

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

Museum pieces?

No one, to my knowledge, has yet commented at any length on the peculiar reluctance of German scholars and academics to conduct research into the community of Jews of German origin that settled in Britain after 1945. Usually, German *Wissenschaftler* are to be found crawling with ant-like industry over any academic subject area available, with the entire field of the Holocaust, the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and the fate of Germany's Jews attracting a quite extraordinary amount of scholarly interest.

But very few German historians actually bother to cross the Channel and investigate the situation, history and experience of the German-speaking Jews once they ceased to be refugees and took British citizenship. In the post-war years, these numbered some 50,000, developing into a vibrant, flourishing community that settled by and large smoothly into life in Britain, mostly integrating reasonably well into British society. One would have thought that they were well worth German scholars' time, but the reality is that a handful of postgraduate students come over, do the research for their theses and are then seen no more.

I do not count studies by German academics on individual refugees or families resident here, nor those on specialised subjects like music in exile, which simply could not be written without research in this country. What I have in mind is studies that deal in depth with the overall post-war history and experience of the Jews from Germany and Austria who made new lives for themselves in Britain. Marion Berghahn's *German-Jewish Refugees in Britain*, reprinted as *Continental Britons*, is a notable exception, but that was published in Britain, in English. Otherwise, one has to fall back on isolated studies like Steffen Pross's *'In London treffen wir uns wieder': Vier Spaziergänge durch ein vergessenes Kapitel deutscher Kulturgeschichte nach 1933* or the section on Britain in the *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945*. German historians mostly study the former



Julius Fromm, shortly before his death in England

refugees from afar, so that they come across not as a living subject, but as distant objects from the historical past.

My theory is that German scholars can cope easily enough with Jewish refugees settling in Israel and America, where they are part of a recognised Jewish community. But they struggle to accept that a Western European country like Britain admitted considerable numbers of Jews before the war and subsequently let them evolve into a settled and thriving community mostly at ease with its surroundings. Germans, it seems to me, prefer to see European countries as having behaved badly towards the Jews during the war, seizing the opportunity of Nazi occupation to allow their antisemitic hatreds free rein; the exceptions, small countries like Denmark or Bulgaria, can be dismissed as marginal. German scholars appear reluctant to take on board the living reality of the Jewish refugee community in Britain; none of them has shown more than a passing interest in researching the AJR and its journal, for instance.

Consequently, when German scholars deal with former refugees in Britain, they all too often depict them as rarities, museum

pieces from a vanished German past that have survived as isolated specimens in an alien and unfriendly British environment. I was forcibly reminded of this when I happened on an otherwise excellent study by the distinguished historian Götz Aly and the well-known journalist Michael Sontheimer, with the eye-catching title *Fromms*. (For readers of a retiring disposition, *Fromms* is the German brand equivalent of Durex, as indicated by the book's subtitle, *Wie der jüdische Kondomfabrikant Julius F. unter die deutschen Räuber fiel* (How the Jewish Condom Manufacturer Julius F. Fell among the German Robbers); the book was published by S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt, in 2007. I considered reviewing the book, under the caption 'Something for the Weekend, Sir?', but thought better of it.)

Fromms is to be highly recommended as a historical narrative. Every aspect of Julius Fromm's life and career has been carefully researched, from his family origins in Konin, then in Russian Poland, to the process of manufacturing the condoms that made his fortune and the procedures by which he was robbed of that fortune by the Nazis. Every aspect, that is, until Fromm's flight in 1938 to London, where he died in 1945. The authors make no attempt to research the communal life of the Jewish refugees in Britain, as those like the Fromms would have experienced it. Although no fewer than five of the eight Fromm siblings escaped to Britain and Julius's son Edgar lived here for decades, the impression left by this book is not that Britain was a major country of refuge for Jews from the Reich, but that the Fromms were fragments of flotsam who happened to land up on British shores and languished thereafter as lonely curiosities in a kind of social vacuum. Any picture of the sizable community to which Edgar Fromm and thousands of others belonged is simply blanked out.

Typically, the presentation of Britain as a country of refuge suffers from the authors' preconceived notion of its intrinsic hostility

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MUSEUM PIECES? *cont from page 1*

to the Jewish refugees. On a very thin selection of evidence, the authors claim to have discovered 'deeply rooted antisemitic resentment' permeating all strata of British society, a claim that most refugees would reject on the basis of their own experience. The authors cite the warnings given to newly arrived refugees about their behaviour in public as further evidence of official hostility, when in fact these warnings – the best-known being the booklet *Helpful Information and Guidance for Every Refugee* – were distributed by Anglo-Jewish organisations; they therefore tell us little about British attitudes, but plenty about Anglo-Jewry's ambivalent feelings towards the refugees from Nazism.

Again typically, the one event in the history of the refugees that is discussed at length is internment and the deportation of several thousand refugees, including Edgar Fromm, overseas, but in the absence of the balancing context of 60 years of post-war settlement. The impression that Britain was not that far from Germany in its treatment of the Jews emerges clearly from the section on the experiences of Fromm's niece Ruth in Britain; she had come here on a domestic-service permit, as far as one can tell from a very cursory reference. At the time of internment, Ruth Fromm was detained at what the book calls the 'notorious' Holloway Prison. Now, Holloway was no holiday camp, but it was not significantly worse than the general run of prisons in democratic states; the loaded term 'berüchtigt' is used to make it sound like the prisons in Nazi Germany, sites of terror where Jews were at the mercy of Gestapo interrogators and SA thugs.

An even more blatant attempt to elide British and Nazi practice occurs when the book discusses the categories to which the Fromms were allocated in 1939 by the tribunals set up to decide whether they should be interned. Most of the Fromms were allocated to Category C and exempted from internment, but Salomon Fromm, Ruth's father, was allocated to Category B, and Ruth herself, so the book claims, was allocated to the same category 'as a kind of Sippenhaft'. 'Sippenhaft' was the Nazi practice of imprisoning the entire families of enemies of the regime, most famously those of the conspirators implicated in the bomb plot against Hitler on 20 July 1944. To imply a comparison between the measures taken against these conspirators, who were hanged from meat-hooks with wire nooses and their relatives sent to concentration

'MORE THAN JUST A JOB'

Two of the AJR's most senior social workers retire



Marcia Goodman, Head of the AJR's Social Services team for the last ten years, was before that a social worker with Jewish Care. At the AJR she found a warm and caring organisation, but felt that much needed to be done to offer the best possible service to all its members.

The social work process was made more detailed and professional. Concerned that only members in London were visited, Marcia was delighted when the Trustees agreed that members anywhere in the country could be visited. Marcia also set up social groups for members around the country and persuaded the New York-based Claims Conference to establish an annual budget, supplemented by the AJR. This developed into the AJR's outstanding outreach service across the country.

Marcia further persuaded the Trustees to amend the AJR constitution in order to provide assistance to *all* victims of Nazi persecution, from whichever country they came.

Marcia says she has been blessed with an outstanding team of social workers, for whom nothing is too much trouble. The outreach

work led to the AJR identifying ever more members around the country. When she required additional social work cover in the North of England and Scotland, the Trustees agreed to the appointment of three Northern social workers.

In her retirement, Marcia intends to spend a lot of time with her family in Israel. 'Being with the AJR has been more than just a job', she says. It has been an opportunity to meet so many wonderful people who have had amazing lives and to be able to help them in many ways. I shall miss you all.'



Norah Gittins joined the AJR in 1983. At first, she worked as secretary to the administrator, then moved into the Membership Department and eventually was asked to join the Social Work team.

'This is the most satisfying and fulfilling work I have ever done', Norah says. Visiting members in their homes, she invariably met with hospitality and friendship. At the same time, listening to accounts of the early

continued on opposite page

camp, and the allocation of a young woman to Category B for purposes of internment is patently ridiculous. The book itself later demonstrates the falseness of the comparison when it informs us that Salomon Fromm was never in fact detained; and his daughter was, unfortunately, just one of a number of young Jewish refugee women who were allocated to Category B and interned, quite irrespective of their fathers' status.

The two descendants of Julius Fromm interviewed by the authors receive the rather curious style of presentation that Germans reserve for Jewish refugees. Both are treated very sympathetically, but both are introduced by distinguishing characteristics that somehow set them up as curiosities. Sontheimer carefully informs us that he first interviewed Edgar Fromm in London 'over a good whisky' ('bei gutem Whisky'), while Ruth Fromm, who now lives in New York, is described as speaking delightfully old-fashioned German and as breaking out into a 'merry cock-a-doodle-do' ('heiteres Kikeriki') of laughter. So we are treated to the stereotypes of the assimilated Brit

savouring the preferred tippel of his adopted land – would Sontheimer ever speak of interviewing a German 'bei gutem Schnaps'? – and the garrulous New Yorker with her trilling laugh. Museum pieces, once again.

If even a book as good as this, by authors as widely respected, falls into errors like those detailed here, it is perhaps because the subject of the German-Jewish refugees in Britain remains one of the last areas where Germans have still not fully come to terms with their past, a small part of that process of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' as yet unfinished.

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Put it in writing

What with emails and texting, there will soon no longer be a call for writing a proper English letter or indeed proper English. The correct way of complying with a request for RSVP – sending bread-and-butter letters, the conventions of condolence, of congratulation and correct forms of address (e.g. how to invite a gay bishop and his partner to open a boys' club) – will be ignored or satisfied with a simple electronic burp.

A pity, because good English is not just a joy to read but to write. There are few rules and lots of conventions, but one rule brooks no exception: less is more. Hemingway called it 'cutting out the junk'; Harold Ross, fabled editor of *The New Yorker*, advised his authors to 'kill your darlings', urging them to cut the colourful phrases they liked best. DeWitt Wallace, founder of the *Reader's Digest* and the man who taught me my trade, invented a technique of editing he called 'condensation', which could reduce an article by a third in length without the writer being able to spot what had gone unless he had his original manuscript in front of him.

Foreigners who acquire a decent vocabulary in their new language understandably take pride in displaying it. Don't overdo it. Go easy on adjectives, abjure adverbs, revel in your freedom from the iron clamp of German syntax or the booby traps of Czech seven-way declension. It's your choice of words that counts, not the garlands with which they are hung. Did you know that English had more words than any other language – some 80,000 I believe? And on top of that, many words have more than one meaning to help you ginger up your prose: for instance 'ginger', which is a verb, a root, a colour, a nickname. Such riches are an open invitation to use every trick from deliberate ambiguity to punning. Punning can be a subtle game or a tedious nuisance, nowhere more prevalent than in newspaper headlines. The financial pages and advertising slogans are especially infested: 'Diamond shares

lose sparkle', 'Go to work on an egg' – that sort of thing.

Play on words is a high-class English entertainment. Shakespeare didn't start it, but doesn't he provide a feast? And so do clerihews, spoonerisms, limericks, rhyming slang, the cornucopia of collective nouns, and the cryptic crossword which has no equivalent in any other language. Just as the *Schüttelreim* has no equivalent in English – although you can force it, if you strain, e.g. 'I saw a butterfly flutter by.' In German, entire poems have been written in this form, ingenious and tedious in equal measure.

Some of the best fun comes with translating idiom into idiom. To find the equivalent of 'in for a penny, in for a pound' in 'mitgefangen, mitgehangen' is a tiny triumph. Or what about rendering 'zart besaitet' as 'shrinking violet'?

They say that poetry is what gets lost in translation, but it need not be so. Some of Michael Hamburger's translations of Rilke into English strike me as every bit as good as the originals. But translating is an art, and you learn strange lessons on the way, one of them being that when you do French into English, you end up with far fewer words. It's like pricking a balloon.

The English are not great translators. Enjoying such riches in their own tongue, they have little feeling for others. When the War Office discovered that I spoke 'foreign', they posted me to India – Hebrew, Urdu, what's the difference! I quite enjoyed the experience, but then I am a firm believer in the idea that we are hard-wired for learning languages. How else do children form grammatically correct sentences they have never heard before?

It isn't poetry that gets lost in translation, but impact. I'd rather write English than German any day, but for me the words 'ich liebe Dich' carry a punch that 'I love you' never will. In my dream world, I write in English, speak French, read German and listen to Italian. Anyone for Yiddish?

Victor Ross

'MORE THAN JUST A JOB' continued from opposite page

traumas and stresses of the refugee community, uprooted from their native soil, was 'often very moving and my admiration for their spirit and courage has grown immeasurably over the years.'

Norah watched the AJR go from strength to strength. Behind the scenes, the attention paid to the needs and wellbeing of the AJR community is quite astonishing, she remarks.

Norah is very grateful and proud to have been part of the dedicated AJR team. She will miss her work and colleagues very much and wishes the AJR continued success in providing for the needs of its 'wonderful and courageous members'. In her retirement, she is planning to continue to play bridge, which she enjoys so much, and perhaps to learn how to play bowls.

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WELCOME TO CANADA

by Fred Stern

The first part of this article, 'My internment', appeared in the October issue.

Arriving by rail in Trois Rivières, we were marched through the city, inhabited by what seemed nineteenth-century French colonials cramming their balconies, from which they hurled abuse at us. It was a horrendous experience. At Camp T, we were welcomed by German PoWs singing the Horst Wessel Song. It was most grueling to hear the words 'Wenn das Judenblut vom Messer spritzt' (When Jewish blood sprays from the knife) 5,000 miles from the scene of those crimes. We managed to get separated.

We were allowed two censored letters a week, 'Prisoner of War' being embossed on the envelopes. Later I learned that my parents were informed by the Home Office that I had drowned on the *Arandora Star*! Luckily on the previous day they received a telegram from their friends, whom I had informed on arrival in Canada, that I was safe. The Home Office was sorry! But they were never sorry they had interned me at the age of 16. Nor did they offer any compensation. Times have changed!

Our first meal consisted of bread and pink Canadian cheese, which, we were told, was prepared by the Germans. We put a stop to that right away and our boys cooked meals to perfection. There was no shortage of ingredients. I acted as waiter, as I did throughout my internment. I discovered that the kitchen staff had to mix bromide into our cereals to stop us diverting our thoughts! Porridge has never since entered my home.

As this was a transit camp, we moved on to Camp B, a clearing in the forest. We occupied ourselves with a variety of jobs and asked to be able to help the war effort. I found it rewarding to make camouflage nets from green cord for covering tanks. I also made trestle tables for the forces. In my spare time I made a pair of clogs with leather straps and created a wooden mushroom to repair my socks.

There was time to study too. We had among us good teachers, from whom I learned Spanish and Gregg Shorthand, and I taught myself trigonometry and calculus. I joined a matriculation course with Toronto University. In English literature we studied *Julius Caesar*, but did not neglect Goethe and Schiller for our German either. I also gave dissertations on Voltaire and Kemal Ataturk. We held organised political discussions as well as debating other subjects.

Throughout that time our 'elder statesmen' negotiated with the authorities

regarding our refugee status, but to no avail. We decided to go on a hunger strike – for four days, having sent out our stock of food. Canadian newspapers found out about our action. We won. But the next day happened to be Yom Kippur. We fought hard to be recognised as Jewish refugees. It is enshrined in our Association's title!

We moved on again, to Camp A, where we had to build our own houses. Each house held 72 inmates, with showers and wash basins between the halves. I even joined a team digging the drains to the toilets. These had no doors and occasionally someone sailed a burning paper boat along the drain! Originally, we just had latrines in the open, which meant sitting on bars, careful not to bend backwards! Some volunteered to empty the buckets. We slept on bunk beds – I always chose the top bunk, jumping in from the end to the consternation of the fellow below. I made a bridge table, placed between the bunks. For our comfort we were issued a horse blanket – no sheets, my school satchel still acting as my pillow. I eventually bought myself pyjamas and other items with the 25 cents a day I earned.

The most exhilarating, but strenuous, work was felling trees in the winter. The gates in the barbed wire surrounding the camp were opened and about a dozen inmates, carrying axes, were escorted into the woods. Trees up to 1 ft. thick were felled – a big notch cut at the bottom, followed by a small one opposite until the tree fell in the desired direction over the first notch. Maple trees were not to be touched. We also shaved off the barks and carried the trees to a river to float them down. They were to serve as pit props. In the forest we had to wear a thick grey shirt with a red patch, one ft. in diameter, on our backs – so that we wouldn't get too far away! Rubber boots and two pairs of socks didn't prevent frostbite and chilblains at -20°C.

Life in internment was not all work and study. All the professions were represented. There was a great deal of talent for entertainment from comedy to concerts, to plays and even operas. Goethe's *Faust* in German made a huge impression on me; it seemed totally authentic. Besides, we made an ice rink, played football and kept up our morale at all times. But we never dug an escape tunnel.

Just before matriculation examinations I acquired my release, my parents having worked hard to obtain it. A number of us were taken to the Isle aux Noix in the river in Montreal, where we spent several days in the company of Italian PoWs, who fed us spaghetti.

Returning to England in April 1942 on the *Capetown Castle* I found my way to Berkhamsted, where my parents were living. Unannounced, I rang the bell. My mother screamed 'Der Bub ist da!' (The boy's here!) and called my father. Her hair was white: my internment had taken its toll on her.

Was any harm done to me? Readers can make their own judgement. I lost two years, but learned a lot about life. Being of impressionable age, much of me was shaped by the experience. I do not underestimate the positive contribution it made to my mind, enabling me to deal with many a situation. Yet, I would not wish to go through it all again. It was certainly not a holiday.

Lady Mosley's 'suite'

The current debate about internment in the *Journal* reminds me of my own experience. I had just reached the age of 16 when Churchill decided to intern all us 'aliens' under the 18B rule. My father, Abisz Meisels, had been sent to the Isle of Man before us, but my mother, Clara Meisels, and I were collected by a Black Maria and driven to Holloway Prison. We shared a cell and were locked up for nearly 23 hours a day – but I had my mother with me whilst the others never knew what had happened to their loved ones.

My father was released from the Isle of Man and arranged for us to receive a parcel of goodies. One day, about eight of us were waiting outside the chief warden's office, chatting mostly in English but also in other languages. When the chief warden came out of her office and said to one of our number 'Lady Mosley, we won't be long!', the rest of us went over to the other side of the room.

We learned that Lady Mosley had two cells, that her food was brought in from outside, and that she wasn't locked up but was allowed to work in the garden, a fact I've resented for over 60 years.

I was fascinated to read a book by Oswald Mosley's son Nicholas, who didn't share his father's and stepmother's ideas. I learned that Oswald Mosley was arrested and sent to Brixton jail. However, Churchill, apparently a friend of the Mosleys, had him transferred to Holloway, where he and his wife shared her 'suite' of two cells. Somehow, this caused my resentment at her two cells to evaporate and I found myself laughing at the thought of Mosley – this archetypal fascist champion of masculinity – incarcerated in a women's prison!

Ruth Schneider

What is a Jew?



by M. Storz

A number of articles have recently appeared in the *Journal* in which people agonise about their Jewish identity. There were also letters whose writers proclaimed that they 'only wished to belong to the human race' – as distinct, presumably, from the Jewish race.

For me, the answer to the question 'What is a Jew?' is simple. A Jew is a person who belongs to the Jewish people, usually as a result of being born to Jewish parents. The Hebrew word *Yehudi* clearly indicates that the person concerned is a member of the tribe of Judah and this is the original meaning of the word.

Of course, not every Jew can relate his ancestry back to the tribe of Judah. He or she may have originally belonged to one of the other tribes or may have become a Jew as a result of marriage or conversion. Nevertheless, the term Jew is used to embrace all who belong to the Jewish people, from whichever tribe they originated, and including those who have converted.

It is almost certainly true that the religion practised by the Jews, based on the Hebrew Bible, has kept them together as a people in exile, or they would probably have lost their identity as a people and as a community. I seriously doubt whether there is a distinct 'Jewish culture' other than that linked to the religion, biblical literature, the liturgy, and traditional Jewish family and community life.

So why do some Jews agonise so much over their identity? Some say that being Jewish is an accident of birth, but does this not apply to everybody? Surely being Anglo-Saxon, Russian, Chinese etc is also an accident of birth, but I doubt whether these people indulge in such dreary agonising about their identity as some Jews do.

As for those who solemnly declare 'I only want to belong to the human race', this hardly makes any sense to me. First, all human beings belong to the human race. Second, you can't 'want' what you already have – you are already part of the human race.

I believe the operative word here is 'only' and I suspect they are implying 'I don't want to be a Jew or to belong to the Jewish people.' They make a high-minded declaration which is intended to sound idealistic but, to my mind, is phoney.

The reasons why some people are uncomfortable about being Jewish vary. It may be self-consciousness, embarrassment, dislike of the religion, or perhaps they have been brainwashed into believing the bad things said about the Jews throughout the ages and wish to dissoci-

ate themselves from them and become part of the host nation.

There are some Jews – perhaps quite a few – who have given up their identity, become completely assimilated, hide the fact that they are Jews, and do not wish to be recognised as such. They keep their identity secret, but the people who write to your *Journal* wish to have it both ways.

On the one hand, they acknowledge that they are Jews; on the other, they imply that they do not wish to be Jewish. If they feel like that, why don't they keep quiet about it and not disturb those who do not share their outlook? Unless, as I suspect, they want to influence others to think like they do, and ultimately to cause the Jewish people to lose, or give up, their identity.

May I declare that I am a Jew? I belong to the Jewish community, will always want to belong to the Jewish community, in this life as well as in any future life, and I love the Hebrew language and enjoy the Jewish traditions.

I hope I have not caused too much shock by expressing these sentiments. They must seem outrageous to some of your contributors, who seem determined to undermine the identity of their fellow readers.

Defining a secular Jew

by Harry Bibring

Let us start with the definitions of the word 'secular' as given in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* in the sense that troubles Martha Blend (September): 'Concerned with the affairs of this world, worldly not sacred, not monastic, not ecclesiastical, temporal, profane, lay'. Martha Blend's interpretation – that being a secular Jew means 'respecting the Jewish contribution to culture and standing up for Jews if they are attacked' – is fine. But this is not limited to secular Jews: observant Jews practise these principles to a considerable extent. As for her reference to the dietary laws, these never had anything to do with refrigeration – a pork chop goes off as quickly as a kosher lamb chop! As for synagogue services being 'alien to the Western tradition' (whatever these two words might mean), this suggests she has been exposed to only one type or a limited number of such services. Today there are so many versions that one often cannot even recognise that their form of worship belongs to the same religion! And why is a framework to life 'nebulous'?

To be a Jew is to be a member of a world community with a code of living that has survived for over three millennia and outlasted many other civilisations. Notwithstanding countless attempts by other communities to destroy the Jewish

people, it is a way of life based on a set of rules and laws, which have been the basis of numerous civilisations. It teaches us to, *inter alia*, respect other human beings, live within the framework of a family, be charitable, strive for peace for all mankind, and educate our children to become upright citizens. All this can be done without setting foot in a synagogue and those who choose to do that are sometimes referred to as 'secular'. But let us never forget where these standards were first laid down. Going to a synagogue to pray is just another way of observing the traditions, which are fundamental to this lifestyle.

Judaism is adapting to change all the time without compromising fundamentals, but one has to understand the basic principles. There are, of course, some communities that attempt change of a more radical form. I have no fear for the survival of Judaism unless we ourselves denigrate it or water it down to become indistinguishable from non-Jewish society. How often has it rightly been said that we are our own worst enemies!

On being or not being a Jew

by Harold Saunders

In 1973 I went to Israel to 'sit shiva' after my father died. Having had little verbal contact with my brothers over the years, I posed the question as to what extent I was a Jew. An agnostic, I didn't practise any part of the Jewish religion ('sitting shiva' was a matter of respect to my father's memory); I was married to a non-Jew; while I sympathised with the aims of Zionism, I was not a citizen of Israel and couldn't consider myself a Jewish nationalist. I concluded that it was the common suffering we endured that still made me feel a Jew.

But that answer is simplistic. Among other reasons, there is also the feeling of guilt I experience at the thought of abandoning my innermost sense of being Jewish. The first question I should have asked is: how to define a 'Jew'? From that definition could have sprung the solution to the question I then posed. But, before answering, one must state who is asking and who is answering the question.

According to Jewish religious law, the question I asked is irrelevant: what matters is whether a child is born of a Jewish maternal line, of a female convert to the Jewish religion, or is Jewish by individual conversion. According to the *Halacha*, the practice of Judaism, although desirable, is of itself not a sufficient condition for being considered a Jew. So once a Jew always a Jew? According to the *Halacha*, one remains a Jew for as long as one does not convert to another religion. By that

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

INTERMENT DEBATE

Sir – As one of the 4,000-odd 'refugees from Nazi oppression' who was shipped off to Canada in July 1940 as a 17-year-old 'enemy alien' under Churchill's 'collar the lot' policy, I was interested in Anthony Grenville's articles in the July and August issues. (I describe my own experiences in more detail in *On the Fringe: A Sort of Autobiography*, reviewed in your July issue.)

What was significant among the occupants of Camp B in the wilds of New Brunswick was the spontaneous development of groups which kept themselves apart from other groups. Orthodox Jews, secure in their sense of identity, carried out the prescribed rituals associated with the celebration of the Sabbath and Jewish holidays, successfully established their need for a kosher kitchen, and employed the services of a 'shabbes goy' to light the fires in their huts with the onset of the colder season.

At the other end of the spectrum, leaders of the Austrian Communist Party in Exile saw in internment the potential for developing new cadres for political work among their youthful supporters. They set up courses in the Marxist approach to history and philosophy, but also identified the major goal of the Austrian party as the re-establishment of Austria as an independent, democratic country after the defeat of Nazi Germany, still problematic and years away.

In between these major groups was the mass of internees of all ages, many with academic and professional qualifications, who were instrumental in developing cultural and educational activities but did not neglect to establish the replica of a Viennese coffee house that became popular among the officers of the guards as well as the internees.

Many of my fellow internees, who were eventually released in Canada, had distinguished careers in the arts and sciences. Nine of them were later awarded the Order of Canada, and one, Walter Kohn, obtained the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1998.

Some time after I left Camp B to be returned to the UK, the role of the camp changed. Jewish and non-Jewish internees were segregated and dispersed to different camps, and the camp itself

became the home of Canadian internees suspected of Fascist and Nazi sympathies, as well as of captured German merchant seamen. The most famous among them was Camillien Houde, the flamboyant mayor of Montreal. But that is another story. It is told in meticulous detail by Ted Jones in *Both Sides of the Wire*, published in 1988.

Hans Reichenfeld, Ottawa, Canada

Sir – My father, Wilhelm Baumann, was interned at Onchan Camp, Isle of Man in 1941. At the time, I was evacuated to Dawlish, south Devon. Aged 12, I was first in a Habonim camp, then in a boarding school. On 10 March 1941 my father wrote to me saying he would be released that week in time for Purim. He told me they had wanted to send him to Canada. I wasn't at home when he came back and didn't know much about his experiences there.

My father was very careful when he wrote that letter as it was 'opened by Examiner 7054'. The original letter is now in the AJEX Military Museum in Hendon together with his army brown sepia photos and Iron Cross of the First World War. On the German side!

*Bridget Bow (née Brigitte Baumann)
Barnet, Herts*

Sir – I was not interned but lost a good home when I was ordered to leave Brighton as an 'enemy alien'. Things were just beginning to look up for me. In September 1940 I landed in a Quaker hostel. There was a girl of my own age there who had lost a good home in Brentwood for the same reason. Her education was ruined. There was also a slightly older girl who had been a student nurse at Guy's Hospital. All the refugee nurses were kicked out of good hospitals. Those of us who came to England under the age of 16 should have been exempted from enemy-alien restrictions.

(Mrs) A. Saville, London NW4

Sir – Internment took place because we were *German* nationals (including Austrians, etc), even if we *had* thrown away our passports! It was very likely that spies could have pretended to be Jewish! This we understood at the time.

Bettina Cohn, Bristol

ASYLUM-SEEKERS GENUINE AND FAILED

Sir – Yes, 'we too were strangers in the Land of Egypt' and, with our particular background, we should show compassion and sympathy for the plight of our fellow-men (September, letters).

On the other hand, one must draw a line somewhere and there exists a vast and not subtle difference between genuine asylum-seekers and failed ones, i.e. economic migrants who, by abusing our lavish welfare system, become a burden on the state and, last but not least, on the tax-payer. I recollect that in order to enter the UK and obtain the then necessary visa, health and police certificates were pre-requisites plus sponsorship and a guarantee of firm employment – which stringent measures no longer apply today.

Another consideration is that many of the immigrants come from countries where hatred of Israel and antisemitism are rife and have been indoctrinated. The government has been hamstrung in applying more stringent measures, essentially due to the Human Rights Act and earlier UN legislation, which were not in force during the pre-war years. How many Jewish lives could have been saved?

*Anthony Goldsmith
Wembley, Middx*

GENERAL SETTLEMENT FUND

Sir – Now we know that settled claims in relation to the Austrian General Settlement Fund are being scaled down to about 15 per cent, it is evident what a huge mistake the Claims Conference has committed to let the Austrians off the hook when it is clear that the total valid claims are well over £1.25 billion – never mind the £480 million figure in Peter Phillips's letter (September).

Whilst writing, I have just received a letter from the Fund in relation to my claim for family members. If the total claim is scaled back to 15 per cent, I should be receiving approximately \$30,000. I do want this money, but I want those who really need it to have it. I do not know what influence the AJR can apply to get money from the Settlement to survivors in need speedily, but you should know I intend to give 30 per cent of whatever is paid out to the AJR as long as it is used to make payments to survivors in the UK in need (not restricted to Austrians), and the other 70 per cent to a similar organisation in Israel. It is clear survivors need funds for medical, dental and ophthalmic expenses, never mind food and whatever additional funds Israeli Prime Minister Olmert is paying out now.

Peter Simpson, Jerusalem

NUMBER OF JEWS IN BRITAIN UNDERESTIMATED

Sir – Mr Channing (July) greatly underestimates the number of Jews in Britain because he defines being Jewish as being Jewish by religion. So did the 2001 census, which specifically asked a question about religion and found 270,000 people to be Jewish in that sense.

But the total number of Jews in Britain is very much greater. Some have become Christian, but much more typical are those of us who have simply ceased to have a religious belief yet continue to think of ourselves, and are thought of by others, as Jews. Among the 70,000 refugees from the 1930s a large proportion falls into that category, especially among those from Germany. Many had ceased to be Jewish by religion generations ago.

Most 'practising' Jews have become increasingly assimilated and, I suppose, the degree of assimilation is even greater among those of us who are not Jewish by religion. Some – not many – have chosen to drop out completely, but the great majority of us secular Jews continue to think of ourselves as Jewish – even if the AJR is often prone to forget our existence!

Professor Walter Elkan, London NW8

ERZWUNGENER FREITOD

Sir – The review of *Erzwungener Freitag* (October) reminded me of an erstwhile neglected corner of the Zentralfriedhof in Vienna which has recently been restored through the efforts of Professor Gerald Stourzh of Vienna University. It provided burials for those who had converted but to whom the Nuremberg laws were applied and were thus denied graves in other cemeteries. The history of those interred there has been researched and many of them committed suicide on the eve of their deportation. Incidentally, some of the graves are marked both by a cross and a Star of David.

Evi Wohlgenuth, London NW3

HELP WITH THESIS

Sir – In late 2003 you published a request from my late husband, Dr John Zamet, for information which would help with his PhD thesis 'German and Austrian Refugee Dentists 1933-1945: The Response of the British Authorities'. He received an overwhelming response from relatives and patients of some 20 of those refugees, including photographs and valuable printed material, and he was lucky enough to meet and talk to many of the people who contacted him.

Sadly, he died in May this year, aged 74, two months after submitting his thesis to Oxford Brookes University, but I know that he would want me, through your journal, to express our sincere thanks for this invaluable help. The thesis will eventually be published as a book and will include a section on the individual personal

histories of those dentists who succeeded in setting up in practice, and on some of those who did not manage to come to Britain. So, if any of your readers would like to add further memories (via the *Journal*), I will be able to include them.

Susan J. Zamet, London N6

'OBVIOUS PARALLEL'

Sir – I would like to comment on the excellent letter in the October issue by John D. Phillip. Of course if you start wars, you should be ready to accept the consequences if you happen to lose. To the Arabs, this does not seem to make sense. Besides the examples brought by John Phillip, if this subject comes up in arguments you could also quote Hungary losing two-thirds of its territory to Romania, Slovakia and Croatia after fighting on the losing side.

Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath, Herts

AJR TEA A GREAT TREAT

Sir – How much my wife and I enjoyed this year's operatic gathering in Watford! It was a long trip for us but well worth it. It was also the first AJR 'meeting' I have attended but I hope it won't be the last. I was frankly amazed at the large turnout. I was just a youngster of not quite nine years old when I arrived with my parents in September 1939. We were lucky. The many we left behind in Berlin two days earlier ended their lives at Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt. They are still mourned. My own life was a happier one and I became education editor of the *Daily Telegraph* (18 years) and head of its Paris office (three years).

Please pass on my compliments to those who organised the event and to the editor of the *AJR Journal*, which I read with great pleasure. My dear late parents used to get it – or one very similar – and always read it from cover to cover. Now I follow suit.

John Izbicki, Tonbridge, Kent

Sir – Once again we enjoyed a wonderful annual Tea and concert at the Watford Hilton Hotel. I would like to show my appreciation for all the good work done by the AJR in arranging happy events and other outings to theatres etc and arranging interesting programmes at the Cleve Road Centre all year round. The meals are always good and everyone is made welcome there. Many thanks to Susie Kaufman and all the staff. We are lucky to have the AJR to look after us so well.

Josie Dutch, London NW2

Sir – What an enjoyable afternoon my husband and I had at the AJR Tea! The singers were in good voice and everybody enjoyed their selection of music. But, above all, we had the opportunity of catching up with friends from other parts of London and that was a great treat.

Meta and Joe Roseneil, Ilford AJR Group

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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The voluptuous charms of a bejewelled Egyptian girl gazing discreetly down at two tiny bronze cymbals in her hands is the pièce de résistance of Ben Uri's exhibition **Auktion 392, Reclaiming the Galerie Stern,**



Emile Vernet-Lecomte *Aimee, eine junge Ägypterin*

Düsseldorf. Framed by a theatrical curtain, this painting, by **Emile Vernet-Lecomte**, was successfully restituted to the Stern estate after the Nazis forced its Jewish owner, Max Stern, to sell the contents of his gallery in 1937. The Ben Uri features Stern's gallery in its launch of a European tour of Nazi plundered art.

Thus Boundary Road is reconstructed into the fateful Auktion 392 in which the distraught dealer sold his dynastic collection through Lempertz auctioneers in Cologne, a place frequented by noted Nazi looters like Hermann Göring. It all contributed to an eerie atmosphere as black-and-white prints of major works from the collection by many Northern European artists such as **Richard Burnier, Wilhelm von Schadow** and **Johannes Koekkoek** are arranged like a shadow show of vanished times. **Nicaise**

de Keyser's beautiful *Pieta* and **Eduard von Gebhardt's** depiction of his sick wife are riveting. Much of the work is pastorally idyllic – an ironic twist when you consider the cruel cynicism with which these paintings were despatched. Stern was fond of Old Masters but concerned himself less with modern European art, although some **Otto Dix** paintings and other Expressionist works were removed from his gallery to feature in the Nazis' contemporaneous Munich exhibition of **Entartete Kunst** (Degenerate Art), which sounded the death knell to Jewish artists in particular and freedom of expression in general.

Stern fled to Paris virtually penniless. He later joined his sister in London until he was interned as an enemy alien, first in Britain and later in Canada. After the war, he retrieved some of his pillaged art and became a successful art dealer in Montreal, promoting modern sculptors like **Jacob Epstein, Henry Moore** and **Auguste Rodin**. Recovering the rest of the works sold in Auktion 392 is complicated by the fact that dealers are not legally bound to provide a work's full provenance or history. Max Stern unwittingly colluded by failing to provide provenance records of his works. Thus the disintegration of his gallery and a vital artistic history of his times disappeared well before Kristallnacht, an ugly hint of the darkness to come. Meanwhile, the totemic Egyptian girl with the Sephardi nose, painted in the wake of Napoleon's march into Egypt, remains an oriental symbol of dignity in defeat.

The **National Gallery's** exhibition **Work, Rest and Play**, flagged up last month, opens with **Duane Hanson's** super-realistic, life-size sculpture *Traveller*. Dozing while waiting for his flight – it's a pure case of leisure imitating work. Twenty-five artists from **Canaletto** and **Gauguin**, to **Ford Madox Brown** offer their views of work and play. **Giovanni Battista Moroni's** reflective sixteenth-century tailor is beautifully observed and contrasts with **Laura Knight's** intense vision of women at work during the Second World War, and **Maggi Hambling's** portrait of the chemist Dr Dorothy Hodgkin, whose very hands seem to burn with intellectual fervour.

REVIEWS

'We did what we thought we had to do'

THE KING'S MOST LOYAL ENEMY ALIENS: GERMANS WHO FOUGHT FOR BRITAIN IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by Helen Fry

Sutton Publishing, 2007, 240 pp., £18.99 hardback ISBN 978-0-7509-4700-4

In September this year, a reunion of refugees who served in Britain's Forces in the Second World War was hosted by the Imperial War Museum and attended by some 200 veterans and their families. The gathering, sponsored by the AJR, the Leo Baeck (London) Lodge and the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women, also served as the occasion for the launching of Dr Helen Fry's new book *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens*.

While researching her earlier work, *Jews in North Devon during the Second World War* (Halsgrove, 2005, reviewed in the April 2006 issue of this Journal), Helen Fry, an honorary research fellow in the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College, London, found that one in seven of the 75,000 German and Austrian refugees who came here in 1933-39 enlisted in Britain's forces in the Second World War – a surprisingly high percentage, she points out. While under Nazi law the refugees were stateless, under British law they were still Germans and Austrians: only after the war did they obtain British nationality.

With the fall of Dunkirk, under Churchill's policy of 'Collar the lot!' the British government began the full-scale internment of those it classed as enemy aliens. By the end of the war, the refugees had distinguished themselves out of all proportion to their numbers. Without them, Dr Fry maintains, the war would have continued longer than it did and the reconstruction of postwar Europe would have been impossible in so short a time.

Dr Fry has chosen to cover only German and Austrian refugees (one wonders why the latter do not figure in the book's subtitle) who enlisted in the British Forces. She has effectively excluded overseas service in Africa, the Middle East and the Far East, as well as the role of Czech, Italian and Polish refugees in the British Forces during the war. One hopes she will be able to cover these subjects in a future publication.

The book is very easy to read, with a sound structure. In sometimes lengthy quotes, the refugees speak for themselves. There are chapters on the participation of refugees in, among others, the (non-combatant) Pioneer Corps; the Royal Armoured Corps; the Commandos (specialist fighters who carried out clandestine intelligence operations); the Special Operations Executive (fighters dropped behind enemy lines); the Royal Air Force; the Royal Navy (in which no more than a tiny percentage of enemy aliens served); the Infantry; women (it is estimated that just under 1,000 refugee women volunteered for the Forces, most of them drafted into the Auxiliary Territorial Service); and post-war crimes investigations, intelligence and military government (an undertaking which could not easily have taken place without the German-speaking refugees). In all their activities, the author underlines, the refugees' greatest value for Britain's Forces was their command of the German language.

The refugees had seen themselves above all as loyal German and Austrian citizens – their Jewishness was secondary to them. Each wanted to play a part in defeating Nazism, with whose evils they were clearly more acquainted than the British fighters themselves, and to repay the debt to Britain for saving their lives. As Ernest Goodman puts it here: 'We did what we thought we had to do ... We tried to fight for the redemption of the human race and to give history another chance.'

The book is copiously documented, with much of the source material previously unpublished. The author has provided an extremely useful select bibliography of books, articles and interviews as well as an index. With this volume, coupled with her earlier one, Dr Fry has made a most significant contribution to the study of an important, hitherto overlooked aspect of British participation in the Second World War.

Howard Spier

A remnant of belief

THE SINGLE LIGHT

by Ernest Levy

London: Vallentine Mitchell, *Library of Holocaust Testimonies*, 2007, 320 pp.

Ernst (his original name) was one of eight children of an orthodox family living in Czechoslovakia. He experienced antisemitism at an early age, culminating in expulsion to Hungary at

short notice. The span of the book is wide, taking in not only the author's experiences in Auschwitz but also under the post-war Communist regime in Hungary, for which he at first has some sympathy. It goes into greater detail than most concentration-camp accounts about the reactions of the prisoners, their day-to-day existence, and the bonding that even in such desperate circumstances gave some measure of comfort. There are even flashes of humour and bursts of song when Ernst uses his trained voice to lead singing in the block.

The prisoners' contrivances to forage for enough food to keep them barely alive are amazing. One such is a scheme by Zoltan, a fellow-inmate. Asked what would happen if he were caught by a guard, he replies: 'Stop fussing. I've sorted it. The guard in the foodstore is a German woman. I arranged it all to our mutual satisfaction. Give a little; take a little.' 'What did you give?' 'What do you think, little one?'

Another time, Ernst agrees to smuggle tins of food in metal pipes he is working on and is saved from punishment only by the guard turning a blind eye.

What is particularly horrifying is the sheer vicious spite of some of the others. 'Jew filth' seems to be their common form of address. This is matched by the Jewish Kapo, whose bloodlust demands that he clubs a quota of inmates to death. He gets his comeuppance when spotted on a dance floor after the liberation. Yet there are examples of humanity: the German guard who befriends Ernst when he is ill with dysentery, the farmer who gives the prisoners potatoes on the death march. There is a poignant moment when Helmut, the guard, surveying the destruction of his country during a pause in the march, muses: 'I'm sitting in this truck in the uniform of a criminal nation. I'm carrying a loaded rifle ready to shoot near-corpse should one make a break for it and stagger into the snow. How do I escape my fate?'

On his return to Hungary, Ernst finds that his father and favourite brother are dead, but his mother and two sisters are alive thanks to Raoul Wallenberg. After a spell of living in Israel, he follows one of his sisters to Glasgow. Debating whether to take up a career as an opera singer or a cantor, he decides on the latter and is now happily settled with a family of his own. Reflecting on what kept him going through those dark months, he writes: 'Those of us with a remnant of belief or who had known

some love for others were able to hold on.' The 'single light' refers to oil he found in a discarded sardine tin which he used to make a light for a Chanukah celebration.

Martha Blend

Painful historical testimony

THIS HAS HAPPENED: AN ITALIAN FAMILY IN AUSCHWITZ

by Piera Sonnino

Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 218 pp.

Piera Sonnino was the only survivor of an Italian family of eight who were deported to Auschwitz in 1944. Her memoir was published in Italy in 2004, five years after her death. Since there are fewer records of the Italian-Jewish Holocaust experience, this book has significant historical value. It is written in the sparest of language. There are no superfluous adjectives or descriptions, only events unfolding. The author's pain is tangible.

Living in 'dignified poverty' in Genoa, the middle-class Sonninos made excuses to potential visitors to hide their shabby home. But in 1938, when racial laws were introduced, their nightmare began. Their human and social lives fell apart. The children were forced to take whatever work they could find, except for the youngest, Giorgio, whose nerves were shattered. Their mother is described as believing in 'silence and control of one's own feelings', while 'in their house certain subjects were forbidden, and love was amongst them'. Piera believed her eldest brother, Paulo, 'died having had no experience of love'.

In a foreword, David Denby comments that 'anyone who reads the memoir cannot fail to be moved by the loving care the Sonninos offered to one another' and that their 'unselfish devotion to one another ... may have hastened their destruction. The older boys might have escaped into the mountains.' In an afterword, Maria Doria Russell notes 'how much help the Sonnino family were offered until the day they were betrayed.' Piera Sonnino herself says 'twice solutions were offered that could have saved our lives' – but, she tells us, the family were modest, lost and confused, and her mother wanted them to stay together at all costs.

It is suggested that Piera survived because she had this story to tell. Initially it was a private memoir of 60 pages, typed without error, written for her daughters Maria Luisa and Bice. David Denby compares her to the aris-

Reviews continued on page 10

**Poems by Lotte Kramer
published in Japanese
edition**

A selection of poems by Lotte Kramer has been published in a hardback edition in Japan. The poems are translated and edited by Sapporo-based Professor Junko Kimura.

REVIEWS continued from page 9

tocratic writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for whom publication was an indignity to be avoided and remarks that maybe writing completed the miracle of her survival.

Laraine Feldman

A significant Yiddish poet

**ALL MY YOUNG YEARS: YIDDISH
POETRY FROM WEIMAR GERMANY**

by A. N. Stencl

introduction by Heather Valencia

Five Leaves Publications, 2007, 124 pp.,
£7.99 paperback

In the post-First World War period, Hebrew and Yiddish writers were attracted to Berlin partly because of famine and insecurity in Eastern Europe and partly because of the rise of Communism, which made life difficult for Jewish writers, especially the Hebrew ones, who were actively persecuted. The Jewish cultural renaissance in Weimar Germany was first explored by Jacob Maitlis in a brilliant Yiddish essay in 1981 and became the subject of an excellent book by Michael Brenner of the University of Munich in 1996.

The list of writers in Berlin at that time who had written in both Yiddish and Hebrew is extensive, and includes Agnon, Bialik, David Frishman and Uri Zwi Greenberg. Berlin was a major centre of Jewish scholarship and the Yiddish academic institute YIVO was established there in 1925, though it soon moved to Wilno. The German interest in the *Ostjuden* was ambivalent. They were reviled as speakers of a debased form of German and as lacking the graces of Western civilisation – but also romanticised as mystical, oriental and primitive. During the First World War, many German-Jewish soldiers encountered the Yiddish world of Eastern Europe for the first time and developed a nostalgia for a lost past, an antidote to negative feelings engendered by acculturation and assimilation. Established writers



**Corruption more destructive
than terrorist threat**

As is its yearly wont, the Jerusalem Academic Association met to toast the New Year. Apart from the usual greetings and light refreshments, the programme also included a lecture by Mudi Levine, a retired police officer, on 'Corruption in High Places'.

The speaker began by declaring that Israel was falling in the list of countries graded by the extent to which they fight corruption. No one in Israel could fail to be aware of the scandals and accusations of sleaze which were our daily fare in the media. Our speaker had inside knowledge of his subject, having belonged to one of the special police units investigating white-collar crime and dishonesty among Israel's senior officials and politicians.

It turned out to be a very depressing occasion. The police investigate white-collar crime and political corruption on the basis of tip-offs, information from the media and subjects tackled by the State Comptroller. They do not tap phones or conduct surveillance without having been granted permission by the legal system. In other words, they act within the bounds that constrain every democratic regime.

Sadly, various instances come to light in which officials are found to be using their position for personal gain or to favour

cronies. Worse still, elected representatives are known to use their power for dishonest and dishonourable purposes. The police endeavour to investigate these suspicions in order to verify or dismiss them. This is done, the speaker assured us, in the most thorough and professional way. If the suspicions are found to have a basis, the material is handed over to the State Attorney so that the offenders can be prosecuted.

What often happens, however, is that the prosecution mechanism turns out to be ineffective. The legal staff of the Attorney General's office, our speaker claimed, is not always of the highest calibre. The best and the brightest young lawyers generally leave after a few years for better-paid employment in the private sector. When confronting high-powered legal counsel in the courts, the lawyers representing the state are not always able to prevail. In addition, judges are loth to incarcerate white-collar criminals together with violent offenders. In many cases, the end-result is a plea bargain, in which the wrongdoers are let off with a far lighter sentence than would otherwise be the case.

Our speaker concluded with an ominous warning. The venom of corruption is pervasive in Israeli society and could eventually undermine the foundations of our democratic society: it is potentially more destructive than any threat posed by terrorism. It is up to the media, the State Comptroller, the police, and the Attorney General to remain on their guard and protect our society.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

such as Alfred Doblin, Joseph Roth and Arnold Zweig responded to this nostalgia.

Avrom Nokhem Stencl fitted well into the 'oriental' stereotype. His poems frequently appeared in German translation and were well received, with an even favourable mention by Thomas Mann. Stencl came from a Hasidic family in Poland. Fleeing army service in 1919, he eventually came to Berlin. He left in November 1936 for London, where he remained neglected, except by the ever-diminishing circle of Yiddishists, until his death (1983).

The poems translated here are taken from the collections *Un du bist Got* (Leipzig 1925) and *Fisherdorf* (Berlin 1933) and are very contrasting works. In the former, Stencl is concerned with expressions of despair and hope, with struggle and conflict within the poet, and with God. There is the imagery of

mystical Jewish ideas, full of physicality and expressionistic in style, emitting pangs of pain. In the latter, there is greater harmony and acceptance of the world, indeed a profound sympathy and understanding of the simple but hard life of the fishing village (based on Neuendorf on the Wolin Peninsula). In the village, life is more limited and everyone knows his place, but there is a sense of community. One's belonging is not questioned – the individual simply has no choice. In the metropolis, one is supposed to be a free individual, but in reality one is lost and abandoned.

Haike Beruriah Wiegand and Stephen Watts have achieved a fair balance in their lively translations and the contributors to the book are to be commended for their efforts to rescue this significant Yiddish poet from unjustified neglect.

Barry Davis

Recently appointed Professor of Jewish History at the University of Sussex, Christian Wiese is a man of stature and ambition. Although he was born in 1961 in Bonn, then the capital of the German Federal Republic, his father, a member of the country's diplomatic service, was posted abroad. Consequently Christian spent the first 15 years of his life away from Germany, first in the Turkish capital Ankara and then in the Chilean capital Santiago, where he attended a German school but learned fluent Spanish. Naturally, Christian studied South American history; imbuing the continent's culture helped him to develop his own formative thinking. His time in Chile coincided with the momentous election and violent overthrow of Salvador Allende. Nevertheless, Christian retains pleasant memories of the country's people and landscapes.

Returning home in 1975, he enrolled at a gymnasium near Bonn, having to catch up with his contemporaries, especially in English and French. He also had his first 'confrontation with modern German history' – until then he had little knowledge about Hitler or the Third Reich. At the age of 18 he began studies at Tübingen University, whose eminent scholars prepared him for the option of becoming a Protestant minister. Modern church historiography revealed to him the failure of the churches and the German elites to challenge the Nazi regime. He was also shocked to discover Christian antisemitism and the political involvement of the churches in the 1930s.

Having spent two months in a kibbutz in 1986, benefiting from his knowledge of both classical Hebrew and Greek, Christian spent a year in Jerusalem among a group of theological students, engaging in dialogue with those of different religious beliefs. Especially valuable was the Christian-Jewish dialogue and, indeed, this became his main area of interest. Intrigued by Israel's beauty, he toured the country to enter into discussions on all aspects of religion with many different groups. Although he had anticipated meeting reluctance and scepticism, his experience proved to be to the contrary.

He joined *ulpan* classes and the 'not too difficult' English programme. He participated in activities at the Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem and met German-Jewish academics at the Hebrew University, where he studied Hebrew, Jewish history and Jewish philosophy. He remains particularly indebted

PROFILE

Ronald Channing

Christian Wiese New professor at Sussex University explores legacy of German-speaking Jewry



PHOTO: RONALD CHANNING

to his distinguished Israeli teachers, the historian Moshe Zimmerman and the philosophers Emil Fackenheim and Yeschayah Leibowitz. During his year he was able to identify German Jews, who still exhibited a distinct German-Jewish culture, and he took his first steps in research. To crown it all, he was married in Jerusalem and remains a regular annual visitor to the city.

Christian returned to Germany to complete his theological studies and in 1989 graduated in philosophy with flying colours. Wishing to take a PhD in Jewish studies and theology, he enrolled at the University of Heidelberg, where he was granted a fellowship and taught Latin to support his family. Rather than researching nineteenth-century Protestant attitudes to Judaism, he approached the subject the other way around, exploring the work of Jewish scholars and their perceptions of Christian-Protestant philosophy and antisemitism. He completed his doctorate at Frankfurt in 1997.

After a year's training, Christian was ordained as a Protestant pastor, at which calling he spent the next three years in a Bonn suburb parish. Being attached to a hospital and providing practical pastoral care among its patients proved extremely rewarding. However, his troubled questioning of the

instigation of the Holocaust remained unsatisfied, and difficulties arose in his mind on the interpretation by the church of the Hebrew Bible. He continued to foster Jewish-Christian study groups and discussions exploring Jewish-Christian understanding.

Eventually he decided to embark on an academic career and took up an appointment at Duisburg Centre for German-Jewish Studies, researching and publishing many tracts, including those on the Holocaust, which brought him to the attention of a much wider audience. In 1999 he was appointed Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies Department of Erfurt University. Visiting professorships took him to Trinity College, Dublin, McGill University, Montreal and Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, teaching Jewish studies. As a result he has developed a strong network with colleagues in North America, Europe and Israel devoted to modern Jewish history and thought. He also undertook a second PhD on the work and enlightened philosophy of Hans Jonas, a student of Heidegger, who migrated to Palestine in 1933.*

This January Christian Wiese was appointed Director of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex, where he has found ample opportunity for research. He is currently working on a new book on the nineteenth-century Radical Reform Movement in the USA and Germany and on a study of Jewish perceptions of Martin Luther. The fact that the Centre is in England gives him the opportunity to be in contact with German-Jewish exiles and to undertake further projects on the refugee experience and their preservation of their legacy despite the Holocaust. Over the coming years, the Centre will continue to require generous financial support if his plans to build up resources for PhD students, initiate special projects and further develop the Centre as an institute of academic excellence are to be achieved.

**Newly published in English: Christian Wiese, The Life and Work of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions (Brandeis University Press, £30).*

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

INSIDE the AJR

Hendon and North London visit to Bletchley Park

This joint outing proved a great success, not only because the venue was an extremely interesting one but largely because our guide, Ruth Bourne, served there during the war and was able to convey her experiences in a very convincing manner.

Wartime requirements demanded a strict separation of the various departments – so much so that the 8,500 people working at Bletchley Park were not allowed to discuss their own area of operation with other operatives. As a result, only the highest echelon of government knew what went on there. The Axis powers had no idea that their most secret codes had been broken, allowing the Allies to plan their actions in full possession of the enemy's plans.

One of the most fascinating items on display was a remake of the Colossus, the world's first re-programmable electronic computer, containing over 2,500 valves. The original was destroyed on government orders at the end of the war. Its sheer size is overwhelming. By chance, close by was a modern lap-top computer, the output of which is many times that of the monster original. A most fascinating outing – thanks to all who organised it!

Herbert Haberberg

Hendon: new rules for power of attorney

Michael Anvoner, a solicitor, told us we should not make home-made wills, that some writers of wills were not suitably qualified, that banks could not be trusted either, and that we should review our wills every 2-3 years. We also discussed power of attorney and were informed that new rules were to be introduced this October. Forms were available – we were urged to register immediately.

Annette Saville

Next meeting: 5 Nov. Otto Deutsch, 'Coffee Houses'



Where the enemy's secret codes were broken: outing to Bletchley Park

Leeds HSFA: history of the Wiener Library

Katharina Hübschmann spoke to us about the origins and function of the Wiener Library. The Library was founded by Dr Alfred Wiener, who, after the First World War, warned the world about the Nazis' activities, for which purpose he opened an office. The Library was founded in Amsterdam and was moved to London in 1939. It has subsequently built up a large collection of archival material connected with the Holocaust.

Martin Kapel

Yomtov atmosphere in Ilford

Thirty-two of us heard Dr Fred Rosner expand on Jewish humour in German, Yiddish and Viennese dialects – and those with knowledge of the last-mentioned laughed loudest. There was a pleasant Yomtov atmosphere at the meeting.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: 7 Nov. Tba

South London: The Grand Tour

Walter Woyda told us about the musical *The Grand Tour* by Jerry Herman, which is based on Franz Werfel's *Jacobowski and the Colonel* – about the refugee experience and fleeing from the Nazis.

Edith Jayne

Next meeting: 15 Nov. South London's Barmitzvah Celebration – 13 years

HGS: 'Jews blessed with original cynicism'

Rabbi Charles Emmanuel, former minister of Alyth Gardens Reform Synagogue, spoke about the relevance of the High Holy Days in the 21st century. He was non-judgmental: it was better to have our youth in synagogue perhaps talking about football, than not having them there at all. As a minister, he would, of course, prefer them to pray while in synagogue but, being an optimist, he expressed the hope that they would do so one day. I especially liked his sense of humour: 'Whereas Christians struggle with the concept of original sin, we Jews are blessed with original cynicism.'

Laszlo Roman

Next meeting: 12 Nov. Alf Keiles, 'The Jewish Influence on Jazz'

Varied agenda in Liverpool

A well-attended meeting was given an update by Angy Williams on next year's

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) event in Liverpool. One of our members, Ellen Shiffman, gave a moving account of her return visits to Germany. Our application for funding for the Holocaust Memorial Book is before the AJR Trustees: it is hoped to have the book published in time for HMD.

Guido Alis

Cleve Road: discussion and get-together

The meeting was hosted by Hazel Beiny and Esther Rinkoff. Following a lively current affairs discussion, we consumed apple and honey and honey cake kindly provided by the AJR Centre. Finally, we made suggestions for next year's programme. Requests were made for Rabbi Charles Emanuel to be a speaker and for us to have a speaker from Waddesdon Manor followed by an outing there. Requests were also made for further outings, including one to the Wiener Library, and for more topical discussions and social get-togethers. It was also suggested that Hazel Beiny should be officially appointed AJR Groups Outings Organiser.

David Lang

Next meeting: 20 Nov. First Birthday Celebration

Welwyn Garden City account of Greek-Jewish history

Rabbi Simon Francis gave us a fascinating account of the history of the Jews of Greece, in an illuminating but humorous manner. Even those of us who had visited parts of Greece were given plenty of food for thought, plus time for questions and the chance to leaf through the interesting books he had brought along.

Monica Rosenbaum

Next meeting: 22 Nov. 'The Wiener Library'

Brighton & Hove: power-point presentation

Howard Falksohn gave a power-point presentation on the history of the Wiener Library, of which he is Archivist, to a large number of members from all over Sussex. It was extremely interesting to see photographs of people connected with the Wiener Library over the years who had made it possible to achieve what it has, as well as to hear about its plans for the future.

Susanne Dyke

Next meeting: 19 Nov. Rabbi V Silverman, 'Jewish Jesus'

Pinner: Kitchener Camp

Dr Clare Ungerson said that this defunct WW1 camp near Sandwich was restored in February 1939 for use as a transit camp for 3,800 residents, mainly Jewish male refugees aged 16 to 40 from Nazi Germany. There were volunteer Kinder-

transportee helpers from Dovercourt. Each 42-bed hut had its own character. The popular director was Jonas May, whose brother Phineas kept a diary and conducted the camp's choir. Many inmates joined the Pioneer Corps or emigrated to Canada or Australia.

Walter Weg

Next meeting: 1 Nov. Tony Bernstein, 'The Technion in Israel'

FURTHER MEETINGS

Essex 13 Nov. 'The Jewish History of Westcliff'

Norfolk 13 Nov. Lunchtime Get-together

Wembley 14 Nov Social Get-together

North London 29 Nov. Audiologist Robert Beiny

Heat it and Eat It – AJR's Meals on Wheels service

Did you know that the AJR is the only Jewish organisation in London that provides a kosher three-course, Continental-style meal delivered to your door twice a week, all for £5 per meal?

Alongside all the other services we provide, members may not be fully aware of our invaluable Meals on Wheels. We already deliver around 750 meals per month. One recipient is Mrs Godfrey, who lives in Wembley Park. She describes the meals as 'delicious' and adds that 'It's wonderful that the AJR has not forgotten about us just because we can't come to the Day Centre!'

Mr Hayman of Mill Hill also takes delivery of AJR's meals. 'I have the easy bit,' he says. 'The AJR does all the hard work – cooking, packaging and

delivering. All I have to do is heat it and eat it. They're very tasty!'

Prepared in our kitchens at the AJR Centre in West Hampstead, our meals are delivered by AJR drivers to members throughout north-west London, from Maida Vale to North Harrow and from Bushey to Archway. And, although we already cover a wide area, we are looking at ways of expanding the service so that more members in Hertfordshire and Middlesex can benefit. If you are interested, please let us know.

If you would like to order the Meals on Wheels service, please contact the AJR Centre in Cleve Road on 020 7328 0208. The cost of a meal is £5. We also charge £1 for delivery regardless of how many meals you want.

Michael Newman

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

Bradford Continental Friends
Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

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

Bristol/Bath
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

Cambridge
Anne Bender 01223 276 999

Cardiff
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Dundee
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

East Midlands (Nottingham)
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

Edgware
Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

Edinburgh
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

Essex (Westcliff)
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

Glasgow
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

Harrogate
Inge Little 01423 886254

Hendon
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

Hertfordshire
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

HGS
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

Hull
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Ilford
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Leeds HSFA
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

DIARY DATES

26 November-

3 December Eastbourne holiday

For further information about this event, please call us on 020 8385 3070.

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)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

Surrey
Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

Weald of Kent
Max and Jane Dickson
01892 541026

Wembley
Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

Wessex (Bournemouth)
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

West Midlands (Birmingham)
Ernest Aris 0121 353 1437

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

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Wednesday 21 November 2007
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

Dawn Somper

The first Jewish Mayor of Camden

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 5 November 2007
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

Dr Helen Fry

'Kinder serving in the Forces
during the Second World War'

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

November Afternoon Entertainment

Thur 1	Mike Marandi
Mon 5	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue 6	CLOSED
Wed 7	Toni Green – Jewish Mother Act
Thur 8	Kristallnacht Service
Mon 12	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 13	CLOSED
Wed 14	Jack Davidoff
Thur 15	Katinka Seiner
Mon 19	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 20	CLOSED
Wed 21	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur 22	Margaret Opdahl
Mon 26	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 27	CLOSED
Wed 28	Douglas Poster
Thurs 29	Paul Coleman

'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

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

Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Golden Wedding

Agi Alexander, former Head of Social Services at AJR, is pleased to announce that she and Simon celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 20 October with over 50 members of their family including their five grandchildren. Cousins came from Israel, Cape Town, Los Angeles & New York, Vancouver & Montreal as well as from Cornwall and Colchester.

Deaths

Nathan Susanne (née Singer), born Nuremberg 1920, emigrated with her husband Alexander to Brazil. Died suddenly in Porto Alegre on 27 August. Much missed by her brother Peter Singer, sister-in-law, two nieces and the wider family as well as by her friends in England, Germany and Brazil.

Wolff Lilli. With great sadness we announce the death of our dear mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, born in Berlin. She died peacefully in her sleep aged 107 on 13 September 2007 and is greatly missed by family and friends.

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'AGONY AUNT' ANNA RAEURN TO SPEAK AT BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE DINNER

We are delighted to announce that the broadcaster, journalist and 'Agony Aunt' Anna Raeburn will be our guest speaker at a dinner on **Wednesday 7 November** at Belsize Square Synagogue. The evening will begin at **6.30 pm**.

The dinner will be part of a visit to London by AJR members from Scotland and the North of England and will be an opportunity for members from across the country to enjoy an evening's entertainment and socialising.

To reserve a ticket for the dinner, at a cost of approximately £20 per head (price to be confirmed), please contact Susan Harrod by telephone on 020 8385 3078 or by email at susan@ajr.org.uk

Please note that places can be reserved only by payment in advance and are offered on a strictly first-come first-served basis.

Michael Newman

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ANOTHER HOLIDAY IN EASTBOURNE

After last year's wonderful holiday in Eastbourne we are returning to the Best Western Lansdowne Hotel.

Monday 26 November – Monday 3 December 2007

Price £420

If you wish to book a superior room, there will be a further supplement. Price includes Dinner, Bed & Breakfast, transport from, and returning to, the AJR Centre in Cleve Road, lunch on journey to Eastbourne, entertainment in the hotel

Book early to avoid disappointment
Call Lorna on 020 8385 3072 or Carol on 020 8385 3085

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ON BEING OR NOT BEING A JEW *cont from page 5*

definition, of course, I remain a Jew in the eyes of Jewish law.

How do some dictionaries define the term 'Jew'? Definitions can be gleaned from the following: *Chambers*: A person of Hebrew descent or religion; an Israelite: (offensively) a usurer a miser etc. v.t. (offensively) to overreach or to cheat. *SOED*: One of the Hebrew or Jewish people, or one who professes Judaism; *Longman's Encyclopaedia*: Accepted designation of believers in Judaism; *Britannica*: The name came to mean the followers of Judaism, including in-born or proselytes, the racial signification diminishing as the religious increased. Later refers to racial history; *Hebrew Dictionary*: One of the sons of Israel, a Hebrew, one of the people of Jews; *The Jewish People*: Judaism is the religion – and, in a broader sense, the culture – of a unique people which has been known as Hebrews, Israelites and Jews.

By these definitions, as far as non-Jews are concerned, Jewish maternity is not a necessary condition and, to the world outside, the practice of Jewish rites appears a sufficient condition. To the racist, the presence of one Jewish grandparent of either gender would 'tint' one a Jew (see above: a person of Hebrew descent). It appears that to the outside world a Jew remains a Jew even when converting to Christianity. The Conversos or, as the Spaniards called them, the New Christians, are an example. These terms were applied not only to the person who had converted but also to many generations thereafter (see above: refers to racial history). Again, by virtue of any of these definitions, I am a Jew.

If Jewishness causes Jews to huddle together because of persecution, then most Jews are Jews only because of that persecution. It follows that Jewishness is 'what has been done to us'. It is not that Jews make antisemitism; it is antisemitism that makes Jews.

Words are the medium for articulating thoughts. The building blocks of the

medium referred to as language are the use of such words. Language is, therefore, the expression of the collective thought-processes of people who use any given language. In English one speaks of Indo-Americans and many other so-called Americans. All are 'All-American'. Why does one not speak of Judeo-American but of an American Jew? This inversion demonstrates the common mindset of Anglophones: the 'Jew' seems a group apart.

On an individual level, Jewishness is a specific concept and construct; it is independent of any other definition. The attempt to flee Judaism is itself a badge of a Jewish identity.

It is simplistic to say 'I was born a Jew and will die a Jew.' My genes – at least some of them – will point to ancestors who lived in the Middle East in the past. Scientists can point to the chromosome that made me male; they may now, or will in the foreseeable future, point to the part of the DNA molecule that made my skin white, my hair black, and my nose aquiline. There is no part of the DNA molecule that can be identified with being born a Jew – not unless one considers Jews a race. But, since Jews are of all colours, they cannot be a racial uniqueness. My Jewishness then is not in my genes. So, obviously I was not born a Jew but I was born into a household that practised the Jewish rites. Is that sufficient for being Jewish? Had my parents converted to another religion before my birth, would I still be a Jew? That again depends on who gives the answer!

A Jew who has abandoned his faith has been labelled a 'cultural Jew'. What is this Jewish culture that he lives by? Is it the same as the culture of an ultra-orthodox Jew? I don't believe so. I have never heard an agnostic or atheist who has lapsed from his church described as a 'cultural Christian'.

There is obviously no simple answer to the question of why I consider myself Jewish. After all this, I am none the wiser!

Central Office for Holocaust Claims Michael Newman

Article II Fund improvements

The Claims Conference has announced major improvements in the eligibility criteria for the Article II Fund. The Fund provides the equivalent of a compensation pension to Holocaust survivors who were interned in ghettos or concentration camps.

With immediate effect, only the income of the applicant – and not that of their spouse – will be considered when calculating household income. Previously, a couple's joint income could not exceed \$21,000 or \$32,000 if both partners were Holocaust victims. The income of the applicant should not be more than \$16,000. Additionally, from 1 October 2007 social security, old age or incapacity pensions will be disregarded as income.

The Conference estimates that as a result of these changes, \$250 million (£125m) in payments will be distributed to an additional 6,000 survivors worldwide over the next ten years. The Claims Conference is writing to previous applicants, whose claims have been 'on hold', to inform them that they may now be entitled to receive the monthly payments of \$320 or £160.

Ghetto Fund

Following negotiations with the Claims Conference, the German government has announced the creation of a Fund to pay compensation to Holocaust survivors who worked voluntarily in ghettos during the Second World War.

The Fund will make one-time payments of 2,000 euros (approximately £1,400) to an estimated 50,000 Holocaust survivors. Because the Ghetto Fund provides compensation for work performed in a ghetto, survivors who received awards from slave-labour compensation from the German Foundation: Remembrance, Responsibility and Future will be entitled to apply.

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

Arts and Events Diary – November

To 25 Nov *Lotte's Journey*. A play based on the life of the German-Jewish artist Charlotte Salomon. New End Theatre, Hampstead, tel 0870 033 2733

To 25 Nov *Auktion 392: Reclaiming Galerie Stern, Düsseldorf*, Ben Uri Gallery, tel 020 7604 3991

Thur 1 Nov 'Portrait de l'oiseau-qui-n'existe pas' Song recital celebrating birthday of Polish-Jewish composer Szymon Laks (1901-83). Viktor Ullman Foundation. Hinde Street Methodist Church, London W1, 7.30 pm. office@wlm.org.uk

Mon 5 Dr Thomas Otte (University of East Anglia), 'Dervishes, Spies and Dracula: The Life of Armenius Vamberg (1831-1913)' Club 43

Thur 8 Prof Siegbert Prawer, 'Sigmund Freud's Shakespearean Autobiography' Taylor Institute, St Giles, Oxford, 5.15 pm

Mon 12 Prof Ralph Andereg (University of Cologne), 'Climate Change and Protection' Club 43

Thur 15 Mitchell Wax, 'Chagall – the Man and his Art' (illustrated talk) Kenton Synagogue Hall, 8.15 pm. B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Tel Tom Heinemann on 07973 137 718

Mon 19 Jens Brüning (Writer and journalist, Berlin), 'Early Voices of the Holocaust: The First Sound Documents Recorded with Survivors by the Psychologist David Boder in 1946' Club 43

Mon 26 Dr Ian King, 'Georg Weerth, Forgotten Revolutionary (1822-1856)' Club 43

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

Holocaust Centre's new expansion plans

Centre for primary schoolchildren to open in 2008

The unique and incomparable Holocaust Education and Memorial Centre at Laxton, in the beautiful Nottinghamshire countryside, announced a new two-year development programme at a celebration of its recent twelfth anniversary. The Centre's plans were revealed by the its Co-Founder and Director, Dr Stephen Smith, who was virtually unknown to the refugee, survivor and wider communities when the Centre opened its doors as Beth Shalom in 1995. Today, however, Dr Smith is an international authority on Holocaust education, chairs the national Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and, with his brother, the Centre's Chief Executive, Dr James Smith, is the co-founder of the Aegis Trust to combat genocide and of the memorial and educational centre in Kigali, Rwanda.

Currently, the Holocaust Centre reaches and teaches an amazing 22,000 children (and more than 300 schools) annually through its education programmes. The new objective is to increase, by the end of 2008, this number to 40,000 by introducing new education programmes and expanding the physical buildings to house them on site. At the centre of these expansion plans are the completion and introduction of the primary schoolchildren's *experience of the uprooting, loss of family and homes, and threat to survival brought by the Holocaust, calling for the almost impossible choices imposed on such young lives.* To be known as *The Journey*, this major new exhibition has now overcome unforeseen building conversion setbacks and, with a revised layout, is opening in September 2008. Already the recipient of funding from the AJR Charitable Trust, among a number of leading charitable foundations and generous individuals who value the Centre's outstanding work, *The Journey* has now received additional backing from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

As the youngsters enter the exhibition through a new children's garden, they will see at its centre the bronze statue of a little girl, the work of sculptor Flor Kent. From 2003 it

had stood on the concourse of Liverpool Street Station, part of a larger installation commemorating the arrival of children of the Kindertransport at the station in 1938 and 1939 sent to safety in Britain at great personal sacrifice by their parents in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. The statue has been loaned to Beth Shalom by World Jewish Relief, the organisation which commissioned it and which, as the CBF, was primarily responsible for initiating the Kindertransports.

The anniversary also saw the launch of the Paul Oppenheimer Fund in memory of the late Belsen survivor and leading British motor engineer who was one the Centre's most regular speakers. Scholarships in his name will enable students to undertake Holocaust studies at the Centre and at former death camps in Europe. An Avenue of Memory will form the new entrance to the Centre, featuring six pillars of rock, standing up to five metres in height, on which will be inscribed the names and sayings of survivors like Paul who dedicated themselves to the Centre.

President of the Board of Deputies Henry Grunwald QC and Holocaust survivor Dr Martin Stern called on others to join the Jewish community in condemning the genocide in Darfur. Abdul Jabar, President of the Darfur Union in the UK, delivered an appreciative emotional response. 'What is happening in Darfur has a long history,' he said, 'but we never thought it would come to genocide.'

Appeal to AJR members: Dr Stephen Smith, Director of the Holocaust Centre, is issuing an appeal to AJR members (many of whom generously donated items for display in Beth Shalom's main Holocaust exhibition) for ID and other documents, photographs, on loan or to be copied, and for other memorabilia to be displayed and used as teaching aids in the new children's Holocaust exhibition *The Journey*. He is also inviting former refugees and survivors to record their stories and/or to talk to groups of primary schoolchildren. In the first instance, please write to: Dr Stephen Smith, The Holocaust Centre, Laxton, Nottinghamshire NG22 0PA, telephone 01623 836 627 or email office@bethshalom.com to obtain a form.

Newsround

Pope visits Vienna memorial

Pope Benedict XVI has visited the Holocaust memorial in Vienna's Judenplatz, where he met with Chief Rabbi Paul Chaim Eisenberg and other leaders of the city's remaining 7,000 Jews. During a three-day 'pilgrimage' to Austria, Pope Benedict said his prayer at the memorial was meant 'to show our sadness, our repentance and our friendship with our Jewish brothers'.

Yad Vashem recipient of annual award

Yad Vashem is this year's recipient of the Prince of Asturias Award for Concord. The award is bestowed upon a person or institution 'whose work has made an exemplary and outstanding contribution to mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among men...'. Previous winners include UNICEF, King Hussein I of Jordan, and Professor Stephen Hawking. The award was made in Oviedo, Spain, in the presence of the Spanish royal family.

Indian Jewish anger over promotion of bedspread

Leaders of India's Jewish community say they are outraged by a new line of bedspreads called 'The Nazi Connection' which used swastikas in its promotional material. There are some 5,500 Jews living in India.

New study finds world Jewish population of 13.1 million

A study by the Israel-based Jewish People Planning Institute has concluded that there are 13.1 million Jews in the world. This is an increase of almost half a million people, or about 4 per cent, compared to 1970 figures. The largest increase in the number of Jews in the Diaspora was noted in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. There are currently some 450,000 Jews left in those countries, with about 221,000 in Russia and 79,000 in Ukraine.

Majority of Israelis support use of nuclear weapons

About 72 per cent of Israelis support the use of nuclear weapons in certain circumstances, according to a recent Canadian survey. The study, conducted jointly by the Simons Foundation and Angus Reid Strategies and reported in the *Jerusalem Post*, spanned a sample of 1,000 adults in Britain, France, Italy, Germany, the USA and Israel. 37 per cent of Israelis believed the use of nuclear weapons to prevent a war would be justified, while 35 per cent believed the weapons could be justifiably used during a war.