind Catholics,

My mother told me of one night when she walked from one village to another with only the moon over her head. When she heard a voice telling her to go back she actually prayed rosary! She heard this voice three times but in retrospect it is clear that she was hallucinating because of fear.

She knocked on the door of a simple cottage and asked for shelter. The family let her in because she carried a rosary. The cottage floor was only solid soil and all the family slept in one bed. They told her that it was a good thing she had turned back as a storm had washed away the bridge, meaning she would have been unable to cross the river if she had carried on, and they helped her find a different route to safety.

Franz Werfel was born in 1890 into a Jewish family in Prague. Like my mother he was sent to a school run by Piarists, a Catholic educational order of priests. They did not attempt to convert him but he was undoubtedly influenced by them.

He became something of a socialite who moved in literary circles in the cafés of Prague, publishing his first book of poems in 1911; in 1918 he was introduced to Alma Mahler, a patron of the arts and an antisemite, whose first husband was the composer Gustav Mahler. Though eleven



Franz Werfel's original book

years older than Werfel he fell in love with her and they married when he was 39 and she 50. It was a very controversial marriage but she proved to be the driving force behind his creativity and his survival.

They travelled widely and whilst in Damascus met survivors of the Turkish genocide of Armenian Christians. In 1932 he published a fictionalised account of the siege which ended in massacre. Musa Dagh means Mount Moses in Armenian and Werfel symbolically compared the 40 days' siege to the 40 years the Jews wandered through the wilderness to reach the Promised Land. In fact, this was poetic licence as the Armenian siege actually lasted 53 days.

This was the first time the world learned of the persecution of Armenian Christians and the novel became a bestseller; it was banned in Germany, and publicly burned in Turkey. Nonetheless, it became an international success and was turned into a film in 1932.

The Werfels lived in Austria until 1938 but fled after the Anschluss, wandering from one country to another and finally settling in occupied France; whilst waiting for permission to travel to Marseilles they lived in hiding in a Catholic sanctuary in Lourdes and it was there that Werfel heard of the



The Song of Bernadette was a popular film starring Jennifer Jones

miracle of Bernadette Soubirous, a 14-year old girl who, in the 19th century, had frequent visions of the Virgin Mary. In one such vision Bernadette was told to wash herself in the spring water and to drink from it. Not seeing any water she dug into the ground and water did, indeed, appear. Several unexplained 'healings' occurred thereafter.

Franz Werfel, distressed and at his wits' end, also drank from the spring and vowed to 'sing the most beautiful song about the miracle, even though I am not a Catholic but a Jew' if only he could escape the Nazis. A miracle happened again! The Werfels managed to leave Lourdes for Marseilles and, together with others, crossed the Pyrenees on foot to Spain. Franz was exhausted but Alma, who was physically and mentally stronger, led the group and was able to bring everyone to safety. From Madrid they went to Lisbon where they were able to board a boat to New York and freedom.

True to his word, Werfel wrote *The Song of Bernadette* in 1941. It was made into a film in 1943 and it became the most well-known of his works. He died in Los Angeles in 1945 and was reburied in Vienna in 1975.

Dr. Elena Rowland.

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Birds, animals, a woman clutching her baby with all the protective strength she can muster: the work of German Expressionist Yankel Adler is searing, anguished and beautiful. The Ben Uri's new exhibition, Yankel Adler: A "Degenerate" Artist in Britain, 1940-49 shows the changes which affected his work after escaping the Nazis and arriving in England.

Annemarie Heibel, author of *Yankel Adler 1895-1949*, describes his work from the British period as particularly impressive and expressive. She told the Ben Uri opening night: "Resulting from the terrible experiences that Adler had to go through, his works have changed a lot compared to those from the 'German' period. They have a different, deeper quality."

Adler expresses many moods and styles. Influenced in Paris by the work of **Picasso** and **Paul Klee**, he blends the figurative with the abstract, an innate cubism lends the work that slightly regimental angularity - but also its gentle, curvilinear expression. Vibrant with colour or introspective in monochrome, as in *Beginning the Revolt*, believed to be a response to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in spring 1943, the passion



Jankel Adler, *Mother and Child* 1941

and pain is palpable. A Cubist style composition of grim grey and white figures, it has an almost robotic and fateful inevitability; ravens, a death-symbol and a scorched tree, contrasts with the positive power of resilience.

As a Symbolist, Adler's work which, if not narrative, is as codified as a Florentine painter's. There is humour, too, and a certain Jewish irony. Adler had been interested in still lifes from the 1920s; *Composition with Fish* evoked his Friday night dinners in his Chassidic home in Poland, a tradition he continued by entertaining his artist friends when he arrived in Glasgow after fleeing Paris. Some of his drawings consist of a few lines. His profile of a Jew in a peaked cap would have been caricature, had it not been for its wry tenderness; another is a poignant glimpse of a woman talking to a man, barely sketched - almost ghost-like - beside her. *Female Head (The Jewess)* seems another secret glance: a dramatic portrait of a sad-eyed young woman, who seems almost in hiding. In the times of Nazi persecution Adler experienced one senses within his work a quest for the essential humanity; a synthesis of his intensely Jewish consciousness and a questioning of what is a man.

Born in Lodz, Poland in 1895, the son of Chassidic Jews, the emerging Nazi movement denounced him as a cultural Bolshevik and his work formed part of a



Jankel Adler, *Bird and Cage*, 1948

"Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich and Berlin. Adler had already fled to Paris in 1933 where he met Picasso and Klee, and where he was regarded as an important modernist.

In early 1940 he joined the Polish Free Army, and arrived in Scotland, penniless, meeting contemporary artists, **Benno Schotz** and **Josef Herman**. He came to London in 1943, where Kurt **Schwitters**, **Martin Bloch**, **Marek Szwarc** and **David Bomberg** formed part of his changing creative milieu and where he developed a more cosmopolitan style.

He influenced the course of post-1945 art in Britain and today he is recognised as a key participant in 20th century European modern and avant-garde art.

Annely Juda Fine Art

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**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

REMEMBERING & RETHINKING

WILFRID ISRAEL

The Kindertransport is commemorated as a humanitarian gesture by the British government, as a response to appeals from the Anglo Jewish community. The pivotal role played by Wilfrid Israel, recounted here by his biographer **Naomi Shepherd** as the first in our *Remembering & Rethinking the Kindertransport* series, shows a far more complex story.

From 1937 onwards Israel had reported on persecution of the Jews and proposed schemes of rescue to British diplomats in Berlin and politicians in London. He was uniquely suited to this role, because of his dual nationality, his range of influential contacts, and his experience from 1937 onwards as head (*Vorsitzender*) of the *Hilfsverein* - the German Jewish emigration office.

The *Hilfsverein*, with fifteen branches across Germany, processed applicants, obtained visas and permits, and chartered ships; Wilfrid Israel extended eligibility for its help to 'non-Aryans', Jewish converts to Christianity, and their children. Equally important to the success of the Kindertransport was Wilfrid Israel's long connection with the British Quakers and his post WWI relief work in Germany.

Just before Kristallnacht, on 7 November, Wilfrid Israel called on the British embassy in Berlin to warn of impending violence against the Jewish community. In the wake of the pogrom, he cabled the Council for German Jewry, requesting they lobby the British government for the immediate admission of unaccompanied children under 17 to the UK. The Council was also asked for a 'non-Jewish Englishman' to be sent to Berlin to monitor the situation and support the appeal. On 15 November Lord Samuel (former Home Secretary, High Commissioner in Palestine and head of the Council for German Jewry) and Chaim Weizmann led a deputation to



Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. The response was non-committal.

No British Jew was prepared to risk a visit to Germany at that time, but the Quakers sent a group of five to Berlin, headed by Ben Greene, to meet Wilfrid Israel. Greene first argued that help should be provided on the spot - the usual Quaker activity. Israel convinced him of the urgent need to get the children to Britain. He directed the Quakers to addresses all over Germany where members of the *Jüdische Frauenbund*, the Jewish women's welfare organisation headed by Hannah Karminski and Cora Berliner, were preparing the families. On his return, Greene and his colleagues gave their evidence during a second deputation, this time to the Home Office, which was successful.

The *Hilfsverein* office, like that of the *Frauenbund*, was closed down by the Nazis after Kristallnacht. Most of the Jewish leadership was under arrest, as well as many of the children's fathers. Wilfrid and Karminski continued the work from their own homes. By December, an Anglo Jewish publisher, Dennis Cohen, visited Berlin and helped him organise the first transport. Though Israel officially left Germany in May, he returned in August to help Karminski process the last transport

group before the outbreak of war - leaving only when warned of his impending arrest. Karminski, like other Jewish leaders given British visas, remained to help others, and perished.

The idea of the Kindertransport originated not with Britain or even the Anglo Jewish community, but with the German Jewish leadership, as did the preparation - under appalling circumstances - for the children's departure. It was financed and administered in Britain by voluntary groups and individuals. The government's ultimate acceptance of the plan was clearly made as compensation for the Colonial Office's refusal of a similar request, by the German Zionist organisation, for 10,000 visas for unaccompanied children to Palestine. Wilfrid Israel and the Quakers proved that the Jewish parents were prepared to part with their children.

In the US there was no equivalent to the British Kindertransport. Only 433 unaccompanied children, many before Kristallnacht, reached the US pre-war under various voluntary schemes. But on Wilfrid Israel's wartime mission to Portugal and Spain, to distribute visas for Palestine, he planned the rescue of children from Vichy France.

Wilfrid Israel remained long unknown as - unlike Schindler or Winton - he himself was in constant danger, repeatedly arrested and followed everywhere by the Gestapo. He collaborated with Frank Foley, the passport officer at the British Embassy in Berlin, who was an MI6 agent. The many whom he ransomed from the camps never learned his name, nor did the children of the Kindertransport; the information he provided to the wartime British government was known only to the Foreign Office and its Refugee Department. He himself wanted his fellow German Jews remembered 'not only for what they suffered, but for what they dared and did'.

Naomi Shepherd's biography 'Wilfrid Israel: German Jewry's Secret Ambassador' first published in 1984, is now available as an e-book.

From Auschwitz to Ambles

Earlier this year we received a letter from AJR member Johanna Howard, who had responded to a request in the Journal from a school in the Lake District which was attempting to collect six million buttons for a Holocaust commemoration project. Thanks to Johanna, we are now in touch with the chairman of the Lake District Holocaust Project, Trevor Avery, who has written this very interesting article for us about the Lake District's role in housing Jewish refugees.

"Of course, you know, this was where the children from Auschwitz came....."

I could never have foreseen how a comment, delivered by a quietly self-effacing Cumbrian gentleman in 2005, could have such far reaching effects on me personally or on those currently involved in the Lake District Holocaust Project. That such a project would take root in such dramatic effect was simply not on the horizon at the time. Life can indeed turn 180 degrees in a sudden moment and the comment "Of course, you know, this was where the children from Auschwitz came....." was just such a moment.

The story of how the Jewish children arrived in the Lake District in 1945, having been flown from Prague and the horrors of the camps and ghettos, is beginning to be known more widely but the full circumstances of their journey, and the unique nature of the community that welcomed them, is still little known or understood.

The Jewish children themselves were in no doubt about their time in the Lakes

and in the words of Jack Aizenberg, and so many others amongst them, "We came from Hell to Paradise". But where does my story begin?

Almost fifteen years ago I had been commissioned to produce an exhibition to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the end of WW2. As I had some knowledge of the wartime operations of the mighty Short Sunderland flying boat, gathered from my time living near Invergordon in the Highlands of Scotland, I decided to create an exhibition about the somewhat surreal story of the flying boat factory that stood on the shores of Windermere in the 1940s.

Perhaps the largest aircraft of its time, being built in arguably the largest single span building in Europe at the time (which just happened to have been constructed in eighteen months in the Lake District of Wordsworth and Ruskin) seemed in itself to be an incredible enough story to tell. Yet nothing prepared me for what was to emerge from this exhibition in what is a small market town in the north of England, namely Kendal. I will come back to Kendal later....

I installed the exhibition with the help of historian Allan King, who was the expert in everything to do with the Windermere flying boat factory. All the attention of the local community (many of whom were former workers at the factory) was on the exhibition; they focused on the production of the Sunderland flying boat, and especially the impact that the factory had on this, the heart of the idyllic Lake District.

However, until this time, little attention had been given to Calgarth Estate, the housing scheme built at nearby Troutbeck Bridge that had been specially built to house the workers at the factory. Many of the skilled employees at the factory had to be brought from Rochester (the original home of the Short Sunderland factory, which was bombed early in the war) and many other workers also had to be drawn from industrial cities throughout the UK. Fair to say that neither the factory nor the housing scheme was welcomed by many in the Lake District at the time, but the

necessities of the war swayed the doubters and naysayers.

The skilled workers were to work on the aircraft itself but also had a role to play in the training of about half the total factory workforce, who had to become skilled flying boat builders in next to no time.

This "other half" of the workforce numbered around 800 workers and came from the young men and women of the local Lakes community of shepherds, stable hands, dry stone wall builders, farm labourers, shop assistants, car mechanics, painters and decorators, servants from the country estates, and all kinds of Lake District folks from far and wide, all of whom were keen and eager to "get in on this thing that seemed like a spaceship arriving, it just seemed so exciting".

The factory successfully produced flying boats for the war effort, and subsequently repaired battle damaged and fatigued ones that were brought to the Lakes for repair. The workers were often faced with the grim realities of war when a Sunderland returned from active service with the "clearest of indications" of modern warfare in the damaged gun turrets and fuselage. This was the moment when, for many of the workers, the war came to the Lake District.

The factory ceased production and repairs at the end of the war, and the single and unattached workers, who had stayed on Calgarth Estate without families, returned to their homes across Britain. This meant that six hostels, which could accommodate three hundred people in individual dormitory rooms, were vacant and available for anyone who might need emergency homes.

These hostels were to welcome the most incredible group of residents imaginable: residents who would be placed at the heart of a thriving community housing scheme where over two hundred wartime families still lived.

On 14 August 1945, Leonard Montefiore and the Central British Fund facilitated the movement of three hundred child

side

Holocaust Survivors, only recently liberated from the most horrific camps and ghettos of Nazi-occupied Europe. He arranged for them to be flown with the RAF from Prague, in the Czech Republic, to Crosby-on-Eden airfield in Carlisle. They were then placed on buses and trucks that would take them through the heart of the Lakes before arriving to stay on Calgarth Estate near Windermere.

There had been concerns expressed by Montefiore, and the team of psychiatrists and carers who were brought to Calgarth Estate to look after the Jewish children, that there might be difficulties placing a large group of clearly damaged and traumatised children into the centre of a unique, working class British community, and at such close quarters at that.

No-one, least of all the carers, knew just how they would care for children who had survived the concentration camps, nor what to expect. The circumstances were unprecedented.

We have much evidence of the positive relief felt by those involved in the Central British Fund efforts: the relationships between the Jewish children and the local community "went very well indeed", according to Montefiore himself.

This was the local community that would be spoken of so very highly by him and by the children's front line carers.

One of Montefiore's team, led by the renowned psychiatrist Oscar Friedman, said that she had to explain to a group of confused Jewish children that "these were not Jewish people being friendly towards them but ordinary English people". One child responded by saying "These are good people, and this is a good country".

Today the factory site at White Cross bay is a holiday chalet park and Calgarth Estate is the location of a school and much pastoral grazing land. Those with a keen eye will still be able to spot the slipway, the guards house at the factory site, and the remains of the coal storage building at Calgarth Estate. Not much else can be

Some of the children enjoying a boat trip in the Lake District



A group of the child survivors watching a film in one of the rooms at the Calgarth Estate



seen above ground, for sure.

We are planning an archaeological survey and excavation at the former site of Calgarth Estate this summer, and to expand the permanent exhibition in Windermere library to tell not only the story of the Windermere Boys, and the community that welcomed them, but also to show the results of the archaeology. The plan is to excavate the remains of one of the hostels where the Jewish children stayed.

And finally, back to Kendal.

One of the Windermere Boys famously changed his surname to "Kendall" when he moved to London after leaving Calgarth Estate. Kopel Kendall's time in the Lake District lived with him for the rest of his life, and its legacy lives on through his family. With plans to develop a much-enlarged exhibition and museum about the Jewish children and the remarkable community that welcomed them, and a memorial made from millions of donated buttons, we would hope the archaeology will add to that legacy for years to come.

We are determined, and owe it to all our children and grandchildren, that the story of the Windermere Boys and Girls is never forgotten, and the story of Calgarth Estate is a key part of that determination.

For further details on the archaeology project titled "From Troutbeck Bridge to Treblinka" please visit <http://troutbecktotreblinka.com/treblinka/>

AJR Northern Regional Lunch Meeting

Wednesday 17 July 2019

Holocaust Learning and Education Centre, Huddersfield University

With key speakers:
 Lilian Black, Chair of HSFA
 Professor Tim Thornton, Deputy Vice Chancellor of Huddersfield University
 Michael Newman CEO of AJR

Transport provided from all major areas in the North of England.

Wendy Bott on 07908 156 365 or at wendy@ajr.org.uk

REVIEWS

ASYLUM

By Moriz Scheyer (translated by P.N. Singer)

Little, Brown and Company, 2016
ISBN-13: 9780316272872

Written at the time of the actual events, this powerful book starts by describing the atmosphere in Vienna before the *Anschluss*, followed by the author's flight, together with his wife and non-Jewish housekeeper, who insisted on remaining with them throughout their ordeal.

The Scheyers moved to Paris, surviving there until the Germans overran France. When the country was divided into two zones, thousands of Parisians abandoned the city, and Scheyer describes the 'Exodus' in vivid terms, as well as the indifference displayed by most French people to the suffering of their Jewish compatriots.

Forced to return to Paris, the trio lived in a state of constant anxiety until Moriz was arrested and taken, together with several hundred other men, to the concentration camp of Beaune-la-Rolande in the Loiret region. Conditions in the camp were atrocious, with starvation rations, constant humiliation and the senseless brutality of their French and German guards, described in harrowing detail. The only consolation was the sense of comradeship with the other denizens of the hut.

Just before everyone was sent to Auschwitz, Scheyer was released because he was over fifty-five, and was able to return to Paris. But the hunt for Jews throughout Paris caused the little group to try to get to Switzerland. The vicissitudes of that attempt are described in disturbing detail, specifying the amounts paid to *passeurs* and sundry officials who were supposed to extend help, the fraudulent assurances of assistance and several close escapes. This attempt failed, too, and they ended up in the small town of Belvès in the Dordogne.

One of Moriz's acquaintances there, a young man named Jacques Rispal,

showed sympathy for the Scheyers' plight, and his mother found a refuge for them in the nearby convent, 'Asile de Labarde,' an isolated building on a hilltop where the nuns looked after mentally and physically disabled women.

For the next two years the trio were able to live there in relative safety. Scheyer describes the selflessness and piety of the nuns and the unexpected kindness of the Rispals. Life in the convent was spartan but the Scheyers were able to breathe more easily. A smuggled radio enabled them to hear news from the outside world and even to listen to music again, reminding Scheyer of concerts he had attended in Vienna.

Scheyer writes: "If Einstein were here, he would be a hunted animal...and the same would apply to a Bruno Walter, a Franz Werfel, even the great Gustav Mahler if he were still alive." He mourns the fate of the millions of Jews who were 'eliminated as pests' by the Germans.

After the war the Scheyers settled in Belvès. When Moriz died in 1949 the typescript of his memoirs was destroyed by his stepson, who considered it too suffused with hatred of the Germans. Some years later, however, his step grandson came across the carbon copy and translated it. He has added an introduction, epilogue, biography and index. We owe him a debt of gratitude for providing us with this account of events as they occurred, conveying the soul-destroying experience of living through that terrible time.

Dorothea Schefer-Vanson

NO PLACE TO LAY ONE'S HEAD

by Françoise Frenkel

Pushkin Press

ISBN 9978-1-78227-400-1

A *BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week* and a *Telegraph* and *Spectator* Book of the Year

This moving eyewitness account tells the fascinating story of a bookseller who opened a prestigious store in pre-war Berlin selling French literature and her later miraculous escape from France.

Françoise Frenkel – a Jewish woman from Poland - studies at the Sorbonne and helps out in a book shop in Paris before realising there was a gap in the German market. So she opens the first shop selling French-language books in Berlin in 1921 which quickly becomes very popular, attracting artists, diplomats, celebrities and poets.

In 1935 serious complications arise, starting with currency red tape followed by the Nuremberg race laws and her personal circumstances become very precarious. The horrors of Kristallnacht are described although as a foreigner her property wasn't vandalised. Life however is soon untenable. Fleeing on the eve of war she arrives penniless in Paris where nobody believes hostilities are approaching. All too soon events close in and she makes for sleepy Avignon. Against advice she heads for Vichy to join family but is forced to flee back again by train with great difficulty. Eventually she settles in Nice, living in hotels.

But in August 1942 she narrowly avoids being rounded up with other Jewish residents thanks to a fellow guest's frantic gestures as she returns from shopping. Thus begins a dangerous life in hiding in the face of increasing food shortages, rations, clamp downs on papers, deportation fears and tragedies. After staying with hairdressers – the Mariuses – who were to remain her link "underground" – and a narrow escape from police she goes to a series of addresses. Always on the move this includes staying in the mountains and some rather dubious homes with owners charging exorbitantly.

A failed attempt to cross the Swiss border sees her in a cold prison fearful of the outcome, although soon released and recuperating in a convent. A second attempt never really comes off but the third time she is free!

Françoise's memoir was first published in Geneva in 1945 and rediscovered in a flea market in 2010. It was recently translated from French for the first time and published in paperback this year. Her writing is thoughtful yet light and

airy, elegant with a contemporary feel capturing the atmosphere well. Yet she never dwells on anything for long so one is taken easily from page to page with very evocative descriptions of the beauty and scenery of the south of France.

Originally Françoise ran the shop with her husband, Simon Raichenstein, until he left Berlin for Paris in 1933. Tragically he was later deported and died in Auschwitz in August 1942 but strangely he is absent from this account. Book discussion group questions are included in the back including if Françoise were alive today what would be the one question readers would like to ask and surely it has to be why he was omitted?

Janet Weston

LIFE AND LOVE IN NAZI PRAGUE:

Letters from an occupied city

By Marie Bader

Bloomsbury

ISBN 978-1788312561

This is not only a captivating but also heart-breaking account of the lives of Marie and her friends and relatives living in Nazi-occupied Prague and elsewhere.

Marie, who is a widow, is writing to Ernst Löwy, who is her second cousin and also a widower. Through her letters we can sense their intense love affair, even though they are separated by hundreds of miles. He has fled to Thessaloniki in Greece where there were similarly restricted conditions. Their relationship was frowned upon by other family members, but through these letters, it was able to not only develop but also thrive.

The 154 letters were written during 1940-1942 when Prague was locked in a reign of terror under Reinhard Heydrich. We see, through the writing, the Jewish community experiencing increasing levels of persecution and their lives changing forever. Because of the German censors reading her letters, it is clear that Maria avoided discussing issues that are going on around her, so we must read between the lines of her writing. One example is her references to her daughters Grete and Edith, who became nameless 'friends'

who live in 'Chicago' rather than Sheffield where they actually lived. She also suggested that Ernst obtain copies of *Der Neue Tag* to read about developments. Marie uses many nicknames for not only people but also groups. These are put in the footnotes of the book to help readers.

A major part of the letters is Marie's longing to join Ernst in Greece but due to the severe restriction in their freedom of movement, this was impossible. On several occasions she refers to a proxy marriage which might have helped strengthen her application for an entry permit to Greece, which is the only way she might have obtained an exit permit from the Protectorate.

Although Marie and Ernst did not survive the Holocaust, I believe that this book brings their story to a wider audience than their family members. I also think that the letters are a very important contribution to witness accounts of the Holocaust in a time where they are so vital to educating the next generation.

Elysia Polin

SONG OF DINA

Opera

Libretto by Diane Samuels, music by

Maurice Chernick

This exciting new work was performed three times - the first two in St. James' Church, Paddington, and the last on June 2 in New North London Synagogue. My wife and I attended the latter, which was packed to the rafters and where this major new work, almost three hours in duration, was given an enthusiastic reception. It involved 11 soloists - all excellent - and the main part of Dina, who was on stage throughout and whose part was daunting, was sung beautifully by Katrina Damigos. The Myriad Choir and a dozen or so musicians were likewise outstanding.

Diane Samuels is, of course, well-known and admired for her play "*Kindertransport*", but the composer, who also conducted, was unknown to me. Well, who was Dina? In her Foreword, Diane Samuels explained that she was the only daughter of Rachel and the patriarch

Jacob. She falls in love with Shechem, prince of the Hivite tribe, and he with her, marries him and bears him a child. Shechem, who together with other members of his tribe has undergone circumcision, is accused of having violated Dina and duly killed by Dina's brothers. The baby is delivered to an angel.

The libretto is both pithy and poetic and the music compellingly appropriate with its Jewish undertones. It is a work one would like to hear again, so as to take in all its ramifications and finer points. Does it have relevance to our present time? Of course it does, and in her Foreword Diane Samuels writes "How do we get over our shame, blame and judgement? How can we live in peace?"

I see no reason why this opera, which was given concert performances, should not take its place alongside the great Greek tragedies as fully staged in the opera house.

Having been to several Jewish cultural events lately I have been struck by the fact that women tend to dress up, whereas men dress down: at least one man turned up in shorts and T-shirt - and in a synagogue, to boot!

Leslie Baruch Brent

ERRATA

The article about Bruno Kreisky in our June issue had half a sentence missing towards the end. The start of the final paragraph should have read: That after the Shoah a Jewish socialist could be elected as Chancellor of Austria is certainly due to Kreisky's political ability but also to the fact that Austria by that time had transitioned into a truly democratic state.

We also apologise to AJR members in the North of England and Scotland for muddling up the details of their respective regional meetings. The Northern Regional meeting is on 17 July in Huddersfield, while the Scotland meeting took place last month, on 18 June.

Financial Destruction

Confiscatory Taxation of Jewish Property and Income

Germany's Jewish population share in 1933 was less than 1%. Nevertheless, Nazi propaganda believed in the existence of fabulous Jewish riches, with some estimates rising as high as 20% of national wealth. This article, written by **Albrecht Ritschl**, a professor at the London School of Economics, uses taxation data collected for the Allied military governments after 1945 to revisit these claims. It shows that, under plausible assumptions, the Jewish-owned share of Germany's private real capital stock broadly matched the population share, with an upper-bound estimate of 1.6%.

The Nazis took power in 1933 with the stated goal of destroying the livelihood of German Jewry. Nazi officials believed that Germany's Jewish minority – some 500,000 in 1933, or 0.77% of the population – owned up to 20% of total wealth at the time. Such beliefs seem to have informed policy decisions by the Nazi regime in 1936 to stop encouraging Jewish emigration and instead embark on a strategy of expropriation, hoping to use the spoils to help finance war preparation. Similar beliefs have induced later scholars to interpret the Holocaust as being economically motivated.

Three forms of taxation

Confiscatory taxation of Jewish property took mainly three forms. The first was a 25% wealth tax on all transfers out of Germany. Introduced after the financial crisis of 1931 to stem capital flight, its thresholds were lowered in 1933 to hit the emigrating middle class. On top of this tax, large parts of a migrant's remaining domestic assets

had to be paid into a blocked account at the Reichsbank, Germany's central bank at the time. Only a fraction would be converted into foreign exchange. The proportion of wealth retained by the Germans was high and rose further, from a total of roughly 60% in 1934 to an estimated 92% in 1937, when expropriation of anyone still managing to emigrate became near-total. On average, nearly 80% of all emigrés' assets were confiscated in this fashion to 1937. Jews applying to emigrate were automatically suspected of attempted tax avoidance, creating the strongest incentives not to understate declared asset values. This also meant that assets sold to non-Jews under duress at below-market prices were still assessed at book values for the purpose of calculating the migration tax.

The second form of confiscatory taxation was a capital levy on Jewish wealth imposed in 1938 after the annexation of Austria. Earlier that year, all Jewish assets had to be registered with the tax authorities. As with the migration tax, assessment was at book values according to the tax code to prevent undervaluation. The capital levy was first set at 20% and later increased retroactively to 25%, as the original revenue target was not met.

A third form of confiscatory taxation consisted in two further levies. The first went hand in hand with the foreclosure of all remaining Jewish businesses, imposed after the Kristallnacht pogroms of November 1938. The second was the transfer of all remaining cash holdings and bank accounts assets to the tax office in November 1941.

Estimating Jewish wealth

The asset values implied in these tax revenues sum up to 5.5bn RM. The 1947 document source adds a rough guess of 1bn



The Nazis vastly over estimated the wealth of Germany's Jewish population

RM in wild confiscations of Jewish property before 1938 that avoided the taxman. Internal guesstimates of Germany's Statistical Office in 1936 put Jewish wealth anywhere between 2.2 and 8 bn RM, with a midpoint estimate of 4-4.5 bn RM. Later studies have ventured guesses of 8-16 bn RM.

How much is much? A contemporary estimate put taxable wealth in Germany at 100bn RM for 1928. Calculating the above asset totals into that, one would easily arrive at Jewish wealth shares of 7-8%, or perhaps even 16% if 16bn RM guess is to be believed. However, the taxable wealth estimate must be seriously underestimated. Later academic work has estimated Germany's privately, real capital stock in 1937 at around 280-310 bn RM. About 54% of registered Jewish wealth in 1938 was real capital, like real estate or shares in businesses. Calculating this into the above range of Jewish wealth estimates and the aggregate capital stock data, one arrives at Jewish wealth share of 0.8-1.6% of the total. This is well in line with the Jewish population share, and far below the wild guesses the Nazis salivated about in the early 1930s. Germany's Jews in the 1930s were better educated than the average German but not massively richer.

Further reading

Ritschl, A, "Fiscal Destruction: Confiscatory Taxation of Jewish Property and Income in Nazi Germany", in: Kreutzmüller, C and J Zatlín (eds.), *Dispossession: Plundering German Jewry, 1933-1945*, University of Michigan Press, forthcoming.



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LOOKING FOR?

SCHROTTER/SCHROETTER/STEVENS

Harriet Stevens is researching her family's history, including grandparents Siegfried and Hedwig, and father Erich/Eric. The Schrotter family came to the UK in August 1939, guaranteed by Mr. Philip Boyle of Wetherby, brother of the then Mayor of Leeds, C. H. Boyle, and Harriet would love to learn more details.

harrietjs@live.co.uk

FAMILY PREISS

The descendants of Lila (Lilly) Honey (née Preiss), Eric Preiss and Gertrude Fox (née Preiss) are being sought in connection with the inheritance of a parcel of land in Žilina, Slovakia.

mareksobola@gmail.com

KINDERTRANSPORT GIRL WITH PLAITS



This photograph, which appeared in *Picture Post* (December 1938), taken by the Viennese immigrant photographer Gerti Deutsch, is in an exhibition entitled REFUGEES, NEWCOMERS, CITIZENS at the Peltz Gallery, Birkbeck College. Amanda Hopkinson, daughter of Gerti Deutsch, would be grateful for any information about the girl in the photo.

Amanda.Hopkinson.2@city.ac.uk

A visit to Lviv

One of our regular correspondents, [Janos Fisher](#), recently paid a short visit to Lviv in the Ukraine. These are his impressions.

The centre of town is pleasant; buildings are in the Austro-Hungarian style, reminiscent of Vienna and Budapest. Many of them have been beautifully restored but even on those left grey, notable features are visible. The town is busy, but we did not see a single cigarette butt or chewing gum on the pavements. People waited patiently at crossings, cars stopped when they were supposed to in order to let pedestrians through (maybe there is a fine for not doing so?). There are many cars, the centre is nearly gridlocked.

Our guide had been recommended by the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter. She led us on a three hour walking tour entitled the Jewish Interest Tour. Admittedly, she mixed in some non-Jewish facts and after three hours we asked her to set us free. We just could not take any more information. She showed us two Holocaust Memorials, both of them spotless - no graffiti.

Most people do not speak English, but in spite of that, if asked, went out of their way to be of help. In the beautiful opera house we saw a lavish production for next to nothing. The woman looking after the cloakroom left her post and ran to help me back to the auditorium when I found the door leading to the stalls locked (no



The fortified synagogue in the small town of Zhovka, near Lviv



One of two Holocaust memorials that we visited

idea why). In the hotel, the young girls at reception were champions.

There were Illegal taxi drivers everywhere. We used them twice; one overcharged by about 10% but was overwhelmingly helpful. An official taxi driver we used was preparing to join his family in a few days' time in Neasden (I wondered whether he was earning money in the Ukraine, to support his family in London?).

Lastly, because I do like to eat, some of the restaurants are beautiful, the food is excellent, portions are large, but presented nicely (in one instance, spectacularly), and of course cost a fraction what they would here.



The site of the oldest synagogue, the Golden Rose. It was destroyed by the Nazis

Five days in May

Nottingham - AJR members, staff and volunteers arriving at the National Holocaust Centre



In the middle of May the country basked in five consecutive days of glorious sunshine. By amazing coincidence, those were the same five days that the AJR Outreach team had chosen for its annual trip. Our Southern Outreach Co-ordinator, **Ros Hart**, takes up the story.



AJR members admire the impressive proportions of Southwell Minster

A coach load of AJR members and staff left Edgware early one morning and had a smooth journey to the Holiday Inn in Nottingham where we all settled into our comfortable rooms in anticipation of our busy few days ahead.

After a talk about the local Jewish history by an AJR Nottingham member, we freshened up ready for the evening.

We dined at the magnificent Langar Hall, a 19th century charming country house, enjoying exquisite fayre and delightful harp music to add to the ambience of the evening.

Monday morning we drove to the beautiful Chatsworth House in Derbyshire. We toured the splendid stately home, ate lunch in the sunshine, and then had a tour of the enchanting gardens. We all agreed it had been a stunning day.



Cream tea at Wedgwood

Tuesday was our much anticipated visit to the National Holocaust Centre, opened in 1991 by the Smiths, a Christian family who, after visiting Yad Vashem, felt that Holocaust education in this country could be improved. They have built an incredible, inspirational site of learning and remembering, including two permanent exhibitions, a memorial and reflective space and beautiful landscaped gardens. We were privileged to meet Marina Smith, matriarch of the institution formerly known as Beth Shalom, of which the AJR has been a leading benefactor for many years. She was charming and thrilled to meet us. We were equally thrilled to meet her.

Wednesday we set off to Wedgwood and enjoyed a very interesting tour of the museum and factory. As always, food was a big feature of the day, and we relished our delicious lunch, and afternoon tea served on beautifully



Enjoying the World of Wedgwood

designed Wedgwood china.

Thursday came round so quickly, and after checking out of our hotel, we journeyed to the quaint market village of Southwell and were taken on a tour of the imposing Southwell Minster.

Lunch in the local pub brought our incredible five days to a sad close, and we said our fond farewells to the Northerners, before travelling back to London, looking forward to a good night's sleep.



The AJR team meeting Marina Smith



Some of the AJR group with the statue of Josiah Wedgwood

OBITUARY

HORTENSE MARIANNE PAULINE GORDON (née HEIDENFELD)

Born: 21 September 1920, Kanth, Germany (now Katy Wroclawskie, Poland)

Died: 8 May 2019, London

Hortense and her younger sister Beata, who was born in 1924, were brought up by strict nanny Annie. Hortense's GP father was a medical officer in the German Army during WW1, gaining the Iron Cross. He played the violin and painted; her mother kept kennels.

The family home had 20 rooms plus a smallholding with chickens, goats and an orchard. The family parrot chirped the phrase daily "Guten Morgen Herr Doktor, Wie geht es ihnen?"

Hortense recalled the boycott of Jewish businesses on 1 April 1933 - Nazis standing outside the house and not allowing patients in. That year her best friend Dorchen said they couldn't remain friends because Hortense was Jewish, for which reason she also couldn't attend grammar school. On Kristallnacht her father was arrested and taken to Buchenwald, later imprisoned in Kanth town hall's tower before being released.

She offered to get work abroad to help her family, saying: "My parents met someone who knew a UK family wanting domestic help so I applied for a visa as a 'cook-general'. My parents/sister hoped this would mean they could follow."

Her father thought she should learn bridge while her mother bought her a sky-blue evening dress and a 24-person white-damask tablecloth. Hortense regretted not saying goodbye to her father in the rush to board the train in Berlin, arriving in Southampton June 1, 1939.

She was shelling peas in her employer's country house in Surrey when war was declared. She realised she would not see her family again,



Hortense as a young nurse

several years later discovering they had perished in Auschwitz.

Hortense never forgot letting the Aga cooker go out on Xmas day and described cooking a veal and ham pie using noodles, because pastry with meat was unknown in Germany. She made wafer-thin cucumber sandwiches for tennis parties and three huge meals daily, plus cleaning the whole house. Fifteen years ago her employer's grandson discovered a letter from Hortense's father and contacted her, remaining in touch till her demise; this meant the world to her.

Interviewed for a forthcoming book on Jewish refugee nurses she said "I didn't want to be a cook-general all my life so I applied to train as a nurse in 1941." She chose children's nursing because 'enemy aliens' could only work in children's, mental or infectious diseases hospitals.

Hortense gained a Gold Medal in 1947 - top of 1000 London nurses - and was accepted on London University's first Health Visiting course, working in paid employment until aged 77. She married Rupert in 1950 and had Yvonne and the

late Monica (d. 1990). Her decision to return to work after Yvonne was born was frowned upon by many, but she wrote in 1959 "I could now give mothers the benefit of my personal experience while my family gained a wife/mother who came home stimulated by her job."

After retiring she volunteered at ORT and became chairman of the Hendon League of Jewish Women branch. She was on the B'nai Brith welfare committee, volunteered at Clara Nehab house and was an AJR volunteer at the Sobell Centre; also a telephone-befriender. She enjoyed the book club and U3A.

In 2018 Hortense was interviewed by the IWM for their Holocaust Galleries opening 2022. She had a positive attitude instilled by her father's philosophy "There is nothing one cannot overcome". And despite her challenges she retained her humour, determination and her lovely smile. She was a good friend to many and will be sorely missed, not least by me her loving daughter.

Yvonne Gordon

Around the AJR

These are just two of the many recent AJR events around the country.

PINNER

David Barnett gave us an interesting and nostalgic history of Joe Lyons and his Tea Shops and Corner Houses. They were such a part of our lives and it is sad they are now all gone. He reminded us of salad bowls, carveries and also Ivy Benson and her Orchestra. What memories were conjured up!
Robert Gellman

ILFORD

David Morris displayed his beautiful handmade boxes in all kinds of wood veneers and finishes. He painstakingly puts the pieces together to produce works of art. We were all most impressed.
Meta Roseneil

JULY GROUP EVENTS

All AJR members are welcome at any of these events; you do not have to be affiliated to that particular group. Please contact the relevant regional contact for full details.

GROUP	Co-Ordinator	JULY	
Bath/Bristol	Ros	1 July	Remembering David Hackell, Bettina Cohn and Hella Hewison
Hull	Wendy	2 July	East Park
Ealing	Ros	2 July	Claude Vecht Wolfe – The Story of the Beatles
Ilford	Karen	3 July	David Barnett – ‘Herbert Samuel: Statesman, Philosopher and First Jewish Cabinet Minister’
Pinner	Karen	4 July	Peter Kurer – ‘What the Quakers did for the Jews of Nazi Europe
Newcastle	Agnes	9 July	Outing to Laings Art Gallery – Prince Albert & the Victorian Art World
Sheffield	Wendy	14 July	Tea in private gardens
Film Club	Ros	15 July	The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society (see ad on page 19)
Prestwich	Wendy	15 July	Social get-together
Edgware	Ros	16 July	Summer tea party
Hertfordshire	Karen	17 July	PLEASE NOTE NEW NAME FOR RADLETT AND SURROUNDING AREAS Herbie Goldberg – ‘The Life and Music of Jewish American Composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk’
Glasgow	Agnes	17 July	Annual BBQ Garden Party
Edinburgh	Agnes	18 July	Outing to the Jazz Festival – King Louis & The Primas
Didsbury	Wendy	23 July	Social get-together
Book Club	Karen	24 July	Meeting
Harrogate/York	Wendy	24 July	Harlow Carr Gardens
Muswell Hill	Ros	25 July	Simon Watson – Tai Chi tutor
North London	Ros	25 July	Peter Maxton – Recollections of a tour manager
Glasgow Book Club	Agnes	25 July	Meeting
Norfolk	Karen	30 July	Guided tour and lunch at Cathedral
Glasgow 2G Group	Agnes	31 July	Outing to Dumfries House

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

Child Survivors’ Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld
020 8954 5298
henri@ajr.org.uk



North West London Lunch & Talk

Tuesday 27 August 2019
Alyth Gardens Synagogue
12:00pm

We are delighted to welcome back
DAVID BARNETT
Speaking about the History of Joe Lyons, famous tea shops and corner houses



£8.00 per person to include a delicious deli lunch.
Booking is essential.

Ros Hart on 07966 969 951
or email roshart@ajr.org.uk



CARD AND GAMES CLUB

Monday 12 August 2019 at 1.00pm

at North Western Reform Synagogue, Alyth Gardens, Temple Fortune, London NW11 7EN

Offering Bridge & other card games, Backgammon, Scrabble & Rumikub, depending on numbers. A light lunch will be served before playing commences

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL An entrance fee of £8 would be appreciated






FILM CLUB

THE GUERNSEY LITERARY AND POTATO PEEL PIE SOCIETY

on **MONDAY 15 July 2019**
at **12.30pm**

Sha'arei Tsedek North London Reform Synagogue, 120 Oakleigh Road North, Whetstone, N20 9EZ

£8.00 donation per person, includes a deli lunch



Based on the best-selling novel, Lily James (*Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*, *Cinderella*, *Baby Driver*) plays free-spirited writer Juliet Ashton, who forms a life-changing bond with the members of the eccentric Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society when she decides to write about the book club they formed during the occupation of Guernsey during WWII.

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL

Call Ros Hart on 07966 969 951 or email roshart@ajr.org.uk

JOIN US FOR A DAY TRIP TO THE SEASIDE



Tuesday 13 August 2019

Coach Leaving Finchley Road and Edgware.

Join us for a delicious Fish and Chip lunch and seshert on Southend sea front

Then the opportunity to wander along the front, take in the sea air, and relax amongst friends.

Contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or susan@ajr.org.uk



SAVE THE DATE

SUNDAY 22 September 2019
at 2pm

AJR'S ANNUAL TEA AND CONCERT

At the brand new rebuilt premises of South Hampstead Synagogue

Robert Habermann will perform

THE GREAT JEWISH AMERICAN SONGBOOK

Watch out for full information in your August and September Journal and please bring your children and grandchildren

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Kindertransport

A special interest group of The Association of Jewish Refugees



LUNCH

on **Wednesday 10 July 2019**
at **12.30pm**

at **Alyth Gardens Synagogue**

Dr Sheila Gewolb DL
The Board of Deputies

Dr Sheila Gewolb DL was born in Cardiff has been the Deputy for Cardiff United Synagogue since 2009.

In 2015 she was elected Vice President of the Board, and in 2018 elected as Senior Vice President.

During her first term of office, she chaired the Community and Education division, and now chairs the International division, which works to support Jewish religious and cultural practices in the Diaspora and advocacy for Israel.

Sheila achieved her PhD in Language and Communication Research in 2015 and was made a Deputy Lieutenant for Greater London in 2016. She has three daughters who live in Miami, Gibraltar and Cumbria, and four grandsons. Her stepdaughter lives in Paris, so there is always plenty of travel on the agenda!

She is married to Roger, who is the Deputy for St John's Wood Synagogue.

In her spare time, (when she manages to get any!), Sheila loves knitting, jigsaws and Lego.

£7.00 per person

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL

Contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or email susan@ajr.org.uk

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Events and Exhibitions

JULY 2019

WARSAWA REUNION

AJR is planning a special event to mark the 80th anniversary of the 29 August 1939 arrival of the packet steamer S.S. Warszawa from Gdynia, bringing several hundred Polish Kinder. We would be delighted to hear from family members of Kinder who travelled on the Warszawa, and who are interested in commemorating this special anniversary.
susan@ajr.org.uk

ENOSH – MUSIC FOR MANKIND

AJR member Rudi Leavor has written a cantata for soprano, chorus & orchestra, based on music of the synagogue and reflections upon the Holocaust and its consequences. It will be performed twice in July.
6 July, Bradford Grammar School
9 July, St George's Church, Leeds
www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/enosh-music-for-mankind-tickets-53526472119

VOSS AT AGM

At the AGM of the Second Generation Network, the Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, Robert Voss CBE, will talk about his fascinating work as the Queen's representative as well as his experiences of growing up as a member of the Second Generation and the impact and consequences of taking part in the BBC documentary *British Jews, German Passports*.
2.45pm, Sunday 21 July
The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, NW8
davidwirth@secondgeneration.org.uk

MAZELTOV!

Seven AJR members – Ernest Simon, George Vulkan, Bob and Ann Kirk, Gabrielle Keenaghan, Walter Kammerling and Ruzena Levy – were included in The Queen's Birthday Honours List.

These inspirational people have dedicated their lives to Holocaust remembrance, sharing their stories with thousands of schoolchildren and others.

AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman said, "It is pleasing to see the incredible work of Holocaust survivors and refugees being recognised in this way."

MazeltoV also to AJR member Anthony Newton, who was recently presented with a Decoration of Merit in Gold of the Republic of Austria in recognition of over 13 years of service to the London embassy. Several Austrian dignitaries and members of Anthony's family attended the private ceremony and lunch at the Ambassador's residence.



Michael Zimmermann, Austrian Ambassador to the UK, presenting Anthony Newton (right) with his award



Soup walk

50 walkers took part in the joint Manna and AJR Soup Walk event in London, marking 80 years of the Kindertransport, raising over £6,500 which will go directly to assist Holocaust survivors living in poverty in Israel.

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

Registered office: Winston House, 2 Dollis Park, Finchley, London N3 1HF

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

Telephone 020 8385 3070 e-mail editorial@ajr.org.uk AssociationofJewishRefugees @TheAJR_

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

Printed by FBprinters, Unit 5, St Albans House, St Albans Lane, London NW11 7QB Tel: 020 8458 3220 Email: info@fbprinters.com

The AJR Journal is printed on 100% recycled material and posted out in fully recyclable plastic mailing envelopes.