VOLUME 20 NO.8 AUGUST 2020

AJR JOURNAL
The Association of Jewish Refugees

Racism and Refugees

The death of George Floyd, an African-American man, in May triggered off a summer of demonstrations, riots and debates on both sides of the Atlantic. It started with the question of police racism in America and quickly turned into a series of passionate debates about race, colonialism and how western societies should teach and remember our colonial past.

Rabbi Joshua Lesser of Congregation Bet Haverim in Atlanta, Georgia, takes a knee during a 4 June interfaith march against racism.

The Anglo-Jewish community was quick to respond. Leading voices condemned racism and Floyd's death. On 8 June the Jewish Board of Deputies announced its intention "to form a Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community to banish prejudice and promote inclusion." The Commission is to be chaired by the leading political journalist, Stephen Bush. First, the Commission will invite "Black British Jews and other Jews of Colour to come forward and give evidence… about their experiences in the community – good and bad…" Second, it will talk to a range of community organisations "to discuss best practice and challenges, and seek to overcome them." Findings will be published in a report before the end of the year.

The Board of Deputies should be praised

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SUMMER READING

The AJR has been extraordinarily busy over the last few weeks, hosting a record number of online events and making sure that all our members have everything they need during lockdown. We hope August brings more peaceful times for everyone and are delighted to bring you a raft of interesting articles to read in this month's issue.

Top of the list is Joel Hockman's fascinating tale of finding an unknown cousin (page 13) and our own Debra Barnes' account of writing her novel *The Young Survivors* (page 14). Continuing the literary theme, David Herman has written a great piece about his recent interview with the author Thomas Harding (page 5), while our Reviews page features four very different books.

We hope you enjoy this issue and would be delighted to receive any comments.

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

Racism and Refugees (cont.)

for its swift and positive action. Bush, a thoughtful political commentator, was an interesting appointment. One significant word, however, was missing from their statement. There was no reference to the word, "history". Refugees who experienced appalling racism during the 1930s and '40s may have wondered why there have been so few attempts to draw on their experiences and other lessons from the European past or, indeed, the role of Jews in fighting for Black rights in the past.

For example, during these debates within the Jewish community and beyond, there have been surprisingly few references to the complicated history of Black-Jewish relations in America over the past century. American Jews played a significant part in supporting Black Americans in their struggle for equality and improved rights. In 1909, Henry Moscowitz joined W.E.B. DuBois and other civil rights leaders to found the NAACP. Kivie Kaplan served as the national president of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) from 1966 to 1975. Arnie Aronson helped found the Leadership Conference. In the early 20th century, nearly 40% of southern Blacks were educated at schools and black colleges established in whole or in part by contributions from Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald.

Later, during the Civil Rights Movement, Jewish activists represented a disproportionate number of whites involved in the struggle. Jews made up half of the young people who participated in the Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marched arm-in-arm with Dr King in his 1965 March on Selma.

This changed later in the Sixties. The New York City teachers' strike in 1968 led to increased racial tensions between Blacks and Jews. The strike symbolised a change in relations between the communities. More recently, there have been numerous violent attacks on Jews in Brooklyn and attempts to ban pro-Israel organisations on US campuses which have barely been reported by the British media.

Secondly, in the discussion about how we might include more teaching about slavery and colonialism in British schools and universities, some Black teachers have looked to Holocaust education as a model. They have admired the use of education packs in schools and the way a new awareness of the Holocaust has emerged. Once there was silence. Now there are exhibitions in leading museums, TV dramas and documentaries and Holocaust Memorial Day. What lessons could be drawn for people thinking about how to promote the knowledge of slavery and colonialism from the growing awareness of the Holocaust in British culture?

Thirdly, and this might be most relevant of all for Jewish refugees, there has been almost no discussion about what we can learn from Germany and other countries in Europe about how to deal with the traumas of modern history.

In 1945 statues of Nazi leaders were torn down all over Germany. Many Germans wanted to forget. Since the 1960s and '70s, Germany has started to find new ways of confronting its dark past.

In an essay called "The History Wars", published in *The New Statesman* on 19 June, Richard J Evans, a leading historian of Nazism, wrote, "We might learn from Germany about how to deal with physical reminders of a controversial past." He took the example of a huge statue of an elephant in Bremen, built in 1932 to commemorate the colonies taken from Germany by the Allies after the First World War. By the 1970s, however, German historians had uncovered the German army's genocide of native inhabitants of German South-West Africa (now Namibia) in the 1900s. Instead of taking the statue down it was rededicated in 1989 as an "anti-colonial memorial", accompanied by a plaque explaining the history of the atrocities.

There are numerous monuments and museum exhibitions in Germany dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust. But some of the most interesting examples are the tens of thousands of *Stolpersteine,* "stumbling stones", small brass plaques built into countless German streets which bear the names of victims of Nazism outside their last-known freely chosen residence. As of last December, 75,000 of these had been laid, most in memory of Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

In Britain this summer the talk has been of tearing down monuments. But perhaps we should be thinking of how to use plaques or our own "stumbling stones" to learn about our colonial past, so that we learn about the darker side of our history. In the best piece I have read on this debate, the distinguished historian of British slavery, Dr Nicholas Draper, wrote in *History & Policy*, responses could have included to "modify statues, to provide a new context for them," or "build new memorials to the victims of slavery, to create counter-narratives that reflected a fuller account of our histories." None of these alternatives have been implemented so far, but this may still be a positive way forward.

By contrast, many Jewish refugees, servicemen and women among them, will have looked on with bewilderment, horror even, at the desecration of the statue of Churchill and The Cenotaph by demonstrators and rioters. This had nothing to do with education, rights or finding creative solutions to the issue of statues and national memory.

This moment has a more positive side. It is an opportunity to learn about our past: what we regret but also what we should celebrate, what divides us and what brings us together as a nation.

We also need to broaden our understanding of racism and displacement. Black Britons are discovering their experience of slavery and colonialism. But rather than create hierarchies of victims, we need to make links between this experience and that of other victims of historical trauma: Jewish refugees, Asian refugees driven out of east Africa, families who experienced the horrors of Partition in India and Vietnamese "boat people", and many more. How can different groups learn from each others' experience? The AJR with its wealth of experience in Holocaust education and the issues of memory and memorials (for example, the AJR plaques) could, and doubtless will, play a significant role in this.

This is a chance to transform our understanding of the past, in schools and universities, in museums and in public spaces. But this shouldn't be about censorship or destroying the past. History, to paraphrase the German-Jewish refugee, Walter Benjamin, is not about the abolition of the past, it is about the bringing of the past to life.

David Herman

A YEAR OF EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

In June, the AJR hosted a three-part online symposium on behalf of the UK's delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) to launch the IHRA's new publication *Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust*. This was just one of several educational projects that have recently benefited from AJR's financial support.

Teachers gathering together after one of the HET residential courses supported by AJR

The IHRA's practical guide for educators, teacher trainers and policymakers was compiled by a team of the world's leading experts in Holocaust pedagogy. The AJR's decision to take a leading role in disseminating the recommendations was based on the view that the IHRA's approach to promoting good practice in the teaching of the Holocaust very much reflected our organisation's own commitment to promoting good practice in the teaching of the Holocaust.

The initiatives supported by AJR's educational grants programme over the past academic year – despite the extreme educational challenges presented by Covid-19 – demonstrate some of the ways that we have sought to influence how the Holocaust is taught in the UK.

One example is the Holocaust Educational Trust's *Exploring the Holocaust* four-day residential course. The course, which took place in Leicester over February half-term, brought together 36 trainee and practising teachers from across the UK in intensive workshops to develop their knowledge of the Holocaust and provide practical approaches to teaching about it.

One participant, Roisin Daly, a History and RE teacher at Harris Academy in Morden, commented, "This course had three major successes. Firstly, it enhanced my subject knowledge with informative speakers. Secondly, it questioned traditional narratives and focused on the complexities of the Holocaust and other genocides. Finally, it allowed space for both questions and reflections which are key to genuine understanding."

Teacher professional development is the focus of another AJR-funded programme, Vision Schools Scotland, launched in 2018 by the University of the West of Scotland to create a network of primary and secondary schools in Scotland that serve as models of Holocaust education.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, 15 schools were accredited as *Vision Schools*. Teachers from those schools took part in a series of workshops aimed at improving their historical knowledge and teaching practice. They also forged relationships with other local schools to disseminate their learning and encourage other schools to take steps towards *Vision Schools* accreditation.

In addition to increasing teachers' access to adequate specialist training to teach about the Holocaust, the AJR has also awarded grants to several institutions that deliver educational workshops directly to students.

The Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre at the University of Huddersfield opened in 2018 and is now expanding its offering, with a specific focus on reaching disadvantaged communities across the North of England. The AJR awarded the Centre a three-year grant to help reach out to 15,000 new students and adult learners.

In London, the Jewish Museum was also awarded a three-year grant. The museum offers six different Holocaust workshops for secondary schools and two workshops for primary schools. With the AJR's support it can deliver 110 workshops each year, to over 6,000 students.

The disruptions caused by Covid-19 have of course negatively impacted many institutions' ability to deliver these educational programmes, but the AJR is collaborating with its grant-receiving institutions to help them adapt their programmes where necessary.

One such programme is the National Holocaust Centre and Museum's *Virtual Journey*, updating the museum's popular Kindertransport-focused exhibition for the digital age. The AJR's support of this project has enabled the creation of an app for tablets and smartphones which follows a young German-Jewish boy, Leo, as he experiences the rise of anti-Jewish persecution before eventually fleeing to Britain on a Kindertransport. Originally envisaged as a digital resource to be incorporated into classroom learning, the app is now available to the public and the Centre has produced guidelines for using it as a tool for remote home-based learning.

"The AJR sees our role as being more than just a funder," AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman commented. "Through the partnerships that we develop, we are helping to facilitate the exchange of expertise in teaching and learning about the Holocaust. We help formulate and share best practice within the UK; we share the best ideas from the UK for the benefit of our counterparts abroad; and we encourage our funding partners to cooperate with each other in order to improve knowledge and understanding about the Holocaust across our society."

Alex Maws
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Much more than a family historian

One of the most exciting things to emerge from the Coronavirus crisis has been the rise of interviews on social media, especially Zoom. Several Jewish organisations have led the way, and last month I interviewed the acclaimed writer, Thomas Harding, online, for the AJR.

We talked about his two best-known books: *Hanns and Rudolf* (2013), about his great-uncle's search for Rudolf Höss, the Kommandant of Auschwitz; and *The House by the Lake* (2015), the story of his family's summer house near Berlin. Sadly, we ran out of time before we could discuss *Legacy* (2019), about the Jewish family behind Joe Lyons, a hugely popular British institution for almost a century.

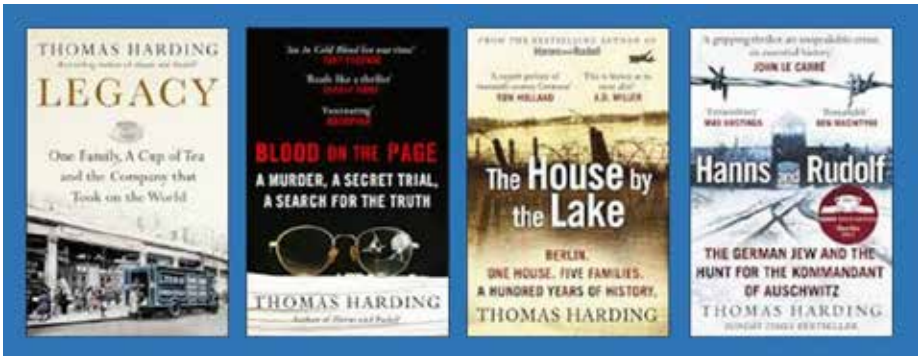
The first two of these books are about Harding's family, German Jews who managed to escape from Nazi Germany in the 1930s. *Hanns and Rudolf* moves between the story of Hanns Alexander, who fled from Nazi Germany and joined the British army when war broke out. Towards the end of the war Hanns became a war crimes investigator. "Rudolf" is Rudolf Höss, a Nazi war criminal who went into hiding towards the end of the war. Harding talked about what had most disturbed him about the story of Höss, his encounter with the Kommandant's daughter who told him what a loving father Höss was. Harding struggled to reconcile her account with what he knew about Höss's sadistic rule at Auschwitz.

The House by the Lake is the story of a house occupied by five families over a century, including Harding's own family. It is a deeply moving story, brilliantly told, but what is especially interesting is how the wooden house by the lake becomes a symbol of 20th century Germany, from the rise of Nazism and the Terror of the Red Army in 1945 to denazification in post-war Germany and life in East Germany.

It also tells the story of Harding's own family, affluent cosmopolitan German Jews, who left Germany with next to nothing and came to Britain where they rebuilt their lives. It is a story of silence and family myths. The older members of his family didn't buy German cars or washing machines, they never returned to Germany and never even spoke about Germany. "It was a closed chapter," he writes.

Stephen Poliakoff's brilliant BBC drama, *Perfect Strangers*, describes the mysteries behind a Jewish family. One of the most fascinating figures is Stephen, played by Anton Lesser, who has become the family historian. Many families have one person who becomes the custodian of the family's story. Thomas Harding became his family's historian. On his father's side they were German Jewish refugees, on his mother's side they helped found Joe Lyons, the epitome of modern Englishness.

Harding is a master of interweaving the story of his Jewish refugee family with the larger history of modern Germany (and then in *Legacy* with the history of modern Britain). The books are full of big names and events from Dr Alexander's famous patients in interwar Berlin to famous Nazis.




Thomas Harding

But throughout these books there is a strong sense of the experience of refugees. For example, how much harder it was for the older generation to cope with displacement, learning a new language, trying to find their bearings in a new culture, whereas the younger members of the family learned English, joined the army, had a good war. How many families did not escape to the same place at the same time, but left Germany piecemeal, at different times and by different routes.

Even his name shows how complicated his family story is, bound up with questions of identity. His branch of the family was called Hirschowitz until they anglicised their name to Harding. Thomas and his cousin James, who used to edit *The Times* and then became Director of BBC News, could hardly be more English, both educated at public school and Cambridge. But we also talked about how (and why) Thomas "applied for the restoration of our [German] citizenship taken by the National Socialists in the 1930s."

Legacy appears in paperback this month and a new version of *The House By the Lake*, adapted as a picture book for children, will come out in September. Meanwhile my interview with Thomas Harding is available to watch on AJR's YouTube channel.

David Herman

LETTER FROM ISRAEL BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON

HANGING OUT WTH HUBBY

In Israel we were just beginning to feel the easing of the strict lockdown rules before they were tightened up again. At the recent very low-key Independence Day celebrations one of the individuals honoured with lighting one of the twelve flames which traditionally mark the opening of the day's events declared how much she missed being able to see, hug and kiss her grandchildren. That must have triggered something in the national psyche, as not long afterwards the Prime Minister announced – as part of the easing of restrictions – that grandchildren will henceforth be able to visit their grandparents, though still keeping a safe distance. I doubt that many national leaders have included that particular facet of family life in their official announcements about relaxing coronavirus restrictions.

But in the interim, most of the population has had to tread a long and lonely road, staying as far away as possible from normal human contact. In other words, couples have been suddenly thrown back into one another's company, after having become accustomed to a life of activity, whether together or individually, and the freedom to come and go more or less as and when they chose.

In my own case, blessed with a considerate mate and a spacious house, this has not proved to be a hardship. But this has not been the case for everyone. Families with small children in cramped flats have experienced great difficulties, and I don't envy anyone in that situation.

Single people have also had to come to grips with even greater isolation – and loneliness – than before. This was brought home to me in a recent Zoom meeting of the group of Jerusalem residents who meet once a fortnight to converse in German, under the auspices of the association of former residents of Central Europe.

The fact that most of these – mainly retired – individuals could even contemplate a Zoom meeting is no small achievement in itself. It's a sign of modern times that by now most people can cope with this aspect of technology. The meeting was initiated by one of the members (one of the few men), but only after over a month of lockdown. By contrast, the German language class I attend here in Mevasseret Zion started Zoom meetings almost as soon as the lockdown began – largely due to our energetic young teacher, who will stop at nothing to continue teaching her mature pupils.

In the Zoom meeting of the Jerusalem group each participant gave a brief account of how they had been spending the previous weeks. To my surprise, almost everyone had found the period positive, on the individual level and as a couple, finding that they enjoyed one another's company and benefited from having time to relax, read, write, garden, listen to music or watch TV and films together. Only one woman who lives on her own complained that she found the period difficult and longed to resume attending concerts, lectures and other cultural events. I also miss concerts, but there's no shortage of music on the radio, YouTube and TV.

This is no scientific study, but it seems only natural that people who have lived alongside one another for many years will have settled into some kind of *modus vivendi*, continuing to live in harmony and, even if circumstances change, will manage somehow to adapt and benefit.

On a personal level, this quiet period has enabled me to concentrate on my various writing projects, and so I have managed to publish another novel (*'Friends, Neighbours, Traitors'*) on Amazon. Hubby has been similarly engaged and has completed another learned article about the painter Caravaggio. Since his background is in the exact sciences it amazes me that he has made this switch to art history, becoming something of an expert in this field. We've even got used to being without any offspring for Friday night dinner.

Provided we remain in reasonably good health, we will probably be able one day to look back at this period and see that it had benefits as well as drawbacks.

A LITTLE LIGHT RELIEF

(courtesy of Tony Hallgarten of London NW1)

HAIKU-SCHMEIKU

What would Solomon have done
If each had said "Give
Him to the other one"?

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.

HUNGARY'S HORTHY IN WW2

Very recently the grandson of Horthy apologised for the Holocaust. The grandson had a close relationship with his grandfather, as his father had died when he was two years old. According to him, Horthy did not know how to deal with Hitler and did not realise till very late what was happening to the Jews.

His apology is a sincere gesture; he says no reaction is expected by him. In that he will be disappointed of course. As in most countries, there is no shortage of Holocaust deniers and also of people who try to "reinterpret" history.

Janos Fisher, Bushey

GOOD, CLEAN FUN

The refugee clientele of the Cosmo restaurant in Swiss Cottage used to mock each other about the difference between German "*Ordnung*" and Austrian "*Schlamperei*" (sloppiness). Now Victor Ross (*High Life, Low Life*, June) has the chutzpah to contrast alleged differences between "Continental" and English attitudes to cleanliness. As I am constantly reminded by my English wife ("PUT IT AWAY, PLEASE!") I have not rid myself of the *Schlampigkeit* (roughly translated as slovenliness) that I brought to England from Austria 80+ years ago. My son, taught by his English mother, irons seven shirts every Sunday night, while his father is content with non-iron shirts. My wife neatly folds her underwear, while I dump mine into a drawer in a heap, straight from the line or the dryer.

John Farago, Deal, Kent

BOY 30529

Following D.H. Dobson's letter (June) I too recommend reading *Boy 30529* by Felix Weinberg, FRS. It is the memory of a real young Auschwitz prisoner – not the story of two imaginary boys.

Weinberg & I met through the *AJR Journal* (a good meeting place for those with journeys in common) when Felix wondered whether it was a coincidence that the first Auschwitz transport (which left Theresienstadt with 5,000 inmates on 6 September 1943) was murdered exactly six months after arrival; or if the date was pre-planned?

I explained that Birkenau 'Family Camp' had been established to mislead the Swiss Red Cross that transports were not being taken to Auschwitz merely to be murdered. The Swiss Red Cross delegate (Dr. Rossel) swallowed everything the SS told him, sending a glowing, but completely false, report to the German Foreign Office. From then onwards, there was no need to pretend. The 3,732 surviving Jews from the original 5,000, were all gassed on the night of 8 March 1944. It was just a coincidence that it was exactly six months since they'd arrived.

Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk

AMADEUS STRING QUARTET

In response to your article about the Amadeus Quartet (June) Mary Brainin Huttrer asked about people who attended a concert at the Wigmore Hall.

I remember going with, I believe, the sister of Norbert (or one of the others) to a concert in aid of a Jewish Charity. The two of us sat on high chairs in the Artists' Room and looked through a gap in the door to watch and listen to the Quartet playing. After the concert the musicians came into the Artists' Room along with the lady organising the concert, who shook my hand and said "You played very well". Happy memories!

Gerald Hellman, London NW9

HELPING OTHERS

In these difficult times it is easy to feel isolated. But the online talks organised by the AJR have been fantastic, very well organised and extremely interesting. I have thoroughly enjoyed the book talks and other events.

Another charity doing incredible work is Barnet Refugee Service, which works with individuals and agencies to improve the quality of life and promote the physical, social and mental wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers who live, work or study in the area. In particular it provides online tuition in English and Maths to school-aged children to increase their opportunity to succeed at school and to fully integrate into wider society.

I tutor three delightful children and it is a most rewarding experience that brightens up my day in these difficult times. But the service urgently needs more volunteers – please contact **farida@b-r-s.org.uk** if you would like to help.

Janet Leifer, London N12

LIVES DISRUPTED

I was supposed to go to Poland in September for the first time just after my 70th birthday, to see my friend Adrian, aged 60 (a NHS staff nurse) compete in the World Masters Judo Championships in Krakow: this has been cancelled and also our flights.

We were going to visit Auschwitz where my father Fiszel was imprisoned for nearly two years. My hotel was near the railway station in Krakow which would have made this trip even more poignant.

At the end of August I was going to repeat my Barmitzvah Haftarah in the Southend & Westcliff Hebrew Congregation Synagogue (where we used to have our AJR meetings) and have a large kiddush to celebrate my 70th; It has now been put on hold!

Larry Lisner, Westcliff on Sea

NO SUCH THING AS SOCIETY?

Greg Lubinsky in his letter (July) tried to make out that Mrs. Thatcher was a woman who cared for the people. Yet one of her first memorable acts in government was to stop free milk for children in schools.

In an interview published by *The Spectator* she criticised citizens who, unable to cope with some of their problems, were looking for help from

the government, e.g. "I am homeless. The government must house me". Well, how else should homeless people be housed? Help from charities has never been sufficient. The government has a responsibility for the peoples' welfare. All that Mrs. Thatcher did in that interview was replace the word 'society' by a 'living tapestry of people.' She left the poor and the homeless without hope.
Eric Sanders, London SW16

NO POLITICS HERE PLEASE

I am a newly joined member of AJR and was very sorry to see modern day politics with nothing to do with either Israel or Judaism appear in the *AJR Journal*, specifically in the Letter from Israel (July) where Dorothea Shefer-Vanson criticised Dominic Cummings' decision to take a cross-country drive during lockdown, despite the fact that his reasons for doing so had been clearly explained. I did not join AJR to read left wing trope.
Deborah Wrapson, Hull
Note from Editor: The views expressed within the AJR Journal are not necessarily those of the AJR.

REVISITING EMOTIONAL VISITS

David Clark's article (July) reminded me of my own visits to Berlin. During one visit in 2000 I met Leonore Meyer, who was working in the not yet opened Jewish Museum, and I agreed to donate some artefacts to the Museum. I returned the following year, on 9 September 2001, and was in my old school when news broke of what is now called 9/11 and all public buildings were closed. Having brought a large, full suitcase I telephoned Leonore and she assured me that we could come in the next day. I gave her my artefacts and she escorted us for a tour of the partially kitted-out Museum; we thus became its first ever visitors.
Rudi Leavor BEM, Bradford

REMEMBERING….OR NOT?

I was so interested to read Eve Kugler's letter (July). My experience was similar: I have no memory at all of my parents, nor of the Jewish friend and the sister of my grandmother who met my train at the Hook of Holland and saw me onto the boat. The next thing I remember is Liverpool St station. It was only when I visited Holland after the war that I was given the photo of this event!
Vera Schaufeld, Wembley

FLEEING FROM FRANCE

I was very interested to read your lead article (July), as my late mother, sister and I were fortunate to flee from France to England in February 1942, through Spain and Portugal.

Although we were German refugees (so to speak "stateless") my sister and I were sheltered during the occupation of France in the safe houses set up by the Jewish French Scouts Movement which was very active at that period. Their history is recorded in two books written by Alain Michel, one of which is *Les Eclaireurs Israelites de France Pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. He describes the names of safe houses and conditions of the places to which I was evacuated. I have only heard of one other person who was evacuated as a Jewish scout in one of the boys' houses, who fled through Spain and Portugal, as we did.

The record of saving Jewish souls by the French Jewish Scouts is quite remarkable.
Isa Brysh, Bournemouth

Walter Benjamin was guided by the "Fluchthelfer" Lisa Fittko across the Pyrenees into Spain, near to Portbou. One can find the most touching description of this escape in Fittko's Book *Mein Weg über die Pyrenäen.* On learning that, for lack of a valid French exit visa (a recently imposed requirement) he would be returned to France the next day, he committed suicide.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry had left for the USA after being demobilised from the French Air Force. He returned in 1944 to join the Free French Air Force. Sadly, he disappeared on a reconnaissance flight from Corsica on 31 July 1944.
Shulamit Spain, Scotland

Shortly before WW2 two of my relatives, wanted by the Gestapo, fled to France. In 1940 they managed to get to Marseilles and were fortunate to be helped by Varian Fry. Joining the group of refugees, they crossed the Pyrenees to Spain and later found freedom in the USA.

My aunt, Käte Wolff, the artist and children's books illustrator, left Berlin for Paris shortly after 1933. Wisely, she adopted the name Lalouve. As a non-practising Jew and fluent French speaker she integrated easily into French society. The publisher Flammarion commissioned her to make children's books which she did almost until the end of the war. To our surprise, when war ended, Käte left her beloved Paris for New York. It was only while visiting us in London that we heard her account of living free under Nazi occupation. Witnessing the horrors and denunciations which cost the lives of so many Jews who were living in hiding made her vow never to return to France. She died in New York in 1968.
Walter Wolff, London NW2

Your article reminded me of the fate of Ernst von der Porten and his wife, my cousin Frieda (Friedl) née Alexander.

Ernst, a Hamburg clinician, was a pioneer in the recognition of anaesthesia as an independent speciality in Germany.

He and Frieda fled first to Switzerland and then to Belgium. On the occupation of France, Belgium and the Netherlands they were deported to France. They both committed suicide in Perpignan on 13 December 1940.

The 'Ernst von der Porten Medal' is now awarded annually to exceptional personalities by the alliance of German anaesthetists.
Anthony Portner, Chertsey

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Althea McNish in 2018 with one of the many fabrics she has designed

During lockdown other things have begun to dominate our consciousness. The Black Lives Matter movement, for instance, and the Windrush scandal, in which hundreds of Caribbean immigrants were falsely accused of illegal status, some of them even being deported.

And so I would like to dedicate this column to a dear friend, **Althea McNish**, acclaimed as Britain's first and most distinguished black textile designer. The Trinidad-born member of the Windrush generation, who died in April at the age of 95, brought all the vibrancy of the Caribbean to her work. She claimed to see everything through a tropical eye, which is certainly reflected in the brilliance of her vermilions, cobalt blues, lush greens – and her shapes – sometimes floral abstracts, sometimes geometric – but always with an underlying hint of the West Indies. Here you find a tropical forest, there a salamander, a cat or a fish.

But the true magic of McNish's work is that she introduced a sense of optimism into the monochromatic post-war period. She helped establish the Caribbean Artist's Movement, working with contemporary artists and poets. Unafraid of colour, McNish had a technical eye and experimented with different materials. She had an eclectic view of her own work. A favourite saying was 'what will come will come'.

Another Althea McNish fabric design

McNish's canvases dramatically reflected her past. She lures us into her vision with panache – whether in fabrics or paintings – all of which reflect the kind of sunshine and light that contrasted with the life she entered when she arrived in 1951 with her mother, to join her father. Persuaded by her tutor, the sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi at the Central School of Art and Design, to focus on textiles, she became the first black student to gain a textile degree from the Royal College of Art.

Her first major client was Liberty's and her first furnishing fabric was *Hibiscus,* featuring the plant's brilliant red flowers against a black background, and then the tropical *Cebollas*. Her work appeared in *Vogue* and *Harpers Bazaar* and her dress fabrics supplied French fashion houses such as Dior. Commissions followed from Jacqmar, Heal's and Conran. Always retaining her West Indies' links, Althea's fabrics formed part of Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe on her royal tour of the Caribbean in 1966.

One of her first designs to go into production, *Golden Harvest* in 1957, was a screen print on cotton satin, later manufactured by Hull Traders. It owed its inspiration to the Essex wheatfields, which she said reminded her of Trinidad's sugar cane plantations – an odd memory, you might think, considering their links to slavery. But no such links intruded upon the upbeat work of an artist who was as cheerful in her personality as she was in her art. Through Hull Traders her pop designs made her part of the Swinging Sixties. She also designed murals with pineapples and pomegranates for restaurants on the ship *SS Oriana*, and a space age wallpaper, *Zircon*, in orange, mustard and yellow. Apart from her own work, Althea judged design competitions and was vice president and fellow of the Chartered Society of Designers.

Althea married the Jewish jewellery designer John Weiss and they exhibited internationally. Their home itself was a riot of colour, cats and Caribbean cooking – John was the cook. She exhibited with the Trinidad and Tobago Artists at the Commonwealth Institute, at the Victoria & Albert Museum, at Manchester's Whitworth Art Gallery and, as recently as last year, at Somerset House. In 2018 she appeared on the BBC4 documentary *Whoever Heard of a Black Artist?*

You can view Althea's work in the V&A, the Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture in London, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum in New York. It can also be widely found online.

Human Rights – our legacy

As the United Nations publicly spearheads efforts to address systemic racism against people of African descent, what does this mean for Jewish people? Mia Hasenson-Gross is the Executive Director of *René Cassin*, the Jewish voice for human rights, which works to promote and protect human rights drawing on Jewish values and Jewish experience.

The term Human Rights can mean many different things, depending on where you are in the world

To many the word 'Holocaust' evokes memories of loss and devastation, heroism, and resistance. It also carries the responsibility to teach others of the dangers of inhumanity. In my eyes it is more than a lesson, it is a legacy.

Human rights are a set of norms, underpinned by values such as freedom, fairness, and justice. They are designed to frame the relationship between the state and the individual.

The concept of individual rights – constraining how rulers could treat their subjects – developed slowly from Magna Carta (1215) through the American Bill of Rights and the French Revolution, towards 19th century laws designed to mitigate human suffering in wartime.

But none of these developments could prevent the atrocities of the Holocaust. The Nazis gradually and systematically eroded fundamental principles, a process that culminated in the torture and murder of six million Jews. A classic pyramid of hate.

The enormity of the Holocaust acted as an ethical 'wake-up call'. The first response was the Nuremberg Trials – international military tribunals prosecuting prominent Nazis who planned and carried out the Holocaust and other war crimes. Described as "the most significant tribute power has ever paid to reason", the trials introduced the principles of 'crimes against humanity' and 'genocide'.

Some incredible 'Jewish human rights heroes' emerged. First was Polish-born Hersch Lauterpacht, a British prosecutor, who played a vital role in defining 'crimes against humanity'. This concept was ground-breaking in placing individual rights and responsibilities centre-stage, holding individual perpetrators to account, and recognising victims as individuals whose rights were denied. Amongst those convicted of crimes against humanity were Hermann Goering and Hans Frank, who was head of the General Government. Crimes against humanity have since been prosecuted at international tribunals concerning Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and when charges of apartheid, rape and sexual violence are heard.

The second key individual was Raphael Lemkin. Best known for coining the term 'genocide', Lemkin advocated that the way to prevent mass killings was to protect the group to which individuals belong. Although the concept of genocide was not used at Nuremberg trials, Lemkin subsequently led the United Nations to adopt the Genocide Convention in 1948. The Convention has since been used to identify genocides in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and recently of the Rohingyas in Burma.

But it was French-Jewish Monsieur René Cassin who helped formulate the language of human rights we use today. With the Nazis defeated, the world vowed that 'never again' would the horrors of the Holocaust be allowed. As a member of the newly established international human rights committee chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, Cassin co-drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Here was the first expression of a global commitment to human rights – a set of minimum standards that would ensure "inherent dignity…. of all members of the human family" as the foundation of justice and peace, an ethical vision for a new world based on social progress.

Cassin always maintained that "Human rights are an integral part of the faith and tradition of Judaism. The belief that man was created in the divine image, that the human family is one, and that every person is obliged to deal justly with every other person are basic sources of the Jewish commitment to human rights."

Though not legally binding, the Declaration inspired many subsequent human rights documents, including various UN treaties, the European Convention on Human Rights and the UK's Human Rights Act.

The Holocaust will always be remembered as one of the lowest points of humanity. But it is also the point from which the universal lesson of 'never again' emerged, and where Cassin, Lauterpacht and Lemkin helped establish the principles that underpin the international community's shared commitment to freedom, justice, equality and peace.

For many, the resulting human rights framework defines who we are and how we live our lives. It is our responsibility to remember this legacy to ensure that the inequality and hate that led to the Holocaust is never repeated.

LIVES IN FOCUS
Rabbi Harry Jacobi

This summer the AJR's Refugee Voices team made a new 'Lives in Focus' short film on the late Rabbi Harry Jacobi MBE, one of the major figures in British Liberal Judaism. Dr Bea Lewkowicz, who directs the Refugee Voices project, shares some of the highlights here.

I conducted the interview with Rabbi Harry Jacobi (born Heinz Martin Hirschberg 1925 in Berlin) four years ago. I remember it very clearly, as Rabbi Jacobi's humility and wisdom made a great impression on me.

I was privileged to listen to his life story and learn about his childhood in Berlin and Auerbach, his Barmitzvah in October 1938, his escape to Amsterdam, and his adventurous journey to Britain on the *SS Bodegraven* in May 1940. I learnt about the Dutch woman called Truus Wijsmuller, whose incredible efforts made it possible for the last Kindertransport from Europe to board this ship and leave Holland just before the Dutch government surrendered (Wijsmuller was made a 'Righteous Among the Nations' by Yad Vashem in 1966).

During our interview Rabbi Jacobi spoke about his life as a child refugee in a hostel in Manchester, about joining the Jewish Brigade, and settling in Amsterdam after the war. He also told me about his rabbinical journey, set in motion by meeting Leo Baeck and Lily Montagu in Holland. He beautifully ended the interview by urging families to be close to each other, citing from the prophets 'Elijah will come and turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents'. It's a message that seems particularly poignant this summer, as we are physically separated from family, friends and colleagues, yet can still turn our hearts to each other and learn from one another.

In this excerpt Rabbi Jacobi recounts his Kindertransport journey.

Please tell us about leaving Berlin.

Well I only took very necessary things, you know, with me. The German children were only allowed to take 10 Marks out, and a little bit of refreshments for the journey. All I knew was that I was going to Holland but I had no idea where. And leaving my mother was traumatic because she cried a lot, of course. She probably knew we may not see each other again. We said goodye at Bahnhof Zoo.

The journey itself was uneventful. We were surprised when we landed in a camp just at the harbour of Rotterdam. It felt like a camp because there was *Stacheldraht* [barbed wire] there. We saw ships go by and I remember a great deal of uncertainty. We didn't get much to eat and, and we were there, I think, at least two weeks.

The Amsterdam refugee committee was able to find accommodation for us in the old orphanage in the Kalverstraat, the main shopping street in Amsterdam. It was no longer needed as an orphanage. And then my uncle, together with the leaders from the refugee committee, enrolled me as a pupil in the ORT *Vakschool* [vocational school], as it was called. The ORT schools were the organisation for rehabilitation and training. So in the summer of 1939 I was enrolled in the ORT school. Among many trades offered in ORT, was *banketbakker*, which is to learn how to bake as a confectionery baker. So I went to the ORT school every morning at eight o'clock.

Can you describe the orphanage in Amsterdam?

Well it's a very old building now which is now the Museum of the History of Amsterdam. It's quite well known. We slept in dormitories, separate from the girls on another floor. The food was very scarce, but we had outings to the swimming pool and to the synagogue. The nicest outings I had, as one of the older children there, were with the husband of Truus Wijsmuller. Her husband was a banker in Amsterdam, did quite well. And he took us on many excursions, he also took us to their home for tea. The Wijsmullers did have children, so they were close to the children in the orphanage. Every weekend I could go and see my grandparents and uncle and aunt and cousin. The last Sunday in Amsterdam it was 'Moederdag', Mother's Day, and the last thing I did, in May 1940, just after the invasion, as a *banketbakker*, I made a cake and inscribed 'voor Moeder' (for mother) which I was able to send to aunt Eva and my grandparents. So that's the last gift of remembrance my family in Amsterdam had of me until after the war.

Please tell us what happened to you after the German invasion of Holland. What are your recollections?

Well I left to go to the ORT school in the morning and the streets were empty and I was told, 'the Germans have invaded us'. Amsterdam was lucky, Rotterdam was completely destroyed. Amsterdam had just two bombs. So I went back to the orphanage. After five days we were

Harry (right) with his cousin Werner, both aged about eight. Werner was deported to Riga during the war and died.

Harry Jacobi in the Jewish Brigade in 1945

Rabbi Harry Jacobi with one of his old family photos

waiting to find out what was going to happen to us. We were very anxious to hear reports of the German invasion.

We heard that the Dutch were completely unprepared. So the Germans invaded quickly and on 15 May we were told, 'Take your pyjamas and your best clothes, we need to leave now'. On the Lijnbaansgracht in Amsterdam there were three buses ready and we boarded them. And Truus Wijsmuller was there to see us and took us to the port of Ljmuiden on the North Sea. And she persuaded the captain of a cargo boat called the *SS Bodegraven* to take us.

Some children remember that Truus left her handbag on board [to make the children feel safer] but then went back. Although she had an opportunity to go to England with us, she refused to leave [she wanted to carry on her rescue work in Holland].

My last impressions of leaving are of British soldiers landing to fight the Germans and the smoking harbour of Amsterdam. The Dutch Shell company had big oil tanks there which the Dutch set on fire, because they did not want the oil to go into the German hands. So the smoke of these big oil refineries saw us off as we left. Soon after we left the harbour, some German fighter planes came over. Luckily they had no bombs left. They would have gladly bombed us and sunk the ship. So I dived on the rescue boats and I wasn't hit by the machine gun fire, fortunately. Now the journey was traumatic because we did not know what was going to happen and where we were going. The Dutch crew was willing to give us some food but all the orthodox people on the boat said, 'no, it is not kosher'. So from leaving Holland until landing in Liverpool we had only dog biscuits and water.

Another famous side story was about the family Goutstikker. Apparently this man Jacques Goutstikker was a very famous art collector, with a big art collection in Herengracht in Amsterdam. I didn't know anything about him. Except we saw an American Lincoln car arriving. He and his wife stepped out and went on board. And then we were told later on that, because the passengers were in the cargo down there, it was very hot and you open the door thinking you get fresh air. Instead he fell down the bottom of the boat and broke his neck. And a sailor fell down with him but he was saved. When we landed in Falmouth the following morning they had to arrange a burial. So his coffin was taken from the boat to Falmouth, was buried there. In Falmouth we waited three days. And finally the British government must have given permission for us to land, we had no fuel and no food when we finally landed at Liverpool.

What were your first impressions landing in Liverpool?

The sense of freedom and friendliness. The police asked me 'do you speak English?'. We had a very friendly welcome and the people of Wigan were very hospitable. They invited us for tea, let us go to the cinema. I don't remember who organised it all. The Manchester refugee committee must have been informed soon after we landed, that weekend. So they quickly bought some accommodation. A girls' hostel and a boys' hostel in Manchester and accommodated us. I was just fifteen, and the school leaving age was fourteen. If I had been a year older I would have been interned. We were given the title of 'friendly enemy alien'. But I got permission to work and got a job as an errand boy, in a shop. Not knowing very much English but willing to work. Then I got myself a job as a car mechanic in a garage. And they put me in charge of the store, as it was also an ammunition factory, part of it was taken over so that was regarded as a 'reserved occupation' which stopped me from being taken to the army. As soon as I was eighteen I volunteered to join the Royal Air Force and passed the examination. The War Office refused to take me as they heard my parents were still in Berlin. So after I was refused I volunteered for the Jewish Brigade.

Watch the entire short film about Rabbi Jacobi at www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/lives-in-focus

Making connections

"…Even though the war did not start because of the Jewish people, the story is true and it happened to a lot of Jewish families. With all our love, your Oma & Opa, March 1996". This note is written to me and my brother on the inside cover of a copy of *A Candle in the Dark* by Adèle Geras.

Melitta (left) and Lisl. both as a teenager and as a 7 year old Kindertransportee (inset)

It was from this moment that I felt compelled to find out what had happened to my ancestors. Where did they end up? What happened? How did this happen? Now, twenty-four years later, I am just putting together the pieces of the puzzle of my Viennese, State Opera ballet dancing grandmother.

Although my grandparents have now sadly passed away, it really is my Oma's doing that I have felt some sort of connection with Vienna since this time, visiting as a child and adult with family and friends. Perhaps this is where my interest for learning the language developed, finding out about the culture and wanting to be able to converse with my grandparents in German (not only English!)

At the start of lockdown I found myself, once again, in the world of ancestry research, going back and forth through different websites and looking through old photos. Time to stop searching and send some emails. So, I contacted the Wiener Holocaust Library and this is how my lockdown started and the reason I won't ever forget it.

"I'm searching for a relative of my grandmother, who came over on the Kindertransport. Can you help?" I wrote. "Time is of the essence as I would have thought Lisl Evelyne would now be quite elderly, if she would even still be alive… All we know is her name and that she lived in Birmingham."

The Wiener Holocaust Library kindly directed me to World Jewish Relief who assisted me by sending some documents over of a little girl with this name – who looked similar to one photo I have, stored away in that special and sacred family album – confirming the dates she came over. I must admit I wasn't hopeful especially as, in my experience, photos of people from the past all look the same. How could I even be sure I was searching for the correct person?!

My search continued and the AJR directed me to an online database. So, my detective skills came in handy, who knew?! I think I could be the next James Bond! I trawled through hundreds of entries on the Kindertransport survey (compiled some 10 years ago) of who came over to the UK… and Bingo! Entry 300 and something….. place of birth: Vienna – match…. D.O.B – match…. Birmingham – match…

"I'm sorry to tell you that Lisl passed away in 2014. But she was married, perhaps this might help you continue your search". If I'm honest, I felt a sinking feeling. Defeat, how could I try and do my part in putting all of those atrocities from the past right? Make amends, make sure that my Viennese ancestors are not forgotten, how? I'm pleased to say, I got over this quite quickly and carried on.

A new search under Lisl's married name and to my surprise her name and her husband's name came up on an electoral register. I decided to try my luck with a quick Facebook search and found someone living at this same address. I explained who I was and who I had been looking for.

Within a couple of minutes, I got this reply: "Lisl was my mum". At this point I nearly fell off my chair. Since then, we have met – virtually of course – and have discovered other relatives from the Maiman family that we both somehow knew (as well as other 'new' Maiman descendants, but I'll save that for another time). We had just never known of each other for over 80 years!

The only shame is that Melitta née Maiman (my grandmother) and Lisl Evelyne née Lichtenstein never met. There was an age gap of more than 10 years but they lived parallel lives in Austria and it seems we did too here in London. For all we know we could have brushed past each other in the street.

The most amazing part is that we had each contacted the same organisations days apart during lockdown – incredible! There is so much more to tell and will be even more once we get to all meet in person! But for now, this is where the story begins…

Joel Hockman

Writing *The Young Survivors*

Debra Barnes, the AJR's *My Story* Project Lead Co-ordinator, has just had her debut novel published. The story was inspired by her own mother's experiences in the Holocaust. Here she writes about her own experience of writing the novel.

Denise Holstein (far right) at the orphanage in Louveciennes with her charges shortly before they were deported. In the middle of the back row are Annette (2nd from left) and Paulette to her right

It wasn't that my mother Paulette never spoke about her early years, she simply didn't remember. Growing up I was told of her twin sister Annette who had died at Auschwitz, along with their brother Nathan. I knew I only had one set of grandparents because the other had died in the Holocaust. There was little else to tell. Mum was born in 1938, so had been a young child throughout the war. Her only memory was of taking Holy Communion with the nuns who gave her refuge.

As a family we rarely spoke about the Holocaust – I suppose it was easier for everyone that way. It was an uncomfortable subject which was avoided.

Then, in 2006, Mum was reunited with Denise Holstein. At the age of 16, Denise was put in charge of the youngest children at a Jewish orphanage in Louveciennes, Paris. Just weeks before the allies arrived into the capital, the SS emptied all Jewish children's homes. Most of the children were transported to Auschwitz. Denise accompanied her group of charges, including Annette and Nathan. The children were sent directly to the gas chambers while Denise was selected for work. Miraculously, Mum was not taken. She was in hospital with measles. By the time the Gestapo went to arrest her, she was hidden in a convent, where she stayed safely until the end of the war.

At their reunion, Denise was able to tell Mum about life in the orphanage. It piqued my curiosity and I wanted to find out more. I now felt I had permission to do so, as if the meeting with Denise had opened a door which had been locked for many years. There was information available online, but it was a time-consuming process; one search could lead to hours lost on the internet, often not even connected to what I was looking for but always fascinating. I felt frustrated as there were never enough hours to get the answers I was looking for.

Mum died after a short illness in 2010. In 2013 I was offered redundancy and took some time for my research. I travelled to the south of France and met with Denise. I was reassured when she told me how the children in the orphanage had happily spent their days, unaware of what was going on around them. I connected with the Jewish community in Louveciennes who invited me to visit the orphanage. I went to the Shoah Memorial in Paris and to Metz where my mother was born.

I blogged about my research and was contacted by others with similar family stories. One man who had more than likely played with my mother when they were two years old. A woman whose mother had been in the same orphanage but managed to escape. Another whose father had been the director of the orphanage until he was ousted by the Nazis. We all seemed to benefit from meeting and sharing our experiences.

Inspired by what I learnt but frustrated at still having so many unanswered questions and blanks in the story, I decided to write a fictional novel, called *The Young Survivors*, following the fate of a French Jewish family during the Holocaust. I continued with my research but now focusing more widely on what happened in Nazi-occupied France. Thankfully it was less painful to write about fictional characters rather than my own family; if I hadn't done so I probably would have been in tears much of the time.

I was meticulous with my research and therefore delighted to receive an endorsement from Dr Toby Simpson of The Wiener Holocaust Library who said, "Throughout the book, readers are offered rich and detailed insights into the grave peril and struggle for survival that Jews faced in Vichy and Nazi-occupied France, which is still not a widely-understood aspect of the Holocaust."

When I look back, I am amazed at how my life has changed in the past decade. From someone almost afraid to learn about the Holocaust I have now written a novel on the subject and since 2017 I work for AJR running the *My Story* project, helping Holocaust refugees and survivors to write their own life stories.

To have a book published has always been a dream of mine but to have written about such an important subject which I hope will help educate others and leave a legacy, is something which makes me very proud.

***The Young Survivors* by Debra Barnes, was published on 23 July 2020 by Duckworth Books and is available from all good book shops.**

Leaving himself till last

On Tuesday 12 May an AJR commemorative plaque was unveiled at the British Embassy in Berlin in memory of consular officials who helped Jews escape Nazi Germany. This spurred Tommy Schweiger to tell his father's story.

My father, Dr Eric Schweiger, was born in Berlin on 17 July 1899. After earning a doctorate from Heidelberg University, he worked as a *Volkswirtschaftslehrer* for the German cartels. This roughly translates as an expert in 'people's commerce', encompassing general economics and various social issues. The unions used him to help analyse economic trends. As a well-connected man in the Jewish community and wider Berlin, he negotiated with the authorities for the passage of many Jews out of Germany prior to WW2.

The visas could only be granted by the British Embassy if affidavits were authorised ultimately by Adolf Eichmann and his office. Once an affidavit had been granted the British Embassy was then allowed to issue a visa for entry into Britain.

My father had weekly meetings with Eichmann, who was then head of the department responsible for Jewish affairs, especially for emigration, which the Nazis encouraged through violence and economic pressure. After war broke out their Jewish policy changed from emigration to extermination.

My father told me that Eichmann insisted on a weekly Saturday morning meeting, purposely to interrupt Shabbat.

My father already had visas for our family and consequently was in a position to emigrate quickly if needed. However that was never enough for him, so he used his connections within the Embassy to get regular updates and to arrange visas for fellow members of the Jewish community.

At 11am on 30 August 1939, after going to the British Embassy as usual, he was told that it was immediately shutting down as Britain was about to declare war on Germany. He phoned my mother and told her to meet him immediately at the main Bahnhof Zoo railway station to board a 3pm train. A suitcase was packed with some nappies (I was just one year old) and we left for the station. He had secured a one month visa for England, en route to Palestine.

One of the reasons we emigrated so late in the day, just before war broke out, was because of his unwavering commitment to use his contacts with the authorities to help others escape.

My old grandparents were unfortunately left behind. This was the last time my parents would see them. They died in Theresienstadt.

Our train travelled west through the night, with many checkpoints at which authorities would board the carriages and demand to see our papers. At some stops, my father told me, he decided it was better to hide rather than risk being thrown off for some minor legal violation.

Eventually the train arrived at Hook van Holland in the Netherlands. From there we boarded a ship to Harwich in England.

War was declared on 3 September 1939 which forced the British authorities to allow us to stay longer than four weeks. My father was however deemed an enemy alien and taken to the detention centre on the Isle of Man; he was there for three years.

My mother and I were allowed to stay in London for a year, until we moved to Lancaster. From there we went to Manchester where my father finally joined us and we were at last able to settle happily as a family.

My father continued his Zionist work by becoming a paid official for the JNF for many years.

After the war he was offered a post as an economic advisor in the first post-war German Adenauer government. But it was a matter of principle to him: he would never serve a country in which the blood of his family ran through the streets.

Dr Eric Schweiger at his desk in Neukölln, Berlin

My father was one of the many courageous people who devoted their efforts to persuading officials to issue visas in order to help Jews escape Nazi Germany.

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.

BRITISH EMBASSY IN VIENNA
Having recently learned of unofficial assistance given to Jews by British Embassy staff in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany, Peter Simpson is interested to know if anyone has knowledge of similar work undertaken by British Embassy staff in Vienna.
petersimpson613@aol.com

LISA & HILDE FLEISSIG of Bamberg
Lena Söder is researching the biographies of Lisa Fleissig (born 25 April 1917) and Hilde Fleissig (born 6 August 1918), former students at the *Eichendorff-Gymnasium* in Bamberg. Both emigrated to London in 1937. Lisa married Ernesto Steinberg and emigrated to Argentina, Hilde married Ernst Fein and emigrated to New York.
soeder.lena@googlemail.com

PETER ROLAND / ALFRED ROSENFELD
German journalist Iris Voellnagel is writing about Alfred Rosenfeld, who headed the Bombay Jewish Relief Association in 1933-1945. She would dearly like to make contact with his son, Peter Roland.
i.voellnagel@gmx.de

OLD BAILEY TRIAL OF SAWONIUK
Michael Anderson is researching pre-war and wartime events in Domachevo, a Jewish town 50km from Brest-Livotsk, near the River Bug, to support a book project about the only successful UK prosecution of a Nazi, Andrei Sawoniuk, at The Old Bailey in 1999. He would like to talk with anyone who has memories or materials on this town or nearby communities, or of Sawoniuk himself.
cloudhedge@yahoo.co.uk

HANNA & MICHEL BUCHWALD
Does anyone remember this brother and sister who were on a Kindertransport from Berlin in March, 1939? Hanna was 12, Michel 11. Michel's daughter, Cathy, would like to hear from anyone who knew them.
cathyhounsell@gouglemail.com

THANKING ALL VOLUNTEERS

Traditionally AJR's annual 'Celebration of Volunteers' has been held at such auspicious venues as the Jewish Museum Manchester and the House of Lords. But this year's guests didn't even need to leave their own kitchen or dining tables.

Just a few of our wonderful volunteers (including our Chairman and at least one Trustee) who took part in our annual thank you event

Despite the lack of a posh venue, over 90 guests joined in to hear Lord Eric Pickles and Robert ('Judge') Rinder voice their support for the AJR and our team of wonderful volunteers.

Lord Pickles spoke about the challenges he has faced managing his roles whilst in lockdown while Rob Rinder suggested that AJR might consider changing its name to 'FJR' or 'MJR' – 'Family' or 'Mishpocha' of Jewish Refugees – as the care and support our members receive is akin to what they might expect from their own families.

Fran Horwich, who co-ordinates the AJR's volunteers in the north of the UK, read out a poem she had written about the value that a volunteer's phone call can bring to an AJR member's day. As she read her poem, the title of which was *The view from my window*, volunteers could send in photos of their own lockdown view.

Michael Newman compered an interactive quiz with questions based on the AJR and volunteering. We were amazed to discover that three of our guests had a combined experience of AJR volunteering of almost 100 years.

Finally AJR's Chairman, Andrew Kaufman, thanked the volunteers, saying: "*This year my thank you is even more heartfelt than usual, as I am acutely aware of the additional support and care you have been giving our members during these challenging times. You have, quite literally, enabled us to maintain a critical lifeline with our members,*" before offering a virtual l'chaim to thank them for their support.

Here's hoping that at next year's celebration of volunteers the drinks will be available for everyone in person!

REVIEWS

CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH WOMEN IN BRITAIN, 1880-1940: LIVING WITH DIFFERENCE
by Anne Summers
Palgrave Macmillan

This book is a treat, even for those whose interests do not lie in denominational or women's history. Though it is an academic study, based on thorough archival research and a deep scholarly mastery of its subject, it is a pleasure to read. Above all, it opens up an entirely new perspective on the Jewish and Christian women who collaborated in the field of voluntary, charitable and philanthropic work between 1880 and 1940.

That period includes the organisational efforts to bring Jews from the Third Reich to safety in Britain. The first study of those rescue efforts that I read was entitled *Men of Vision*, by Amy Zahl Gottlieb. But, as Anne Summers points out, whereas men predominated among the members of the national committees concerned with rescue efforts, the local committees, where most of the work was done, were manned, as it were, by women. She consistently demonstrates the remarkable contribution made by women to the task of rescue, noting for example that saving the child victims of Nazi persecution was first suggested as early as autumn 1933 by Helen Bentwich, who usually figures as the wife of an eminent man, Sir Norman Bentwich.

Summers traces the interfaith cooperation between Jewish and Christian women, mostly from the higher social classes and of progressive convictions, back to the 1880s, when there appeared a Jewish women's organisation that sought to safeguard immigrant women from Eastern Europe against sexual exploitation. With growing confidence, Jewish women became involved in the 1890s in the campaign to free Captain Alfred Dreyfus, then in the openly political cause of women's suffrage; the Jewish League for Woman Suffrage was founded in 1912.

Summers shows how Anglo-Jewish women like Lily Montagu, daughter of Samuel Montagu (the banker and founder of the orthodox Federation of Synagogues), who became a great benefactor of the refugees from Nazi Germany, combined a commitment to gender equality with that to religious reform. Though she came from a devoutly orthodox background, Montagu championed the cause of progressive Judaism; the support that she gave to the refugees' principal religious foundation, the New Liberal Jewish Congregation (now Belsize Square Synagogue), was frequently acknowledged in *AJR Information*.

Central to Summers's book are the remarkable friendships that developed across the religious divide, and sometimes across the political divide, between Jewish and Christian women: Lily Montagu and Margaret Gladstone, who was to marry James Ramsay MacDonald of the radical Independent Labour Party; Netta Franklin, Lily's sister, and the educationalist Charlotte Mason; or Rebecca Sieff of the toweringly wealthy Marks family and Jennie Lee, wife of the left-wing firebrand Aneurin Bevan.

Summers demonstrates convincingly that in Britain pressure from the host community, whether in the form of outright antisemitism or of subtler demands to conform to British standards, was not the only form of social control to which Jewish women were subject; the patriarchy operating in their community heavily influenced the course of their everyday lives. Accordingly, Summers advances a more nuanced view of relations between the Jews and the native British than do those who treat those relations as almost exclusively determined by British antisemitism. Of the rescue efforts in the 1930s, she writes that they may have been disorganised, but that in Britain, 'the only country where non-Jews organised support locally for refugees', refugees did not starve or end up on the streets.
Anthony Grenville

THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF MR PRINS
Aletta Stevens
Brown Dog Books and The Self-Publishing Partnership

People say the greatest journeys are escapes and this book tells of a Dutch refugee who daringly fled in a fishing boat under cover of darkness. He settled in Bath where he later spearheaded a link to help hungry citizens in his native Alkmaar.

Eli Prins' family had lived in the famous cheese market town for generations where he was based as a poet, playwright and theatre producer. He used this work as a cover to travel to Germany and Austria to bring Jews and anti-Nazis to safety in the Netherlands. This covert voluntary mission made him a prime target for the Nazis. Once they invaded Holland he knew he was no longer safe. With enormous difficulty he and others joined Alfred Goudsmit – head of the famous de Bijenkorf department store – who chartered a small trawler to take them to safety in England.

Desperately overcrowded and narrowly escaping mines and overhead aircraft, they eventually landed in Lowestoft to a warm reception on 16 May 1940, just six days after the Dutch occupation. Before the war Eli's sister Rose had married an Englishman, Herbert Tobin, and had settled in London. Soon they were evacuated to Bath where Eli joined them. The city's population was swollen by evacuees, including large numbers of children plus employees of Government departments, although unfortunately Bath itself was devastatingly blitzed and this is graphically described.

The book also highlights Eli's many talents. He was involved in valuable war work, was a good linguist and familiar with the literary scene. A highlight was being invited to tea with the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina in exile here. Paramount was keeping in regular touch with family in Holland for whom life deteriorated rapidly. Rosette, Eli's mother, was no longer allowed to work in the public library and his elder brother Aron was forced to close his law practice. Discrimination escalated and

Alkmaar's Jewish residents were ordered en bloc to settle in Amsterdam. So Eli's parents left the house where they had lived for 28 years, never to return. They had to make do with a succession of cramped quarters in constant fear of deportation. Tragically they were transported to Sobibor where Aron soon followed.

Holland suffered a gruelling "Hunger Winter" just as hostilities ended, with great shortages of food and fuel. An ARP warden there pre-war, Eli continued in the role in Bath where he told head warden and Rotarian Jimmie Wills about his home town's plight. Jimmie had the idea of adopting it as a sister city. Clothing and large sums of money were despatched to help Alkmaar, with the first tranche of children arriving for an extended visit later in 1945. So the twinning association was born which thrives to this day.

Author Aletta Stevens was raised in Holland and her knowledge of the country shines through in the book. She also brings to it a vibrant enthusiasm for the twinning association where she has served as a committee member and re-discovered the history of the Link.
Janet Weston

A COUNTY OF REFUGE: REFUGEES IN CUMBRIA 1933-1941
Rob David
Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society

This is a beautifully illustrated book which examines Cumbria's response to the refugee crisis of the 1930s and early 1940s. A wealth of archival material and oral testimony demonstrate that at that time many Cumbrians welcomed refugee groups.

Much was achieved with the support of voluntary organisations, and women were in the forefront of the humanitarian work, meeting the needs of refugees. Readers are introduced to a number of refugees and the stories behind their arrival in Britain. There is an interesting analysis of the Enemy Alien Tribunal held at Whitehaven in 1939 as well as of the significant contributions of many refugees to the county during WW2 and throughout the post-war era.

This is a finely written book which is an important contribution, not just to our knowledge of the past but also to our understanding of the present.
Kathy Cohen

AUSCHWITZ
By Angela Morgan Cutler
Galileo Publishing 2018

I recently came across this book, first published in 2008, which focuses on visitors to Auschwitz (regular readers may recall my own article questioning Auschwitz tourism in our January issue). It is a book that questions our need to look: what is there to uncover, other than the difficulty of peering into such a place and into a subject that has been obsessively documented, yet can never really be understood? How to write about Auschwitz in the twenty-first century, when the last generation of survivors is soon to be lost?

It is also a book that searches for a personal story. It opens on a local bus that takes its author Angela, her husband En (whose mother survived the Holocaust where most of her family did not) and their two sons to Auschwitz sixty years after the Holocaust, and ends in a pine forest outside Minsk where En's grandparents were shot in May 1942. The backbone of *Auschwitz* is a series of emails between the author and acclaimed Franco-American writer Raymond Federman. At the age of 14, Federman was hastily thrust into the small upstairs cupboard of their Paris apartment by his mother just before she, his father and two sisters were taken to Auschwitz, where they were killed.

Federman has spent a lifetime trying to find a language appropriate for the enormity of the Holocaust and his part in its legacy, ultimately espousing *laughterature* – laughter as a means of survival. This beautiful, powerful and innovative work experiments with different forms – correspondence, reflections, dreams, a travelogue – that mirror the fragmentary legacy of the Holocaust itself and, at the same time, capture its contradictions—and sometimes its absurdity.

As one reviewer, Henry Woolf, wrote: "Angela Morgan Cutler has brilliantly infiltrated the borders of this landscape of desolation. Somehow she has found a voice that reflects the enormity of the horrors perpetuated there without being stifled by them. Unsentimental and richly worked… the words are more than mere messengers of thoughts and feelings – they glow with a life of their own… the whole package quite inimitable: the rarest quality in literature."
Jo Briggs

OBITUARIES

RALPH (RUDOLPH) BAER

Born: 17 May 1929, Frankfurt
Died: 21 June 2020, Chorleywood, Herts

Ralph's mother, Gertrude, was a kindergarten teacher, and his father Ernest Baer a bank employee. They were not observant Jews but the family began following Jewish customs at home after Ralph transferred to a Jewish primary school from his first school, where he had experienced antisemitic bullying.

At the age of nine Ralph came to the UK as a refugee. He left school at 16 to train as a medical laboratory technician, eventually qualifying as a fellow of the Institute of Medical Laboratory Sciences. He spent most of his career in the National Health Service – an institution he passionately supported.

In his mid-twenties, Ralph's love of travel led him to Kenya to set up a lab for a group of doctors in Nakuru. He made good friends there, especially among the expat Jewish community. A second tour took him to Kampala in Uganda, where he met Barbara, who was working as a nursing sister in the same government hospital. They were married in Wales in 1961 and moved back to the UK permanently, eventually settling with their four children in Amersham, Buckinghamshire, where Ralph oversaw the pathology lab at Amersham General Hospital until his retirement in 1990.

Ralph and Barbara had a happy marriage over 59 years, each practising their own faith (Barbara being a lifelong Anglican). After the move to Amersham Ralph attended services at Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue, but felt it would be good to have something more local. He and Barbara opened their home for the initial gathering of what eventually became the South Bucks Jewish Community (SBJC); 40 people attended that first meeting. Ralph took on responsibilities for Rites and Practices, organised the mitzvot rota, and represented the congregation at meetings and conferences. He remained involved as a member of SBJC until his health determined otherwise.

Ralph joined the Labour Party in his teens and remained a member for the rest of his life. He loved political debate. He canvassed during election campaigns and stood as a party candidate in local elections though, as a socialist in Amersham, he was aware that the odds were stacked against him! Ralph was a man of high principles and strong views. He was eloquent at stating the latter, but, more impressively, he lived by the former.

Ralph loved classical music, had a lifelong love of learning, current affairs, political biographies and, in retirement, took courses at the U3A. He volunteered for Meals on Wheels and repaired microscopes to be sent to medical labs in developing countries. He was optimistic by nature, laughed easily, and accepted without complaint the physical and mental limitations that affected the final part of his life.

Ralph was predeceased by his oldest son, Richard, earlier this year, and is survived by his loving wife, Barbara, his children and their partners Alison and Michael, David and Rachel, James and Henry and his six grandchildren, Matthew, Clare, Kate, Helena, Andrew and Hannah.
Alison, David and James Baer

MANFRED DURST

Born: 11 November 1924, Munich
Died: 7 June 2020, London

Fourteen-year old Manfred arrived in England via a Kindertransport in January 1939, with a 10/ – note, a bicycle and a watch that had just stopped. After leaving Dovercourt he stayed at a boys' hostel near Portobello Road, while attending Salamon Wolfson School, which was evacuated to Wiltshire during the war.

At sixteen he was offered a choice of apprenticeships and chose the jewellery trade, believing from the price he had been quoted to get his watch repaired that there was money to be made. He served a five-year apprenticeship at a Hatton Garden diamond mounters and had additional training at the Central School of Arts and Crafts. Midway through the war the factory changed production from jewellery to making bomb sights. Manfred wanted to join the RAF but his employer enforced his apprenticeship.

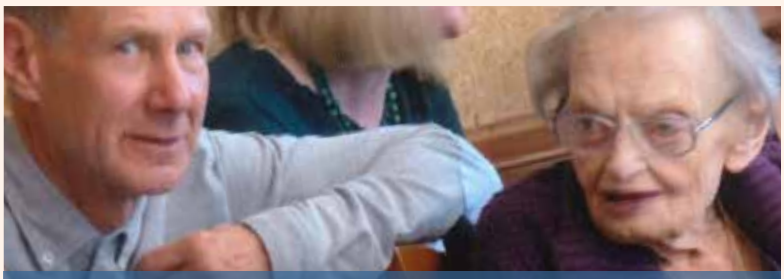
After the war he set up his own jewellery business in partnership with his great friend, John Najmann. The two of them had met in the hostel and been apprenticed together. The name, Fred Manshaw Ltd, was a combination of a reversal of his own name and that of his favourite writer, George Bernard Shaw. They opened a small workshop off Hatton Garden and

started to make faceted wedding rings. They found great demand for their work among mail order companies, cigarette coupon companies, as well as wholesalers and small retailers, and soon employed many jewellers and trainees, with their first two employees being survivors of Bergen Belsen. As Manfred used to say during his talks to schools, "Even then I realised that if you give a piece of fish to a person they have a meal, but if you teach them to fish, they have a meal for life."

Manfred travelled widely throughout the US and Europe, learning about modern production techniques. By 1951 the company had stopped retail sales, only supplying wholesalers, and was using latest technology and processes to mass produce items that found a ready market within the rapidly emerging multiple jewellery retailers like Argos, Ratners and H. Samuel, although they were careful not to supply any one customer more than 15% of their output. In 1988 they decided to sell Fred Manshaw Ltd to a public company and retire. Recognised for his commitment to standards as well as innovation, Manfred had already been made a Freeman of the City of London and became President of the British Jewellery and Giftware Federation and Chairman of the British Jewellery Association, and also served the British Hallmarking Council for 15 years.

After retirement Manfred devoted a great deal of time to Jewish causes and other former refugees, providing both advice and financial assistance. In Israel he endowed the Shabtai Levy Children's Home at Haifa while in Britain he furthered the work of the JIA and chaired the Leo Baeck Home House Committee. He maintained close links with the AJR and was guest lecturer at our 1990 Annual General Meeting. He also found time to enjoy his hobbies of golf, skiing, walking and bridge.

Manfred's wife Marion, who was also from Munich, passed away in July 2019. Manfred is now survived by son Michael, wife Ilana, granddaughters Carly and Lisa and great granddaughter Ariana.
Michael Durst



Edith pictured with her AJR social worker Dean Lloyd-Graham at her 100th birthday party in 2018.

EDITH POULSEN
(formerly Maw) née Levai

Born: 10 April 1918, Vienna
Died: 4 April 2020, London

Edith Poulsen, who died six days before her 102nd birthday, was an ardent socialist who made significant contributions to public life, particularly in Waltham Forest. She was indomitable in her work on the social care scrutiny committee and was mayoress and deputy mayoress on a number of occasions.

After the 1938 Anschluss Edith's father was arrested as a Jew and a socialist, and sent to Dachau. Edith, aged just 20, went to the American embassy to find addresses of American citizens who shared her mother's maiden name (Baruch). She wrote to them all, asking for an affidavit for the USA for her parents – and received one positive reply! Having the affidavit secured her father's release from Dachau.

Edith came to England on a domestic permit and, at an AJR event in Swiss Cottage, she met Robert, a dentist, who was in the process of divorcing his wife. Robert could arrange for Edith, her younger sister Lizzie and Aunt Margit to go to Southampton harbour to see her parents on the boat on their way to America. This was the last time Edith saw her father, who died after the war in Seattle (thanks to Edith, not in a concentration camp).

Robert took over a dental surgery in Birmingham and, after his divorce in 1941 they married, six weeks before their daughter Sylvia was born. Robert died in 1943 and Edith moved back to London with Sylvia to join Margit and Lizzie with baby son Michael. Lizzie's husband, Harry Warren (formerly Heinz Weininger) was away in the British army.

Edith met Charlie Poulsen, her second husband, at an amateur theatre company. They had a small registry office marriage and Charlie adopted Sylvia. Once Sylvia was grown up, Edith studied at the LSE for a B.Sc. degree in medieval economic history and later became Head of Economics at a private school.

Edith met the trials and tribulations which life threw at her with cool and wise stoicism. On finally reaching 100 she remarked "How that will annoy Hitler!" Her birthday party was held at Walthamstow Town Hall, attended by 60 family, friends and local dignitaries. Edith was much loved and respected and those who knew her will guard her memory in their hearts.

AJR MEETINGS IN AUGUST VIA ZOOM

Here are details of the Zoom meetings we are holding for members around the country in place of our normal Outreach Groups. They are open to all AJR members – please email Susan Harrod on susan@ajr.org.uk for joining details.

Wednesday 5 August	Claude Vecht Wolf – **The Beatles**	2.00pm
Thursday 6 August	Rabbi Mark L. Solomon – **Music and conversation**	2.00pm
Monday 10 August	Professor Clare Ungerson, author of *Four thousand Jewish Lives Saved*, about the **1939 Kitchener Camp**	2.00pm
Wednesday 12 August	Dan Fox – **Jews fighting in Europe**	2.00pm
Thursday 13 August	David Barnett – **Tea Shops and Corner Houses: the Story of Joe Lyons**	2.00pm
Wednesday 19 August	Deborah Cohen and Ingrid Sellman – The history and significance of **Willesden Jewish Cemetery**	2.00pm

The AJR YouTube Channel

The AJR now has its own dedicated YouTube channel, full of video content that we think will be particularly relevant to our members.

Recently loaded films include Simon Parkin talking about *The Island of Extraordinary Captives*, and a lively Q&A about *The Ballad of the Cosmo Café,* both of which formed part of our online programming to mark Refugee Week 2020.

We have received much positive feedback about the channel. Ruth Ramsay, a second generation member in Glasgow, wrote: "It is absolutely wonderful to view in one's own time and also provides the opportunity to be far more involved and aware, as a lot of these events take place in London and we would not see them otherwise. Despite the circumstances and many changes, I hope this format can continue: it is much appreciated."

To find the AJR channel simply go to **www.YouTube.com** and search for the **Association of Jewish Refugees** or type **www.youtube.com/c/TheAssociationofJewishRefugees** into your browser.

JEWISH RESISTANCE TO THE HOLOCAUST

The Wiener Holocaust Library, which has recently reopened for research appointments following lockdown, hopes to open its brand new exhibition to the public sometime this month.

Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust tells the story of the Jewish men and women who, as the Holocaust unfolded around them and at great risk to themselves, resisted the Nazis and their collaborators.

At the time of going to press, exact details of public access to the exhibition had not yet been confirmed. However at 7.00pm on 5 August the distinguished Professor of History Samuel Kassow will speak at an event to celebrate the exhibition, along with Director of The Wiener Holocaust Library, Dr Toby Simpson, and the exhibition's curator, Dr Barbara Warnock. You can register for this event for free via **www.wienerlibrary.co.uk**


Jewish Lithuanian Partisans, July 1944

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.