

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Remembering internment

My article on the 'Thank-You Britain' Fund (May 2007), which emphasised the positive side of relations between Britain and the Jewish refugees from Hitler, provoked a letter, published in June, reminding readers of the mass internment of 'enemy aliens' in the summer of 1940 – the heaviest item on the negative side of that account. The wartime internment and deportation of refugees were indeed the greatest stain on the record of the British government's treatment of those who fled here to escape Nazi persecution. The events of that momentous summer, now 67 years ago, were of such consequence for the refugees that I intend to devote two major articles to them.

Initially, the government had intended to avoid mass internment, which had proved harsh and unjust in the First World War. Instead, at the outbreak of war, German nationals were required to appear before tribunals, which classed them according to the security risk they posed. Only a tiny minority – some 600, mostly Nazi sympathisers – were placed in Category A and interned forthwith. The vast majority – over 64,000 and consisting mostly of 'refugees from Nazi oppression' – were placed in Category C and left at liberty. Some 6,800 people, whose cases were unclear to the tribunals, were placed in the intermediate Category B and made subject to certain restrictions.

But with the fall of France and the Low Countries in May/June 1940, which exposed Britain to the most serious threat of invasion it had faced since 1066, a wave of panic swept the country. Newspapers like the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, organs of the xenophobic right whose hostility to the refugees barely concealed their dislike of Jews, had been pressing for some time for the internment of Jews from Germany. The government now gave way to those who argued that the refugees posed a threat to



Internment camp, Isle of Man

national security, as spies or as potential fifth columnists who might sabotage British defences as their counterparts supposedly had in Holland and France. The defenceless refugees fell victim to this temporary ascendancy of reactionary bigots and Jew-haters allied with military and security circles obsessed with internal threats to the defence of the realm.

In May 1940, the newly installed coalition government under Winston Churchill first decreed the internment of male enemy aliens between the ages of 16 and 60 living in 'Protected Areas' on the threatened sectors of the coast, then issued the notorious order to 'Collar the Lot'. Male refugees in Category B were interned, as were Category B women; the detention of male refugees in Category C, ordered in June, was under way when the policy of internment was halted the following month. This ultimately caused the internment of some 27,000 enemy aliens, including some 4,000 women, most of whom were Jews who plainly posed no security risk whatsoever.

The mass internment of enemy aliens in 1940 was, it is now generally agreed, indefensible. It was a measure that was as cruel and inhumane as it was stupid and pointless. The best that can be claimed for it is that it was an ill-considered response to a situation of extreme emergency, at a time of national obsession, largely irrational, with

internal security risks, largely imaginary. To intern as potential Nazi sympathisers Jewish refugees, who had been the most prominent targets of Nazi persecution and had the greatest reason to oppose the Nazi regime, was almost perversely insensitive. Among its worst aspects was the trauma that a fresh bout of detention inflicted on those of the internees who had already experienced imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps.

The incompetence and inefficiency that characterised the entire episode were apparent from the outset. The process of arresting detainees was conducted with a combination of heartless bureaucracy and disorganised muddle. Refugees were often detained in the early morning – some suffered the dawn knock on the door that would carry them off to an uncertain fate – while others adopted the simple expedient of leaving home early to avoid arrest. The police notoriously raided Hampstead Public Library on 13 July 1940 to detain its refugee readers, but failed to round up those who congregated for an early breakfast at Lyons Corner House at Marble Arch.

After their arrest, most refugees were first held in temporary camps, like the racecourses of Kempton Park and Lingfield for those in the London area. Conditions were bad at Prees Heath in Shropshire, where internees lived under canvas, and indescribable at Warth Mill, a disused cotton mill in Bury, Lancashire, where dirt, squalor and lack of food and facilities reigned. The chaos of these makeshift arrangements was matched by the disorganisation of the entire exercise; the internees soon realised that the military authorities had no real idea why they had been interned, what was to be done with them, and how long they were to be held. Worst of all was the psychological blow of being unjustly imprisoned; the deprivation of liberty, the confinement and humiliation were made more wounding by

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REMEMBERING INTERNMENT *continued from page 1*

the apparent willingness of the authorities to identify Jewish refugees with the agents of Nazism.

The authorities soon started moving the internees from temporary camps to the Isle of Man, where, as in the First World War, they were to be held. Many spent some time at a makeshift camp in Huyton on Merseyside, a newly built council estate hastily converted into a camp. The internees were housed in camps in Douglas and other resorts on the Isle of Man, mostly in groups of boarding houses requisitioned for the purpose. Camp names like Central Promenade, Hutchinson, Onchan, Sefton, Mooragh and Rushen (the women's camp comprising Port Erin and Port St Mary) passed into refugee usage.

Conditions in the camps on the Isle of Man were considerably better than in the temporary camps, not least because some semblance of order and stability could be established there. The internees lived in small groups in individual boarding houses, where the food and accommodation were spartan but adequate; many refugees slept two to a double bed. The summer months on the Isle of Man were pleasant, and free from air raids. Walks in the country were permitted, under armed guard, as was swimming in the sea. There were adequate sanitary arrangements and some medical care. The internees were able to develop a remarkable array of cultural activities,

including concerts, lecture courses and other educational activities organised by 'camp universities'. The galaxy of academic and artistic talent available in the camps made for a wide and attractive selection of lectures for those eager to put their enforced idleness to good use.

But the emotional and psychological impact of detention remained powerful and hurtful. The internees were confined on an island remote from the mainland cities, far from their families, whose safety was at serious risk from German bombing and who had been deprived of their main breadwinner. Cut off from reliable sources of news, the internees fell prey to all sorts of rumours and fears, not least that Britain would surrender and hand them over to the Nazis – 'like rats in a trap', as had happened in France. The difficulty of communicating with the outside world, especially the long delays to which letters and telegrams to families were subject, was a source of great frustration; refugees found it hard to set about securing their release. The arbitrary inefficiency of the administration was one of the aspects of camp life that most affected the internees' morale.

The government took the process a stage further when it started to deport internees overseas. Four ships carrying some 4,400 men sailed to Canada, while some 2,400 were sent to Australia on the ill-famed *Dunera*, in extremely poor conditions; on this vessel

the internees were robbed and seriously mistreated by the military escort, and eventually court-martial proceedings were taken against the officer in charge and two of his subordinates. On 2 July 1940, the liner *Arandora Star*, bound for Canada, was sunk off the Irish coast with the loss of several hundred lives, mostly German and Italian deportees. Though the government first claimed that all Germans on board had been Category A internees, it soon became known that many of the dead were Jewish refugees in Category C.

The resulting furore crystallised opposition to internment and led to a determined campaign against it in parliament, culminating in a celebrated debate on 22 August 1940, as German bombs fell on the capital. By then, public opinion had swung sharply against internment and the government had reversed its policy, issuing a White Paper in late July listing a variety of categories of internees eligible for priority release; these were widened over the following months. The release of the interned refugees proceeded reasonably speedily. The first 50 were released from the Isle of Man on 5 August 1940, though many more were detained until late 1940 or early 1941. By August 1941, only about 1,300 refugees were still interned in Britain, while many of those deported overseas had returned, often to join the armed forces.

Anthony Grenville

Kindertransport Survey: a progress report

The Survey Team of the KT/AJR Planning Committee has been very busy registering the returns of our Survey Questionnaires. The good news is that the number already received approaches 1,000. Approximately 550 are from the UK, 150 from Israel, 280 from the USA, and a handful from other countries. We have also received several hundred Supplementary Questionnaires about ex-Kinder no longer with us. These are yet to be registered.

This response is very pleasing, to say the least. A return of over 60 per cent is a result which would be hailed with euphoria by any market research organisation, which would normally have to make do with a mere fraction of this.

The Survey Team wishes to express its unstinting admiration and gratitude to everyone who has returned forms. Those who have not yet responded, be assured – it is not too late. We would very

much welcome further returns. Each one will add value to our historical archive.

We are indebted to the AJR Charitable Trust for funding this initial stage of the project and intend to report fully at an early opportunity.

To all those who have generously provided additional anecdotal information on the last page of the Questionnaire, it has so far not been possible to assess this fully and/or answer letters, but please be assured that these contributions will yield much knowledge.

We are now striving to formulate the next stage, the aim of which includes computer scanning of the returns and data processing of the historical facts. This may take some time, but ultimately, I am confident, it will lay the ghost and provide us with statistically dependable, archival information of what have hitherto been only views and guesstimates.

Bertha Leverton and Judy Benton, who have generously given of their time to work with me, and Ronald Channing, who has provided support and advice, join me in expressing our gratitude. I will report again.

Hermann Hirschberger

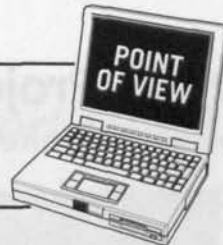
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In support of today's refugees



The asylum-seekers who depend on Barnet Refugee Service are often destitute and all are seeking safety, having fled from persecution and frequently abuse, torture and rape. Family members and friends may have been killed in what had been their homeland.

Our clients are not economic migrants looking to improve their lives. We have no argument with economic migrants but their circumstances and problems are totally different from those of people seeking asylum and the two categories should not be confused in the debate over immigration: economic migrants are deliberately coming to a new country and new opportunities; asylum-seekers are fleeing from persecution.

Barnet Refugee Service is an independent charity supporting local asylum-seekers regardless of their country of origin, race or religion. Our role is to offer practical support to these vulnerable people and to advise them on access to health, education and housing and to guide them hopefully towards integration into a new life and into our society. At all times we treat them with dignity and respect in order to help in restoring their sense of their own worth.

Many refugees need emergency support with food and clothing. The 'lucky' ones receive 70 per cent of the basic state benefit and are forbidden from working to enhance this meagre income. Those in politics and the media who imply that asylum-seekers are a drain on our resources should question a policy that actively prevents people from making any contribution to society.

Most asylum-seekers would like nothing more than the opportunity to work and enjoy the financial and psychological rewards that employment brings to them and to the wider community.

The unlucky ones, who may have absented themselves from the records for fear of being forcibly removed to a distant town where they know nobody or who perhaps have had their asylum claim arbitrarily rejected, receive no state support and are totally dependent on organisations like Barnet Refugee Service for food and clothing.

Reports late last year from Amnesty International and Refugee Action claim

that the government, by cutting off support for refused asylum-seekers, is using destitution in an attempt to drive refused asylum-seekers out of the country.

The reports reveal that many refused asylum-seekers are being reduced to penniless poverty. If they cannot find a friend or acquaintance's sofa to sleep on, they often end up sleeping in parks, public toilets and telephone boxes and have to go without vital medicines even after they may have survived torture. These people rely on the charity of friends, acquaintances or organisations like Barnet Refugee Service in order to survive.

The local Barnet council has closed its refugee section and we are the first port of call for most asylum-seekers in Barnet. We deal with more than 3,500 enquiries a year as well as running specific support groups for refugee women and teenagers. We provide information and education to local service providers such as health professionals, including GPs and housing officers.

Please think back to those trapped in Germany in 1939 because most countries had closed their doors to any more refugees. The doors were closed because allowing in new people with strange customs and a strange language is difficult, untidy and politically unpopular in that it so often brings out people's worst fears and prejudices.

The destiny of those refused asylum at that time was to die in the camps. Surely we, of all people, must fight to prevent such things from ever happening, both on the scale of genocide but also in the case of any one person. Death, or at best torture and abuse, is often the true cost of deciding that we have no room for one more fleeing person.

So many of us, our parents, grandparents or great-grandparents, were asylum-seekers. Let us honour their memory and the contribution to this country made by them and their descendants by supporting today's refugees.

Peter Salomon

Peter Salomon is Chairman of Barnet Refugee Service. His father, who grew up in Landsberg an der Warthe (East Prussia), fled to England in 1938.

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Making a New Life Project Holocaust survivors in Yorkshire

For three years a collaboration between researchers at the University of Leeds and the Holocaust Survivors' Friendship Association (HSFA), set up in 1996 to bring together the now ageing and scattered Holocaust survivors, has been documenting their extraordinary lives as much *after* the Holocaust as before and during its terrible years.

Using in-depth interviews to record the full range of experiences of 'making a new life' as an immigrant from a world lost in the destruction that was the Holocaust, the project has also been given a wealth of documents that build our picture of what was left behind, what was brought here, and what was made in this new life in Britain.

This May, an event took place to mark the handing over of the archive so far accumulated to the safe-keeping of the Special Collections of Leeds University's Brotherton Library.

A small selection of the documents was exhibited in the Brotherton Room to indicate the wealth of material for social histories and the continuing study of all dimensions of the Holocaust as an event with continuing repercussions for the



Silman family: Norman and Trude with daughters Ruth and Judith at Gordale Scar, Malham, 1959

survivors, their families and our societies.

The core of the archive comprises interview tapes, related transcripts and associated papers of members of the HSFA. There are over 80 tapes of personal testimony with individuals and, more recently, interviews of survivors brought together for the first time. Over 1,000 images from personal photograph collections have been scanned and added to these in-depth interviews.

A database of over 90 names of former

refugees who have made a new life in Yorkshire has been compiled. A few large collections of personal papers form the bulk of the archive. The largest consists of some six boxes of papers left upon the death of Edith Culman which includes a box of her husband Emil's papers and a further box of their correspondence over 30 years with their son Emanuel in the USA. Smaller but by no means less significant original collections relate to John Chillag, Ernest Millet, Rudi Leavor and Helga Anysz.

The project has involved the Centre for Jewish Studies (founded 1995); the Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History (CentreCATH, founded 2001) at the University of Leeds; and the HSFA of Yorkshire.

The research has been generously funded by the Association of Jewish Refugees, the Arnold Ziff Foundation and the Julius Silman Foundation.

The research team includes Professor Griselda Pollock, Brett Harrison, Dr Amanda Bergen and Bernice Shooman.

The inspiration and drive behind the project come from the first Chair of the HSFA, Trude Silman, and the many members who started it off by sharing their stories. It has also been supported by volunteers Janet Friedman, Barbara Cammerman and Hilary Curwen.

Ruth Taylor, University of Leeds

AJR 'busier than it has ever been', AGM told

The AJR was probably busier now than ever, its Chairman, Andrew Kaufman, told this year's AGM. Indeed, its membership had grown by 26 last year, with 235 new members in all. The year 2007 was shaping up similarly, he said.

While the numbers attending the AJR Centre were inevitably declining, Andrew said, the Meals on Wheels service was booming – 'not surprisingly considering the amazing quality of the food'. Susie Kaufman and her staff should be thanked for their tender loving care.

The Social Work team too was busier than ever, expanding our services in Northern England and Scotland. We were now a truly national organisation, ably led on the social work side by Marcia Goodman.

Three new regional groups had been formed in 2006, bringing the total to 36, with additional staff recruited.

Trips – to Berlin last year and Vienna this year – and members' holidays in Bournemouth and Eastbourne could not have taken place without the hard work of members of staff, in particular Ruth Finestone and Carol Rossen.

Andrew went on to pay tribute to Volunteer Co-ordinator Carol Hart – 'We couldn't exist without the volunteers' – and to Michael Newman for the vital work of publicising our activities and his invaluable work on Holocaust claims. The



AJR 'busier than ever': Chairman Andrew Kaufman, left, and Vice-Chairman and Treasurer David Rothenberg address AGM

AJR Journal remained as respected as ever. With regard to special interest groups, Andrew thanked Kindertransport Chairman Hermann Hirschberger for ensuring such an easy relationship and noted that we had now been joined by the Child Survivors Association.

But all this 'busyness' cost a great deal of money. The AJR relied increasingly on legacies. 'We want to be busy helping you, so please don't forget us!'

Finally, Andrew thanked the long-serving and loyal directors Carol Rossen and Gordon Greenfield as well as the Management Committee, who supported the organisation unflinchingly.

David Rothenberg, AJR Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, stressed the AJR's 'very important' international connections. He noted that the New York-based Claims Conference was the 'single largest source of income'. The AJR was not a fundraising

organisation, but relied on income from members – i.e. legacies. There was no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow: 'We depend on you!'

David pointed out that the second generation had been badly scarred by their parents' experiences and that we needed to help them as well. He too paid tribute to the staff's hard work.

The Honorary Officers and members of the Management Committee were re-elected unanimously. HS



Popular volunteer Fred Dunston with his sons Colin, left, and John. At a delightful lunch to celebrate his 90th birthday, Stanmore and Day Centre staff paid tribute to 'our most loyal volunteer', as AJR Director Carol Rossen described him. It was in the mid-1980s that Fred first began voluntary work for the AJR, alongside Sylvia Matus. Now, he does filing in the accounts department at Stanmore. Fred vowed he would continue his volunteer work as long as he could: 'It's what keeps me going!'

The 'other' Herzl

How a refugee engineer engineered history

Erich Herzl, an 87-year-old Viennese refugee, is not related to the famous Theodor. But he has made a lasting impact on history in a quite different way.

I first met Erich in 1942. He was already a trained engineer, operating a huge lathe at Swann Mill's London factory, but I lost touch with him when I was called up into the British Army. In London's Waterloo one day, there he was, 58 years later, and we had an opportunity to fill in the gaps from the missing years.

Subsequently, whenever Erich and I met in London, the words Riga-Bikernieki regularly cropped up. I would tackle him for details about it. It was also around the mid-80s that a Jewish community leader spoke on Austrian television about the mass deportations of Jews to a ghetto in Riga and mentioned lists had been drawn up by the punctilious Gestapo, confirming Herzl's fears that his parents had suffered a similar fate.

So there was Erich, himself an elderly survivor, now fully aware of the medical experiments, torture and executions in the Kaiserwald camp (a suburb of Riga); moreover, he knew of the skeletal remains in the Bikernieki woods. Burning with the desire to provide the victims with a decent place of rest, but bereft of resources and contacts, his early efforts to persuade Jewish leaders to turn his idea into reality met with hesitation – it was believed there were too many obstacles to overcome. But gradually there grew a climate of awareness that such a venture might succeed.

Erich began by gathering together friends and cohorts to form the Initiation Riga Club. What he was seeking was a memorial for the victims plus a second memorial entitled 'Never Again' as a symbol for future generations. He met the late German President Dr Johannes Rau, whom he found full of understanding, and contacted Dr Karl-Wilhelm Lange, President of the War Graves Association, who did everything he was asked on learning of the fate of Herzl's parents (he assisted with funds too). The Vienna authorities and German local government contributed



The Memorial in Riga-Bikernieki

to the fund, as did a number of individuals, including Herzl himself. Altogether, some DM 6 million was raised, also covering the cost of the *Remembrance Volumes*, which contain the lists of Jews deported to the Baltic states.

In May 2000 representatives of 18 German cities and towns formed the Riga Committee, to which Vienna

Now, as awards and honours flow in Herzl's direction, does he regard his mission as complete? Not so.

Addressing groups of young people in Riga and holding educational seminars elsewhere is for him what passing on the truth about the past is all about.

(represented by Herzl) was added. The aim was to remind the world that 25,000 Jews had been deported from these locations to Riga in 1941-42 and put to death in the Bikernieki woods. Of the 42,000 Vienna Jews deported, one in ten had ended up in Riga. Aided by organisational and financial help from the Austrian Black Cross, Herzl and other members of the Riga Initiative Group travelled to Latvia to assess the situation. Clearly what was needed was a professional approach to express the meaning of this gruesome site. As Erich explained to me: 'The Germans tried to burn the remnants, but took hasty leave when the Russian army closed in.' Now, some 60 years later, the stage was set for a phase of 'new history'.

A defining moment for Herzl was his

meeting with a history teacher from Munster who happened to be delving into the Nazi atrocities in Riga. The teacher put him in contact with Dr Bergmans, the chairman of the Riga KZ group, who in turn was acquainted with Sergei Rysh, a well-qualified Jewish architect resident in Latvia, and his wife Galina, also an architect. Now, this emotive journey could continue. Sergei bore overall responsibility for the design of the monument, providing the conceptual authenticity to reflect the horrors that had taken place there.

Topographically, the Nazi execution squads had found in the woods a bowl-like spot most suitable for the killings and mass graves. This led the architects to the idea of nameless gravestones for each person in 'open earth', with sharp-edged stones to denote the victims' proximity to each other. The monument itself is divided into grid-squares so as to symbolise the planned exterminations, while another part of the design represents a chapel, with a memorial stone commemorating those buried there.

Following a great deal of spadework to comb clean the immediate area in the Bikernieki woods, and the actual construction of the monument, all was ready in November 2001 for the site to be declared open and inaugurated by a Latvian rabbi. The commemorative ceremony was held in the presence of a mix of people who included surviving kin, delegates from towns and cities from which victims were sent to Riga, religious dignitaries, prominent political figures, and members of the public. Also present was Ellen Davis, who wrote a moving letter to the *AJR Journal* (March 2002). She contacted Erich Herzl to say how appreciative she was: the fact that her relatives now had a grave, she said, had reduced her trauma considerably.

Now, as awards and honours flow in Herzl's direction, does he regard his mission as complete? Not so. Addressing groups of young people in Riga and holding educational seminars elsewhere is for him what passing on the truth about the past is all about.

Ken Saunders

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

ISRAEL: TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD

Sir – Caroline M. Salinger (Letters, May) proves how deeply implanted anti-Israel propaganda is in the public's conscience. She repeats every falsehood ('Israeli policy of dominating, expelling, starving and humiliating an entire people') based on the thoroughly discredited ramblings of a few disgruntled IDF renegades, slanted reports by Israeli human rights groups, and academics like Dr Ilan Pappé, who roam the globe attacking Israel with the most foul lies.

Certain Israeli human rights groups are heavily financed by foreign interests inimical to Israel's best interests and, in order to keep the funds rolling in, they supply their bosses with juicy, but rarely credible, concoctions. An investigation by an Israeli newspaper not only revealed the large sums Peace Now was receiving but also the falsity of its reports. This is also true of B'tselem and groups like those Ms Salinger mentions, some of whom accused 'settlers' of 'deliberately killing unarmed' Arabs, including children, and destroying Arab olive trees. These accusations, though eventually proven false, caused immense damage to the image of the 300,000 law-abiding Jews in Judea/Samaria.

The olive-tree fabrication was exposed only after 'settlers' set up cameras around olive groves which caught Arabs and their left-wing allies destroying the trees themselves! No similar fuss was ever made about the destruction of thousands of Jewish fruit trees by Arabs!

It is most offensive that people like Salinger show no concern about Israeli 'unarmed civilian targets', including children deliberately killed by Arabs, leaving more than 150 dead and hundreds maimed since the signing of the Oslo 'peace' accords in 1994. Two examples: (1) In 2001 a CIA-trained PA sniper shot Shalhevet Pas, a 10-month-old 'settler' baby girl, through the head as her father pushed her pram near their home; (2) A 29-year-old, 8-months pregnant 'settler' mother, Tali Hanuel, was shot at close range together with her 4 small 'settler' daughters after their car was attacked by 2 'poor, humiliated' Arabs.

Dr Pappé was booed by left-wing fans during a recent lecture at London University when he declared seeing 'IDF soldiers playing football with the heads

of Palestinian babies'! It seems that even his most faithful admirers realised he had gone too far this time! Hopefully, others will also reject mendacious anti-Israel propaganda from unscrupulous sources.

Mrs Trudy Gefen, Kiriath Ono, Israel

Sir – My friend Hans Seelig might care to elaborate how he imagines Israel could defend itself by 'internationally acceptable means' at the same time as being subjected to continuous rocket bombardment. Does he consider the rocket bombardment of Israeli civilians internationally acceptable?

At present, the Iranian President and his government are paying lip service to the destruction of Israel while they still have reason to be scared of tiny Israel. The moment Israel's leaders were to confine themselves to an 'internationally acceptable defence policy' à la Neville Chamberlain's Munich, lip service would turn into action. Surely we German and Austrian ex-refugees of all people should have learned by now our lesson that finger-wagging and wrist-slapping will never stop bloodthirsty antisemitic dictators.

Mr Seelig rightly points out that had Israel existed in the 1930s, there might well have been no *Shoah*. I should add that had Hitler been stopped by force in time, there would have been no Second World War and no Auschwitz. By sticking to internationally acceptable means – in other words, by pussyfooting in the face of Iranian threats – we may well have to wait this time rather longer than just 1,900 years for the next State of Israel to arise. *Dr Fred Rosner, Chigwell, Essex*

Sir – With regard to the shocking proposed boycott of Israeli academic institutions, was there ever a boycott of academic institutions behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War, of rogue oppressive regimes, of countries harbouring Islamist terrorists, etc? No, Israel is fair game because everyone knows that Israel will not retaliate by declaring a bloody *fatwah*, as others might.

Bronia Snow, Esher, Surrey

Sir – I am delighted to be able to disillusion M. Storz. Of course there are Palestinian organisations working for a peaceful solution and non-violent resistance – the Palestinian Center for

Peace and Democracy, the Hope Flowers School in Bethlehem and many Arab-Jewish ventures such as Ta'ayush and the MidEastWeb Group for Coexistence.

M. Storz also misread my objection to the separation wall – not that it has reduced the number of suicide bombings, but *where* it is has been built, way beyond the Green Line. One cannot but suspect a motive of land acquisition otherwise it would have been routed through land recognised internationally as Israel's territory.

M. Storz doubts the veracity of the Israeli officers who refuse to 'dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people'. Allow me to recommend *Breaking Ranks*, by Ronit Chacham – a moving account of how experienced officers felt compelled to take a stand against army behaviour in the Occupied Territories.

If Mr Kolman wants to talk about historical expulsions he should read the diaries of Ben-Gurion, which make clear the policy of the Haganah leadership: 'to expel the Arabs and take their places ... and if we have to use force ... then we have force at our disposal' (1936).

For those who continue to insist that it is acceptable to keep silent despite our knowledge of what Israel is doing in the Occupied Territories, let me quote the Holocaust historian Yehuda Bauer: 'Thou shall not be a perpetrator; thou shall not be a victim; and thou shall never, but never, be a bystander.'

Caroline M Salinger, Leicester

'ON BEING JEWISH'

Sir – Edith Argy writes (May) that being Jewish is an accident of birth and half-quoting the prophet Micah is all there is to being Jewish. No! There is very much more to being Jewish. It is most unfortunate that by the beginning of the twentieth century most Jews in Western Europe considered their Jewishness just an accident of birth. Indeed, it was the least important thing in their lives and they were in a state of utter shock and disbelief when, under Hitler, it became the most important item in their life. They had always wanted to assimilate and they did so outwardly. The gentile population still considered Jews an alien population and were treated as such. It has been well described as 'unrequited love'.

Those Jews who managed to escape, although still calling themselves 'Jewish', were really 'fellow persecutees' with little adherence to Judaism. They remained just as ignorant of the practices and principles of Judaism as they had been previously.

The Nazis considered us a race but this idea is foreign to Judaism. Anyone is free to join the Jewish people. The Bible has defined us in Exodus Ch 19:6 as 'A kingdom of priests and a holy nation'.

What constitutes 'being Jewish'? I can do no better than refer to the Hertz

Chumash (Pentateuch), page 926, where he defines the content of Jewish education: the principles of the Jewish religion; the Hebrew language; knowledge of the Bible; the history of our people.

Just 'being Jewish' or being 'good Jews' will not prevent our children from marrying non-Jews – and that will be the end of Judaism and all we stand for.

Max Sulzbacher, London NW11

Sir – I couldn't agree more with Edith Argy. I was born in Prague between the First and Second World Wars. I was not instructed in the Jewish religion but knew I was Jewish, which my family realised the hard way after the Nazis occupied Czechoslovakia. I am aware of my Jewishness; I am deeply interested in Israel's affairs; I respect religious people, but cannot join them. I am a secular Jew and I belong to the human race, as so well phrased by Edith Argy.

Hana Nermut, Harrow, Middx

Sir – Edith Argy's article is a personal point of view, which I respect. However, it raises some questions: (1) Is *being a Jew* different from *being Jewish*? (2) Are secular Jews included in the statistics?

Edith Argy wishes to 'belong to one race only – the human race'. I learned in my English lessons that 'The more I see of people, the more I like my cat.'

Anna Schlesinger, Wembley, Middx

JEWISH AT WHAT PRICE?

Sir – When I came to England it was because we were Jewish and we fled for our lives. I then 'married out'. It is now 62 years on. My marriage was a great success and I don't regret a moment of it. Of course, I want to be buried Jewish. It is in my blood and in my mind. It was always accepted by my family.

Did not the Austrian Kultusgemeinde send me a certificate that I was an 'Honourable Member', did my birth certificate not state that I was Jewish, of Jewish parents, and does Austria not list me as a Jewish refugee? But it costs about £5,000 more to be buried Jewish than the average burial. And there lies my dilemma: is my Jewishness worth an extra £5,000?

H. Sale, Harrow

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST

Sir – I read the Newsround item in your May issue headed 'School teachers drop Holocaust lesson for fear of giving offence'. My immediate reaction, like I imagine that of many other readers, was one of indignation. However, on reflection it seemed so much at variance with what happened in my grandchildren's schools, where a great deal of time was devoted to the Holocaust, that I took the trouble to download the full text of the report of the Historical Association on the

'Challenges and Opportunities for Teaching Emotive and Controversial History'.

It turns out that this is an interesting document analysing failures and shortcomings in the way history is taught in some schools. Nowhere is there mention of teachers *dropping* subjects – rather that they are *not included* in the curriculae of some schools because of, e.g. lack of teacher subject knowledge; paucity of resources; teacher avoidance of risk-taking.

The report goes on to analyse the problems of teaching controversial and emotive subjects such as the Holocaust, Britain and the Slave Trade, Islam, Arab/Israeli Relations etc., many of which are taught at A-level. It quotes examples of how these subjects are being taught successfully in schools across the country and gives guidelines as to the methods and techniques to be employed. The report concludes with a section entitled Good Practice and case studies, suggesting how History should be taught, including, e.g., visits to the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition.

I found the report encouraging in the ideas it put forward to stimulate discussion in order to get students to have a rounded understanding of historical subjects. It is therefore a pity, in my view, that this news item was presented in your journal in such a negative way. It might be a good idea if you were to give a fuller report, thus helping to lower the blood pressure of your readers. We have a tendency to be a bit paranoid when it comes to topics of this sort and I feel that we should also welcome and signal positive steps taken to correct the balance.

Richard Tait, Richmond, Surrey

SO MANY POINTS OF VIEW

Sir – I congratulate you on your policy of neutrality and balance in the articles and letters, which express so many points of view, not always in sympathy with mine. In this instance, Edith Argy's 'On Being Jewish' and Victor Ross's 'Restoration Comedy', as well as many of the letters, were to my liking. Victor may well feel more than disgruntled, but his style of expression made me chuckle.

Werner Conn, Lytham St Annes

A LAUGHING MATTER

Sir – Where did you find Victor Ross? He made me laugh about not getting compensation – quite a feat! He reminds me of Richard Grunberger. Maybe he's RG come back? More of Victor Ross please!

(Mrs) Anthea Cohen, London SW19

FEELING SICK

Sir – No wonder Richard Grunberger felt sick at the concept of 'Schleim' (review, May). Perhaps because of that we called porridge oats 'Haferflocken' in the Vienna of my childhood.

Francis Steiner, Deddington, Banbury

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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The Ben Uri Gallery continues to explore European-Jewish artists working with those of other cultures. Its latest exhibition, **Regard and Ritual**, features the work of two important painters, **Shanti Panchal** and **Julie Held**.

Both are both highly sensitive to vivid colour, which they use to convey the intense memory of lost worlds and the quest for coming experience.



Hazel and Ash by Shanti Panchal

Gujarati-born Panchal produces rigid figures with haunting Oriental eyes against a background of reds and ochres rendered through many layers of paint to give effect to a certain opaqueness, which could be read as an opaqueness of spirit. In *Homecoming After a Long Absence*, Panchal's dead brother enters the room in a ship, symbolising the ethereal journey.

Panchal's heritage is that of the seventeenth-century Moghal tradition, a strong influence on Indian art with its concentration on detail and miniaturisation. In terms of religious symbolism, a blue-black fish, signifying Matsya, the Hindu mythical being, is placed beside static figures sharing the same stylised expressions. *The Judgement* relates to the artist's divorce and shows him in defeated pose in a green dressing gown sitting on a green sofa and surrounded by silent family members. The

colours are significant: the red background – lust for life; the beige edge of the curtain – a cloud or a bridal canopy; the green – passage of time.

Panchal's work is highly literal, but no matter how eloquent, it can seem repetitive.

This is less true of **Julie Held**, the daughter of Jewish refugees from Nazism. Her work is forged in German Expressionism but her thick, dry application of paint recalls the technique of Francis Bacon. Cobalt blues, veridian greens and vivid fuchsias manifest an inner darkness. *The Florist*, which some see as a self-portrait, has a woman in a light-fur collar at the far left of the painting pointing towards a bouquet which is almost off-canvas. The blooms flicker like flames.

The portrait of her father is also shown off-centre, in deep shadow. He is in a train or a bus, leaving a Tyrolean snow scene to which he attaches neither memory nor sentiment. This is, of course, a very evocative subject for a second-generation Jewish artist.

Equally powerful is the *Shabbat Table*, in which the candlesticks and *chala* are shown without perspective and represent people. She often returns to this theme of the empty dinner table – perhaps a reference to loss, and certainly the lost *Shabbat* meals which followed the death of her mother. Just as Panchal is drawn to Hindu images like fish, boats and elephants, Held returns to flowers and shoes, also implying the Holocaust.

Lily Freeman escaped Nazi Europe on a fishing boat to England. Interned and sent to Holloway Prison, she continues to exhibit at the age of 87. Her latest **Happy Paintings** exhibition at Hampstead's Burgh House presents florid local and more exotic landscapes. She is not an artist to depict the shadowlands – she has seen enough of them. But her latest work is computer-generated abstract art. It is certainly not a step too far for this indefatigable artist.

REVIEWS

Preserving the memory

BELSEN 1945: NEW HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

edited by Suzanne Bardgett and David Cesarani

London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006, 250 pp. paper

HISTORY, MEMORY AND MASS ATROCITY: ESSAYS ON THE HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE

by Dan Stone

London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006, 262 pp. paper

Ladislav Urban spent ten months in Belsen, taken with his brother and their nanny from a hiding place in the mountains above the Slovak spa town Piastany. It was October 1944 and he was ten years old. At the time of liberation, April 1945, he, along with thousands of the inmates, was suffering from typhus and his brother from malaria. They recovered, but remained in quarantine in the camp until August. Transported to Prague, they found a notice that their father, who had survived, was looking for them.

I showed Ladislav the new volume of essays on Belsen I was reading when I met him on a recent trip to Slovakia. The cover is a grim picture of German PoWs transporting corpses to the charnel house. A group of children are watching them in the background. 'That's me!', Ladislav exclaimed, indicating a tall youngster in the middle of the front row. 'That's the house of the dead and those are our barracks!'

I was stunned. And suddenly this very informative book, edited by Suzanne Bardgett and David Cesarani, came to life. My impression of the British liberation of Belsen had always been positive, enhanced by the recollections of the Jewish chaplain, Rabbi Leslie Hardman, and the romance between Norman Turgel, then a sergeant in British intelligence, and his survivor bride, Gina. But now I learned that at least 14,000 inmates had died after the liberation owing, in great part, to inadequate medical facilities and inappropriate nutrition.

Many of these essays depict the desperate conditions in the camp at the time of liberation, the terrible overcrowding – one example provided by Cesarani tells of a washroom with 12 taps for 4,000 inmates in the 'star camp' – the untended piles of corpses, from which it was difficult to prise the

nearly dead, the skeletal living inmates riddled with disease and laid low by starvation, and the complete shock and horror of the liberators, who were unprepared for such a situation.

A collection of papers presented at a seminar on the sixtieth anniversary of the camp's liberation, the book includes testimonies from a variety of angles – survivors' recollections, including essays written by children immediately after liberation, impressions of soldiers and medical personnel involved in the liberation effort, and reactions of broadcasters and film-makers and their audiences. A prominent survivor who published her testimony is Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, who had survived Auschwitz by becoming a member of the *Lagerkapelle* before having to confront the fresh horrors of Belsen.

Among questions raised in some of the essays and in Cesarani's lucid introduction is whether there was an element of antisemitism in the liberation effort. Were some inmates treated with less compassion and attention because they were Jewish? And was the preponderance of Jews among the victims and survivors of the camp played down so as not to excite excessive sympathy? A chilling directive by the Ministry of Information in 1941 cited by Tony Kushner recommends limiting atrocity propaganda to incidents involving 'innocent people' – not 'violent political opponents' and not 'Jews'.

In contrast are reports of the moving broadcasts made by Patrick Gordon Walker and Richard Dimpleby. Gordon Walker's recording of the first Sabbath eve service held in the camp is particularly affecting: 'A group of a hundred or so in the open air, amid the corpses. Two or three women sang duets and solos. The padre read the service in English and Hebrew. No eye was dry. Certainly not mine. Most of the celebrants were in unconcealed floods of tears.'

Equally affecting is Rainer Schulze's essay on the bond between Andrew Matthews, a medical student volunteer from London, and Hana and Eva Sachselova, teenage sisters from Czechoslovakia. Horrified by what confronted him at Belsen, haunted particularly by the 'living dead' – 'human animals half-naked and dying, bereft of all hope and common dignity' – Matthews found in the sisters a symbol of the 'immortality of youth and hope'. After he left the camp, he believed they must have died from typhus, and treasured the drawings Eva had given him. Returning to Belsen in 1949 and on the fiftieth

anniversary of the liberation, he could not trace them and it was only after his death in 1997 that the information centre at the memorial discovered the sisters alive in Prague and conveyed the news to Matthew's daughters, who contacted them. Eva's drawings illustrate this volume.

I have related this story in detail as I find it – and much else in this book – the most effective form of Holocaust testimony. When the subject is, to my mind, over-intellectualised, as in Dan Stone's undoubtedly worthy attempt to assess different interpretations or perspectives, it feeds into what Stone himself refers to as the 'Holocaust industry'. One intriguing feature Stone highlights are the conflicting attitudes Hannah Arendt voiced at different stages in her career. Her dismissal of the 'banality of evil' in the wake of the Eichmann trial is well known. Less commented on are her reactions at the time of the atrocities and shortly after, in which she depicts a virtually metaphysical horror – powerfully conveyed in a letter to Karl Jaspers in December 1946 as 'an organised attempt ... to eradicate the concept of the human being'.

Has Norman Finkelstein's disparagement of the 'Holocaust industry' any validity? Clearly there is a need to preserve the memory, not least to counter ignorance, as in the reference, by P. G. Wodehouse's biographer (cited by Kushner) to 'Belsen-Birkenau'. Can this be exaggerated, however? This is a question Ladislav Urban has to contend with, in a society where antisemitism is closer to the surface. He is the representative for Holocaust Memorial Day in his native Komarno and has been interviewed on several European television channels. Yet his children 'don't want to know', his non-Jewish second wife feels he is too consumed by the subject, and even his half-sister, Hanka, born after the war, agrees. Yet I found Ladislav's courage and bearing worthy of the greatest respect.

Emma Klein

Charmed existence ON THE FRINGE: A SORT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY by Hans Reichenfeld

published by Hans Reichenfeld, 2006,
144pp., may be ordered from a
bookshop quoting ISBN 0-9782162-0-2

'A sort of autobiography' sums up this book. The early chapters about life in Vienna are the best, but the

description on the back cover of 'a psychiatrist who grew up in Freud's Vienna' is a bit misleading as Hans did not qualify as a psychiatrist until the 1960s, when he and his family emigrated to Canada. Hans Reichenfeld has led, and is probably still leading, a fairly charmed existence. He and his immediate family were able to leave Austria for England, avoiding the fate of several other family members who were murdered by the Nazis. Hans was the first to leave. Through a family connection with a prominent Quaker, Alois Jalkotzy, he went to the Friends School, Great Ayton in Yorkshire. A year later his parents and sister settled in Scotland, where he joined them.

Both Hans and his father were interned. Hans was sent to Canada, where the most important people in the camp were the Viennese pastry chefs and – since they were able to obtain good ingredients – a cafe was opened serving delicious pastries and good coffee. Later, the RAF trained Hans as a wireless mechanic. His war was uneventful and he never saw a shot fired. Posted to Iceland, he experienced Icelandic hospitality (pancakes and coffee) and wonderful scenery and met Ragga, to whom he was married for over 50 years. His mother didn't approve of his choice and told him that 'this marriage of yours may be fine for Iceland but it's not for the long haul.'

Ragga Reichenfeld supported her husband during his years of study and his time as a GP, initially in practice with his father, and, later on, in Canada, where he changed careers. He says 'he thrived on the moves (three in all) but they created great stress for the family'. This period is glossed over.

Although a strong supporter of Communism for most of his life, Hans Reichenfeld lost his faith after the Hungarian uprising, when the *Daily Worker* suppressed Peter Fryer's report (later published as *A Hungarian Tragedy*) because it went against the party line. He experienced feelings of solidarity towards the Hungarian refugees, in spite of the traditional Austrian love/hate relationship, 'because they let us down during the 1848 revolution'.

I would like to have read more about his experiences and his marriage but, since he outlived his wife, that may be too painful. The book is a little sketchy and I was left with the impression of a rather detached personality.

Laraine Feldman

Reviews continued on page 10

REVIEWS continued from page 9

CINEMA

Chocolate box film-making

THE PAINTED VEIL
 directed by John Curran
 starring Edward Norton
 and Naomi Watts
 at selected cinemas

How can so many internet reviewers get it so wrong! Here was I trudging heroically through the driving rain to my local cinema, even finding somewhere not so far away to park, sitting myself down in a draughty, one-third-full hall, and looking forward to what most agreed was an outstanding movie. But soon I was counting the minutes – 125 long ones.

As everybody knows, Somerset Maugham novels are all about the British doing dastardly things to one another in colonial parts, with marriages breaking down and lots of hanky-panky going on along the way, all against a contrasting cultural background. So it is here.

Empty London socialite Kitty (Naomi Watts), past her sell-by date in her family's eyes, marries infatuated bacteriologist Walter Fane (Edward Norton), who sweeps her off with him to his research job in Shanghai. In what for her is a loveless marriage, Kitty is soon hanky-panky-ing with the local stiff-upper-lip Lothario, who drops her the minute Walter finds out. Walter blackmails her into accompanying him to a new job in an area deep inside China overtaken by cholera. After the couple have spent long hours mentally torturing each other, and following her deepening involvement in the local orphanage under the influence of the Mother Superior (Diana Rigg), Kitty finds spiritual redemption (oh dear!), igniting at last a mutual love between her and her husband – before a tragic ending which, in the context of the film, seems hardly to grow out of the plot.

Not that there's anything wrong with the plot – cholera-infected villages, however sanitised, in a China smouldering with anti-foreigner sentiment are not a film-maker's idea of a commercial payout – it's the plodding treatment of it that's the problem. Norton, who looks, acts and talks like an elongated relative of the celebrated 1947 Roswell alien, played more or less the same role in last year's infinitely better *The Illusionist* – a fairytale love affair in turn-

of-the-century Vienna. Naomi Watts is extremely nice to look at and we do do a lot of looking at her – far more even than we look at the holiday-snapshot mountain range which reappears every few moments to remind us that this is an 'art-house' film. Watts is a considerable actress but never looks at ease here. Mother Superior Diana Rigg, wearing a perpetual I'm-older-more-experienced-and-therefore-cleverer-than-you-are smirk on her face, is made up to resemble a not-so-distant cousin of Norton's Roswell alien.

The only truly sympathetic Brit in the film is the local colonial official Waddington, played by Toby Jones, who seeks to place a protective layer around the odd couple. Shackled up with a Chinese girl half his age and double his weight, he never loses his humility.

As the film plods to its chocolate-box climax, the ingredients are melted down one at a time. The nationalist Chinese anti-foreigner backdrop eases, Walter the Bacteriologist cleans up the water in the village, and Mother Superior Rigg reveals she has long ago lost her passionate faith: she and the Almighty are 'like an old couple sharing a settee who don't speak but deep down we know we'll never leave each other.'

The film was produced by Norton and Watts – hopefully they'll go on to better things.

Howard Spier

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LETTER
 FROM
 ISRAEL



Peace at almost any price?

Peace with Syria? It has seemed like an unattainable dream for a very long time.

The visit of an unofficial Syrian intermediary combined with repeated declarations by Prime Minister Olmert that Israel has no intention of attacking that country has prompted speculation in Israel that some kind of agreement is in the pipeline.

No one disputes the fact that any agreement with Syria would involve returning the Golan Heights, the strategic plateau that dominates Israel's fertile Jordan Valley, Lake Tiberias and many northern towns and settlements.

In the Second Lebanon War last summer rockets were fired into Israel from Lebanon, causing damage to Israeli life, limb and property – but not a single shot was fired from Syria. Lebanon paid a heavy price for its failure to restrain terrorists, while Syria did not suffer in any way.

The Golan Heights region is dear to the hearts of many Israelis, whether as a buffer zone, an area of agricultural settlement whose rich archaeological remains attest to ancient Jewish life, or an area for tourism. Under Israeli hands the volcanic soil has yielded good harvests, and the terrain and climate have been found to be ideal for viticulture. Today no connoisseur can ignore the excellent Golan wines, some of which are considered to equal those of France.

But if that is the price that has to be paid, the question arises whether Israelis will be able to see beyond the immediate loss to the ultimate benefit. The hardliners will doubtless oppose the idea with every fibre of their being, but there also seems to be a growing groundswell of voices advocating peace at almost any price.

If real peace can be guaranteed, then perhaps it is worth exchanging real estate for the lives of our sons and grandsons. Perhaps we should consider that each Remembrance Day, when we hear about yet another family devastated by loss.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

PROFILE

Ronald Channing

Lilian Levy London-born girl's miraculous survival



Birnbaum, who took her, along with his wife, their own six children and many other orphaned Jewish children, under his protection.

As the end of the war approached, the Germans set about killing as many of their concentration-camp inmates as possible. Among all the chaos, Lilian was put on one of the last trains going east but it was bombed by the RAF, who saw it as a troop carrier. The train was abandoned by its survivors, among them Lilian, filthy and suffering from paratyphoid. Somehow, with her liberation by the allies, she was taken into hospital and eventually recovered. Lilian found herself in an orphanage in northern Holland which she saw as 'paradise' on earth.

Mr Birnbaum traced her aunt in London, now her only living relative and, as Lilian held British nationality, there was no impediment to her travelling in 1946 to stay with her. Her aunt thought it best to arrange for Lilian to be adopted, and so she was, by Dr and Mrs Davidson, a paediatrician, former Berliner and Jewish refugee of 1933, living in Swiss Cottage with their grown-up daughter of 26. Lilian was then only six. They were very good to her in all manner of ways despite the rather large age gap.

Anyone meeting Lilian Levy would immediately be struck by her self-confidence, her pride in her appearance, and her pronunciation of English – though her early life was far removed from 'drawing-room' Britain.

Her parents had fled Frankfurt and escaped to the Netherlands, anticipating that, as in the First World War, Holland would remain neutral and a safe haven. While Lilian's father remained in Amsterdam, her pregnant mother left for London where, on 14 August 1939, Lilian Dreifuss was born. Ironically, her mother decided to avoid the dangers of Britain's war with Germany, flying from Croydon airport on 3 September with her new-born baby to rejoin her husband in Amsterdam.

Hitler, of course, swept aside Dutch neutrality and invaded the Netherlands on 10 May 1940, placing it under German occupation. Increasingly harsh measures against the Jews were soon introduced and the family went into hiding in the north. In early 1943, however, in response to a radio announcement that British subjects – of which Lilian was one by reason of her place of birth – were to be given an assurance of safety and exchanged for German prisoners-of-war, the three of them reported to the German authorities. They were taken to the Dutch Westerbork concentration camp prior to incarceration in the notorious Bergen-Belsen camp. Lilian was then just four.

Over the ensuing year and a half, conditions in the camp drastically deteriorated with huge overcrowding, primitive conditions, life-taking diseases and little or no food. By January 1945, both her parents had starved to death and it was a small miracle that Lilian, now a five-year-old orphan, survived. She owed much to the humanitarian acts of a religious Jew, Mr

Lilian went to South Hampstead High and Parliament Hill Schools, in 1960 qualifying in modern languages at the Institut Français. She took her linguistic skills to work with a number of commercial organisations.

Lilian's aunt made sure that she attended Belsize Square Synagogue services every week. Lilian first met Herbert Levy, a leader of the youth drama group, when she was just 15. Herbert had come to Britain with the Kindertransport and, in 1961, when Lilian was 21, they were married. They had two children: Andrew, now a law lecturer, and Hilary, a special needs adviser and mother of their two grandchildren.

Lilian joined Herbert in running his textile business and took over full responsibility at one stage when Herbert was ill, until they retired in 1994. That same year, Lilian responded to an advertisement in the Belsize Square Synagogue magazine seeking German speakers for archival work at CBF-WJR, and she joined the Jewish Refugee Committee of WJR as a volunteer to answer queries on the archives. The JRC archives contain records of refugees from Nazi persecution who were helped in some way by the JRC between 1933 and 1945 and onwards. If an individual had made contact with Bloomsbury House, he or she was likely to be on one of the 70,000 files on record.

In the 1980s the files were placed on microfilm. Of particular interest were the Kindertransport files and the JRC set out to return each Kindertransportee's identity card to the individual concerned. Other queries followed: verification of dates of arrival, knowledge with a significant bearing on German and Austrian pension rights, the restoration of looted art, and the tracing of family members. Lilian found herself in a position of considerable trust. Personal files remain closed for the foreseeable future – available only to the individual concerned or, if deceased, to their direct descendants. Lilian can empathise with the enquirers and is certainly the right person for the job.

Both Lilian and Herbert are great devotees of the theatre. They also read a great deal and love music, especially opera. In 1981 they visited Mr and Mrs Birnbaum at their home in Israel. Lilian could at last thank them for saving her life.



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INSIDE the AJR

Kingston Continental Friends inaugural meeting

Members from Cheam, Surbiton, Kingston, New Malden, East Sheen and Richmond shared bits of our life stories and, although some members had known each other previously, we had not necessarily shared these before. We agreed to meet again in late August, hopefully the second of many such meetings as there was a strong feeling of fellowship among us.

Edith Jayne

West Midlands (Birmingham) talk on the Wiener Library

Howard Falksohn, Senior Archivist at the Wiener Library, gave us an illustrated talk on the Library's founding, facilities and resources, as well as its ongoing work and plans for the future. The meeting was the first since the death of our member Paul Oppenheimer MBE, who is much missed (see obituary, page 15).

Philip Lesser

Next meeting: Sun 15 July. Lunch Garden Party. Details being sent out separately

An illuminating morning in Ilford

Dr Helen Fry enlightened us about 'Refugees in Uniform', comprising Kitchener camp and the Jews who joined the Pioneer Corps and their combined efforts on the war front. One member, delighted to find her photo in Helen's book, told us how she came to be in Devon during the war. A very illuminating morning.

Meta Rose Neil

Next meeting: Wed 4 July

Pinner: Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital

Jane King traced the history of the Foundling Hospital, which took in 27,000 unwanted children following its creation by Royal Charter in 1739 due to the efforts of philanthropist Captain Thomas Coram. Support by leading figures of the day, such as William Hogarth, led to the Hospital becoming the country's first public art gallery.

Walter Weg

Next meeting: Thur 5 July. Blanche Benedick, 'My Escape to Sweden'

Oxford talk by BoD representative Dr Winston Pickett, Public Affairs and Communications member of the Board of Deputies, gave a lively account of the Board's history, providing examples of recent actions in which it had been involved.

Oliver Lawton

Next meeting: Tues 7 Aug

Essex talk on genealogy

You could have heard a pin drop during Jeanette Rosenberg's talk on genealogy, which was of particular interest to me as a Holocaust survivor. I would also commend our group co-ordinator Hazel Beiny for providing these speakers, each of whom has so far proved a winner.

David Kutner

Next meeting: Tues 10 July. Leslie Sutton, 'The Nuremberg Trials'

Lucky reunion in Cardiff

Some 20 of us from Cardiff, Newport and as far away as Aberystwyth were given a Power Point update on the Middle East situation by the Israeli Embassy's Robin Hamilton-Taylor. I was lucky to meet Kurt Iwnicki, a retired engineer from Newport, and his charming wife. We were astonished to discover we had both lived with the same Zuntz family in Oxford during the war years, albeit at different times!

William W. Dieneman

Discussion in South London on Israel and the media

Jack De Metz spoke about 'Fair Reporting on Israel' and what members can do if they think the media are biased, a controversial subject on which many of us had something to say.

Nicholas Marton

Next meeting: Thur 12 July. A BoD representative

HGS and life in South Africa

Dr Sheila Martin said that so much had happened in South Africa so quickly to turn it from a barren country into a sophisticated multi-racial society. Today, the country had sadly seen a breakdown of law and order, with 18,000 murders last year, and 40 per cent unemployment.

John M. Davis

Next meeting: Mon 9 July. Details tbc

The story of the bagel told in Hendon

Frank Miller told us the story of the bagel - which, in fact, originated in the Muslim East. A scrumptious bagel tea followed. Our thanks to Hazel Beiny for arranging the catering.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: Mon 2 July. Dr Scarlett Epstein

Cleve Road and the Wiener Library Howard Falksohn gave us a comprehensive presentation on the Library's past, present and future. In 2009, he told us, it would be moving to a building in Russell Square and collaborating with Birkbeck College on a lecture programme.

David Lang

Next meeting: Tues 17 July. Regional Get-Together. Details to be sent out separately

Surprising events in Edgware

This time it was we who were the speakers and we were asked to talk about the most surprising event in our life - which, for one lady, was an invitation to Buckingham Palace for the Queen's 80th birthday party, which was on the same day as her own. We had a special tea and cakes for our own first birthday.

Felix Winkler

Next meeting: Tues 17 July. Regional Get-Together. Details to be sent out separately

Joint group visit to the theatre

Those of us who went to see *Kindertransport* at the Hampstead Theatre came away in a very thoughtful frame of mind. The play was powerfully acted and produced. One was left to wonder what one's personal reaction would have been had one faced the dilemma of the leading lady.

Herbert Haberberg

Audiologist is guest speaker at Herts

Robert Beiny, an audiologist, spoke movingly about his work with orphaned and abandoned children in Romania with severe hearing problems, before discussing help available to people in this country.

Ruth Tuch

Next meeting: Tues 17 July. Regional Get-together. Details to be sent out separately

Brighton & Hove Sarid legal lecture

Retired barrister Sydney Levene gave us an interesting talk on the duties of the legal profession. He mentioned his work in some famous trials such as that of the Yorkshire Ripper and the Bradford football stadium fire.

Ceska Abrahams

Next meeting: Mon 16 July. Godfrey Gould, 'The Incredible Life of Trebbitch Lincoln'

Conversation exchange in Nottingham (East Midlands)

Eighteen of us met at the delightful period house of Ruth and Jurgen Schwiening. Following a splendid lunch,

we were entertained to live Jewish music by Dori Lake (a second-generation member) and a friend. Members could also view paintings and glass sculpture by Ruth displayed around the house. It was a lovely afternoon for sitting in the garden and having coffee and the conversation exchange which is so important to members who are scattered over a wide area and look forward to this form of informal occasion.

Bob Norton

North London Israel update

The Israeli Embassy's Robin Hamilton-Taylor gave us an update on the situation in Israel. His remarks were most informative and explained a number of the underlying problems the country is facing at present.

Herbert Haberberg

Next meeting: Thur 26 July. David Eby, 'The Jews in Italy'

OTHER MEETINGS

Wembley Wed 11 July. Tbc

Surrey Wed 18 July. Annual Garden Party. Details to be sent out separately

Kent Sun 22 July Garden Party with members of Council for Christians and Jews in Hastings. Details to be sent out separately

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

Bradford Continental Friends
Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)
Fausta Shelton 01273 734 648

Bristol/Bath
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

Cambridge
Anne Bender 01223 276 999

Cardiff
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Dundee
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

East Midlands (Nottingham)
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

Edgware
Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

Edinburgh
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

Essex (Westcliff)
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

Glasgow
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

Harrogate
Inge Little 01423 886254

Hendon
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

Hertfordshire
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

HGS
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

Hull
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Ilford
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Child Survivors to meet this November in Jerusalem

The 19th annual conference of the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust will take place in Jerusalem on 5-8 November 2007.

Child Survivors, aged under 16, emerged from Nazi-occupied Europe at the end of the Second World War. Past conferences have all been successful and gathered 500 and more people. Occasionally, unexpected reunions, even of long-lost family members, have taken place at these conferences. Being together in Israel will be of special significance. It will be a unique opportunity for Child Survivors in Israel and from other countries as well as Second- and Third-Generation members, to come together.

The conference will present prominent speakers, seminars and workshops as well as opportunities to relax and meet other participants. In addition, we will have a very special all-day programme at Yad Vashem. Pre- and post-conference tours have been planned.

The Conference Committee comprises people in the USA and the Netherlands and a team in Israel. The conference registration packet and further details are available on the World Federation's website (www.WFJCSH.org). Alternatively, please telephone Henri Obstfeld (020 8954 5298) for a registration packet.

Leeds HSFA
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

Liverpool
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

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

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

KT-AJR

Kindertransport special interest group

Monday 2 July 2007
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

Dr Eva Roman

'Psychological Trauma'

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

July Afternoon Entertainment

Mon	2	KT LUNCH - Kards & Games Klub
Tue	3	CLOSED
Wed	4	Geoffrey Strum
Thur	5	Sheila Games
Mon	9	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	10	CLOSED
Wed	11	Simon Gilbert
Thur	12	Margaret Opdahl
Mon	16	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	17	CLOSED
Wed	18	Concert by Music in Hospitals
Thur	19	Katinka Seiner
Mon	23	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	24	CLOSED
Wed	25	Mark Rosen
Thur	26	Ronnie Goldberg
Mon	30	Kard & Games Klub
Tue	31	CLOSED

DIARY DATES

8-15 July	St Annes holiday
17 July	London & South Get-together, Radlett
7 August	Northern Get-together, Leeds
15 August	Trip to Frogmore House with Guided Tour & Savill Garden
9 Sept	AJR Tea at Watford Hilton

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 Kasimir on 020 8385 3070 to make an appointment at AJR, Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups 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

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Births

Congratulations to Linda Kasmir on the birth of her fourth granddaughter, Einav.
 Congratulations to Carol and Adrian Rossen on the birth of their second granddaughter, Ayala.

Deaths

Kanter, Edith, 1912-2007. My dear blind mother, aged 95, living in Princess Alexander Home, Stanmore, died peacefully in her sleep having suffered from bronchial pneumonia for the last few days of her life. A truly dignified and great lady who bore all her trials and tribulations without complaint. Will be sorely missed and never forgotten by her daughter Ursula, whom she left at Berlin Station in February 1939 at the age of 3 for the Kindertransport to England, son Steven, son-in-law George and daughter-in-law Patsy, 7 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. May the everlasting GOD bless and keep her. Amen.

Meller, Ruth Helge (née Israel), born 19.01.20 Saar, Germany, died 27.05.07. Ruth died suddenly but very peacefully at home. Already deeply missed by daughters Claudia, Rachel and Sonia and her large circle of friends. A life well lived.

O'Brien, Vera (née Harth) has died suddenly in Taupo, New Zealand, aged 78. She is much missed by her husband John, 6 children, 22 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren, and her many friends.

CLASSIFIED

I am looking for a travelling companion who would like to go on holiday either in this country or abroad. Please contact Alf Muller on 020 8450 6794.

AJR Centre

Chiroprapist. Trevor Goldman at the Paul Balint AJR Centre Wednesday 11 July and 8 August 2007, 10-11.30 am.

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

The cost, including Dinner, Bed and Breakfast, is £420 per person
 The hotel charges a supplement per room for sea view or deluxe room

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020 8385 3070

FROGMORE HOUSE AND SAVILL GARDEN
 15 August 2007

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Call Carol on 020 8385 3085 or Lorna on 020 8385 3070

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 Saturday mornings at 10.00am
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 Nursery School: 9.15am – 12.15pm
 Belsize Under 3s: 9.30am – 11.30am

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Obituaries

Paul Oppenheimer MBE

Paul Oppenheimer was born in Berlin in 1928, the eldest of three children. His father, Hans, had joined the banking firm of Mendelssohn and Co. The family moved to Holland in 1936 and were caught in the Nazi occupation of 1940. Paul was incarcerated for almost two years, first in Westerbork then in Bergen-Belsen, where his parents perished.

Following liberation, Paul and his siblings returned briefly to the Netherlands before coming to London at the instigation of an uncle. In 1947 Paul moved to Birmingham, where he combined an engineering apprenticeship at BSA Tools with evening study towards a London University BSc in Mechanical Engineering, completed in 1954

with First Class Honours. In 1955 he obtained an MSc in Thermodynamics at Birmingham University. In 1958 he left BSA to join Joseph Lucas, initially as a Nuclear Project Engineer. Four years later he moved to another part of the organisation, Girling, which became his professional home for three decades.

The mid-1960s saw the introduction of disc brakes in passenger cars. Paul became involved in the development of overseas markets, initially in Italy (with Fiat and Alfa Romeo) and Sweden (Volvo). He designed a pioneer dirt shield for the disc brakes on the Alfa Model 105.



Paul was appointed MBE in the 1990 New Year Honours for services to the motor industry.

Following retirement, Paul devoted himself to speaking about his wartime experiences. He addressed some 700 audiences, mostly of schoolchildren. In 1996 the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire published his memoirs, *From Belsen to Buckingham Palace*, sales of which exceed 10,000 copies. In 2004 the University of Wolverhampton made him an Honorary DLitt for his contribution to Holocaust education.

In 1964 he married Corinne Orme, a nurse who later became a JP. She survives him together with their two sons and a daughter and grandchildren.

Jack Spier

Our father, Jack Spier, born Hans Joachim Spier in Treysa, Germany on 9 January 1928, was one of the last of a significant generation of young boys who fled the Nazis in 1939.

Colonel Julian Leyton arranged the transportation of a group of boys and girls to England. Only later did it become known that the sponsors were Lord and Lady James de Rothschild of Waddesdon Manor. The children became known as the Cedar Boys and Girls, after the name of a house in which they lived. Jack was one of these 31 boys and two girls.

On leaving school, Jack attended Aylesbury Technical College, where he

studied Bakery and Confectionery. He served in the National Fire Service in 1944-46 and in 1947 obtained his British Citizenship Certification. In 1947 he married Madge, who predeceased him by 21 years.

Jack was associated with many associations locally in Hastings and Bexhill, being President of the Master Bakers, the Rotary and the Chambers of Commerce, and Vice-Chairman of Hastings College. He was also a founder member of the Hastings and Bexhill Jewish Society. He raised thousands of pounds for charity – from the High School to the swimming pool, the YMCA, and Bucket and Spades, a home for mentally handicapped children.

Jack had six daughters, ten grand-

children and two great-grandchildren. He was always grateful to Lord and Lady de Rothschild for the haven they gave him and for being able to lead a life of freedom here after coming from Nazi Germany with the Kindertransport, which allowed him to bring up a family rather than be a victim of the Holocaust.

Jane Spier

Ruth Sheldon

Ruth Sheldon was born in Vienna in 1922. Her parents were Leopold and Helena Karrach, her sister Gerda. Following the Anschluss, they were evacuated by Kindertransport, arriving in England in early 1939. Her father was killed at Auschwitz.

The Simons in Twickenham looked after Ruth while she completed her schooling. Nursing was the only opportunity available to her as an alien. She finished training school having been awarded the County gold medal and was also entrusted with the task of giving the very first penicillin injection to a civilian, supervised by Alexander Fleming.

She met her future husband, John, who suffered with severe asthma, while working as night sister and they were married in

1947, to fit in with the arrival from Vienna of her mother, whom she hadn't seen since 1939. Their son, Christopher, was born in 1951.

Ruth put her heart and soul into everything she did. She trained as a midwife and, later, as a youth leader. She needed to keep busy: sewing, knitting, crocheting, making stuffed toys, cooking (Viennese, of course – her apfelstrudel was supposedly the best outside Austria!), gardening, delivering (27) babies, running the local youth club, and many other things. She loved swimming, music (particularly Viennese), going to the theatre and opera, and looking after her asthmatic husband. She died suddenly, in her husband's presence, 60 years after they first met.

John Sheldon

Arts and Events Diary – July

To 2 Sept The Last Goodbye: The Rescue of Children from Nazi Europe
The story of the Kindertransport. Jewish Museum Finchley, tel 020 8349 1143

Sun 1 July Forty Years' Anniversary Celebration of Clara Nehab Care Home Garden Party at 13-19 Leaside Crescent, London NW11, from 3.30 pm. Guests welcome. Leo Baeck (London) Lodge

Mon 2 Denis Vandervelde, 'A Postal Historian Considers the Role of the Jewish Peddler in Nineteenth-Century Germany' Club 43

Mon 9 End-of-Season Informal Meeting (with readings in German and English) Club 43

Wed 11 A Tea Cruise on the River Wey Leo Baeck (London) Lodge

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

Leo Baeck (London) Lodge Meetings at 11 Fitzjohn's Avenue, London NW3, 8.00 pm. Tel 020 8958 2516

Michael Newman is away

A future for Britain's Jewish community?

The majority of Jews living in Britain during the twentieth century placed great importance on being recognisable practitioners of the Jewish faith centred on synagogue attendance, religious rituals and/or adherence to aspects of specifically Jewish social life, business, the professions, culture, countries of origin, languages, history, welfare provision, and support for Israel. Their voluntary participation within a conglomerate Jewish community, whose numbers supposedly peaked at some half-a-million after the Second World War, is demonstrated still by the plethora of independent communal institutions which offer succour, support and enlightenment to their members from the cradle to the grave. Few felt it incumbent on them, or were persuaded by a supernatural revelation, to convert to Christianity despite an established church, emancipated Catholicism and free and reformed churches and chapels, all eager to offer salvation of souls and alternative communities.

Jewish immigration into Britain was caused by extremes of persecution and the resultant transfer of centuries-old centres of Jewish learning and their surviving East and Central European Jewish populations to North and South America, Britain and, eventually, Israel. Save for a Sephardi elite, most of us owe our presence in Britain either to the pogroms that befell the Jews of the *shtetl* in the Russo-Polish empire, which between 1881 and 1914 brought more than 100,000 emigrants to these shores, or to the 70,000 refugees who gained entry as victims of Nazi persecution in the 1930s, mainly from German-speaking Central Europe.

An unspoken assumption among my mid-century generation was that identification with Anglo-Jewry and continued 'middle-of-the-road' observation of rituals in the United Synagogue, or possibly within the Reform movement for those who brought their convert spouses into the Jewish community, would ensure its survival. The most orthodox Jews set themselves apart, retaining eighteenth-century Polish dress, devoting themselves to the interpretation of traditional texts and

prayer and the procreation of rather large families. What I did not do was ask 'For how many generations can such an immigrant group maintain its foreign traditions, languages and beliefs while seeking fully to benefit from the educational and material benefits proffered by the host community? Why should the integration of our immigrant community ultimately not result in its assimilation?'

Perhaps similar questions were occupying the minds of Jewish Policy Research (JPR), who have published an illuminating study of *Jews in Britain: A Snapshot from the 2001 Census*. For the first time, a voluntary question on religion was included and those who identified themselves as 'Jewish' have provided a unique body of information which, in a JPR and Board of Deputies collaboration, has yielded a revised picture of Britain's Jewish population.

Apparently Jews form a total population of 270,000 and live in most parts of the UK. However, 65.5 per cent of British Jews live in London, almost a quarter in Barnet and Redbridge, and a half in Harrow, Camden, Hackney, Hertsmere (an exceptional growth area), Bury, Leeds, Westminster and Brent. A high proportion of Jews live alone at both younger and older ages. Though three-quarters of married Jews have a Jewish spouse, approximately one-sixth have spouses of another faith, usually Christian, and more than 5,000 are cohabiting. Health is generally above average. Overall, British Jews enjoy high levels of educational and career achievement, women in particular exhibiting exceptional success, and the Jewish population experiences high living standards, though overcrowded accommodation is found in inner-city areas.

With a community which owes its origins to twentieth-century immigration and is, unsurprisingly, numerically in decline, rather than accepting that certain Jewish institutions tended to cold-shoulder non-Jewish partners and the children of inter-marriage, it would seem that revitalised efforts to retain self-identifying Jews within Anglo-Jewry might both strengthen and enrich our community.

Vienna Holocaust archive unveiled in Washington

The Holocaust Archive of the Vienna Jewish community has been unveiled at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. The archive, discovered by the Vienna Jewish Community in 2000, includes some half-a-million pages of material detailing efforts by Jews to leave the country in the 1930s and records of their deportations to concentration camps. The archive will be exhibited at the Jewish Museum of Vienna from 3 July onwards.

Former death camps seek right to charge

Some of the former most notorious Nazi concentration camps, now run as museums, could soon demand an entrance fee from visitors to help finance educational facilities. Former concentration camps in Germany are funded by both the federal and regional governments but the money, directors insist, just about covers operating costs. 'Between a third and a half of all requests for guided tours and educational support are having to be turned down', said Günter Morsch, who supervises the memorial sites in Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück and Brandenburg.

Japan's 'Schindler' honoured

Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan have visited the monument of Chiune Sugihara in Lithuania. In 1940 Sugihara, who saved about 6,000 Jews from the Nazis, was acting consul in Lithuania's temporary wartime capital when he was ordered to abandon his post as the Germans advanced. Instead, he signed as many transit visas for the Soviet Union as he could in defiance of his own government. He died in 1986 and his family had to wait 14 years for the then foreign minister to issue a formal apology.

Synagogue opened in Estonia

The first synagogue in Estonia since its Jewish population was wiped out in the Holocaust has opened. The synagogue, which can fit 180 people in the main worship area, was built at a cost of about \$2 million with money from a US-based foundation and Estonian Jews and non-Jews.

Fake Eichmann passport put on display

A passport used by Adolf Eichmann to escape to Argentina in 1950 under the name Ricardo Klement has been turned over to the Holocaust Museum in Buenos Aires. A judge stumbled upon it in a court file.