

AJR journal

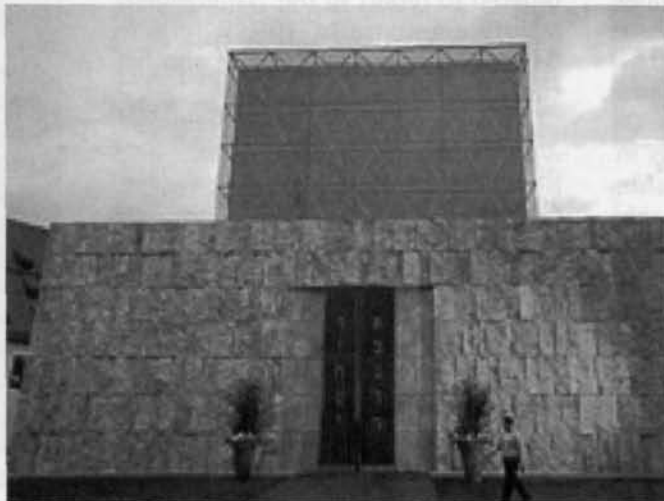
Association of Jewish Refugees

Two faces of a German city: Munich

Before German reunification, Munich and Hamburg were the two largest cities in West Germany. They remain prominent centres of German public life, not least in the area of relations between Germans and Jews. Munich has been in the news recently with the inauguration of its new Jewish community centre and synagogue on the Jakobsplatz on 9 November 2006, the anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom. But the city has also been embroiled in an unpleasant controversy concerning the laying of *Stolpersteine* in memory of its former Jewish citizens deported by the Nazis, which ended with the city council removing those *Stolpersteine* that had been laid and banning the laying of any more.

This latter episode might for some evoke memories of Munich's 'brown' past, when its title as 'Hauptstadt der Bewegung' (capital city of the movement) celebrated it as the city where National Socialism was born and where Hitler first won mass support. Lion Feuchtwanger memorably conveyed the poisonous atmosphere of those years in his novel *Erfolg*. Munich was the site of Hitler's failed putsch of 9 November 1923, whose 'martyrs' were later enshrined in Nazi mythology (for a masterly recreation of the abjectly unheroic reality of the Beer Hall Putsch, see Richard Hughes's novel *The Fox in the Attic*). After 1933, the annual commemoration of the putsch in Munich became an important date in the Nazi calendar, and the city was singled out for the distinction of hosting iconic Nazi events like the Degenerate Art exhibition of 1937.

But Munich was hardly a true stronghold of Nazism. The Bavarian government of the 1920s, representing a traditionally right-wing, Catholic political constituency, extended a measure of protection to the Nazis, with the aim of enlisting them in its struggle against the more left-wing national governments in Berlin. For that reason, the head of the Bavarian government, von Kahr, formed a tactical alliance with Hitler in November 1923, only to abandon him in mid-putsch. This confirmed Hitler in his



New Munich synagogue

contempt for the traditional Bavarian right: on 30 June 1934, the Night of the Long Knives, Hitler, by then chancellor, took the opportunity to settle scores with von Kahr, whose body was found dismembered in a swamp near Dachau. Bavaria was the last German state to fall under Nazi control in 1933, as the Bavarian government, dominated by the Bayerische Volkspartei, the party of Bavarian Catholicism, continued to enjoy substantial support right up to its forcible dissolution.

Significantly, the real hotbeds of Nazism, like Julius Streicher's bailiwick in Franconia, were often in areas outside the core of old Bavaria. Catholic Bavaria was in some ways closer to Austria, where, after the Anschluss, Chancellor Schuschnigg and his Christian Social ministers, good Catholic right-wingers and stalwart advocates of Austrian autonomy, were imprisoned alongside the Nazis' other enemies. Rather as the post-war Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) took over the Christian Social mantle, Bavarian Catholicism resumed its political sway after Hitler; the CSU, the Bavarian wing of the conservative CDU, held power in Munich almost uninterruptedly. But the stoutly traditional CSU, even under strongman Franz Josef Strauß, never remotely resembled the Nazi Party, though an unrepentantly authoritarian and reactionary strain has rumbled on beneath the surface of Bavarian politics.

Munich has moved further from its 'brown' reputation than it is sometimes given credit for. Its modernisation and liberalisation were promoted by an influx of new industry, as firms like Siemens relocated their headquarters there from divided Berlin or, like BMW, built new high-technology factories there. Bavaria has indeed become the industrial success story among the German *Länder*. The city's infrastructure was thoroughly renovated for the 1972 Olympics, even if these are now remembered more for the murder of Israeli competitors by Arab terrorists.

Munich has become a relaxed and relatively liberal Central European city, prosperous and cultivated and with little sign of the antisemitism and extremism that disfigured it in the interwar years. Readers may be surprised to learn that as long ago as the 1950s it was the first German city to use the pages of *AJR Information* to issue an invitation to its former Jewish citizens to visit their native city as its guests.

My judgment (with due respect to Peter Jordan's letter in our December 2006 issue) is that Munich city council's ban on *Stolpersteine* has nothing to do with antisemitism, and everything to do with the objections to the *Stolpersteine* vocally expressed by the representatives of the local Jewish community, concerned at the prospect of Jewish names being trodden on by German feet. What could the city council do, faced with that attitude on the part of Frau Knobloch and her colleagues, other than bow to Jewish susceptibilities, given the extreme sensitivity of such issues in post-Holocaust Germany?

Munich's new synagogue exemplifies the institutional integration of the Jewish community into the city's life. It is, however, a matter for regret that the community did not see fit to invite the AJR to the inauguration of the community centre, even though our Association represents a very significant contingent of former Jewish citizens of Munich and their descendants.

Anthony Grenville

Two faces of a German city: Hamburg

Hamburg, the proud Hanseatic city looking out north-west towards Britain and the Atlantic, boasts a liberal, Protestant outlook as far removed in spirit from Catholic Munich, away to the south-east, as it is by geography. But Hamburg's reputation as a bastion of opposition to National Socialism has led it to brush the less savoury aspects of its past between 1933 and 1945 under the carpet, as if its vaunted liberalism absolved it of complicity in the persecution, expulsion and extermination of its Jewish citizens. Of all the major concentration camps in Germany, Neuengamme, outside Hamburg, is, typically enough, probably the least known.

That Nazism in Hamburg could be as inhuman as elsewhere was evident from the regime's earliest days, with the brutal treatment of its opponents that the Communist author Willi Bredel recorded in *Die Prüfung*, the semi-autobiographical account of his imprisonment in Fuhlsbüttel; where Hamburg's political prisoners were also Jews, as in the case of the murdered Social Democrat Fritz Solnitz, Bredel showed that they were subject to horrifying violence. After 1945, Hamburg chose to pursue the crimes committed in its institutions with notable lethargy: the authorities there showed little interest in prosecuting Willi Dusenschön, the man in charge when Bredel was incarcerated in Fuhlsbüttel, despite the seriousness of the offences for which he bore responsibility.

While Hamburg basked in the myth that Hitler had been unwelcome there, the city's Jews had experienced the contrary only too painfully. In an interview for the AJR's *Refugee Voices* project, Lily Crewe recalls vividly how she and her father were among the Jews ordered to leave Hamburg's opera

house when the Führer arrived, lest their racially inferior presence tarnish the performance. The writer Robert Muller was haunted by the memory of what had befallen the beloved grandmother who brought him up in Hamburg – excluded from the society of her native city, bereft of the protection of the law, and finally ordered to report to the 'Sammelplatz Moorweidenstraße 15', where in December 1941 she became another statistic in the 'Final Solution'.

The indomitable Lucille Eichengreen, who survived Auschwitz and Neuengamme before she was twenty, found herself back in Hamburg, her home city, in autumn 1944. Her description of the appallingly brutal treatment that the Jewish women in her work detail experienced there is to be found in an exceptionally valuable volume on Jewish life in the Grindel district of Hamburg: *Eine verschwundene Welt. Jüdisches Leben am Grindel*, edited by Ursula Wamser and Wilfried Weinke (zu Klampen Verlag, 2006, ISBN 3-934920-98-5, 34 euros).

Remarkably, the editors have succeeded in recreating the vanished world of Jewish life in the Grindel area, by weaving together documents, photographs, autobiographical accounts by former Jewish citizens of Hamburg, and testimonies by victims of the Nazis, many of whom did not survive. The extraordinary amount of detailed research that has gone into this book is the key to its success, for from the stories, painstakingly reconstructed, of often totally unknown Hamburg Jews emerges the overarching story of the city's Jewish community, from its days of confident ease to its destruction and the scattering of its survivors.

It is a pleasure to record the contributions by Hamburg-born Jews who escaped to Britain. These include Elizabeth Atkinson, née Flörsheim, who came via Holland and Palestine to settle in Cottingham, near Hull; Charlotte Stenham, née Cohn, who, as another *Refugee Voices* interview proves, still possesses the charm that she displayed as a small girl, biting into an apple in a pre-Hitler advertisement for fruit; and the late Paul Cohn, who spent seven years working in manual drudgery as a Kindertransportee, but rose to become Astor Professor of Mathematics at University College London. This splendid volume also contains, to take

but one example, a wealth of detail about Hamburg rabbis who came to Britain: Paul Holzer, Bruno Italiener, and Joseph Carlebach and his son Julius, to whom religion and scholarship in both countries owe so much.

Anthony Grenville

AJR on the BBC

The AJR has learned that the BBC documentary about the AJR Centre in Cleve Road will be broadcast on Thursday 1 March at 8.30 pm on BBC4.

The half-hour documentary is part of a six-part series entitled *The Waiting Room*.

Viewers should note that BBC4 is a digital channel and is available only on satellite or cable television.

Michael Newman

Hannah Anne Shearer MBE



Hannah Anne Shearer, a member of the AJR's West Midlands group, has been awarded the MBE for her work with the elderly in Birmingham. Anne is the third member of the group to have been honoured for her work, the other two being Paul Oppenheimer and Fred Austin.

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The pen – mightier than the sword?



It is most gratifying to know that the words I write in the Point of View column cause so much wrath among some of your readers. When I was a Fleet Street journalist my brief was to be controversial. Happily, I do not seem to have lost the knack! Six letters attacked me in your January issue. At least, this shows that what I write is read!

I am, however, appalled by some of the readers' letters. I don't mind being attacked personally, but it is their antipathy towards Israel that saddens me greatly. I may be accused of blind loyalty towards Israel but these readers seem totally blind to the fact that, had Israel existed in the 1930s, a great many of the six million who perished in the Holocaust would have survived. 'I shall be voicing exactly the same opinions – and highly critical opinions – about Israel ... wherever I go', boasts Peter Zander. Francis Steiner maintains that 'the prospect (or threat) of the creation of the State of Israel [was] at least one cause of the Shoah'. Charles Bieber accuses me of being 'both arrogant and presumptuous' for saying it is every Jew's duty to be loyal to Israel. E. Millman finds my assertion that the media attacks Israel unfairly 'totally unjust'. Alan S. Kaye says that 'Israel, militarily and politically, seems to be waist-deep in a swamp'. Lastly, Peter Henry Chapman can think of nothing cleverer to say than that 'every time I read a letter or an article by Peter Phillips it gets up my nose!' He too finds it objectionable that I believe it is every Jew's duty to be loyal to Israel. However, I now ask all these fellow members of the AJR one question. If antisemitism became rampant in Great Britain, as it did in Germany and Austria 70 years ago, to which country would they flee?

May I suggest that it would be to the Jewish homeland – Israel?

But hold on a minute! What's this I see in the February issue of the Journal? Kurt Schapira supports me. He states that Heinz Grünewald has no evidence to assert that your readers do not support Israel and maintains that, had Israel existed, our lost relatives might have been offered an unconditional haven and the Holocaust might never have happened. Then M. Storz accuses Peter Zander of being 'full of spite against Israel' and Francis Steiner of being 'Hitler's apologist' when he suggests that the Holocaust was all due to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem! Fred Hirsch confuses me. He sits on the fence (oh, those splinters, Fred!), maintaining that I am wrong in the narrow sense but right in the wider one. What does that mean? Bettine Le Beau (bless her!) was hurt by the critical letters regarding my remarks on Israel. As she rightly says, 'isn't it comforting to feel that our genetic country is always there to receive us with open arms?' Francis Deutsch agrees with me that 'Jews are a race', as well, of course, that Judaism is a religion. Frank Bright, like Kurt Schapira, believes that 'A state of Israel would have saved us then [during the Second World War]'. Clare Parker is certainly not a fan of Peter Zander's views, while Janos Fisher would have him excommunicated along with members of Neturei Karta! Victor Ross wonders whether Peter Zander denies the Holocaust.

As Victor Meldrew would have said: 'I cannot believe it.' Am I losing my touch after all? A whole series of letters backing my opinions on Israel!! Perhaps the majority of *AJR Journal* readers are not such a bad lot after all.

Peter Phillips

Carl L. Flesch is a longstanding member of the AJR who has written a number of books that will be of interest to many members: *And Do You Also Play the Violin?* about the musical world of his father, the classical violinist; *Where Do You Come From?* which deals with the early days in this country of refugees from Hitler's Germany; and *Who's Not Who*, his most recent book, an engaging collection of essays dealing with controversial questions of the day. For extracts and details of how to obtain them, please visit

www.carlflesch.co.uk or call 0117 9241766

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AJR Holocaust Memorial Day service at Belsize Square Synagogue, London
(see story on page 16)

Left:
Rolf Weinberg
and Ruth Young

Right: Rabbi
Rodney Mariner

Photos: NIGEL SUTTON



Outstanding speakers at Sussex campus

Vice Chancellor Professor Alasdair Smith welcomed a large number of students, members of staff and local residents to the University of Sussex's special programme for Holocaust Memorial Day. The event was organised by Diana Franklin and Chana Moshenska of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, the Centre's newly installed Director, Dr Christian Wiese, and sponsored by the AJR.

Janina Fischler Martinho spoke with dignity of her experiences as a child in the Cracow ghetto. Her family lived modestly. When the Germans occupied Cracow the Jews became 'Germany's prime targets'. Personal possessions were sold for basic sustenance and fuel in the bitter winter. In December 1940 the Jews were confined to a ghetto. Janina managed to slip out of the ghetto to trade and buy food for the family.

In May 1942 the ghetto was surrounded by the SS. An *Aktion* for 'resettlement' in the east lasted eight days in a heat wave. Members of Janina's family were among the 10,000 sent to an extermination camp.

As the ghetto was reduced in size, Janina and her brother Joseph lived with cousins, nine in a small room. During the *Aktion* of 27-28 October, when 6,000 were trucked to Plaszow concentration camp, Joseph managed to rescue his sister. Janina was liberated by the Russians in January 1945 from a village near Cracow. The following year she left for Edinburgh on the offer of a free place at a good school. Later she earned a university degree, married and has her own family.

Helen Bamber OBE, founder of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Vic-

tims of Torture, grew up in a working-class family in north London. She faced up to violent racism and antisemitism in school and on the streets. A listener to German radio, Helen's father warned of the oncoming war and helped refugees to leave Nazi Germany. Most of their family were killed at Maidanek, and in 1945 Helen volunteered for relief work in Bergen-Belsen.

In 1947 Helen was asked to take care of a group of Jewish child survivors settled in Britain; they became known as the 'Boys'. Holocaust survivors, unable to return to their countries of origin, known as 'Displaced Persons' (DPs) in the 1940s, needed to find a meaning for everyday life. In 2005 Helen Bamber established the foundation which bears her name. 'We have to reclaim the past for the people who lost it', she said.

Ronald Channing

'Vitaly relevant for our own times': Holocaust Memorial Day, Newcastle

Speaking at the national Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony in Newcastle, Ruth Kelly MP noted that despite 62 years passing since the liberation of Auschwitz, the Holocaust remained 'vitaly relevant for our own times'.

Award-winning actor Henry Goodman began and concluded proceedings with readings of works by Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi and the 1,000 guests at Newcastle's Theatre Royal saw a poignant mix of speeches and presentations. 'Chaim's Story' focused on the experiences of AJR Newcastle member Chaim Nagelsztajn, who survived incarceration in Auschwitz. He and Zimbabwean refugee Tutu Manyena lit the Memorial Flame at the conclusion of the ceremony.

The programme featured an interview with a survivor of the genocide in Dafur, which included footage of the persecution suffered by some 2.5 million Sudanese. Guests also saw the film *The Nazi Persecution of the Roma People*,

which chronicled a study trip by members of Newcastle's Czech Roma community to the former Nazi concentration camps in the Czech Republic.

As well as a range of musical performances reflecting on the Holocaust and the Bosnian conflict, the audience heard from Dr Tom Shakespeare on 'The Nazi Persecution of Disabled People' and from Newcastle Councillor Sir Jeremy Beecham on the social integration programmes in the city.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks reminded the audience that 'At the heart of evil is dislike of the unlike, the fear of difference, the belief that because you are not like me, you are a threat to me.'

Earlier in the day, visitors gathered at Newcastle's Civic Centre, taking the opportunity to read information displayed on exhibition stands. The AJR boards included excerpts from the Holocaust Memorial Book written by Newcastle AJR members in memory of relatives who

perished in the Holocaust as well as contemporary documents and testimonies highlighting the contribution to Tyneside made by Jewish refugees who fled Nazi persecution.

Guests were addressed by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Councillor Diane Packham, and Councillor John Shipley OBE, Leader of Newcastle City Council, while Dr Stephen Smith MBE, Chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, spoke about 'The Dignity of Difference'.

In the previous week the AJR was represented at a ceremony in London's City Hall to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. AJR member and Auschwitz survivor Trude Levi spoke about her experiences in the Holocaust and guests heard from London Assembly Chairman Brian Coleman, Rabbi Tony Bayfield and Helen Bamber OBE as well as a reading from Mayor of London Ken Livingstone.

Michael Newman

Out of love

I have fallen out of love with the English. Not overnight of course – it's been coming a long time. Our affair started as a forced marriage, neither side knowing what it was in for. I arrived in England as a teenager, not by choice but because England would have me. Gratitude put me on my best behaviour: I had been saved and I would love my saviour. Three early encounters won me over. I was taken to a posh club and allowed my first breath of all-male privilege. Next, an English

It was a world I didn't know existed, but I was determined to become part of it, to become one of 'them'

acquaintance, having just gone to Cambridge, invited me to spend a day in Magdalene College. I was intoxicated by the autumnal harmony of stone and nature as we walked among the deer and planned to write a masterpiece. Then my mother, to top it all, arranged for me to join a county family on a shooting holiday in Yorkshire, where I was taught a new kind of ritual slaughter. I drank in everything: the clothes, the accents, the smell of the gun room, the tipping of the beaters, the brace of pheasants put in the cars of the departing guests. It was a world I didn't know existed, but I was determined to become part of it, to become one of 'them'.

The war turned everything on its head. No debutante balls, no shooting parties, internment followed by army service instead. I had a 'good war', as the saying went, but came back to nothing. No job, no money, no classy friends. Lacking a foothold in society, I decided to write a love letter to the English. It appeared between hard covers under the title *Basic British* – a fair success, but nothing to compare with Mike's *How To Be An Alien*. My subject was, of course, how not to be an alien.

In spite of having published the textbook, I made little progress towards becoming a textbook Englishman. The people I mixed with socially were refugees

like myself. We resolutely spoke English among ourselves, derived our opinions from the *New Statesman and Nation*, and anxiously waited for our naturalisation papers to come through. Marrying an English girl did not advance my prospects; nor did an ill-judged change of name. She thought us foreigners much more interesting and did not supply the oxygen breathed by the upper classes.

I suppose my eyes were opened by members of my family who had emigrated to America. When they asked me to visit them, I found them loud and cheerful, at ease with their rasping Kissinger accents and foreign ways. Not that they considered themselves foreign: I did who shushed them on behalf of the Ur-Americans of my imagination, just as I felt the need to protect the English from my foreign self until assimilation would make me part of the furniture.

For my relatives, the issue of assimilation never arose. They were Americans from the day they set foot there, becoming an instant ingredient in the American

Marrying an English girl didn't advance my prospects; nor did an ill-judged change of name. She thought us foreigners much more interesting and didn't supply the oxygen breathed by the upper classes

stockpot, adding their flavour even as they were being flavoured. Their strange names marked them out as the genuine article; my adopted name underlined my alien ambitions.

The melting-pot effect is not only comforting – it is highly productive. Jews flourish in it. In the arts in general, in literature and entertainment in particular. Compare a Bellow, a Mailer, a Roth with the meagre contribution of Jews to twentieth-century literature in England. It is as if they were leached and coarsened

by the steady drizzle of antisemitism. There are, of course, a few prominent achievers, but without collective impact. There is no effective Jewish lobby. In America, where

For if it were not for that regular fix of antisemitism, a secular Jew such as I might develop a serious identity problem. Antisemitism defines me in the way that the space enclosing a sculpture defines its shape

there is no shortage of antisemites, the Jewish lobby speaks with a powerful voice.

Bit by bit the blinkers came off. I learnt to distinguish between the genuine article and the show of tolerance that was indifference under another name. I saw through the double bluff of self-deprecation, the arrogance of learning worn lightly, the ice-cold heart behind good manners, and the many guises adopted by antipathy towards Jews – political, religious, social, competitive – rampant above all in my natural habitat, the educated middle class. I had to admit it: my quest was hopeless. And so love died.

Where does this leave the spurned lover? With another reason to be grateful to his hosts. For if it were not for that regular fix of antisemitism, a secular Jew such as I might develop a serious identity problem. Antisemitism defines me in the way that the space enclosing a sculpture defines its shape, mine being that of a cosmopolitan Jew who enjoys the twin blessings of a British passport and a time-share in the glories of the English language.

Victor Ross

The author was born in Vienna and educated in Austria, Germany, France and England. He spent his working life in advertising, journalism and publishing. In 1963 he was responsible for starting the Thank-You Britain Fund, later taken over by the AJR.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

FAITH SCHOOLS: FOR AND AGAINST

Sir – I heartily deplore the divisive effect on society of single-faith schools. I do not discount the excellent academic education many such schools provide. However, academic excellence alone in the early formative years cannot produce a 'rounded' person and, to the contrary, produces many narrow-minded and bigoted people. Studying, playing, discussing and debating together with peers of different faiths is, in my opinion, more important and more 'educational'. Without this 'breadth' of education, our young are ill-prepared for the reality of adult life.

Furthermore, I consider that the only hope of a future for the human race lies in people learning at school through dialogue with their peers of different cultures. There is, currently, a dangerous level of violence between peoples of different cultures/religions. Violence inevitably generates resentment and breeds more violence. Only understanding and dialogue can hope to mend such rifts.

Religious organisations could, and should, take responsibility for religious education out of the schools system. Giving up Jewish schools – difficult as that would undoubtedly be – would certainly be a good investment for the future as long as all single-faith schools vanished. So, thank you Peter Phillips for opening up this emotionally charged topic.

*Ruth Barnett, Clinical Director,
Raphael Jewish Counselling Service
London NW6*

Sir – Peter Phillips cites his educational experience at a 'non-faith' school. But was it really a 'non-faith' school? Of course not – it was a Christian school. However, he was happy with that situation.

My experience was quite the opposite. As a young child evacuated to a small village during the war, I attended the local primary school. While I was treated sympathetically as a Jewish refugee from Nazism, this did not prevent me from having to learn the New Testament or from attending hymn-singing assemblies. The situation was the same at all the village schools I attended during the war and my friends assured me that I would go to hell if I didn't believe in Jesus.

My relief when, after the war and on our return to London, my parents enrolled me in a Jewish school was immeasurable. Now, I was spared from hymn and carol-singing and, instead of having to refuse to act in the nativity play, I could participate in the Purim play and go to Chanukah parties.

It is not simply a matter of Jewish education: it is also a question of self-respect.

*Thea Valman
Tvalman@aol.com*

Sir – When the late Chief Rabbi Jakobovits was inducted in 1967 the tenor of his address was 'Education, education, education'. Similar to Tony Blair's aim some years later. Rabbi Jakobovits wanted to prevent the disappearance of Anglo-Jewry, which was rapidly declining due to assimilation and, in particular, intermarriage. The only way to prevent this was to open more Jewish faith schools and, in a way, he was successful. It is only through education in Jewish schools that our children can imbibe the values of our faith: the home together with the synagogue is insufficient.

All my four children went to Jewish schools and Jewish youth clubs. Perhaps the schools and clubs did the job too well and they all went to Israel.

Peter Phillips describes himself as a racial Jew. The whole idea is foreign to Jewish thought. The Nazis defined us as a race but we prefer our definition from the Bible: 'A Kingdom of Priests and a wholly nation' (Exodus 19:6).

Jews are a tiny minority here. Consequently, assimilation is a real probability. Peter Phillips was presumably born in Germany and had such a strong feeling of identity that he joined the Jewish Society at Oxford and married a nice Jewish girl. But what about his children and grandchildren? How can such a sense be instilled in them if not by education? Just being able to read Hebrew is hardly sufficient. What about being familiar with the Hebrew language, the Bible and its development such as the Talmud, Jewish history and Jewish philosophy? This can only be taught in Jewish schools together with secular subjects.

Jewish schools need not be divisive: extra-curricular activities can make pupils aware of other faiths. Statistics show that

the rate of intermarriage among those who went to Jewish schools is much lower than among those who went to ordinary schools and had little or no Jewish education.

*Max Sulzbacher
London NW11*

'ISRAEL-BASHING CORRESPONDENCE'

Sir – As a fairly recent member of the AJR, I was dismayed to find again a collection of Israel-bashing correspondence in your otherwise excellent journal. I would have expected better of what is, after all, a periodical encompassing Kindertransport and Holocaust survivors.

Peter Zander's vitriolic attack is particularly distasteful. He smugly declares that he has no need for a third nationality – pray God that his grandchildren won't need it one day. Or let him tell it to those who found a safe haven in a Jewish homeland when they had nowhere else to go. Actually, Israel is far better off without the likes of him, who finds it necessary to go to Berlin of all places – to the very heart of the people who threw him out – to malign his fellow Jews.

Hitler did not, at first, intend to annihilate the Jews – he simply wanted them out. However, after the fiasco of the Evian and Bermuda conferences, when it became clear that no country wanted them, it gave Hitler *carte blanche* to go ahead with the 'Final Solution'. He said at one of his famed 'table talks' that the world would be grateful to him for ridding Europe of its Jews. Had there been a Jewish state just a few years earlier, there would have been no Holocaust.

Rubin Katz, London NW11

BBC BIAS CHALLENGE

Sir: Re Inge Trott's challenge with regard to BBC bias (February), I am constantly bombarded by the BBC with information about the sufferings of the Palestinians. No doubt they suffer for various reasons, but not all the sufferings are caused by the Israel/Palestinian conflict. But the BBC rarely devotes time to what goes on in regions of Israel affected by Palestinian mortars. Only once do I remember hearing 'From Our Own Correspondent' describing the result of Palestinian bombs fired from Gaza on the homes and schools of Israeli citizens. One particular correspondent who always presented events from the Palestinian side was Orla Guerin.

Alex Lawrence, Marlow

ARE JEWS A RACE?

Sir – Many of your readers seem to agonise over the question whether the Jews are a race. Whenever I receive a hospital submission form, I am asked about my racial details. I simply tick the box 'White European' and leave it at that.

Jack Lee, London N11

THERESIENSTADT

Sir – In his recent article (December), Anthony Grenville refers to Theresienstadt as a ghetto and suggests that a distinction needs to be made between this and a concentration camp. This suggestion is misleading.

In ghettos families would live together in private homes, prepare their own food, and be free to leave the ghetto each day. None of this was the case in Theresienstadt. The inmates were prisoners, sleeping in barrack rooms on bunks, several dozen people to a room; food, which typically consisted of soup made of potato peelings plus a ration of bread, was prepared in camp kitchens. There was malnutrition, forced labour and severe punishment, only the most extreme of which took place in the Kleine Festung, and constant fear of deportation lists for Auschwitz.

The error concerning the nature of Theresienstadt seems to arise from the Nazi film and the Red Cross inspection of 1943. These were pieces of misinformation and it should be remembered that film sets can be constructed to show what the makers want to show. As for the famous Red Cross inspection, it too was a complete fraud. At the age of eight, I was one of a line of children presented to the inspectors (who were from the German Red Cross, not the Swiss). The officer in charge of us told us that if spoken to during the inspection we should call him uncle and say we had sardines for lunch. The one statement was as false as the other. Various 'facilities', one of which was a children's playground, were constructed for the inspectors to see and were immediately dismantled after the inspection and never used.

G. J. Tyrrell, geotyr@aol.com

It was not at all my intention to distinguish between Terezin and a concentration camp. I wanted to distinguish between the Small Fortress, which was a prison, and the main body of Terezin, which was part of the town of that name, sealed off as a ghetto by the Nazis and now inhabited again by townspeople. I do not know what else one can call this but a 'ghetto'. All the publicity material available at Terezin refers to it as such: the pamphlet published by the Terezin Memorial is headed 'Terezin Ghetto', the museum is called the 'Ghetto Museum', and so on. Incidentally, it is completely erroneous to suggest that Jews in Nazi ghettos were free to leave them every night, as anyone who is the least bit familiar with conditions in the Warsaw Ghetto, for example, will know (Anthony Grenville).

FRIGHTENING VISION OF A FUTURE BRITAIN

Sir – I was pleased to see Ronald Channing's apt reference to the book *Londonistan* (January). I assumed the political correctness brigade would, sooner or later, exert pressure to ban it from further printing, like Salman

Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. I have always admired Melanie Phillip's outspoken articles in the press and her visions of a future Britain are truly frightening – particularly as far as Britain's Jewry is concerned. Melanie Phillips is no Jeremiah but a realist and the present status-quo attitude by past and present governments reeks of appeasement.

Anthony Goldsmith, Wembley, Middx

'DISGRACEFUL ROCK OPERA'

Sir – 'The show has great panache', writes Gloria Tessler in her review (December 2006) of *Caroline, Or Change* at the Lyttleton Theatre. She must have seen a completely different production to the one I endured. I found it a very nasty, antisemitic work with no artistic value whatsoever.

This disgraceful rock opera was performed on the afternoon I attended to an audience comprising many young Afro-Caribbean schoolchildren. When Caroline, the 'star' of this piece, the Afro-American servant, tells the young Jewish boy 'When you die you will go to hell!', there was enthusiastic clapping from some of this young audience.

Should the Board of Deputies not be protecting our small community from this, particularly at a time of growing antisemitic incidents?

M. Ladenheim, Surbiton, Surrey

HANDS-ON LADY

Sir – My mother was a resident at Heinrich Stahl House while Dorli Neale (Profile, January) was matron and I would like to pay tribute to the wonderful qualities she brought to the job. Warm, understanding and always available, she kept a motherly eye on all residents, not least in the dining room. The term 'hands-on' might have been invented for her.

Stella Curzon, Ruislip, Middx

AJR LIKE A MOTHER

Sir – I have been a member since 1947 and find all the services – cultural and otherwise – invaluable to me. AJR is like a mother who watches over us. Thanks for all the wonderful work you are doing.

Mrs C. Haar, London NW8

ENTERTAINMENT AT ITS BEST

Sir – I am a member of the local AJR group and I am writing to commend you on the speakers we have had recently. Our most recent speaker was George Layton. He was brilliant. He read an excerpt from his book *The Trick and Other Stories*, which to me was entertainment at its best.

Other speakers who come to mind are Lynn Fisler, a healer, and Katharina Hübschmann from the Wiener Library. Thank you again for sending us such interesting speakers. Keep up the good work.

David Kutner
Westcliff-on-Sea

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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The political turbulence of eighteenth-century Europe, with the overthrow of the French monarchy and its eventual reinstatement after the fall of Napoleon, is the backdrop to the **Royal Academy's** current exhibition, **Citizens and Kings: Portraits in the Age of Revolution, 1760-1830**. As crowned heads rolled in France, Europe, Britain and America were caught in the turbulence of war, a clinically insane king, George III, was deposed, and the rising bourgeoisie challenged traditional



Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Marat 1793*. Oil on canvas. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels

concepts of absolute monarchy with radical new ideas.

This ushered in the age of the Enlightenment and artists like **Reynolds, Ingres, Goya, David** and **Delacroix** were on hand to depict what was arguably the greatest intellectual rethink since the Reformation.

But only one painting in this extremely dense exhibition conveys any sense of the French Revolution. This is *The Death of Marat*, murdered in his bath by Charlotte Corday. The iconography in this painting, by **Jacques-Louis David**, recalls Christ taken down from the cross, symbolic of the quasi-religious status revolutionaries were accorded. Even though the French

Revolution was secular in its bloody-mindedness, it offered high-minded ideals, like the pursuit of truth. There are many formal and official portraits, rulers in coronation robes, statesmen philosophers and – perhaps most telling – the Ingres portrait of an enthroned Napoleon, with all the trappings of power, more flamboyant than any of the royals the Revolution destroyed.

The Enlightenment's new middle class saw children differently too. Family portraits by **Romney** and **Gainsborough** abandoned the dynastic bloodline in favour of the child within a loving family.

A classical revival in portraiture was soon replaced by Romanticism and Realism. Typical of this are **Pajou's** busts of architect Charles de Wailly and his wife looking intimately at each other. The exhibition continues until 20 April.

'The photograph fulfils my deep need to stop things from disappearing', says **Dorothy Boehm**, whose vision at the age of 83 remains fresh, humorous and original. **Ambiguous Realities**, at the **Ben Uri**, tells the story of her grasp of the fleeting scene, its humour and quality of endurance. Boehm left her childhood in Lithuania, when she came to England as a refugee from Nazism in 1939, and her innovative work implies a strong grasp of loss, fear and sudden change. She has a feeling for colour and texture, for the dappled effect of light and shadow, and for

her cubic, near-architectural pieces, which create a semi-abstract effect. Camden Town is famous for its street effects: Boehm, here at her quirkiest, captures a massive trainer suspended from a building and gesticulating dummies.

Wolf Suschitzky was a refugee from what he terms 'Austro-Fascism'. Ironically, it is the **Austrian Cultural Forum** which features the black-and-white images which show him to be a cameraman at heart. He has an eye for mood and movement, the misty haze of a winter morning, or the images seen in a wet pavement at night as a girl runs away. Symbolism does not elude him either, for instance in his shot of a monkey at the feet of a huge Buddha.

REVIEWS

The loathsome Louis Darquier BAD FAITH: A FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF FAMILY AND FATHERLAND

by Carmen Calill

Jonathan Cape, 2007, 576 pp. £20

What do a journalist born in Australia, the founder of the Virago company, a London psychotherapist and the Frenchman in charge of deportation during the Nazi occupation of France have in common? Answer: Carmen Calill is the journalist and founder of the *Virago Press* who sought help from a psychotherapist, Anne Darquier, the abandoned daughter of Louis Darquier and his Australian wife Myrtle Jones. The suicide of Anne Darquier started Calill off on a trail which became a detailed account of the behaviour of the French towards their Jewish population both between the wars and during the Nazi occupation.

The villain of the piece is Louis Darquier. Born into a respectable bourgeois family in Cahors, south-west France, he became its black sheep. Having been discharged from the army with a poor record in the First World War, he failed to apply himself to any worthwhile profession. He and his alcoholic wife lived by scrounging money from his successful brother René. Louis and Myrtle lived a fantasy life as Baron and Baroness de Pellepoix, moving from hotel to hotel as their funds ran out. Their daughter Anne, who was taken to England and fostered by an English 'nanny', rarely saw her parents.

The German occupation provided Louis with his big opportunity to turn his already savage antisemitism into a tool for his promotion. Through his anti-Jewish pamphlets he came to the attention of the Nazis, who bankrolled his activities as a member of the Commission for Jewish Affairs. After the repeal of the Marchandau law, which prohibited attacks on people on religious or ethnic grounds, any Jew was fair game.

Calill gives a blow-by-blow account of how the persecution developed. At first, it was so-called foreign Jews who were deported, then French citizens and, finally, even the sick, pregnant

women and young children were not spared. The notorious camps at Gurs, Pithiviers and Drancy served as staging-posts for Auschwitz. The round-up of Jews held under terrible conditions in the Vel'd'Hiv was achieved with the help of 9,000 French policemen and yielded over 5,000 women and 4,000 children. Where the quotas demanded by the Nazis involved a shortfall, children were added in to make up the numbers. It is a sorry tale of greed – the Jews were stripped of all their assets – corruption and ruthlessness. In all this, the Catholic bishops kept up their traditional antisemitism and made no protest. It has to be said, however, that some of the lower echelons of the Church opened their doors to children and other refugees.

And after the war what happened to Darquier, the mountebank who had used his fascism and antisemitism to make his way in the world? He lived his life undisturbed in Spain, where he was allowed to settle by the Franco government.

This is a big book. Packed with information, it is a must for anyone who wants to know what happened in France in these crucial years. Finally, there are many reproductions of cartoons and pamphlets vilifying Jews which have to be seen to be believed.

Martha Blend

A long book but a good read **MY DARLING DIARY VOLUME TWO:** **THE GIRL IN AND OUT OF LOVE,** **OXFORD 1944-1950**

by **Ingrid Jacoby**

Penzance: United Writers Publications Ltd, 2006, 412pp., £18.95

Ingrid Jacoby's first published diary dealt with her arrival in Britain under the Kindertransport movement at the age of 12 and subsequent life through to 1944. It attracted the attention of programmes such as BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* and *Message to Myself*, with one reviewer even comparing it with that of Anne Frank.

Not having read volume one, it took me a while to get into this second diary, but soon I became avidly interested in Ingrid Jacoby's love and working lives. Considering the risk of unwanted pregnancy, I think she was rather brave, but a little naïve too. Her experiences with virginal (and not so virginal) young

men make for cringing reading and the all too familiar 'When I want him he doesn't want me' syndrome is alive and well.

An attractive, intelligent young woman, Ingrid endures an unhappy emotional life heavily affected by the wartime disappearance in Vienna of her mother and grandmother, who are presumed dead. Ingrid is trying to discover their fate. Her father comes across as rather unsympathetic. When she tells him she fancies obtaining some ladies' slacks to wear, he replies that 'slacks are only for tall slim blonde women with perfect figures'. And he does not appear to share much of his prosperity with Ingrid and her elder sister Putz, who joined her in Oxford.

It's a world of chilly bed-sitting rooms, eating meals off trays and listening to the wireless, sitting round a friend's fire listening to records of classical music, or visits to concerts, theatre, cinema and friends. And lots of tea. Although Ingrid supplements her salary by babysitting and typing, she seems to manage to get out a lot. Maybe this is because there is no television yet, but people do seem to be much more sociable and often rather kind. She does experience some xenophobia in her first job, being told that 'maybe that is how you do things in your country' and she keeps quiet about being Jewish, regarding it as something she didn't choose but was thrust upon her.

Ingrid misses Falmouth, where she had been at school after arriving on the Kindertransport, but she manages annual visits there. She is able to get jobs quite easily, moving from the Central Library to Wolsey Hall, then to Parkers' bookshop, where she has a complicated relationship with her married boss, WB. Even when she walks out of that job after a blazing row with him, she falls on her feet with a new job in a bookshop. I wondered if her later proclivity for married men was a result of her unhappy relationship with her father. This is particularly so in the case of WB, who is more of a friend than a lover, although she does comment some time later that she finds married men 'delicious'. It's a long book at 412 pages, but a good read, in spite of the many lists of people Ingrid knows and meets. Don't bother to try and keep up.

Laraine Feldman

CINEMA

Variations on a theme of betrayal

BLACK BOOK

directed by **Paul Verhoeven**

with **Carice van Houten**

On general release

Multifaceted may be an understatement in describing this film, made by Dutch director Paul Verhoeven on his return from 20 years in Hollywood. While the plot focuses on the fate of the Jewish singer Rachel Stein, after she sees her family mown down by Nazi gunfire during an attempted escape by boat to the liberated south of the country, it is the moral dilemmas she confronts, themselves a microcosm of the film's powerful moral complexity, which are most significant.

On one level, this is reflected in Rachel's experiences in the Dutch resistance, where she becomes a blonde and takes on the alias Ellis de Vries, and her entry, by virtue of her feminine charms, into the exclusive circle of the local Gestapo and the bed of SD officer Ludwig Muntze. This provides Verhoeven, who made *Basic Instinct*, with the opportunity to flaunt his leading lady's anatomy with scenes of unusual intimacy in addition to the invariable sexual encounters. While some might take issue with this seemingly inappropriate Hollywood-style distraction, the relationship between Rachel and the sensitive, widowed Muntze is one of genuine feeling, on a par with the love of resistance leader Gerben Kuipers for his son, whose capture, with other resistance fighters, by the Gestapo is the trigger for Rachel's Mata Hari-like incursion into the bosom of the enemy.

These, rarely seen, human qualities serve as a powerful foil to the endless series of betrayals, which dominate the film. Indeed, there could be no more fitting subtitle than 'Variations on a Theme of Betrayal'. Verhoeven skilfully preserves the suspense and shock characteristic of a thriller/whodunit, as one traitor after another is outed. Ironically, of course, it is Rachel who is viewed as the traitor *par excellence* and brutally tormented by both sides, and it is her fortuitous discovery of the 'black book' listing all the Dutch

continued on page 10

Arts and Events Diary – March

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

To Thur 29 March *The Last Goodbye* The story of the Kindertransport Exhibition at the Jewish Museum, Finchley, tel 020 8349 1143

To Thur 29 March *350 Years of Anglo-Jewry: South African Connections* Exhibition at the Jewish Museum, Finchley, tel 020 8349 1143

To Sun 18 March *Antony Sher: A Cast of Characters* Exhibition featuring a series of self-portraits Family portraits and a collection of his book illustrations also on display. London Jewish Cultural Centre tel 020 8457 5000

Mon 5 March Prof Leon Yudkin, 'The Prague Circle: German Literature in Prague in the First Half of the 20th Century' Club 43

Wed 7 Prof Tony Kushner (University of Southampton), 'Refugees – Now and Then' Annual lecture, Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, University of London. Senate House, University of London, Room ST 274/275 (Stewart House Wing), 6.00 pm

Thur 8 European Voices: Eva Menasse Venue: Austrian Cultural Forum, London SW7, 7.30 pm. Tel London Jewish Cultural Centre on 020 8457 5000

Mon 12 Ken Baldry, 'Richard Wagner: A New Concept of Opera' Club 43

Tues 13 Prof Ulrich Herbert, 'The Nazi Concentrations: Formation, Development and Conceptualization' Wiener Library, 7.00 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247

Mon 19 Dr Gwen Williams, 'Notable Writers of Detective Novels in the 19th and 20th Centuries' Club 43

Wed 21 Women's Awareness Programme. Old Age is a Marathon: The Prevention and Management of Frailty. Baroness Julia Neuberger and Jackie Morris in Conversation London Jewish Cultural Centre 7.30 pm tel 020 8457 5000

Mon 26 Geoffrey Ben-Nathan, 'Antisemitism, the Greatest Hatred in German History: Whys and Wherefores' Club 43

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

REVIEWS *continued from page 9*

collaborators, which serves, ultimately, to vindicate her.

There are a number of vividly effective set-piece scenes: the shooting of the treasure-laden Jews and the rapacious looting of their spoils, under the aegis of Muntze's nemesis in the Gestapo, Gunther Franken; the thwarted attempt to free the captured resistance fighters; and, in contrast, the gaudy festivity of Nazi celebrations, where Rachel encounters Franken's current *paramour*, Ronnie, the proverbial tart with the heart of gold. Most shocking, perhaps, are the scenes of liberation, where presumed collaborators are subjected to Nazi-style vilification.

In a well-acted film, the virtuoso

performance of young Dutch actress Carice van Houten as Rachel stands out. Overall, Verhoeven should be saluted for his courage in exposing the myth of the supposedly 'heroic' Dutch resistance, a myth to which I, despite extensive reading of books on the Holocaust era, had, until then, subscribed.

Emma Klein

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Letter from Israel

Only in Israel

Sometimes events in Israel annoy or amuse one. Sometimes one is left speechless. And sometimes all one can do is shake one's head and say 'Only in Israel!'

A trip to Eilat in winter is always a delight. If the occasion is a music festival with the Kirov Orchestra and choir and their conductor, Valery Gergelyev, how can one resist? Since the package included the hotel, the concerts and the flights there and back, we decided to leave our car at the airport. The flight takes only half an hour. It would make a refreshing change, cut travelling time, and enable us to reach our destination without enduring the four-hour car journey. Or so we thought.

Finally our departure was announced, accompanied by an explanation – not an apology – for the delay. The pilot's wife had just given birth and a replacement had had to be found.

Poor signposting meant that we missed the turning and spent half an hour touring the huge new airport till we reached our terminal. The airport was crowded with passengers eager to be the first to board the plane, but that's par for the course in Israel.

Once everyone was on the plane and strapped in, crying children included, the plane sat on the runway for almost an hour. Finally our departure was announced, accompanied by an explanation – not an apology – for the delay. The pilot's wife had just given birth and a replacement had had to be found.

If the pilot herself had been pregnant we would have understood. Most women of my generation gave birth without a husband beside us anyway, and to leave a plane full of passengers on a runway for an hour, when the whole flight takes just half an hour, seemed an exaggerated instance of the 'Only in Israel!' syndrome. Needless to say, by the time we reached our destination we were more exhausted than ever.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

PROFILE

Gerda Mayer

Hans Albrecht A kind heart



I met Hans Albrecht again after many years at a Kindertransport reunion. I was sitting outside a cafeteria and saw a man at another table silently mouthing something at me. I went across. 'Stoatley Rough!', he said.

Stoatley Rough it was indeed. The school founded for refugee children (though not exclusively so) set on a magical wooded incline between Haslemere and Hindhead.

But had I remembered Hans Albrecht? The age gap between a 16-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy is vast. Our paths had crossed only briefly. Certainly I had been aware that Hans Albrecht had had a handicap. He told me about it at this reunion. Indeed, he had now come with a carer. He had suffered a childhood illness and his parents had been told by his doctor that he would never fully recover.

He remembered too our headmistress, Dr Hilde Lion. One of the great strengths of the school had been that the children were known in the round. 'Hans Albrecht', Dr Lion had once said in his presence, 'is not academic but he has a kind heart.' It was touching that a man of near-70 should remember and treasure this compliment.

Later, I found myself with his companion-carer queuing in the cafeteria, Hans Albrecht still nursing a lemonade outside. 'What a dear man!', I exclaimed (or something like that).

'Yes, there isn't a mean bone in his body.'

This was the beginning of a friendship with Hans Albrecht. Usually he prefers phoning to writing but, when he does write, his English is impeccable. He knows his 'who' from his 'whom' – which *The Times* sometimes does not!

Hans is full of surprises. He is fond of books, especially on Jewish subjects, and, I believe, he reads both English and German. Once, remembering my *Hachsharah* days, I hummed a tune, the Hebrew words of which, even after a year and a half there, I had never mastered. However, Hans not only knew the words but was able to translate them!

Hans has now told his 'life story' to Katherine Leinius, a volunteer from Kassel, who works for Action Reconciliation for Peace, and this has been published by the Sussex Tikvah with a most affectionate tribute from its honorary secretary, Arthur Oppenheimer. In this, he quotes from an article written by Hans himself for the *Sussex Jewish News*. Hans movingly

describes how a good friend of his mother, a school teacher by the name of Theresa Postl, insisted on openly befriending her when it had become unwise for non-Jews to do so. Hans's mother warned Theresa that sitting next to a Jew on the tram might cost her her job. Theresa replied: 'I would rather lose my job than my faith in you.'

Hans movingly describes how a good friend of his mother, a school teacher by the name of Theresa Postl, insisted on openly befriending her when it had become unwise for non-Jews to do so. Hans's mother warned Theresa that sitting next to a Jew on the tram might cost her her job.

Theresa replied: 'I would rather lose my job than my faith in you.'

In his autobiography too, Hans remembers those who stayed loyal to their Jewish friends.

Born in Linz, Hans Albrecht came to England with the Kindertransport; fortunately his parents came over too. He seems to have had a very unsettled life: 'I lived for three weeks in Brighton with a family but they sent me away, first because I was mentally handicapped and second because my father was a doctor of law and not of medicine.' One can only guess what happened. An eight-year-old, hardly conversant with English, mentions that his father is a 'Herr Doktor'. Perhaps his hosts explained that here lawyers are not given this title. And he feels snubbed. Altogether, there is some confusion about family background.

From Brighton to Margate, from Margate to Worthing, from there to North Wales. Then on to the English Lake District, to Harpenden, to Cophthorne, to Haslemere (our school) and so forth.

His cousin too, also a Kindertransportee, seems to have had an unsettled time. So, of course, did many of us. The whole world was in upheaval. But Hans Albrecht seems to have had a particularly difficult time. He tells it all laconically and without self-pity. Sometimes he simply, baldly, states that he was unhappy. He had spent four years in a Rudolf Steiner home, where 'I was very unhappy because I was lost completely to Judaism'.

His religion seems to have meant a great deal to him. When once I mentioned the loss of my own parents, he assured me that at the coming of the Messiah, we would be reunited. He regularly visits the grave of his parents – 'the only people who loved me.' Surely not. I have been told that he is a great favourite in Brighton's Jewish community. Owing to the good offices of Bertha Leverton, he joined some of those who became barmitzvahed in their later years. And at the last Chanukah celebration he sang the *Maoz Tzur* when the candles were lit. He is happy now.

On re-reading his autobiography for the purpose of this profile, one thing above all struck me. He remembers so many people. He never has an unkind word to say about anyone. A kind heart. Not a mean bone in his body. In short, a gentleman, a gentle man.

INSIDE the AJR

Hendon: How Bletchley helped us win the war

Ruth Bourne gave a most interesting talk on Bletchley Park, where she worked during the war, under strict secrecy, on the Enigma and Colossus decoding machines. Staff worked in shifts around the clock and slept on the site in dormitories. This work helped us to win the war by intercepting German and Japanese messages. There is now an exhibition on the site and a visit there is planned for next summer.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: Mon 5 March. Alan Conway, 'Yiddish Music'

Brighton & Hove Sarid: Jews in the anti-apartheid struggle

Dr Sheila Marshall gave our well-attended meeting a talk on the history of South Africa from its establishment in 1652 until today. She especially noted the support given by Jews to the struggle for equal rights under apartheid. Also, Jewish lawyers were the only ones prepared to defend the activists put on trial. This support was not forgotten by Mandela and his followers.

Ceska Abrahams

Next meeting: Mon 19 March. Social Get-together

George Layton at Balint House

The HGS group had a well-attended meeting to hear the actor and writer George Layton, best remembered for his roles in the TV series *Doctor in the House*, *The Sweeney* and many more. More recently, he has concentrated on writing books for adults and children. Born in Bradford of Jewish parents who fled from Vienna, George gave a lively account of his acting career and his more recent activity as an author.

Ruth Rossall

Next meeting: Mon 12 March. Rabbi Simon Francis, 'The Decimation of Greek Jewry'

A delightful afternoon in the West Midlands (Birmingham)

Twenty-two of us enjoyed a Get-together at the lovely home of Lia and Phillip Lesser. We congratulated Anne Shearer, a member of our group, who had been awarded the MBE for her work with the elderly in Birmingham. We felt proud that Anne was the third member of our group who had been honoured for her work, the other two being Paul Oppenheimer and Fred Austin. Myrna thanked Lia and Phillip on behalf of all present for their hospitality. A delightful afternoon.

Eileen Aris

Ilford briefing on Middle East

Robin Hamilton-Taylor of the Israeli Embassy gave us a fascinating overview of the current situation in Israel and patiently tackled the many questions posed to him after his talk. Over 20 people attended. A pleasant start to the new year.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: Wed 7 March. Walter Woyda, 'Milk and Honey, the Musical'

South London member erects plaque in former *shtetl*

Due to the invited speaker's sudden incapacity, one of our members, Helen Goldman, stepped into the breach. Helen spoke about how she came to England from her native Poland, progressing from shop assistant to head of three departments and finally to principal buyer for a large departmental store. Eventually, she returned to her *shtetl* in Poland (now in Ukraine), where she instigated the mounting of a plaque in memory of the long-forgotten Jewish population.

Inge Gredley

Next meeting: Thur 15 March. Naomi Hyamson entertains accompanied by Jenny Gould

Harrogate Continental Friends

At our first meeting of 2007, we shared interesting reports of recent events. Those unable to attend some or all of these events were delighted to hear about them in detail. Susanne informed us about 'things to come' before we next meet. The afternoon came to a close after the usual tasty refreshments.

Inge Little

Next meeting: Wed 18 April

Pinner: Is food good for you?

In a most interesting talk, Malvern Barnett, a highly experienced food analyst, gave us the low-down on the labelling of packaged food. He assured us our tap water was safe to drink and that, despite various food scares, all edible produce was constantly monitored by laboratories able to detect minute quantities of additives, harmful organisms and residual pesticides.

Walter Weg

Next meeting: Thur 8 March, 2.00 pm. Clive Lawton, 'The "Me" Generation'

Hull encouraged by recent events

Keen to support similar future events, we discussed the recent enjoyable Northern groups' trip to London as well as the successful Bradford pre-Chanukah party. We were encouraged by young people participating in Holocaust Memorial Day events as witnessed in the Hull, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire areas. Especially notable was the excellent speech at Beth Shalom by Dewsbury's Muslim MP Shahid Malik.

Bob Rosner

Next meeting: Sun 29 April

Cleve Road briefed on AJR activities

The AJR's Michael Newman told us the intention was to continue the Outreach Programme with the formation of further

new groups in 2007. He expected AJR's services to be required for at least another 15-20 years. Michael then updated us on claims for insurance policies sold between 1920 and 1945 and Swiss bank accounts, pointing out that the Swiss had been bankers to the Nazis. He also mentioned he would shortly be meeting Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the Austrian General Settlement Fund (see p.15).

David Lang

Next meeting: Tues 20 March, 10.30 am. Walter Woyda, 'The Rothschilds, the Musical'

Edgware and the history of the bagel

Frank Miller joined us from Hastings to relate the story of the bagel. Apparently the bagel dates back to 1683 in Vienna, when the Viennese army beat the Muslims in the siege of Vienna. The talk was followed by a lavish bagel and smoked salmon tea.

Ruth Fletcher

Next meeting: Tues 20 March. Bryan Moser, 'The Mozarts'

Surrey coffee morning

Members turned out in strength for a coffee morning at the home of Edmée and Tom Barta. We were sorry to learn that Tom had just been admitted to the local hospital for tests and everyone signed a get-well card to wish him a speedy return home. Edmée's decision to go ahead with the event was warmly applauded and our thanks go to her and all who contributed to a happy morning among friends.

Harry and Jan Stadler

Oxford find

What a find! Irene Gill, author of the book *Oma, Mu and Me*, spoke to us about the letters and photo albums of her grandmother in Germany dating from around the turn of the twentieth century up to the First World War. When antisemitism reared its head, the family moved to Denmark and the UK. Irene also spoke about the internment of her father, academic life in Oxford, and how she became a little English schoolgirl.

Anne Selinger

Next meeting: Tues 27 March. 'Israel Update'

North London: The life of Leo Baeck

Rabbi James Baarden, speaking on 'Aspects of the Life of Leo Baeck', brought out clearly the immense influence Leo Baeck was able to bring to Jewish life through his charisma and learning. A number of our members subsequently took part in the Holocaust Memorial service at Belsize Square synagogue - a most impressive event.

Herbert Haberberg

Next meeting: Thur 29 March. 'The Board of Deputies: Past, Present and Future'

Essex: A short story

George Layton read to us from one of his short stories, about a Northern couple who had been married a long time when the husband died. The wife had got rid

of his train set and he had died of a broken heart a week later. The moral was that we are all connected as human beings and with AJR we are one big extended family. *Larry Lisner*
 Next meeting: Tues 13 March. Dr Helen Fry, 'Refugees in Uniform'

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Wessex Tues 6 March. Details to follow
 Norfolk Thur 8 March. Lunchtime Get-together, usual venue
 East Midlands/Sheffield/Hull Sun 18 March. Joint meeting with Beth Shalom. Details from Head Office

AJR SEDER NIGHT

Second Night Seder Service
 Tuesday 3 April 2007

The Paul Balint AJR Centre
 15 Cleve Road, London NW6

Rev Larry Fine will be officiating

Please telephone 020 7328 0208
 for reservations by 26 March

£25 per person - places booked after this date will be charged at £30 per person
 Limited space available for wheelchairs
 6 pm for 6.30 pm prompt start

LIVERPOOL

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

The Liverpool AJR group are currently collating a register of names from people in the Merseyside area whose family members perished in the Holocaust.

The names, together with photographs and short histories, will be included in a Memorial Book which will be on permanent display in Liverpool. Copies of the book can be distributed to members and used for education, ensuring that those who perished will be remembered by future generations.

It is planned that the Liverpool Holocaust Memorial Book will be completed in time for the National Holocaust Memorial Day Event to be held in Liverpool in January 2008. If you would like your family names (parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) to be included in the Liverpool Memorial Book, please contact GUIDO ALIS on 0151 428 1924 for an application form or email g_alis@decordovas.com.

We can help you complete the forms for however many names you have. One name or 50 - we can include them all. All applications must be in by 31 May 2007.

Paul Balint AJR Centre

15 Cleve Road, London NW6
 Tel: 020 7328 0208

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Wednesday 21 March 2007
 11.45 am for 12.15 pm

Rabbi Meir Salasnik
 'Questions and Answers'

Please be aware that as from March 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 5 March 2007
 11.45 am for 12.15 pm

Paul Anticoni
 'The Work of
 World Jewish Relief'

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

March Afternoon entertainment

Thur	1	Francis Spiegel
Mon	5	KT Lunch - Kards & Games Klub
Tue	6	CLOSED
Wed	7	Margaret Opdahl
Thur	8	Mike Marandi
Mon	12	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	13	CLOSED
Wed	14	Jack Davidoff
Thur	15	Ronnie Goldberg
Mon	19	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	20	CLOSED
Wed	21	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	22	Sheila Games
Mon	26	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	27	CLOSED
Wed	28	Michael Heaton
Thur	29	Douglas Poster

DIARY DATES

22-26 April Vienna trip
 24 June Bournemouth holiday
 -1 July
 8-15 July St Anne's holiday

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

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

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

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

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
 Bob Rosner 0148 2649156

Ilford
 Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

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

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

Birth

Congratulations to Sima and Ronald Channing on the birth of their second grandson.

Death

It is with great sorrow that the family of Polly Zinram, née Stern, announce her sudden death on 4 January 2007. She is greatly missed by all her family, none more so than her husband Heinz, who is now 96 years old.

In memoriam

In memoriam 3-4 March 1943 of the 283 Dresden Jews, deported from Hellenberg Camp, including Martin and Lotte Reichenback, and murdered at Auschwitz the very night of their arrival.

Classified

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Cantor: Norman Falah Cohen

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Friday evenings at 6.45pm

Saturday mornings at 10.00am

Religion School: Sundays 9.45am-12.30pm

Nursery School: 9.15am - 12.15pm

Belsize Under 3s: 9.30am - 11.30am

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Mobile: 0795 614 8566

AJR TRIP TO VIENNA

Following last year's successful trip to Berlin we are arranging a trip to Vienna from 22 to 26 APRIL. There will be a full agenda with sightseeing. Some walking will be involved. For further information, please call Carol Rossen on 020 8385 3085

HANDING THEM DOWN

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Obituaries

Thomas Tausz

Thomas Tausz, who died on 11 January, was born into the Belsize Square Synagogue community of which he became chairman in 2004.

His father, Dr Gellert Tausz, was its long-serving honorary secretary, as was Thomas for the 19 years preceding his chairmanship. His Karlsbad-born father worked as a lawyer in Hungary. He came to England in 1938 and died in 1980. His mother, Martha, an active member of the synagogue's Women's Society, came from Wiener Neustadt, near Vienna, two days before Kristallnacht. Having met in London and married in 1940, the couple joined the then New Liberal Jewish Congregation.

Their daughter, Patricia, and son, Thomas, were born in London, Thomas on 20 February 1947. From William Ellis School in Hampstead he obtained a chemistry degree at Manchester University and worked for a couple of major companies before joining his father's toy-importing business. In 1973 he married Dilys Norman, a law reporter. They met just before she went to university and married as soon as she obtained her degree.

As the nature of business changed and large retailers dealt directly with manufacturers, Thomas retired from importing. But he used the contacts initiated by his father in China and expanded by him to become a consultant to Chinese manufacturers with regard to Western markets such as quality control.

The care that characterised his business dealings was key to his dedication to synagogue matters. Particularly concerned with youth as the core of the community's future, he was a mainstay of the children's High Holy Day services, again following in his father's footsteps, and was instrumental in developing the now flourishing *heder* and nursery. After High Holy Day services, he would write to each participating child to thank them for their individual contribution. Despite suffering from cancer, diagnosed a few months earlier, he took part in last autumn's children's services. As dozens of tributes attest, he made everyone, of whatever age or background, feel valued.

It was entirely in character that his dying wish, expressed to his wife Dilys, daughters Hannah and Ellie, and son Jared, was to ensure that the *kiddush* arranged for his 60th birthday in February should go ahead as planned.

Ruth Rothenberg

Charles Stenham

Charles Stenham was born in Leipzig in 1916 into a traditional Jewish family. He learned a trade as a carpenter before emigrating to Palestine in 1936. He lived in Degania and Haifa, where he joined the railway police. In 1940 he enlisted in the British Merchant Navy and travelled to the UK. Discharged in Scotland, he joined his brother Henry in London (Henry was to die in Burma fighting for the British Army).

Charles trained as a precision toolmaker and joined the Home Guard. In early 1942 he met his wife-to-be Charlotte and they married that December. Charles became a manager in the children's book-publishing company Brimax. In 1951 his first son, Robin, was born, followed in 1955 by Jeremy. Charles later became the London representative of the Newcastle-based Team Valley Brush Company, an artist's brush producer. In 1996 he became a volunteer at the Wiener Library, maintaining their archive of book reviews.

Charles is survived by his wife, two sons and four grandchildren: Paddy, Clare, Nina and Max. He will be missed by his many friends, especially for his gentleness and wry sense of humour.

Tomi Spenser

(né Thomas Sonnenschein)

Tomi Spenser, born in 1927, came to Britain from Prague on a Kindertransport. He qualified in medicine at St Andrews in 1951 and married Dr Sheine Schwartzberg. In 1955 they joined Sheine's father's family practice in Leigh, Lancs. Tomi established a second clinic in a nearby coal-mining community. Edith Rudinger, a friend from the Kindertransport, persuaded him to write the successful book *Ailments and Remedies* for the Consumers' Association. In 1966 the Spensers and their four children moved to Israel.

Tomi and Sheine plunged into the rural GP life in the northern kibbutz Sasa. He helped to create the Israel Association of Family Medicine and began academic work in the new Haifa Medical School in 1975. He was proud of his 30 years of practice with Sheine in an Arab-Jewish group of nearby rural clinics which contributed much to co-existence.

After retiring, Tomi established the programme for the study of the Holocaust and Medicine in Haifa. It notably included an exhibition of artwork by and about physicians from Teresin. Tomi was an outstanding *mensch*.

Shmuel Reis, Jonathan Spenser

Central Office for Holocaust Claims Michael Newman

Briefing by Hannah Lessing

Speaking at the Austrian embassy in London at the end of January, Hannah Lessing, General Secretary of the Austrian National Fund, gave an overview of the General Settlement Fund (GSF), including information on when payments were likely to be complete.

The \$210m GSF was established in January 2001 as part of the Washington Agreement to 'acknowledge the moral responsibility for losses and damages inflicted... and to settle comprehensively unanswered questions of restitution and compensation'.

Ms Lessing outlined how the Fund was processing 200,000 claims submitted by 20,000 applicants for – among other assets – properties, bank accounts and insurance policies as well as stocks and shares.

She explained that while there was insufficient money to make full restitution payments from the GSF, claimants would receive a pro-rata share, calculated at approximately 13 per cent of the actual value of losses. Down payments from these awards would be completed by the end of 2007, with the balance paid in 2008. The Fund, she said, was making initial payments in accordance with age, with the applications of those born in 1920 currently being finalised.

Hannah Lessing confirmed that the GSF did not gain interest between the time it was agreed and the dismissal of the final lawsuit against the Austrian state in December 2005.

She also answered questions about the new, online database of looted art – www.kunstrestitution.at – which includes full provenance information on 10,000 artworks. One piece, an oil painting by the Dutch painter van Ostade, which had been hanging for many years in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, had already been identified and was in the process of being recovered by the Commission for Looted Art in Europe.

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

'Beyond human understanding'

Holocaust Memorial Day events

AJR service at Belsize Square Synagogue

It was 'beyond a normal being's understanding', said Rolf Weinberg, who served as an officer in the Free French Forces, as he recalled the six million Jews who were murdered and the 50 million other victims of Nazism at the AJR's Holocaust Memorial Day Service in London's Belsize Square Synagogue. Escaping from the Gestapo in September 1938, Rolf left Hamburg by ship and dedicated himself to the fight against fascism and antisemitism. 'It was a dangerous illusion', he said, 'that this would never happen again'. He was greatly concerned about the world into which we were bringing our children and grandchildren and about the threats to the State of Israel.

Rabbi Rodney Mariner, who conducted the service, welcomed the Austrian Ambassador, AJR members and supporters. The lighting of six candles preceded the incantation of the memorial prayer and *Kaddish* for the six million victims.

Imperial War Museum

Leading British television documentary filmmaker Martin Smith gave a penetrating analysis of 'The Crime Without a Name' at the Imperial War Museum. He was closely involved in the creation of both the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Museum's own Holocaust Exhibition. He pointed out that saving Europe's Jews was not one of the Allies' war aims: when Jan Karski, the Polish emissary, gave eyewitness testimony of the destruction of Polish Jewry to Britain's Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, it was virtually ignored.

London Borough of Harrow

Harrow's Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony was led by Mayor Janet Cowan in the Council Chamber. An explanatory history of the Holocaust was delivered by Alderman Keith Toms and Rabbi Andrew Shaw recited memorial prayers.

Guest speaker Gina Turgel said that loss

of life on such a scale represented 'statistics without a human face'. Following the Nazi invasion of Poland, her family were ordered to deliver all their precious possessions to the Nazi headquarters or be shot, leaving them with nothing and then being crammed into a ghetto. At Plaszow concentration camp 50-70 people could be shot at morning roll call or hanged. Disease and starvation were rife. At Auschwitz the notorious Dr Mengele selected her for the 'shower room', which this time discharged water, not gas. Eventually she was loaded onto a truck at Buchenwald for Bergen-Belsen, with its heaps of bodies and walking skeletons. She volunteered to work in the hospital and was liberated by British troops in April 1945, though people continued to die in their thousands.

London Borough of Barnet

Mayor of Barnet Cllr Eva Greenspan addressed an audience of several hundred at Barnet's Holocaust Memorial Day event, held this year in the newly enclosed quadrangle of the University of Middlesex. Cllr Greenspan, whose own parents were Holocaust survivors, said we were close to the moment when the Holocaust would become history: it was our sacred duty to preserve its memory. Genocide in Rwanda and Dafur and the revival of antisemitism meant that 'we must speak about yesterday's horrors to learn about tomorrow'. It was our duty to challenge prejudice and to teach our children respect and a commitment to maintaining the memory of the Holocaust.

Among others taking part in Barnet were the Rwandan Ambassador, who described how a million were killed in 100 days while the UN, there on the ground, remained impotent; Professor Ludwik Finkelstein, who described the Holocaust, which he and his wife Mirjam had survived, as 'beyond human understanding'; Councillor Brian Coleman; Malke Benmayer; Valdemar Kalinin, a Romany; pupils from East Barnet School; the London Cantorial Singers; Queenswell Junior School Choir; and Rev Bernd Koschland.

Newsround

Irena Sendlerowa: a legend in her own lifetime



PHOTO: LIU POHLMANN

Irena Sendlerowa at the age of 97

When the Warsaw ghetto was erected in 1940 Irena Sendlerowa began helping the city's Jews, in particular Jewish children. She forged documents and placed children in Christian homes. Tortured by the Gestapo, she never revealed her secrets and, sentenced to death, she managed to escape. In all, Irena smuggled some 2,500 Jewish children out of the ghetto after finding hiding places in convents, orphanages and with non-Jewish families prepared to shelter them. Now living in a Catholic institution in Warsaw run by monks, Irena has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Antisemitic attacks at record level in UK

Antisemitic attacks reached record levels in Britain in 2006 and peaked during the conflict in Lebanon. Race-hate incidents - ranging from death threats to physical assaults - rose by over 30 per cent to almost 600. 'These are the worst figures we have had in the 23 years since we have been monitoring [antisemitism]', said Mark Gardner of the Community Security Trust, which advises Britain's Jews on safety issues.

Holocaust education taught in Croatia

Teachers in Croatia have taken part in a three-day seminar on teaching the Holocaust. Until 1989, under the rule of the nationalist President Franjo Tudjman, the government either dismissed or played down Croatia's complicity with the Nazis during the Second World War. Since 2000, textbooks that speak openly about Croatia's puppet fascist regime and its crimes against Jews have been included in school curricula.