



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

A Changed Perspective

This month marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the most notorious of Nazi camps. And over the past 75 years there have been fundamental changes to the way we think of the place.



The railway tracks that led directly to one of the three gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz Birkenau

When I visited Auschwitz in 1977 it was very different from today. I took the bus from Cracow. The bus journey began with a huge argument. A passenger, buying his ticket, asked for a ticket to "Auschwitz". A Pole objected: "Not Auschwitz. Os 'wie.cim."

When I arrived, the site was completely empty and desolate. There were no English-speaking people anywhere and hardly any signs in English. More than forty years on, the signs I remember were in Polish and Russian. The little information available, was about "victims

of Fascism", not Jews, following the official Soviet line.

It is hard to remember how little was known about the Holocaust in the 1970s. There were surprisingly few history books on the subject, compared to today. *The World at War* (1973-4) consisted of 26 episodes. There was just one episode ("Genocide, 1941-45") about the Holocaust.

What was clear, however, was that Auschwitz was already the most famous
Continued on page 2

HAPPY 2020

The 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz provides the focus for much of our content this issue, with two eyewitness testimonies and a report on a recent visit made by our Editor, as well as our lead article.

You will also find the first in our new series *Lives in Focus*, taken from the AJR Refugee Voices Archive.

Due to limited space, there is no Letters page this month but please rest assured this will return in February, with all its usual mix of comments and opinions.

In the meantime we wish you all the very best for 2020.

News.....	3
A Righteous Spymaster	4
Art Notes.....	5
Generation 2 Generation.....	6
Letter from Israel	7
Lives in Focus: Mirjam Finkelstein.....	8-9
Reflections on Auschwitz	10-12
Alfred Kerr's Latter Years	13
Around the AJR.....	14-15
Reviews.....	16-17
Looking for.....	18
Obituary.....	19
Events & exhibitions.....	20

Please note that the views expressed throughout this publication are not necessarily the views of the AJR.

AJR Team

Chief Executive Michael Newman

Finance Director David Kaye

Heads of Department

Community & Volunteer Services Carol Hart

HR & Administration Karen Markham

Educational Grants & Projects Alex Maws

Social Work Nicole Valens

AJR Journal

Editor Jo Briggs

Editorial Assistant Lilian Levy

Contributing Editor David Herman

Secretarial/Advertisements Karin Pereira

A Changed Perspective (cont.)

symbol of the Holocaust. For several reasons: First, it had a German name, linking it with the Nazis. Second, it was by far the largest camp. A death camp, a labour camp where slave labour was used, and, notoriously, a camp where medical experiments were conducted. Finally, it had been made famous by survivors like Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel and perhaps its best-known prisoner, Anne Frank. There were hardly any survivors from Chelmno or Treblinka. More survived Auschwitz and wrote about it. People in Britain knew about Belsen from the shocking newsreels and Richard Dimbleby's famous broadcast about the liberation of the camp. But otherwise little was known about the other death camps.

Hence the impact of Claude Lanzmann's masterpiece, *Shoah* (1985), ten years after *The World at War*. Lanzmann's documentary taught us about other death camps in Poland, Chelmno, Treblinka and Sobibor, which are now part of the mainstream historiography, but were barely known in the twenty years after the war.

Shoah begins in the woods around Chelmno. There was nothing there. Silence. Emptiness. The opening moments could not have been more different from the famous imagery of Auschwitz, the railway line leading up to the main entrance.

These two different images, the silent woods and the entrance to Auschwitz, summed up the radical novelty of Lanzmann's film. Many of the early history books about the Holocaust, such as Raul Hilberg's pioneering work, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), were inspired by the image of Auschwitz, the embodiment of a mass bureaucratic programme of destruction, railway lines bringing Jews from all over Europe. The scale of Auschwitz, the image of the railway line and the crematoria, made the Holocaust seem so industrial, so modern.

Lanzmann famously relied on Hilberg as one of his main historical advisers. But he also presented a very different image of the Holocaust. First, how *Polish* it was. All those desperately poor villages. By focusing on the other smaller death camps in Poland, Lanzmann showed us a much

less industrial, much more primitive Final Solution, set in woods and fields, outside small towns.

The new historiography that has emerged since *Shoah* has confirmed this move away from Auschwitz. Historians have written more about the Einsatzgruppen and "the Shoah by Bullets" on the Eastern Front, where small groups of German soldiers and their local accomplices, would arrive in a village and shoot the Jews in ditches and move on. This was very different from "the Shoah by Gas", epitomised by Auschwitz. We are suddenly a world away from Dr. Mengele and his experiments on twins or the dominant image of eugenics and *The Racial State*, the title of a very influential book by Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann in 1991.

The moral dilemmas, brilliantly captured by Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, based on their experiences at Auschwitz, suddenly seem very different in the light of these other death camps and the mass murder of Soviet Jews. Who had time for thinking about "the grey zone", when you came off the trains at Treblinka or when the *Einsatzgruppen* turned up in a tiny village in Ukraine?

We suddenly began to realise how unrepresentative writers like Levi and Wiesel were. They were young, fit men. Wiesel was fifteen when he arrived at Auschwitz. Levi was twenty-four. They were young and single, they had no children, they were in good health, and even when Levi was ill he was ill at the right moment, before the death march. Levi spoke German. It was no good speaking German when you arrived at Sobibor. He was also skilled, a chemist who could work as an assistant in IG Farben's Buna Werke laboratory that was intended to produce synthetic rubber, so he was spared hard labour in freezing outdoor temperatures.

This was something else that made *Shoah* so astonishing. It was about human bodies. How cold the camps were in winter. How hot the trains were in summer. How thirsty and hungry prisoners were. How bodies were ravaged by dysentery and typhus. There is nothing scientific or bureaucratic about that. Recent research on Soviet prisoners of war show that hundreds of thousands, captured on the Eastern Front, were

starved to death.

Of course, prisoners in Auschwitz were desperately hungry too. Primo Levi describes how "there was enough soup for eight people, but not for *three hundred*. And so we shut the door on those patients next door. If we had shared the soup among the others we would *all* have perished: as it was, we succeeded in saving a few lives in the dysentery ward."

What Levi's writing about Auschwitz tells us, above all, is how important luck was. The opening words of *If This is a Man* read, "It was my good fortune to be deported to Auschwitz only in 1944." Why "good fortune"? Because slave labourers became more valuable. The hospital at Monowitz opened only a few months before Levi arrived: "before that there had been no chance of medical treatment at all," writes his biographer Carole Angier. And, crucially, there was less time for Levi and Wiesel to hold out until liberation.

In 1989 Zygmunt Bauman wrote a famous book about the Holocaust called, *Modernity and the Holocaust*. What did Levi's luck have to do with modernity? And yet people keep writing about Auschwitz as a symbol of modernity. Instead we should think of how primitive the fates of so many victims of the Holocaust were. This is perhaps the best thing about David Cesarani's monumental book, *The Final Solution* (2016).

After the war, Auschwitz became a kind of grand cultural metaphor. "No poetry after Auschwitz", said the German thinker, Adorno. "Since Auschwitz we know what man is capable of," said Viktor Frankl. In a famous scene in the BBC series, *The Ascent of Man*, Jacob Bronowski said of Auschwitz, "that was not done by gas. It was done by arrogance. It was done by dogma. It was done by ignorance."

There is something terribly empty about these pronouncements and something very misleading about letting Auschwitz stand as a symbol of the Holocaust or of the dark side of modernity. We will remember what happened at Auschwitz as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of its liberation. But we should also think of the many terrible kinds of experiences of countless other victims.

David Herman

Two remarkable refugees

The AJR recently unveiled a commemorative plaque at the former Hampstead home of artist and illustrator, Milein Cosman and musician and writer, Hans Keller.

Milein was born in 1921 and grew up in Düsseldorf, attended school in Switzerland and came to England in 1939 to study fine art in Oxford. In 1945 she established herself in London as a freelance artist. In 1947 she started to work for the *Radio Times* where she met and later married the writer and broadcaster, Hans Keller.

Hans was born in Vienna in 1919 and lived with his family in Döbling until the Anschluss forced him to emigrate to London in 1938. He quickly made his name as a highly original musical writer and from 1959 to 1979 held a variety of senior positions at the BBC, for which he was a frequent and popular broadcaster. He died of motor neurone disease in 1985.

At the unveiling on 25 November AJR



Guests at the unveiling of the new AJR plaque at Willow Road, Hampstead

Trustee Frank Harding said: "This plaque commemorates the lives of two remarkable Jewish refugees who contributed not only to the local community but to the very fabric of British society. This is the 12th plaque in AJR's scheme and we believe that as well as being instructive and informative, the plaques serve as a reminder of the past while perpetuating the memory of the

people being honoured."

Guests at the ceremony included Milein and Hans' niece Ena Blyth, as well as current owners of the home, Philippe Sands and Natalia Schiffrin. Dignitaries included His Excellency The Austrian Ambassador Michael Zimmermann and Head of the Cultural section at the German embassy Ralf Teepe.

AJR TRUSTEES

The AJR wishes to express formal thanks to Joanna Millan and Sir Erich Reich, who stood down as trustees at the recent Annual Election Meeting.

Prior to becoming trustees of the AJR Charitable Company, both Joanna and Erich were members of the Management Committee of the AJR Friendly Society, Erich joining in 2001 and Joanna in 2004. Joanna represented the interests of the Child Survivors and will continue to serve the AJR as a member of our grants committee which considers proposals for Holocaust education and commemorative projects.

The AJR is also delighted that Sir Erich



Joanna Millan

has accepted the title of Honorary Life President of the Kindertransport Special Interest Group of the AJR, a position from which he will continue to represent the interests of the Kinder.

Also at the Annual Election Meeting, Stephen Kon and Mark White were re-elected as trustees as was the AJR Chairman, Andrew Kaufman MBE.

Paying tribute, Andrew said: "My fellow

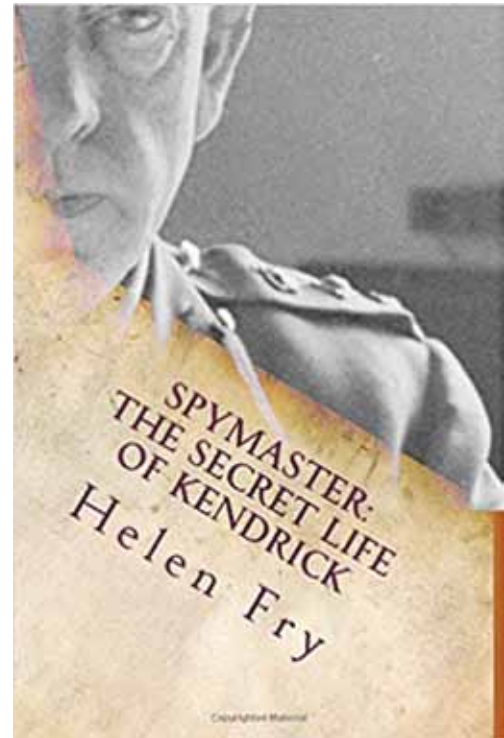


Sir Erich Reich

trustees and I would like to express our deep appreciation to Joanna and Sir Erich for their immense contributions, not only in representing their fellow members but as trustees, always seeking to improve the AJR's purpose and output. While their resignations mean that for the first time in our history, the AJR has no first generation trustees, it remains the AJR's over-riding priority to continue to support our first generation members however we can."

A Righteous Spymaster

Thomas Joseph Kendrick – the spy who saved many Austrian Jews in 1938 before his own arrest by the Gestapo - was recently honoured at a ceremony at Hoop Lane cemetery. Yet Kendrick's legacy remained largely unknown for over 80 years. His biographer Dr Helen Fry takes up the story.



A new plaque, made possible by the generous donation of an anonymous benefactor, is situated on the special Remembrance Wall for the Righteous Gentiles at the Jewish Cemetery in Hoop Lane, Golders Green. Its unveiling was led by Rabbi Amanda Golby, together with myself, educator and historian Trudy Gold, businessman John Curtis and comedienne Helen Lederer, whose grandfather worked for Kendrick as an intelligence officer at Trent Park. Guests included Kendrick's relatives together with representatives of AJR, AJEX and other Jewish community organisations.

We had two very special guests of honour: 100-year old Eric Sanders, who was saved by Kendrick in Vienna in 1938 and went on to serve in the Pioneer Corps and Special Operations Executive (SOE), and 97-year old Eric Mark, who worked at Trent Park as one of Kendrick's secret listeners. Both veterans are longstanding AJR members.

Kendrick was the British Passport Officer in Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s. It was a cover for his work as a spymaster for the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS/MI6). When Hitler annexed Austria in March 1938, Kendrick faced a human catastrophe as thousands of Jews queued outside his offices. By intervening with false passports, stamping documents for people who did not qualify for emigration, and bending the rules, he and his staff saved up to 200 Jews a

day, according to Foreign Office reports at the time. He even defied the SS and Brown shirts who forced Jews to scrub the pavements on their knees outside Kendrick's office. He strode out one day, kicked over the buckets in defiance of the regime, and said "Not on my patch!"

Kendrick saved thousands of Austrians. Amongst them were concert pianist Peter Stadlen, pianist Marion Stein (second wife of Jeremy Thorpe) and eminent skin specialist Dr Erwin Pulay, a close friend of Sigmund Freud. Amongst those given a temporary visa was photographer Lotte Meitner-Graf whose portraits in the National Portrait Gallery include photographs of Anthony Asquith, Yehudi Menuhin, Benjamin Britten and Elizabeth Taylor.

Kendrick began to issue visas on the flimsiest of evidence and for Jews who did not quite meet the criteria. One such person was Lord George Weidenfeld, founder of the publishing house Weidenfeld & Nicholson. Nineteen-year old George was at risk after his father was arrested by the Gestapo. George once recalled the one and only meeting with Kendrick that saved his life. Armed with a non-committal letter from a distant relative in England, George arrived at the British Passport Office with his mother. 'It was doubtful that I had enough support in England to stay there,' recalls George. 'We were shown into Kendrick's office. My mother pleaded with him for a visa.'

'I'm terribly sorry – there's nothing I can do,' said Kendrick. 'You don't have the right papers. You need further support.'

George's mother burst into tears. Kendrick swiftly grabbed George's passport from his hand and stamped it. He issued a three-month visa knowing full well that once in England it would be difficult for George to be sent back to Austria. It allowed George to enter England on 8 August 1938, via Switzerland on a transmigration visa. Lord Weidenfeld was clear that without Kendrick, he would not have got out of Austria and would have perished in the Holocaust. There are thousands more stories like this where human acts of kindness and heroism transcended personal risks and saved lives.

The legacy did not end with Kendrick's expulsion from Austria in mid-August 1938 on charges of spying. He went on to head an intelligence team that included Jewish refugee secret listeners and émigré women to bug the conversations of German prisoners of war at three clandestine sites: Trent Park, and Latimer House and Wilton Park in Buckinghamshire. The intelligence gained at these sites is now recognised as having turned the tide of and shortened the war, alongside Bletchley Park, RAF Medmenham and other clandestine wartime sites that supported the operational work of the Allied forces across all services.

ART NOTES:

by Gloria Tessler

This month Gloria reviews three different current exhibitions.

What lies beneath the surface of one of Leonardo's most famous paintings? **Leonardo: Experience a Masterpiece** at the **National Gallery** uses hyperspectral imaging techniques to break down one of the world's great masterpieces, *The Virgin of the Rocks*, virtually to the raw canvas. Images fly around the ceiling to the haunting sounds of baroque harpsichord music. This digitalised interactive experience – you even have mirrored words in glass cubes because, allegedly the great man wrote right to left – was created to encourage us to linger before the painting for longer than the average few seconds. But at an entry fee of £18-20, I would encourage visitors simply to pop upstairs and see this unparalleled work for themselves, where they can spend as many immersive seconds, minutes or hours as they like for free.

Until 26 January

One Man's War – the exhibition of satirical anti-Nazi photomontage posters by German



Detail from an infrared reflectogram of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Virgin of the Rocks*

Dadaist **John Heartfield** at East London's **Four Corners Gallery** could not be more explicit, nor more timely, in the wake of renewed threats from the far right in Europe.

The work is surreal – a frenzied bulldog trampling over the dead; a swastika formed from axes dripping blood; an impaled chicken; a little Hitler dwarfed by a giant menacing a stash of money. The images are particularly shocking because of how perfectly they are rendered.

A key exponent of Dadaism in Berlin, Heartfield, born Helmut Herzfeld, believed art should promote social change. From 1930 he designed 240 anti-fascist, anti-war photomontages for *AIZ*, the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* (the Workers Illustrated News). He fled to Prague in 1933, working for the paper in exile until he escaped to Britain in 1938, where he was interned.

He spent the next few years in Hampstead, where he joined the Free German League of Culture, but on returning to East Germany in 1950, he was regarded with suspicion, despite his support for communism.

Heartfield's work was rediscovered in Europe in the late 1960s and 70s, and in the UK by a group of radical artists working for "Camerawork" magazine.

Until 1 February



Dora Maar at Tate Modern



Better known as the lover of Picasso, portrayed as a Niobe figure, all tears and disappointment, the photographer and painter **Dora Maar** comes into her own in **Tate Modern's** current retrospective. Less known is that this subtle photographer, who took her camera to London during the Depression, viewed the city through its street characters, its pearly kings and queens, the poor, the hungry, the maimed and the beggars. Her heart moved her to record the disadvantaged in society. It happened the year before she met Picasso when she had a string of fashion commissions to her name. She met the great Spanish artist at the height of her career and the nadir of his. She taught him complex techniques combining photography and printmaking, while he in turn taught her to paint.

As Picasso's muse – among his other lovers – she is shown as the recurring Weeping Woman in many of his paintings, including his great anti-war *Guernica*. Perhaps he saw in her an innate compassion but despite the turbulence of their relationship she remained to the end an artist and a woman of creative courage in her own right, painting, returning to photography and surrealism with an imaginative power all her own.

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**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

Generation 2 Generation

When Anita was nine years old her mother, Naomi, cuddled up in bed with her and told her the appalling story of what had happened to her in Auschwitz.

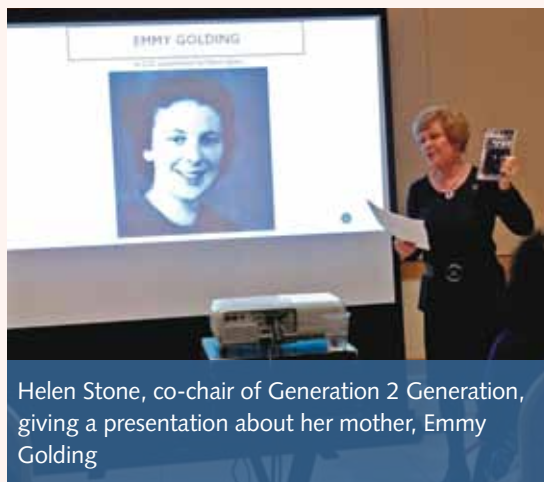
Unsurprisingly, what she was told had a lasting effect on the child and now Anita is one of the founder members of Generation 2 Generation (G2G), an organisation that supports and encourages second and third generation descendants of Holocaust survivors to retell the experiences of their parents or grandparents.

Helen's mother, Emmy, was equally frank with her daughter, who grew up knowing that her grandfather had been in Dachau and that her mother and grandparents had escaped death by the skin of their teeth, arriving in Britain just before the outbreak of war. Helen, too, is a founder member of G2G.

Lesley's mother, Eva, spoke often about her experiences in Germany before and after the Nazis were in power and of how she and her younger sister, Ulli, had to leave their beloved parents to join the Kindertransport. Lesley, who is now co-chair of G2G with Helen, is already busy sharing her family's story, including what happened to her grandparents left behind in Germany. These three examples demonstrate the wide variety of Holocaust experience and the importance of preserving testimony in all its forms.

You may be wondering why we need yet another Holocaust organisation. Those that exist already recognise fully that in ten or fifteen years' time the current dedicated group of survivor speakers, already in their 80s and 90s, may no longer be with us to talk about their experiences of surviving persecution. The question arises of what we, the next generation, can pass on from those who have passed on.

We believe that it is vital that the next generation is ready to take over the



Helen Stone, co-chair of Generation 2 Generation, giving a presentation about her mother, Emmy Golding



Anita Peleg

work of their parents, so that their unique memories will not be lost to young people in the future. Our aim is to supplement the pool of first generation survivors with well-prepared, high quality second and third generation presenters who can make full use of modern multimedia techniques to engage the attention and spark the empathy of today's teenagers.

Since Generation 2 Generation was formed some two years ago, we have trained and supported a number of speakers who can step in at short notice to deliver powerful and engaging presentations to groups of young people. We work with the existing Holocaust education organisations to engage the many members of the second and third generations eager to get involved.

Young people who have heard talks given by Generation 2 Generation have responded with great enthusiasm. Here are a couple of comments:

It was really moving and a very clear explanation. Although it is almost impossible to imagine what it was like living as a Jew in the 1930s and 1940s, I now understand what they might have felt. It was extremely interesting and moving. Thank you for sharing your story.

The presentation was amazing! I thought it was very inspiring of you to recall your family's very difficult past. I learned many things including how all generations suffered. The different points

of view from the different ages was fascinating.

If you have a compelling story to tell of a parent, grandparent or friend who survived the Holocaust and could pass it on to young people in a powerful and engaging format, please get in touch with Generation 2 Generation at office@generation2generation.org.uk We would love to hear from you and you would be welcome to join us at one of our regular coffee evenings, at which you will hear extracts from completed presentations and can ask questions about the process of creating your own presentation.

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LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



'I AM THE ENEMY YOU KILLED, MY FRIEND'



A performance of Benjamin Britten's monumental War Requiem in Jerusalem a few days before the date

commemorating the armistice between the warring countries during WW1 was an event not to be missed.

The performance requires the participation of two orchestras, three choirs and world-class soloists. Thus, the large stage of Binyanei Haoma, where the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra performs its concerts in Jerusalem, was so crowded that the children's choir had to be situated offstage. We could hear them, but we couldn't see them, and only once the performance had ended could they stride out to the front of the stage to take their bow.

On this occasion the tenor, James McCorkle, was from the USA, Morgan Pearce, the baritone, was from the UK, and the soprano, Tatiana Pavlovskaya, was from Russia. Morgan Pearce was wearing a poppy in his buttonhole, reminding us of the relevance of the

date. All the soloists sang wonderfully well, but the Russian soprano, who did not stand at the front of the stage with the other two soloists but was situated mid-stage, at the front of the choir, had such an astounding voice, both in its power and its beauty, that we could hear her singing rising above that of the choir, sending chills down one's spine.

When I was a student at London University in the early 1960s one of my friends was a member of the Bach choir and participated in the first performance of the work. I remember her regaling us with anecdotes about Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, and I recall my own sense of distrust of 'modern' music at the time. But I was young and unacquainted with the work of Benjamin Britten. Since then I have attended one other rendition of the War Requiem in Jerusalem, several years ago, and it was at that performance that Janet Baker gave her farewell performance. Then, as now, it was a very emotional event.

For anyone who isn't familiar with the work, it combines the traditional Latin text of the church liturgy with the poetry of Wilfred Owen, one of the most prominent of the poets of WW1. His poetry is not always easily accessible, and although the printed programme contained the text in the original English alongside a Hebrew translation, the pace of the music did not always make it understandable.

One of the most shocking parts of the War Requiem relates to the 'binding of Isaac' in Genesis. Owen takes the Biblical account, almost word for word, but changes the end to decry the slaughter by Abraham of 'his son, and half the seed of Europe, one by one.' Chilling words for anyone to read anywhere, and all the more so in Israel today.

But the importance of the War Requiem for Israel is inescapable, I am thinking especially of one of the last lines, 'I am the enemy you killed, my friend.' That phrase has stayed with me and haunted me since that evening, and is particularly relevant for us. Here in Israel Jews and Arabs live and work alongside one another, whether in hospitals or medical centres, as well as in supermarkets, pharmacies, public transport and every kind of retail outlet. The thought of killing the people with whom we live side by side is anathema to me and to most other people here. And yet...

The War Requiem ends on a solemn yet tranquil note, in line with the church liturgy, with an appeal for peace and rest. It is sung first by the two male soloists, then the children's choir, and finally the entire choir. That heartfelt prayer is repeated in every Jewish as well as Christian service, but seems to be as unattainable as ever in the turbulent world of today.



AJR ANNUAL TRIP JOIN US THIS YEAR IN THE COTSWOLDS

**Sunday 10 May
– Thursday 14 May 2020**

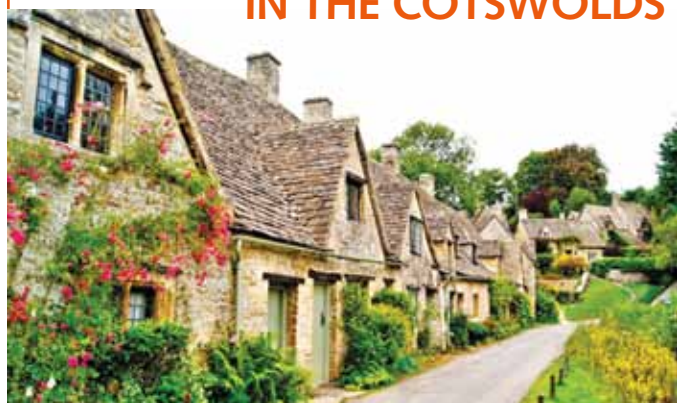
Coach travel from London to Tewkesbury (where our hotel is based), plus four nights' accommodation. We will also help arrange travel from other parts of the UK to Tewkesbury.

The itinerary will be a full five days of visits to attractions in the Cotswolds and surrounding areas, returning to the hotel each evening. Please bear in mind this is a busy itinerary and a fair amount of walking, getting on and off the coach, early starts, steps and sightseeing will be involved.

All meals, accommodation and travel will be included in the price.

Places are limited and are on a first come, first serve basis.

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



Lives in Focus: An Interview with Mirjam Finkelstein

This is the first of a series of interview profiles from the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. **Mirjam Finkelstein (1933-2017)** was interviewed by Dr Bea Lewkowicz on 6 November 2006 at her home in Hendon.

Mirjam was born in Berlin and was the daughter of Alfred Wiener, who founded the Wiener Holocaust Library. Mirjam and her family moved to Amsterdam in 1934, from where her two sisters and her mother were deported first to Westerbork and then to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. In early 1945 she was 'exchanged' from Belsen to Switzerland and Mirjam and her sisters joined their father in the USA. She returned to the UK in 1947, where she finished her schooling and went to University. She became a Mathematics teacher, married Ludwik Finkelstein and together they raised three children - Anthony, Daniel, and Tamara. Mirjam was an active Holocaust educator.

Below is an edited version of the interview. If you would like to see Mirjam's 'Lives in Focus' film, please visit ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/lives-in-focus.

Thank you Mrs Finkelstein for having agreed to be interviewed for Refugee Voices. Could you please tell me something about your family background?

I was born in Berlin, the youngest of three, and lived there with my father and my mother. I did not know what was going on around of course, but it was just the start of Hitler's coming to power. My father was already very worried about it and trying to take steps to see what he could do to avoid a further slide into antisemitism, which of course was very difficult. When nothing came to any fruition of this, he decided that he would have to leave Germany and in 1934, I was only eleven months old, we went to Amsterdam as a family.

Where did you live?

In a street called Jan Van Eyck Straat in Amsterdam South. And that's where the library, my father's library, then called the 'Jewish Central Information Office', where all the material that he bought and brought was there above us or next to us.

In 1939 my father decided to take the library to England. He got permission to take it there and most of the library was indeed shipped over some time in 1939, in March or maybe a bit earlier than that. He took the library and took the books and he then immediately set about trying to get a visa for us. My mother was not terribly keen on moving again but he was getting a visa and he did get a visa. It is dated. It was written on 6 May and arrived on the 10 May, on the day that we could no longer get out.

How did the outbreak of war affect you?

Once the war started it impinged much more on us - on our own liberties and so on. A lot of shops we could not go into. 'Verboden voor Jooden,' - and then of course the star. That very much impinged on us. We had to wear the star and it had to be on whatever we wore outside; it had to show, so it had to be sewn on. Incidentally, those stars - I have always thought it very strange: You had to actually buy those stars, only the Germans could think of this. You had to purchase these stars and then sew them on to our clothes.

And what happened when you were about to be deported?

More and more people were being deported from Amsterdam. It was a very hot June day, 20 June 1943. And I remember early in the morning hearing these boots on the pavement outside. And they came, sometime in the early morning. They came up to our flat. 'Raus! They counted us. My mother pleaded with them and showed them our father's war medals. That counted for absolutely



Mirjam Finkelstein, 2006

nothing. And we marched down the stairs where I managed to whisper to the neighbours around - not that they could do anything - and told one of the children there to take my scooter and keep my scooter.

We were marched to the railway station and put onto a cattle truck. It took some hours, the whole thing. We were put on a cattle truck and we were then transported - very crowded, very uncomfortable - the same story as one often hears - no water, nothing, no sanitation. However, in a way we were - in inverted commas - 'lucky' because we were taken to Westerbork in South Holland, which was only a few hours from Amsterdam.

Tell us about Westerbork.

In Westerbork, I remember at first crying all the time and, as I say, it must have been very difficult. Eventually, I settled down. I was ten years old, old enough to know what was happening. Certainly we realised - I realised - this was serious. There was something happening beyond, even beyond the adults' control. Perhaps that's what starts children off when they feel the adults are not in control.

In December 1943, after about 6 months in Westerbork, we were sent to Belsen. When we arrived there it was terribly bleak.

So what were those first impressions when you arrived?

The impression, as I said before, was



Mirjam (right) with her sisters in Amsterdam, ca 1941

bleakness - bleakness and cold. It was empty. Somehow I had sort of felt we were going somewhere better and it certainly did not prove that way. It was very cold. It was very uncomfortable and bleak. The food it transpired there was very poor and everything seemed to be made of turnips. There was turnip soup and there was turnip jam and there was turnip coffee and very little of it. And bread no doubt also had turnips in it. We had a ration every day and a sort of soup, which had practically nothing in it of any food value and very little of it. I mean that is when we started to experience hunger and cold.

We were staying in a compound. Belsen had several compounds, you know. This, as I mentioned before, I found out later was called a 'Star Camp'. They reserved this particular compound, I think, for people who had some sort of passport, some sort of 'foreign nationalities'.

*So how long did you spend in Belsen?
How many months?*

We were there a year – a bit more. We were there from December 1943 until January 1945, the whole year around. In January 1945, there were already rumours, I remember people were getting quite excited. And about 250, 300 people were called to come out and walk past the camp doctor. My mother managed – I don't know how - to walk upright past him, and we were chosen to go on this transport and we were immediately taken to the railway tracks nearby. We were sat there for quite a while and then the train arrived, an ordinary train. And we were put onto this train and moved off. We were told it was an exchange. I think we knew we were going to Switzerland; I am not quite sure.

We eventually reached St Gallen. And at St Gallen we were taken off the train and put onto a Swiss train, across the border. There, they took my mother out to a hospital. And she died within hours; she died that night in Kreuzlingen in a hospital. I think she knew that she had taken us out. She

had got us free - and let go.

What impact did it have on your life to be a child survivor, a refugee?

I think the main thing is that I am very laid back and I don't think I would have been. There are so many things that happen that I know just are not that important, that I cannot get myself excited about. But I have become more conscious of being a survivor because lately one speaks about it more. There were years when I was studying or working when really that was not of any importance. It is only when one gets a bit older that you remember, you know you go back more perhaps.

So is it quite important for you to talk about your experiences?

I do not feel that I need to talk about it. It's rather the other way around. I feel that somebody needs to do it, and why not me, you know, I am after all at the younger end of the spectrum.

REMEMBERING & RETHINKING

The international forum on the Second Generation



Save the Date!

The AJR is delighted to announce the second in our conference series,
Remembering & Rethinking: The international forum on the Second Generation.



This two-day conference will be held at Stamford Bridge, London on 21 and 22 April, 2020 and is kindly sponsored by Chelsea Foundation as part of its *Say No To Antisemitism* campaign.

The conference will be of particular interest to the Second Generation of Holocaust refugees and survivors.

Programme and ticket details to follow.

REFLECTIONS ON AUSCHWITZ

“There is no language to describe it.”

Birmingham AJR member Mindu Hornick endured six months in Auschwitz in the winter of 1943-44.

“I was just 13 when I was transported from the ghetto in Slovakia to Auschwitz-Birkenau with my mother, older sister and two younger brothers. On our arrival, a Polish prisoner bravely jumped into the cattle truck and persuaded my mother to let me and my sister Bylu go ahead and that we would see her later.

“The fact that he spoke in yiddish convinced mother. He told me to say that I was 16, my sister 17, and that we were seamstresses. We never saw our mother or two little brothers again.

“At the selection gate we were admitted to the main camp, marched to be stripped naked, disinfected, showered, hair shaved and tattooed with a number.

“I really thought we had entered hell. There were watchtowers all around, with SS officers pointing machine guns at us and others just shouting orders, with snarling dogs. We were surrounded by heaps of emaciated bodies piled on trolleys and the stench was indescribable. We could not believe what we were seeing.

“Bylu and I were initially taken to Block 16 where all ‘beds’ (slats of wood) were already occupied, leaving just the floor. Within a few days our mother’s sister, who was there with two cousins, managed to find someone in Block 14 to secretly swap with us, which helped us to survive. We were assigned to work in the ‘Kanada’ warehouses, sorting through new arrivals’ possessions, which I now realise was a very privileged job. Our daily subsistence consisted of

one watery bowl of turnip slime and bread doctored with sawdust and - we later discovered - bromide to stop our menstrual cycles.

“We had to stand for roll call two to four hours each day in all weathers. We often had Dr Mengele (the ‘angel of death’), immaculately dressed carrying a pair of white gloves. When he pointed at anyone they had to step out of line and we would never see them again.

“When people ask how I survived, I always say - sheer luck. But also people survived in pairs – I had my sister. After six months we were both transferred to a munitions slave labour camp just outside Hamburg. The conditions there were brutal and the chemical explosives often caused severe injuries. We were always hungry and cold and many girls starved or were beaten to death. But at least the air was free of the smell of burning bodies and the soup was slightly better than at Auschwitz.

“In early May 1945 we were rounded up by the SS and put on a passenger train. It was the day before liberation and the British were advancing fast. The train was accidentally bombed by the Allies, who did not realise there were prisoners on board. Very sadly, 48 of our girls were killed and the top of our carriage was completely blown off. It was another miracle that Bylu and I survived.

“We were eventually taken to a recuperation camp. After being nursed very slowly back to health we returned to Prague. The city had been eaten out by the Germans, but everyone was happy to be alive. One of my mother’s sisters had also amazingly survived the war and been reunited with her husband, welcoming us into their home with open arms. But with communism on the rise and the Russians keen to



annexe Czechoslovakia as a buffer zone, things became uncomfortable.

In 1948 I secured a place on Dr Schonfeld’s transport on a stateless passport to Britain with a guarantee that an Aunt and Uncle living in Birmingham would give me a home. Family again came to my rescue and I’ve lived in Birmingham ever since. I now have a family of my own and my time is spent on education with schools, colleges and universities.”

Mindu revisited Auschwitz for the first time in 2014. She found the experience very traumatic and literally couldn’t move from the sofa for a week after her return home. Last November she made a second visit, with a group of people from her local community which, while still very emotional, she found slightly easier.

She explains, “There is no language to describe Auschwitz. I completely understand why Spielberg sat on *Schindler’s List* for three years, trying to work out how to do full justice to the sheer horror that he wanted to convey. That’s why during my recent visit I was gratified to see that effort is being made to preserve the buildings, for example by re-roofing the barracks. My biggest fear is that the passage of time will be allowed to dim the horror. I’m relieved that organisations like the AJR are making sure that future generations will be able to witness and learn from our experiences.”

In 2018, just before her 90th Birthday, Mindu was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Worcester in recognition of her educational work with the Anne Frank Trust and the Holocaust Education Trust.

REFLECTIONS ON AUSCHWITZ

"ANYWHERE ELSE MUST BE BETTER"

Suffolk AJR member Frank Bright was incarcerated in Auschwitz in October 1944.

"We had been in Theresienstadt for 15 months and the ghetto was being liquidated. 18,402 people were sent to Auschwitz between 28 September and 28 October 1944, on 11 transports. Less than 10% of them survived. My father was taken first and we never even had a chance to say goodbye. My mother's and my turn came on 12 October, five days after my 16th birthday. We were put on a 3rd class compartment train which meant, in the circumstances, that the last day for many was reasonably comfortable, certainly more so than the covered cattle trucks. Were we going to a labour camp, as we had been told? Were we going to be reunited with the many who had done this trip before us? We were, but not in the sense we had hoped for.

"The train came to a stop. We could see prisoners in striped clothing, supervised by women SS officers. Some of the prisoners crowded around our window, begging for bread. An elderly man opposite us had bread but decided that if bread was so short here he should keep it for his family. Within an hour he would be dead. He might as well have given all of it to the pleading prisoners.

"The SS officers politely asked whether anyone had difficulty walking, pointing them towards a lorry. It never took them to the camp. The rest of us were put into two queues, one with women, girls and small children and the other for men and boys. My mother spotted me and broke rank to shake my hand. Like my father, she was never going to have a grave that I can visit.

"I became one of a small number of men and boys who had been chosen to live, or rather to be worked and starved to death. There was no intention to keep anybody alive for long. As we were marched off, our guards politely asked for our wrist watches - a profitable sideline for them. Every single other possession of ours ended up in *Kanada*, out of the soldiers' reach.

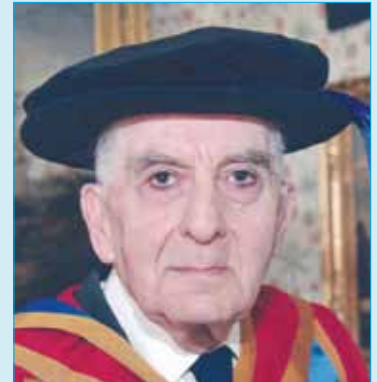
"On the way we passed a hut where women had just been processed. With their shorn heads and all other hair removed they looked like shop dummies. I too had every hair on my body shaved and was handed a pair of worn-out trousers and a long jacket with a large cross painted in red on its back. Pants were made from prayer shawls which, although intended to humiliate us, actually did us a favour as they were made of the finest wool. We were allowed to keep our shoes, they were taken from me on the first night by fellow prisoners.

"In the failing light, I saw a rectangular, rather squat chimney belch fire and smoke. I asked what it was and when I saw the next flame I wondered whether it had just consumed my mother. Then a curtain came down on my mind. It was self-preservation. I could see and take in but I felt nothing. That mental numbness stayed with me for many years. It was then the only way I could keep sane.

"On the second night we had a visit from the manager of Vereinigte Deutsche Metallwerke (VDM), which had been awarded the contract to produce aircraft



Frank Bright on his first day at school



Frank Bright taken at his more recent graduation

propellers for the Luftwaffe. He had already received 300 prisoners from Auschwitz and needed another 165. I happened to be standing near the door and was lucky. A former classmate of mine, Kurt Huppert, who was standing at the far end of the hut, was not so fortunate and died in Dachau in January 1945.

"I remember one inmate, Otto Fischer, who had been a leading statistician in Prague. Naturally slim, his ribs were by now projecting through his skin beyond what even the SS considered acceptable, and he had been consigned to a hut to await execution. But VDM needed a mathematician and the SS had promised him one. In saving their own face, the SS inadvertently saved Otto's life.

"Our fate had been mapped out for us and we thought that anywhere else must be better than this hell hole. That wasn't necessarily true and others will confirm that. A quarter (15,000) of prisoners evacuated from Auschwitz alone, never mind from all of the other camps and put on a death march, perished. Nevertheless we left on the night of 19 October 1944 in cattle trucks, standing room only, arriving at our new *Friedland* camp on the following morning."

Frank Bright will be sharing his full testimony during the AJR's Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration service at Belsize Square Synagogue on 23 January.

REFLECTIONS ON AUSCHWITZ

Visitors too welcome?

Jo Briggs, Editor of the AJR Journal, visited Poland and Auschwitz for the first time in November.

'Trophy tourism' - the experience of seeing a well-known place for yourself the first time – has become a global pastime. In recent years it has been perfected by the Chinese, who can today be spotted at tourist sites all over the world with their selfie-sticks. But I didn't expect to see them at Auschwitz.

The 'camp' (and surely there is a more appropriate word for it?) which once played host to the calculated and terrifying murder of ten percent of the world's total Jewish population now 'welcomes' 2.1 million visitors a year, making it the most visited destination in Poland. I say 'welcome' as there is a visitor centre, selling – bizarrely – post cards and ice creams, while each group is escorted round by a tour guide who uses an audio system to deliver brutal statistics such as how much human hair was removed from victims (seven tons) as well as helpful instructions such as 'We are now entering the gas chamber, please mind your step.'

Over the years I have seen numerous films and read countless testimonies, especially since I started editing the *AJR Journal* three years ago. I'm familiar with the gruesome statistics and details and I've had the great privilege of speaking to several survivors. So, bus-loads of tourists and deadpan tour guides aside, nothing that I saw in Poland really surprised me, but I was chilled to my very core by the scale of human depravity and by the tragic waste of so much life and potential.

Auschwitz 1, the labour camp entered through the infamous *Arbeit Macht Frei* arch, is nowadays little more than a no-tech museum which presents, in my opinion, a very sanitised version of the

true horrors that took place there. The one exception is Block 27 where the Shoah exhibition, prepared by Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Institute, poignantly conveys the vibrancy of Jewish life throughout Europe before WW2 and houses an appallingly large book containing all the known names (so far over 4.8 million) of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Auschwitz-Birkenau, the nearby extermination camp where the SS gassed up to 6,000 Jews each day, tells another story. Most of it was destroyed, either by the Germans to hide evidence or by the inmates after liberation to provide desperately needed fuel, but the train tracks to nowhere are still firmly in place. The sheer size of the camp and the precision of its design bear evidence to the SS cruelty and ruthless German efficiency in a truly devastating way. As dusk fell we filed out of the camp in silence, our hearts physically aching for the 1.1 million of our brethren who never walked out.

At several points around Auschwitz and also at other sites we visited while in Poland, including the Majdanek labour camp and the remains of the Warsaw Ghetto, it was life affirming to see other Jewish groups waving Israeli flags and singing the Hatikvah. But one wonders what the non-Jewish visitors make of it all. Several members of my own group think it only right that so many international travellers come to visit, believing it can only increase their awareness of the dangers of prejudice and discrimination. As a Jew, however, I cannot help but resent the fact that Poland's tourist economy benefits so greatly from something for which, to this day, a great many Poles

Prosthetic limbs on display at Auschwitz



shun all responsibility.

I'm glad I've been to Auschwitz. The memories will stick with me for life and it's a visit that, in my opinion, every Jew should try to do. But it's just one piece in a massive jigsaw of Holocaust horror, and very little effort has been made on the site to set it within its wider context. To the casual visitor I think it sits in a "grey zone" between facilitating education and promoting morbid tourism. The Poles could do so much more with it, but 'twas ever thus.

My three-day trip to Poland was organised by JRoots on behalf of Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue. JRoots can be contacted on 020 8457 2121 or via www.jroots.com

Other opportunities to visit Auschwitz include taking part in March of the Living, a six-day educational journey in Poland that brings people from all over the world to Auschwitz on Yom Hashoah. It promises to be an extraordinary and unforgettable experience and an opportunity to learn about 1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland as well as the devastation and horrors of the Holocaust. See www.marchoftheliving.org.uk

A much smaller and lesser known event is the Vrba Wetzler Memorial March, commemorating the heroism of Walter Rosenberg (Rudi Vrba) and Alfred Wetzler (Josef Lanik) who managed in 1944 to escape from Auschwitz, reach Slovakia and reveal to the world the horrendous truth. The 120km march emphasises the importance of resistance and defiance. See www.vrbawetzler.eu

ALFRED KERR'S LATTER YEARS

Unlike their parents, Judith Kerr and her brother Michael were refugees in Britain who became hugely successful. Judith, who died in May, was an internationally renowned writer and illustrator of children's books. Michael, with a brilliant academic record at Cambridge and solid war service in the Royal Air Force, became a knighted Lord Justice of Appeal; he died in 2002.

For their mother Julia and their much older father Alfred, however, flight from the Nazis ended a glittering and harmonious family life in Berlin. Julia had been a gifted composer; Alfred had written the libretti for her three operas. They had hosted leading politicians, lawyers and writers. Alfred had interviewed Emile Zola, spoken at Ibsen's funeral, and become friends with Albert Einstein, H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw.

From the turn of the century, the non-observant Breslau-born Kerr had been an influential if often controversial drama critic in Germany, as well as a sharp-tongued essayist, not least when it came to attacking the rising right-wing extremists. Tipped off that his passport was going to be confiscated, and with just a rucksack, Kerr caught the next train to Prague, weeks after Hitler came to power. His books were burned and banned.

Professional frustration followed years of esteem as a celebrated writer. In exile, the family had a shabby flat in Paris and then only shabby hotels in London. While not rich in Berlin, the family's years in exile were marked by an unending battle to avoid destitution - and near suicidal despair on Julia's part.

Although grateful to the 'wundervoll' British for taking in him and his family, Kerr complained that his warnings about the Nazi menace fell mostly on deaf ears. He claimed that the British, obsessed with cricket, were ignorant of what was at stake. Well beyond retirement age his English poor, compared to his perfect French, Kerr

struggled to get his work published, or his film-script ideas accepted. Thirty-one years after death his diary, *Ich kam nach England*, about his first three years in London, was published in book form in Germany. Julia, too, was unfulfilled professionally. She had secretarial jobs mostly below her ability, until she landed a well-paid position as an interpreter at the Nuremberg war crimes trials.

Towards the end of 1945 Kerr, aged 78 and in poor health, applied to become a British citizen, as did his family. A year later, the Home Office told him it had accorded priority to his application, but that there would be a delay. Kerr had been exempt from wartime internment, unlike his son. Yet Michael, having served in the RAF, was fast-tracked and naturalised in December 1946. The rest of the family had to wait until the following spring, because of a complication in the Royal Family. Princess Elizabeth was informally engaged to Prince Philip, who was not British. Only after he had been naturalised, and the engagement become official, did the citizenship door open to the remaining Kerrs and other refugees.

Alfred Kerr died in Hamburg in 1948. For Dr Deborah Vietor-Engländer, Kerr's biographer, his years in exile were not entirely tragic. She says: 'At least they were all together.' And, of course, they were all safe.

The same cannot be said for Deborah's own family. Her father Otokar, was a Prague engineer on a business trip to Sweden when Hitler occupied the



Alfred and Judith Kerr, sometime between 1931 - 1934



Portrait of Alfred Kerr painted by Lovis Corinth in 1907

city. Otokar reached London while his wife managed to get their daughter, Shulamit, out on Nicholas Winton's Kindertransport. She herself died in Prague; it was the only Jewish funeral there in 1942. Deborah's grandparents, her father's brother and the rest of the family perished - in the death camps, or on the 'death march' as defeat approached. One aunt and one cousin survived.

Born in London in 1946, Deborah studied German and French at University College London and completed a Ph.D in Tübingen. She is currently preparing for publication unknown texts which Kerr wrote weekly from 1897 to 1922.

Martin Uli Mauthner is the author of books about German writers in exile in pre-war France, and about Hitler's Paris envoy Otto Abetz and the French writers he groomed.

Around the AJR

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

PINNER



Jewellery expert John Benjamin explained how jewellery designs changed after WW2 when cheaper, luxury giftware became available from India and other places outside Europe. John's presentation was well illustrated and his anecdotes were much appreciated.

Henri Obstfeld

GLASGOW

We had a record turnout for our talk by film maker Jonathan Metzstein, son of Kindertransportee the late Leo Metzstein. Jonathan's current film project seeks to understand the reality of being a refugee, starting with the Scottish Jewish community. Jonathan can be contacted at filmbeatuk@gmail.com.

Agnes Isaacs

EDINBURGH



Members met at the home of Francoise Robertson and enjoyed an informal evening with Barbara Winton, daughter of the late Sir Nicholas Winton.

Agnes Isaacs

ILFORD

Our speaker showed us how music could stimulate the brain and aid recovery from strokes, dementia and even autism. Using assorted musical instruments and singing with exercises were extremely beneficial.

Meta Roseneil

AJR HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2020



This year's theme is STAND TOGETHER

AJR's Annual Commemorative Service will be on
THURSDAY 23 JANUARY 2020 AT 2PM
Belsize Square Synagogue

Refreshments will be served following the service

To register your attendance please call:
020 8385 3070 or email karin@ajr.org.uk



AJR FILM CLUB

MONDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2020
at 12.30pm

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

£8.00 donation per person

STAN & OLLIE



Laurel and Hardy – the world's greatest comedy team – face an uncertain future as their golden era of Hollywood films remain long behind them. Diminished by age, the duo set out to reconnect with their adoring fans by touring variety halls in Britain in 1953. The shows become an instant hit, but Stan and Ollie can't quite shake the past as long-buried tension and Hardy's failing health start to threaten their precious partnership.

A delicious deli lunch will be served first

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL
for seating and catering

Please RSVP to Ros Hart
on 07966 969951 or
email roshart@ajr.org.uk

CONTACTS

Susan Harrod
Events and Outreach Manager
020 8385 3070 susan@ajr.org.uk

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

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

Ros Hart
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator
07966 969 951 roshart@ajr.org.uk

Karen Diamond
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator
07966 631 778
karendiamond@ajr.org.uk

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

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FORTHCOMING NATIONAL EVENTS

TITLE	DATE	VENUE	DETAILS	CONTACT
KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH	8 January	North Western Reform Synagogue, NW11	With guest speaker Joan Ryan MP, Honorary President of Labour Friends of Israel	Ros Hart
HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY	23 January	Belsize Square Synagogue	See advert on opposite page	Karin Pereira
ANNUAL HOLIDAY	10 - 14 May	The Cotswolds	See advert on page 7	Susan Harrod

REGIONAL MEETINGS

The AJR operates a nationwide network of Regional Groups that offer our members a unique opportunity to socialise with friends of similar backgrounds. There will be an interesting programme of speakers, plus the opportunity to meet up with old friends and make new friends. 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 co-ordinator for full details.

GROUP	CO-ORDINATOR	DATE	TIME	EVENT
Pinner	Karen Diamond	2 January	2pm	Les Spitz , travel photographer
Ealing	Ros Hart	7 January	2pm	Paint a Foundation Stone for the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre
Essex	Karen Diamond	7 January	12pm	Social get-together over lunch
Ilford	Karen Diamond	8 January	10.30am	Paint a Foundation Stone for the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre
Glasgow Book Club	Agnes Isaacs	9 January	2pm	Book Club discussion
Bromley	Ros Hart	9 January	2pm	Social get-together
Leeds	Wendy Bott	9 January	2pm	Social get-together
Hampstead	Ros Hart	13 January	2pm	Sheila Gewolb, British Board of Deputies
Hertfordshire	Karen Diamond	13 January	10.30am	Paint a Foundation Stone for the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre
Hull	Wendy Bott	15 January	2pm	Social get-together
London Cards & Games	Ros Hart	20 January	1pm	Join us for a deli lunch before playing Bridge, Backgammon, Scrabble or Rummikub
Edgware	Ros Hart	21 January	2pm	Paint a Foundation Stone for the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre
Cheshire	Wendy Bott	21 January	2pm	Social get-together
Book Club	Karen Diamond	29 January	2pm	Book Club discussion
Muswell Hill	Ros Hart	30 January	2pm	Paint a Foundation Stone for the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre
North London	Ros Hart	30 January	10.30am	Paint a Foundation Stone for the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre

REVIEWS

GERETTET. BERICHTE VON KINDERTRANSPORT UND AUSWANDERUNG NACH GROSSBRITANNIEN

By Eva-Maria Thüne

Hentrich & Hentrich

ISBN: 978 3955652807

Aptly named a 'reader', this compilation of interviews with Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria, Poland and what was then Czechoslovakia differs from other similar collections, mainly because the snippets of conversations with "the saved ones" are sensitively put together by the editor so that no one voice dominates, neither that of the editor/interviewer, Prof. Eva Thüne, nor those of any individual refugee.

The interviewer's aim is clear: she wants to understand the linguistic development of her conversational partners. The questions focus on language change and the experience of a new culture. The open interview format, however, takes the conversational partners well beyond the original aims of the book and into the realm of memories - of the parents who stayed behind, of the frequently dramatic departure from the home country, of the arrival in the UK. Assembled into three chapters (focusing respectively on the world left behind, the new country, and their reflections on the experience as a whole), the individual voices coalesce to form a more holistic picture of life stories under the effect of trauma and rescue than is offered by many other collections of Holocaust/Kindertransport memories of which I am aware.

For many interviewees the learning of the new language was a less memorable experience than other cultural changes they underwent. Even so, the book succeeds in focusing on memories connected with language, such as misunderstandings which often left feelings of confusion, emptiness, disconnectedness and uncertainty. Internal and external pressures to acculturate during WW2 frequently

led to conflicts of loyalty. The refugees' attitudes towards the German language and culture reflect these. The volume demonstrates how German could only become a resource if the refugees managed to find a way of living with these conflicts of loyalty and the tension between the two (sometimes more) languages and cultures.

The book attempts the impossible: the understanding of trauma through language; if it succeeds it is because the interviewer/editor puts herself in the background and allows the refugees to speak directly to us. It can only be hoped that *Gerettet* will be published in English soon so that Kinder descendants can read it too.

Dr Eva Duran Eppler

APPLIED ARTS IN BRITISH EXILE FROM 1933: CHANGING VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE

The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, vol. 19

Brill Rodopi

ISBN: 978-9004395091

I was incredibly excited to read the whole volume, having attended the tantalising book launch, and I was not at all disappointed. This book is beautifully produced and illustrated, richly detailed and attentive to the complex lives of the many exiles, émigrés or refugees involved with the applied arts. I had not fully engaged with the work of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, based at the University of London, not really appreciating how close to home their work is. The second substantive chapter of this volume, by Deirdre Fernand, on the architect Peter Moro and his organisation MARS, quickly brought this home to me.

The whole chapter is based upon a man whose life in Germany had many parallels with my father's: they both studied at the Technische Hochschule in Berlin and arrived in the UK in 1936. Fernand discusses the importance of the notion of *Beiunski-land*, quoting another fellow architect, Frederick Marcus, who had left Germany in 1933. "Marcus called Hampstead 'beiunski-land' because bei-uns (at home) is how

the Germans began every sentence when they talked about home". This was certainly true of my own father, and I immediately felt at home with reading about the many and varied lives of these people involved with the applied arts. However, my father was a mechanical engineer, and there is little on this as a particular topic within the applied arts, perhaps because it is deemed more of a science?

What is particularly interesting for me, as a relative newcomer to the field and a feminist, is how many of the contributors to this volume are women. Of the 11 authors nine are women, of whom three are also editors of the whole volume. Perhaps more curiously, one of the editors does not feature as an author – Marian Malet – but she has been an editor of many of the yearbook volumes, reaching back over more than 15 years. The subjects of several chapters are, perhaps more curiously and importantly, women. Women's careers were not of particular salience in the first half of the twentieth century, but this female creative work in the applied arts is a prominent feature of some of the chapters in the book.

John March writes a most interesting chapter on women photographers, whilst Ines Schlenker discusses those émigré artists, including one to whom the book is dedicated – Milein Cosman – who drew for the *Radio Times*. Together with Susan Einzig and Gerard Hoffnung, Cosman was also among an elite circle that produced black and white illustrations for 'the imaginative world of radio', providing a pictorial summary of a programme. She is seen as one of the outstanding illustrator artists of the 1940s and 1950s.

Pauline Paucker discusses typographers in exile, including one important woman – Elizabeth Friedlander – who together were critical to developments in new typographies. Again, this creative endeavour is illustrated with the most interesting graphic designs. Anna Nyburg also writes about the work of both women and men textile surface designers. She discusses those who successfully managed to escape from Nazism and a potentially significant woman who did not manage to leave,

mentioning the tragic life of Otti Berger, a graduate of the Bauhaus. She does also discuss the creative lives of several other women refugees in textiles. Inevitably perhaps, women also feature in the chapters on the work of significant refugee male artists, with their supportive contributions.

Finally, one aspect of the book which I find somewhat disappointing is the fact that two of the chapters are in German. Chapter One is about the creation of new homes in exile and Chapter Six is about photographer Francis Reiss. Despite the fact that my father was from Nazi Germany (or perhaps because of it) I cannot read German fluently. This book is a vital testimony to the creative potential and work of a generation or more of refugees and will contribute greatly to that heritage from the perspective of the 21st century.

Professor Miriam E. David

THE BOY WHO FOLLOWED HIS FATHER INTO AUSCHWITZ

By Jeremy Dronfield

Penguin Books

ISBN 978 0241359174

This is a remarkable true story, well supported by research, interviews, references and the entries from the diary written by main hero, Gustav Kleinmann, between 1939 and 1945.

The Kleinmanns were an ordinary Jewish family in Vienna, keeping their faith and tradition until their peaceful lives were interrupted. Father Gustav and his son Fritz were among the first to be arrested and, consequently, deported to Buchenwald in October 1939.

Gustav secretly kept a diary, sometimes only a few sentences, describing main events and their ordeal. Hunger, physical punishment, torture, typhus epidemics and everyday encounters with death were part of their daily life. A strong loving bond developed between father and son as they shared their fate, bread and work. When Gustav was transferred to Auschwitz, Fritz volunteered to join him.

Father and son survived five concentration camps and death marches.

During a train journey near Vienna in January 1945, Fritz managed to escape but he was caught and returned to Mauthausen. Many of their friends were shot or gassed before their eyes or died from exhaustion, but Gustav and Fritz witnessed the camp liberation. Both were close to death but they survived and made it to Vienna where they discovered that Fritz's mother and one sister had been murdered in Belarus. Another sister, Edith, was in Britain while the youngest sibling, Kurt, was in the USA.

Gustav remarried and stayed faithful to his religious beliefs and his tradition. He rarely spoke of his sad history and died at the age of 85. In contrast Fritz was tormented by his memories. His two marriages broke down, he tried and failed to settle in Israel, returning to Vienna. He dropped his faith, became a communist sympathiser and trade union activist, and talked about the Holocaust. He passed away in January 2009, also aged 85.

Everyone involved in Holocaust education should read this book. There is detailed description of Nazi infrastructure and politics, which de-humanised others and exploited slave workers, and interesting accounts of friendship and resistance within concentration camps. I would have found it useful to see more photos and maps within the book, but it is highly recommended.

Dr Elena Rowland

ERNST J. COHN: BIOGRAPHY AND FAMILY MEMOIR

Henry J. Cohn

Privately published, available from henrycohn@waitrose.com

Among German Jewish refugees, my late father (1904–76) took an unusual path. Professor of Law at Breslau university aged 28, he was attacked from November 1932 by students who did not want German law taught by a Jew. After three months of intermittent rioting, the university suspended him eight weeks before the April 1933 law dismissing Jewish civil servants. In England from May 1933, he practised as an expert in German law and qualified as a barrister. He stood guarantor for 14

family members who were saved from the fate of many others.

After three wartime years in the Royal Artillery he was recruited to prepare for the occupation of Germany and the resetting of its legal system by SHAEF and the Foreign Office. Post-war he featured as expert witness in German, Swiss and international law, probably the only Jewish refugee to become a full-time barrister. He resumed his academic publications, which altogether numbered fourteen books and nearly 200 papers, was a frequent correspondent in *The Times* and *Jewish Chronicle*, and became honorary professor at Kings College London and Frankfurt (Main). Much in demand as a humorous lecturer in Jewish and wider circles, he was active in the World Jewish Congress (British Section), his Reform synagogue (of which he became president), and several Jewish cultural institutions.

He was proud to be a conciliator between Germans and Jews, Zionists and non-Zionists, and Orthodox and Reform Jews.

Dr Henry Cohn



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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.

HUTCHINSON CAMP INTERNEES

British author and *New Yorker* writer Simon Parkin is looking for former internees (or descendants thereof) of Hutchinson camp on the Isle of Man. Likewise, any internee who was aided in their release by Bertha Bracey, chair of the Central Department for Interned Refugees.

simon@simonparkin.com

CHARLES JAEGER

John Fox is seeking a Professor Charles Jaeger who taught his mother and aunt English in Vienna and knew many Austrian aristocrats in the late '20s and early '30s. He lived in penury in Bayswater until about 1970, and had a passion for Lawn Bowls!

jhgfox@aol.com

HELEN LESSER / YAFFE

Beatrice Fraenkel is hoping to find out more about the scheme by which Sir



Scottish WW2 heroine Jane Haining, together with some of her Hungarian pupils

and Lady Jefferson of South Manchester offered a home for her late mother Helen Lesser (married name Yaffe) in 1939, when she was a 17 year old German Jewish refugee. The Jeffersons were recruited into the scheme in 1938 by a Fräulein Förster.

beatrice.fraenkel@me.com

KURT LINDENBERG / LYDRA

Kurt Lindenberg from Nordhausen, his wife Margot (née Wiersch) and daughter Pamela (born c.1941) came to the UK in the 1940s, possibly via China. Pamela has been traced to near Wolverhampton in 1944 and the family might have changed the surname to Lydra.

elindenberg93@gmail.com

JANE HAINING

Scottish historian Cameron Brooks hopes to trace descendants of former students of Jane Haining (see picture), who trained Hungarian Jews in the domestic sciences at the Scottish Mission School in Budapest in the 1930s and 1940s and helped them to secure jobs in the UK.

CBrooks@churchofscotland.org.uk

GEORG MOLNAR

Martin Hartmann seeks any information on Georg Molnar, who was born 11 May 1926 in Temesvar, Romania. Georg grew up in Vienna and came on a Kindertransport in April 1940, staying near Ipswich. His mother Paula's maiden name was Singer.

martin.hartmann@nationalpark.co.at

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OBITUARY

SAM GONTARZ

Born: 6 July 1929, Łódź Poland

Died: 14 November 2019, Whitefield, Manchester

Sam (Szmul) was the youngest of a loving working class family of five: father Avrum, mother Ruchla, brother Srulek and sister Sala. In 1939 the family were herded into the Łódź Ghetto and thence to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Sam spent time in four other concentration camps including the notorious Mauthausen, before being liberated by the Allied troops in 1945.

In 1947 Sam – the only survivor of his family - was sent to the UK through UNRA to stay with a distant aunt in Manchester. Life started to improve for him almost immediately. He became best friends with some of the other “Boys” who had also made their homes in Manchester.

Along with Sam Walshaw and Karl Klienmann Sam moved into The Holmes, a big house in Prestwich used by the Fruhman family for their kosher catering and function business. Life was good, fun times had finally started. They worked hard and played even harder.

After working as a car mechanic for a while and then at Jacobs the bakers, Sam got a job with a handbag



manufacturer. After learning the handbag trade, he decided to set up his first manufacturing plant, which turned out to be in a room above Jacobs the Bakers around 1954.

At about this time, Sam met Sheila on an evening out at the Ritz ballroom. They soon became soul mates and even worked together before marrying in 1958 at Blackpool Reform Synagogue.

From then on, Sam worked hard to build a future for himself and his new wife and in 1965 and 1971 were blessed with Adrian and Robbie, their two sons.

Sam was the life and soul of every party, always happy, and everything he did was for family and friends.

He is sadly missed by Sheila, Robbie and Adrian and grandchildren Rem and Lucia.

Robbie Gontarz

A PRAYER FROM THE CAMPS

We are grateful to Marianne Parkes of Stroud, Glos, for sharing this remarkable prayer which she found among her mother's documents. It was entitled 'A Prayer of a Jewish Leader in an Extermination Camp'.

The text was published in the German periodical *Frankfurter Hefte* in October 1947. Very little notice has been taken of it, perhaps because it is an unfamiliar mixture of sermon and prayer; that is to say it is as much addressed to fellow sufferers as it is communion with God. This is not exceptional in the Jewish tradition; it arises from the experience of the inseparable oneness of man's relation to God and his relationship to his fellow men. It seemed worth translating into English as a human

document of the highest order:

“Peace be with the men of ill will; and may an end be put to all revenge and all talk of punishment and chastisement. The atrocities defy all measure. They are beyond human understanding. Innumerable are the martyrs. Therefore, O God, do not weigh with the scales of Justice, charging the hangmen with the suffering of their victims and calling them to horrifying account, but let it be otherwise: credit the hangmen, the tale bearers, the traitors and all the other evildoers and count to their benefit the human greatness to which their doings gave rise: all the courage and fortitude, the humble unselfishness, the dignity, the unpretentious efforts, the undaunted faith and the brave smile that dried up tears: all the love, all the sacrifices, above all the passionate love in all those torn, tormented hearts which remained strong

and faithful whatever happened, in the face of death and in the very midst of death, yea, and also any slightest effort made in the hours of profoundest weakness.

May all this count as ransom with Thee, Lord our God, for the forgiveness of sin, for the resurrection of righteousness. May what is noble also count and not only what is evil. And may we in our enemies' memory no longer be their victims, their nightmare, their haunting apparitions, but rather their challenge that they may leave off their frenzy. This and nothing but this shall be imposed on them when it will be all over: - only that they shall let us live as human beings amongst human beings.

May Peace descend upon this tortured Earth to all men of good will and grant Peace, o God, also to the others.”

Events and Exhibitions

SURVIVOR WEBCAST



To mark HMD 2020 the Holocaust Education Trust will be sharing a webcast of the live testimony of Auschwitz-Birkenau survivor Susan Pollack MBE, who was born in 1930 in Hungary. In 1944 she spent 10 weeks in Auschwitz before being marched to Bergen-Belsen.

24 January, at 10.00am

www.het.org.uk/survivor-testimony-webcast

INSIDERS OUTSIDERS FESTIVAL

Numerous events and exhibitions are taking place this January as part of the AJR-supported nationwide arts festival Insiders Outsiders, which celebrates refugees from Nazi Europe and their contribution to British culture. They include a new exhibition in Leicester entitled **Dissent and Displacement**, which opens on 31 January and a public seminar series starting in February.

[https://](https://insidersoutsidersfestival.org/events/2020-01/)

insidersoutsidersfestival.org/events/2020-01/

THE FORGOTTEN EXILES

Dr Jennifer Craig-Norton will talk about Jewish Refugee Domesticates in Britain between 1938 – 1945, at an event organised by the Second Generation Network.

11 February, at 6.15pm

www.wienerlibrary.co.uk

LIBERATION 75

This May will see the largest international event to mark the 75th anniversary of liberation from the Holocaust. Taking place in Toronto, Canada, the three day event is aimed at survivors, descendants, educators and friends.

31 May – 2 June

www.liberation75.org

From Eisenstadt to the Tower

As I sat waiting my turn to shake the hand of Sir Kenneth Olisa, Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, I could not help but reflect on my journey from the *Judengasse* of Eisenstadt in Austria to this unique and exciting event 80 years after I left Vienna on the Kindertransport.

I was one of 37 people seated in the hall of the New Armouries of the Tower of London, waiting to receive the British Empire Medal awarded in the Queen's Birthday Honours list last June and one of five AJR members at this ceremony. The others are Ann and Bob Kirk, George Vulkan and Ruzena Levy. We were welcomed by the Constable of the Tower, Lord Houghton of Richmond, who urged us to relax and to enjoy the day. It was



The five AJR members who were presented with their BEM at this ceremony. From L to R: Ann Kirk, Bob Kirk, Ruzena Levy and Ernest Simon. George Vulkan is at the back.

our event, he insisted.

In the same vein, Sir Kenneth Olisa, representing the Queen, wanted to be sure that everything was being done for our enjoyment. Throughout the entire procedure he chatted gently with each recipient. As we were called forward in alphabetical order the reasons for our award were read out. In most cases it was to reward many years of voluntary service to the community, ranging from fund raising for different charities to services to athletics or boxing or Buddhism

or education. A centenarian received an award for services to bell ringing in his community church. All the AJR members earned prolonged applause for our services to Holocaust Education.

The entire procedure ran like clockwork, and every official, from the most junior to the top, was kind, efficient and helpful. It was a day which will stay in my memory for a long time.

Ernest Simon BEM

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