

# AJR journal

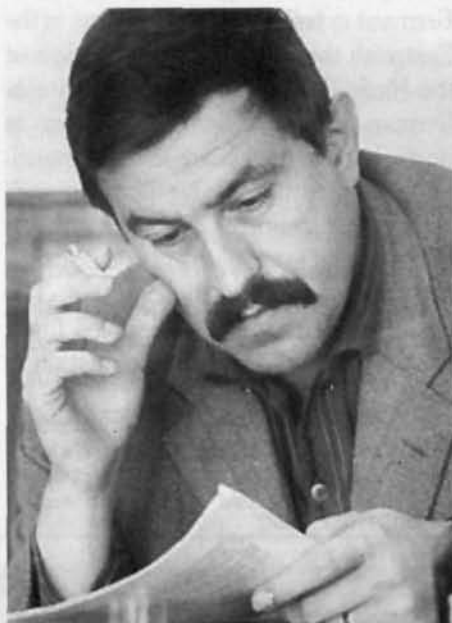
Association of Jewish Refugees

## German guilt and Günter Grass

Günter Grass's concealment, for over 60 years, of his brief wartime service in the Waffen SS was inexcusable, but also unaccountable. How much damage could revealing it possibly have done him? Grass was born in Danzig (Gdansk) on 16 October 1927, which made him all of seventeen and four months when he started his active service in the Tenth SS Panzer Division Frundsberg in February 1945; it ended two months later when he was wounded and taken prisoner by the Americans.

By that stage in the war, hundreds of thousands of German soldiers were fighting in Waffen SS units, mainly because Hitler no longer trusted the regular army after its involvement in the attempt on his life in July 1944 and transferred troops en masse to Himmler's command. Late in the war, many of these Waffen SS formations had little in common with the original 'élite' SS fighting divisions *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* or *Das Reich*. This is not intended to exculpate former Waffen SS-men, but simply to point out that by 1945 many ordinary men and, as in Grass's case, boys were being scooped up willy-nilly into the Waffen SS.

By his own admission, Grass had been indoctrinated with Nazi values as a schoolboy and was eager to fight in a high-prestige branch of the forces. After the war, he remained sharply conscious of the sinister attraction Nazism had exercised over the minds of the young and unwary. Indeed, his continued sense of the power of Nazi propaganda and ideology – part manipulation, part seduction, part coercion – fuelled the arresting depiction of German society under Hitler in the trilogy of prose works that made his name: *The Tin Drum* (1959), *Cat and Mouse* (1961), and *Dog Years* (1963). Even Grass's most famous figure, the child-sized drummer Oskar Matzerath, who proclaims



Günter Grass in 1961

his outsider status by refusing to grow after his third birthday, displays an unsettling combination of features and qualities sometimes uncomfortably close to those of the Nazi dictatorship around him.

Grass's admission that he served in the Waffen SS leads to a subtle reinterpretation of his works. Now that we know that he did not just serve harmlessly with an anti-aircraft battery, guilty of nothing more than passive collusion, we no longer identify the authorial persona with characters like Pilez, the narrator of *Cat and Mouse*, and Harry Liebenau, writer of the love letters that form the second book of *Dog Years*, whose obscure sense of post-war guilt arises largely from mere passivity in the face of evil. Instead, we recognise that Grass is closer in experience to Joachim Mahlke, the adolescent 'hero' of *Cat and Mouse*, whose obsessive desire to win the Iron Cross, inspired by schoolboy notions of heroism and Nazi militarism, leads him via the Russian front to destruction; his story stands as a striking literary warning of

the corrupting power of indoctrination and infatuation with such values.

Writing in the *Jüdische Allgemeine*, Michael Wuliger attacks Grass by claiming that his irreproachable behaviour as a democrat and anti-Nazi after 1945 was only possible because the Allies had defeated Germany: 'Had it turned out the other way round, who knows what might have become of the man from the SS.' This is a sadly superficial judgement, for the key point is precisely that Grass remained aware of his own youthful susceptibility to Nazi ideology and for that very reason was able to render so successfully the dangerous fascination that Nazism exerted on so many ordinary Germans.

The Matzeraths and Materns, the Schefflers and Greffs who people his books display the weaknesses to which human nature is prey – and not only in its German variation. Michael Wuliger might reflect that it was not just innate moral superiority that kept Jews out of the SS, but the antisemitic attitudes and statutes adopted by Nazi organisations. Grass, unlike Wuliger, takes account of humanity's abiding frailties; he conveys unforgettably the contribution they made, under the historical and political conditions of the 1930s, to the creation of Hitler's Reich.

Grass's critics have also seized on his novel *Im Krebsgang* (*Crabwise*) (2002), which deals with the sinking of the ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* in the Baltic Sea in 1945 with heavy loss of German civilian life, to argue that he, the ex-Waffen SS-man, went on to try and relativise the Holocaust, by foregrounding the sufferings of German civilians. But it is quite mistaken to place Grass among those who, like Jörg Friedrich, have since the 1990s been making implicit and ill-founded parallels between the Holocaust and the Allied air raids on cities like Dresden.

*continued on page 2*

GÜNTER GRASS *continued from page 1*

To begin with, the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff* is mentioned repeatedly in Grass's books from the very start – unsurprisingly, given the number of Danzig families who lost relatives in that event – and wholly without connection to the rewriting of history undertaken by Friedrich and his ilk in the 1990s. More importantly, Grass always places the suffering of the Germans in the moral context of their responsibility for the far greater sufferings of others. Not surprisingly, he depicts graphically the suffering of Germans, as in Oskar Matzerath's fevered vision of the deaths of 4,000 children drowned while crossing the river Vistula to escape the advancing Russians.

But that is balanced by such memorable scenes as the collusion of the German civilian population in the Kristallnacht pogrom, when Sigismund Markus, the Jewish shop-owner who sells Oskar his drums, is driven to suicide by rampaging Storm Troopers. And when the Matzeraths are evicted from their flat by the Russians and forced to flee west, Grass ensures that

this cannot be seen as undeserved German suffering. For the new occupier is Herr Fajngold, a Jew who has survived Treblinka and persists in discussing his new home with his wife and children, even though with one part of his deranged mind he knows that his entire family is dead – he was one of those detailed to strew disinfectant over the corpses, and survived.

Grass can never be counted among those who seek to equate the plight of the Germans expelled from their homes in the East with the sufferings of the victims of the Nazis. When describing the fate of German civilians in *Dog Years*, he leaves no doubt as to their share in the responsibility for their fate, by highlighting such items as mass graves and the mountain of bones that sprang up outside Danzig's local concentration camp, Stutthof. The balance he draws from the forced flight west of the city's German population is clear:

Zurück bleiben Knochenberge, Massengräber, Karteikästen, Fahnenhalter, Parteibücher, Liebesbriefe, Eigenheime, Kirchenstühle und schwer zu transportierende Klaviere. Nicht bezahlt werden:

fallige Steuern, Raten für Bausparkassen, Mietrückstände, Rechnungen, Schulden und Schuld. Neu beginnen wollen alle mit dem Leben, mit dem Sparen, mit dem Briefeschreiben, auf Kirchenstühlen, vor Klavieren, in Karteikästen und Eigenheimen. Vergessen wollen alle die Knochenberge und Massengräber, die Fahnenhalter und Parteibücher, die Schulden und die Schuld.

(Left behind are mountains of bones, mass graves, card-index boxes, flagpoles, party membership books, love letters, family homes, church pews and untransportable pianos. Unpaid are: taxes due, savings payments to building societies, rent arrears, invoices, debts and guilt. They all want to make a new start in life, in saving, in writing letters, on church pews, at pianos, in card-index boxes and family homes. They all want to forget the mountains of bones and mass graves, the flagpoles and party membership books, the debts and the guilt.)

This resonant passage establishes an irrefutable connection between the guilt incurred by so many ordinary Germans during the Third Reich and their suffering at its end, when their collusion in Hitler's crimes came home to haunt them – as it continued to haunt them, unacknowledged, in the later decades of prosperity and convenient amnesia.

Anthony Grenville

### New director for German-Jewish Centre

Christian Wiese, previously Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Erfurt, has been appointed Director of the German-Jewish Studies Centre at the University of Sussex.



Born in 1961, Professor

Wiese has, among many other qualifications, a PhD from Frankfurt University and a degree in Modern Hebrew from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Among his books are *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany* (Leiden, 2005) and *Jewish Dimensions of Hans Jonas's Life and Thought* (forthcoming 2007). HS

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## A sad loss

Many of us who were children in the 1950s will remember cowering behind the sofa when BBC TV broadcast the *Quatermass* series. At last, here was adult science fiction, not the usual old American hokum. Sadly, the creator of *Quatermass*, Nigel Kneale, died recently. Kneale worked on *Quatermass* with the refugee producer-director Rudolph Cartier (Katscher), one of a small number of refugees to establish themselves in the new medium. The refugee intellectual elite – Martin Esslin, Hans Keller, Stephen Hearst – preferred the more cerebral medium of radio.

Kneale's principal refugee connection was through his wife, the writer Judith Kerr, daughter of Alfred Kerr, the great pre-Hitler drama critic, and sister of the late Sir Michael Kerr, the distinguished lawyer. Judith Kerr is famous for her children's stories and for the delightful semi-autobiographical trilogy that begins with *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, the story of the

family's flight from the Nazis, continues with *The Other Way Round*, and concludes with *A Small Person Far Away*, where the heroine, by now the wife of a gifted and oh-so-British BBC scriptwriter, becomes a mother.

Judith Kerr has two children, one of them the prize-winning novelist Matthew Kneale. Her many readers will offer her their condolences on her loss, while wishing the Kerr-Kneale dynasty every success in the future.

Anthony Grenville

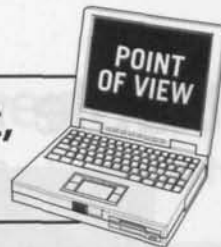
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## No quotas for faith schools – but, better still, no faith schools



What a kerfuffle there was a few months back when the government wanted to introduce quotas in faith schools. Their bid failed but, if I had my way, I would abolish faith schools altogether. Like probably the rest of you, we do not have children of school age but, fortunately, we have school-going grandchildren, and thus my interest in the subject.

Faith schools, I believe, are divisive. Why should there be schools to which only Jews can go – or only Christians or only Muslims? We live in Great Britain. What has our religion to do with our general education? Yes, of course there should be time spent having religious education, but surely English language, English literature, mathematics, science, foreign languages, history and geography are more important – and a case could be made that art, music and sport are equally important.

What has one's religion to do with one's general learning? If parents feel that their children should have a strong religious education then the children should be taught religion at home, or at their synagogue, church or mosque. Faith schools, by their very nature, make children insular. They teach them that they are different from the norm. Why does the Jewish male pupil have to wear a *yarmulka*? In polite British society men remove their hats indoors – not don them! Jack Straw doesn't want Muslim women to wear the veil because he thinks it inappropriate in this country. Seeing Jewish ultra-orthodox pupils coming out of school wearing their peculiar garb is equally inappropriate. What they are implying is that 'We are not truly British'.

I was the only Jew at my school in Northamptonshire. I bless my late father for deciding, with my headmaster, that I should not be treated differently from the other boys, so I went to chapel every morning and, when I became a school prefect, I read

the lesson. However, my parents did not let me forget that I was a Jew. I had a barmitzvah (even though my nearest synagogue was 23 miles away) and, when I went to Oxford University, the first thing I did was join the Jewish society and find myself a nice Jewish girl! I married a Jew and, though we are in no ways religious, we maintain our Jewish traditions. I also sat on our synagogue council for seven years.

However, I strongly believe in assimilation. I don't like Jewish golf clubs because I do not consider myself different from my Christian friends. Some of my best friends are Christians! I was a school governor at an independent girls' school in a part of north-west London where many rich Muslims live. We didn't notice the growth of Muslim pupils attending the school until the bursar told us they made up over 60 per cent of all girls. So what, you might ask. So the Muslim parents began to feel that the school was a Muslim one and not the English school to which they believed they were sending their daughters. Inevitably, the intake of Muslims fell, a shortage arose, and I recently saw that the school was advertising in the *Jewish Chronicle*!

You may argue that in the case of the Jewish schools in particular, the examination results are excellent. Well, yes they are, but that is because the children attending them come from homes that believe in education. Furthermore, they have been heavily vetted before being allowed to become pupils – something that happened when we had grammar schools but, sadly, not now under the comprehensive system. Chances are that they would do equally well in any good school. No, I dislike the concept of faith schools but – and this is most important – I don't ever let my grandchildren forget they are Jewish.

Peter Phillips

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## Unforgettable week in Vienna

This autumn I was fortunate to be invited by the Jewish Welcome Service to spend a week in Vienna. My only qualification was 'born in Vienna before 1938'. The entire affair was extremely well organised by Mr and Mrs Mariotti. All costs were met by the Service. About 100 third- and fourth-age original citizens of Vienna from the USA, Canada, Israel, Australia, Argentina, Germany and the UK were welcomed and brought by taxi or coach to the Stephanie Hotel in the second district, which had been 40 per cent Jewish. That evening we enjoyed dinner at the hotel. We were addressed by Professor Zelman, who conceived the whole idea in 1978. He survived Auschwitz and Mauthausen.

The following morning we went on a three-hour tour of Vienna in two coaches with German- and English-speaking guides. We started along the Ringstrasse, with its wonderful gleaming white buildings and monuments, and then went up the Höhenstrasse to the Kahlenberg, which was one of my favourite cycling venues. We ended up in the Rathaus, the town hall, where we were received by dignitaries and had a wonderful tea – or rather coffee and cakes. That evening I chose my old haunt,



the Griechenbeisl, for my dinner venue.

The highlight at midweek was the visit to the Hofburg, the imperial castle. We all thought that the opulence of the interior surpassed anything we had ever seen before. Despite the country being a republic, the Austrians are still very fond of their imperial past, their empire having comprised a large part of Europe before the First World War.

Dr Heinz Fischer, the President, came

to meet us. We shook hands and I let him know that my great-uncle had been a member of parliament. He said he had had a Jewish grandfather and I retorted that I had had two! He spoke good English and told us that a number of extremists protesting against remembrance of the Holocaust had been thrown out of the debating chamber.

The day after we visited the Palais Epstein, built by a Jewish banker whose philanthropy broke him during the Depression. Members of our group were filmed and interviewed there for the National Day programme on Austrian TV. In the evening we went to the Heurigen in Grinzing, frequented by Beethoven, to enjoy ourselves on wine, old women (and men) and song.

On the Friday some of us went to the cemetery. Later we all attended evening service in the synagogue, the only one not burnt down in Vienna on Kristallnacht for fear that it would have destroyed the inner city. It is also the documentation centre. Its significance for me is that my parents were married there. Our unforgettable week ended with a meal in the synagogue hall.

**Fred Stern**

## My schooldays in Vienna

At the end of our fourth year at junior school, teachers would recommend the best pupils for grammar school. Those selected had to pass an entrance examination. There were several kinds of secondary school: the Realschule, which concentrated more on practical subjects; the Realgymnasium, which was more academic; and the Humanist Gymnasium for the brainiest.

I went to the Realgymnasium for girls. It was in the 2nd district and was mostly Jewish. Fees were graded in accordance with family income; nobody was refused admission for financial reasons.

We attended school six days a week, including Saturdays. Pupils in the 'B' form didn't write on Saturdays; the 'A's' did. School hours were 8 to 1 (8-2 on choir practice days).

Religious instruction – two lessons a week – was compulsory. Jewish girls were taught by a rabbi, Catholics by a priest.

School books were borrowed for a small charge. The poorest girls came

first when books were handed out. The rest of us traded in the previous year's books and bought the current books second-hand. Exercise books, pens and suchlike had to be bought by parents.

We went to the Gymnasium for eight years, following which we faced written and oral examinations – the Matura – for university entrance. All subjects had to be taken.

There were nervous breakdowns and one girl even attempted suicide. If a pupil had a bad report and didn't dare go home, counsellors would take her to face her angry parents.

Each class had a book containing the class register and recording anyone who was late along with any misdemeanours. Teachers had to record in that book each week what they taught. They also had a catalogue in which they recorded the results of oral examinations. There were no physical punishments: we had to write 'I did (this and that)', which was signed by a parent, the form mistress or, if serious, the head mistress. We were given marks

for 'conduct' in our reports.

For games (one afternoon a week) we played Völkerball, volleyball and basketball. We went swimming in summer and skating in winter.

Breaks were: 5 minutes at 9 am; 10 minutes at 10 am; 5 minutes at 11 am; and 10 minutes at noon. If we had to change classrooms we picked up our coats and books and moved during break (there were no cloakrooms).

Following the Anschluss, our head mistress, who was Jewish, was sacked and replaced by the biology teacher, who was a Catholic. We Jewish girls were allowed to stay at school until July but then the school was 'aryanised' and we had to leave.

I was offered a place at the ultra-orthodox 'Chayes' Gymnasium but my parents turned it down: we had to get out of Austria come what may. Luckily we succeeded (my parents went to Shanghai). Fortunately I managed to get back to school over here, but it was child's play compared with Vienna.

**Annette Saville**

## 'Our most recent diaspora'

### An exhibition at the Berlin Jewish Museum

Most Jewish refugees now still alive belong to the generation that was fortunate enough to escape from Nazi Germany before the barriers of war made it all but impossible. For many of us the *Auswanderung* was an adventure, even though we were translated overnight into a strange environment, where we not only had to learn a new language but also new ways of life. This sudden translation is vividly brought to life by the exhibition *Heimat und Exil*, currently being shown at the Berlin Jewish Museum and continuing until April. The numerous artefacts and recorded interviews with many oldies provide an impressive chronicle of the pre- and post-emigration periods which we, the émigrés, lived through, whether in Liverpool, Philadelphia, Tel Aviv, Shanghai, La Paz, or in so many other areas across the globe. Even those of us who landed in Britain – perhaps a somewhat homogeneous group – can tell many different stories about 'integration'. But none of us was put to work as a crocodile hunter or prison guard – a fate that befell a boy whose family happened to end up in Bolivia.

A visit to the 'Heimat und Exil' exhibition should be a must for all those who, as children, were exposed to grown-up talk of affidavits, guarantees, visas, *Reichsfluchtsteuer*, Kindertransport, and the like – all commonplace words that we children did not



The author at the age of 18. The photo was taken shortly after Felix Frankfurter became Felix Franks

understand at the time. The many exhibits were painstakingly and lovingly assembled by Eva Söderman and her dedicated group of curators during a two-year period. I contributed several photographs, my naturalisation certificate, my army tunic and the tail-end of a German incendiary bomb, which my father extinguished in a very professional manner.

An enormous glass table with a map of the world carries the flags of all the 90 countries where members of our generation found refuge, even if they eventually re-

migrated, mainly to Israel and the USA; very few returned to, and settled in, post-war Germany. The exhibition follows a chronological path, as experienced by us, the younger generation, from the days of the Weimar Republic, followed by the ever-tightening net of Nazi oppression, accompanied by the sound of marching jackboots, to the day when we finally left our *Heimat*, most of us for ever. In retrospect, it was a bizarre turn of events: the authorities wanted us out of Germany, but they made the escape progressively more difficult.

Personal stories, told by individual escapees, can be heard in German and English through headphones, mounted next to the displays of visual artefacts: among other things, documents, personal letters, children's drawings, photographs, articles of clothing and newspaper cuttings in foreign languages. I still treasure my German ID document which carries a stamp of the UK Immigration Service, dated 21 April 1939, permitting me to stay in Britain for a period not exceeding one year – but I am still here! By listening to the recorded stories and looking at the visual displays, the visitor will gain an idea of the magnitude of this, our most recent diaspora, which – fortunately for most of those still around to tell their stories – had happy endings.

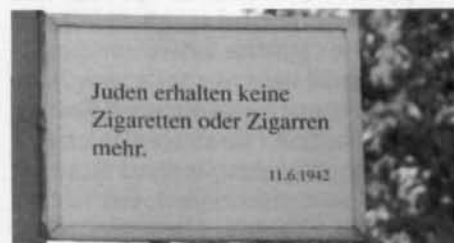
Felix Franks

## Berlin's other memorial to its Jews

With the opening of the Holocaust Memorial and the Jewish Museum, visitors to Berlin might well overlook another, more modest, memorial to German Jews. North of the Bayerischer Platz, a residential area that was much favoured by middle-class Jews (Albert Einstein once lived here), the local Schöneberg Council has attached to 80 lampposts placards itemising some of the many laws and ordinances restricting and imposing other conditions on the rights of Jews. It is a moving memorial to how everyday life for Berlin's Jewish population became increasingly intolerable starting less than three months after Hitler's seizure of power.



'No promotion for Jews'



'Jews are no longer to receive cigarettes or cigars'

Visitors to Berlin seeking evidence of the increasing number and extent of prohibitions, and worse, on Jews in the city need only walk through the area. The impact is frightening and profound. The date of each is clearly given. All the placards have a small sign under them reading 'Denkmal. Orte des Erinnerns im Bayerischen Viertel. Ausgrenzung und Entrechtung. Vertriebung. Deportation und Ermordung von Berliner Juden in den Jahren von 1933 bis 1945' (Places of remembrance in the Bayerischen District. Exclusion and deprivation of rights. Deportation and the murder of Berlin's Jews between 1933 and 1945).

Peter Seglow

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### EVERY JEW'S DUTY

Sir – I shall not be obeying Peter Phillips's command to censor my public statements about Israel. I shall be voicing exactly the same opinions – and highly critical opinions – about Israel, in whatever company I find myself, whether it is in London or in Berlin. I take my integrity with me wherever I go. I owe Israel no allegiance whatsoever. I in no way identify with it. When I visited it in around 1970, it was to me an alien, oriental country with a lot of old Berliners, musicians and theatremen within it, and one that had utterly unsubtle, uncomprehending attitudes and policies towards the neighbours whom it displaced. It has since been pursuing neurotically vengeful, nationalistic and racist policies, tit for tat, never taking on board the wisdom of the most famous Jew – that of turning the other cheek. Israel's existence has done nothing to stem antisemitism but has in fact exacerbated it. Its relationship with America and the West has only provoked and stirred up more ructions in the Middle East.

I am part of the scene, and yet not of it. And two nationalities are ample for my requirements. I feel no need to add the Israeli to the German and the British.

Peter Zander  
London W1

Sir – Peter Phillips describes himself as a racial rather than religious Jew and thus explains his undying loyalty to the State of Israel, a loyalty he considers to be the duty of all racial Jews. He is not alone among assimilated European or American Jews in distancing himself from inherited religious belief and practice. But what on earth – except in the fevered phantasy of Nazi racialists – is a racial Jew?

Three thousand years since a nomadic tribe settled in Canaan and 2,000 years since the fall of the Temple (by which time half of the Jews then living were in the diaspora anyway), few of us can have any genetic inheritance from the people of Israel of the day. Quite apart from intermarriage, there are other gentile genes in the Jewish community. For instance, how many orthodox Jews from the Pale are descended from the red-bearded Khazars, who converted as a

people to Judaism to avoid offending their Byzantine and Muslim neighbours? My father's family, who settled in the *Sieben Heiligen Gemeinden* by the middle of the eighteenth century at the latest, were reputed to have come from Hamburg – is it strange that they were fair-haired and blue-eyed, while their Falasha co-religionists look like the Africans they were?

The world owes Israel support and loyalty largely because of the Holocaust. I do not know about Nazi ideology in its early stages but, before I escaped from Nazi Greater Germany, the emphasis seemed to be on getting the place *judenrein* – expulsion rather than extermination. Is it possible that the influence on Hitler to switch to extermination (emigration was banned in 1941, I think) came from a Grand Mufti of Jerusalem fearful of large-scale Jewish immigration? In which case, is it fanciful to regard the prospect (or threat) of the creation of the State of Israel as at least one cause of the *Shoah*?

Francis Steiner  
Deddington, Banbury

Sir – Peter Phillips feels racially Jewish but there is no such entity as a 'Jewish race'. This is a myth propagated by the Nazis and Mr Phillips should be ashamed to repeat it. At best, the Jews are a people, united by religion and shared experience.

As regards Israel, although the Holocaust may have been an important catalyst in bringing about a favourable vote for the partitioning of Palestine, credit must be given to 50 years of Zionist lobbying.

Mr Phillips's Jewish nationalism, and his opinion that it is every Jew's duty to be loyal to Israel, is both arrogant and presumptuous. Arrogant because nationalism by its very nature brooks no dissent. And presumptuous because every person of the Jewish faith has free will and it is not up to Mr Phillips or anyone else to tell us where our duty or loyalty should lie.

As for the six million who died for Israel's creation, what sort of cheap, populist myth-making is that! Does Mr Phillips know that his beloved Israelis mocked and vilified many of the Holocaust survivors who ended up in Israel as cowards?

My family did not die for Israel. They were not martyrs for the cause of Zionism. They died because of their Judaism and for no other reason.

Charles Bieber  
London N12

Sir – Peter Phillips asks 'Why were Jews interned in the Isle of Man?', which he sees as an example of British antisemitism. They were interned not as Jews but as 'enemy aliens' as at the time of internment they still held German nationality.

Mr Phillips seems to think that 'integration' is the answer to antisemitism and the 'Jewish question'. He has obviously forgotten the thousands of German Jews who were well 'integrated' in Germany in the 1930-40s, yet that did not save them from Auschwitz.

I find his assertion that the media attacks Israel unfairly over its treatment of the Palestinians totally unjust. Israel, in my view, deserves to be taken to task over its policy in the West Bank and Gaza.

As a Jew, I object to his telling me that my duty is to stand up for Israel, right or wrong. Israel's policy in the recent war in Lebanon and its behaviour towards the West Bank Palestinians and in so-called 'free' Gaza are outrageous and I have every right – even the duty as a Jew – to say so. His dragging the Holocaust victims in to support his argument is a cheap ploy. They did not die 'for Israel's creation'. My mother's entire family, killed in Auschwitz, were certainly no Zionists.

E. Millman  
London W3

Sir – Peter Phillips writes approvingly, and rightly, about integration and can seemingly contemplate that without loss of identity, but he appears to see no contradiction in his call for loyalty to Israel. At a time when Israel, militarily and politically, seems to be waist-deep in a swamp, surely the ordination of three rabbis in Dresden and the opening of a new synagogue in Munich are the equivalent of bright lights in the darkness. Of course, they may fail but they propose a future for Jewry among – not separate from – the rest of humanity and offer the hope of unity with other minorities of whom Mr Phillips writes in the ongoing fight against ignorance and prejudice.

Alan S. Kaye  
Marlow, Bucks

Sir – Why is it that every time I read a letter or an article by Peter Phillips it gets up my nose! I find it objectionable to say 'Every Jew's duty'. Who does he think he is – Winston Churchill?

Instead of generalising about Israel and what 'we' must do, isn't it far more important to help a co-religionist if or

when he or she is in difficulties? As far as antisemitism is concerned, this is an action that has persisted since time immemorial, even among Jews. A far greater spirit in place of society's selfishness is more achievable as the items in Mr Phillips's article are known to all of us. *Peter Henry Chapman*  
*Isle of Man*

#### ISRAEL'S ENEMIES

Sir - I have just listened to Mr Gerald Kaufman's vitriolic speech against Israel in the House of Commons. Israel's enemies must be very proud of him.

*Henry Rado*  
*Harrow, Middx*

#### THREE RABBIS IN A VICARAGE

Sir - I was interested to read in your October issue a review by Emma Klein of *Three Rabbis in a Vicarage*, the history of Belsize Square Synagogue. This, of course, is a congregation with a long and uniquely close association to the AJR.

I am writing principally to thank the reviewer for her words and, in particular, for her pointing out one very important omission - the index - for which I can now offer help. For technical and other reasons, which were unforeseen, we were forced to go to press before the completion of the indexing and so I attach below a link to the author, who will be happy to forward a full index on request.

I do however want to take Miss Klein up on one thing: her criticism of style and in particular the reference to world events that she found unhelpful. Oddly enough, this aspect of the narrative is one that has received the most favourable comment, particularly from younger readers. More importantly, for a community thrown together by the force of world events, this historical time line is highlighted favourably in all previous critiques, including that of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

But Miss Klein is right about the lack of an index and so I am happy to have this opportunity to refer readers to antonygodfrey@aol.com, who will forward this as a Word document by return. Perhaps, if we are allowed the luxury of blowing our own shofar, I might also mention that copies of *Three Rabbis in a Vicarage* are available through the office at Belsize Square Synagogue. It will be of great interest to all your readers, who will find both the style and the content hugely informative and enjoyable.

*Ian Lee*  
*Editor, Our Congregation*  
*Belsize Square Synagogue, London NW3*

#### PLAUDITS

Sir - Thank you, Anthony Grenville, for two excellent articles in the November

issue: the brilliantly concise and informative piece about Hungary and the analysis of the Austrian and German elections in which you point out the misreporting we get in the British media.

I also liked and appreciated Ronald Channing's profile of Frank Meisler and deeply admire Meisler's Kindertransport statue at Liverpool Street Station. He catches the feelings of those of us who arrived on the Kindertransport.

*Bea Green JP*  
*London SW13*

#### VIENNESE HUMOUR

Sir - While browsing through one of my father's books about Viennese humour, cabaret etc, I came across two 'immediate post-war advertisements': 1) 'Will exchange gold Nazi party emblem for Jewish grandmother'. 2) 'Parrot lost. Finder is advised that the owner no longer shares the parrot's political views.'

*Paul Samet*  
*Pinner, Middx*

#### GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY

Sir - I would like to express my thanks to the AJR 'meals on wheels' service. There is a large menu to choose from and the meals are delivered punctually, distance being no problem. Good value for money!

*Eva Frean*  
*London N3*

#### BOURNEMOUTH HOLIDAY

Sir - I and all who took part had a lovely holiday in Bournemouth thanks to Carol, Ruth and Annie. The three of you made me comfortable, feeling secure and safe in my frail condition. These holidays are important for my wellbeing, physically and mentally. You provided entertainments galore. The highlight was the last evening, when you treated us lavishly.

I am looking forward to the next holiday, in June 2007. Please put my name on your list. If possible, I would like to have the same room, number 216. I know by now which tricks to use to make the plumbing work.

*Anna Schlesinger*  
*Wembley, Middx*

#### 'KEEPING THINGS GOING'

Sir - I have had many second thoughts regarding the renewal of my 50-year membership. On browsing through the November issue, I discovered that life would be difficult so many miles away from your efforts to keep 'things going' and will therefore renew my membership. With very best wishes for 'keeping things going' and the pleasure this gives us so many miles away who are so enlivened by a feeling of common heritage and fate!

*Edith Fischl-Lee*  
*Woollahra, Australia*

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# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Would Charles Saatchi have sponsored **Diego Rodrigo de Silva y Velazquez** had he been around in the late sixteenth century? Today we have swapped the nobility of the Spanish painter's day for



Velázquez, *An Old Woman Cooking Eggs*, 1618. The National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh. Purchased with aid of The Art Fund, 1955 ©National Galleries of Scotland. Photo Antonia Reeve, Edinburgh

commercial dragons and captains of industry. The only significant difference is that shock and awe in art have replaced the need to depict royal likeness.

But in the work of Velazquez, naturalism clearly impressed him more than state portraiture. Sponsored by Abbey, the **National Gallery**, which contains the largest collection of the artist's work outside the Prado in Madrid, launched its much-anticipated Velazquez exhibition, which runs until 21 January. *The Guardian* newspaper revealed that the show sold more advance tickets than the previous exhibitions, including those of Vermeer, Titian and Caravaggio.

Velazquez was court painter for Philip IV of Spain and his children, all of whom are portrayed in the full monty of royal regalia. Children, court dwarfs and the king got up as hunter are all intensively portrayed, but it is in the nobleman's kitchen that he developed a true insight into ordinary people.

Brian Sewell, speaking on BBC2's *Newsnight* review just after the preview, called Velazquez a subversive artist. It is an interesting term and goes some way to explaining the interest the painter took in the gnarled or innocent faces of the hard-working servants, the food, the texture of the pots and cooking utensils – these have so much more to say than his formal portraiture. There is a striking contrast between the more conventionally painted effete royal paintings, with their static poses and bewildering detail, and the kitchen paintings, where he allows himself

the full reign of emotions. The model who appears in *An Old Woman Cooking Eggs* and *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* has a face riddled with experience and compassion as she and a younger woman prepare a meal of fish and garlic. Here the realistic flesh tone is starkly different from the rosy paintings of his young *infantas*.

But then there were the religious paintings too, *de rigueur* for any serious artist of his day. In the *Adoration of the Magi*, painted in 1619, the texture and colours of the cloth are stunning. They all allude to the intense purity of Mary's face, covered in a white headdress. In contrast, Velazquez's *Rokeby Venus*, originally known as the *Toilet of Venus*, featuring the famous reclining nude gazing at herself in the mirror, is full of romantic innuendo. The remarkable delicacy of her pallor with its pits and hollows of the skin and the deep shine of her hair make a challengingly modern portrait flying in the face of the Inquisition.

- **Renoir Landscapes 1865-1883** at the **National Gallery** 21 February–20 May 2007
- **Citizens and Kings: Portraits in the Age of Revolution, 1760-1830**, **Royal Academy of Arts**, 3 February–20 April 2007
- The fourth annual **Photographic Portrait Prize** has been won by Richard Boll. Until 18 February at the **National Portrait Gallery**

## REVIEWS

**Brilliant but terrifying book**  
**DIE 'JUDENDEPORTATIONEN' AUS**  
**DEM DEUTSCHEN REICH 1941-1945**  
by **Alfred Gottwaldt** and  
**Diana Schulle**

*Marix Verlag, 2005, 508 pp., 15 euros*

This is a totally factual account of all trains used by the Germans to transport Jews and others to the East. Each train was given a prefix, e.g. DA, and a number, the date it left and from where, the time of departure and arrival at this or that camp, how many men, women and children were on it, where they originated, and whether they perished at their destination or survived. One marvels at the astonishing amount of time-consuming research by the authors and at the meticulously kept archives of the Deutsche Reichsbahn which enabled the research to take place.

There is no comment on the illegality and immorality of the Holocaust – there is frankly no space for it. Many trains are singled out as the vehicle for well-known individuals, for instance Rabbi Leo Baeck, Anita Lasker, Ottla Kafka-David, a sister of Franz Kafka, and the composer Hans Kraša. Examples are given of exceptional brutality, such as when a male workforce returned from work outside a camp to find their womenfolk and children had been taken away and shot, or when a fully loaded train which had an operational stop near a town was kept in sidings for two days because the supervising police or SS men wanted the weekend off.

Trains were usually old-type 3rd class, 2nd class for the supervisors, and always overcrowded. The first cattle trucks were used in January 1942. Deportations were suspended over Christmas when trains were needed to take soldiers home from the front for a couple of weeks. Sometimes when only a few Jews were transported, a single coach was attached to a scheduled train and shunted from one to another. Because the main-line station at Theresienstadt lay some distance from the camp, a special spur was built to connect one with the other.

The route taken by the trains is

meticulously described, including empty trains returning after discharging their passengers. Destinations were, among many others, Minsk, Riga, Kovno, Dachau and Auschwitz. One tragedy among many is that in some areas Jews were detained after having suffered physical and emotional deprivation on the long journey and shot on the spot, as in the Rumbula forest outside Riga where, fortunately, a large memorial now stands.

Many photocopies are reproduced of 'Richtlinien' (orders). An appendix lists all trains in order of time: 24 pages with some 25 trains per page, giving approximately 600 trains, usually operating daily from 15 October 1941 to an arrival date at Theresienstadt of 15 April 1945.

This brilliant but terrifying book is not for the fainthearted. When a train from Berlin is mentioned, as is frequently the case, the reader can visualise his relatives being on it en route to Auschwitz.

Dr Gottwaldt is Director of the Railway Section of the Deutsches Technikmuseum in Berlin; Dr Schulle, a Historian with the Centrum Judaicum, is currently supervising the project of a Memorial Book for the German Government of all German-Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Rudi Leavor

**Response of a stropky teenager**  
**A LIFE DISPLACED:**  
**EXILE, ADOLESCENCE AND**  
**ALIENATION IN WARTIME BRITAIN**  
 by Ush Light

Privately published: 95 Highdown Road, Lewes, Sussex BN7 1QF, 2006  
 81 pp., £8.00

Despite its subtitle, this book of poems spans many decades both before and after the war. Although an occasional date is given, one would rather have liked to know when the individual pieces were written and whether they were an immediate response to a particular event or written retrospectively.

Ush Light must by now be in her mid-eighties. She arrived in Britain in 1933 at the age of 12, together with her 'immediate family'. Those of us who arrived much later would have found an England far more aware of Hitler's

threat and more sympathetic to the 'alien' in its midst.

In those pre-war years this was a proud, self-confident nation (would it still were!) and – yes – perhaps a little smug. Ush Light, who has by now long been 'an integral part of the community', cavilled against the smugness then, as perhaps many of us young ingrates did: 'Behave yourself, show gratitude and we will tolerate you, which is more than others do.' This last line does raise a wry smile. We who love, and identify with, this country now can recognise the response of a stropky teenager, cross at the indignity of it.

But by far the best in this little book are two splendidly funny pieces of prose, one about the many disasters besetting the aspirant driver in *Any Half-Wit Can Learn to Drive and Marriage* – amusing observations on the many contradictory demands on women.

The poems are, however, sometimes more problematical and not always as lucid as her short staccato sentences might promise. Occasionally they are in need of pruning and revision. For instance, cutting out a lot of dead wood in *Witch Hunt*, one alights on some lines that could happily have stood on their own: '... goodies are "WE"/and baddies are "THEY"/no matter who or where "we" are/no matter who or where "they" may be.'

Again, some of the poems are non-sequiturs. Why, for instance, does the welfare state suddenly metamorphose into a return visit to Germany?

The most successful poems are *Witch* – *A Dimly Remembered Fairy-Tale*, which has a pleasantly eerie feel to it, and *Cautionary Tale*, an entertaining fable about a do-gooder who rescues a mouse from a cat and is bitten by the mouse for his pains.

Gerda Mayer

## FILM

### 'In good shape'

KZ

directed by Rex Bloomstein  
 Screen on the Hill, North London  
 (Jewish Film Festival)

'I'm glad I've been here. It's in good shape. I'm going to Auschwitz soon. That's the biggest, isn't it? And then

I'll see a lot of the others.' This reaction to a tour of Mauthausen by one of numerous visitors from around the world struck me forcibly when viewing Rex Bloomstein's powerful documentary at the recent Jewish Film Festival. The casual use of 'in good shape' to describe a Nazi concentration camp was one vivid example of the crassness to which Holocaust tourism all too often falls victim. Another was the sign: McDonald's Mauthausen. For this I was more prepared, aware of the existence of a shopping centre and discotheque in the vicinity of Auschwitz. Bloomstein's penultimate image of the vast souvenir shop, with banners proclaiming the names of notorious camps as if they were artists with artefacts for sale, was particularly disturbing. The camp doors were then closed, bringing to an end 'a day in the life of Mauthausen'.

In making this film, Bloomstein has eschewed many conventional tools of Holocaust documentary such as archive footage and sombre music. What he has conveyed is the impact of Mauthausen today. The audience shares the experience of visitors being shown around the camp. Some giggling schoolchildren, for example, are later transfixed by what they have encountered. A small Kurdish girl, who seems far too young to be exposed to such depredation, illuminates the darkness with the word she inscribes in the visitors' book: 'Baris' meaning Peace.

The reaction of the tour guides to the horrors they depict is particularly moving. Two stand out – a middle-aged man whose ten-year obsession with Mauthausen has fuelled a tendency to alcoholism, and a young 'national serviceman', who, like several others, has chosen to serve in the camp for a year rather than go to the army.

Other inhabitants of the picturesque Austrian town interviewed in the film display less compunction, reflecting Austria's ambivalent reaction to the Anschluss and her Nazi past. A young couple living in a house formerly inhabited by a camp commandant admit to being the butt of gruesome jokes but seem barely disconcerted. An elderly woman speaks gloatingly of her

Reviews continued on page 10

REVIEWS *continued from page 9*

handsome Nazi husband. A proud 'Mauthausener' describes a trip to Israel where she was repeatedly told by tour guides not to mention that she is from Mauthausen. On seeing the name of her beloved hometown on a banner 'in some museum' – clearly Yad Vashem – her pride seems to have subsumed any other feeling.

Mauthausen was not, originally, a camp for Jews, who were only brought there from the autumn of 1944, generally from other camps. The words of a 94-year-old non-Jewish survivor in the audience bore passionate testimony to the filmmaker's underlying aim: to promote freedom and democracy as the only antidote to the evil which led to these – and subsequent – atrocities.

*Emma Klein*

### Family chronicle tantalising for its omissions

#### VIENNA

by Eva Menasse

London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006, £12.99

This novel, set in Vienna as the title suggests, is a family chronicle that spans three generations. The grandfather is a Jew with a non-Jewish wife who survived the war without being deported; his sons, sent to England on the Kindertransport, return to a Vienna under Allied occupation; his grandchildren are born after the war.

The story begins in pre-Anschluss Vienna and follows the fortunes of the young sons of the family to a town in England during the war, to internment in the Isle of Man, to VE Day, to military service in Burma, and back to Vienna. Some of the transitions are abrupt, which can be confusing. Despite the momentous events that form the backdrop to the story, the main focus is on bread-and-butter concerns and family relationships. The author is brilliant in describing significant looks and gestures and in summing up a situation. She writes about her parents: 'Their life together, a comprehensive failure ... dissolves painlessly like aspirin in water.'

Much of the novel is taken up with descriptions of happenings at the

Schneuzel sports club of which the grandfather is a devoted member, and of the coffee houses he patronises. The complexities of being half-Jewish in Vienna surface only in hints and brief comments. The return of the refugee son is dismissed in a few sentences: 'How tall he's grown, thought my grandfather ... tall and lanky like an English spring chicken.'

The grandfather has a euphemism for the Star of David which he was obliged to wear – a 'dog-tag' – and forced labour becomes 'sauce labour'. Thus painful subjects are avoided. When a non-Jewish fellow member of his club asserts that the number of Holocaust victims is exaggerated, he keeps quiet. However, the third generation displays less of this fear of involvement with the past, and a grandson is active in unmasking a sporting hero who has an appalling Nazi record. He and his sister become interested in their Jewish heritage.

This is a fascinating book bursting at the seams with material, but tantalising for what it does not tell you. What did it feel like to be a Jew in Nazi Vienna? It is as though the topography of Vienna has become a substitute for the secure roots the protagonists lack and the questions some of them dare not answer.

*Martha Blend*

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### Letter from Israel

The Justice Minister is arraigned for indecently assaulting (well, kissing) a subordinate. The President is under suspicion of having sexually assaulted, possibly even raped, female members of his staff. Other ministers are accused of bumbling incompetence.

What is the average man or woman in the street to make of all this? Each morning one opens the newspaper and turns on the radio, fearing to hear of yet another exposé of ministerial shenanigans or mismanagement.

Has Israel deteriorated so much since the heady early days of its existence, when idealism reigned supreme and everyone thought only of the greater common good? That, at least, is the general impression.

Somehow, however, that seems unlikely. Several decades ago Moshe Dayan, though married and a family man, regularly bedded every secretary or woman soldier who took his fancy, and in between these episodes engaged vigorously in semi-clandestine archaeological digs, carrying off his stolen finds for display in his home and garden. The public turned a blind eye or gave an understanding, if not forgiving, smile. It's true, the cuckolded husbands concerned were less than overjoyed, and one even threatened to 'put out his other eye', but no one thought of bringing matters to court, or even to the front page of the papers.

Forty-odd years ago no female would have dreamed of making a fuss over a kiss or a risqué remark. Today these are matters that destroy careers. It seems then that the world has changed, and Israel with it. The feminist movement has ensured that the routine harassment of women is something that is no longer sanctioned.

Whatever the outcome of the various cases currently *sub judice* or under investigation, it is undoubtedly better to live in a society where women have recourse to the justice system rather than having to submit to embarrassment and harassment.

**Dorothea Shefer-Vanson**

# PROFILE

Ronald Channing

## Dorli Neale

### Hard work and no regrets



Photo: Ronald Channing

had two sons. Ernest was a caterer and Dorli joined him in the business. They worked long hours until 'retiring' officially in 1977. Ernest died in 1999.

While Ernest enjoyed a well-deserved and long retirement, Dorli felt that she had to keep busy, first with a home cake-baking business, selling to friends and delivering to West End shops. Then, attracted by an advert for part-time help at Heinrich Stahl House, Dorli began another career there. 'I loved it', she said, and soon found herself Assistant Matron. The work was often demanding, but she had a little flatlet when on duty. Admiring the organisation and totally devoted to the welfare of its residents, it was no surprise when she was appointed Matron. Continental refugees like herself, the residents became close personal friends and she taught the chef how to cook them Continental-style kosher food. 'We were like a family', she said, 'residents, who were much younger then, and staff together.'

In 1988, at the age of 65, Dorli retired, but within months she returned as a regular volunteer for Heinrich Stahl and, after its closure in 2001, for Leo Baeck, Osmond, Balint and Otto Schiff Houses, taking over the chairmanship of Balint House and organising befriending, functions, outings and celebrations of the Jewish holidays. In the past, residents were young enough for there to be a life outside the home; at this time, with the residents being much older and frailer, it was no longer possible.

Having had a hard working life, Dorli enjoys the active relaxation that retirement has brought. Touring and cruising are her favourite pastimes – rounding Cape Horn, visiting America's national parks and walking among Antarctica's elephant seals! Both her sons are married and Dorli has five grown-up grandchildren to spend Friday night Shabbat with. 'I have been a lucky person, having a good husband, children, grandchildren and many good friends', she says. 'I cannot say that I regret anything I have done in my life.'

Dorli Pasch, the youngest of three girls, was born in 1923 in the picturesque Austrian town of Innsbruck, where her parents had emigrated from their native Czechoslovakia. With a successful textile business, the family lived in a comfortable apartment and maintained their Jewish traditions. Although they thought mother a bit of a disciplinarian, the girls certainly knew how to gain their father's approval and affection, and were often taken by their parents on walking and skiing expeditions in the mountains.

Dorli happily attended the local *Volkschule* for girls, at 11 passing the entrance examination for the Realgymnasium. Her first four years there were quite pleasant, though in 1936, after she had been called a 'dirty Jew' at school, her father took the miscreant to court and won his case!

Dorli's parents began to understand what was happening in Germany when arriving German-Jewish refugees came to them for help. At the time of the Anschluss, Dorli remembers being overwhelmed as the Brownshirts and German soldiers marched through Innsbruck's main street to the cheers of large crowds. Within days the sign *Jude* had been fixed outside their shop; SA guards were posted to keep people from entering and the business soon collapsed.

Her father tried every channel of escape to Czechoslovakia or France without success, but in October her eldest sister left on a domestic permit for England. During Kristallnacht several Jews were killed, the apartment broken into, Dorli and her remaining sister beaten up, and father taken away, escaping only by chance from being 'thrown in the river'. They shut up shop and left for Vienna, squeezing in with a lawyer cousin. In December Dorli, aged 15, joined the Kindertransport and, by good fortune, her parents and sister also reached England in May 1939.

Dorli remembers the freezing chalets at Dovercourt and Selby, an old Tonbridge Wells boarding school, and, eventually, selection for a grammar school in Norbury,

south London, staying with a kindly Jewish family. In September the school was evacuated to Hove. At 16 Dorli 'did quite well' in her matriculation examinations but had to leave the coast as an 'enemy alien', joining her parents who were making a living by letting rooms in London.

Though she wanted to study medicine, her father chose for her a millinery apprenticeship, her first position being with Madame Isobel in Grosvenor Street. Relieved to be called up for war work at 18, as one of the few girls in a large Acton factory she enjoyed her time repairing searchlight engines. She celebrated D-Day at the factory, but on VE-Day she joined the crowds outside Buckingham Palace celebrating victory.

Her father had died in 1944 but her mother carried on letting rooms and baking patisserie. At that time every woman wore a hat and Dorli worked for a milliner in Bond Street, then as a hat designer near Liverpool Street. In 1946 she met Ernest, a refugee from Vienna, in one of the refugee clubs soon after he was demobbed. They married in 1947, lived in a flat next to Walm Lane Synagogue, and

# INSIDE the AJR

## Norwich by candlelight

When we six indefatigables arrived at the door of the synagogue the lights went out all over Norwich. Undeterred by such trifles as a power cut, proceedings continued by the flickering light of candles in a wonderful candlestick provided by George. It couldn't have been more romantic and the nosh and the meeting were enjoyed by all. We signed a card to Tony wishing him every success with a new set of eyes. Frank brought a cutting from *The Times* of 8 May 1945 in which the future in-laws of one of our members had advertised. The instant we rose to leave the lights came on again ...

*Frank Bright*

**Next meeting: Thur 8 March 2007.**  
Usual venue

## Food for thought in Ilford

We had a good attendance for Rita Vangelder, who spoke about faith healing. She told us she had been doing this work for years and showed us articles about her healing in local papers. There was some scepticism on the part of members but her enthusiasm was a pleasure to see. Food for thought even if it left some of us wondering.

*Meta RoseNeil*

**Next meeting: Wed 10 Jan (not 3 Jan).**  
Israel update

## Scotland pre-Chanukah party in Glasgow

Irene Conway entertained the 45-plus members gathered, leading a sing-along of favourites old and not so old, including some of her own re-writes in 'mostly-Yiddish'. Then we enjoyed a spread of salmon, eggs, etc on 'can't-get-it-in-Edinburgh' bread and delicious latkes with apple sauce as well as a 90th-birthday cake created for two lady members. Henry Wuga told us about his visits to the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum and the new Kindertransport statue at Liverpool Street Station. May these get-togethers continue.

*Jonathan Kish*

**Pinner: war and peace in the Mid East**  
In a remarkably fluent talk, UK-based academic and analyst Hagai Segal traced the chequered history of peace efforts in the Middle East, including the 'road map'. He gave us insight into current thinking in Israel since the withdrawal from Gaza and the Lebanon war. He remained a relative optimist with regard to achieving peaceful co-existence.

*Walter Weg*

**Next meeting: Thur 11 Jan. Malvern Barnett, 'Food - Is It Good for You?'**

## SW Midlands socialise

A warm welcome awaited us at the home of Ruth and Allan Jackson in Pershore

when we met for lunch and a chat. The conversation flowed over a range of subjects, not least the role of religion in today's troubled world. Myrna brought us up to date with news of other group activities and Ruth and Allen spoke of their recent journey to Berlin to view old haunts, visit memorial sites and attend a school reunion. Many thanks to Ruth and Allen for their hospitality. Further meetings are planned for February and August.

*Renate Beigel*

## HGS talk on transplantation immunology

Professor Leslie Brent told us how he had become involved in transplantation immunology. He began his talk with a tape of the Kindertransport Choir from Dovercourt, which he had introduced on the BBC soon after arrival on the first Kindertransport. He discussed both the new technology of face transplants and the morals of vivisection.

*Hazel Beiny*

**Next meeting: Mon 8 Jan. George Layton, 'An Actor's Life'**

## Demonstration of acupuncture in Essex

Rita Halstead gave us a detailed demonstration of acupuncture. Physical as well as emotional factors can cause the body to develop a wide range of diseases. Acupuncture does not simply treat the symptoms of a single ailment but seeks to find the reasons for it in the whole person. We were shown an assortment of needles and other equipment necessary for this treatment, which is now available from the NHS.

*Julie Franks*

**Next meeting: Tues 9 Jan. George Layton, 'An Actor's Life'**

## South London celebrates 12th birthday

Myrna having lit the candles on our delicious birthday cake, Rabbi James Baaden gave an interesting talk about the achievements of people in later life in politics and many other fields, for instance Golda Meir and David Ben-Gurion. A fine party enjoyed by all.

*Inge Gredley*

**Next meeting: Thur 11 Jan. Israel update**

## Brighton & Hove Sarid writing group

Members of our Creative Writing Group read us extracts from their writings. We heard that some of them had never put pen to paper before joining the group and that others have had their work published since. Tributes were paid to Andrew Herskovits, who for the last seven years has tirelessly led this activity, teaching, encouraging and inspiring everyone.

*Fausta Shelton*

**Next meeting: Mon 15 Jan. Dr Sheila Marshall, 'South Africa Now and Then'**

## Second meeting at Cleve Road

At this second meeting of the group, new members told us about themselves and other members gave résumés of their histories. Myrna Glass spoke about the project in which Charlotte Lang (née Diamant) assists Eva Grudin in Vienna to trace those who came over here following an ad in the *Jewish Chronicle* or *The*

*Times*. There was a discussion about future programmes. The group will normally meet on the third Tuesday of each month.

*David Lang*

**Next meeting: Tues 16 Jan, 10.30 am. Michael Newman on the Claims Conference and the future of the AJR**

## Edgware talk on musical

Thirty-five of us enjoyed extracts from *The Rothschilds the Musical*, presented in a pleasant and professional manner by Walter Woyda. Many of the pieces played had a recognisable Jewish tune.

*Felix Winkler*

**Next meeting: Tues 16 Jan. Frank Miller, 'The Story of the Bagel'**

## Oxford hears history of Wiener Library

Katherine Klinger gave us a fascinating history of Alfred Wiener's collection of documentary material on Nazism. Funding crisis after crisis has dogged this valuable collection, which by 2009 will need a new home. Perhaps we could visit the collection?

*Anne Selinger*

**Next meeting: Tues 23 Jan. Irene Gill on her book *Oma, Mu and Me***

## Hendon talk on genealogy

Jeanette Rosenberg spoke to us about possibilities for tracing our ancestors. Both her parents were refugees but she was born in England. Among the sources she uses, she told us, are the internet, archives, notices in *The Times*, and synagogue records of barmitzvahs and batmitzvahs.

*Annette Saville*

**Next meeting: Mon 8 Jan. Ruth Bourne, 'The Bletchley Park Code-Breakers'**

## Cardiff talk on Wiener Library

Myrna and Hazel welcomed us at our usual meeting place, the Reform Synagogue near Cardiff. The Wiener Library had sent their Senior Librarian, Katherina Hübschmann, to give us an insight into the valuable task they have been performing for some 50 years from their London headquarters. An interesting and informative talk.

*Hans Meyer*

## West Midlands (Birmingham)

We enjoyed a most interesting talk by Alan Cadell on his work for the Second World War Experience Centre. His interviews brought him a wide variety of stories.

*Phillip Lesser*

## North London: Walter Woyda comes up trumps

Our advertised speaker having cancelled due to ill health, we were thrown back on our own resources. As usual, our own Walter Woyda came up trumps. We first of all had a report from Hanne Freedman on the visit to the Imperial War Museum, followed by a discussion on a number of subjects in which members present joined enthusiastically.

*Herbert Haberberg*

**Next meeting: Thur 25 Jan. Rabbi James Baaden, 'The Life of Leo Baeck'**

## FORTHCOMING MEETING

**Surrey Wed 17 Jan. Social get-together at home of Edmée Barta**

## 4-DAY TRIP TO VIENNA

Following last year's successful trip to Berlin we are arranging a trip to Vienna in APRIL – DATES TO BE CONFIRMED

There will be a full agenda with sightseeing. Some walking will be involved. For further information, please call Carol Rossen on 020 8385 3085

### HOLIDAY FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS

Sunday 8 July 2007 –  
Sunday 15 July 2007

AT THE FERNLEA HOTEL  
11/17 South Promenade, St Annes  
Tel 01253 726 726

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### DIARY DATES

25 January Holocaust  
Memorial Day  
Service,  
Belsize Square  
Synagogue

April Vienna trip  
(dates to be  
confirmed)

24 June-1 July Bournemouth  
holiday

8-15 July St Anne's holiday

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

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

### AJR LUNCHEON CLUB 10th ANNIVERSARY

Wednesday 17 January 2007  
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

Ralph Blumenau  
'Islam and the Jews'

### KT-AJR

Kindertransport special  
interest group

Monday 8 January 2007  
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

Round Table  
Viewpoint

Reservations required  
Please telephone 020 7328 0208

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday  
9.30 am - 3.30 pm

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE  
IS CLOSED ON TUESDAYS**

January Afternoon entertainment

Mon 1	CLOSED
Tue 2	CLOSED
Wed 3	Simon Gilbert
Thur 4	Jack Davidoff
Mon 8	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue 9	CLOSED
Wed 10	Douglas Poster
Thur 11	Madeleine Whiteson
Mon 15	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 16	CLOSED
Wed 17	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur 18	Paul Coleman
Mon 22	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 23	CLOSED
Wed 24	Mike Marandi
Thur 25	Margaret Opdahl
Mon 29	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 30	CLOSED
Wed 31	Ronnie Goldberg

### AJR GROUP CONTACTS

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Cleve Road, AJR Centre  
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Co-ordinator  
020 8385 3070

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

Susanne Green, Northern Groups  
Co-ordinator  
0151 291 5734

Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator  
020 8385 3070

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)  
Andrea Goodmaker 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

**FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Deaths**

**Bley Walter.** Born Berlin 1923. Father of Annette and Robert, husband of Pamela. Passed away suddenly 19 November 2006. We will never forget you.

**Ellis Rachele** (née Wolf) KT. Died 17 November 2006 after a long and valiant struggle with Parkinson's. Our close and mutually supportive friendship dates back to the Unity Theatre, 1947. All sympathy to Peter and family. 'Lie easy now; sleep out Eternity Encradled in our love.' Edith Maw-Poulsen (née Lévai).

**Kingston Margaret** (Gretl) (née Weiss). Born Voitsberg, Steiermark, Austria 1912. Arrived in England in 1939 with two-year old daughter Trudy to join husband Herbert Kingston (Bernhard Knapp). Widowed in 1958 but single-handedly maintained her husband's tailoring business as well as bringing up their three children. All adored her for her warmth, sense of humour, courage, honesty and straightforwardness. Her heritage continues through her children and her Israeli grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She will be sorely missed by all.

**Levy Edward.** The Trustees, Management and Staff of the AJR send their condolences to his wife and family at this sad time. He was a valued Trustee of the AJR.

**AJR Centre**

**Chiropodist.** Trevor Goldman at the Paul Balint AJR Centre Wednesday 24 January 2007, 10-11.30 am.

**Classified**

A scooter suitable for indoor use only is available to anyone who needs assistance in their home. Please contact Ruth Finestone at AJR Head Office, tel 020 8385 3070.

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Mobile: 0795 614 8566

**AJR SEDER NIGHT**

**Second Night Seder Service**

**Tuesday 3 April 2007**

The Paul Balint AJR Centre  
15 Cleve Road, London NW6

**Rev Larry Fine**  
will be officiating

Please telephone 020 7328 0208  
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£25 per person

– places booked after this date  
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## Search Notices

**Rosemary Cosman and Manfred Templer.** These Kinder were, I believe, in France during the war, having been sent there from Belgium. They were definitely in England at some point after the war. Manfred Templer may have been in the Merchant Navy or British Navy in the late 1940s. A survivor of a group in France during the war is researching for a book about former Brussels children (mainly from two homes) who ended up in Château La Hille. Pls contact Susie Shipman, 54 Morrab Gardens, Ilford, Essex IG3 9HL

I am writing an article about the **Jewish Hospital in Berlin.** The hospital was used partly as a Gestapo-controlled hospital for Berlin's 'mixed-race' Jews and partly as a quasi-prison/holding camp for Jews being sent east. I need to find survivors (or families/friends of survivors) and people who passed through the Hospital in any capacity during the war, even as doctors or nurses. I believe there are some Jewish survivors who came to this country as refugees after the war. I am also looking for survivors abroad. Pls contact Sarah Helm tel 0208 740 9506

I am seeking info about my grandparents, **Walter and Elisabeth Mann,** from Germany. He was a dentist in London before the First World War. She may have been a piano teacher. They had a son, Franz Richard, born 1914. All were interned on the Isle of Man during the

First World War and then sent back to Germany. Later my father was sent to Paris to be with an uncle. Elisabeth survived concentration camps and lived in Berlin. Any info, pls contact Judith Mann-Calvi at jcalvi@tiscalinet.it

In June 1940 my father, **Albert Donaldson,** married **Emma B. Mullner** and his brother married **Sonia M. E. Mullner** to save them from being deported. My father was unable to get a divorce and I wish to find out whether this lady returned to Austria or remained in the UK. If you have any info on these two ladies, pls contact me at judywebsl@tiscali.co.uk

I, **Gita Ringsell, née Rosenkranz,** was born 02.01.1927 in Teplitz-Schönau, Czechoslovakia. My brother, **Martin Rosenkranz,** was born 1931. My parents were **Joseph and Charlotte (née Teitelbaum) Rosenbaum.** Charlotte had three sisters: Rosa Teitelbaum (married name Webber), Clara Teitelbaum (had two children: Edmund and Eli), and Lola Teitelbaum. Any info on any of the above, pls contact Gita Ringsell on 079 4642 8365

I wish to make contact with any Dutch or members of other nationalities who passed through the **Lloyd Hotel** in Amsterdam in the 1930s. The info is required to build up a history of this building, which has been restored to hotel status. Pls reply to Pat Cravitz at pcravitz@hotmail.com

## Central Office for Holocaust Claims Michael Newman

### Czech art deadline abolished

Politicians in the Czech Republic voted overwhelmingly last November to cancel the end-of-year deadline for applications in respect of Jewish-owned artworks appropriated during the Nazi occupation of the country.

A 2000 law provides for the return of state-owned property to Jewish Holocaust victims and their heirs stolen between September 1938 and May 1945. The law was introduced following the establishment in 1998 of the Czech government commission to organise a search for lost works of art and to prepare legislation allowing confiscated property to be restored to the original owners.

To date, around 20,000 paintings and other works of art which originally belonged to Czech Jews have been found in various galleries and castles, with 13,000 having been discovered since 2002. However, only about 500 pieces have been returned to their original owners.

Claims can now be filed indefinitely for the artworks, which are displayed online at [www.restitution-art.cz](http://www.restitution-art.cz)

## Arts and Events Diary – January

**To 8 April Champion of the Child: Janusz Korczak** Exhibition at the Jewish Museum, Camden Town, tel 020 7284 1997

**To 11 Jan Absence and Loss A photographic Holocaust memorial exhibition** Manchester Jewish Museum tel 0161 834 9879. **From 23 Jan** at Belsize Square Synagogue

John Lee Anderson, **'Iraq and Public War Crimes Trials'** Wiener Library, 7.00 pm, date tbc, tel 020 7636 7247

**Mon 8 Dr Hanne Castein, 'Caspar David Friedrich, a German Romantic Painter'** (with illustrations) Club 43

**Mon 15 Dr Ian King, 'Angela Merkel – Germany's Eastern Thatcher?'** Club 43

**Wed 17 Film: Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West,** with the film's director, Professor Robert Wistrich, London Jewish Cultural Centre, 7.30 pm, tel 020 8457 5000

**Mon 22 Ralph Blumenau, 'How Paranoid Was Stalin?'** Club 43

**Tues 23 7th Annual Glasgow University Holocaust Memorial Lecture: Professor Gerald Feldman, University of California, Santa Barbara, 'How Complicit Were the German and Austrian Banks in the Holocaust?'** Western Infirmary Lecture Theatre, University Place, 6.15 pm. Lecture co-sponsored by AJR

**Wed 24 Living in the Warsaw Ghetto: Reflexions of Survivors 60 Years On** Jewish Museum, Camden Town, 7.00 pm, tel 020 7284 1997

**Mon 29 Dr David Williamson, 'The Second Siege of Malta, 1940-42'** Club 43

*Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Hans Seelig on 01442 254360*

### Genealogists

It is suggested that members be wary of signing power-of-attorney with unknown genealogists, solicitors and companies who offer to represent clients with Holocaust-era compensation and restitution claims.

Their strategy is to target heirs of Holocaust victims whose names appear on lists of unclaimed Holocaust-era assets such as dormant Swiss bank accounts. However, clients are not informed which assets have been identified until a power-of-attorney has been signed.

The compensation schemes with which they claim they can assist are often free, while their charges are exorbitant. Members may wish to consider revoking a previously signed power-of-attorney.

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](mailto:mnewman@ajr.org.uk)



with Ronald Channing

## Newsround

In the period prior to the winter holidays – during which the whole country seems to shut down, irrespective of the clemency of the weather – the Jewish community crams its calendar with meetings and events to enlighten seekers after truth. Here follow brief accounts of three of those in which I, and maybe you, participated.

**Speaking out**

An absolutely packed house gathered at the London Jewish Cultural Centre to question Melanie Phillips, the journalist, *Moral Maze* broadcaster and, one might almost add, the UK's most courageous and only really effective proponent of Israel's case. The centre of interest was her latest book, *Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within*. Well researched, provocative and not a little frightening to those with memories of Hitler, if subsequent events and court cases are anything to go by *Londonistan* is proving too close to the reality which it reveals.

Following the indiscriminate and brutal murder of 50 London Transport passengers by four native-born suicide bombers, Melanie believes that it was revealed that under the noses of the government, parliament, intelligence services and police, Britain had become the European hub for the promotion, recruitment and financing of Islamist terror. She uncovered a persistent state of denial by the British establishment both on the left and the right. Radical demands were being appeased by multiculturalism rather than challenged by common sense, Melanie argues, and Britain should face up to the threat to its way of life. This most readable book, published by Gibson Square, is having a considerable influence on the debate.

**Beyond (my) understanding**

The eponymous Clemens Nathan Institute organised another of its exceptionally high-powered conferences at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, on the theme of 'Foreign Policy and Human Rights'. The keynote address was given by the distinguished diplomat Sir Jeremy

Greenstock, former Special Representative for Iraq and Ambassador to the United Nations. His diplomatic language tended, for me at least, to obscure any anticipated insider revelations. Other participants included Sir Franklin Berman, Professor of International Law at the University of Oxford and former adviser to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Professors Françoise Hampson and Sir Nigel Rodley of the University of Essex.

I have to confess that the subtleties and minutiae of international law left me reaching incomprehensibility rather earlier than anticipated but, if their conjoined efforts could restore a modicum of justice which redressed the huge built-in majority of anti-Israel sentiment in the UN General Assembly, I would forgive them everything!

**Giving the victims a voice**

The Imperial War Museum was host to the Leo Baeck annual lecture 'The Making of the New Yad Vashem Museum', given by Yehudit Inbar, curator of the team which recreated Israel's Museum of the Holocaust in Jerusalem. The new Museum, which took 12 years to complete, opened in 2004. Although the Holocaust 'defied understanding', said Yehudit Inbar, it was true that few tried to stop the perpetrators, although 'it could have been done'. The victims had done nothing wrong and each one 'had the right to be remembered as a human individual', their remembrance being 'a basic cultural obligation'.

Holocaust victims tended to be portrayed as their murderers saw them – anonymous people with no families or individuality – and the photographs, films, documentation and other materials on display were made or collected by the perpetrators. It was decided that the new Museum would focus on the Jews – the victims – to give them a voice and attempt to tell their individual stories with which to make a collective narrative, and to achieve this despite an obvious paucity of artefacts, photographs and documents. In the exhibition many voices are heard from different locations, languages and religiosity, Ashkenazi and Sephardi.

**New synagogue in Munich**

A new synagogue has been opened in Munich, 68 years after Hitler ordered its predecessor to be destroyed. Germany's President, Horst Koehler, was among the many religious leaders and officials who attended the synagogue inauguration. According to Deutsche Welle, some 9,300 Jews now live in Munich – the country's second largest Jewish community.

**£1.5 million grant towards Holocaust education**

The British Government has said it will give £1.5 million to the Holocaust Education Trust to allow students from every school in Britain to visit Auschwitz. The funding means that the number of students able to participate in the scheme each year will rise from 400 to over 6,000.

**Holocaust book wins prestigious French prize**

An American has become the first native English speaker to win the Prix Goncourt. Jonathan Littell won the prize with *Les Bienveillantes* (The Kindly Ones), an account of Nazi atrocities in Eastern Europe. The book also won the Académie Française prize.

**Vienna Jewish school attacked**

Police have detained a man suspected of breaking into a Jewish school in the Austrian capital and smashing windows and porcelain. Community leaders denounced the attack, at the Lauder Chabad School, as the most serious antisemitic attack for two decades. The suspect reportedly described himself as a Croatian.

**Lebensborn children seek true identities**

The children of a Nazi-era programme to breed a master race are stepping up efforts to find their true identities after a life traumatised by shame and alienation. A group representing thousands of people born under the *Lebensborn* (Spring of Life) programme of Heinrich Himmler have met in Wernigerode, the site of a *Lebensborn* birth clinic, to share experiences and help each other to trace their true parents – who were often committed Nazis.

**Cuba Jews celebrate 100th birthday**

Cuba's tiny Jewish community has marked its 100th birthday with religious services, music, dancing, parties and speeches. Some 1,500 Jews reportedly live in Cuba, more than 85 per cent of them in Havana.