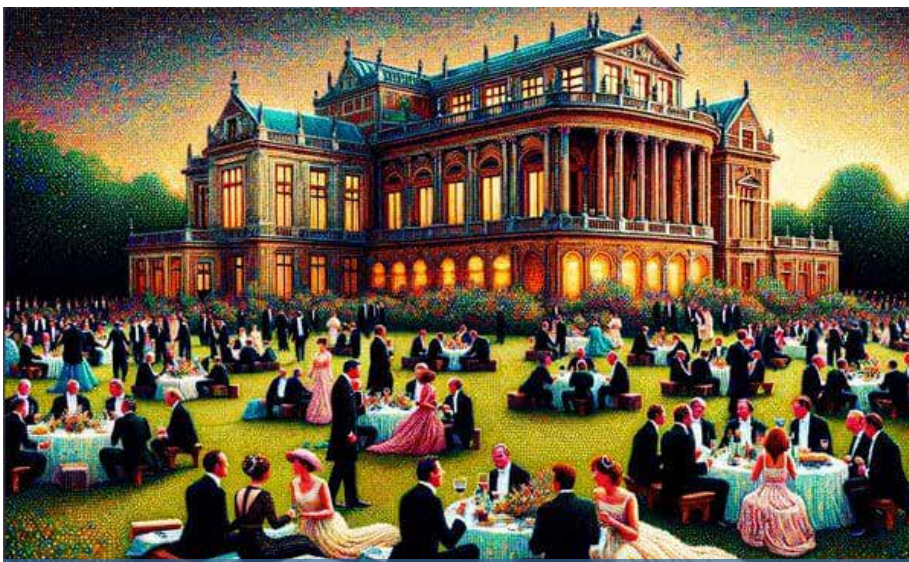




Surprising lessons in opera

Ninety years ago this week saw the first ever summer festival at Glyndebourne, one of the most celebrated opera festivals in the world. Some of the key figures in its creation were Jewish refugees from central Europe.



The Glyndebourne Summer Festival has inspired hundreds of artists as well as opera lovers

The first six-week season at Glyndebourne opened on 28 May 1934 with a performance of *Le nozze di Figaro* followed by *Così fan tutte*. Boyd Neel had conducted the first music heard in the renovated Glyndebourne opera house in 1934, in private performances, at John Christie's invitation. Christie's original theatre was soon enlarged and improved many times after its initial construction. As early as 1936 its capacity was increased to 433; by 1952 it held nearly 600, and finally, in 1977, it held 850 people. A rehearsal hall was also built.

There is something quintessentially English about Glyndebourne. Visitors, dressed in black tie and summer dresses, picnicking in the beautiful grounds, close to an English

country house in Sussex which goes back to the 15th century.

John Christie hired conductor Fritz Busch as the first music director, Carl Ebert, the Intendant of Berlin's Städtische Oper as artistic director, and Rudolf Bing became general manager until 1949. All three men were exiles from Nazi Germany.

Carl Ebert (1887-1980) was born in Berlin, the illegitimate child of a Polish father and an Irish-American mother, who was later legally adopted by Wilhelm and Maria Ebert. He started out as an actor, performing in Max Reinhardt's productions at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. In 1929 he directed his first
Continued on page 2

INCREDIBLE ARTS

This month's issue has a strong musical theme. As well as our lead article on Glyndebourne we have a centre spread focusing on our recent Kindertransport commemorative concert at Wigmore Hall, and a separate article on page 13 written by the great great nephew of Gustav Mahler.

The Jewish refugee contribution to the visual arts is also celebrated, including cinema (pages 9 and 12) and fine arts (pages 8 and 15).

We hope you enjoy this issue and, as always, would welcome any feedback.

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

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Surprising updates in opera (cont.)

opera productions in Darmstadt (where he first worked with Rudolf Bing) and in 1931 he returned to Berlin to run the Städtische Oper, where he collaborated for the first time with the conductor Fritz Busch. When the Nazis came to power Ebert left Germany for Switzerland, then in 1934 he came to Britain to take charge of the inaugural season of the Glyndebourne festival.

According to his obituary in *The Times*, 'What he accomplished at Glyndebourne in collaboration with Fritz Busch as conductor was to give a living demonstration that opera was a form of art sui generis, a Gesamtkunstwerk, and not, as English tradition had for a couple of centuries believed, a vehicle for star singers against tattered scenery and rough-and-ready stage management.'

When Glyndebourne reopened after the war Ebert and Busch returned, and their productions continued to set high standards. Ebert remained as artistic director until retiring in 1959. In 1954 he returned to a permanent post in Germany, resuming his former position in charge of the Städtische Oper, Berlin. In 1961 he supervised the rebuilding and directed the opening production of the company's new opera house in Berlin, the Deutsche Oper. He later retired to California where he died in 1980.

Ebert's longtime collaborator, Fritz Busch (1890-1951), was also born in Germany and worked at two leading German opera houses until the Nazis came to power. As a leading anti-Nazi he was dismissed from his post at Dresden State Opera and he joined Ebert at Glyndebourne in 1934, returning there in 1950 before dying of a heart attack in 1951. According to *Grove*, Busch was 'the soundest type of German musician: not markedly original or spectacular, but thorough, strong-minded, decisive in intention and execution, with idealism and practical sense nicely balanced.'

As Daniel Snowman writes in his fascinating book, *The Hitler Emigrés* (2002), 'Neither Busch nor Ebert was Jewish and neither was forced to leave Germany. But it was brutally clear to both men that everything they valued was now in jeopardy, and both felt themselves forced to seek work wherever they could obtain it,' in Buenos Aires and then at Glyndebourne.

Rudolf Bing (1902-1997) was born in



This wonderful painting by Julian Sutherland-Beatson, 2023, shows the planting of a special AJR tree at Glyndebourne to commemorate our own 80th anniversary in January 2022 and the very special contribution of Jewish refugees. The painting was commissioned by the family of Charles Danson, a refugee from Berlin who was a chorus member of the Glyndebourne opera in the 1950s, his family also sponsored the planting of the tree in his honour.

Vienna and was the only Jewish refugee of the three and worked in Germany from 1927-33. In 1934 he and his wife moved to Britain where he helped found the Glyndebourne Festival Opera. In 1947 he co-founded and was the first director of the Edinburgh International Festival and in 1949 he moved to New York to run the Metropolitan Opera for the next 22 years, where he supervised the move to the Lincoln Center. Throughout his years in America he remained a British citizen and was knighted in 1971. In August 2016 the AJR unveiled a plaque at Glyndebourne in honour of Sir Rudolf Bing.

There were two other refugees who were later associated with Glyndebourne. Martin Isepp (1930-2011), like Bing, was born in Vienna, the son of the artist and art restorer Sebastian Isepp and his wife, Hélène, a singer and singing teacher. In 1938 the Isepps fled to Britain where Sebastian worked at the National Gallery in London and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. In 1957 Martin joined the music staff of Glyndebourne Festival Opera, where he served for 34 years, as chief music coach 1973-78 and head of the music staff 1978-93. From 1994 until 2007 he returned annually as chief guest coach.

Another refugee who sang at Glyndebourne was AJR member Katinka Seiner-Easton, who describes the experience in her *My Story* book.

The story of Glyndebourne, ninety years on from when John Christie hired three émigrés, tells us much about the impact of refugees who came to Britain after 1933.

First, what seems quintessentially English was often changed beyond recognition by newcomers from central Europe. Second, that many refugees were itinerant, coming to Britain but then moving from one country to another, leaving their imprint wherever they went, even in some cases like Ebert, returning to postwar Germany for a spell. In some cases, they moved to quite unlikely places: Busch and Ebert worked together for four seasons at the Colón Ebert in Buenos Aires and from 1936 Ebert made regular visits to Ankara where he helped develop a state drama and opera school and a state opera, that had been partly instigated by Paul Hindemith at the request of the Turkish government. Ebert spent much of the war years there as head of the Department of the Performing Arts and played a decisive role in commissioning opera translations into Turkish for the school. Third, one of the areas where émigrés had their greatest impact was in the performing arts, from Glyndebourne to the Edinburgh Festival. Fourth, how many refugees had children, like Martin Isepp, who also went on to have a huge impact on British culture. Finally, not all the leading émigrés were Jewish. Apart from Ebert and Busch, the artists Oskar Kokoschka and Kurt Schwitters, the writer Fritz Schumacher (*Small is Beautiful*), the architect Walter Gropius and the choreographer Rudolf Laban were all non-Jewish.

For people interested in the story of European émigrés who came to Britain in the 1930s there is much to celebrate at Glyndebourne this summer and also some surprising lessons in cultural history.

David Herman

AJR DOES DOWNTON

In April the AJR Outreach team organised a wonderful two-day trip to Hampshire, the highlight of which was a visit to Highclere Castle, known worldwide as the location for *Downton Abbey*.

Ros Hart reports.

Highclere Castle loomed up into the blue sky and we excitedly made our way to the imposing front entrance. For those of us who had watched *Downton Abbey*, the rooms and staircase were exactly as shown on the screen. This is no film set, it is the home of Lord and Lady Carnarvon, who are still very much in residence. When the house isn't open to the public, they use it to entertain and host, and their guests sleep in the same bedrooms as the fictional characters in *Downton*.

The house is immaculate and very well maintained and an added bonus was the Egyptian exhibition in the castle cellars. In 1922 the 5th Earl of Carnarvon, together with his good friend, the archaeologist Howard Carter, made the extraordinary discovery of the Tomb of Tutankhamun. At Highclere one can see astonishingly exact and beautiful replicas of the shrine, the middle coffin, the mummy and the iconic death mask of the Boy Pharaoh.



After lunch in one of the jazz playing marquees, and a wander around the pristine gardens, we made our way to our hotel in nearby Kingsclere. After a rest we enjoyed dinner in a private room. It was such a pleasure to see our members laughing together, as they do on all our trips. It's when people really get to know each other.

The next morning, after a delicious breakfast, we checked out of our lovely hotel and enjoyed the breath-taking scenery on our way to Hambledon Winery, the oldest commercial vineyard in the UK. We

heard about how the vines are planted and tended, and the whole journey from grape to bottle, before being taken on a fascinating tour, seeing the massive presses, drums and barrels, and learning about the processes.

After tasting a couple of the vineyard's award-winning sparkling wines over a sandwich lunch we slowly made our way back to our coach, and back home.

It was a fantastic trip, enjoyed by everyone, and we thank all our members who made it so pleasurable.

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

As the Israel-Gaza conflict continues to divide opinions some AJR members have tabled concerns that even first generation Holocaust testimonies might be viewed in a different light.

A recent report from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust showed that there was a 20% decrease in the number of HMD events that took place this January. Although on the one hand, the Holocaust and the war in Gaza have nothing to do with each other, one only needs to scan the media to find countless examples of how members of the public conflate these

issues. There are numerous references to 'victims becoming oppressors' and even to Israelis as Nazis.

In the run up to Yom HaShoah the AJR's Alex Maws wrote a blog for the Council of Christians and Jews. In it he wrote 'If there was ever a time to be uncowed by the culture we are facing of surging antisemitism, it is now.... the current situation in the Middle East is not the Holocaust, but it does serve as an important reminder that antisemitism did not magically disappear with the liberation of the camps. Jewish people around the world continue to wonder and worry about how and where we will be able to live our lives in peace and in happiness, without our very existence in

society being seen by some as a problem that needs to be corrected.

'Although being Jewish is something that brings tremendous joy and pride to so many, it is also true that in the back of our minds, we know that not very long ago the entire world once turned its back on us when we most needed its protection – and we can't help but wonder if that might happen again.'

Alex's full blog can be read on <https://ccj.org.uk/blog/yom-hashoah24> while on page 5 our regular Israel correspondent Dorothea Shefer-Vanson focuses on the sensitivities around commemorating Yom HaShoah this year in Israel.

THE MEN WHO TRIED TO STOP THE NAZIS IN THEIR TRACKS

Eighty years since two Slovak Jews, Alfred Wetzler and Rudi Vrba, escaped from Auschwitz to warn the world about the deportations of Hungarian Jews, the AJR brought together experts and descendants to honour their heroism and discuss how their story can be remembered today.



The fully booked event on 1 April saw over 100 people gather at the Slovak Republic Embassy, with the Slovakian ambassador, Dr Róbert Ondrejcsák, and AJR CEO Michael Newman introducing the proceedings.

Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba, who met for the first time in Auschwitz, were among the first people to not only successfully escape from the camp, but also to inform the world about the horrors of the industrial killing taking place there.

The two survived for almost two years in the camp, far longer than the average of those selected to be labourers, before escaping and trekking some 140km to Žilina, Slovakia, where they recounted the horrors of the camp in detail to the Slovak Jewish community.

The publication and circulation of their 32-page testimony, which became known as the Vrba-Wetzler report, sent shockwaves throughout the world and was critical in putting pressure on the Hungarian regent, Miklós Horthy, to halt the deportation of Hungary's Jews to Auschwitz.

Speaking at our event, the author Jonathan Freedland said that the Vrba-Wetzler report "literally stopped one train in its tracks", saving some 200,000 Jews from being deported from Hungary and meeting the

same fate as the 437,000 Hungarian Jews who had already been murdered in death camps.

Freedland – whose book based on the story, *The Escape Artist: The Man Who Broke Out of Auschwitz to Warn the World*, reached number two in the 2022 Sunday Times bestsellers list and was shortlisted for the Waterstones Book of the Year – was one of the evening's panelists.

He said: "Those 200,000 people and their children, and their grandchildren, and now their great-grandchildren, owe their lives to the truth-telling of Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba. There are, I would guess, more than a million people alive in the world now because of what they did. It's a huge achievement.

"It's why I say these two men are towering figures of the Shoah who should be remembered alongside Oskar Schindler or Anne Frank and the huge names we associate with [courageousness during the Holocaust], and for a very long time they were not."

Dr Martin Korčok, Director of the Holocaust Museum in Sered', Slovakia, provided attendees with contextual information about the "rife" antisemitism and anti-Jewish legislation in Slovakia at the time and the country's collaboration with Nazi Germany. Using a presentation of maps and pictures,

Korčok spoke about the background of the Slovak-speaking two men, their escape route out of Auschwitz and the circumstances surrounding the founding of the Vrba-Wetzler report.

He said that despite Vrba and Wetzler being relatively unknown to many in Western Europe, the section dedicated to their memory in the Holocaust Museum in Sered' is one of their most popular educational programmes.

Several members of Rudolf Vrba's family were in the audience, including his granddaughter Hannah who showed pictures of herself as a young girl with him and spoke about the positive memories she and the family had of him.

Relative of Alfred Wetzler and director of AJR Refugee Voices, Dr Bea Lewkowicz, organised the evening and shared her memories of meeting both Wetzler and Vrba.

His Excellency Róbert Ondrejcsák, Ambassador of Slovakia to the UK, remarked: "Today, as we reflect on the legacy of Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, we are reminded of the power of resistance in the face of tyranny, and the importance of bearing witness to injustice wherever it may occur. We are proud to partner with The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) to honour the legacy of these two courageous men, ensuring that the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten, and that the voices of the victims continue to resonate across the generations."

The event was dedicated to AJR member George Donath, who had passed away just a few days previously.



Rudolf Vrba's granddaughter Hannah, Michael Newman, Ambassador of Slovakia to the UK Dr Róbert Ondrejcsák, translator and Slovak literature promoter Julia Sherwood, Dr Bea Lewkowicz, Jonathan Freedland, and the director of the Sered' Holocaust Museum Dr Martin Korčok

DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON'S

LETTER FROM ISRAEL



INDEPENDENCE DAY 2024



The annual transition from Remembrance Day to Independence Day that takes place every year in Israel in May is always

difficult. But this year it was more painful, even excruciatingly so, than usual.

Traditionally on Independence Day Israelis gather together to celebrate, whether by going on trips to one of Israel's natural beauty spots, enjoying barbecues in public parks or private gardens, or attending one of the many free public performances given by singers and other artists. The aroma of roasting meat envelops most of the country's towns and villages as people gather together to celebrate the event by eating and drinking, sometimes even to excess.

This year, however, many people, my household included, refrained from celebrating the event in the usual way. After all, who can celebrate when we are still reeling from the incursion by terrorists and the orgy of murder and destruction

they unleashed on our unsuspecting and unprotected civilians on 7 October? Israel has suffered terrorist attacks in the past, but nothing like this, with over a thousand people murdered, whether in their homes, at a music festival or trying to defend the country. Add to this the fact that over six hundred soldiers have died in the war that is still being waged against Hamas and Hizbollah, that over a hundred hostages are still being held by Hamas, that rockets are still being fired at the civilian population in the north and the south of the country, and that over three hundred thousand Israelis have been displaced from their homes and there is really very little appetite for rejoicing. Although the government tried to organise the usual celebratory events, many people refused to participate in them or even watch them broadcast on TV.

Along with all the suffering, pain and heartbreak, the country has never been more divided, with demonstrations still being held throughout the country to protest the government's mishandling of the situation. Israel remains a democracy and the concept of free speech continues to be sacrosanct, but the extremist elements within the government, who threaten to topple Netanyahu's government if their demands are not met, seek to undermine the liberal principles on which Israel was founded and

impose their messianic madness on the entire country. The threat of antisemitism on the outside is overshadowed by the threat to our liberal values from the inside.

Wider events in the political arena serve to underline the average Israeli's sense of unease, though the opprobrium of political leaders is not usually enough to dampen our mood. Israel's lack of popularity in the wider world is not to be sneezed at, but that alone is not enough to dampen the general mood. We have experienced similar swings in approval of our government in the past and have managed to overcome the critics who either deny our very right to exist or seek to put the clock back to a time when our ability to defend ourselves was shaky.

And so, instead of the usual barbecue in our garden with friends and acquaintances, we invited just four of our closer friends to our house for a cup of coffee. We were all in a subdued mood, but first we drank a toast to our country, and tried to focus on the positive aspects of life and avoid dwelling on the issues that are painful. On the whole we managed to remain optimistic, hoping that next year we will be able to celebrate Independence Day in the traditional way, with joy in our hearts.

DO YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR FAMILY STORY ALIVE?

Whilst there is nothing as powerful as hearing Holocaust testimony from a survivor, the reality is that it's time for the second and third generation to take up the mantle.

Which is why Generation 2 Generation (G2G) and Northern Holocaust Education Group (NHEG) are actively seeking new speakers, including from outside London and Manchester.

Ernie Hunter of NHEG said, "We aim to inspire our audiences to stand

up against hatred, discrimination and persecution of any kind." Sharman Berwald of G2G said, "Learning about the Holocaust keeps our family stories alive and promotes tolerance and understanding."

On **18 June at 7.30pm** join us for an informal online event with G2G and NHEG for people interested in keeping their family story alive, documenting it and sharing it in schools and other audiences.

You will hear from representatives of both G2G & NHEG about their experiences of giving talks and, most importantly, learn exactly what is involved, including putting

together a presentation, training and mentoring, bookings, what is expected from a speaker and what you can expect back.

AJR's Next Generations Manager, Debra Barnes, who has been a G2G speaker since 2021 and has now spoken to thousands of students said, "Telling my mother's Holocaust story to young people is probably the most important thing I can do to help raise awareness of the dangers of antisemitism. It's incredibly fulfilling and something I would encourage others to consider."

The Zoom link for the event is <https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89827359108>.

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.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Reading the article in your April issue, I was surprised to read nothing of the large number of almost exclusively Jewish German refugees who fled to France in the days immediately following Hitler's seizure of power already early in 1933. Many, probably most, left Germany less because they were Jewish but more because they were well-known members or supporters of the German Communist Party. According to several estimates, by October 1933 there were over 20,000 such refugees, almost exclusively in Paris. Among them were both my parents. My mother was a well-known member of the Frankfurt University Communist Party. My parents left Frankfurt at a few days' notice. Apparently, a warrant had already been issued for their arrest. Among better known German refugees in Paris at the time were Hanna Arendt and Walter Benjamin.

Despite the lingering antisemitism typified by the Dreyfus affair, initially at least, France welcomed refugees from Hitler's Germany. By December 1933 there was already a German language daily paper for German refugees; 'Die Pariser Tageszeitung'. Nevertheless, my mother told me that the French called them 'les b'erns'. When things were difficult for them in France, some German refugees would say that, in some respects, things had been easier, where it was more familiar 'bei uns'. That is to say, back home in Germany.

I was born in Paris in September 1934 and named 'Pierre' This is because the name Pierre translates easily into just about every other European language and, knowing that we would have to leave France, our next destination was uncertain.

With French unemployment increasing about half of these refugees moved on. I believe my father had lost his French labour permit. Together with my parents, I returned to Germany right at the end of 1934 or early 1935. Although they certainly feared arrest on returning to Germany, we nevertheless went back and I spent the first three years of my life first in Frankfurt and later in Berlin. We succeeded in coming to England in 1937.

Peter Seglow, London NW3

no effort to stop their leaders committing these crimes.

He does not mention that after its creation in 1948 by the United Nations, Israel never once initiated an attack against the Arabs in spite of three joint country attacks (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan) against Israel. Since then terrorist organisations have been firing shells into Israel which were retaliated. People dying on both sides. Finally, Hamas made their cowardly attack in October 2023, murdering and raping innocent civilian men, women and children, and taking hostages as prisoners. The Israelis each time have offered to negotiate a peace, mostly negotiating through other countries. Every time Hamas has refused to accept anything except the total disappearance of Israel.

Robert Norton, Nottingham

NO EXCUSE FOR HAMAS

I think Mr. Schwiening (*Letters, May*) has forgotten that the Blitz bombing was started in 1940 by the Germans. They destroyed large areas of London such as the East End, the North and the City. They destroyed countless private, commercial and religious buildings and killed thousands of people. In addition, they bombed and destroyed large parts of cities like Coventry, Birmingham and Manchester. Germany and its people should have been declared war criminals for the crimes committed against their own Jewish citizens in labour camps and later death camps. The population made

MARGARETE STERN z"l

It was my privilege to interview Margarete for the *My Story* project. I was well aware how important it was for me to capture her remarkable story as accurately as possible on tape. Of course, I was nervous but Margarete welcomed me so warmly to her Swiss Cottage flat and soon put me at ease. For someone with such an amazing life story to tell, she was very modest and self-effacing but full of good humour.

My condolences to her family and friends. May her memory be a blessing.
Charlotte Balazs, Barnet

LOOKING FOR?

STOLPERSTEINE IN SLOVAKIA

Steven Dorner is trying to arrange a Stolperstein for his paternal grandfather and family, who lived in a small town in what is now Slovakia and who were murdered in 1942. He would like to know whether any reader has successfully arranged a Stolperstein in Slovakia and could advise him.

sandcdorner@aol.com

IZI & LOTTE ETTINGER

Stephen Lawson, Vice President of South Hampstead Synagogue, is seeking more information about Izi and Lotte Ettinger, believed to have come from Germany and Poland respectively. The couple, who were childless, donated a sefer torah to the South Hampstead community.

stephenlawson813@gmail.com

REFUGEE MEMORABILIA

PhD student Will Todd would love to hear from any Jewish refugee – or their descendants – who still has personal memorabilia from their original homes. His research aims to demonstrate how a perspective based on objects (rather than documents) can increase our understanding of the refugee experience and convey new and deeper insights into their lives.

william-noah.todd@bristol.ac.uk

DID YOU KNOW MY UNCLE?

Jasper Rees is rightly proud of the little-known role that his great uncle, Julian Layton, played in saving Jews from Nazi persecution but would love to know more.

"Am I right in thinking that this Eichmann was the war criminal?"

"Yes, he was the war criminal."

In 1979 my great uncle Julian was interviewed by an archivist from the Imperial War Museum. It was the only interview he ever gave.

His first involvement in rescue work came in 1936 when, in Australia on business, he was cabled by the Jewish Refugees Committee and asked to persuade the government in Canberra to accept 500 young skilled refugees. Over the next nine months he personally interviewed applicants in Frankfurt and Vienna.

After the Anschluss Julian had to deal directly with Adolf Eichmann. "In Vienna I always had to report to Eichmann," he recalled, "Tell him exactly what I proposed to do and during my visits there he would send for me, usually in the middle, ask me how I was getting on and before I left would I give him a nominal roll of all those who we had selected to come to this country. I was very nervous of giving him a nominal roll because I feared that they might substitute some names of people who they would want to send out of Vienna for their own purposes."

Julian's commitment to refugee work grew out of gratitude. "If my parents hadn't had the good fortune to leave Germany," he reasoned, "but for the grace of God there go I".

His parents were immigrants from Frankfurt. My grandfather James was born in 1895, Julian in 1904. They and two of his brothers changed their



Julian Layton

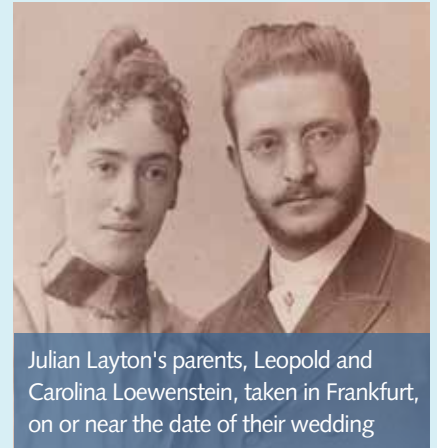
surname from Loewenstein to Layton and worked for the family stockbroking firm.

"We – meaning our family – were all perturbed with conditions in Germany," Julian explained. "We felt that one of the family should devote a good part of his time to the refugee problem."

He would work in the City until two, then head to Bloomsbury House where the Jewish Refugee Committee was housed. He was soon approached by Jewish families asking him to bring over relatives or friends.

Of his 14 trips to Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, the most dramatic found him in Vienna on 9 November 1938. "When there was that disastrous evening in Vienna [Eichmann] phoned me in the afternoon and said, 'I don't want you to be in the Jewish quarter this evening for certain reasons.' And of course we all knew what was going to happen. That was the ghastly night of the Kristallnacht. And the next morning the British consul sent for me very early and said, 'I think you'd better get out of Vienna.'"

That same night in Frankfurt a boarding hostel for Jewish schoolboys was attacked. In early 1939 James and Dorothy Rothschild dispatched Julian to Frankfurt to negotiate to bring back the schoolboys, plus the hostel owner and his family. They settled in a house called The Cedars on the Rothschild estate at Waddesdon Manor and became known as the Cedar Boys.



Julian Layton's parents, Leopold and Carolina Loewenstein, taken in Frankfurt, on or near the date of their wedding

Meanwhile Julian oversaw an operation to bring over 3,000 unsponsored Jews and house them in a disused WW1 camp in Richborough on the Kent coast. His task was to negotiate the release from the Reich of every refugee.

Most joined the Pioneer Corps. In the agitated atmosphere after Dunkirk, the 700 who didn't were interned as potential enemy aliens. By now in uniform, Julian was persuaded to go to the Isle of Man to look after their interests. In due course the decision was taken to send them to Australia and in 1940 they were among 2,500 detainees crammed onto the *Dunera* for its infamous voyage. In 1941 Julian was dispatched to Australia to take up the Jewish internees' cause. He stayed till the end of the war.

In answer to a final question from his interviewer, Julian was downcast. "The impression that I got then was it was a great pity that we didn't do more, before the war obviously, to save lives." Then he softened. "There's no question about it that we saved many thousands of people from the gas chambers."

Because Julian gave only this one interview much of his contribution is hardly known. If there are any readers who know more about the people he helped to save, then I and other members of his family would love to learn more.

Please feel free to contact Jasper directly via jasperrees@gmail.com

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

One of Frank Auerbach's hauntingly beautiful *Charcoal Heads* on display at the Courtauld



How does an artist reflect the anguish of a broken childhood? Frank Auerbach was torn from his Berlin home before his eighth birthday and sent to England on the Kindertransport in 1939. He never saw his parents again. He spent the rest of his childhood at a progressive boarding school in Kent with other Jewish refugee children. His gifts for art and drama were evident by the age of 16. Frank Auerbach is now in his 90s and still working fervently from the Camden Town studio that was once the workplace of his admired Leon Kossoff and Phil Metzger.

His paintings of Mornington Crescent are vibrant and optimistic, and yet it is his **Charcoal Heads** at the **Courtauld Gallery** that reveal a life shattered and rebuilt. In these raw and dramatic images we see the true essence of his broken childhood.

Auerbach studied at the Borough Polytechnic with David Bomberg, who urged his students to “define their experience of matter.” He wanted them, Auerbach recalls, “actually to apprehend the weight, the twist, the stance of a human being anchored by gravity: to produce a souvenir of that.” A prolific artist who is said to work from dawn to dusk, he said: “It seems to me madness to wake up in the morning and do something other than paint, considering that one may not wake up the following morning.”

The exhibition brings Auerbach’s post-war charcoal drawings together with paintings of the same sitters, reflecting his view of the close link between painting and drawing. He wanted each to be considered a standalone work.

Auerbach would begin his sketch, rework it, destroy it and start again. The process could last months, the canvas consistently shattered and torn, until the final image revealed through the thick impasto conveyed every nuance of the human being he was committing to posterity. They tell a powerful story even though the faces are blurred, making no eye contact, with heavy-lids beneath ponderous, sculptural foreheads. These works could not be further from the conventional image of a painted portrait, for in this instance it is not perfection the artist is striving for, but an almost messianic revelation of the soul.

The great masters Auerbach admired included Rembrandt, Constable, Rubens and Picasso. It was the intimacy of their work that attracted him, and we can see what he absorbed from them.

Auerbach stands with Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud and Leon Kossoff as one of the most original artists of the post-war period. But, as far as Bacon

is concerned, they come from different worlds. Bacon’s expressionist screams and distortions certainly reflect his own pain, sometimes even with a sense of parody. But Auerbach’s work relates his personal emotions to something more universal, suggesting lives that are shattered by war can also be remade. The torn canvas recalls the anguish, but also the possibility of repair. And this is what makes him one of the greatest painters of his era. He is not an outsider, but a participant, someone who sees, understands, and shares. *Ecce Uomo*: he is saying.

The exhibition closed on 27 May.

Annely Juda Fine Art

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**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

The Everyman refugee connection

Simon James is a member of the second generation who now lives near Swansea and has a passion for both cinema and writing.

You could say that my education in film and world cinema started quite by accident. This is the story of that happy accident and how it intersects with a fascinating period of history in Hampstead which saw a large influx of mainly Jewish refugees arrive in London in waves in the 1930s.

My father Karl Rikowski arrived in July 1939. After a spell of internment as an enemy alien, he was released in 1942 and settled in north London in 1943. Employment was sometimes difficult to obtain so Karl and some compatriot refugees started to build a niche offering in property renovation and maintenance. Their clients were mainly fellow refugees and displaced persons living in the Hampstead, Swiss Cottage and Finchley Road areas.

Around this time my father met Mr James Fairfax-Jones, the then owner of the Everyman Cinema and began maintaining the cinema and undertaking running repairs. He got to know the staff very well, and the Everyman became a sort of creche for my brother and me. Karl would drop us there in the afternoon and pick us up a few hours later. Of course we were not abandoned, rather we were under the watchful eyes of the staff, including the wonderful projectionist. And so our education in film started.

The programming in the 1960s included regular seasons of classics and trilogies mostly shown at the same time each year, sprinkled heavily with more modern releases. So there we sat in the high-backed seats of the Everyman and soaked up the Ealing Comedy season, including *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Ladykillers*. Then the German expressionist season, *Dial M for Murder*, *Nosferatu* and *Metropolis*. Then The Satyajit Ray season. The Bergman season. The French New Wave season. Classics from Hollywood – *Casablanca*, *Citizen Kane*, *The Maltese Falcon*. The

Andrzej Wajda trilogy starring Zbigniew Cybulski, the Polish James Dean. Films with wartime connections had a special resonance like *The Third Man*, which was a favourite of mine. Not to mention Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, and the Gorki Trilogy.

And *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday* by Jacques Tati. The list could go on and on. We saw the same films over and over again – no bad thing for such classics as we noticed different things each time.

In my adolescence and 20s my love of film continued, with many visits to the Everyman. This time it was often with a friend or girlfriend, seeing old classics as well as new releases. It was always a wonderful and a very social occasion to catch up with friends one might meet in the queue or over a glass of wine downstairs – perhaps enjoying one of the art exhibitions being shown by a local artist. There was always a good attendance by refugees, for example Mr Cohen who owned Hampstead Photographic in Heath Street, and also many well-known people from the arts, including John Hurt, Ted Hughes, David Magarshack and Elias Canetti to name a few.

My father told me how during the war many refugees would go to the Everyman not only to enjoy British and American films, but also because it was warm and cheaper than feeding the gas meter in a bedsit or flat. Many notable refugees were members of the German Free League of Culture, such as the Stuttgart artist and writer Fred Uhlman, or the Austrian Centre in 124 Westbourne Terrace - another hub of



Simon's father, Karl, pictured in St John's Churchyard in Hampstead for an advert for Dulux paint

creativity and dissent - of which the poet and political activist Eric Fried was a member.

After the war, when international film programming recommenced, the Everyman became incredibly important for refugees who could watch international films not shown in mainstream cinemas. It kept a cultural connection with European and world culture alive in a London that was grey, drab and still subject to rationing. And of course there was the vital social aspect and feeling of belonging it engendered. Refugee cinema goers would often meet up after the show for a coffee and post film critique in the Coffee Cup, the Cosmo in Finchley Road or the Prompt Corner in Pond Street.

In a way, back then the Everyman was like a special club where you could celebrate film, culture and meet like minds and old friends. It was a cinema like no other and for me the relationship with the Everyman was a sort of love affair with the place, the people and the films I watched there. Thank you Mr Fairfax-Jones, I am indebted. I suspect many feel the same love for the place and are grateful that the cinema is now in new hands and thriving.

A fuller version of this article appears in www.everymancinemahistory.co.uk/

Tom Conti leads Kinder appla

Eighty-five years since the Kindertransport brought the youngest victims of Nazi terror to safety in Great Britain, the tributes at a commemorative concert organised by the AJR to remember their dramatic escape from Hitler's persecuti



Tom Conti compering the concert at Wigmore Hall



First generation Kinder standing up for a round of applause

Tom Conti took on the role as the concert's compère, having recently played renowned German-Jewish refugee Albert Einstein, shortly after the Jewish scientist fled Nazi Germany, in the hit movie *Oppenheimer*.

Addressing the packed-out event at Wigmore Hall, Tom Conti said: "As the son of an Italian immigrant father, I had some experience of what it was like to be an incomer. For the children of the Kindertransport - thrust into new life, in a strange land, without their parents - it must have been terrifying. That's why I was honoured that the AJR approached

me to present today's concert. The Kinder represent strength and courage in the face of adversity and have an invaluable lesson to teach us all, about the perils of prejudice and discrimination."

The 500+ audience included a number of Kinder and their descendants as well as the family of Sir Nicholas Winton. Famed for being one of the key organisers of the rescue of 669 children from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia, Sir Nicholas's endeavours were recently depicted in the film *One Life*.

The music was performed by one of the

UK's most accomplished chamber groups, the Leonore Piano Trio. The musicians moved onlookers with a mix of central European and British compositions by musical masters Beethoven, Haydn and Novak – all chosen to reflect the heritage and culture of the child refugees.

During proceedings, eight of the original children, who found sanctuary in the UK stood to an emotional display of applause. The Kinder included Winton children Lady Grenfell-Baines, Lord Dubs, Peter Schiller and Bronia Snow, as well as Albert Lester, Elisabeth Marcuse, Ruth Jacobs, Harry Heber, Kurt Eichner and Ralph Samuels.

use at milestone concert

Scottish actor Tom Conti led on.



The concert attracted some wonderful media coverage, including this fabulous double page preview in the Daily Mirror in the preceding week, and a lengthy report on ITV News London on the evening of the concert



Members of the first generation with the AJR's Michael Newman, Danny Kalman (who chairs our Kindertransport Special Interest group) Nick Winton and Tom Conti

Reflecting on the sad reality that the Kindertransport anniversary year coincides with a time of increased sensitivity and concern for Jewish people, in this country and globally – AJR CEO Michael Newman, said: *“It is a priority for The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) especially at this time of increased antisemitism, to instil in all audiences the universality of the Holocaust, its lessons and its warnings in the hope that it can never recur and that the salvation of the Kindertransport will never again be needed”.*

Other honourable guests included Lord Pickles, UK Envoy for Post Holocaust

Issues, and representatives from the German, Austrian and Czech embassies.

One of the attending Kinder, Bronia Snow, who was rescued by Sir Nicholas Winton, sent us a lovely email the following morning to say: “I just want to send you a few lines re yesterday’s magnificent event. The organisation of that huge event with a packed hall was brilliant. It all went so smoothly. I have been to many wonderful musical events at the Wigmore Hall, it being my favourite concert venue, and it was so nice to find myself there again and also bumping into friends whom I had not seen for some time.”

We also garnered some fantastic media coverage, including the lead item on *ITV London News*, which included interviews with Tom Conti, Lady Grenfell-Baines, Lord Dubs, and Sir Nicholas Winton’s family members, plus shots of the live action. You can watch the report on: <https://www.itv.com/watch/news/catch-up-on-itv-news-london-from-sunday-12th-may/cwbr8jf>

Gemma Blane

Watch the entire concert on: <https://www.youtube.com/live/0479ihLaKGE?si=talyR8Hte6kE5lfc>

A TREBLE OSCAR WINNER

What do the movies *Spellbound*, *Ben Hur*, *El Cid*, *Double Indemnity* and the original *Jungle Book* all have in common? Their soundtracks were all composed by the Hungarian Jewish refugee Miklos Rozsa, the Oscar-winning composer perhaps most closely identified with film noir.

Janos Fisher explains more.

Miklos Rozsa was born in Budapest in 1907 into a cultured and well-to-do Jewish family.

Both his parents were musical and his mother played the piano. An uncle of his, who played for the Budapest Opera, gave Miklos a violin when he was five and by the age of eight he was composing and performing in public. Later he moved to Leipzig where he continued to compose classical music. Some of these compositions were performed by orchestras led by Solti, Ormandy, Bernstein and other well-known conductors.

In 1934, at the suggestion of his friend Arthur Honegger, he started to compose film music. His first work was for the Hungarian Jewish filmmaker, Alexander Korda. His scores, when he became the music director of the Korda



Miklos Rozsa is the composer perhaps most closely identified with film noir

Film Studio, included *The Four Feathers*, *That Hamilton Woman*, *The Jungle Book* and *The Thief of Bagdad*.

In 1943, moving to Paramount, he composed the music for *Double Indemnity*, *Sahara* and *Five Graves to Cairo*. Academy Award nominations followed these. The score for the film *Spellbound*, starring Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck, then received an Oscar, his first. His second Oscar followed for the score of *A Double Life*. In 1948 he signed a contract with Metro-Goldwyn Mayer. His longest film score - the music for *Ben Hur* - won him his 11th Academy Award. During the seventies he collaborated with

Billy Wilder on several films and the last film he composed for was Steve Martin's *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid*.

After 1982, when he had a stroke, he stopped composing film music and only worked on concert music. He composed violin and cello concertos and other orchestral works.

This Hungarian Jew was, without any doubt, one of the most important composers of film music of all time. During his Hollywood career he left his stamp on dozens of classic films and received a staggering total of 17 Academy Award nominations.



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Mahler's very great nephew uses citizenship for 'Resurrection'

Third generation AJR member Julian Lowrie has recently reclaimed his Austrian citizenship, having discovered by surprise not only that he is Jewish but also distantly related to the famous composer Gustav Mahler. He answers some important questions.

How did you discover your ancestry?

I was adopted as a baby and, because of that, until recently had no knowledge of my ancestry, though I had always been curious about my heritage. In 2018, my wife brought me a DNA test for my 50th birthday which revealed my Ashkenazi roots.

I was intrigued and so decided to apply to the council for my adoption records for the first time. With the help of a social worker, I started to trace my birth family. This was a complex endeavour which was initially very difficult, especially when I realised that certain family surnames had been changed post WW2 and that my birth mother had been living in Italy for over 50 years. Nevertheless, I persisted with the search, eventually discovering that my maternal grandparents had fled Vienna in 1938 because my grandfather, Rudolf Czechowitzka, was of Jewish heritage. Also in the escape party were Rudolf's brother Heinz, and their mother Anna Czechowitzka, my great grandmother.

Even more incredibly, I learnt that Anna was the daughter of Leopoldine Quittner (my great, great grandmother) and Leopoldine's brother (my great, great, great uncle) was composer Gustav Mahler, musical director of the Vienna State Opera House where he was a conductor from 1897-1907.

I also discovered that various members of my family were victims of the Holocaust. Sisters Johanna Blau and Sara Serafine Grunsfeld (my great, great, great aunts) lost their lives in Treblinka and Theresienstadt respectively, both in their 70s. Another victim was Alma Rosé, the daughter of Justine Rosé Mahler and niece of Leopoldine Quittner.

She died within 10 months of arriving at Birkenau, after heading up the women's orchestra of Auschwitz.

Learning of my Holocaust-related heritage was a very emotional experience. But I have also now discovered living relatives in the USA, to where some of my family managed to emigrate, including one close relative who fled Europe by Kindertransport

What research have you done since?

I recently discovered that my grandfather Rudolf and his brother Heinz were interned in the Isle of Man after War broke out. They subsequently anglicised their surnames to help them assimilate - Rudolf changing from Czechowitzka to Herbert, which had been his middle name. In fact, I was born Stephen D'Anno Herbert but my adoptive parents changed my name to Julian Mark Lowrie. Meanwhile, Heinz changed his name entirely to Henry Hines, using an anglicised version of his previous forename for his new surname.

I have now met several 'new' blood relatives in the UK, Vienna and even, via video call, the USA (shoutout to my cousin Debra for sharing her delicious latke recipe!). I truly never anticipated to have such a fascinating story or to learn so much more about myself in the process.

Why have you claimed Austrian citizenship?

Upon learning about the clause which allows a descendant of anyone who fled Austria due to Nazi persecution to claim Austrian citizenship, I decided to start the process. Thankfully I was successful alongside my own two children; we are now all Austrian citizens. This is something which my family members were deprived of when they were forced to flee their home. Acquiring the citizenship both affirms my own heritage and goes some way to righting those historical wrongs and I feel immensely privileged to be able to re-connect to my history in this way.

Being an Austrian citizen enables me to continue to visit and learn more about my family through unlimited travel to Austria,



Julian Lowrie in front of a poster for his birth family's jewellery family shop in Vienna



Julian Lowrie next to a bust of his great great uncle Gustav Mahler, in the newly refurbished Vienna museum in Karlsplatz

especially in a post-Brexit context. It will also be helpful for my two children, who can now better understand our heritage and enjoy the right to travel, work and live in Europe without restriction! My daughter Hannah is already planning a tour of our family history across Europe, visiting cemeteries, sites of Holocaust memorial and particular places of importance to our family.

What are your thoughts about the AJR and its sister organisations?

I am a very new member of the AJR but have already been made to feel welcome. The work it does on Holocaust education is invaluable; it is imperative that future generations never forget the atrocities which occurred, especially as the number of Holocaust survivors dwindle. It is only by understanding the horrors of our past that we can prevent horrific acts in our future.

AJR FUNDING PARTNER

The Sir Martin Gilbert Learning Centre

Sir
Martin
Gilbert
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The latest in our series of articles looking at organisations which receive funding from the AJR focuses on the Sir Martin Gilbert Learning Centre, established in memory of the late British historian by his widow, Lady Esther Gilbert, and his close friend Sir Harry Solomon.

Bringing the Kitchener Camp into classrooms

Since its creation in 2017 the Centre's talks programme has brought the work of nearly a hundred academics from around the world to the general public, and our focus has always been on events which combine scholarship and accessibility, rigour and engagement – the hallmarks of Sir Martin's own work.

In 2022 we set out to reach a new audience, with an ambitious schools' outreach programme. The idea that underpins all our schools' work is that Jews are an integral part of British history, and students should encounter them as such. Working with teachers representing state, grammar, and independent schools around the UK, we wanted to find out more about whether and how history teachers include Jewish voices in their work, and what obstacles might prevent them from doing so. There was a clear pattern in the responses we received: a lack of confidence and a shortage of time. This, we felt, was where the Centre could help.

We set to work on creating an extensive resource pack on Jewish migration to Britain in the 1930s, rich in primary sources, historiographical debates, background information and enquiry questions. In short, the pack pulls together everything a teacher might need to teach this topic, handily broken down into discrete topics. Teachers love to be able to do a deep dive in a specific area without having to trawl through archives and a hefty pile of scholarly tomes themselves.

What struck us, when creating this pack, was that, alongside the *Kindertransport*



Bethany Gaunt leading a recent session for students, and a word cloud, showing what the students associated with the word 'Jew' after the session.



and the Domestic Worker scheme, there was also the Kitchener Camp, a piece of history little known about by the public. Having researched the Camp to include it in our pack, we decided that this rescue of around 4,000 Jewish men from Germany and Austria warranted further attention, and we had a hunch that the AJR might agree. We relished the opportunity to use sites such as AJR's Refugee Voices for the authentic words of survivors.

We were delighted to receive funding from the AJR for the creation of a resource pack entirely dedicated to the Kitchener Camp rescue, as well as to support school sessions which we deliver directly to students, both in person and online.

Many may be familiar with Clare Weissenberg's heroic Kitchener Camp website, which she donated to the Wiener Holocaust Library. This veritable treasure trove, alongside Clare Ungerson's captivating book *Four Thousand Lives*, provided us with a wealth of background information, which has been painstakingly pieced together, and both Clares have generously read and provided feedback on our school pack. Their works, alongside other resources, are the basis for the pack.

Descendants of Kitchener men, and even one survivor who stayed in the camp himself as a young child, have also embraced the project with open arms, providing invaluable personal stories and primary sources which we have woven into our resource pack and school session.

As a small charity one of our biggest obstacles is visibility. This is a crowded field, with many excellent organisations providing vital support for schools. While we felt strongly that the Kitchener Camp was worthy of lesson time, our fear was that teachers would not have the space or inclination to include it. We need not have worried: in the first six weeks of the session going live we were able to reach 600 students and trainee teachers around England, Scotland and Wales, and 100% of these institutions would like us to return in future for more sessions. What teachers and students particularly enjoyed was following the lives of real Jewish refugees: hearing the ways in which they had overcome adversity to build rich, fulfilling lives in Britain.

We are so grateful that the AJR's support has allowed us to begin telling the story of the Kitchener Camp to students around the UK, and we look forward to seeing how both the Kitchener resource pack and school session continue to be used by teachers – we already have bookings up to March 2025! We are proud that, even as a small charity, we are making an impact and empowering teachers to include Jewish history and introduce new Jewish perspectives to secondary school students around the UK.

Bethany Gaunt

Associate Director of the
Sir Martin Gilbert Learning Centre

SPOTLIGHTING GRETE RING

The Ben Uri Research Unit is recording the émigré contribution to British visual arts and culture since 1900. It has already published some 500 profiles, with a further 800 under research. Here we share their profile of the influential art historian and gallerist Grete Ring, who was regarded as a force of nature.



Grete Ring at an auction in 1931

Grete was born Margarete Ring into a prominent Jewish family in Berlin, Germany in 1887. Her father was Victor Ring, a distinguished judge of the Superior Court of Justice, and her mother, also Margarete, was a sister of Martha Liebermann, wife of the famous German impressionist painter, Max Liebermann.

Art was prominent in Grete's life from an early age, with important collectors such as Oskar Huldshinsky and Eduard Arnhold paying frequent visits to her family home. She studied art history, archaeology and philosophy at Berlin University, completing her doctorate in 1913 under the supervision of Heinrich Wölfflin in Munich.

She began her career during the early part of the First World War as an assistant at the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, and for about a year at the National Galerie in Berlin, where she acquired her knowledge of 19th-century painting and became interested in the relationship between German and French art of this period.

Recommended by the art historian Max J. Friedländer to take over the scholarly writing and editing of Cassirer's auction catalogues, in 1919 Ring entered the employ of the Paul Cassirer Gallery in Berlin, becoming partners in the business with Walter Feilchenfeldt in 1924. After Paul Cassirer's suicide in January 1926, the couple continued managing the affairs of the gallery, organising successful exhibitions of 19th century

and contemporary artists, among them Oskar Kokoschka (1927) and Van Gogh (1932).

Following the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the gallery was shut down and, in November 1933, Ring became sole owner. But soon afterwards she received notice from the Nazi authorities banning her from continuing to conduct business. In 1935 the gallery was liquidated, and in May 1938 Ring emigrated to London.

The Home Office granted Ring permission to work as an art dealer and an art historian for one year and in July 1938 she inaugurated the newly founded branch of Paul Cassirer on Cleveland Row in London's St James's, with an exhibition of 45 watercolours and drawings by Cézanne. In November she was summoned to a Metropolitan Police Station to officially review her status, for which she wrote a résumé in English. In this she described herself as being 'of Protestant faith and not of Aryan origin (according to the Nuremberg laws)'.

In 1941 she had to leave the gallery premises after heavy bombing destroyed most of the stock she had brought from Berlin. In a letter to the art historian Ludwig Grote in Munich on 29 June 1945, Ring wrote how her collection of drawings from the German Romantic period – now part of the Bequest Grete Ring at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford – had luckily been spared. After the destruction of her house and gallery space, Ring moved into a small house in Richmond, together with the art dealer Arthur Kauffmann and his wife Tamara.

In this intellectually stimulating environment she spent her time writing in the garden, visiting libraries and attending lectures. She later moved into a beautiful house in South Street, Mayfair, where she displayed the drawings from her collection. It soon became a meeting place for international scholars and intellectuals, and Ring developed close friendships with English and continental art historians and important figures from the museum world, including associates of the Warburg Institute and the director of the National Gallery, Sir Kenneth Clark, who issued an affidavit to the English authorities on her behalf.

Ring contributed scholarly articles and reviews to a range of publications including *The Burlington Magazine* and *Master Drawings*, *The Art Bulletin* and in 1949 published *A Century of French Painting 1400–1500* (Phaidon Press).

Grete Ring died in hospital in Zurich, Switzerland in 1952. In 1998, the Ashmolean Museum celebrated Ring's collection in the exhibition *19th Century French and German Drawings from the Grete Ring Bequest*.

Grete Ring is featured in a new exhibition *Refugee Art Dealers in Twentieth-Century London*, which opens at the Ben Uri Gallery on 26 June until September.

To see profiles of other émigré artists – and maybe even add your own insights – please log on to Buru.org.uk and click on who you know or know of.

REVIEWS

HOW TO WIN AN INFORMATION WAR: THE PROPAGANDIST WHO OUTWITTED HITLER

(Faber, hb, £20)

By Peter Pomerantsev

Peter Pomerantsev is a Soviet-born British journalist and author. His latest book, *How to Win an Information War: The Propagandist Who Outwitted Hitler* (2024), is about Sefton Delmer, a British propagandist during World War II.

Delmer was born in Berlin in 1904, the only son of Professor Frederick Sefton Delmer (an Australian lecturer in English at Berlin University) and his wife, Mabel Hook. In 1917 they moved to Britain but his father returned to Germany after World War I. Sefton was educated at Oxford and after graduating, he became the Berlin correspondent for the *Daily Express* from 1928-33. He was the first British reporter to interview Hitler. He then became the Paris correspondent and from 1936 he covered the Spanish Civil War.

From 1940-45 Delmer became the Head of Special Operations for Britain's Political Warfare Executive, making 'black propaganda' radio broadcasts to Germany. As Pomerantsev writes, 'He edited a daily newspaper and oversaw a whole industry of leaflets stimulating desertion and surrender, fake letters, fake stamps, and a vast array of rumours, gossip ... all intended to break the spell cast by the Nazis.'

Many of Delmer's team were German-speaking Jewish refugees. One of their most intriguing radio characters was *der Chef*, a character who loved the German army but hated the Nazis. He was played by Peter Hans Seckelmann, a mild-mannered German novelist of Jewish descent. One of the main scriptwriters was Johannes Reinholz, who had fled Berlin with his Jewish wife in 1939. In 1942 Reinholz was replaced as *der Chef's* antisemitic adjutant by Frank Lynder, who came from a family of Jewish booksellers in Bremen.

There was a strange civil war between Delmer's team and the worthy intellectual émigrés who worked for the BBC German Service and wanted to convert ordinary Germans to their high liberal or Socialist ideals. Listening to them, Delmer later wrote in his memoirs, was like 'Maida Vale calling Hampstead.' This, Delmer thought, would never work. This antagonism was reciprocated by refugees like Karl Otten. 'Everyone at the BBC knows that Sefton Delmer is a fifth columnist,' Otten wrote. But Delmer used the testimony of other refugees to give authentic details to his broadcasts.

'What was it like for Jews to work for a show counterfeiting Nazi propaganda?' Pomerantsev asks. How did they feel about speaking foul racist abuse in these broadcasts, aimed at winning over German listeners in these broadcasts?

Others recruited by Delmer included Peter Wykeman (né Weichmann), Rene Halkett (né Freiherr von Fritsch), Father Elmar Eisenberger, an Austrian priest, and Agnes Bernelle, and the writers, Muriel Spark and David Garnett.

Delmer wanted broadcasts that would speak to ordinary Germans and constantly undermine their faith in Nazism, building a divide between them and the party. He believed that many Germans were not idealists or passionate Nazis and he wanted to tap into this lack of idealism. It worked. Delmer's broadcasts later moved to the BBC. 'The estimated audience for the BBC German broadcasts,' Pomerantsev writes, 'was now [in 1945] between ten and fifteen million a day – up from one million in 1941.'

After the war Delmer returned to *The Daily Express*, published two volumes of memoirs, *Trail Sinister* (1961) and *Black Boomerang* (1962), and wrote two other books, *Weimar Germany* (1972) and *The Counterfeit Spy* (1973). He died in 1979.

But he will be remembered for his contribution to the war effort. He and his unlikely team helped break the hold of Goebbels' propaganda machine, creating a gap between the German people and the Nazis until Germans believed the version of reality they got

from Delmer's broadcasts and leaflets rather than the version they heard from the Nazis. That's how we helped Britain win the Information War.

David Herman

THE ORPHANS ON THE TRAIN

by Gill Thompson

Headline Review

Fate can take unexpected turns and never more so than for the auburn-haired teenager from Scotland who ends up spending the war working and surviving in war-torn Hungary. Kirsty is devastated when her father is killed in a mining accident in their hometown of Hamilton, near Glasgow, after her mother died of tuberculosis when she was only four. A lifeguard at the local baths, he had imbued a love of swimming in his daughter. Now an orphan and alone in the world, she at first lives with friends and as solace learns to cook. When life becomes uncomfortable Reverend Murray, the minister who conducted the recent funeral takes her to a talk by Jean Mathison the matron of a girls' mission school in Budapest with many Jewish pupils.

So Kirsty decides to go back with this caring lady when she returns from furlough to neutral Hungary and put her newly-acquired culinary skills to good use. Miss Mathison had already been alarmed about the "huge danger" the Jews of Europe faced following Kristallnacht in Austria and Germany in November 1938. In particular she worried about how those in Hungary – who were already experiencing worsening living conditions – would cope.

The grim journey in this historical fiction book starts as war breaks out. After travelling through several countries with interminable waits in the cold, the pair arrive at the school. At first life goes fairly smoothly and Kirsty helps the cook Mária in the kitchen. In summer there are even wonderful swimming holidays on Lake Balaton. But as time goes on life becomes increasingly difficult. Problems build up for Jewish families who are all dealt with compassionately by Matron as

food becomes ever scarcer and goes missing in the kitchen. Ominous links with the Arrow Cross Fascists emerge and Kirsty endures a terrifying incident. Meanwhile everyone soldiers on, working ever harder to help pupils as their world closes in, until Matron is arrested by the Gestapo.

Kirsty had made friends with a pupil Anna – whose father owned a watch-making business – and gets to know her family but after the Nazi invasion in 1944 worries desperately for them. As conditions deteriorate badly the two girls find themselves on their own – and go to desperate lengths to survive – searching for food and dodging the Nazis and Arrow Cross men. Almost insurmountable problems arise as they go from one hiding place to the next.

Interwoven are stories of the insidious impoverishment, hardship and deprivation of Jewish life. People are forced into cramped and crowded living quarters where disease is rife, are allowed out for very limited hours and forced to wear a yellow star. Ever-resourceful, the girls make a series of audacious escapes and very narrowly avoid death and drowning in the River Danube.

As well as being a story about strong friendship this is also an account of great tragedy, anguish, the kindness of strangers, and romance. Despite the poignant and sometimes horrifying happenings, the gripping narrative is always interesting and easy to read. It makes the reader appreciate just how independent and resourceful youngsters had to be in wartime and the profound agony which divided families and sometimes separated them forever.

Janet Weston

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KINDER EVENTS – for all Kinder and their descendants

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susan@ajr.org.uk



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OBITUARIES

Hella PICK CBE

Born: 24 April 1929, Vienna

Died: 4 April 2024, London



Hella Pick grew up in Vienna's 19th Bezirk with her mother and grandparents, as her parents divorced when she was three years old. She was nine when she arrived on a Kindertransport and went on to become a pioneering journalist of great repute.

Hella's family were part of the Viennese bourgeoisie who saw themselves as the professional middle-class, urbane, cosmopolitan, secular - a million miles away from the bearded religious Jews who arrived in Vienna from the East.

Life before Hitler was aspirational and comfortable. But, as it turned out, how Hella's family thought of themselves didn't matter. Their secular lifestyle counted for nothing in Nazi Austria and, whether they liked it or not, their story would soon become one of an Austrian-Jewish past.

Hella's experience of childhood separation, first from her father, then her mother, her home, her school and all her friends, is by any standards harrowing. But she always insisted that she remembered nothing about her emigration. More than anything, she hated being seen as a victim, although in her autobiography she did acknowledge that she always struggled to trust and never lost the feeling that there were invisible walls that, as a refugee, she felt that she could never scale.

"My life" she wrote "was driven by an unending need for recognition that my work was first-class; and, in love affairs, by constant reassurance that my commitment was fully returned".

As a student at the London School of Economics, where she met my mother, Hella was one of a group of young Jewish refugees who shared a defining ambivalence about their Jewish identity. They would say that they were Jewish not by religion but 'by race.' Like her friends, Hella wanted to believe in a post-war world where what had happened to her could never happen again to anyone of any faith.

But no matter what dreams she might have had for a better future, the ghosts of Hella's past were always there in her love of returning to Vienna, her Austrian porcelain collection in her flat on Haverstock Hill, her choice of art, her schnitzels and sachertorte and her passion for Mozart.

It was only her Jewish identity – the single fact that had turned her life upside down – that was conspicuously absent. As she said: "I could not bring myself to speak of it, or even acknowledge it for many years".

But that was to change. In 2018, as the guest on *Desert Island Discs*, Hella effectively 'outed' herself as a Jewish Kindertransport child, also detailed in her autobiography in 2021. A whole new UNambivalent Jewish world reached out to her. And her social diary became even busier – always a joy for Hella.

After decades differentiating herself from London's Jewish community, she even started arguing for a greater focus on the rise of antisemitism in the programme of The Sussex Weidenfeld Institute - where she and I were on the Advisory Board together - and on more than one occasion, she shocked me by saying "I really must join Belsize Square synagogue". She never wanted her 'Jewish-ness' to be confused with

religious belief but for the first time she felt able to embrace the lost piece of her identity.

The day before she died, weak and on oxygen, she was asked whether she wanted a religious ceremony. She didn't but this is what she then said: "My Jewish identity meant a lot to me and I regret spending so many years not getting involved.

"I am sad not to have understood more clearly what it meant to be a Jew. In the end, Jewishness became part of my identity and it makes a difference finally to be able to acknowledge that."

Nicola Glucksmann

Note from editor: Hella believed that the only way to fight antisemitism is to teach people about Jewish culture, Jewish history, and Jewish integration into wider cultural, intellectual and scientific experience. Not just by always focusing on the Holocaust. Her full testimony can be viewed on www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/hella-pick

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Eric MARK

Born: 18 July 1922, Magdeburg

Died: 7 November 2020, Brussels



70 years after the events, Eric Mark learned that the ‘Secret Listening’ he had been part of had significantly shortened WW2. By this time, only a handful of the 110-odd ‘Secret Listeners’ were still alive.

A refugee from Germany age 12 ½, with a small suitcase of clothes, his teddy and his stamp collection, red-haired Eric took to Britain immediately, falling in love with tea, marmalade and cricket, and later getting his little brother also safely to Britain.

However, stateless from 1936 and cut off from his parents, Eric’s experiences reached a low-point when, aged 18, he was rounded up with other German nationals and interned on the Isle of Man as an “enemy alien”. The only way out was the Pioneer Corps where Eric did the dullest jobs, moving crates or piling bricks, although he did enjoy the camaraderie. He used his Army-issue shoe brush for the rest of his life, waving it at students during his talks whilst imitating his formidable Sergeant-Major.

A Sergeant discovered Eric had a significant mathematical brain, and shortly afterwards Eric was told to sign the Official Secrets Act, finding himself in the Intelligence Corps. The 21-year-old was delighted he was going “to DO something” at last, so imagine his disappointment at being sent to sit in a grand English country house basement.

Trent Park was the first of three locations where the British housed captured senior enemy officers. They were housed in great comfort, and kept ignorant of the superbly-hidden bugging devices that had been placed throughout, including billiard tables, plant pots, window sills, even

trees in the gardens. As the imprisoned residents of Trent Park grew in numbers, those from the same region of Germany or Austria would lapse into dialect, and British-born Secret Listeners struggled to understand. Native-born German & Austrian Jews now (finally) classed as safe for the war effort were recruited, with Eric among them.

Chats between German officers about the latest German technology or military strategy planned in Berlin proved of immense value to all Allied Intelligence Services. Eric knew none of this at the time, although he guessed it once: having heard “Peenemünde” in a bugged conversation about long-range German weapons (V1 ‘doodlebug’ Flying Bombs and V2 Rockets), when BBC radio announced a major RAF sortie had destroyed a site at Peenemünde, Eric guessed (hoped) that the Secret Listening had been helpful.

Still stateless, Eric later went with the Intelligence Corps into Germany to assess the extent of middle-ranking Germans’ Nazification - enthusiasts, or lip-servers to survive? A naturally kindly man, he found this analysis challenging.

However he felt really outraged when Nazi officers he had listened to bragging how many Jews & others they had killed, were released home to Germany scot-free. The Secret Listener recordings of atrocity-boasting by many (not all) officers had to be hidden to avoid Russia learning how technically-advanced British bugging was, and there was no alternative evidence for an open trial.

After many years with Shell in London then The Hague, Eric joined the European Commission in Brussels in 1973 as a transport economist. Given the devastation he had witnessed in

war-torn Europe, he thoroughly enjoyed working for the European commonality through better road safety. Colleagues in Brussels complimented this “typical Englishman” on his excellent German(!), Dutch, French and Italian.

Few have heard of Eric Mark, but his gentleness and twinkly-eyed humour are remembered by all who met him, and his legacy in encouraging European road safety are visible every time we leave our homes: compulsory seat-belts; impact-absorbing (crumpling) car bonnets and motorway barriers; tachographs to protect lorry drivers; wet-weather gripping tyres; as well as financing the M25 orbital around London, and initial feasibility surveys for the Eurotunnel.

Eric died aged 98, and is survived by his wife Miriam, children David, Anne and Sandra, and grandchildren Rebecca, Hannah, Nathaniel and Jacob.

With warmest thanks to historian Dr Helen Fry, whose 20 years’ painstaking research uncovered the Secret Listeners’ and wider intelligence history; Eric’s story is in Helen’s book, *The Walls Have Ears*.

Sandra Robinson



ARE YOU THE CHILD OF A CAMP SURVIVOR?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET OTHERS AND SHARE THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES?



caryn@ajr.org.uk

IN PERSON EVENTS

DATE	TIME	GROUP	CO-ORDINATOR
Monday 3 June	12.30pm	Bristol	Ros Hart
Thursday 6 June	2.00pm	Pinner	Karen Diamond
Monday 10 June	2.30pm	Leeds	Michal Mocton
Tuesday 25 June	11.30am	Central London	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 25 June	12.30pm	Brighton	Ros Hart
Tuesday 25 June	2.00pm	Edinburgh	Agnes Isaacs
Wednesday 26 June	11.00am	Degas Exhibition at the Burrell Collection, Glasgow	Agnes Isaacs
Thursday 27 June	12 noon	Nottingham	Karen Diamond

ZOOMS AHEAD

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

Mon 10 June @ 4pm	Gavin Morris – South African Jewry: before, during and after apartheid https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83060108607 Meeting ID: 830 6010 8607
Tues 18 June @ 7.30pm	Telling Your Family Story with G2G & NHEG https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89827359108 Meeting ID: 898 2735 9108
Wed 26 June @ 2pm	Book Discussion (no speaker) – Frenchman’s Creek by Daphne du Maurier https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83157504036 Meeting ID: 831 5750 4036

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KEEP FIT WITH AJR

All AJR members & friends are invited to take part in these online exercise and dance classes throughout the coming month.

Every Monday @ 10.30am	Get Fit where you Sit (seated exercise) https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439 Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439
Every Tuesday @ 11.00am EXCEPT 4, 11 AND 18 JUNE	Shelley's Exercise class https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622 Meeting ID: 884 6694 5622
Every Wednesday @ 9.30am EXCEPT 12 JUNE	Dance Yourself Fit with Jackie Turner https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86302485494 Meeting ID: 8630 248 5494

GERTI BARUCH

The AJR was sad to learn of the passing of Gerti Baruch just days short of her 98th birthday.

A full obituary will be published next month.



The AJR Ramblers enjoyed fantastic weather for their first outing, which took in some of the Royal Parks in central London. The next outing is on 22 July - contact karendiamond@ajr.org

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