

# AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

## Cultural legacy

One of the most distinctive features that the Jewish refugees from Central Europe brought with them to Britain was their culture. This was a legitimate source of pride to them, for the Jewish contribution to the culture of the German-speaking lands had been enormous; one need only cite the names of Heine and Marx, Freud and Einstein to make the point. After 1933, however, the pride that the German-speaking Jews had felt in assimilating into the German-language culture of their native countries turned very sour indeed.

For some, the Nazi years proved that the project of assimilation into German and Austrian society had been foredoomed to failure, that it was a pathetic delusion based on a misunderstanding of the relations between Jews and gentiles. The pride of the assimilated Jews in their community's cultural achievements was dismissed as mere *Yekke* pretentiousness, the product of a misconceived attempt to worship at the altar of German *Bildung* (education or culture). After 1945, many refugees rejected the German past entirely, abhorring a culture so deeply contaminated by Nazism and its crimes.

But others remained loyal to the culture they had inherited, arguing that much of German-speaking high culture had stood in direct opposition to the Nazis, who had banned and burned it. Many refugees were instinctively inclined to preserve the cultural habits with which they had grown up, the German classics that they had read and the German composers whose works they had listened to. Anyone who knew refugee households in the post-war decades will remember shelves stacked with volumes of Schiller, Fontane and Thomas Mann, not to mention Erich Kästner or the Brecht/Weill *Threepenny Opera*. The Wigmore Hall in those decades was seldom without its faithful audience of refugees, eager for their fix of Beethoven or Brahms, Schubert or Hugo Wolf.

German-language culture had become a core component of German-Jewish identity. Ever since the emancipation of the Jews of



Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

Germany in the eighteenth century, inspired by figures like Moses Mendelssohn; the assimilated German Jews had increasingly abandoned traditional Jewish religious beliefs and practices, putting behind them what they saw as the backwardness and superstition of the ghetto. Instead, they embraced the Enlightenment ideals of freedom, tolerance and equal rights. In politics, this led German Jews to support liberalism and constitutional government, in the realm of culture to immerse themselves in the literature, music and art of the German classical canon. It has often been said that they replaced religious observance with high culture – German high culture, associated with names like Kant, Goethe, Schiller and Beethoven.

Pride of place was reserved for Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's drama *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*, 1779), a play with a Jewish hero by a (non-Jewish) founding father of the German theatre. Set in Jerusalem at the time of the Crusades, *Nathan* makes a powerful dramatic plea for tolerance and the overcoming of religious prejudices. The main character, a wise Jew based on Lessing's friend Moses Mendelssohn, has learnt to forgive those who murdered his family in a pogrom. With the backing of the enlightened Muslim ruler Saladin, he works

towards a reconciliation between the three great religions, a project endangered by the principal representative of Christianity, who relapses all too easily into violent, mindless prejudice.

When the Jüdischer Kulturbund was set up in 1933 to promote Jewish culture inside Nazi Germany, the first play that the Jewish actor-director Fritz Wisten staged was, demonstratively, *Nathan*; and when he resumed his theatrical career in 1945 it was again with a production of *Nathan*. For German Jews like Wisten, the play took its place both at the onset of Nazi barbarism – as a symbol of Jewish self-assertion – and at its end – as a token of the survival, amidst the rubble of Hitler's Reich, of humane, civilised values. In 1954 the Council of Jews from Germany, the organisation representing the German Jews who had been forced to flee abroad, decided to set up the Leo Baeck Institute, dedicated to the preservation of the cultural and intellectual heritage of German Jewry. And when the Institute planned a history of the Jews in Germany, it set 1779, the year of *Nathan der Weise*, as its starting date.

The German Jews abroad almost came to see themselves as true heirs to the high tradition of German-language culture. A report in *AJR Information* of December 1960 on the conference of the Council of Jews from Germany expressed their pride in their cultural heritage:

The Jews from Germany have not evaded the historic task imposed on them. They have utilised their organising capacity, their knowledge and their capabilities to the advantage of the countries to which they have emigrated – but they have not been forgetful of their own tradition, nor of their history and the obligations arising therefrom. Their desire is to preserve in its vitality what has been handed down to them, for the service both of the present and the future.

Noble words; but surveying both the high accomplishments of assimilated German Jewry and the catastrophe in which it ended, one is inclined to cite Amos Elon's epitaph for it: 'The pity of it all'.

Anthony Grenville

## Amor als Landschaftsmaler

Goethe remains one of the giants of European literature least known and understood in Britain. Is he a Romantic, as his celebrated early novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (*The Sufferings of Young Werther*) and his vividly passionate early poetry suggest? Or the greatest of the German Classical writers (a category none too clear in British minds), creator of the dramas *Faust*, *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and *Torquato Tasso*, the *Wilhelm Meister* novels and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (*Elective Affinities*)? The sheer breadth of his production also defies categorisation for, unlike Shakespeare, Calderón or Racine, he is not to be classed primarily as a dramatist, nor, like Cervantes, Balzac or Tolstoy, as a novelist, nor as a writer of verse, like Dante or Heine.

One of the best ways of familiarising British readers with this towering and multi-talented figure is translation. But translating poetry is notoriously difficult. As Derek Glass showed in his bibliography of Goethe translations, *Goethe in English*, many have tried, but few have genuinely succeeded. The most acclaimed translations of Goethe's poems are those by David Luke, though Professor T. J. Reed of Oxford kindly sent me an article in which he makes out a strong claim for John Whaley's translations.

Poetry lovers should welcome the appearance of *Love as Landscape Painter*,\* David Black's translations of

some 40 of Goethe's poems. Black, who is neither a professional translator nor a specialist in German literature, relies instead on an intuitive sensitivity to the poetic qualities of Goethe's verse, both in its sublime mastery of rhyme, rhythm and diction and in the lyrical profundity and complexity of the sentiments it expresses. His translation of the opening of the title poem of his book, *Amor als Landschaftsmaler*, demonstrates this with subtle beauty: 'Once I sat upon a rocky outcrop,/ Staring at the mist with eyes unmoving'.

Black tackles even the most famous poems. 'Who rides so late when the night is wild?/ It is the father with his child./ He holds the boy in the crook of his arm./ He clasps him safely, he keeps him warm' plunges us into the Erlking's terrifying realm; the initial question draws the reader into the narrative, the horse's hoof-beats of the rhythm drive it forward. *Erlkönig* is an example of the directness that characterises much of Goethe's poetry, not only the early love poems – 'Es schlug mein Herz, geschwind zu Pferde!/ Es war getan fast eh' gedacht' – but also the late poetry with its reflective, philosophical dimension: 'If you will not dare this danger:/ Perish, and become! -/ You remain a haunted stranger/ In earth's deepening gloom' (*Selige Sehnsucht/ Ecstatic Longing*). Of comparable quality are Black's versions of challenging poems like *Das Göttliche*

(*The Godlike*) and *Dauer im Wechsel* (*Permanence in Change*).

The core of Black's book is his translation of the 22 *Roman Elegies*. 'Speak to me, stones!', he begins the first elegy, 'Let me hear your voices, lofty palazzi!/ Streets! have you nothing to say? *Genius loci*, wake!' 'Streets! have you nothing to say?' renders 'Straßen, redet ein Wort!' boldly and punchily. Black keeps to the demanding requirements of Goethe's chosen form, the elegiac couplet, while allowing the verse to flow freely. His translation of the famous lines from the fifth elegy, celebrating sensual pleasure alongside artistic creativity, shows this: 'Yet how is it not learning, to scan that delectable bosom,/ Or when I slither my hands pleasantly over her hips?/ Then I understand marble; then I discover connections,/ See with a feeling eye, feel with a seeing hand.'

But sometimes poetry's magic wanes in translation: 'Do you know the land that blooms with lemon trees?' does not quite capture the yearning musicality of 'Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn?' (*Mignon's Song*). Perhaps no English version ever can.

Anthony Grenville

\*D. M. Black, *Love as Landscape Painter: Translations from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* (Fras Publications, 2006, ISBN 0-9549941-4-0, available from The Atholl Browse Bookshop, Blair Atholl PH18 5SG, £8.50)

### Refugee children at Natsworthy Manor



German-Jewish refugee children sent to Natsworthy Manor, Widecombe in the Moor, Devon, during the war. In this photo, supplied by Liz Aldridge, are her father and aunt, Alexander and Eleonore, who were there from July 1939 to July 1940 with their parents, before all returned to 19 Draycott Place, London (refugee accommodation). The children are (from left) Alexander Schadowsky (became Sinclair), Heinz Meyer, Eleonore (Lore) Schadowsky (became Sinclair), Herman Meyer, Solm(?) Cortinho, Dietrich Holman, Herbert Meyer, Alex Sabs.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of

THE ASSOCIATION OF  
JEWISH REFUGEES  
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AT 11.30 AM

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## The Six-Day War: The real story

I remember the Six-Day War vividly because I was supposed to arrive in Jerusalem for a mini-sabbatical at the Hebrew University on 5 June 1967. The 40th anniversary of the war will be seen by historical revisionists as an opportunity to rewrite what happened. What follows is the real story.

Before the war, Jerusalem was divided and Sinai was occupied by the United Nations force stationed there after the 1956 Suez fiasco to prevent Arab terrorists getting into Israel from Egypt and the Gaza Strip. There had been 37 such attacks in the first four months of 1967, in addition to the daily shelling of northern kibbutzim by Syrian artillery on the Golan Heights, which had been endured since 1948.

On 15 May Egyptian forces moved into Sinai. It was believed to be a political demonstration to cheer up the Syrians, not a military challenge. On 17 May Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riyad wrote to UN Secretary-General U. Thant demanding that he withdraw the peacekeeping force from Sinai. Within hours, and without consulting the UN, who had put them there in the first place, he did as he was asked.

By 21 May Egyptian forces were lined up on the Israeli border, but no shot had been fired. On 22 May President Nasser announced a blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, cutting off the port of Eilat, an act of war in direct contravention of international maritime law.

Nasser made a series of bellicose speeches. On 27 May he declared: 'Our basic objective will be the destruction of Israel. The Arab people want to fight' and 'The meaning of Sharm el-Sheikh is a confrontation with Israel. Adopting this measure obligates us to be ready to embark on a general war with Israel.' These sentiments were echoed by Iraq and Syria. Even King Hussein, denounced by Radio Cairo on 28 May as a 'Hashemite whore', signed a pact with Nasser on 30 May.

The Israelis were militarily inferior in numbers and equipment to Egypt alone, and the extinction of Israel was very much on the cards. Assurances from US President Johnson and many others that the Gulf would be kept open proved worthless.

Tension built up on the borders and

many commentators thought Israel had left it too long to respond, even if they were militarily able. On 5 June, however, the Israeli air force waited until the Egyptian pilots had returned from their morning patrol and were having breakfast. They then flew under the Egyptian radar and used heat-seeking missiles to destroy the Egyptian air force on the ground.

The land battle for Sinai was the biggest tank battle on record but, without air cover, the Egyptian army was outclassed. By the end of the second day, Egyptian fortifications had been penetrated, and the roads to the Suez Canal were clear. By 8 June resistance had collapsed.

The Israelis had sent a message to King Hussein that their quarrel was not with him and that, if he did not join in the war, he would remain unchallenged. Convinced by Egyptian claims of an outstanding victory, however, he began shelling the new city of Jerusalem mid-morning on 5 June. Israel initially refused to respond, but eventually the parachute division that had been scheduled to be dropped on Sharm-el-Sheikh was re-assigned to the attack on the Old City, which was captured by 7 June, though at a relatively heavy cost in lives. The remainder of the West Bank fell more easily.

Israeli forces were thus free to turn their attention to Syria. On 9 June Israeli bulldozers cleared rocks from the sides of the Golan escarpment and, by 10 June, when a ceasefire was agreed, the whole of the Golan Heights as far as Quneitra was in Israeli hands.

I arrived in Jerusalem two weeks late. Not only were the Jews celebrating, but the traditionally moderate Jerusalem Arabs were benefiting from the tourist boom and happy to see friends – even Jewish ones – they hadn't seen for 20 years. The consensus on both sides was that Nasser would fall and that the Israel-Arab conflict would be resolved. Instead, Nasser was rearmed by the Russians, the United Nations worked hard to maintain the war it had precipitated, and the Khartoum Conference pledged 'No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel and no negotiations with Israel'.

Bryan Reuben

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## Overcoming trauma: a weekend in Berlin

Berlin was my first *Heimat* as I was born there in 1935. She and I have spent almost a lifetime apart, yet we connected almost immediately when I visited her for a long weekend earlier this year. This wasn't my first visit since leaving Berlin in 1939 on the Kindertransport as I have visited her at least half a dozen times in between. Berlin and I have been through our separate trauma and, I think, we have come out the other side in reasonably good shape.

This time, I came on my own at the invitation of Leonore Maier at the Jewish Museum. I arrived on Thursday afternoon and had the evening to explore locally before going to the Museum the next day. I had the privilege of going round the special *Heimat und Exil* exhibition alone before going round later with a group of graduate students from Greenwich University who were spending a few days in Berlin. The views expressed and questions asked by these students and their tutors made it a fascinating experience for me. On the Monday, I had the pleasure of talking with a group of students from the Berlin Nelson Mandela School in the Museum's classroom. This group comprised students from many countries so, apart from my personal story and the theme of 'exile', we had a lively discussion on identity and citizenship. They were interested too in what differences I found talking with German student groups compared with similar groups in England. Of course, every group has its own character so that the flow of dialogue is inevitably different, but that did not satisfy them. There is always the underlying issue around in German dialogue: 'How do "they" feel about "us" now?' I suspect the hidden and 'un-askable' question is more like 'How do I feel about myself as a German now?' This issue for the second and third generations in Germany in bearing the indigestible part of their personal and collective history is as difficult for them as it is for second- and third-generation Holocaust survivors. And this is a genocide that has been fully acknowledged. How much deeper in the collective human psyche are the horrors buried from past genocides that are being perniciously denied such as the Armenian genocide and the rape of Nanking?

The exhibition itself cannot fail to impress. It is not the size that draws the



Ruth Barnett

visitor into engaging deeply. Holocaust museums tend to strike a note of horror, making it difficult, if not unbearable, to try and absorb very much. A huge screen imaging a Nazi march, that follows the visitor with its discordant marching beat in the background, represents the horror. However, the ethos is positive. These are the stories of the Jews of Europe who escaped the Nazi death machine. For most, their lives were shattered, vividly illustrated by a room full of fragmented photographs (the same ones shown as you enter the exhibition), but they found ways of renewal in the lands of exile. Most of them never returned to their original *Heimat*, but I know from my own work with survivors that many made the difficult journey to reconnect with their roots, even if they did not stay there. There were many voices of refugees for the visitor to listen to through headphones. These have power to engage and move the listener beyond any of

the visual material, although I was moved to find a photo of my father in Shanghai that I had never seen before.

Finally, a moving experience on the way home. On leaving the Jewish Museum on the Monday afternoon, I was lucky to find a lone taxi just outside. The driver expected me to want to go to the new Holocaust Memorial as, he told me, most of his fares did. I wondered why he chose to wait so often at the Jewish Museum. He said he wanted to do something to help Jews, and so we got talking. We ended up sitting some time in the departure bay of the airport. He was almost in tears as he described his struggle to come to terms with his mother having worked for the Nazis in Poland during the war and his father having fought with the Wehrmacht on the Eastern front. Neither had given him much in the way of details so he was left a prey to his own fantasies about what they might have been involved in. I was able to validate his anguish, if not comfort him a little, by telling him I felt honoured he had shared his painful story with me. I also encouraged him to talk to more people, especially his children, and find out more so that his children would not suffer a similar lack as he had. I suggested there might be many more with stories like his if he could only find and talk with them. This taxi driver remains as an important part of my weekend, representing the scars left in Berlin's soul from the infamous Third Reich.

**Ruth Barnett**

*Ruth Barnett is Clinical Director, Raphael Jewish Counselling Service*



AJR member Dr Andrew Herxheimer, left, pictured with Professor Walter Thimme and President of the Berliner Ärztekammer Dr Günther Jonitz, right, has been awarded the Georg Klemperer Medal. Georg Klemperer was an outstanding physician at the Moabit Hospital in Berlin until 1933, when he was forced to leave.

## Let's try to be fair to the Austrians (however difficult it may be)

When I wrote about my love/hate relationship with Vienna some months ago, many of you decided to attack me. 'How can you have a love/hate relationship with a city whose citizens threw you and your family out?', I was asked in the letters pages of the *AJR Journal*. 'The relationship *must* be one of hate', a reader wrote. 'Visiting Vienna makes you and your family revolting', someone else claimed. Well, I don't hate Vienna and I don't hate Austria and I think Hannah Lessing, a Jew, who is Secretary General of the National Fund and the General Settlement Fund, is doing a good job on our behalf!

There is absolutely no doubt that the Austrians were duplicitous for many years, claiming that they had been attacked by Germany and that they were therefore not liable to pay any restitution to Austrian Holocaust survivors. This, they said, was the duty of the Germans. Conveniently, they tried to sweep under the carpet the fact that following the Anschluss the Germans were welcomed in with open arms. But I said I would be fair to the Austrians so I must mention that their chancellor at the time, Kurt von Schuschnigg, was not a Nazi and, indeed, was imprisoned by them.

The Claims Conference reached an impasse with the Austrians after the war because Austria was claiming it had been a Nazi-occupied country. Surprisingly, the Austrians received some support for this claim from both the United States and Israel. The Americans saw Austria as an important Cold-War buffer state. The Israelis saw it as an important transit point for Jews fleeing the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and they did not want to jeopardise this situation. So it is easy to understand why the Austrians did not own up to their crimes. Also, one has to wonder whether the Claims Conference put enough pressure on them to admit their guilt.

Much later, in 1986, there came the Waldheim affair: when Kurt Waldheim was seeking the Austrian presidency it



Peter Phillips

was revealed that he had concealed the fact that he had been an officer in the German army. Fortunately, this created an environment in which Austria's links to its Nazi past were discussed and in which the claims of victims could be pursued.

Later still, in 1991, Jörg Haider, of the right-wing Freedom Party, praised the Nazis during a debate in parliament. This was too much for Austrian Chancellor Vranitsky to accept, so he decided it was time to issue an apology: 'We own up to all the facts of our history and to the deeds of all parts of our people. We must apologise for the evil.' (It was, of course, around this time that Austria applied for, and received, membership of the EU, so perhaps Vranitsky had a hidden agenda!)

It was now up to the Committee for Jewish Claims on Austria (CJCA) to negotiate the best deal it could. Sadly, I feel it let us down. It was agreed that no major compensation would be paid out until there was legal peace between Austria and its victims. Why then did they not put pressure on the lawyers in the United States and their clients to halt their class actions? (The Altmann and Whiteman cases went on and on until, eventually, one was settled and the other dropped.) Why did the CJCA agree to such paltry sums of money in compensation for our huge losses? The General Settlement Fund was granted \$210 million to be shared between

20,000 claimants. Bank Austria (Creditanstalt) was allowed to get away with paying only \$40 million in compensation. To receive my pension, I had, first, to pay the equivalent of two years' pension into a special Austrian pension fund. Was that fair? Why was Ariel Muzicant, the President of the Austrian Jewish community, given precedence over us as to when the money from the fund was to be received, and why was he allowed – with our money but without our knowledge – to rebuild the Hakoah sports stadium in Vienna? It was also, seemingly, agreed that money could be taken for the pet projects of members of the World Jewish Congress – like the building of a Yiddish theatre in Tel Aviv. Why?

In 2001 an agreement was concluded between the CJCA and the Austrian government in which benefits of \$480 million were to be paid to Austrian survivors. How was this reduced to \$210 million? Why was it agreed that we should be paid in dollars? Remember, it is now almost two dollars to the pound. The CJCA was not to know this but, had they acted faster, particularly with regard to 'legal peace', we would all have been far better off. Rabbi Israel Miller, one of the leaders of the Claims Conference, confirmed that the Conference 'had not devoted enough time or effort to Austria'. Gideon Taylor, one of its current leaders, agreed that perhaps it was wrong that Rabbi Israel Singer, who replaced Rabbi Miller after his death and who was also an official of the World Jewish Congress, should have stated that 'survivors have not the right to decide all questions about funds restored to the Jewish people from the Holocaust'.

So, is it entirely the fault of the Austrians (or Hannah Lessing) that we are all still waiting for our compensation from the General Settlement Fund? Let's be fair: let's admit it isn't!

Peter Phillips

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### 'ISRAEL-BASHING'

Sir – In his attack on Peter Zander's 'Israel-bashing' (March), Rubin Katz seems to forget that in this country we celebrate freedom of expression as well as of the press, even if certain views seem distasteful to some. 'Israel-bashing' is an emotive term intended to silence all but the blind acceptance of everything Israel says or does. It needs to be used with care (as does 'self-hating Jew').

It is perfectly legitimate for us to criticise Israel, however severely, and have those views published in our *AJR Journal* when we feel that the country's behaviour conflicts with our perception of Jewish and civilised ethics – above all the duty to treat other people and peoples, including our enemies, with justice and humanity. If we feel that this behaviour is contrary to international law and our moral expectations, we have every right – indeed, duty – to say so.

I am not myself a Zionist – meaning that I do not wish to emigrate to that country. At the same time, I am no anti-Zionist. Israel has every right to exist and defend itself and its citizens – but by internationally acceptable means. Had it existed in the 1930s, there might well have been no *Shoah*: certainly, many Jews, including many of my own family, would have survived the war.

I would prefer that most Jews be able to live in the Diaspora as a beacon for our values and way of life. When the Hitlers of this world refuse to accept our integration, it is *they* and not *we* who are wrong.

I can assure Mr Katz that, whatever we say, most of us, deep down, care very much about Israel.

Hans Seelig  
Hemel Hempstead

Sir – Re Ms Salinger's letter (May), I am sure nobody would wish to condone a policy of 'expelling and starving' an entire people – if that is indeed true, as I have read nowhere else about people being expelled or starved. As for the separation wall, she conveniently forgets how many people were blown up before this was built.

I certainly do not believe in my country right or wrong, and if the Israeli government pursues wrongful policies, I agree it should be criticised. Ms Salinger mentions the many Israeli organisations which are doing just that, which is surely a great compliment to the Israeli people.

Can she name equivalent Arab or Muslim organisations protesting against the use of suicide bombs and the deliberate teaching of hatred of the Jews and who advocate peace and the acceptance of the State of Israel? I very much doubt it.

There are far worse things that are going on in the world which should appal Ms Salinger. Such as the situation in Sudan or in Iraq or the recent plot to commit mass murder in this country for no apparent reason other than to pursue 'jihad' against non-Muslims.

In any case, the conflict in the Middle East is not about the policies of the Israeli government but purely about the existence of the State of Israel itself. Instead of concentrating exclusively and obsessively on alleged Israeli wrongdoings Ms Salinger should tell us whether she approves of the use of suicide bombers, of indoctrinating children to hate Jews, and of the use of crude anti-Jewish propaganda which seeks to demonise the Jewish people. M. Storz, London N16

Sir – Congratulations, Ms Salinger, for doing the BBC's and other public news agencies' work for them. They also only list the misdeeds of the Israelis and not the causes.

Gaza was evacuated – now it has a rocket launcher aimed at Israelis instead of being used to benefit the Palestinians. The Occupied Territories became occupied when Israel was attacked. Very few countries return territory gained when they had to defend themselves. Israel never started a war. You never mention the constant fear of allowing your children to attend functions. Suicide bombers strike to kill innocent civilians. I wonder how other countries would react to people crossing the border to kidnap soldiers. Of course, no decent human being would condone cruelty to other human beings. Violence begets violence. It is difficult to be judged when you are surrounded by people who want your demise. Gisela Feldman, Manchester

Sir – Sad that fellow Jews should be so critical of Israel. In 1939 I came here with the Kindertransport, the sole member of a very happy and loving family unit. We had become completely assimilated in Austria. If only Israel had been there, as a bolt hole! Jews have no other homeland and there is still antisemitism. Also, many of Israel's neighbours, sadly, don't want

them to survive, even to exist.

Yes, I too think Israel takes wrong decisions. But please remember there is bloodshed and sadness and loss on both sides. Sadly, news in some famous newspapers is rather economical with the truth about the Middle East. We Jews need Israel. R.W.

Sir – The thought processes of some of your readers are unfathomable. Mr Vajifdar (May) thinks the current upsurge of antisemitism is due to Israeli policies. He obviously has not heard of the Crusades, the pogroms of the Middle Ages or the Holocaust – all long before Israel existed.

Caroline Salinger, who quotes a motley collection of Jewish fringe organisations in her support, might usefully dwell on the complete expulsion by Russia of Poles and of Germans by Poles and Czechs after the Second World War. No so-called international lawyers or, for that matter, the UN have called for the return of territories or populations – or does 'illegal appropriation of land' apply only to Israel?

Ernest G. Kolman, Greenford, Middx

Sir – When a retired Israeli judge, sufficiently respected to be given the task of producing an assessment of the Israeli military action in Lebanon last year, considers that the action was 'ill thought out', was not based on a detailed military plan, and was pursued without considering other options and without consultation outside the army, does this report make him an enemy of Israel? If I, along with many others, thought along these lines at the time, were we all enemies of Israel, as a number of your correspondents alleged? Marc Schatzberger, York

### DIVIDE AND LIVE

Sir – I greatly enjoyed reading Bryan Reuben's review of Colin Shindler's book *What Do Zionists Believe?* (May). However, the penultimate paragraph raises some small problems. (Incidentally, the expulsion of the Hashemites from Saudi Arabia took place in 1921, not in the 1930s, causing the British *their* small problem – of quickly finding substitute countries for two brothers who had just lost theirs, i.e. Jordan and Iraq.)

I am not sure whether it is helpful to date Palestinian self-perception of their own nationality and identity. The famous reply in the 1960s to Golda Meir when she said 'There are no Palestinians' was 'There are *now* – and you helped to make them!'

It is almost wholly immaterial whether or not Arabs and their descendants, who presently live on land that once formed part of Mandated Palestine, and conceive themselves as having a different identity from that of Syrians, Jordanians and other Arabs, hold this belief on grounds that are illogical or historically inaccurate. What matters is that *they* believe it. And any attempt to reach a settlement that

ignores that belief is doomed to failure. This holds equally true for the other side – denial of the rights of the Jews as a nation is well matched by the denial of the rights of the Palestinians as a nation.

The way forward for both nations will arrive when both are prepared to replace the old saying 'Divide and rule' by something more positive – 'Divide and live'.  
*Fred Barschak, London NW6*

#### AJR DIVERSITY

Sir – I, like Professor Novak (Letters, May), have often felt that the *Journal* reflects mainly German/Austrian Jewish refugees. I come from Teplitz-Schönau in Sudetenland, where my mother's family had lived for some 200 years; my father came from Budapest. While one hears so often of German/Austrian towns welcoming refugees back to the towns of their origin, in an act of reconciliation, one never hears of this happening in Czech, Slovak, Hungarian or Polish towns – or, if it does, it is not reported in the *Journal*. As the AJR's East Midlands 'contact', I would be happy to hear from and about other Czechoslovak Jewish refugees.

*Bob Norton, Nottingham*

Sir – I agree wholeheartedly with Professor Novak. I also read the *Journal* with great interest from cover to cover and I too am disappointed not to find articles reflecting the experiences of refugees from countries other than the German-speaking ones. I was one of the children that Nicholas Winton brought out of Czechoslovakia via the Kindertransports – even this German name reflects the way we were outnumbered by those from Germany and Austria.

Maybe the fault lies within ourselves. If we were to contribute articles of interest to the *Journal*, our voices would be heard.

*Bronia Zelenka Snow (née Ringler)  
Esher, Surrey*

#### A SALUTE TO WOLF SUSCHITZKY

Sir – The *Journal* (May issue) came this morning. To my great surprise I found in it your salute to me. How can I ever thank you? I am somewhat embarrassed about so much recognition in my old age. The *Journal* has much improved since your editorship! I have subscribed to it for many years.  
*Wolf Suschitzky, London W2*

#### THANK-YOU BRITAIN

Sir – As Anthony Grenville said in his piece about the Thank-Offering to Britain Fund (May), my father, Hans Blumenau, was one of the original members of the Fund's committee. Like a good democrat, he accepted the majority decision of the committee, but he deeply regretted, as I do to this day, that the very considerable amount of money raised (£96,000 in 1965 was the equivalent of about £1,440,000 today) was spent on a series of academic lectures which, once given to small audiences, were quickly forgotten, and on

research fellowships to individuals the result of whose research for the most part sank equally rapidly into oblivion.

Many of the contributors had hoped that the money would be spent on a distinguished sculpture to be erected in a public place which would be seen by millions of passers-by and remind them (and their descendants) not only of our gratitude but also of Britain's role in deserving it.

*Ralph Blumenau, London W11*

Sir – Re thanking Britain, to some extent I agree – but not all the way. Have you forgotten that many were interned on the Isle of Man, some very elderly? My father was there for three years. Many mistakes were made. Some were sent to Canada and Australia, who were expecting PoWs: they were astonished when out came elderly civilians – Jewish into the bargain. The camps, I understand, were primitive and there was a lot of hardship. Then the *Arandora Star* was sunk, with many lives lost. So, you see, not everybody is so grateful.  
*Anne Pisker, London SW15*

#### BACK TO GERMANY

Sir – Re Ernest Kolman's letter (April), some years ago a journalist of the Shofar (Menorah Congregation) contacted me for a brief interview. When I mentioned I had visited Germany several times in the not-so-distant past, she banged her fists on the table condemning this. When she left me, she got into a German BMW.

*A. Jonas, Macclesfield*

#### HERITABLE CLAIMS

Sir – In the last paragraph of his article in the May edition, Victor Ross states that if some claimants to the Austrian General Settlement Fund die, the remaining claimants would benefit. This is simply not the case as these claims are heritable and would pass to another family member.

*Ralf Wachtel, Potters Bar, Herts*

#### RESTORATION TRAGEDY

Sir – The most elegant piece, 'A restoration comedy' (should surely have been 'tragedy'), in the May issue showed convincingly what an illiterate, humourless bunch of buffoons the Viennese Gestapo were. Who in their right mind would have used *Faust, Part II* as lavatory paper when *Goetz von Berlichingen* would have been so much more appropriate, to the point and within their intellectual grasp. The immortal words in that play were surely the only sentence of any play they ever used – without realising it, of course.

*Frank Bright, Ipswich*

#### 'GRABBING' NOBEL PRIZES

Sir – Still on the subject of Victor Ross's article in the April issue, Hungarian Jews must be champions at 'grabbing' Nobel Prizes. Out of 12 'grabbed' by Hungarians, possibly one was 'grabbed' by a non-Jew – the rest, I am afraid, were all awarded to Jews!  
*Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath*

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# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Visitors to London's **National Gallery** often return to pore over the nation's best loved paintings. But for **Leon Kossoff** such visits became a one-man industry that turned into an obsession. **Leon Kossoff: Drawing From Painting** at the National Gallery until 1 July, features a man who has been visiting the National Gallery for 50 years since the age of ten – producing



Leon Kossoff, *From Veronese: An Allegory of Love, IV ('Happy Union')* Private Collection © Leon Kossoff

hundreds of drawings in which he tried virtually to inhabit masterpieces, like **Rembrandt's** *Woman in a Stream* or works by **Velazquez**, **Cézanne** or **Poussin**.

Kossoff is pragmatic about his talents, saying of himself 'the art of drawing takes courage because I'm not a draughtsman, but if you love art you can learn to draw from it'. Although his vision seems so derivative, a closer look shows you he is telling a different story. Some might consider his work sketchy and retro, but the key is his word 'inhabit'. In works like *Venus and Adonis*, after **Titian**, and **Rembrandt's** *Ecce Homo*, he is peeling away the layers of paint which have formed the images so familiar to us in order to reveal, not the

artist's process, but the essential feeling which engendered it. What emerges is the raw energy which may be lost in perfection. Kossoff is moved by *Ecce Homo* although he sees no religious symbolism in it. His massive painting of *Christchurch, Spitalfields*, ingrained on his memory when he lived in Spitalfields, is a large truth in a mendacious era to him; painted in blues and greens, it has the quality of a fading mirage – not a place you want to enter, but tramps and homeless people can be picked out if you look carefully enough. This is a strong and subtle work.

**The Unknown Monet: Pastels and Drawings** at the **Royal Academy of Arts** until 10 June, is a similar journey to

that of Renoir at the National Gallery. Here you see the process by which Monet achieved a symbiosis of light and colour in landscape, but with no sense of the limbo where Renoir languished after emerging from Impressionism. His early drawings and flirtations with caricature marked him as a very gifted draughtsman – a totally different artist to the Monet of the waterlilies.

Shades of Monty Python occur in the dark imagery of the **Gilbert and George**

major retrospective at **Tate Modern**. Much of the art-to-shock world has moved from the time these two well-dressed, gay men challenged the very notion of art and redefined sculpture as 'the entirety of lived experience'. We have had the Chapman brothers, Damian Hirst and the whole Saatchi-fostered dross of post-Modernism, with the result that the gay sexuality thrown at us from a great height now seems tired and self-indulgent. We forget that we have had no major Gilbert and George retrospective for 25 years so their shock-factor is somewhat diminished. But room after room of outspoken metropolitan angst, male sex, and what appears to be one long rant against the religious culture which rejects them left me feeling drained.

## REVIEWS

### Revival of powerful drama

#### KINDERTRANSPORT

by Diane Samuels

Hampstead Theatre, North London

The revival of Diane Samuels's powerful *Kindertransport* by the Shared Experience theatre company played to a packed audience at the Hampstead Theatre. Against a spare stage set of packing cases and wardrobes in a neglected attic, the haunting plot spanning three generations unfolded, searing in its intensity. While the background is likely to be all too familiar to readers of this journal, they are less likely to have confronted the emotional and psychological conflicts that dominate the action.

The young Eva is a bright nine-year-old from Hamburg, one of thousands of Jewish children who were accepted in this country in the aftermath of Kristallnacht; her mature incarnation, the anglicised Evelyn, is suffering from a longstanding crisis of identity. And it is this duality, unveiled when Evelyn's daughter, Faith, chances to uncover some long-hidden papers, which is the meat of great drama as opposed to documentary.

For while many, like Eva, torn – or seemingly expelled – from her comfortable home and loving parents, suffered the traumas of displacement and loss, few are likely to have experienced the harrowing choice and ultimate betrayal from which Evelyn will never recover. And, far more than just another dramatised saga of the Holocaust, Samuels's principal themes are the complexity of family ties and the many anguished variations of identity – lost, hidden, repressed, stolen.

These interwoven threads are movingly fleshed out in Polly Teale's skilful production, in which past and present are fused in a shared space to accentuate the dichotomy in the soul of Samuel's protagonist. Uncannily, Matti Houghton as the young Eva and Marion Bailey as Evelyn share the same straight, pulled-back and fringed hairstyle. Yet that is one of the very few links between the courageous, feisty, proudly German-Jewish child and the repressed, colourless, obsessively 'proper' middle-class Englishwoman, who play out their contrasting stories in a form of synchronised duet.

The other 'link' is a mouth organ and a pair of books in German, which

survive Evelyn's final destruction of the hidden relics of her buried past, to be handed over to her daughter. These are *The Ratcatcher of Hamlyn*, who, in his impersonation on the stage, haunts the mature Evelyn no less than the young Eva, and a once-cherished *Haggadah*, now dismissed as 'some Jewish book'.

The eerie 'ratcatcher', and a few minor roles played by the same actor, are rare 'masculine' incursions in a realm of mothers, daughters and grandmother(s) whose interaction, sometimes loving but often fraught, lies at the heart of the drama and the moral complexities it raises. Did Eva, for example, genuinely feel her parents were casting her out, or is this a rationalisation she adopts to suit her later decision? Did Lil, her foster-mother, really force her to eradicate elements of her essential 'persona' – the desperate Evelyn, after all, accuses her of 'murdering' much of her – or was Eva/Evelyn herself responsible for this transformation? These are questions that linger with, at least, this member of the audience.

Matti Houghton's outstanding performance as the child Eva, convincing in German as well as English, moved me to tears; Eileen O'Brien as Lil displayed considerable adeptness in a role spanning over 40 years as foster-mother to nine-year-old Eva and 'grandmother' to the 20-something Faith; Lily Bevan, as Faith, effectively conveyed her fury and frustration at having been deprived of her rightful heritage. I confess to being less moved by Marion Bailey's Evelyn, feeling that there may have been an element of over-acting in her hysterical late breakdown. But maybe this was a sign that she had succeeded in depicting a character I found less than likeable.

*Kindertransport* will be showing at the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton, from 29 May to 2 June and at the Oxford Playhouse from 5 to 9 June.

Emma Klein

### The byways of survival

THE FORGER: AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF SURVIVAL IN WARTIME BERLIN

by Cioma Schönhaus

*Granta*, 2007, 220pp., £9.99

Much has been written about the highways of survival in the concentration camps, but less is known about the byways – how a few Jews managed to exist under the noses of the Nazis. To do so you needed

resourcefulness, vigilance, willing helpers and luck. Cioma Schönhaus seems to have had a good measure of all of these. His book has the excitement of a thriller – except that the danger is real and not fictitious.

The background to the story is the gradual degradation of a Jewish population who find it hard to believe that a cultured nation could turn against them with such ferocity. Left in wartime Berlin after others have emigrated, the least of their troubles is being called up to do manual work in factories. The wearing of yellow stars, restrictions and constant fear of arrest are a daily part of their existence. By 1942 they begin to receive letters asking them to report for 'resettlement in the East' and giving lists of clothing to bring which, unbeknown to them, they will never need. Some actually welcome this change of scene.

At the beginning of the story Cioma Schönhaus is a teenager who has had to leave the art school where he had started to study graphic design. He lives with his parents and near his grandmother, aunt and uncle. One by one they receive their deportation notices and Cioma is left alone in his parents' flat. He himself has temporary protection from deportation due to his job in a metalwork factory.

After receiving a last message his father has managed to smuggle out of Majdanek, Cioma decides to go underground. An acquaintance recruits him to join a group who are forging papers that would keep other 'submarines' out of the clutches of the Gestapo. He describes his first day off work feeling 'as though I was playing hookey from school'. Painstakingly applying his skills as a draughtsman, he succeeds in producing convincing imitations of the life-saving passes. He himself finds lodgings with German women who ask no questions.

Part of the fascination of this book is that it provides information to which we as Jews would have had no access: what life was like for ordinary Germans during the war. It seems that most young men were called up, there were air-raids and rationing, but otherwise everything was remarkably normal. Armed with his forged documents, Cioma cycles through well-known Berlin streets, goes sailing, eats in pubs and restaurants and has affairs. One hotel he frequents has 'chandeliers, white-covered tables, liftboys ... sparkling glasses, thick red carpets'. In contrast to this opulence, he hears a BBC broadcast about the treatment of Jews

in Poland and wonders 'What was it like to live in such a camp? How did you sleep at night? Were there wooden bunks? Was there toilet paper?'

One day his carelessness gets him into trouble: he loses his wallet, as a result of which his cover is blown and he decides to try to escape to Switzerland. On a bicycle, he makes his way to the border through empty countryside. During a brief stay with a friendly pastor, he is urged to wait out the war (now that the end is in sight) in the pastor's home. But he decides not to endanger his host with his presence and manages to swim across the border to safety. Luck is again on his side as the Swiss authorities allow him to stay. Some of the members of the group he has left behind are not so lucky.

This is an amazing story told with an artist's eye for detail and with many delightful graphic illustrations – a bargain at the price.

Martha Blend

### A very good friend to have SHELTER FROM THE STORM (SWALLOWCLIFFE HALL TRILOGY: BOOK 3)

by Jennie Walters

*Simon and Schuster* 2007, paper, 272pp.

It is England, 1939. Isobel, recovering from tuberculosis, is sent to live with her gran, Polly, who works at Swallowcliffe Hall. On walks to the village she meets Andreas Rosenfeld, a German-Jewish refugee, who saves her from drowning when she falls through a rotting balcony. They become good friends and Isobel manages to get Andreas a job at the Hall.

A few weeks later there is a fire at the Hall next to Andreas's room and Isobel's gran is badly hurt. Andreas is a prime suspect. Isobel hears her gran during a delirious fever telling her best friend, Iris Baker, that Iris's illegitimate son, Ralph Chadwick, is living in a vicarage. Isobel realises that she showed this man around the Hall a few weeks earlier and drives to London to contact him, on a mission to reunite him with her gran, the person who knew Iris best. A few days later Ralph comes to the Hall to see Isobel's gran but, sadly, after he leaves, she dies. After the funeral the Lord of the Hall decides to turn Swallowcliffe into a refugee home. Isobel foils a plot to stop this idea and, after some emotional events, she and her family move near the Hall, where Andreas, having been found innocent,

**REVIEWS** continued from page 9

acts as a translator.

My favourite character is Andreas because he is Jewish (like me), he likes painting and he is a very heroic, selfless and loyal person. He would be a very good friend to have.

My favourite part of the novel is when Isobel is describing how she would like things to be: 'Mum would lose the frown lines between her eyes and maybe she'd actually start being nice to Dr. Hathaway ... Gran would get better and Hitler would realise there was no point in going to war. And pigs would fly.' Also: 'Gran agreeing to share her kitchen with Mrs. Rosenfeld was about as likely as Hitler taking up flower arranging.'

Some parts of *Shelter from the Storm* hurt a little because there are descriptions of antisemitism, for

example 'Once they [the Jews] have swindled their way to something, they become thieves and blood suckers, either openly or in secret' (quotation from *The Jewish World Plague* at the beginning of Chapter 6). But I know that this is the way things would have been at that time and that Jennie Walters is trying to make the story realistic. Also, there is not much description and you have to know that the 'Great War' means the First World War. In addition, you will need to have already read the first two books in this trilogy: *House of Secrets* and *Standing in the Shadows*.

I think this book would be suitable for girls, and perhaps boys, aged around 10 to 13.

**Rosie Esther Solomon (aged 11)**



## Letter from Israel

Like migrating birds, they spend every winter in Eilat. Their home is in London, but the winter climate makes their old bones ache and, besides, she's not too keen on housework.

Hearing the unmistakable sound of native London accents in the hotel club room, we fell into conversation with the visitors from the UK. They seemed to be in their seventies and to have spent a lot of time in the sun, judging by their tans.

'Yes, we come here every year, and spend three months in this hotel. We've been doing it for the last 16 years', they told us. 'The hotel staff regard us as family.'

How admirable, we thought, wishing that more British Jews would follow their lead. Little did we realise that we had fallen into a trap.

'But why do Israelis have to take their children with them everywhere?', they complained. 'Why can't we eat in the dining room without having to put up with screaming children? Why does everyone have to wear jeans all the time? Is it a religion? Why do Israelis pile so much food on their plates? Was there a famine? And why is everyone so bad-mannered?'

It seemed slightly futile to try and counteract those sweeping generalisations. How does one explain that Israel is not England, that most parents wouldn't dream of going away without their children, that Israelis enjoy good food, and that people on holiday, especially in the laid-back atmosphere of Eilat, tend to wear comfortable clothes?

After our conversation I took a good look at the other people in the hotel. I saw adorable babies and toddlers and beautiful, lively children. I tried to view those happy families through my acquaintances' jaundiced eyes, but my imaginative faculties failed me.

Yes, once there was rationing and hardship here, but that was a long time ago. Nowadays, Israelis simply want to enjoy themselves. Just like everybody else.

**Dorothea Shefer-Vanson**



'Remembering for the Future': Rabbi Grunewald, far left, with survivors who lit candles on Pinner Synagogue's Yom Hashoah evening. The survivors are Rev Gershon Gladiusz, Prof Ladislaus Löb, Mrs Susan Pollack, Mrs Anita Lasker Wallfisch, Mrs Lilian Levy

### Only a Past by Debora Kadisch

I sit in my armchair  
Twiddling my thumb  
Think of champagne and  
Sometimes of rum  
There is only a past  
And no future more  
I can no more do work  
As I did before  
Can hardly look after myself  
Can't reach high or low  
To get to the shelves  
I now have a carer  
Who helps me a lot  
If she's not here  
My daughter I've got  
My grandchildren are helpful too  
When they come here, and this is true  
A while ago I was still keen  
To get to 100 with a telegram  
from the Queen  
But now I'm grateful  
That at this exciting time  
I'm still able to make up this rhyme.



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Ruth Lansley's goldfish must be the best fed on the Isle of Wight. I watched in awe as she flung fistfuls of nourishing food into their pond and the sleek-skinned, fat-bellied fish jumped clear out of the water asking for more. The pond is a tiny part of the lovely garden encircling Ruth's bungalow, which itself lies between exquisite country lanes beyond the holiday resorts of Sandown and Shanklin. An imposing area of the garden is set aside in remembrance of her husband Peter.

Ruth's childhood in Germany was a happy one. The Kormes family had a beautiful home in Hanover and Ruth's father owned a thriving auction business. She had two brothers and a sister. As the political situation in Hanover deteriorated, the children were packed off for Leipzig, a city whose beautiful architecture, lovely parks, opera houses, theatres and restaurants Ruth came to love deeply: 'Imagine my shock when it was announced by the new Nazi party that these places were no longer to be enjoyed by me.'

In 1937 Ruth was sent to Holland. She lived for a year in Amsterdam, moving from family to family. She met Anne Frank a number of times.

In the summer of 1939 Ruth and her elder sister Inge boarded a ship in Hamburg, each clutching a bouquet of roses given them by their parents, who waved them off from the dockside. They were never again to see their parents, who perished in Auschwitz. Ruth's brothers fled Germany by different routes and later fought for the Allies against the country of their birth.

In England, Ruth and Inge went as domestics to a house in Bournemouth owned by a lady who treated them badly. It was only following the intervention of a German club nearby that their conditions improved.

During this period, Ruth's English was coming on apace. Though there was the occasional slip. 'Is it a bitch or a bastard?', Ruth asked a startled dog-owner, who

# PROFILE

Howard Spier

## The turbulent life of Ruth Lansley



walked away in disgust.

When the war broke out Ruth and Inge were sent off to internment in the Isle of Man. The 18 months they spent there were by no means wasted. Ruth learned much from her fellow internees about theatre, music and many other activities, and sold outside the camp jewellery internees had made from shells.

On leaving the Isle of Man, Ruth joined her brother in Newcastle. Here, she took up nursing, caring for both war wounded and coal miners, though she didn't obtain sufficient qualifications for a subsequent career. It was in Newcastle that she first met her husband, Peter Lansley, a naval officer, marrying him shortly after the war. She and Peter, a specialist in airport communications, moved to Porchester, near Petersfield.

Having brought up a family, Ruth did a number of jobs, at one stage managing a wine bar for three years. She also worked for a company organising exhibitions, earning so much commission through telephone sales that she incurred the jealousy of other employees.

The family moved to Southampton, then Cheltenham. Here Ruth began the handicraft

in which she excels, painting delicate pictures, tiny boxes, eggs and far more commercially.

Twenty-seven years ago the family settled in the Isle of Wight, where Peter was born. Peter came from an illustrious family: his grandfather had been a wine taster for Queen Victoria in the local Osborne House.

Ruth's two sons and their families visit frequently. Recently hospitalised with heart problems, she needs to rest as much as possible and the family are content to stay in nearby accommodation.

Ruth is one of the few outposts of AJR membership on the Isle of Wight. I was pleased to see a recent copy of the *AJR Journal* pinned prominently to a wall.

Ruth was one of a number of Holocaust survivors who talked about their experiences to the local Medina High School among activities marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. She acknowledges the importance of passing on her knowledge to the next generation: 'I am so glad I spoke to them. It has done me a lot of good, got me out of my shell and made me believe there is hope. These children are our hope for the future.' She is convinced of the importance of forgiveness: 'If one of those who did this to us asked for my forgiveness, I would give it. I cannot forget but I could not spend my last breath saying I hate them.'

A year or two ago, Ruth was among a group of Kindertransportees who met Prince Charles, whom she found delightfully sympathetic and humorous. Esther Rantzen filmed a TV programme at her home, she also recalls with pride.

Ruth's home is dotted with mementos: pictures she has drawn, photos of family and life in Germany and England. Cushion covers, tiny boxes, eggs, teddy bears she has designed, and is designing, abound.

Ruth writes poetry and short stories. A poem devoted to the memory of her parents appeared in the *Journal* recently. As can be seen on the charming photograph above, Ruth plays the cello (as well as the violin).

A startlingly youthful-looking 85, Ruth has a highly developed sense of humour. But she is acutely aware of contradictions within her: an evident enthusiasm for life coupled with bouts of profound depression, exuberant self-confidence living together with a deep uncertainty. 'I've led a very turbulent life', she says, a statement no one would dream of questioning.



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# INSIDE the AJR

## Wembley inaugural meeting

Myrna Glass explained to the 23 people present the set-up of AJR groups in Southern England and Wales. Everyone then introduced themselves and gave a brief history of their lives. Amazingly, most of those present had lived in Wembley for over 40 years, and many who lived near each other had been unaware of the other's existence. It was agreed that the group would endeavour to meet on the second or third Wednesday afternoon of the month according to availability of dates.

*Myrna Glass*

**Next meeting: Wed 13 June**

## Newcastle Elders Council

Our speaker was Dr Robert Weiner from the Elders Council of Newcastle. This organisation, open to all aged over 50 in the area, has improved access to many amenities and services within the city. Most of the 30-odd people present were unaware of the Council's existence and were keen to join. Dr Kurt Shapira introduced us to Eileen Brady, the new AJR social worker for the North and Scotland. We were then introduced to Richard Smith and John Stelling, co-ordinators of the North East War Museum Project, a major part of which is the creation of a permanent Holocaust exhibition and resource centre.

*Walter Knoblauch*

## Bristol/Bath talk by Wiener Library archivist

Kitty and Gabriel Balint-Kurti again agreed to host this meeting at their home. Following a welcoming buffet lunch, we listened with great interest to Howard Falksohn, a second-generation Kind who is an archivist at the Wiener Library. He dealt with the numerous questions with knowledge and patience.

*D. H. Hackel*

## East Midlands (Nottingham) and Sheffield joint visit to Beth Shalom

Some 30 of us were warmly welcomed by Beth Shalom directors Marina Smith and James Smith. Following a nice buffet lunch, we were shown a film and addressed by James Smith, who explained the Centre's expansion plans. We also visited the lovely gardens with their various memorials. A very enjoyable experience, which we would like to repeat next year.

*Bob Norton*

## Manchester: how to make documentary films

Television document-maker Dee Marshall spoke to a well-attended meeting about the making of a film portraying the story of a well-known Auschwitz survivor. She acquainted us with the great care and

precision – and not least the pitfalls – which go into the making of such documentaries. More details were given of the Manchester area Memorial Book for relatives who became victims of the Holocaust.

*Werner Lachs*

## Ilford sketch of history of South Africa

Dr Sheila Marshall gave us a thumbnail sketch of the history of South Africa, where she had grown up. Dr Pinkus then put on a film showing how many Jewish people helped fight the injustice inflicted on the Black population and how grateful Nelson Mandela was for our help in their cause.

*Meta Roseneil*

**Next meeting: Wed 6 June. Frank Miller, 'The Story of the Bagel'**

## Liverpool Moments and Memories

We shared memories at a viewing of the AJR Refugee Voices DVD *Moments and Memories*, featuring Liverpool member Ellen Shiffman. Rachel Littlewood, Outreach Worker for the Liverpool Everyman/Playhouse Theatres, spoke to us about the play *Kindertransport* and the corresponding art exhibition.

*Susanne Green*

**Next meeting: Wed 20 June. Annual Lunch. Gisela Feldman, 'Boat to Nowhere on the SS St Louis'**

## Pinner: the Rothschilds and Waddesdon Manor

With the use of excellent slides, Robert Keating told us the history of this remarkable, multi-national family of philanthropists, benefactors, businessmen, politicians and art collectors. We even had a 'virtual tour' of Waddesdon thrown in. The Rothschilds' money helped to fund hospitals in the UK, much of the development of Israel – and they even provided accommodation and education for a group of Kindertransport refugees for several years!

*Paul Samet*

**Next meeting: Thur 7 June. James Taylor, 'Camouflage in Wars'**

## Edinburgh and the complexities of Heller-scrap

Before settling down to Lilian Bell-Heller's talk, members observed that the *AJR Journal* was heavily German-biased, reported on the Yom Hashoah Memorial service, discussed the Anne Frank exhibition at the Edinburgh shul in June, and opted for Glasgow as the venue for the Michael Tobias meeting on 2 September. Lilian guided us into the complexities of printing 'Heller-scrap', named after her grandfather, who owned the business in Vienna from 1917. Heller-scrap is multi-coloured illustrations of a general and educational nature which members remembered playing with and trading in as children. The meeting was kindly hosted by Irene and Phillip Mason.

*Jonathan Kish*

## Brighton & Hove Sarid – forging of a Jewish identity

Professor Scarlett Epstein told us about

her life in Vienna at the start of the Nazi occupation. The antisemitic incidents she encountered at school and the plight of her family fleeing persecution contributed to forging her strong Jewish identity.

*Ceska Abrahams*

**Next meeting: Mon 18 June. Celebration of 8th anniversary**

## Harrogate and the Timewatch programme

The *Timewatch* programme shown on BBC2 in April hopefully commanded a large audience. Many AJR members who saw it may not have known that Suzanne Ripton, one of the 'hidden children', is a member of the Harrogate group. Susanne Green, as always, brought past and future events to our notice before we socialised with refreshments, expressing hopes to meet again on 4 July.

*Inge Little*

## Middle East update at Cleve Road

The Israeli Embassy's Robin Hamilton-Taylor told us that the recent Lebanon War had resulted in a new strategic equation in the north; that the peace process with the Palestinians was on hold following the election of Hamas; and that Iran had become Israel's number one concern in international affairs.

**Next meeting: Tues 19 June 2007. Bettine Le Beau, 'Happiness is a State of Mind'**

## Edgware (almost) solving world's problems

The AJR's Ronald Channing prepared a list of foreign-affairs topics, giving us an opportunity to express our views about any of the points mentioned. Whether we were successful in resolving the problems of the world, only the future will tell.

*Felix Winkler*

**Next meeting: Tues 19 June. 'The Wiener Library'**

## Leeds HSFA: the Sefton Project

Nigel Flanagan and Glen Williams, from the Unison trade union, gave us an interesting account of the Sefton Project, set up to counter claims made by the BNP in leaflets circulated to schools and private homes and to Holocaust denial websites accessible to school children. A number of trade unions have given financial support to the project, which has enabled young people to meet Holocaust survivors.

*Martin Kapel*

## April success in Surrey

The sun shone brilliantly as members from many parts of Surrey gathered at the Saunders' lovely home. In the garden, under the magnificent ancient tree, old and new friends chatted away while enjoying the beautifully presented, delicious food. The morning was a great success, passing all too quickly.

*June and Ron Wertheim*

## Superb Cambridge talk on Vienna coffee houses

We were privileged to enjoy a superb talk

## Day Trip to Windsor Castle

14 June 2007

'Royal Weddings from Queen Victoria to Queen Elizabeth II'  
We will be leaving Cleve Road at 9.30 am and returning at approx 5 pm

Price £25 to include entrance, exhibition with half-hour talk, coach, and picnic lunch  
Very little walking involved unless you walk around the castle grounds

Spaces are limited

To book please contact Lorna Moss ASAP on 020 8385 3070

## FROGMORE HOUSE AND SAVILL GARDEN

15 August 2007

Join us on a guided tour of Frogmore House. Hear the story of past residents of this house, now used by the Royal Family for private entertaining, then pay a visit to Savill Garden

Some walking is involved  
Price £25 includes transport, entrance and sandwich lunch

**Places are limited – book early to avoid disappointment**

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

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

## AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Wednesday 20 June 2007  
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

**Rabbi Malcolm Cohen**  
'Finding God in the Most Unexpected Places'

Please be aware that members should not automatically assume that they are on the Luncheon Club list. It is now necessary, on receipt of your copy of the *AJR Journal*, to phone the Centre on 020 7328 0208 to book your place.

## KT-AJR

Kindertransport special interest group

Monday 4 June 2007  
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

**Dr Claire Ungerson**  
'Kitchener Camp Revisited'

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**

### June Afternoon Entertainment

Mon	4	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue	5	CLOSED
Wed	6	Douglas Poster
Thur	7	Jack Davidoff
Mon	11	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	12	CLOSED
Wed	13	Ronnie Goldberg
Thur	14	Ann Kenton-Barker
Mon	18	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	19	CLOSED
Wed	20	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	21	Jen Gould
Mon	25	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	26	CLOSED
Wed	27	Mike Mirandi
Thur	28	Michael Heaton

### DIARY DATES

5 June	South of England Get-together, Bournemouth
14 June	Windsor Castle with Royal Weddings Exhibition talk
27 June	Scotland & Newcastle Get-together, Edinburgh
8-15 July	St Annes holiday
17 July	London & South Get-together, Radlett
7 August	Northern Get-together, Leeds
15 August	Frogmore House with Guided Tour & Savill Garden

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

### 'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

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



Members of AJR trip to Vienna take time out in the grounds of Schönbrunn Palace

by Otto Deutsch, sharing with us his childhood memories of 'Weekends in Vienna' – especially the role of the coffee house just before Jewish life was to change for ever in so many places in Europe. We also learned that a new Jewish community was emerging in the city.

*Keith Lawson*

Next meeting: Thur 21 June

### Hendon and the history of the Jews of England

Susannah Alexander told us about the history of the Jews in England from its earliest beginnings. Today, she said, the Jewish community was experiencing a decline caused principally by deaths, re-emigration and mixed marriages.

*Annette Saville*

Next meeting: Mon 4 June. 1st birthday celebration

### Israel Independence Day celebrated in Kent

Eighteen of us enjoyed a Yom Ha'atzmaut party and lunch provided by Myrna, ably assisted by Jane and Ella. Frank explained the origin of the Israeli flag and members who had visited Israel reminisced about their experiences there. A flute trio comprising Margaret, her daughter and her

niece played the Israeli national anthem for us. A memorable occasion. *Inge Ball*

Next meeting: Tues 26 June. A Board of Deputies representative

### North London and the secrets of Bletchley Park

Ruth Bourne spoke to our well-attended meeting about the Bletchley Park code-breaking station. When visited by MI6 members, disguised as a shooting party in the late 1930s, the site and conditions were found to be suitable for the establishment of a code-breaking station. Alan Turing, with the help of experienced Polish and other scientists, developed an intricate machine which was able to decipher the German 'Enigma' code, greatly helping the Allies to bring the Second World War to a victorious end.

*Eva and Joe Behrens*

Next meeting: Thur 28 June. James Taylor, 'Aspects of Churchill's Life'

### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

*Regional Get-together in Bournemouth*  
Tues 5 June. Call Susan Harrod at Head Office for details

*Essex* Tues 12 June. Joint lunch with Edgware. Details being sent separately  
*Norfolk* Thur 14 June. Lunchtime Get-together

**CLASSIFIED**

**Birth**

Congratulations to Sima and Ronald Channing on the birth of their granddaughter Jasmine.

**Birthday**

**Kadisch, Debora.** It is with the greatest pleasure that we – Maggie, David, Pema and Samantha – would like to congratulate our dear mum, granny and great-granny on reaching her 100th birthday and wishing her a wonderful day and year ahead (see page 10).

**Kadisch, Debora.** Congratulations, keep smiling. Love, Lore.

**Anniversary**

**Holden (né Holzinger), Herbert and Edith (née Eisler)** are commemorating their Golden Wedding on 2 June. Their marriage was solemnised at Cockfosters and Southgate Synagogue, Old Farm Avenue, Southgate, London N14.

**Deaths**

**Martin, John Charles Zelenka.** It is with great sorrow that the family of John Charles Zelenka Martin OBE announce his death on 29 March 2007. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

**Miller, Irmgard (née Joseph),** born Stralsund, Germany 9 May 1909, died London 2 April 2007. An amazing lady, who will be missed by family and friends.

**Roston, Benjamin,** born Warsaw 1919, died 13 April 2007 at the Brompton Hospital, London aged 87. He is deeply missed and mourned by his three daughters, Miriam, Carmel and Suzy, his grandchildren, Jake, Joe and Charlie, and Cilly Haar, his partner for the last 17 years. Ben was a great fighter, who even after suffering a stroke five years ago which left him partially disabled, tried to lead as active and normal a life as possible. May he rest in peace.

**Steiniger, John.** It is with great sorrow that the family of John Steiniger announce his death on 16 March 2007 in the Lindo Wing of St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, just before his 100th birthday. He will be greatly missed by his family and his many friends.

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**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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020 8385 3070

**Act for Change**

We need Survivors to come forward who are willing to be interviewed by secondary school students and to provide the stories that will initiate this journey for them on 13 July. The testimonies will be compiled in a DVD we are currently developing.

Are you open to share your personal story during the Holocaust? Does your experience during the Holocaust reflect a point of decision that created change in your own life or in the life of others?

The decision may have seemed minor at the time or it may have had an impact on a large number of people. Whatever personal dilemmas you faced, we are interested in hearing from you.

Please contact us on 0845 0945 980 or at enquiries@actforchange.org.uk



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## Obituary

### Hugh Steven Nelson

My father Steve Nelson, born Hans Seligsohn-Netter in Charlottenburg, Berlin in 1920, was one of the last of a significant generation of young people who fled the Nazis, fought in the British Army, and became British nationals. Steve died peacefully on 17 April, a week after his 87th birthday.

In 1933 he came to England, where he attended Repton School. He went up to Cambridge in 1938 and in 1940 was interned under the Emergency Powers Act as an enemy alien. He was imprisoned on the Isle of Man and, later, for a year in Montreal, with notable fellow refugees such as Max Perutz, Claus Moser, Herman Bondi and the infamous Klaus Fuchs.

In 1941 he joined the Pioneer Corps and in 1944 was commissioned in the Royal Artillery. His time in the British Army has been featured in both German and English versions of the book *The King's Own Loyal Enemy Aliens*, by Peter Leighton-Langer, a description of the paradoxical situation



Steve Nelson in 1944

in which German nationals joined the British Army to fight against Germans! Steve greatly treasured this book.

In 1946 he obtained British naturalisation and began training as a chartered accountant. Together with his father, Julius Seligsohn-Netter, he pioneered a new form of advertising – direct mail – by setting up the company British International Addressing Ltd (BIA). BIA was eventually sold to Reuben H. Donnelly from the US in 1970. In 1978 he retired to beautiful Wensleydale in the Yorkshire Dales. His wife Ruth predeceased him by nine years.

Steve had a great love of life and people. He travelled extensively in Western Europe and harboured a passion for music. Up to a few years ago, he was a regular visitor to the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth. He is survived by two sons, one daughter, seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He will be sadly missed by all of us.

Andrew Nelson

### Central Office for Holocaust Claims Michael Newman

#### The International Tracing Service of the Red Cross

Under the terms of an agreement between the 11 governments which control the archive of the International Tracing Service of the Red Cross, the entire collection of records pertaining to some 17 million displaced victims of the Holocaust and the Second World War are expected to be fully scanned and made publicly available by the end of this year.

The International Commission that controls the records began administering the archive in 1955 to respond to requests to track missing persons, help reunite families and, later, to validate compensation claims by Holocaust survivors or their relatives.

Following years of pressure from survivors, the 11 member countries of the International Commission agreed in May 2006 to open the archive to inspection and research.

#### French railways litigation

In a setback to the families of Holocaust victims hoping to claim compensation from the French government and railways (SNCF), at the end of March a judge overturned a ruling that French railways must compensate the family of a Jewish man transported to an internment camp in Nazi-occupied France.

In a landmark verdict last June, a court ordered the SNCF and the French government to pay 61,000 euros (£41,500) to the family of Georges Lipietz, a Polish-born Jew arrested by French police and taken by train to a transit camp near Paris in 1944.

As well as its collaborationist role in deporting some 76,000 Jews to concentration camps in Eastern Europe, prospective plaintiffs argue that the SNCF acted out of greed, pointing to evidence that it charged French authorities the price of a third-class rail ticket for each person loaded into its cattle wagons.

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)

## Arts and Events Diary – June

**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

**Mon 4 Prof Liliane Weissberg, 'Hannah Arendt at the Movies: Charlie Chaplin and the Hidden Tradition of Jewish Culture'**, Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex, Arts C110, 4.30 pm (tea at 4.00 pm, Arts B127), tel 01273 678771

**Mon 4 No lecture** (hall not available) Club 43

**Tues 5 Prof Robert Wistrich, 'Jews, Muslims and the Crisis of the French Republic'**, London Jewish Cultural Centre, 7.30 pm, tel 020 8457 5000

**Wed 6 Mohammed Faheli and Carol Brauner, 'The Arab and Jewish Community in Acre'** Leo Baeck (London) Lodge

**Mon 11 Dr Richard Dove** (Research Institute for German and Austrian Exile Studies), 'Ein schweres Leben (A Difficult Life): The Writer Robert

Neumann in Wartime Britain' Club 43  
**Tues 12 Prof Volkhart Knigge, 'Complexity as Opportunity: History and Memory in the Buchenwald Memorial after 1990'** Room B33, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1, 7.00 pm. Tel Wiener Library 020 7636 7247

**Wed 13 'The Pearl Hiller Singers'** Leo Baeck (London) Lodge

**Mon 18 AGM** Club 43

**Wed 20 Clemens Nathan, 'The Hague Conference'** Leo Baeck (London) Lodge

**Mon 25 Dr Paul Goldman, 'Simeon Solomon: The Jewish Pre-Raphaelite (with illustrations)'** Club 43

**Wed 27 'End of Term Social: A Musical Evening'** 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*

## Building and accessing refugee archives

### Sussex University introduces a database on German-speaking refugees

Archivists, librarians, historians, authors, researchers and film-makers explored the significance of refugee archives at an international conference hosted by a team from the German-Jewish Studies Department at the University of Sussex, led by Professor Edward Timms.

In proportion to its population, Britain received more refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe than any other country: between 60,000 and 90,000 German-speaking refugees reached this country in 1933-50. Professor Timms stressed the 'immense and enduring debt' owed to them by the host community. The growing interest in social history relied increasingly on the availability of new information and the technology which facilitated access to it – hence the importance of archival resources.

### Research on children's hostels

The Reverend Bernd Koschland recalled his arrival with the Kindertransport in 1939 and his settlement in a hostel for boys in the Buckinghamshire village of Tylers Green; the hostel, established by Rabbi Eli Munk, maintained orthodox Jewish standards. His researches revealed that at least 68 such hostels were established in the UK and Ireland.

Among 'a wealth of material', his archival collection includes Tylers Green's minute book, correspondence from government departments and the local police regarding any movement of 'alien' foreigners, contact with refugee organisations, magazine articles, and rare photographs. There is also detailed information on individuals and descriptions of wartime conditions, including internment for the older boys. In 1945 the hostel was transferred to London. It closed in 1947 with the young adults going their separate ways.

### Refugee Voices

Dr Bea Lewkowicz described the concept of the AJR's *Refugee Voices* oral history archive she and Dr Anthony Grenville were creating. A total of 150 face-to-face interviews with German-Jewish refugees and survivors from all parts of the country had been recorded on video and were being transcribed for the benefit of scholars. Photographs, additional

biographical information and other documents were also filmed and added.

Among the participants were 71 men and 79 women, most of them from Berlin, Vienna and Hamburg; 67 people came to Britain in 1939; 65 people were over 80, of whom 17 were over 90 years old; of the total, 35 had been Kindertransportees, 6 hidden children, and 13 camp survivors; 10 women had worked as domestics. The new archive is intended as an invaluable resource for both academics and members of the public. Dr Lewkowicz has also made a film, *Moments and Memories*, which highlights the lives of 14 refugees before and after their emigration, providing a retrospective of their thoughts and experiences.

The Wiener Library's unique archival collection on Nazi persecution in the Third Reich, including press cuttings and photographs, was called upon by the British government during the war and remains a leading source for scholars of the period. According to Howard Falkson, the Library's archivist, the personal papers of German-Jewish refugees and much rich correspondence in German form an important part of the collection. Consequently the library remains a key place of deposit and Howard Falkson's objective is 'to collect as much material as possible before it is discarded or lost.'

### Major refugee database

A team from the University's German-Jewish Studies Department is currently working on British Archival Resources Relating to German-speaking Refugees (1933-50), a project known by its acronym of BARGE. As holdings of institutional archives and personal collections, both German and English language, are widely scattered through the British Isles, the BARGE database is a research tool with which to locate and consult them. It records the names of individuals and the location of their papers along with brief biographical descriptions. The project is due to be completed next year and, to date, over 1,200 collection descriptions and over 2,000 biographies have been identified.

*To offer sources of archival material relating to German-speaking refugees or to receive further information, please visit [barge@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:barge@sussex.ac.uk)*

## Newsround

### New Jewish Museum in Munich

In 1928 (writes H. Peter Sinclair) a group of Munich Jews, led by Rabbi Leo Baerwald, discussed the creation of a local Jewish museum. The onset of the Nazi era put an end to this. Now, nearly 80 years on, the Jewish Museum in Munich has finally opened. Those present at the opening were



not only from the local Jewish community but also included local dignitaries and, like me, a few pre-WW2 Jewish citizens of Munich by personal invitation from the Mayor.

Visitors to the new museum, which is a municipal project, can learn about Jewish life and culture in Munich. The first recorded presence there of a Jew, Abraham of Municha, was in 1229. A special section offers in-depth information on Jewish history and religion. Each of the three floors has a reading area, a study facility or a library. More about the museum can be found at <http://www.juedisches-museum.muenchen.de>

### Spielberg Foundation shifts focus

Director Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation is to expand beyond focusing on the Holocaust to recording eye-witness reports of genocide in Rwanda, Darfur and Cambodia as well as stories of life in South Africa.

### Antisemitic incidents doubled in 2006

According to a study by the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Antisemitism and Racism in conjunction with the World Jewish Congress, last year saw a sharp rise in incidents of antisemitism worldwide. A total of 590 incidents of violence or vandalism against Jews, Jewish property and Jewish institutions were reported. The number of physical assaults on Jews was twice as high as in 2005.

### Catholic summit to fight antisemitism

The need to step up the fight against antisemitism will be a key issue for the world's Roman Catholic bishops at a meeting of the Vatican next year. A 60-page document put out by the Vatican includes a questionnaire calling on bishops to investigate the use of biblical texts to ferment attitudes of antisemitism, the JTA (New York) reports.