

# AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

## Ukraine, Jews and antisemitism

Unreported by the British media, a considerable affront to Jewish sensibilities was staged by Ukrainian activists in Paris, in the form of a celebration at the grave of the former Ukrainian leader Simon Petliura, under whose brief rule thousands of Jews were murdered in the bloodstained chaos that followed the Russian Revolution. Petliura had to flee from Bolshevik rule and was assassinated by a Jew in Paris in 1926.

The Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria are naturally preoccupied with the Nazi brand of antisemitism that harnessed nineteenth-century racial theory and twentieth-century German technocratic efficiency to an unprecedented project of genocide. But one should not ignore the older, atavistic forms of antisemitism that flourished across Eastern Europe. By 1917, Ukraine had a long tradition of antisemitism, dating back to the uprising of 1648-54 against Polish rule led by the Cossack Hetman (leader) Bogdan Khmelnytsky. The Polish landowning nobility often left the management of their estates to Jewish middlemen, who thereby incurred the hatred of the Ukrainian peasants. Khmelnytsky's uprising witnessed one of the largest series of massacres of Jews perpetrated in Eastern Europe; it formed the subject of Sholem Asch's harrowing novel *Al Kiddush Hashem: A Novel of 1648*.

Now that Ukrainians, Europe's last submerged nationality, are forging their own independent state, they may be tempted to cast Petliura, who fought for Ukrainian independence between 1917 and 1921, in the heroic mould of Hetman and national leader. But that would be to deny the darker side of the legacy of Ukrainian nationalism, its ingrained antisemitism. During Petliura's rule, it has been estimated that between 35,000 and 100,000 civilian Jews were murdered, up to 40 per cent of them by his forces. Some scholars have argued that Petliura was no antisemite, but he certainly did nothing to prevent the excesses committed by his forces, preferring, as did other warring factions, to use hatred of the Jews as motivation for his troops.

In the witches' cauldron that was Ukraine in the revolutionary period, three separate conflicts were fought out simultaneously:



Petliura's grave in Montparnasse Cemetery, Paris

the international war between the Central Powers, Germany and Austria-Hungary, and Russia; the national struggle of Ukraine for independence from Russia; and the civil war between the Bolsheviks (Reds) and the counter-revolutionary forces (Whites). This turmoil gave rise to Mikhail Bulgakov's unforgettable novel *The White Guard*; in its dramatised version, *The Day of the Turbins*, it was a favourite of Stalin.

After the 1917 February Revolution that deposed the Tsar, Ukraine had its own parliament, the Rada, which in June 1917 proclaimed Ukraine an autonomous republic; this brief period of self-rule ended when German and Austro-Hungarian troops occupied Ukraine and installed a puppet government under Hetman Pavlo Skoropadsky. After Germany's defeat in November 1918 and the withdrawal of the occupying forces, Petliura was a member of the new government, the Directorate of the Rada, and, in January 1919, when war broke out between the newly established Soviet Russian regime and Ukraine, he became the leading figure in the Directorate. But in late 1918, it was White forces, breaking out of their southern strongholds, that occupied Ukraine; as convinced Russian nationalists unwilling to compromise the integrity of the

Russian Empire, the Whites were no friends of Ukrainian separatism.

When the Bolsheviks defeated the Whites in autumn 1919 and the civil war ended, Ukrainian nationalists fared no better under the ruthless centralising force of Soviet power. Petliura withdrew to Poland, and played a part in one of history's more fantastical forgotten episodes, the attempt by newly independent Poland to reconquer territories it had not held since the seventeenth century by invading Ukraine. In the Polish-Bolshevik war (1919-21), Marshal Pilsudski's forces took Kiev (Kyiv), the Ukrainian capital, aided by forces under the command of Petliura. But the Poles were pushed back, and most of Ukraine fell to the Soviet Union.

Ukrainian antisemitism reached its lowest point during the Nazi occupation; the Ukrainian auxiliaries who played their notorious part in the operation of the death camps are forever part of the image of the Holocaust. Indeed, had the Germans not behaved with insensate savagery in the occupied Ukraine, it is likely that they would have secured substantial local support. As it was, collaboration was widespread, and Ukrainians and especially Cossacks were prominent in the army of General Vlassov, commander of the renegade Soviet forces who fought with the Germans.

Vassily Grossman, whose novel *Life and Fate*, centred on the Battle of Stalingrad and encompassing the fate of the Jews under both warring dictatorships, is one of the towering epics to emerge from the Second World War, was born into the Jewish community of Berdichev, Ukraine, in 1905. Grossman witnessed the aftermath of the Nazi occupation first-hand as a Soviet war correspondent. But his *Black Book*, with details of Ukrainians who worked as Nazi police, was suppressed after the war, and *Life and Fate*, written in 1959, was published in Switzerland only in 1980, 16 years after his death. As the celebration of the anniversary of Petliura's death shows, the lethal antisemitism that disfigured Ukrainian national life is still being airbrushed out of its history, to the detriment of the country's healthy political development.

Anthony Grenville

## From our parents' bookshelves

This is the first of a series of occasional articles devoted to works of literature that formed part of the culture of German-speaking Jewry and can still be read and enjoyed today.

Arnold Zweig's novel *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927) is probably the best novel in German to come out of the First World War - though the best selling is Erich Maria Remarque's anti-war classic *Im Westen nichts Neues* (*All Quiet on the Western Front*, 1929), known worldwide in Lewis Milestone's film version. Penguin Books published a translation, *The Case of Sergeant Grisha*, in 1986.

Zweig's novel revolves round a judicial murder, an execution carried out with due legal procedure but with complete disregard for true justice. Grischa, an escaped Russian prisoner-of-war, is shot as a spy, though he is clearly an innocent man simply trying to get home to his family. But it is 1917, and the German High Command on the Eastern Front, fearful that Russian deserters might infect the German army with revolutionary Bolshevism, has ordered that Russian soldiers captured behind the German lines be executed as spies.

Zweig, a Jew born in Glogau (Silesia) in 1887, served in the press department of German Army Headquarters on the Eastern Front, after a spell in a labour unit on the Western Front had turned him into a convinced pacifist - see his novel *Erziehung vor Verdun* (*Education before Verdun*) - and subsequently into a Communist. Whereas Remarque writes from the perspective of the frontline soldier, a worm's-eye view that sees little beyond the multitudinous forms of suffering and death in the trenches, Zweig uses the case of Grischa to illuminate the underlying workings of military and political strategy.

Those who seek to save Grischa place justice and morality ('Recht') above the interests of German power ('Macht'): General von Lychow, representing the old Prussian virtues founded on a bedrock of traditional values; his nephew and adjutant Lieutenant Winfried; his legal adviser Dr Posnanski, a memorable portrait of a Jewish lawyer whose wit and razor-sharp intelligence conceal a passionate commitment to humanity; and Posnanski's clerk Bertin (Zweig himself).

Against them stands the most powerful man on the Eastern Front, Albert Schieffenzahn, an unforgettable portrait of General Ludendorff, Field Marshal von Hindenburg's right-hand man, a technocratic genius whose undeviating obsession with German power, territorial annexations and outright military victory (the 'Endsieg') led Germany to crushing defeat in 1918. The case of Grischa becomes a touchstone by which Germany's conduct of the war is judged - and found morally wanting. Schieffenzahn may succeed in imposing his will on von Lychow, but he relies on superior power to do so. Though he defeats Russia, his position will, it is plain, collapse once it in turn encounters superior forces in the West.

Zweig's panoramic view of the war in the East takes in Germans, Russians, multinational Austro-Hungarians as well as Jews living in the Pale of Settlement in German-occupied Russia. Zweig was one of those assimilated Jews whose life was changed by encountering the traditional Judaism of the East; he rediscovered his Jewish roots, later going to Palestine to escape Hitler. Through the centuries-old wisdom of these Jews, Zweig compares the German Empire with the great empires of the past that crumbled into dust, like Sodom and Gomorrah, once the righteous among them were outnumbered by the power-mongers.

The military-industrial-aristocratic complex that dominated German policy-making in the First World War, bent on massive annexations abroad and rejection of democratic reforms at home, met its nemesis in 1918, when its defeated troops refused to continue fighting for a regime from which they were wholly alienated; revolution swept the Kaiser from his throne. Zweig's compulsively readable narrative, combining distanced irony with passionate condemnation of injustice, succeeds brilliantly in interweaving the case of Grischa with the forces that decided the fate of the warring nations. He returned to East Germany in 1948 and died there in 1968, laden with honours by the Communist authorities but with his creativity sadly diminished.

Anthony Grenville



PHOTO: ALFRED BUECHLER

Happy birthday, Mr Chairman: AJR's Head of Administration and Personnel Carol Rossen makes a presentation to Hermann Hirschberger

Kindertransport members of AJR, in cooperation with Susie Kaufman and the AJR Centre staff, organised a surprise 80th birthday celebration and lunch for Hermann Hirschberger, chairman of KT-AJR's Planning Committee.

Bertha Leverton, founder of the Kindertransport reunions, spoke of Hermann's organisational and planning skills as Chairman, and of his sense of humour as displayed at the monthly lunches. Hermann was also a member of the Board of Deputies and continued to speak to schoolchildren about his experiences, both here and in Germany, she said.

In his response, Hermann spoke of the tremendous privilege he felt at being 80 and thanked his wife Eva for her continuing support. Carol Rossen made a presentation on behalf of the AJR, as did Harry Heber for World Jewish Relief.

RDC

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## Stateless in Schlaraffenland

The war in Europe was over, and I had become an ACE - Allied Civilian Employee - working for the US Army in Germany. I had a cushy job in Pullach, Bormann's former headquarters where we were billeted, as assistant to the personnel officer, a captain, whereas the majority of my colleagues had to travel into Munich each day to censor letters or monitor telephone calls.

It hadn't been an easy decision to leave England. The prospect of facing Germans again gave me nightmares, but what finally decided me was the fact that my father and brother, who had survived the war on the Continent, were then living in Nice and that I would surely find an opportunity of meeting them. (In fact, I saw my father as early as July 1945 in Poissy, a small town north of Paris, where we spent a week in preparation for our work in Germany. He had undertaken the then gruelling journey from the south to spend a few days with me.)

My fears about the Germans proved to be unfounded. Exhausted by six years of a war that had left their cities reduced to rubble and ended in their humiliation, the master race had become dispirited, bedraggled and very humble. At times I was to find their servility, their eagerness to please, almost embarrassing.

The army's civilian staff consisted of WDEs (War Department Employees) and us ACEs, mainly recruited in Britain. The WDEs earned twice as much as we did; their accents were the same, if not worse, than ours, for they were mostly older than we were, and they did the same work as we did, but there was one important difference: they held American passports and we were stateless.

Nevertheless, I had two great assets: I was young and I was female. For an army of occupation, far away

from home and forbidden to fraternise with German women, we young girl ACEs were a godsend. We were courted, propositioned and sometimes even proposed to. The army, anxious to keep its soldiers happy, organised and provided transport for outings and dances that would allow us to mix freely. There was always an abundance of food and drink, to the amazement of us ACEs who had come from austere, rationed Britain.

I had a third asset: I didn't smoke. Nobody at that time wanted German marks - everybody wanted cigarettes. My PX ration would buy me anything, from the services of exclusive dressmakers to expensive cameras. What Harold Macmillan once famously told an ungrateful nation was true of us young female non-smoking ACEs: we'd never had it so good.

The first holiday the army provided, over Christmas and New Year 1945-46, was to the South of France! I used - or possibly abused - my position and made sure I was on it. The journey took a now incredible 52 hours. I stayed at the Carlton in Cannes - Nice was for GIs and I had officer status - in almost obscene luxury. After a joyful reunion with my brother and sister-in-law, I managed to spend time with them and my father each day and at the same time explore the beautiful coast.

Just before I bade a reluctant farewell to the Good Life, in September 1947, I paid a brief visit to Vienna, nine years almost to the day since I had left it. The houses were shabby, the people surly and very sorry for themselves. But what struck me most was that the city had indeed become the *Stadt ohne Juden*, foreshadowed by Hugo Bettauer in his 1922 novel, and in the process had lost its soul. I left without regret.

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## 'Large enough to cope, small enough to care'

The essence of the AJR, Andrew Kaufman told a packed AGM gathering at the Paul Balint AJR Centre, was that it was 'large enough to cope, small enough to care'.

Delivering his report for 2005, the AJR Chairman said nothing more typified this essence than the Paul Balint Centre. The AJR differed from other charities: it knew its members intimately. If a regular member suddenly didn't come for lunch on Monday, the staff would know something was amiss and deal with it immediately.

There had been a huge growth in membership cared for by the Social Work team of Marcia Goodman. In 2005, some 1,000 members had received help, whether Self Aid, Homecare, welfare benefits advice or general social work. Under Carol Hart too, the AJR's 'fantastic' team of volunteers added the personal touch which made the AJR so unique.

Far from declining, Andrew said, the AJR had recruited a new member every two days. With the Kindertransport coming under the AJR umbrella several years ago, there were many new, younger members. Members had also joined through the Claims Office, so ably run by Michael Newman, and through the growth of regional groups, of which there were now 35. They were also recruited through Michael's valuable work in media and public relations.



Not on the agenda: Chairman Andrew Kaufman and Vice-Chairman and Treasurer David Rothenberg share a lighter moment

The AJR publicised all these activities through its website - visited by nearly 9,000 people per month from around the world - and the Journal. Following Richard Grunberger's sudden death in February 2005, the Journal continued under the direction of its Executive Editor, Dr Howard Spier. In January 2006, Dr Anthony Grenville, who had been associated with the AJR for many years, became Consultant Editor and his scholarship and specialised knowledge of the refugee community had shone through his learned articles.

The AJR Charitable Trust had provided increased financial assistance also to organisations like the Anne Frank Educational Trust and Beth Shalom as well as its own Refugee Voices project.

These projects would be the AJR's enduring legacy.

Andrew thanked the dedicated staff at the AJR, Directors Carol Rossen and Gordon Greenfield, and the 'extremely supportive' Management Committee.

David Rothenberg, the AJR's Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, echoed the theme that the AJR would continue as an organisation despite the generally held belief that it was in decline. Its remit went well beyond the present generation, he declared, adding 'We'll be in business for 50 years!'

David underlined the AJR's links with the New York-based Claims Conference, stating that one half of the AJR's activities were funded through that organisation. The Umbrella Group of Holocaust, Survivor and Refugee Organisations covered the whole of the UK and the entire spectrum of the Jewish community. The AJR had also benefited from the sale of Heinrich Stahl House.

The AJR spent over £1 million a year, David continued, but its finances were sound because of the legacies it received. He paid tribute to the dedicated work of the AJR's staff.

Andrew, David and all members of the Management Committee were re-elected unanimously.

HS

## AJR's 'jewel in the crown' celebrates 20th birthday

On a splendid summer's day, some 70 guests celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the AJR's Paul Balint Day Centre, now renamed AJR Centre, at a special lunch (for a detailed story of the Centre's history, see February issue).

Welcoming guests in the brilliant sunshine, AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman noted that the Centre's role had changed substantially in its 20 years. Given that the average age of regular visitors was now 90, the meals on wheels service - over 200 frozen kosher meals per week throughout Central and North West London - had become one of its most important services.

Andrew paid special tribute to several of the guests. Ludwig Spiro, AJR's former Treasurer and now Life President, had, he said, 'conceived the Day Centre and brought it to life', while the Paul Balint Charitable Trust - Andrew, Danielle and Agnes Balint were present - had



Tête-à-tête: Ludwig Spiro, AJR Life President and inspiration behind the AJR Centre, in conversation with Andrew Balint, nephew of the Centre's benefactor, Paul Balint

supported it loyally for many years. Andrew went on to single out 'one lady whose name was synonymous with the Day Centre': Sylvia Matus, who had retired only last year. Sylvia, he said, had 'brought her own brand of TLC - Tender Loving Care' - to the Centre. Now, the Centre - 'the jewel in the AJR's crown' - was looked after with TLC by his wife Susie and her loyal and hard-working staff.

Dawn Somper, Deputy Mayor of Camden, acknowledged she had previously been unaware of the Centre's existence but declared it was carrying on the noble tradition of aiding refugees and of being 'a champion of older people'. She looked forward to returning to the Centre next year as Mayor of Camden.

Hermann Hirschberger, Chairman of KT-AJR's Planning Committee, stressed how much Kindertransport members appreciated the Centre - in particular the monthly lectures and, of course, the splendid food, provided at such little cost. It was a pleasure to be there, Hermann added.

The speeches at an end, guests seemed to need little urging to tuck in to the excellent fare provided on this memorable day.

HS

## More on refugee children in North Cornwall during the war

I read Trude Silman's article 'A school which no longer exists' (June issue) with great interest. I remember Kingsley School at Tintagel, but cannot recall whether I knew at the time that there were five refugee girls boarding at the school. I knew about the ladies who were known as the Principals. One of them was Susan Stebbing, Professor of Logic at Cambridge and a formidable intellectual.

I went to the grammar school at nearby Camelford, but spent much of my holidays at Tintagel in a caravan belonging to the Jago family - Tom and Violet and their sons Tom and Geoffrey, with both of whom I am in regular touch. (Tom had a girlfriend called Renate Fuerstenthal at Kingsley School. Does Trude Silman remember her?) These good people received my sister Hannah and myself as full members of the family. To be sure, many Kinder were not treated at all well by their hosts but I sometimes think that not enough acknowledgement is made of the efforts of many non-Jewish families like the Jagos, who were substitute parents in every sense. I left in late 1941 for the St Mark's Road hostel while I worked in the Hammersmith



Photo taken in 1937: Tom Sr, Tom Jr, Violet, Geoffrey

Hospital laboratories until 1943, but my sister stayed with the Jagos for two more years.

My sister and I were also taken to the Singers for Pesach. Charles and Dorothea Singer lived in a house called Kilmarth on the south coast of Cornwall. Their children were Andrew and Nancy but I have lost touch with them. The house was subsequently acquired by Daphne du Maurier, who based her novel *The House on the Strand* on it. Professor Singer, a surgeon, became discouraged from

practising medicine by his horrifying experiences in the field hospitals of World War I. He became Professor of the History of Science at University College London and is best known as the co-author of the monumental *History of Technology*. Dorothea Waley Singer and her monster hearing aid was exactly as described by Trude Silman. Dorothea, too, was a distinguished historian of science, the author of the definitive biography of Giordano Bruno, who was burned at the stake in 1500. She was secretary to the Cornwall refugee committee and did much good work putting Jewish authorities in Germany in touch with potential hosts in Cornwall.

I also remember being taught Jewish studies by correspondence course from the St John's Wood synagogue. In this way, I got to know rather more about the prophets Hosea and Amos than I thought I needed to know, but it got me a credit in School Certificate. The member of staff concerned was a Miss Marjorie Moos and I am surprised that they have no record of her at the synagogue.

Harry Grenville  
(formerly Heinz Greilsamer)

## The Other Schindler's List

'A school which no longer exists' took me back to a school in Hampstead, where, at the elbow of Maresfield Gardens, Dr Schindler's co-ed prep Regent's Park School had a handful of refugees cramming for various exams before the war.

There were only two classes, so a nine-year-old could sit next to a teenager. The main thing was to learn everything as fast as possible to pass some exam sooner than you'd be ready for it. To be pitchforked into a country whose language you don't speak is tough enough without having to grapple with nineteen shillings eleven pence three farthings, the order of Henry VIII's wives, and French irregular verbs.

Three teachers tried their best with us: an art/PE mistress who taught the girls to roll their r's ascending the steep hill from Finchley Road public baths, where the swimming pool doubled as a gym, and two male colleagues.

Mr Steele's main subject was English.

Daily he led us into battle against pronunciation, punctuation and colloquialism, and never to ask 'When is he coming back?' on being told someone had passed away. His advice for instant command of the language was to read the third leader of the *Times* daily.

Sadly, Mr Petley's mathematical genius never penetrated me. He was a keen amateur astronomer who, in the bald area laughingly called 'the garden', had us help him build an observatory to house our home-made 6-inch reflector telescope, before that fateful 3 September '39 scattered us in all directions.

In summer, we tried to become cricketers. Pitches in public parks were heaven. The only catch was we went there to play the other schools in the area. Having hundreds of boys to pick their teams from and traditions going back centuries, they had no trouble scoring them so that these confrontations were like David and Goliath but with the wrong ending.

It was a doubtful honour to be appointed captain, though it taught me how to stop being 'Silly Mid-On' if I wanted to survive. The posting of my batting order on the notice board before matches was always a love-hate affair - you can't please everybody. Looking back on it now, I would call it 'The Other Schindler's List'.

Still, all this helped no end with exams and reports, for dear Dr Schindler wrote 'though unfortunately his paper was not handed in on time, no doubt due to his other interests like the cricket where he created splendid esprit de corps etc'. Yet, I must have got it together in that final summer before the war as I passed the entrance exam for the Regent Street Polytechnic School of Architecture. Had it not been for Herr Schickelgruber, I might have gone on to design buildings which Prince Charles actually likes. Instead, all that remains is for all of those who remember all of that to have the best reunion ever.

Günter Guttman  
(Peter Goddard)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### WHO IS OUR ENEMY NOW?

Sir - Peter Phillip's article 'Who is our enemy now?' (June) is a little disturbing. After all these years in exile, he seems to have learned very little.

I was married to an Austrian lady for 33 years. We frequently went to Vienna mainly to visit relatives but also for holidays. While there, I could not help but feel uneasy, almost like returning to the 'shadows of the past'. It is a city full of life, entertainment and gaiety, seldom surpassed. And yet, Mr Phillips seems to underestimate the activities of right-wing extremists, including in Austria. He says many of these activists are over 80. Don't think for one moment that they are on their own. There are others all over Europe and, sadly, from the Middle East. They are no less dangerous than the Muslim extremists.

Peter Henry Chapman  
Isle of Man

Sir - Would Peter Phillips not agree that the enemy was - and is - fundamentalism of whatever hue? Is it more than an historical accident that many of today's terrorists profess Islam? Yesterday they were 'Christian' and, in between, were those few who hoped to create the State of Israel by terrorist means.

Francis Deutsch  
Saffron Walden

Sir - I, for one, wouldn't dream of condemning Peter Phillips merely for his predilection for wiener schnitzel and apfel strudel and all things Viennese. And why the dilemma over falafel or wiener schnitzel when you can enjoy both, with falafel as *Vorspeise* naturally? Personally, I prefer cholent and käsekuchen, the way mamma used to make it back in Poland.

On the other hand, I cannot share Mr Phillips's sympathy for Daniel Barenboim, given his one-sided attitude to Israel, the country he was brought up in and which educated him. Barenboim clearly demonstrated his insolence when out of the blue he struck up a Wagner piece during a concert in Ashkelon. Would he

have dared behave in this way in Berlin or Vienna? I doubt it. Only in Israel can an ersatz Jew feel so uninhibited as to disregard the law and the sensibility of many in the audience.

Another of your regular correspondents swoons over Barenboim and Edward Said. If only those pesky Israelis would fade away, all would be well! Islam would be pacified, peace would break out overnight wherever Muslims were hitherto unwilling to co-exist with people of other religions, and bin Laden would be out of a job!

Mr Phillips got it drastically wrong when he said 'Under Stalin, millions of Jews were killed too.' Where did all these Jews come from? Stalin did indeed decimate certain minorities, like the Kalmyks and Crimean Tatars, for allegedly collaborating with the Germans, but this would hardly have applied to Jews. To the contrary, ahead of the German advance, thousands of Polish Jews fled east, towards the Russian lines, and would otherwise have perished. Furthermore, Russia kept its Polish border open at first - how many countries opened their borders to Jews? Admittedly, many were later sent to the *Gulag* after Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

Few of us would be around today were it not for the Soviet Union. The miracle occurred on 22 June 1941, when Hitler diverted his attention from these shores and turned on Russia. Britain could not have withstood the massed Wehrmacht divisions that Hitler unleashed against Russia. The Ruhr would have been out of range of American bombers and the Normandy invasion would have been impossible without a springboard in Europe.

It must be acknowledged that it was the Russians who bore the brunt of the war. I am eternally grateful to the Red Army for rescuing me and my sister in Warsaw, in the nick of time, in January 1945.

Rubin Katz  
London NW11

Sir - Having a love affair with Vienna is nothing new for Viennese or ex-Viennese Jews. Shortly after 1415, when Jews were first expelled from the city, after some 20 plus of their co-religionists had been murdered and the city had acquired the name Ir-Hadamim (City of Blood), Jews filtered back to Vienna, and this process has been going on ever since.

The subject was brilliantly treated by Professor Berkely (né Weingarten) in his book *Vienna and Its Jews. The Tragedy of Success: A Story of Unrequited Love* and - provided one goes back or visits with one's eyes open - there is much in the view expressed by Edith Argy to commend it.

All this leaves is for Peter Phillips to get his numbers right. The survival figure for Austria, supported by the Kultusgemeinde in Vienna and Yad Vashem, is just over 1,800, 95 per cent being concentrated in Vienna and out of 43,000 Jews alive in Austria on 1 September 1939 - a small enough number even then.

As for Stalin, there is not the slightest evidence that he murdered millions of Jews *qua* Jews. He certainly murdered some 10,000 Jews as Jews, including almost the entire Soviet Jewish leadership in 1941-42, and this in the course of murdering some 25 million people, in addition to losing 25 million during the war. There may well have been hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews killed by Stalin, not because they were Jews, but because they were perceived as belonging to other groups.

As for Kitty Schafer, while I wholly support her tribute to Hannah Lessing, I find it difficult to wax sentimental over the Vienna New Year Concert. I cannot forget that the first concert in the twentieth century, after a lapse of some 50 years, was on 1 January 1939 - two and a half weeks after the first Kindertransport (on which I was) had left. What the experience of that concert - or rather merely knowing about it - was like for the parents who were left behind can only be imagined. Vienna is the city of dreams - and every now and then it becomes a nightmare.

Fred Barschak  
London NW6

Sir - Harry Needham (July) may find himself 'revolted' by my not hating Vienna, but why is he 'revolted' by my family too? My wife is English, as are my four children and nine of my grandchildren; two of my grandchildren

are Australian. However, he obviously believes that children are responsible for their father's opinions and thus his hatred for the Austrians who, unless they are now more than 80 years old, could not have been Nazis.

My wife points out that when using the word 'family' Mr Needham may be referring, in particular, to my parents. My father, a doctor in Banbury, died over 40 years ago. There is a plaque to him at Banbury Horton General Hospital. Though obviously a Jew, he was given the honour of a memorial service at St Mary's Church, the main church in Banbury. My mother assisted him in the surgery and, after he died, came to live in London, and played an active part in the League of Jewish Women. She died nearly 20 years ago. I hope, Mr Needham, they are not the ones who revolt you.

*Peter Phillips  
Loudwater, Herts*

#### **BOMBING OF DRESDEN A 'WAR CRIME'**

Sir - What a deeply unpleasant review by Frank Bright (June). The fire-bombing of Dresden was not as big a war crime as the Holocaust but it was a war crime nevertheless. Those who deny it and refuse their compassion to the thousands of Dresdeners burned alive in February 1945 are as morally deficient as those who deny the Holocaust.

The wonderful rebuilding of the Frauenkirche is a symbol of reconciliation and hope for the future. And the Jews of Dresden live on in the diaries of Viktor Klemperer, one of the literary masterpieces to emerge from the Second World War - fit to stand alongside the diaries of Anne Frank and the work of Primo Levi. Dresden is, once again, becoming one of the most beautiful cities in Europe - to be enjoyed by Jews and non-Jews alike.

*David Kemp  
Glasgow*

#### **BAHNHOF GRUNEWALD**

Sir - For the record, there are two errors in your July issue: on page 5, the station from which Jews were transported from Berlin was Grunewald; on page 15, the year of Gerald Fleming's birth should be 1931.

Mr Jim Rees, Rail Vehicle Collections Manager at the National Railway Museum in York, has written to tell me that he can think of few more interesting exhibits than a cattle truck in which Jews

were transported to concentration camps, but that the Collections Management Team has to give a final decision. Herr Gottwaldt of the Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin has written that such trucks are available (through him).

*Rudi Leavor  
Bradford*

Sir - Re your report on the AJR trip to Berlin, please allow me to correct the name Bahnhof Hamburg - the station you describe is the Bahnhof Grunewald. Your description is quite correct in naming each transport which left there in the course of several months. The stone memorial you mention is outside the station on the wall. Thank you for the report: this is a very sad memorial site.

*Alice Fink  
Chicago*

#### **FAMILY TRIP TO EASTBOURNE**

Sir - Our AJR family has again enabled us to have a great holiday in Eastbourne. The weather was perfect, the food and service very good. We enjoyed interesting trips to the countryside - especially appreciated by people with walking difficulties. The ladies of the Women's Institute treated us to a lavish tea in a very relaxing atmosphere. Every evening there was something to do. My admiration goes to the five or six members aged well over ninety, one almost a hundred - lovely and brave ladies and a gent. The AJR gives most of us the only chance we have of a holiday - we wouldn't dare to travel on our own any more. As usual, a big credit to Carol and her team.

*Hana Nermut  
Harrow, Middx*

#### **MEALS ON WHEELS: A SHORT NOTE OF THANKS**

Sir - Just a short note of thanks to Susie and Sandra for the wonderful service they provide for 'meals on wheels'. It has always been a pleasure to speak to them on the phone when making orders. The two gentlemen who deliver the meals are charming. As for the meals themselves - they are just delicious and so beautifully served and packaged. I wish you every success in the future. Many thanks for all your kindness.

*Charlotte Collins  
(on behalf of Konrad Schreiber)  
London N3*

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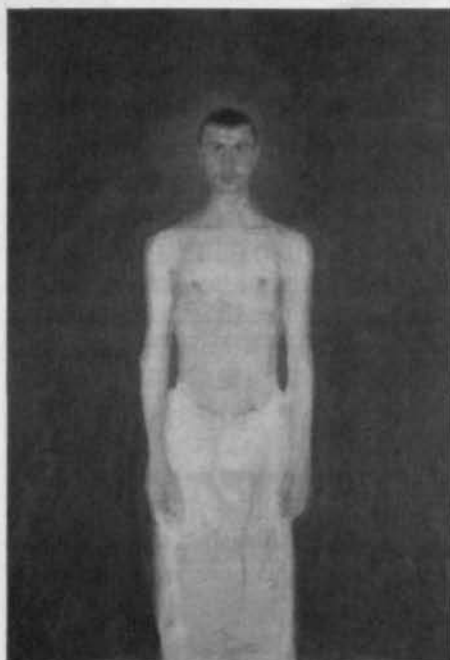
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**ALL STAFF SCREENED AND VETTED**

# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler



Richard Gerstl, *Self Portrait against a Blue Background*, 1904-5 © Leopold Museum, Vienna (637)

To admire **Wassily Kandinsky** is not simply to marvel at his extraordinary colours and shapes, but to understand the journey that led him to abstraction as pure truth. Kandinsky lived through two world wars and the Russian Revolution, political challenges which inspired - and ultimately disappointed him. Pantheism, Theosophy and Existentialism, Expressionism and Fauvism all played their part in his spiritual development, and his guiding lights were the educationalist Rudolf Steiner and the Theosophist Madame Blavatsky.

**Kandinsky - The Path to Abstraction 1908-1922**, at the **Tate Modern** until October, is the first major UK exhibition of his work, gleaned from galleries in Russia, France and Germany. In this short period, Kandinsky, inspired by contemporaries Klee and Mondrian, discovered how thought forms can express themselves through personal meditation. Wagner and Schoenberg revealed that music and notation could also translate into abstract art.

Kandinsky started out as a figurative artist inspired by the landscape of Murnau in the south Bavarian Alps, where he lived

after leaving Russia in 1921. He moved to France in 1933. Significantly, he developed his pure abstractionism in 1913-14, just before the First World War. His brilliant *Improvisation 35*, painted in 1914, is like a spirit in freefall, full of incandescent colours, and seems to have been painted in one tumultuous rush of inspiration. Later, his mood darkened, his colours became more sombre, his natural exuberance dulled. In 1917 *Twilight* represents his anxiety over the Russian Revolution, which first excited him, but later rejected his work and its spiritual message as too bourgeois. In his 1919 work *Painting with Points*, black outlines convey the restrictions imposed on artistic freedom. Later, his paintings become more linear, guided by his interest in the Bauhaus movement, with its influence on architecture. In *White Oval* he surrounds himself for the first time in blackness, as though he were an island, although the optimistic rainbow symbol recurs. *Composition VI*, said to have been inspired by the Flood, contains all kinds of symbolic motifs - among them fish, birds, horses and boats.

In his formative years, Kandinsky moved from place to place to gain recognition. But just as totalitarian Russia dismissed him, so his work was eventually banned by the Nazis as degenerate.

Contemporary artists, like Damien Hirst, can command vast sums today. But the nineteenth-century European artist faced a crisis. **Rebels and Martyrs** at the **National Gallery** until 28 August, shows how the French Revolution had swept away the patronage of church and nobles, and artists were abandoned to the mercies of the new bourgeoisie - a business class with little feel for art. Many self-indulged their role as the sad, impoverished, misunderstood artist. Much of their work was mannered and stylised, culminating perhaps in the over-romanticised *Death of Chatterton* by **Henry Wallis**. He swallowed arsenic yet his pose is as elegant as if he'd just fallen asleep! **Gustave Courbet**, **Vincent Van Gogh** and **Paul Gauguin** depicted themselves as Christ figures - even Jewish artists like **Egon Schiele**, **Kokoschka** and **Richard Gerstl** indulged this fantasy, fed by the antisemitism then current in Vienna.

## REVIEWS

### A watershed moment in history

#### KRISTALLNACHT: PRELUDE TO DESTRUCTION

by **Martin Gilbert**

HarperCollins, 2006, 320 pp., £14.99

*Kristallnacht* is the third in a new series of short books from HarperCollins, each concentrating on a particular event which was to prove a 'watershed moment' in history. *Kristallnacht* fits neatly into this category, as the key moment when, as the series' editors put it, Germany 'turn[ed] away from acceptable European moral standards of behaviour', which resulted in 'a challenge to the rest of the world with regard to the provision of safe havens for the hundreds of thousands of Jews seeking to escape the Nazi fury'.

The first half of the volume builds up the detail of what actually occurred in Germany and Austria in the days around 10 November 1938. The second half provides a frame, describing events prior to and following these days, setting them in a wider context and tracing the efforts of the international community to deal with the masses of refugees created at a stroke, almost, by the Nazis' now overt aim of rapidly removing as many Jews as possible from their territories.

The broad-based evidence assembled here demonstrates how thorough the destruction was. The SS, SA and Gestapo clearly played the central role, rather than ordinary police. Even schoolboys were used to lead attacks on some occasions. Against the picture of brutality that unfolds must be placed innumerable examples of great courage, quiet resourcefulness and dignity on the part of the victims.

What also emerges are the individual acts of decency, from the most unexpected sources - from the SS concierge at the Jewish Teachers' Seminary in Würzburg, for instance, who warned the students to leave, to

the well-known act of defiance of Police Lieut. Krützfeld, who personally prevented the Gestapo from setting fire to the Oranienburger Strasse Synagogue in Berlin; from the Gentile neighbour in Mainz who pasted a notice 'Aryan Business' on the windows of his Jewish neighbour's shop, which thus escaped destruction, to the German fireman who for 60 years hid the Star of David from the top of the Semper Synagogue in Dresden, until he could return it to its rightful owners. Several diplomats used their privileged status - on occasion against their superiors' orders - to help Jews obtain visas; the hero here is Frank Foley, British Passport Control Officer (and undercover agent) in Berlin.

Various ultimately fruitless attempts to resettle the refugees in different parts of the world are duly recorded. The changing attitudes of the British and US governments are chronicled, though the efforts of the former are perhaps viewed more positively than recent studies would suggest. The number of refugees in Britain by late August 1939 is given as 'about 65,000', whereas Louise London's 2000 estimate of 80,000, which has taken into account factors such as the authorities' deliberate understatement of numbers at the time for political reasons, is closer to the truth. A caveat concerning the reliability of contemporary statistics should have been included.

The variety of sources used in this narrative is a particular strength of the volume. Nothing is as vivid, perhaps, as eyewitness accounts of an event and the book is largely constructed upon a wide range of these. Contemporary newspapers, mostly from Britain and US, are quoted extensively. Many unpublished written and oral accounts have been gathered from ex-refugees for this volume and used alongside published material. Contemporary diplomatic dispatches make up a particularly useful part of the picture, and there is other archival material too.

It is timely for a volume such as this to appear, in which the breadth and

depth of testimonies can be provided, enabling a nuanced picture to emerge. The editors' wish to 'stimulate the reader to think about Europe's and America's relationship to their past and the key figures and incidents which moulded ... it' can only be applauded.

Marian Malet

## THEATRE

### All Jewish life is there

#### SIT & SHIVER

written and directed by Steven Berkoff

New End Theatre, Hampstead, North London

High drama takes place in a *shiva* house, where Debbie and Sam and their families gather to honour their late father. But is it the austere old patriarch or Jewish family life itself which is being mourned here? It is not tragedy, however, but comedy which launches the play as the characters, who verge on caricature, ensure a laugh a minute. It is really very funny, as the vapid, loud-mouthed daughter Debbie, in a full-on portrayal by Sue Kelvin, thrashes around the stage with her fleeting mood changes, screaming out Yiddish phrases one minute, praising her dead father the next, and insulting her long-suffering husband Lionel for his inability to rise to the solemnity of the occasion. As a counterpoint to this activity, there is a constant worry as to whether there's enough tea and cakes to go around.

The entry of Debbie's blind brother Sam (Barry Davis), a socialist intellectual, steeped in his impossible memories of the siege of Cable Street and the Mosleyite riots, deepens the atmosphere, recalling the hardship of the sweatshops of the *schmutter* business, both in London's East End and India, where he travelled as a young man. There is a paradigm here, as the pithy Sam, more perceptive in his blindness than anyone else, is praised for a play he once wrote, while his nephew, Mike, in a low-key performance by Iddo Goldberg, is

pestered for details of his acting roles by a family honed to a tradition of practical earning power, as opposed to artistic aspiration.

Everyone is very polite to Mike and his non-Jewish girlfriend, Sylv, played with suitable bemusement by Leila Crerar, whom the family decline to describe as a *shiksa*. That term is reserved for the genteel Mrs Green (Louise Jameson), whose appearance at the play's climax to announce that she too wants to mourn the patriarch, who, she discloses, was her long-term lover, pours further chaos on chaos. How will the family confront this revelation? The shock and awe which follows takes the play to a more philosophical level, where everyone must meet the challenge of sudden change, both internal and external.

This is a riotous play, vivid and vulgar with some real gems of dialogue. Berkoff evokes poetic memories of the rag trade through the memories of Sam, Lionel, his brother-in-law (Linal Haft), and the family friend, Morris (Saul Reichlin), whose description of that 'certain fall in the drape, a low swing in the lapel' typically romanticises a tough immigrant experience.

All Jewish life is thrown into relief by Berkoff's talent for realism and his historical perspective on the East End, the riots, the sweat shops and the rise of a new, less committed generation. But there is a generational flaw. Sam is more 90 than 60, and the others represent a Jewish experience now long gone. Where are the lawyers, doctors and accountants who typify their more affluent era?

Gloria Tessler

### The outrageous and the fantastical

#### THE RIGHTEOUS MEN

by Sam Bourne

HarperCollins, 2006, 353 pp., £10

A background steeped in Jewish mystical legend and Christian supersessionist theology might strike the jaded aficionado as yet another

variant in the newly fashionable genre of the religious thriller. For me, a relative neophyte, these ingredients made *The Righteous Men* by the apparently unknown 'Sam Bourne' a riveting read.

Oxford-educated Will Monroe has returned to America, where his father is a prominent federal judge, and landed a job on the prestigious *New York Times*. After a first assignment, a seemingly routine gangland murder in Brooklyn, he is dispatched to the West Coast and encounters another murder case. Both victims, apparently 'lowlife' characters, had performed one exceptional good deed in their lives, a feature Will exploits to his journalistic advantage. Professional gratification is soon dispelled when an email from some undecipherable source informs him that his psychiatrist wife, Beth, has been kidnapped and that any attempt to involve the police will lead to Will's losing her forever.

The tortuously convoluted but spellbinding conspiracy in which Will becomes trapped features the ultra-orthodox Hasidim of Williamsburg in a prominent role. Will's bruising initiation into this alien world is powerfully conveyed and reinforces his conviction that the Hasids are the villains and that the elderly rebbe whose picture he sees everywhere is behind his wife's abduction. Subsequent dealings with members of the community cause him to modify his first impressions and enable him - and the reader - to gain insights into a world where pre-modern mystical beliefs coexist with, and are facilitated by, the very latest in computer technology.

The legend which provides the book with its title is that of the *lamed vavniks* - the 36 righteous men on whom the existence of the world is said to depend. And the righteous men of the book, often of humble origin and dubious repute, are scattered across the globe, where the reader finds them just as they are about to be eliminated. These 'virtual voyages' interrupt the narrative flow

of the novel with its focus on Brooklyn and Will's search for his wife but serve both to intensify the element of suspense and to provide some intriguing cameos of unusual actions and circumstances.

The tension mounts once a former, Jewish, girlfriend of Will's comes onto the scene to offer her help. Known as 'TC', she and Will have to move swiftly to escape attack. From this juncture, Will experiences a seemingly endless series of narrow escapes as a new ingredient enters the narrative - the Church of the Reborn Jesus, a sect propagating the formula that Christians have superseded Jews in the divinity's favour and appropriated all Jewish customs, traditions and folklore.

The build-up to the climax is certainly gripping and, while the dramatic dénouement with its double twist may strike some as far-fetched, I, personally, feel that it is no more than fitting to a genre that lends itself to the outrageous and the fantastical.

The book is a new departure for Sam Bourne's award-winning journalist alter-ego, the *Guardian* and *Jewish Chronicle* columnist Jonathan Freedland.

Emma Klein

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## Letter from Israel

Since I am a coward and am also addicted to classical music, one of the reasons I am prepared to visit my dentist is that his radio is tuned to the classical music programme on the radio.

Things haven't always been harmonious between my dentist and me. He has an aversion to Christian liturgical music. But some of the best music belongs to that category, and on Sunday afternoons the radio broadcasts music for Israel's Christian community. That means that I never make an appointment for a Sunday afternoon.

On my last midweek visit, however, the only sound was the shrill scream of the drill. When I inquired as to the cause, the dentist explained that the radio authorities had changed the strength of their transmitter, and there was too much interference to make listening to music enjoyable.

I knew what he meant. A few weeks earlier all the radios in our house appeared to lose their tuning. I had attributed this to our cleaner, who prefers oriental music or, worse still, the incessant babble of the news and phone-in programmes, to classical music.

According to my dentist, it was all a conspiracy on the part of the authorities because the audience that listens to classical music is small and not very vociferous. Nevertheless, a recent attempt to close the station down was foiled after a protest campaign was mounted by the listening public.

I was faced with the prospect of a series of long and unpleasant dental treatments without the solace of music. For a moment I was downcast. But the solution came to me in a flash of inspiration. The next time I took along a tiny radio with earphones. The rich tones of a Schubert sonata filled my ears. And I smiled as I settled down to enjoy my session in the dentist's chair.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

A petite, literate and courageous lady, Vera Gissing welcomes visitors to her charming white Thames Valley cottage, which stands just a few minutes' drive from the home of Sir Nicholas Winton, the Englishman to whom she owes her life, as do 668 other mostly Jewish Czech children.

Vera Diamant was born in 1928, the second of two daughters, in the small town of Čelákovice, near Prague, in the newly independent Republic of Czechoslovakia. Her father was a wine merchant with warehouses and offices adjacent to the comfortable family home. There were only five other Jewish families, but the children regularly visited their grandparents in Prague.

On 15 March 1939 Vera looked down from the windows of their apartment as German soldiers goose-stepped into the town square, the Czechs responding by singing their national anthem. A German officer commandeered their best room and ordered them to speak German. Father, much respected by the townsfolk, objected and was humiliated in front of his family; Vera vowed never to speak German again.

Vera's mother, anticipating the threat to her daughters, entered their names on a list for evacuation to Britain, though their chances were slim as 5,000 children were enrolled. Nicholas Winton, a young English stockbroker on holiday, recognising the dangers, gathered details of the children, then returned to England to work determinedly to find £50 Home Office guarantees and foster families, which permitted him to organise eight trains for children leaving Prague for England. A ninth was prevented from departure by the outbreak of war and none of the children on it survived.

Winton's role would have remained undiscovered had his late wife Grete not found archival material stored in their attic and had Esther Rantzen's television programme *That's Life* not brought him together with Vera and other Czech Kinder he saved. Today, he is a remarkable 97-year-old; Vera acts as his social secretary and 'gatekeeper'.

Arriving at London's Liverpool Street Station, all Vera knew was that she was

# PROFILE

Ronald Channing

## Vera Gissing Life is for living



PHOTO: RONALD CHANNING

going to a family in Liverpool. Left last and alone, she was eventually taken care of and collected after two days by Mrs Gladys Rainford, who promised 'You shall be loved.' Learning English at a council school and adapting to the lifestyle was not easy and within two months she was evacuated to Southport and an isolation hospital with scarlet fever. On her return, Vera soon earned a place at the top of the English class.

Following the retreat from Dunkirk, Vera joined in comforting wounded Czech soldiers and wrote to Czech President-in-Exile Edvard Beneš, receiving a reply with his visiting card. When he attended a Czech concert in Liverpool, Vera presented his card and was invited to join him. The President told her about a Czech school in Shropshire and within a week she was admitted, enjoying three of the happiest years of her life, making good friends, most Jewish, and sharing hopes and fears. Before the school was disbanded in 1945 she discovered that her mother had died of typhus two days

after the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and, later, that her father had been killed on a death march.

Vera returned to Prague that August to live with her surviving aunt Bertha and entered a gymnasium, but met with anti-Jewish antagonism. Answering a newspaper advertisement for someone with perfect English, Vera entered the Czech Ministry of Defence, but the Communist coup in 1947 changed the situation overnight. Now in danger, she suffered interrogation for 36 hours. It took more than a year to leave the Defence Ministry, obtain a passport and return to England.

A chance meeting with Michael Gissing brought marriage and a home in Ealing. They had three children and were together for 33 years. Vera later met Harry, who had been in her class at the Czech school and was now a dental surgeon and, while retaining her independence, they became close friends until his death in 1976. Vera worked translating books from Czech into English, wrote a teachers' guide on Nicholas Winton's rescue mission and, eventually, a number of her own children's books. She also speaks to schools and universities.

Following the 1968 'Prague Spring', Vera returned on a visit to Prague with her daughters, but found herself caught up in the Soviet occupation and had to flee once again. In 1985 some 60 former pupils of the Czech school held a reunion at their former school in Wales and the BBC interviewed Vera at her cottage. From the age of ten Vera had kept a diary and, after the school reunion, she realised the importance of her diaries and set about writing her autobiography, *Pearls of Childhood*. This was first published in 1988 and is now read in many languages the world over.

With a diary as full as ever, Vera divides her time between corresponding with fellow survivors and students of the Czech Kindertransport, speaking and writing on her experiences, and caring for an ill daughter. Čelákovice town council has erected a plaque to the memory of her parents and to the remarkable story of the rescue of Vera and her sister by an Englishman.

# INSIDE the AJR

## Pinner Holocaust claims talk

Michael Newman, who runs the Central Office for Holocaust Claims at the AJR, had all the facts at his fingertips as he gave us a comprehensive talk on the current position regarding Germany and Austria and the vexed situation relating to Hungary and Poland.

*Walter Weg*

**Next meeting: Thur 10 Aug. Annual Garden Party**

## Herts cosy get-together

We met once again at the cosy home of Monica Rosenbaum. We were very pleased to meet the AJR's new groups co-ordinator Hazel Beiny.

*Sam Ostro*

**Next meeting: Thur 24 Aug. Details being sent out**

## Ilford talk on Wiener Library

Katharina Hübschmann of the Wiener Library gave us a brief history of this renowned establishment, as well as describing the work currently being done by their archivist and the help given by German-speaking assistants. The library is open to the public and Myrna will arrange for a small group to visit in the autumn.

*Meta Roseneil*

**Next meeting: Wed 2 Aug. Third birthday celebration**

## Newcastle: Jewish identity of Sigmund Freud

Dr Kurt Schapira gave a detailed account of Freud's background and strong Orthodox heritage. Having witnessed the rise of antisemitism, Freud advised his colleagues to leave Vienna, but was reluctant to do so himself. His marriage to Marthe in 1886 was held under a *chuppah*, but he banned any form of religious observance in his own home. He eventually came to England, where he was feted by such luminaries as Stefan Zweig, Salvador Dali and H.G. Wells.

*Deanna Van der Velde*

**Next meeting: Sun 10 Sept**

## Gems and minerals in North London

One does not expect to see gemstones and minerals made into slides, but this is what Clement Kryslar did for his talk on 'Gems and Minerals in Literature'. We saw various agates, tourmalines and other semi-precious stones in their natural form and made into jewellery.

*Myrna Glass*

**Next meeting: Thur 31 Aug. Celebration of fifth birthday, with entertainment**

## Oma, Mu and Me reading in Sheffield

Irene Gill's book *Oma, Mu and Me*, from which she gave us readings, portrays the lives of her grandmother and mother in pre-Nazi and Nazi Germany and herself as a refugee in Oxford. She was well rewarded by our appreciation and would be happy to talk to other groups about her book.

*Inga Joseph*

## Liverpool annual lunch

We held our annual lunch at Harold House, the Jewish Youth Centre. Following a tasty meal, members from Liverpool, St Annes, Blackpool, The Wirral, and north and south Manchester heard an entertaining talk on Liverpool Jewry by Gerry Lipson. He was particularly well qualified to do this, having been, and being, in many responsible positions in the community, including President of the Liverpool Jewish Representative Council.

*Gerald Jayson*

**Next meeting: Kathleen McCreery, 'Ella Schliesser, Actor and Activist'**

## Birmingham (West Midlands) concert

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra gave a matinée concert in Symphony Hall featuring 'Viennese Masters'. The concert was greatly enjoyed and had a special resonance for some of our members.

*Philip Lesser*

## Cardiff discussion on future meetings

I for one felt that a leisurely get-together - with a meal and perhaps a talk by one or two members on early experiences - would be of general interest. It would be a better option than a rushed short meeting, considering that some of us take almost two hours to reach the Cardiff venue.

*Charles Meyer*

**Next meeting: Mon 4 Sept. Details tba**

## Brighton & Hove Sarid agree to disagree

In the absence of a speaker, we chose to have an exchange of views on topics ranging from constitutional to religious matters and a great deal more. We agreed to disagree on most topics while having a good laugh together.

*Fausta Shelton*

**Next meeting: Mon 21 Aug. Susannah Alexander, 'The Jews in England'**

## Oxford talk on Israeli ambulance service

After we had celebrated our first birthday, Eli Benson of Magen David Adom enlightened us on the organisation. MDA responds to every call whatever its source and has outstations throughout Israel. We also heard about the blood collection centre which has the most modern facilities for processing blood into its fractions before sending them wherever they are needed.

*Anne Selinger*

**Next meeting: Tues 15 Aug. 'Origins of the Bagel'**

## Nottingham (East Midlands) summer get-together

We met for our summer get-together at the lovely old rambling home of Ruth and Jürgen Schwiening in Market Bosworth. The East Midlands membership enjoyed socialising as well as viewing a superb collection of paintings and glass sculpture created by Ruth. We enjoyed thé superb lunch Ruth and Jürgen provided and hope to meet again in September.

*Bob Norton*

## North London outing

Our visit to Hughenden Manor, the home of Benjamin Disraeli, proved most interesting. There was plenty of time to meander through the gardens and visit the church where Disraeli is buried. One mystery remains: Where is the advertised 'German Forest'?

*Herbert Haberberg*

## New group in Hendon

The inaugural meeting was held with 37 new members and chaired by Hazel Beiny. It was a fabulous afternoon, when people were reunited with old friends. The group decided it would like not only guest speakers but also social get-togethers, discussion groups and outings.

*Hazel Beiny*

**Next meeting: Mon 21 Aug. Bettine Le Beau, 'Happiness is an Attitude of Mind'**

## Leeds HSFA: the Sylvia Wright Trust

Tony Allinson told us that Sylvia Wright, a nurse, midwife and health visitor, went to South India in 1982 to institute a programme of medical help, health education and general education in one of the poorest regions of the country. The Trust concerns itself mainly with deafness, which is especially common in the area.

*Martin Kapel*

## 'Healer's' Cambridge talk

Lynne Fisher explained her role as a 'healer' and the function of the dedicated sanctuary where she and her colleagues provide a valuable service to the community. Ruth Clapham and others provided excellent refreshments and Hazel Beiny, our new co-ordinator, introduced herself to the members.

*Keith Lawson*

**Next meeting: Thur 17 Aug. Bella Robinson-Zel, 'Reflections of a Psychotherapist'**

## Edgware second meeting

Edgware met for the second time and new members were introduced to the group. Michael Newman spoke on the future of the AJR and restitution. This new regional group has formed a planning committee.

*Hazel Beiny*

**Next meeting: Tues 1 Aug. Alf Keiles on jazz appreciation**

**Bournemouth group's Isle of Wight outing**  
We returned to the Isle of Wight having spent a pleasant day there three years ago. Following a picnic lunch at Victoria Fort, we visited Ventnor Botanical Gardens, where we met members of the Isle of Wight Jewish community. Our thanks to Myrna Glass, Herta and Walter Kammerling and Danek Bardash who made all the arrangements.

*George Ettinger*

#### Essex-HGS lunch

We visited the Essex group in Westcliff, whose chairman, Otto Deutsch, told us about the history of the area. A buffet lunch was served, giving everyone the chance to socialise. Later, we were given a guided tour of Southend and Shoeburyness. This is the third year in which the Essex group have offered hospitality to another group.

*Myrna Glass*

#### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Essex Tues 8 August. Details tba

Bath/Bristol Wed 16 August. Lunchtime get-together

Norfolk Thur 17 August. Lunchtime get-together

#### Newcastle Holocaust Memorial Book

The Newcastle AJR group are collecting a register of names from people in the Newcastle area whose family members perished in the Holocaust. The names, together with photographs and brief histories, will be included in a Memorial Book (location yet to be decided). Copies of the book can be distributed to members and used for education, ensuring that those who perished will be remembered by future generations.

If you would like your family names (parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) to be included in the Newcastle Memorial Book, please contact Marion Josephs on 0191 285 1912 or Susanne Green on 0151 291-5734 or at [Susanne@ajr.org.uk](mailto:Susanne@ajr.org.uk).

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**Manchester**  
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

**Newcastle**  
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

**Norfolk (Norwich)**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**North London**  
Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

**Oxford**  
Susie Bates 01235 526 702

**Pinner (HA Postal District)**  
Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

**Sheffield**  
Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

**South London**  
Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

**South West Midlands (Worcester area)**  
Ruth Jackson 01386 552264

**Surrey**  
Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

**Weald of Kent**  
Max and Jane Dickson  
01892 541026

**Wessex (Bournemouth)**  
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

**West Midlands (Birmingham)**  
Ernest Aris 0121 353 1437

**Myrna Glass, AJR South and Midlands  
Groups Co-ordinator**  
020 8385 3077

**Susanne Green, AJR Northern Groups  
Co-ordinator**  
0151 291 5734

**Susan Lewis, Groups' Administrator**  
020 8385 3070

**KT-AJR (Kindertransport)**  
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

**Paul Balint AJR Centre**  
15 Cleve Road, London, NW6  
Tel: 020 7328 0208

**KT-AJR** Kindertransport  
special interest group

**Monday 7 AUGUST 2006**  
11.45 am for 12.15 pm  
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**Reservations required**  
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**Monday, Wednesday & Thursday**  
9.30 am - 3.30 pm

AUGUST	Afternoon entertainment
Tue 1	CLOSED
Wed 2	Margaret Opdahl
Thur 3	No Entertainment
Mon 7	KT Lunch - Kards & Games Klub
Tue 8	CLOSED
Wed 9	Nicola Smedley
Thur 10	Rita & Jack Davis
Mon 14	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 15	CLOSED
Wed 16	Francis Spiegel
Thur 17	Guyathrie Peiris & Bill Patrick
Mon 21	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 22	CLOSED
Wed 23	Simon Gilbert
Thur 24	Ronnie Goldberg
Mon 28	CLOSED - BANK HOLIDAY
Tue 29	CLOSED
Wed 30	Jenny Kossew
Thur 31	Michael Heaton

#### DIARY DATES

**August 23** Lunch at Day Centre, afternoon trip to Tiptree for Cream Tea

**September 10** Annual Tea at the Watford Hilton

**Oct 29-Nov 5** Bournemouth holiday

**November 9** Kristallnacht

For further information about any of these events, please call us on 020 8385 3070.

#### 'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

Members requiring benefit advice please telephone Linda Kasmir on 020 8385 3070 to make an appointment at AJR, Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

Editorials and articles published, and opinions expressed, in the *AJR Journal* are not necessarily those of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.

## FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Thanks

Eva and Tony Grenville would like to thank the Trustees, Management and Staff of the AJR for their good wishes and the generous gift presented to them on the occasion of their recent marriage.

## AJR TEA

SUNDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2006, 2.30 PM  
AT THE HILTON HOTEL WATFORD

A booking form is inserted into this issue of the Journal. On the back of the ticket application form there is a form for brochure space. If you would like to support the AJR even further, kindly complete the brochure form and return it to us.

We look forward to seeing you at the AJR Tea.

Should you require further details, please telephone us on 020 8385 3070.

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Very little walking involved

Optional Lunch at the Day Centre,  
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## Obituaries

### Gertrude Schrecker

Trude, born in Vienna in 1912, was my stepmother, but couldn't have done more for me if she had been my natural mother.

Like all of us who survived the Holocaust, she was very lucky to escape the Nazis. Her family left by train for Genoa, where they caught the *SS Conte Verdi* for Shanghai. My father met Trude on this journey and lived with the family until he left for London, where I was, in 1942. Trude started an artificial flower business and left for New York in 1945. Then she came to London and in 1946 married my father. This is when, as a 14-year-old, I first met her.

My father was a brilliant man but not easy to live with. Trude made a warm home for him and they travelled the world in support of the England football team. My father didn't want any more children and, as I've never married, there are no grandchildren. But I know that Trude got great joy from the families of her cousins here in England and her nephews and nieces in America.

My father died in 1984 and Trude forged a new life for herself. Within two months of his death, she had received two marriage proposals!

One of Trude's many gifts was the ability to shut out unpleasant thoughts. At the age of 93, she could still beat me at Gin Rummy, though she tended to overbid at Bridge. Trude had a long and full life and a peaceful death and will be greatly missed.

Tom Schrecker

### Hubertus Czernin

Born in Vienna in 1956 to a branch of a Bohemian noble family, Hubertus Czernin campaigned against everything he believed was unjust in contemporary Austria. He became a member of staff of Austria's leading news magazine *Profil*, later becoming its editor. Subsequently, he went into publishing, bringing out works on, *inter alia*, antisemitism and the pillage of Jewish property in 1938. His greatest coup was to expose the murky past of presidential candidate Kurt Waldheim. A cause which exercised him much in his last years were the paintings by Gustav Klimt taken by the Nazis from the Bloch-Bauer family and which the Austrian government refused to return. His campaign resulted in the passing of an Austrian art restitution law. The paintings were finally returned this year.

## Search Notices

**Denmark** - I am seeking survivors or relatives of persons born in Denmark or who had Danish citizenship and were persecuted in the Holocaust - in particular, women who married non-Danish husbands, lost their Danish citizenship and were deported from their homes outside Denmark. Am also interested in *chalutzim* with knowledge of the *Der neue Weg* group around Bertl Grass. Any info pls to Silvia Goldbaum Tarabini Fracapane at silviagtarabini@hotmail.com

**Deutsch (née Lauber), Lea** - born November 1883 Tarnow. Married Emanuel Deutsch (1880-1938). In 1937-40 her address was Köstlergasse 1/27, 1060 Vienna; in 1940-41 Dreihufeisengasse 3/8, 1060 Vienna. Deported to Riga December 1941. Any info pls to Lilly Axster, Lehargasse 3/8, A - 1060 Vienna tel 0043 1 585 65 58 email lilly.axster@gmx.at

**Goldschmidt, Walter Peter** - my father, born Brackel, Germany, 1898, arrived UK September 1939. Sent to Kitchener Camp. Arrested Romily July 1940, then sent to Isle of Man; later went to Liverpool. Travelled on *Dunera* to Australia. Lived in Hay NSW, Tatura Victoria, and Liverpool NSW. Left Australia in June 1941 on *Largo Bay*. Any info pls to Michael and Bronwyn Goldschmidt, Hillcrest View, 232 Cannon Hill Crescent, Mt Pleasant, Christchurch 8081 tel (03) 384 5399 email goldschm@paradise.net.nz

**Tannenbaum, Dora** - my grandmother, born Berlin, raised in Jewish orphanage, worked in Jewish old peoples' home. Came to Luton late 30s - would have been in her early 20s. Had a daughter in England who was adopted. Later moved to Scotland. Info pls to eleanor\_thom@yahoo.co.uk

**Weltlinger, Siegmund** - involved in re-establishment of Jewish community in Berlin after Shoah. Am also attempting to track down his surviving family members. His only child, Wolfgang Weltlinger, emigrated to United Kingdom in 1939. Info pls to Philipp Nielsen, 37 Chillingworth Road, London N7 8QF

**Wolf, Edita (née Ranchburger)** - born 1928-29 Czechoslovakia, possibly Prague. Shared dormitory in Theresienstadt with Helga Weissova, who wishes to contact her. Info pls to Irene Walters, 33 Glasslyn Road, London N8 8RJ tel 020 8340 0524 email irene@palaceview.demon.co.uk

## Central Office for Holocaust Claims

Michael Newman

### World record for a painting

The 1907 portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer by the Austrian artist Gustav Klimt, the subject of a legal battle for more than five years, was sold to the Neue Galerie in Manhattan last month for a world record of \$135 million (approximately £73m). This eclipses the previous highest amount for a painting - the \$104.1m paid for Picasso's 1905 *Boy With a Pipe (The Young Apprentice)* - and was bought for the New York museum by its owner, the cosmetics magnate Ronald Lauder.

In January, Maria Altmann, a niece of Mrs Bloch-Bauer, argued that the portrait was seized along with four other Klimt paintings by the Nazis during the Second World War. The Austrian government then arranged for the paintings to be shipped to her in California.

### Tunisian compensation

In a groundbreaking accord reached in June, the German government has agreed to pay compensation to former inmates of Nazi prison camps in Tunisia.

Holocaust survivors interned in camps such as Gabes, Marcia-Plage and Tniet-Agarev in Tunisia - under the protectorate of the French collaborationist regime - will now be eligible for payments of €270 (approximately £185 per month) made from the Article 2 Fund. Applicants must also meet other Article 2 Fund eligibility criteria.

### Insurance Commission

Applicants to the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) are reminded that they can obtain information about the status of their claims by ringing the freephone number 00800 2525 3535. Please note that when calling you will be asked to quote your claim reference number.

Written enquiries should be sent to Central Office for Holocaust Claims (UK), Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL, by fax to 020 8385 3075, or by email to mnewman@ajr.org.uk

## Boston pop

Travelling across the North Atlantic these days is routine for most visitors to the New World, but for me it remains a marvellous achievement of modern technology. One can only wonder at how the umpteen tons of a fully loaded 747 take to the air. The point of arrival on this passage was Boston, Mass., famous for its place in Anglo-American history, old world charm and a certain 'tea party'.

Though still proclaiming its historical efforts to shed allegiance to the colonial power, the city bursts with pride at its European heritage, predominantly the Irish and most especially the Kennedys, to achieve its unique New England character. Walking tours from Boston Common, now a pleasant park in the centre of the city, visit any number of 'Old Meeting and State Houses', each no doubt highly significant when ridding them of the British but, alas, somewhat too similar in architectural form to be recollected retrospectively.

Present-day Bostonian prosperity is demonstrated not only in the architecturally breathtaking John Hancock Tower, but also in the number of only marginally lesser skyscrapers newly erected along its sea frontage. The ultra-prestigious Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), viewed over the Charles River, must also be contributing immeasurably to Boston's economy.

Collected by friends, a couple who recently decamped from England to West Hartford academe in Connecticut, I was struck by the predominance of traditional clapperboard housing. West Hartford exudes the quiet sophistication and self-confidence of the university town that it is, yet on its main streets and shopping malls every major international brand is represented, including a salon of Steinway pianos, the Rolls Royce of the keyboard world. A visit to Newport, Rhode Island, famed for its harbour-full of hi-tech racing yachts, revealed the first synagogue, built on the Amsterdam model, to be consecrated in North America, recently restored to its former glory, and the summer 'cottage' - i.e. palace - of the

Vanderbilt railway multi-millionaires, The Breakers, which was quite literally breathtaking.

### Toronto - tomorrow's world

Flying from Boston on to Toronto proved less than routine as an exceptionally violent storm - global warming? - all but closed the airport for most of the day. Eventually we were transported, though I still quite cannot reconcile the intriguing bird's-eye view of Niagara Falls with a direct route. Toronto I have known since 1959, when my brother was married there to a nice Jewish girl from London.

If the future can be anticipated, it surely will look something like Toronto. The city is multiculturalism in action with most ethnic groups seemingly both maintaining the languages and cultures of their old identities, while taking on the fundamental English-speaking style, government and open society without resentment. The resultant high-rise city, with its plethora of banks, insurance companies, mining and oil giants and much more, dwarfs the former Bank of Commerce, to the top of which I climbed a half-century ago as the then highest building in the British Commonwealth!

'Honest' Ed Mirvish, Toronto's legendary retailer, has invested in a third theatre refurbishment and regeneration. The Canon Theatre, deceptively still a bit grotty from the Yonge Street sidewalk, boasts an absolute gem of a large amphitheatre and its latest comedy musical, *Fame Becomes Me*, was well on the way to Broadway. Toronto has latterly become a battleground for the world's leading architects. Frank Gehry has designed a whole new glass wall in which he is encasing the Art Gallery of Toronto, while Daniel Libeskind was making good progress at encapsulating the Royal Ontario Museum and turning it into one of his unique buildings, though, strangely, his name was nowhere to be seen. Architecturally, Toronto's new Opera House I have to report as somewhat less exciting, but I can't wait to return to tomorrow's world.

## Newsround

### German state bans neo-Nazi organisation

The eastern German state of Brandenburg has outlawed a far-right group on the grounds that it aimed to emulate Hitler's Nazis. Over 250 police officers raided 13 apartments and other premises in Brandenburg used by members of the Schutzbund Deutschland group. According to state interior minister Jörg Schoenbohm, police found a printing press and confiscated leaflets, brochures and CDs containing extremist propaganda.

### CIA keeps Eichmann's hideout secret

According to recently released CIA documents, the USA was aware of the hiding place of Adolf Eichmann but did nothing to pursue him. University of Virginia historian Timothy Naftali says the documents show that West German intelligence told the CIA that Eichmann was living in Argentina under the pseudonym Clemens two years before he was seized by the Israelis. The case is an example of deals the CIA made with Nazis during the Cold War.

### Auschwitz and New York museums to merge

The Board of Trustees of the Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust has decided to enter into final negotiations with the Auschwitz Jewish Centre. Once the agreement is finalised, the New York Museum will operate the centre in Poland and will have overall responsibility for the combined institution.

### Kielce monument unveiled

A memorial to Holocaust survivors killed and injured in the Polish city of Kielce has been unveiled. In July 1946 residents killed more than 40 Jews who had returned to the city after the war to reclaim their property. The city of Kielce and the US Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad have financed the memorial.

### Anti-Jewish sentiment 'overwhelming' in Muslim countries

Anti-Jewish sentiment is nearly universal in Jordan and Egypt, a survey has found. Some 98 per cent of respondents in Jordan and 97 per cent in Egypt harboured anti-Jewish feelings, while negative feelings about Jews were found to be 'overwhelming' in other Muslim countries surveyed as part of the Pew Global Attitudes Project for 2006, according to a *New York Times* report.