



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Lights, camera & all sorts of action

Traffic lights, window displays, atomic bombs and government statistics provide an eclectic mix in this, the second of our four-part series about the impact of Jewish refugees on modern British culture, to mark the 80th anniversary of the AJR.



The Hungarian physicist Leo Szilard was inspired by a London traffic light to invent atomic energy.



Ernst Stern, theatre designer for Max Reinhardt, created Selfridges' decorations for the coronation of George VI.

At the beginning of her book *The Other Way Round* Judith Kerr describes walking through wartime London. Anna (based on Kerr herself) is a Jewish refugee schoolgirl from Germany. She and her family had come to live in London in 1935. It is March 1940. Anna sets off to visit her parents who are staying in a shabby-genteel hotel in Bloomsbury. She realises she has lost the fourpence for her bus fare, so she has to walk all the way.

To follow that route sixty years on is a reminder of the achievements of the two generations of European refugees who came to Britain in the middle of

the 20th century, both of the scale of the achievement and its enormous range and diversity. In Part One (September), we followed her walk through West London.

In Part Two we pick up the route on Oxford Street, by Selfridge's, where Ernst Stern, once Max Reinhardt's designer in Germany, was 'Chief of Design' for Selfridge's decorations for the coronation of George VI. And behind Selfridge's, the Wigmore Hall, where the Amadeus String Quartet gave their first concert. And then back onto Oxford Street, to John Lewis, whose unmistakable logo was created
Continued on page 2

BUSY OCTOBER

We continue to celebrate our 80th anniversary year with a range of exciting activities, including this month's Next Generations conference - see details at bottom of page 3.

Later this month we will be planting the very first of our '80 Trees for 80 Years', in a programme that will run up to Holocaust Memorial Day in January. If you would like to sponsor one of these trees in the name of a loved one please email 80trees@ajr.org.uk

Meanwhile please enjoy the many and varied articles in this month's issue - feel free to send any comments or suggestions direct to editorial@ajr.org.uk

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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 Adam Daniels

Heads of Department

Community & Volunteer Services Carol Hart
HR & Administration Karen Markham
Educational Grants & Projects Alex Maws
Social Services Nicole Valens

AJR Journal

Editor Jo Briggs
Editorial Assistant Lilian Levy
Contributing Editor David Herman

Lights, camera & all sorts of action (cont.)

by the German designer, Hans Schleger in the mid-1960s. Just beyond Oxford Circus is where the Academy Cinema used to be, London's leading art house cinema for more than thirty years, owned by George Hoellering, who had collaborated with Brecht on the film, *Kuhle Wampe* (1932).

Carry on along Oxford Street and we come to Charing Cross Road. Turn right, towards Great Newport Street where the young theatre director Peter Zadek directed the world premiere of Jean Genet's *The Balcony* at the Arts Theatre Club in 1957. Genet was so outraged by Zadek's production that he apparently bought a gun with the intention of shooting his director. Zadek returned to his native Germany soon after.

But what if we had turned right at Oxford Circus, along Regent Street down to Piccadilly? Just behind Piccadilly are the art galleries on Cork Street, which once included Roland, Browse and Delbanco (Heinz Roland né Rosenbaum from Munich and Gustav Delbanco from Hamburg were both refugees), the Arcade Galleries (established by Paul Wengraf, a refugee from Vienna), and Lefevre (where Lucien Freud held his first show in 1944). The refugee artists, exhibited on Cork Street and elsewhere in London, included Lucien Freud and Frank Auerbach, both child refugees, and Kurt Schwitters, Jankel Adler, Martin Bloch and Josef Herman, among many others.

Nearby, were the New Burlington Galleries where, in 1938, Herbert Read curated the first major showing of the modern German artists: 269 exhibits including work by Dix, Ernst, Grosz and Kirchner. Most of the artists on show had been included in the famous *Degenerate Art Exhibition*, the year before. Not everyone was impressed. Writing in the *New Statesman & Nation*, their art critic Raymond Mortimer wrote: 'People who go to see the exhibition are only too likely to say: "If Hitler doesn't like these pictures, it's the best thing I've heard about Hitler"'. For the general impression made by the show upon the ordinary public must be one of extraordinary ugliness.'

Just off Piccadilly, Albany, the exclusive apartments where Isaiah Berlin had his



German refugee Peter Zadek directed the world premiere of Jean Genet's *The Balcony* in 1957.

London pied-à-terre, a Jew from Riga at home opposite Fortnum & Mason and Hatchards. Near Albany is Burlington House where The Royal Society used to be. Seventy-four immigrant scholars or their children were among its members, many of them refugees, and sixteen of them Nobel Prize winners.

On the south side of Piccadilly was Simpson's clothing store, where Laszlo Moholy-Nagy arranged displays and then south, across Jermyn Street, is the London Library, where Isaiah Berlin, while browsing in the stacks in the 1930s, discovered the writing of Alexander Herzen, the 19th century Russian émigré. Round the corner from the London Library, down St. James's Street, are the offices of *The Economist*, where Isaac Deutscher, Daniel Singer and George Steiner, worked in the 1940s and '50s. An unlikely trio to find at *The Economist*: two Polish Trotskyites and one of the greatest literary critics of the 20th century. Nearby, is the St. James's Club which in 1950 turned down Isaiah Berlin as a member because he was Jewish.

Across Green Park to Buckingham Palace where Berlin, Rudolf Bing, Hermann Bondi, G.R. Elton, Ernst Gombrich, Ludwig Guttman, Alexander Korda, Hans Krebs, Claus Moser, Nikolaus Pevsner and Karl Popper, were among the European émigrés and refugees who were knighted.

And then across St. James's Park to 10 Downing Street, where Winston Churchill famously confused Irving Berlin and Isaiah Berlin (when Churchill asked

Irving what was 'the significant piece of work you've done for us?' the wrong Berlin replied '*White Christmas*'). Twenty years later, Lord Balogh was a regular visitor as a consultant to Harold Wilson. Next door, at No. 11, Balogh's fellow-Hungarian economist, Lord Kaldor, was special adviser to the Chancellors of the Exchequer of two Labour governments.

Then into the labyrinths of Whitehall where Sir Hermann Bondi was chief scientific adviser in the 1970s, where Sefton Delmer worked during the war and where Walter Ullmann was a part-time lecturer to the Political Intelligence Department. There is the Home Office where Jacob Bronowski worked for the Military Research Unit during the war, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, where Eugene Grebenik prepared the major demographic reviews of 1977 and 1984, and the Government Statistical Service, headed by Claus Moser through the 1970s; The War Office where the Russian historian, Leonard Schapiro, worked while his childhood friend, Isaiah Berlin, was working for the Ministry of Information in New York and then Washington D.C. Churchill thought Berlin's reports from America 'make the most of everything'. Anthony Eden agreed. But, he wrote, 'There is perhaps a too generous Oriental flavour.'

From Whitehall down to the Thames and the House of Lords, where Lords Balogh, Bauer, Dubs, Hamlyn, Jakobovits, Kaldor and Weidenfeld were among the refugee peers. Then along Whitehall to the Strand and the Strand Palace Hotel was where the Hungarian physicist, Leo Szilard, stayed in 1933. One day, Szilard was waiting to cross Southampton Row and watched the traffic lights turn from green to amber and then to red. He later wrote, 'It ... suddenly occurred to me that if we could find an element which is split by neutrons and which would emit two neutrons when it absorbs one neutron, such an element, if assembled in sufficiently large mass, could sustain a nuclear chain reaction... The idea never left me. In certain circumstances it might be possible to set up a nuclear chain reaction, liberate energy on an industrial scale, and construct atomic bombs.' There is no blue plaque by these traffic lights, but they are probably the most important traffic lights in the 20th century.

David Herman

BEM Apology

In our August BEM Gallery we included a photograph of our member Simon Winston wearing university attire, without explaining why.

In fact on 20 May Simon Winston received his BEM award from Sir John Peace, Lord-Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire (they are both pictured here alongside a photograph of Her Majesty The Queen) during a wonderful ceremony at the National Holocaust Centre (NHC). After receiving his award Simon then recorded an acceptance speech for a second award - his Honorary Doctorate from Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln – which was later broadcast at a virtual



awards ceremony hosted by the University. NHC made a short film about the occasion, which can be seen at www.holocaust.org.uk/simon-winston-awarded-the-bem

AJR wishes a hearty mazeltov to Simon on both of these truly remarkable achievements.

ANNUAL ELECTION MEETING

The Annual Election Meeting of The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) will take place at 3pm on Thursday 2 December 2021 at AJR, Winston House, 2 Dollis Park, London N3 1HF.

Anyone wishing to stand for election must be nominated by at least ten associate members of the AJR together with a notice signed by the nominee indicating their willingness to serve as a trustee should

they be elected. This must be duly received in writing by Monday 22 November 2021 at the AJR offices.

Michael Karp, who was appointed during the year as an additional trustee, has been nominated to be re-elected as a trustee.

If you wish to attend please contact Karin Pereira on **020 8385 3070** or at karin@ajr.org.uk

CHILD SURVIVORS CONFERENCE

The World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Descendants Annual Conference will take place on November 5-8 2021, at the St. Louis Grand Marriott Hotel in St. Louis, MO, USA. You can register online at www.holocaustchild.org

Erratum

The dates given in the obituary of the late George Loble (September) were incorrect. He was born on 25 September 1926 in Bamberg and died on 25 February 2021 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His son is Peter Loble (not Lobl as printed)

PENSION NEWS - CLAIMS CONFERENCE ARTICLE 2

Recipients of the above pension are advised that the issuing of your annual life certificates has been delayed. Please do not be alarmed as this will not affect your pension payments.

When you do receive the certificate please make arrangements to notarise and return the certificate as usual. Should you need any assistance, please get in touch with Rosemary Peters rosemary@ajr.org.uk or Karin Pereira karin@ajr.org.uk



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ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE

With the exception of Lord Rothschild in the 19th century, Robert Voss is the only Jewish Lord-Lieutenant in English history. As the son of two refugees from Nazi Germany he is also an active AJR member and on 11 October he will be giving us a special Zoom interview. Jo Briggs met up with him recently.

The role of Lord-Lieutenant is hugely varied and its core responsibility is representing the Monarch. This includes handling royal visits, evaluating honours and royal garden party invitations, awarding medals under Royal Warrant to members of the emergency services, liaising with military forces – including being President of the county's Reserve and Cadet forces – and welcoming new citizens into UK citizenship.

Robert is four years into his term as Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Hertfordshire (see the profile that Peter Phillips wrote shortly after his appointment, in our November 2017 issue) and the past 18 months have been particularly challenging.

"During the pandemic Hertfordshire was a microcosm for the whole of the UK. I was amazed by the speed with which people got together to help others, the volunteering and community spirit throughout the entire county was just incredible. It's really important that the right people get recognised for what they did, and it's surprising what impact can be made simply by a representative of HM The Queen saying thank you," explains Robert.

Over 500 *Heroes of Hertfordshire* badges were handed out as part of a special scheme that Robert set up during the pandemic. Other innovations include the creation of 15 specialist panels, focusing on everything from education to sustainability, bringing together local experts and influencers and drawing on an extensive support team from across the county.

"I have 48 Deputies who help by chairing these panels and contributing their respective expertise. They also represent me



Robert Voss with The Princess Royal during a three point visit to Hertfordshire this July

if I cannot attend an event. They support charities, community groups, business groups, the arts, education and many other areas," he says.

For such an all-encompassing – and time consuming – position, many would be surprised that the role is unpaid. Only travel expenses are reimbursed, for a role that Robert still considers a huge honour.

As the only Jewish Lord-Lieutenant Robert feels he has a double responsibility to fly the flag for British Jews as well as to be the Queen's representative in the county. South Hertfordshire has the highest population of Jewish people outside Greater London, and the Jewish communities around Hatfield and Stevenage are expanding fast.

His dual passion for his religion and his county is demonstrated by the fact that he is determined that Hertfordshire should be well represented in AJR's *80 Trees for 80 Years* project. Robert is also the local representative for *The Queen's Green Canopy* and AJR's planting of four oak trees in his region will serve both these agendas.

Promoting good relations between Hertfordshire's different communities is also a key part of Robert's role. "There are over 20 practising religions within the county so the work of our Interfaith Panel is very important. We also have over 4,500 local charities, which reflects the diversity of our community. There are some extremely affluent areas in the county but we also have some of the most deprived areas within the country.

As a very successful businessman who

spent over 40 years in commodity trading internationally, Robert is also a huge champion of local enterprise, including helping 14 local businesses and entrepreneurs to achieve a Queen's Award.

"These awards create a great boost to our local economy and jobs," explains Robert, who has acted as a consultant, mentor and non-executive to a number of companies and was awarded a CBE "for services to British Industry and voluntary work in the UK" in the New Year's Honours List of 2014.

Robert and his wife Celia have three children and two grandchildren and have lived in Hertfordshire for over 30 years. His hobbies include most sports, especially golf, cricket, cycling, rugby and football as well as travel, music and his family.

A Lord-Lieutenant usually serves until his or her 75th birthday, meaning that Robert will step down in 2028. Until then he will continue to be the main link between the Monarch and her people in the county, proud to represent someone he describes as "incredibly brave and stoic" during what have been very difficult years for her and her country, placing even greater burdens on her representatives.

"People often ask me whether being Lord-Lieutenant is hard work," he says. "I tell them that it's manageable, now I have cut it down to just eight days a week!"

Robert Voss will be in conversation with Jo Briggs on Monday 11 October at 6pm. Join the event on <https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88498196849>

LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



STILL OPTIMISTIC



Times seem grim in the world in general. Corona is still on the rampage, and catastrophes, whether

man-made or natural, come hot on the heels of one another. Here in Israel, many adults, myself and my husband included, have had their third vaccination, though the numbers on a national scale continue to be worrying. Forest fires, whether occurring naturally or caused by malign humans, have wreaked untold damage on the beautiful woodland area of the Jerusalem hills, the air is scorching hot for most of the daylight hours, and the shadow of another lockdown loomed as the high holidays approached.

And yet, despite all the doom and gloom, there are signs that things are moving in a positive direction. In what appeared to be a candid TV interview, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid admitted to having erred in not attending cabinet meetings devoted to addressing the Corona issue, even going so far as to give the media credit for calling him out on this. He has since attended every such meeting, whether in person or via zoom.

It looks as if a national budget will be

passed without undue fuss and bother, with increases in the allocations for the health and education ministries, enabling the services provided to certain segments of the population to be extended. Admittedly, there are still many areas in which the services provided to the less fortunate could and should be improved, especially housing and welfare, but this still signifies a positive change, both in attitude and in action.

In foreign policy, too, relations with other countries seem to be going in the right direction, with invitations extended to our Foreign Minister by the Arab Emirates as well as Morocco, Egypt and the U.S.A. On the other hand, our relations with Poland have taken a turn for the worse since that country ratified a law to deny the right of Jews who lost property during and after WW2 to sue for compensation. I'm curious to see how that will evolve, though I personally regard the Polish government's threat to 'retaliate' for whatever steps Israel might take, by preventing organised groups of Jewish youngsters from visiting concentration camps, as a blessing rather than a punishment. There is no need to put more money in the pockets of the people who have taken so much from us. A visit to Yad Vashem, or even a course of visits there, can have just as salutary an effect, quite apart from the shameful behaviour occasionally displayed by some of our youngsters on those trips.

But above all, life goes on. Families

frolic and camp at the seaside and on the shores of Lake Kinneret, and also visit the many beautiful nature reserves and interesting sites in which Israel abounds. The beaches, playgrounds and funfairs are full of youngsters enjoying the last days of the summer holiday. Several museums, e.g., the Bible Lands Museum and the Museum of Islamic Culture, both in Jerusalem, are holding particularly attractive exhibitions (birds in the Ancient Near East in the former, the History of Coffee in the latter). Nobody knows how long all this will continue and we can still mix almost freely (wearing masks and keeping our distance from one another), so everyone's doing their best to benefit from the current situation while they can.

Existential threats are still with us, and experience has taught us that things don't always only improve, but it is good to remind ourselves that at least for the moment we are not being constantly bombarded by news items that another national election is in the offing.

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Letters to the Editor

To submit a letter please email editorial@ajr.org.uk. Please note that 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.

EVERY ASPECT OF BRITISH LIFE

I am writing in response to September's front page article, framed by the wonderful George Steiner quote which David Herman used to illustrate the amazing impact that two generations of Jewish refugees have had on British culture. However according to David Herman, it appears that other than Judith Kerr, the entire contribution has been made by male Jewish refugees some of whom he name-checked. It is unfortunate that two generations of Jewish refugee women who have worked and made an invaluable professional and cultural contribution across British society, not least also by supporting their husbands and families, have been uniformly overlooked. Perhaps they were invisible? As the daughter and granddaughter of German Jewish refugees I feel this omission is not only historically inaccurate and sexist but also frankly rather outdated.

Julia Eisner, London N19

Thank you for September's wonderful lead article which celebrates the huge contribution that refugees made (and continue to make) to our lives in this country. The breadth of their endeavour across all spectra of life is, indeed, remarkable. One group that is also worthy of mention but frequently neglected in this context, is the group of (primarily) Viennese women and men who arrived in Scotland in 1939 to build what has become the Camphill movement, caring for and educating children and adults with special needs in schools and communities worldwide. They were led by Dr Karl König who created the study and social group which followed the teaching of Rudolf Steiner in 1930s Vienna, saw the impending storm and left Austria with the determination to live and work together. At one point the hope was China but Aberdeen became the reality. My father was one of that group, brought up Jewish but converted to Christianity through Steiner. My German mother, also a refugee who came to England in

1937, joined Camphill during the war. The remarkable stories of the founders of Camphill is told in *The Builders of Camphill. Lives and Destinies of the Founders* (Floris Books)
Tom Baum, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

You mention many refugees' contributions to British life and academic understanding but the references are scattered. It would be wonderful if someone could write a book or academic paper summarising these contributions, which are quite overwhelming. I would offer but at 94 I am too old to undertake the task. Maybe this has been done already but I am not aware of it.
Vernon Katz, Woodbridge, Suffolk

THANK YOU AJR

I live in Buenos Aires and received your magazine yesterday, so today I read all of it. Every word! I want to thank you for sending it to me for so many years. I always enjoy reading it but this time even more, on its 80th birthday. I am now 92 years of age, born in Vienna and went to England when I was 9 with my brother who was 14.

We left Vienna in December 1938 without our parents (our father was in Dachau), rescued by the Kindertransport and for this I am forever grateful. I also wish to thank all those good people who donated £50 to finance this project.

At Dovercourt we were "chosen" by a lady who lived in Bath and who decided to "adopt" us.

I want to thank you deeply for being able to uphold the *AJR Journal* for 80 wonderful years, for helping so many people, for understanding. In other words, for existing.

Last but not least, I love the idea of you planting 80 oak trees; pity I am not in England to be able to help "taking care of" them and/or donating some money

for such a lovely cause.
Lisa Seiden (née Leist), Buenos Aires

A free digital copy of Lisa's book *Stay together with your brother (No te separes de tu hermano)* is available in Spanish from lisaseiden@hotmail.com

SHANGHAI'S 'LITTLE VIENNA'

I enjoyed reading Martin Mauthner's piece, and Stephen Meyer's letter in response. The lives of my Viennese-born aunt, Lisbeth Epstein, and her future husband, Bruno Loewenberg, were saved by their flights to Shanghai in 1940 and 1939 respectively. Bruno was released from Buchenwald the same month as Stephen Meyer's father, thanks to his sister's securing him a ticket to sail to the Chinese port. She – and the rest of his family – failed to leave Germany, and all perished.

Bruno set up Shanghai's first refugee-run library and bookshop, on the corner of what was then Bubbling Well Road. My aunt, thirty years his junior, became his assistant and eventually 'married the boss'. After the war, and the Communist take-over, they left for San Francisco. I have narrated my family's story in a book called *Inside the Chinese Box*, triggered by a box of documents and photographs left me by my aunt. This fascinating chapter of WW2 history – including Shanghai's Little Vienna – deserves to be more widely known. As Martin Mauthner writes, the Chinese are preserving the memory of some of the 20,000 European Jewish refugees who escaped to this unlikely haven in an excellent museum. My aunt's is one of the stories on display.
Rachel E Meller, Cambridge

SUDETENLAND

In 1945 Gustel Worms, a Sudeten German, hid in the forest outside her home town with her elderly father for three weeks to escape the Czechs. She then escaped to Germany. Unfortunately for her, she ended up

in East Germany and suffered the privations of living in that country, and died in the 1980s, before the fall of the communist regime. Does R J Norton (letters, August) think she “got what she deserved”?

“Utti”, as her charges called her, was a devoted nanny (nursemaid) to my mother and her two siblings. I remember my mother sending parcels of coffee and other necessities to her during my childhood and they corresponded frequently. When my aunt was dying, it was Utti that she called for.

As Jews, we should be especially wary of lumping together a group of people purely by their nationality or ethnicity, and who are we to judge if someone has “got what they deserve”?

Annette Ray, Tunbridge Wells, Kent

SURVIVOR OR REFUGEE?

Note from Editor: We received a large response to the question posed by Peter Phillips' granddaughter: *Refugee or Survivor?* (September). Here is a brief summary.

Peter Briess considers himself a refugee, whereas his aunt and cousin who went through Terezin and Auschwitz, were definitely survivors. **Isa Brysh** thinks that the line has been blurred and, over time, refugees also became survivors. Since her naturalisation as a child, she considers herself a “British Citizen” with memories of a troubled childhood.

Walter Brendel, although classed as a refugee, considers himself ‘part of the Kindertransport’, even though he arrived in the UK with his mother and brother. **Dr Anthony Joseph**, despite being British-born, aligns himself to the concept of Jewish peoplehood and thinks ‘Refugee’ is perhaps intuitively enough after all. **Joseph Cent** wonders whether he is both refugee and survivor as he was chased by the advancing German Army from his home near the border with Belgium all the way to the coast near Biarritz.

CHOSEN – LOST & FOUND BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

Emma Klein has written an excellent review of the personal account by Rev. Giles Fraser (September) and I agree that the book is highly readable. I should declare my interest. Fraser is a name change from Friedeberg, which family's Anglo roots are nearly as senior as my own. The relative of Giles in Liverpool, Reverend Samuel, changed his name in WW1 to Frampton and married a relative of my paternal grandfather, Miriam, the daughter of Rev. George J. Emanuel (1837-1914) of Singers Hill Synagogue. I knew many members of Sam and Miriam's descendancy including a granddaughter and her husband who were both savagely and tragically murdered (as too one of their sons at the same time) after a family wedding in Sheffield in 1983. Giles was kind enough to send me some excerpts from his work to check for genealogical accuracy.
Dr Anthony Joseph, Smethwick

GERDA MAYER

I was very sorry to learn that Gerda Mayer has passed away. She and her husband Don were good friends for many years. Don was Hon. Treasurer of the Wanstead Jewish Literary Society for some time and much appreciated.

Gerda's poems are often selected for sharing with U3A members at our monthly poetry readings so she will not be forgotten. Her poems are full of feeling and pathos but hope as well. She will be remembered through her poems.

Meta Roseuil, Buckhurst Hill

OUR BELOVED DAY CENTRE

Following Susie Kaufman's letter (September), I remember helping AJR before the day centre opened, by assisting cook Ruth Renfield in a building in Eton Avenue to prepare and freeze meals which were then delivered by volunteers to various homes.

Belsize Square Synagogue had better facilities and kindly offered them for AJR's use. We foil covered every surface of its *milchig* kitchen for the *fleishig* food that

LOOKING FOR?

Seán Kelly wants to know whether this young lady is an ancestor of an AJR member? Her photo was taken by 'Cinema Studios' 16 Duke Street, Aldgate, London EC3. It was renamed Duke's Place in 1939, so the photo precedes or was taken in 1939.
moritzschauspieler@gmail.com



Paul Alexander kindly brought over from Hannah Karminski House. We remember him cleaning his car and laughing when we finally moved to the Paul Balint Day Centre in Cleve Road and the schlepping and shlopping stopped.

The Balint family generously funded the building, which included residential flats and a flat for the future resident caretaker. Ludwig Spiro, Theo Marx and Ruth Anderman designed the kitchen, dining rooms and games rooms on the lower ground floor, where I was employed as cook along with Joseph Pereira as assistant cook. After some months AJR offered Joseph the caretaking position and I lost my assistant cook.

Sylvia Matus and Renee Lee organised most activities with chair-based exercises on the ground floor opposite the cloakroom. Sylvia and Renee had a 'raised office' ie two desks and two chairs!

Helen Grunberg, London NW10

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Galleries are emerging from lockdown with renewed vigour and imagination. Some are venturing far from home. From next month (November) the National Portrait Gallery, still undergoing major refurbishment, will continue sharing its collection through a nationwide programme of activities and partnerships.



Edouard Manet's *A Bar At The Folies-Bergère* will be on view at the newly reopened Courtauld gallery

Last month it partnered the **Brent Museum and Archives** to explore portraits of people connected with Wembley Stadium. *People Powered: From the ground up* runs until December 3, and *Icons of Colour: Portraits of Brent's Change Makers* will present its recently commissioned portrait of Zadie Smith by **Toyin Ojih Odutola**.

Next year the NPG will partner four British galleries and will send portraits from its Tudor collection and its Bloomsbury Group to exhibitions in Bath, Liverpool, Sheffield and York, including some that have rarely left their London home.

The **British Museum** has also made some interesting discoveries, which are featured in *The Great Picture Book of Everything*. The exhibition comprises some 100 newly rediscovered drawings by Japanese artist, **Katsushika Hokusai** (1760–1849) and will run from 30 September 1 – 30 January 2022.

But at a time of closures and re-openings, perhaps the most exciting of all is the transformation of the **Courtauld Gallery**, which is due to open in November in what is described as a complete reinterpretation of its Samuel Courtauld Trust collection, which covers the period from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century. You will soon be able to see some of the world's most popular Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works there, such as **Manet's** much loved *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, or **Van Gogh's** *Self-*

Portrait with Bandaged Ear, once seen as shocking. They will provide the *pièce de résistance* in the gallery's newly restored Great Room, and will be joined by eight **Cézanne** favourites, resplendent against a long white wall.

The Courtauld is justly proud of its outstanding Impressionist collection and after a closure of three years, the Impressionists' return will represent a cavalcade of colour or – if paintings could sing – a grand chorus of welcome in true classical style. It is scarcely an exaggeration because the Great Room, said to be London's oldest purpose-built exhibition space and the largest in Somerset House, is a magnificent area, now renovated and modernised to show the works in the best possible light, where they were once hung in chains and only illuminated by picture lights!

Nestling among the better-known Impressionist paintings, you will also have a chance to view an exquisite gem – **Renoir's** rarely seen *Spring at Chatou*, a gentle, pastoral scene featuring an almost imperceptible man in a sunhat within a misty landscape of flowers and high grasses. The painting will be on loan to the Courtauld.

The gallery's largest work to be shown is arguably its most important: Austrian Expressionist **Oskar Kokoschka's** 1950 triptych, *The Myth of Prometheus*. It is an apocalyptic image in three eight metre canvases, produced out of the artist's experience of WW2. In an unusual use

of neo-classical imagery it reflects the loss of humanity to the pursuit of science and technology. This powerful work will be displayed for the first time in over a decade in the Katja and Nicolai Tangen 20th Century Gallery.

Another feature will be a gift of 24 drawings by such artists as **Kandinsky, Klee, Baselitz** and **Richter**, whose works will share the space together for the first time. A new gallery has also been created on the first floor to feature paintings from the Medieval and Early Renaissance periods.

The Courtauld was due to reopen after two years, but it wasn't just the pandemic which delayed it but – from the sublime to the unthinkable – the discovery of a large medieval cesspit in the basement! The gallery's transformation will allow now much needed wheelchair access, and there are new temporary exhibition spaces. The three-year closure involved inevitable problems regarding the art housed there. Some works were sent around the world, including tours to Tokyo and Paris. Now, finally, the masterpieces are coming home for the November re-opening.

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CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

FIGHT ANTISEMITISM WITH OUR HERITAGE

The Jewish world has been shaken by the antisemitic outbursts that accompanied the most recent Gaza conflict, far broader geographically and more intense than in the past, accompanied by serious incidents of threat and violence.

This is the culmination of a number of worrying developments in recent years that all point to a sense that anti-Jewish hatred is once again on the rise. Inevitably, thoughts turn to what needs to be done to combat this, and the overwhelming view is that education is the key tool to confront this most ancient of prejudices. But how is the tool to be deployed?

I want to propose what has been a dramatically overlooked weapon in the arsenal to tackle antisemitism; one that might even offer the best chance of success. It relates to a remarkable resource that exists in many countries yet has been largely ignored – the Jewish heritage sites that dot these landscapes.

The story of the 20th century is that the Jewish people no longer live where they had lived, through migration, expulsion and Holocaust. The places that were Jewish heartlands for centuries have all but disappeared. What remains is a vast physical heritage, the patrimony of the Jewish people and a profound testimony which, without a community of users, has been suffering from neglect and destruction.

Preserving this cultural heritage has been a 'Cinderella' subject within the Jewish world, largely ignored. These buildings are seen as problematic, a burden – an irrelevance. If there are no Jewish communities, why save them?

The London-based Foundation for Jewish Heritage takes a different view – that these buildings, many unique and beautifully constructed, can become meaningful again and serve a vital contemporary purpose, and that purpose is *education*.



Casale Monferrato synagogue, Italy

The most typical scenario for the successful re-use of abandoned historic synagogues has been to transform them into Jewish heritage centres. There are many highly successful examples of Jewish heritage as visitor destinations, and places like Venice, Amsterdam, Krakow and Prague attract visitors in the hundreds of thousands.

Such places provide an inspiring setting, and have the space to deliver substantial content on Jewish history, faith and traditions, calendar and life cycle, promoting knowledge, understanding and empathy. They also inevitably address the Holocaust, delivering a profound message on just where prejudice unchecked can ultimately lead, powerfully underscored by the very location itself.

What makes these centres especially effective is that this is *local heritage*, indigenous, authentic, and physically situated within a building passed by residents every day.

I was once in a small Polish town talking with students who were doing a project on the former Jewish community. I asked one what she would say to people who question the point, given that there are no longer any Jews. She casually replied, "it's the history of our town," which certainly impressed me. Instead of Jews as 'the other,' this was Jews as fellow citizens, part of the collective, Jews as neighbours, Jews as ourselves – and Jewish heritage as *shared* heritage.

To provide education and combat anti-Jewish sentiment in the most impactful way, we need to work locally, presenting the Jewish story as integral to the landscape – and Jewish heritage sites are perfectly placed to deliver this.

Israel has 104 embassies around the world. In Europe alone there are 3,347 historic synagogues, themselves all potential *embassies of the Jewish people*. They can serve as vehicles for projecting the Jewish experience and Jewish cultural influence; a form of 'soft power'.

Indeed, given the particular context of Jewish heritage, the importance of these sites is being increasingly recognised by important bodies such as the European Union as they urgently try to respond to the recent growing xenophobia by promoting 'EU values' of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights.

A lot of work has been, and is being done, to preserve Jewish built heritage, but the scale of the task remains enormous. Those of us championing the cause of Jewish heritage need more recognition, and more practical support. The significance of this activity is far greater than currently realised.

Michael Mail
Chief Executive
Foundation For Jewish Heritage

FROM HUYTON TO HOCKNEY



Paul Bayer writes: the recent sad death of Rudi Leavor, who was a good friend of my late father, has spurred me to research my own father's history. Richard Franz Bayer was a lapsed Catholic who fled Austria in 1940 for political reasons and was interned at Huyton in Liverpool along with many Jewish refugees. He was a talented artist whose cartoons from the camp are carefully preserved and who went on to teach art to, among others, David Hockney.

My dad, Richard Bayer, was born in Vienna in 1901. His own father died before he was born and his mother died when he was just three, so his early years were spent with relatives.

After leaving school he studied art and psychology, becoming a teacher. He was noted for his creative use of art in primary education and he also worked with Franz Cížek, founder of Vienna's Child Art Movement.

In the years leading to WW2 he became politically active, addressing anti-Nazi meetings, joining protest marches, and co-leading the Social Democratic Youth Movement. He also drew and published satirical anti-Nazi political cartoons that led him into conflict with the right-wing government.

When Hitler annexed Austria, Richard faced arrest. His wife, Frances, and their daughter, Liza, had already fled to England and enlisted the Quakers in getting Richard out of Austria. He later told his family that he was carrying a pistol in case of capture – with five bullets for the Nazis, one for himself.

Richard found work teaching at a school in Hertfordshire, but was soon interned at Huyton in Merseyside. There he turned his artistic skills to good use, designing humorous postcards about camp life, as well as political comment about the war. He produced a 'catalogue' of over 70 cartoons, from which other detainees could order a black and white outline to colour in themselves - a bit of a cottage industry in unusual surroundings.

After a few months, he was released from Huyton and made his way to London, where he worked as a sign-writer, including painting cinema posters. Wanting more permanent work, he took up a teaching post in 1941 at Bradford Grammar School as an art and crafts master, where he stayed until 1966. David Hockney was a pupil and Richard became Hockney's tutor, mentor and a lifelong friend. He wryly recalled writing 'Very Good' on Hockney's pre-GCE art report.

In 1943 he became secretary of the International Centre in Bradford, a social club to help refugees assimilate into Yorkshire life. He was a member of the Bradford Arts Club from 1943 to 1962, and a founder member of the Shipley Arts Club.

His first wife, Frances, died in the 1950s and their daughter, Liza, who also became an artist and art teacher, lived and worked in the York area until her early death in the 1970s. Richard later remarried, and he and my mum, Barbara, raised two sons. Richard continued to develop his art, painting in oils, gouache, watercolours and acrylics and also worked with ceramics, scraperboard, lino-cutting and silhouette-cutting. His work was frequently exhibited locally, including at a solo show at Bradford Central Library in 1972. He died in 1990.

My father never lost his German language, and it was fascinating to listen to him talk to his central European friends in a mish-mash of German and English. Afterwards he would have no idea which language he'd been speaking. Occasionally I remember being told off in German as, without realising it, he reverted to his mother tongue in time of stress. I also remember him helping me with maths homework and I could hear him muttering the calculation in German, before explaining the way to the answer in English.

Question to AJR members: Some of the cartoons which Richard Bayer drew while he was at Huyton are accompanied by some beautifully handwritten words which are attributed to a 'Leo Wiener'. The words are handwritten in German so Paul is unable to read them and would love to hear from any AJR member for whom this name or these words might be significant.

EMANCIPATION TO DESTRUCTION

In the 19th Century the Scholem family arrived in Berlin from Poland.

Here Martin Mauthner describes the changes they had to make and the differing paths their lives later took.



'Darwinistisches' was the title of an unusual cartoon published in Berlin in 1904. Four drawings depicted the Menorah evolving into a Christmas tree. The caption read: 'How the Hanukkah candle-sticks of the goatskin dealer, **Cohn**, [in bold type] in Pinne [a village in Poland], developed into the Christmas tree of the *Kommerzienrat* [a title bestowed on distinguished business people], **Conrad**, in West Berlin's Tiergartenstrasse.'

That caricature was not antisemitic propaganda: after all, it appeared in the short-lived Jewish satirical periodical, *Schlemiel*. It could almost equally have applied to the Scholems, except that they did not alter their name. A relatively uneducated Marcus had come to the Prussian capital from Glogau, on the Oder in Silesia, after barriers to free movement were lifted in 1812, during the Napoleonic wars. Taking advantage of the opportunities in the growing metropolis, his son Siegfried set up a printing business, as did his son, Arthur. With everyday life becoming more regulated, Arthur encouraged clients to standardise their business forms and he prospered from new technology.

The Scholems had maids, a car, and in 1924 acquired a lakeside cottage south-east of Berlin. As they embraced German culture, they did not abandon Judaism but wore it lightly; Arthur, the enterprising paterfamilias who read the *Manchester Guardian*, lit cigars with a Sabbath candle and the family enjoyed *Stollen* at Christmas.

Yet they were acutely aware that opaque antisemitism still pervaded German society. Legal emancipation co-existed with subtle social exclusion. Like Gregory Peck, who in the 1947 film *Gentleman's Agreement* learns about 'restricted' hotels and housing in postwar Connecticut, so the Scholems and their co-religionists knew their boundaries, and how to respond. If a Berlin sports club welcomed only gentiles, Jews would found their own. But was that enough?

How the four sons of Arthur, who died in 1925, coped is the fascinating underlying theme of Professor Geller's superbly readable story, covering four generations. As the *Buddenbrooks*-like saga unfolds, he excels in portraying the complexity of German Jewish society.

The elder sons, Reinhold and Erich, who followed their father in the printing business, shared his confidence that antisemitism would fade away, if one accepted (pre-Hitler) Germany and assimilated. Reinhold had trained in London, Turin and Paris. Awarded the Iron Cross, he was a true patriot and something of a nationalist. Erich had worked as a printer for the *Manchester Guardian* and was a liberal. The brothers ultimately had to sell their business to 'aryans' and flee to Australia in 1934, where they struggled to start afresh. Their mother, Betty, managed to join them after *Kristallnacht*.

Both the younger sons, on the other hand, rejected Germany's capitalist model, and became alienated from their father. Werner, who married a gentile,

believed only a revolution could get rid of the antisemitic virus. He became a communist member of the Reichstag. Arrested after the Reichstag fire in 1933, he was murdered in Buchenwald in 1940.

Even as a young man, the youngest son, Gershom (born Gerhard), interested himself in Judaism and Zionism. He did not share his parents' belief in assimilation; he instead embraced a Jewish identity and in 1923 emigrated to Palestine, where he died in 1982. Today he is the best-known of the four brothers, renowned for the way he pioneered the study of Jewish mysticism, especially the Kabbalah. He was also a controversial Zionist, adopting a dove-like stance. He saw it as a cultural rather than political concept, and showed concern for the fate of the Palestinians.

Geller suggests Germany has not adequately commemorated the family. As one of the 96 Reichstag members killed by the Nazis, Werner has his slab in the memorial in front of the Bundestag. He is also honoured by a *Stolperstein* near his former residence in the Hansaviertel. Otherwise, there is the strange tombstone in Berlin's Weissensee cemetery. Only Arthur is buried there, but someone later added the names of his wife and sons, except Reinhold. Was that someone making a statement – that the Scholem's true home was Germany?

***The Scholems from Emancipation to Destruction* is written by Jay Howard Geller and published by Cornell University Press**

Who should tell the story?

***Broken Instruments* is a new musical about Holocaust survivor, violin restorer and violinist Ari Vander. Its co-creator William Varnam shares the story of its creation.**

Broken Instruments is the shared title of a new musical dramatisation, audio play, and novella, all as yet unheard of by the wider public. Yet the period in history in which these works are set, is known across the globe. I speak of course of the Holocaust - a story that must never be forgotten. But who should tell it? Should it be in the hands of those whose background and culture are directly connected, or should it be told by those whose forebears averted their gaze from cruelty or who were geographically too distant to grasp the nature of the horrors? Or is it anyone who collides unexpectedly with the harsh realities of war and hatred towards a nation?

If the latter is acceptable, then two individuals born and nurtured among the mining communities of north Nottinghamshire are playing their parts. When my friend, songwriter Phil Baggaley, read the book *Violins of Hope* by James A. Grymes he gave me a copy. It is a book dedicated to the violin and its players. Music offered hope in times of captivity and persecution. It inspired Phil to write a song titled *Broken Instruments* and after one listen, I understood immediately, and we both knew what we had to do.

I began looking further into the history of the Holocaust and there were times often when I had to stop and take a deep breath to arrest the tears. Phil had similar experiences. We visited the National Holocaust Centre in



Nottinghamshire, we made enquires, we had debates, we spoke to other creatives and with a rabbi who was kind enough to take us seriously and help us with Yiddish and Hebrew words.

The combined impact was so powerful that Phil and I took a leap of faith, even though we were non-Jewish and had no family links to the Holocaust. We were determined to respect the culture and people we were 'artistically' representing. A script quickly came together, and Phil crafted a beautiful range of songs, to which orchestration was added by the extremely talented music producer Mark Edwards. But then Covid 19 stepped in. Staging a live performance became impossible. We responded by creating an audio version under the direction of inspirational freelance theatre maker Daniel Ellis.

We deliberated at length about casting the actors, and if their voices should 'sound Jewish'. There are many debates about actors' licences to portray different cultures and genotypes but I believe that the actor's job is to truthfully portray characters in the environments they inhabit. This is not pretence. This is striving for a believable reality. With this premise in mind, and with what we considered to be a great weight of responsibility, we decided to be honest with ourselves. Our resources comprised almost exclusively white, British actors, a mix of male and female as the parts demanded, and none of whom were

Jewish. This is how it was. This is what we had. We had a play about which we were passionate. We knew we were taking a risk with such a sensitive topic and with the casting, but telling the story is what mattered. And this is what we did thanks to the work of a group of talented actors, and the technical recording wizardry of Rob Bullock. By using local British accents, we avoided falling into those awkward pits of caricature and stereotype.

Broken Instruments gives life to fictitious characters but relates to true events. Is it truth or is it fiction? Certainly it merges fact with fiction, but it seeks to portray a truth. Actors are like paintings. Both create an illusion that evokes real emotions. One is a picture on a wall that takes you beyond the wall; the other exists within walls that are gateways for the imagination.

Our yet-to-be-staged musical, and yet-to-be-listened to audio play, and our yet-to-be-published novella await their audiences, listeners, and readers. There are many ways to tell a story. Ours is one of hope and healing through the power of music. It has its sorrows, but it has its joys, and it offers a safe passage through turbulent times, carrying with it tunes that testify to a better future.

More information via
info@brokeninstruments.co.uk or
www.brokeninstruments.themusical.co.uk



NEXT GENERATIONS

The Association of Jewish Refugees

NEXT GENERATIONS

This month we share the views of AJR Trustee Stephen Kon. For the past 40 years Stephen has practised as an EU /Competition lawyer in London and Brussels. He was chairman of the London Jewish Cultural Centre and is currently a Trustee of the Freud Museum.

My father Tadeusz (Teddy) Kon rarely spoke about his life before or during the war. I knew that his father owned a textile mill in Łódź, where they had a comfortable life, and that Dad was studying law at Warsaw University before his father persuaded him to leave for Russia on 1 September 1939; that he was subsequently captured and held in a camp where he was tortured (the scars of which were clearly visible). He was freed following the Nazi invasion in June 1941, eventually coming to England. He never spoke of the fate of his parents or his brother, other than to acknowledge they had been killed but that he could not ascertain what had happened.

When my father suddenly died of a heart attack I reproached myself for not probing him more. A few years later, when I became an interviewer for Steven Spielberg's Shoah Project, I realised that my father was not unusual in not wanting to talk about his experiences. In contrast, many of my interviewees were now older and recognised the importance of Holocaust education by recording their personal stories. Sadly, my father was no longer there to tell his story.

So I decided to research my father's story for myself. I went to Łódź and Warsaw and to Yad Vashem. After ten years I was able to answer most of the unanswered questions.

After escaping the Nazi invasion of Poland with little more than a loaf of bread and photos of his parents, my father made it to Lvov (now Lviv in Ukraine). In July 1940 he was arrested by the NKWD (KGB) security and deported to a "labour" camp in the Karelian-Finska Soviet Socialist Republic. In October 1941, after release, he enlisted in the "Anders Army" formed by the Free Polish government in exile in London consisting of former Polish POW's. Together with his army unit he travelled to Persia, South Africa, the United States and Palestine where, in July 1942, he came under British command and ultimately was assigned to the Polish Naval Depot in Plymouth.

The Free Polish government in exile enabled him to continue his legal studies at Oxford University in the hope that the pre-war democratic Polish government would be restored. During this time, he met my mother, Lilian, the daughter of a Polish family which came to the UK c.1910. They married in October 1945 and circumstances were such that my father was unable

to qualify as an English lawyer, so he went into the textile business which he knew well. He always regretted not pursuing his law career.

As to my grandparents, shortly after its invasion the Nazi government established the Łódź Ghetto (renamed Litzmannstadt) with its deplorable and dehumanising conditions. My grandparents left their apartment on the main street, which had been regularly looted, and went with my uncle (who was in ill health) to Bydgoszcz, a small city further north. They were found or reported and in 1944 sent to Chelmo.

I assume that my uncle died at Chelmo although I have never managed to establish that for sure. My father's own experiences left him deeply scarred. He treated his new life in England in complete isolation from his pre-war life in Poland. I believe that many if not most survivors are torn by conflicting feelings of loss and guilt. Despite such inner turmoil he enjoyed his new life and some of the activities he had developed in Poland. However, there was always a sense that my father felt irreparably bereft.

My choice of studying law was very much influenced by a wish to complete what my father was unable to do. I decided early on in my legal studies that the EEC (as it then was) constituted a noble endeavour to avoid European wars in the future. I quickly became fascinated by the idea of a new legal order with nation states sharing their sovereignty rather than invoking it with bellicose intent. Hence my post grad work in Bruges: and working subsequently in Brussels only reinforced this commitment. Brexit left me with a sense of bereavement which reactivated my second generation genes. So, contrary to any expectation I would have entertained pre-Brexit, I have been granted Polish nationality and now have an EU passport. In a world which is still ravaged by war and enormous levels of refugee displacement, remembrance and education is essential in creating a culture where much cited hopes such as "never again" can become a reality .



Teddy (Tadeusz) Kon, c.1937

AJR CREATES PEN PALS

At the end of July we received an email from Tina Bruce asking if we could put her in touch with Sir Erich Reich, who chairs the AJR's Kindertransport Special Interest Group. It transpired that Sir Erich was fostered by Tina's great-grandparents and grew up for a while with her mum and family in Dorking. This is Tina's account of what happened next.

My mum rarely spoke about her childhood, but I knew that she started her life in Dorking in a refugee centre. She had fond memories of living in Shere, where her father worked as a carpenter. She missed her mother, who always spoke German. She loved picking bilberries in Nower Woods, and visiting the Silent Pool and Abinger Hammer. I got the impression that her grandmother lived with them, or at least that she saw her often, and that mum considered her quite stern – she didn't like mum wearing lipstick, as it was made from beetle blood, and they argued!

My grandparents died before I was born, and mum was never close to her brother and two sisters; I think there was a falling out at some point, but mum never talked about it and it didn't really



Erich with his foster mum Mrs Kreibich, Tina's great grandmother



Erich Reich with his foster family

occur to me to ask more. Unfortunately mum died not long after I was married and when we had our children, I became sad not only that they'd never know their grandmother and that I couldn't tell them much about our family history. I was in touch a little with my uncle Rudy (mum's brother) and his wife, Jenny, recommended Sir Erich's book.

I have to admit, I cried a little when I saw the photos of Sir Erich and my great-grandparents; I wasn't expecting photos and was unprepared for the emotions they stirred up. After finishing the book I kept going back to look at the photos and think of this man who was a stranger but with such a strong link to my family. I decided to try to thank him for sharing his story and giving me the opportunity to see some of my family that I never knew.

I contacted the AJR and was amazed to receive a response almost immediately, with Sir Erich also emailing me the very same day, asking about me and my family. He has been so warm and kind in sharing his memories of my family and his time with them, and we've exchanged several emails.

I'm so pleased to have made a new friend; it's strange to feel I know so much about him and his life already, and exciting to share memories of those long gone, keeping them alive just a little. Hopefully we'll be able to meet face to face next year and he has offered to share his memory album of his time in Dorking with

"our" family. In these strange times his little book has brought so much to my life. I've reflected on how lucky I am to be "in touch" with my family through Sir Erich, and sad that so many people lost so much in the war which in a roundabout way brought us together.

SIR ERICH WRITES:

"I arrived at the refugee home Burchett House Dorking in the autumn of 1939, as a four year old. Most of the families in this home were Jewish. The couple who took me in, and who were themselves refugees from Nazi Germany, became my foster parents. I lived with them for some seven years, during which time I became part of their family. As they were Christians, this included going to church and Sunday school, but only at festival time. They treated me extraordinarily well, made me feel at home, part of their family. Like good parents, Emilie and Joseph admonished me when necessary but also praised me at times. I even played with their children, one of them being Tina's mother, Sonya, just a few years younger. We managed to get into a few scrapes together, for which we were duly told off. Imagine the surprise when I was contacted by my foster parents' great- granddaughter so many years later. It brought back many wonderful memories of my time as a youngster in Dorking. I look forward to meeting her and reconnecting with Dorking and the Kreibich family."

TOO MUCH PAST

In this excerpt from an article in the latest edition of *The Jewish Quarterly* the celebrated writer Deborah Levy meditates on Maria Stepanova's recent book *In Memory of Memory* about the past, memory and family.

Maria Stepanova begins this discursive meditation on and around the ways in which her "ordinary" Jewish family managed to survive the persecutions of the twentieth century, with the death of her father's estranged sister. The narrator finds herself in Aunt Galya's apartment, sorting through postcards, ivory brooches, photographs, letters, diaries, souvenirs. She realises that this hoard is a valuable archive. "Objects from the long distant past," Stepanova writes, "look as if they have been caught in the headlights, they're awkward, embarrassingly naked. It's as if they have nothing left to do."

Stepanova is at her most searing when she writes about the "nonhuman face" of objects. Her description of missing parts of crockery as "orphaned", or faded photographs as "foundlings", opens the mind and lets in our own personal and historical associations. She is particularly astute on family photographs, noting there is always one that features "a middle-aged, stylish woman, suffering from chronic, mild depression".

Many writers are called upon to accompany Stepanova on what is as much a thought experiment "on the way memory works, and what memory wants from me" as an attempt to piece together shattered fragments of family history. These writers include Sebald, Proust, Barthes, Nabokov, Sontag and, perhaps most piercingly, Osip Mandelstam, under the heading *The Jewboy hides from view*.

A few visual artists are enlisted too, but less successfully. Stepanova includes a short, rather basic treatise on the

extraordinary photography of Francesca Woodman, who experimented with ways of making herself blur and disappear in her self-portraits. Woodman suicided in 1981, age 22. She is twinned with the vibrant, turbulent, ironic paintings of Charlotte Salomon, who was murdered age 26 in Auschwitz. Stepanova writes in a chapter entitled *Selfies and their consequences*: "All that disappears is what made you yourself." Is that true?

It is certainly true for the narrator in W.G. Sebald's 2001 novel, *Austerlitz*. He gradually discovers the fate of his mother, who was deported to the death camps. There is a great deal at stake for Jacques Austerlitz. This is because he carries within himself knowledge that is too painful to access. His assignment with the past is to recover this knowledge.

Stepanova's narrator speaks and thinks in a detached, elegant, serene tone. Perhaps there is no other tone that can better handle the panorama of ideas she puts to work in this philosophical investigation into remembering and forgetting. If I am not sure what is at stake, or what her narrator wants to know, or even what it is she wishes to un-know, perhaps that's her point. "There is too much past, and everyone knows it," she tells us. As her title suggests, memory itself is an artefact.

Towards the end of the massive achievement that is *In Memory of Memory*, Stepanova writes, "Sometimes it seems like it is only possible to love the past if you know it is definitely never going to return." Yet, as Freud told us, the past does return, and though we might wish to see it off, the repressed will jump into the queue at the grocery store and present itself in the form of a child's gold watch. Memory was Freud's major subject, of course, a life's work. His archaeological metaphor suggests that to recover the past, with all its shards and fragments, we have to dig down and bring to the surface those memories that have been pushed out of consciousness. And so, for this reader anyway, the unconscious of *In Memory of Memory*



Deborah Levy

is the way it obsessively digs up the perilous twentieth century and searches among its tram routes, crockery and stockings for the trauma wound.

The past is not exactly a stranger at our table, but it is uncanny all the same. Neither dead nor alive, it does not return my stares or smiles or tears, but in my own mind it does listen to my thoughts. Somehow, I believe we are both of us the present and the past, slightly altered from this exchange of knowledge and feeling.

Deborah Levy is the author of seven novels, numerous short stories and several acclaimed dramatisations. Her full essay *Too much past* can be read in issue 245 of *The Jewish Quarterly*, out now. *In Memory of Memory* by Maria Stepanova was published in 2020 by Fitzcarraldo Editions.

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The 'Little Polands' in Mexico and East Africa

James Colenut has recently completed an MA in Holocaust Studies at Royal Holloway, University of London as the David Cesarani Kobler Scholar - a scholarship partly funded by the AJR as part of our Educational Grants Programme, for which James is immensely grateful. His studies covered many different aspects of the Holocaust, some of which are very little known, such as the one he shares here.

As a History teacher, I often consider how my students imagine the past. When Year 7 examine the dreary existence of a medieval peasant, what sights, sounds, and scenes come to mind? These mental images act as a heuristic to the remembered past. Exploring our imagined constructions reveals the extent of our knowledge, and the role of photography, film and fiction, or storytelling more broadly, in generating our collective picture of the past. In History education, this concept has been labelled 'world building'.

When we think of Jewish refugeehood in the middle of the twentieth century, what mental worlds do we build? For the survivors, these worlds are painfully real, formed by experience and shaped by the contours of private memory. For successive generations, however, these imagined pasts are important. Inevitably etched in the black and white of newsreel footage, we perhaps see scenes of children on steam-engulfed platforms in Central European cities, or figures pinched with apprehension, sitting on suitcases in Lisbon, Marseille, or Trieste. We may instead hold images of arrival: Liverpool Street Station, the Statue of Liberty, or the limestone brick of Jaffa's port.

Our shared scenes of Jewish refugeehood

do not include the sounds of Polish folk music echoing around a crumbling hacienda in rural Mexico, or the smell of rye bread drifting across the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro. These images disrupt our expectations. The presence of Jewish refugees in Polish camps across WW2's tropical periphery is a counterpoint to established narratives of wartime displacement, and is, in itself, a remarkable story.

The names of the 'Little Polands' attest to their geographic diversity: Santa Rosa, Tengeru, Balachadi. These camps were a fixed point on a trajectory of mobility, which began with deportation from Poland's eastern borderlands into the Soviet interior, followed by passage into Central Asia and Iran, before resulting in a constellation of refugee settlements scattered across the Middle East, Mexico, India, and British East Africa.

From 1942 until the early 1950s, these settlements were populated by the 113,000 refugees evacuated from the Soviet Union into Iran with the 'Anders Army', including an estimated 7,000 Jewish soldiers and civilians. Understood in Polish memory as an 'odyssey' of redemptive, national-religious suffering, the transnational movement of refugees was shaped by ethnic entanglement. Jewish refugees were moved and confined alongside Catholic Poles. Yet the Jewish presence is largely absent from the popular and academic literature. The camps were claimed as spaces of Polish rejuvenation and cultural nationalism, directed by the clergy, managed by the government-in-exile, and shaped by the context of Nazi-Soviet occupation.

In the febrile atmosphere of Constitution Day parades and communal meals of stodgy peasant fare, wholly unsuited to the new environment, it is perhaps not surprising that these settlements have been imagined as spaces of Catholic homogeneity. It is possible, however, to uncover the Jewish presence. The Jewish experience as a subsumed minority is

Panorama of Santa Rosa, Julian Plowy Collection, Santa Rosa Album, KSVM



particularly striking in two camps, nearly 10,000 miles apart: Colonia Santa Rosa in Guanajuato State, Mexico, and Tengeru Camp in Tanzania, one of 22 Polish settlements in British East Africa. These settlements housed the families of the Polish army and owed their existence to frenzied negotiations between five governments.

We can trace and identify the Jewish inhabitants of these sites through a scattered archive of refugee testimony, both oral and written, the internal communications of Jewish relief agencies, and the records of 'local' communities in Nairobi and Mexico City. Dora Gross Moszkowski's account of her five years in Tengeru bursts with vivid description of people and place. She marvelled at a world entirely different to her Krakow home. Dora, her husband, and their two children, were only included on the transport to British East Africa because of her husband's "Polish sounding" name.

Recruitment for the Anders Army in Soviet Central Asia was drenched in an antisemitism that refuted any Jewish claim to 'Polishness'. Deportation and exile had hardened the swelling resentment of the 1930s, driven by ethno-religious claims to Polish nationhood. The antisemitic fervour of the pulpit and the ballot box travelled with the refugees. The presence of Jewish refugees in the 'Little Polands' offered a challenge to attempts to reassert and recreate a homogenous, Catholic space in exile. Dora's memoir details the campaigns of hatred, led by Tengeru Camp's senior clergy. As one of the camp's 22 Jewish refugees, living amongst 4,000 Catholic Poles, Dora was



Constitution Day Parade in Tengeru Camp, May 4th 1944, Moskal Family Collection, Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum



targeted for removal from any role in camp life. Her abiding memory of her time in Tengeru was her “mission to combat prejudice” in the face of taunts.

In Colonia Santa Rosa, a former hacienda which housed 1,432 Polish refugees from 1943 to 1947, a similar pattern of Polish-Jewish relations played out. The oral testimonies of four Jewish refugees allow us to recreate the camp as a space of Polish cultural nationalism, enforced proximity, and fetid heat. The 27 Jewish refugees in the hacienda were physically and verbally assaulted. The experience was too much for Fini Konstat, aged 16 upon her arrival, who typified the Jewish refugees’ horror at living “between anti-Semites”.

The Jewish inhabitants utilised local networks of communication to get the word out to the local Yiddish press, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, and the organs of American Jewry, drawing frenzied attention to, what one American Jewish newspaper labelled, the “Jewish inmates of a Polish concentration camp” so close to American soil. The resulting controversy stimulated action. The local community, in the form of the Comité Central Israelita de México (CCIM), worked effectively to remove the majority of Jewish refugees from Santa Rosa, placing them with families in Mexico City and finding work. After Santa Rosa’s closure in 1947, the camp’s Catholic inhabitants crossed the Rio Grande to join America Polonia, or traversed the Atlantic in the case of the 66 ‘Windrush Poles’ who boarded the Empire Windrush in Tampico. However, for the Jewish refugees of Santa Rosa, Mexico was

home. Their gratitude for their rescue from Santa Rosa, the vibrancy of the local community, and the relative absence of antisemitism in Mexico, ensured that their trans-global migration ended in Central America.

The stories of Tengeru and Santa Rosa, briefly alluded to here, are worthy of further reading. As a Masters student in Holocaust Studies at Royal Holloway, I have been regularly drawn to their sheer improbability, transnationality, but mostly to the questions they raise: How many more Jewish refugees were ‘subsumed’ in these spaces of Polish cultural nationalism? What did it mean to be a minority within a minority in a colonial space, with its racial taxonomies? Studying these spaces, and the lived experience of Jewish refugees within them, allows us to expand our geographic understandings, challenge nationalist historiographies, and enrich the ‘worlds’ we build when we think of refugeehood.

James is a Teacher of History and Politics at St Marylebone CE School, a comprehensive school in Central London. From 2018-2020, he completed intensive teacher training with the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) in Israel, Lithuania, and London. He is now a HET Outreach Educator.

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REVIEWS

LETTERS TO CAMONDO

Edmund de Waal
Chatto & Windus

Vignettes from the history of a great Parisian family and the atmosphere of wealth, culture and enormous sadness is beautifully captured in Edmund de Waal's new book *Letters to Camondo*. It is a series of fictional but very personal letters to Count Moïse de Camondo, a Parisian collector and bon viveur from a great Jewish assimilated family. They arrived from Constantinople at the same time as Edmund's similar and distantly related Ephrussi family came from Odessa. They were part of the belle epoch, living a few doors away from each other in an area populated by other rich and intellectual Jewish families including the Rothschilds. They were also targets for antisemitism.

Distinguished potter and author Edmund started writing during lockdown last year and exploring the rooms, archives and attic, tells of the interesting and wonderful life the Count led. He created a spectacular house with modern conveniences and filled it with a great private collection of eighteenth century art for his only son Nissim to inherit. But Nissim is sent to the front after volunteering to fight in WW1. The Count always keeps everything, saving the 268 precious letters and postcards he receives. Nissim sees friends die before joining an air squadron and displaying great bravery, flying mission after mission. He is reported missing on 5 September, 1917 – Marcel Proust sympathises with his father – before sad news of his death is confirmed.

Nissim's rooms become a shrine and eventually the museum opens in December 1936 to great fanfare after being bequeathed to the nation in the year following the Count's death. France's first Jewish Prime Minister Léon Blum is then nearly killed in a royalist and racial attack. Clouds are gathering, war breaks out and soon Paris is occupied and deportations start. Moïse's daughter Beatrice

– newly converted to Catholicism – and her daughter Fanny still enjoy a charmed life with their love of horses and equestrianism. Fanny's brother Bertrand is a wood carver, perhaps looking a little vulnerable in a poignant picture with his dog illustrating the back cover. But despite the family's enormous philanthropy, all are deported and Moïse leaves no direct heir.

The Museum at 63 rue de Monceau has remained unchanged since it opened. Edmund spotlights lavish rooms full of antique furniture, art, bronzes and paintings as he uncovers layers of family history filled with great tragedy. Weaving in all the loops, he also tells of helping his elderly father reclaim Austrian citizenship taken from him in 1938.

This is a very elegant and beautifully illustrated book, written mostly with a hauntingly light touch. It is quick to read but I did so twice to absorb more. Although less compelling than his best-seller *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, we catch brief glimpses of the famous netsuke (Japanese miniature ivory carvings). Despite so much tragedy, the book is uplifting and bears tribute to the Camondos and their close network of Jewish friends who showed outstanding generosity to the French nation and culture.

Janet Weston

JUST PASSING THROUGH: INTERACTIONS WITH THE WORLD 1938-2021

Daniel Snowman
Brown Dog Books

Daniel Snowman has written and edited almost twenty books over half a century, ranging from American history to classical music. Readers of the *AJR Journal* may know him best, however, for his acclaimed book, *The Hitler Emigrés: The Cultural Impact on Britain of Refugees from Nazism* (2002) and his Introduction to *Insiders Outsiders: Refugees from Nazi Europe and their Contribution to British Visual Culture* (2018).

Now in his early eighties, Snowman has published an account of his rich and fascinating life, from his early childhood in WW2 to his long career at BBC radio

and encounters with famous figures from Harry Truman to The Amadeus String Quartet and Plácido Domingo.

Born in 1938 Snowman grew up in a Jewish family in suburban Edgware. One grandfather was Acting Chief Rabbi. His early loves included cricket and opera. He studied History at Cambridge and the first of a series of lucky breaks came when he was invited to study American Government as a postgraduate at Cornell University. It was an exciting time to be a student in America. Kennedy was president, the Civil Rights movement was at its height and Snowman got to meet President Truman who told him why he had dropped the atomic bomb. His time in America led to a job teaching Politics at Sussex University and then to joining the BBC in time for the 1968 American presidential election.

The chapters on his years at the BBC are a fascinating evocation of a bygone age, barely recognisable today. The world was his oyster, with all the BBC's then ample resources at his disposal. He was able to indulge his great passions of music and history, producing programmes about the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Winifred Wagner and books on the Amadeus Quartet and Plácido Domingo. Snowman emerges from his memoir as hugely likable, a man of wide interests, with an enormous appetite for work and happy and lucky in equal measure.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter concerns his book, *The Hitler Emigrés*, especially 'how elements of the culture of pre-Hitlerian Central Europe came to influence, or to be integrated with (or rejected by), the pre-existing culture of their new country.' How did these central European refugees have such an impact on post-war Britain, with its notoriously insular and conservative culture? They acted as a bridge between British cultural life and European modernism. 'Nikolaus Pevsner,' he writes, 'introduced the ideas of Gropius and the Bauhaus to a generation raised on Tudorbethan revival and the Garden City ideal, while Martin Esslin at the BBC introduced the work of Central European playwrights to British audiences.'

OBITUARY

JOACHIM AUERBACH

Born: 4 March 1928, Berlin

Died: 14 May 2021, Birmingham



Joachim was born to Felix Auerbach and Lisbeth Auerbach (née Adler), into a family of lawyers and rabbis.

His family managed to arrange for Joachim to leave Germany in July 1939. He was only 11 years old. He never saw his parents again. They were murdered in a Nazi concentration camp in July 1942.

Joachim was taken to Bunce Court School in Otterden, Kent, a German progressive school with a strong connection to the Quaker movement where one of his cousins, the now famous painter Frank Auerbach, was also a pupil.

In 1944 Joachim left school and went to Birmingham, initially to a hostel overseen by a local branch of the Central Office for Refugees. He made lifelong friends and worked at various administrative jobs, finishing his career as a civil servant.

He travelled widely and went back to Berlin in 1989, just

before the wall came down. Some of his trips were with the International Friendship League, which was established to break down barriers between nations. In later life he visited London for the Safe Passage lobby of Parliament for child refugees to be allowed into the UK. Joachim's recognition of the need for such an approach was born of his own experience.

Joachim was a keen walker and a member of the City of Birmingham Ramblers group. Through the group he became a member of Birmingham Progressive Synagogue and a regular at social activities there. He attended two dancing groups a week, he Morris-danced well into his 80s and loved walking in the Lake District.

He was a member of the Association of Jewish Refugees for many years. The AJR was very supportive and arranged for him to have a wonderful, caring social worker, Marilyn Thomas, who did so much for him – and who meant so much to him. He is survived by his cousins Frank and Leonard Ashley.

The Ashley Family

Just Passing Through follows Snowman from project to project: a prolific author, broadcaster and lecturer and, most recently, a trustee of *Insiders/Outsiders*, a festival dedicated to the achievements of refugees from Nazism. The book closes with Snowman now in his eighties, still in excellent health. He knew he had had a good innings, he concludes. So true. Thoughtful, cultured, Snowman exudes cheer and wellbeing without ever being complacent. It's hard to imagine a happier life.

David Herman

NEW EXHIBITION

AJR recently helped fund a new exhibition of photography and video from award-winning Second Generation artist Sara Davidmann, revealing a personal story of trauma passed down through generations. *My name is Sara* at the Four Corners Gallery tells the story of the German-Jewish side of Davidmann's family, many of whom were murdered in Auschwitz and Theresienstadt, while others escaped to Shanghai, France and Israel, and by living in hiding in Berlin. Sara's own father and aunt escaped from Berlin on the *Kindertransport*, arriving in Britain in 1939.



ZOOMS AHEAD

Details of all meetings and the links to join will appear in the e-newsletter each Monday.

Thursday 7 October @2pm	Helen Fry - A Very Secret War: Bugging the Nazis in WWII https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83512186939
Monday 11 October @10.30am	Online Yoga: Get fit where you sit https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85925519362
Monday 11 October @3pm	Dr Rona Hart - Positive Psychology https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89852807545
Monday 11 October @6pm	Robert Voss CBE CStJ, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88498196849
Tuesday 12 October @2pm	Nathan Abrams - Stanley Kubrick's Jewishness and how it affected his films https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88060228352
Wednesday 13 October @2pm	AJR Book Club Discussion (no speaker) https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83344249162
Thursday 14 October @2pm	In Conversation with a My Story participant https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ajrs-my-story-life-book-project-tickets-146435298921
Tuesday 19 October @2pm	Stanley Soffa - The Jewish History Association of South Wales https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82859057527
Wednesday 20 October @2pm	Nick Dobson - The Glorious Garden of the Dead: Highgate Cemetery https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82907607247
Sunday 24 October @10.30am	Joint event with the Dunera Association - 81st Anniversary of the Dunera arrival in Australia https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85849734897
Monday 25 October @10.30am	Online Yoga: Get fit where you sit https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83361396889
Monday 25 October @2pm	Pam Fox - Kosher Hotels in Bournemouth https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/82347484633
Tuesday 26 October @2pm	Rosalind Bluestone - Goods for Good https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88408802678
Wednesday 27 October @2pm	Laura Nicholls - 6 Reasons Why Bath is a World Heritage City https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89012561954
Thursday 28 October @2pm	Katy McGregor - The History of Rouken Glen Park https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/81255419867



KRISTALLNACHT SERVICE 2021

Thursday 4 November 2021 2pm
Online and at Belsize Square Synagogue (if possible)

To book your place please email susan@ajr.org.uk
or call the office on 020 8385 3070

Please confirm if you wish to attend in person or view via Zoom
The Zoom link will appear in the November Journal and in the e-newsletter

Confirmation of whether the event will take place in person will be made by mid-October.

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