

# AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

## Berlin – the eye of the storm

Germany in the first months of 1945 experienced a firestorm of violence of almost unparalleled dimensions. Between January 1945 and the end of the war in May 1945, it became the arena for destruction and killing on a vast scale, both on land and from the air. Hitler's war had come home to Germany in full measure, and its final battles were fought out in the heartland of the Reich, including its capital, Berlin.

In the months after the Red Army launched its massive offensive of 12 January 1945, only halting when it took Berlin, the German army suffered its greatest losses of the war. In January 1945, the number of German fighting men killed was over 450,000, far more than the 185,000 soldiers who died in January 1943, when Stalingrad fell. As Professor Richard Bessel has pointed out in his recently published study, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace*, this was considerably more than the losses suffered by Britain or the USA during the entire war.

The killing was on a staggering scale: in the following three months, February to April 1945, the monthly toll of German military casualties never fell below 280,000. Though Germany had no hope of winning the war, Hitler's strategy of resistance to the bitter end led to a grinding campaign of destruction, in which stubborn German resistance was engulfed by the Allies' overwhelming superiority. The cost was terrible: the Red Army in particular, always prodigal with human lives, suffered enormous losses in its advance into Germany, losses for which its soldiers duly sought vengeance.

The RAF and the USAF intensified their onslaught on Germany's cities from the air, dropping almost 50 per cent more tons of bombs on Germany in the first three months of 1945 than they had in the whole of 1943. The air raid that destroyed Dresden on 25 February 1945 was replicated all over Germany, with smaller towns like



Red Army captures Berlin

Pforzheim and Würzburg suffering devastating damage. Civilian casualties were enormous and Germany's entire infrastructure – transport, communications, fuel, gas, electricity, water, food supply – broke down. Huge numbers of civilian casualties also occurred in the East, as several million Germans fled before the advancing Red Army. These disorganised treks in freezing weather cost hundreds of thousands of lives. Civilians suffered terribly as the Red Army fought its way into one German city after another, especially those like Breslau and Königsberg, which the German military leadership had designated as 'city fortresses' and forbidden to surrender.

The chaos that engulfed the Reich in its dying months did not spare the Jews, even though the gas chambers in the extermination camps had ceased to operate by 1945. As the camp system broke down, Jews died in thousands on senseless death marches or from hunger, disease and maltreatment in the appalling conditions prevailing in camps like Belsen and Dachau. Of the 700,000 people in camps in January

1945, of whom some 200,000 were Jews, between 200,000 and 350,000 died. Nothing characterises the wanton savagery inherent in the Nazi system more clearly than the way it attempted, almost as a kind of automatic reflex, to continue the genocide of the Jews by makeshift means at a stage when Nazism itself was collapsing.

The Nazi leadership, obsessed with avoiding another November 1918 and the humiliation of surrender, had no strategy to offer than that of fighting on, against hopeless odds and in an utterly desperate situation. The regime now had to make Germans, civilians and soldiers, support a lost war and conduct a pointless resistance against a superior foe, at enormous cost in human suffering and material destruction. This compelled the authorities to employ increasingly ruthless measures against their own citizens: ordinary Germans not hostile to Hitler were now exposed to the Nazi terror, as any signs of unwillingness to prosecute the war to the bitterest of ends were punished drastically, often by summary execution. It was a strategy almost designed to maximise casualties, military and civilian.

The maelstrom of violence visited upon Nazi Germany in 1945 must be seen in the context of the greater violence inflicted by Nazi Germany on the peoples of Europe and on those like the Jews whom it designated as its foes. The violence was the logical end product of Nazi policies and German wartime practices. So this article is intended to convey the dimensions of the killing that occurred on German soil in the war's final months, not as a plea for sympathy for Germans. It is, admittedly, true that the innocent suffered with the guilty: Richard Bessel cites a seven-year-old boy who saw his grandmother burnt alive in the bombing of Magdeburg and a girl of 13 who was gang-raped by Russians. But when the girl cried out for her mother, a Russian

*continued overleaf*

**BERLIN – the eye of the storm**  
*continued from page 1*

soldier, not untypically, let her go – how many German soldiers showed the same flicker of humanity to young Jewish girls as they despatched them to mass graves or gas chambers?

A memorable account of civilian life and suffering in those apocalyptic months has enjoyed a remarkable second lease of life in recent years. *Eine Frau in Berlin (A Woman in Berlin)*, republished by Eichborn Verlag in 2003, is the diary of an anonymous German woman written in the weeks between 20 April and 22 June 1945 and describes the daily realities of the dying spasms of the Third Reich, the end of the war and the entry of the Red Army into Berlin. It was filmed in 2008. (Perhaps regrettably, the author's identity has been revealed: she was an otherwise unknown journalist, Marta Hillers, who died in 2001.)

The book was originally published in America in 1954 and was translated into several languages. But the German version appeared only in 1959, and in West Germany the book failed to achieve the status it deserved. This was hardly surprising, given the reluctance of Germans to confront the catastrophic defeat they had endured only a decade earlier, the reduction of their proud capital to rubble, and their humiliation at the hands of Soviet soldiers whom they had been taught to regard as racial inferiors during the Nazi period. Coupled with feelings of guilt about the Nazi past, this made Germans shy away from their memories of the war and its end. It was left to a book by a British author, Antony Beevor's *Berlin: The Downfall, 1945* (2002), to provide a full-scale study of the German capital in 1945.

Among those suppressed memories, none was more sensitive than the treatment of German women by the victorious Soviet troops. Whereas German women like the anonymous author of *Eine Frau in Berlin* sometimes had the courage to speak out honestly about their experiences of rape, German men who, if present, had been powerless to intervene or, if absent, had been away fighting for a lost and discredited cause, found the blow to their masculine self-image too much to bear. The mass rapes that accompanied the advance of the Soviet forces, though hardly a secret, were rarely discussed openly. As a result, it was only with its republication in 2003 that *Eine Frau in Berlin*

became a bestseller.

The book presents a graphic, factual account of the author's experiences, and the very objectivity with which it is written gives it a searing honesty and a gripping sincerity. With many of their men captured, dead or fighting elsewhere, Berlin's womenfolk faced the Soviet advance virtually undefended. The anonymous author does not shrink from describing her own experiences, which after the first few days led her to adopt the expedient of finding a senior Russian officer as a 'protector', to save her from the random attentions of marauding troops. She does not indulge in self-pity or parade her victimhood. On the contrary: aware of German responsibility for the war and its atrocities, the author told Kurt Marek, who wrote the afterword to the 1954 edition, that 'none of the victims can wear their sufferings like a crown of thorns. I for one had the feeling that what happened to me was a balancing of accounts'. In this respect, her book evokes a contrasting reaction to *The Reader*, which depicted the 'narcissistic self-absorption' typical of post-war Germany's attempt to come to terms with its Nazi past (see my article in the April issue).

The author of *Eine Frau in Berlin* makes plain how defeat and collapse undermined the subordination of women to men in the militarised, male-dominated society decreed by National Socialist ideology. The impotence of German men in face of the Red Army's appropriation of their womenfolk leaves her openly scornful of their traditional notions of masculinity. The unwillingness of men like her partner to acknowledge her new-found sense of freedom and independence, common to women who have had to take responsibility for their own lives, disappoints her bitterly. His emotional inability to come to terms with her experiences at the hands of the Russians effectively wrecks their relationship.

The book points to one of the most significant consequences of Nazi Germany's violent end: the severing of the link between the previously loyal population and the leadership that in the end brought misery, humiliation and death upon it. Nazism, militarism and right-wing extremism have carried little political weight in Germany since.

**Anthony Grenville**

Views expressed in the *AJR Journal* are not necessarily those of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.

**Kindertransport Reunion  
 founder Bertha Leverton  
 to emigrate to Israel**



Bertha Leverton thanks KT members for their good wishes

**B**ertha Leverton, founder and organiser of the Reunion of Kindertransport, is to emigrate to Israel to live with her family there.

At a crowded and deeply moving farewell party at the AJR Centre in Cleve Road, members paid tribute to Bertha's contribution to the Kindertransport movement – which would not have existed without her efforts.

Over 20 years ago, against all odds, Bertha took it upon herself to bring about an international gathering of those who, like herself, had fled to Britain from Nazi persecution, in many cases never seeing their parents again.

The enormous success of the 1988 First Reunion was followed ten years later by a Second Reunion, and, last November, by a Third Reunion, when almost 600 people, including guests from Israel, the USA, Germany and elsewhere, were present. On the latter occasion, undoubtedly the highlight of the day for many Kinder was the attendance as guest of honour of HRH The Prince of Wales.

At the farewell party, the present KT Chairman Erich Reich, the former KT Chairman Hermann Hirschberger

*cont. centre column opposite*

**AJR Directors**  
 Gordon Greenfield  
 Michael Newman  
 Carol Rossen

**AJR Heads of Department**  
 Susie Kaufman Organiser, AJR Centre  
 Sue Kurlander Social Services

**AJR Journal**  
 Dr Anthony Grenville Consultant Editor  
 Dr Howard Spier Executive Editor  
 Andrea Goodmaker Secretarial/Advertisements

## No needles, please!

**R**eaders, I married him! But not without first telling him two facts about me that I felt he ought to know before we got hitched. One, I couldn't cook. Two, to avoid sleepless nights, I needed to read in bed. I wasn't much of a catch but he accepted both. In return, he asked only for one thing: I was never to knit in his presence – he couldn't stand the clicking of knitting needles. I stared at him and laughed and laughed until I cried.

From the age of five, I yearned for school. 'I'm bored', I'd say. 'What shall I do next?' and 'When can I go to school?' I wasn't quite six years old at the beginning of the school year in September and, in order to be admitted, I had to satisfy an official at the local office of the ministry for education that I was mature enough to start school. Trembling, I presented myself. He asked me my name and how old I was and where I lived and I had to tell him the colour of various marbles. 'Yes', he smiled at the end of the interview, 'You are quite ready for school.'

My teacher was called Frau Pekarek. We had to call her Frau Lehrerin and had to stand when she entered the classroom and every time she addressed us. She called us by our surnames.

I was a model pupil from the start. In my fear of being late, I chivvied the entire household out of bed half an hour earlier than was necessary. The school opened at a quarter to eight for the start of lessons at eight but, on most mornings, clutching my father's hand, I would be pacing up and down outside the school at twenty to eight. It was one of my ambitions to enter the classroom before anyone else, and the sound of my solitary footsteps on the creaking floorboards gave me a delicious sense of righteousness.

School was exciting – most of the time. I still remember our primer with the red apple on page 1. A for *Apfel*. My application in all subjects was overwhelming. And indeed I learned to read at record speed (and was never bored again). No one could beat me at spelling and my compositions were read out for all to hear. I got the top grade (1) in all academic subjects but ...

It soon became clear that I had been born with two left hands. I was clumsy beyond belief. My handwriting was among the worst in my class. As for

my drawing, the teacher would look at my exercise book, hold it upside down and ask 'What is this meant to be?' and wouldn't believe it was meant to be a horse.

Frau Pekarek took us for all subjects except needlework and, while she was prepared to make allowances for my weaknesses, the needlework teacher was not – and you couldn't really blame her. The facecloth I was knitting for a whole year was as black as ink and damp with my tears of frustration. She gave me a 3 in my school report and said I deserved a 4, the fail mark. The disgrace of it almost broke my heart.

I never got the hang of crochet either, and the only skill to do with needles I ever acquired, taught me by an aunt with the patience of an angel, was to darn socks. During our early married life, in austere postwar London, I would darn my husband's socks while we were listening to the Saturday Night Play on the Home Service.

When I had stopped laughing – and crying – I was able to promise my husband-to-be with an entirely clear conscience that I would never ever trouble him with the clicking of needles.

**Edith Argy**

### **BERTHA LEVERTON**

*cont. from opposite page*

and Rolf Penzias, a school contemporary of Bertha, reminisced about Bertha's legendary determination, paying tribute to her virtually single-handed achievement in forming the Kindertransport movement. 'You never argued with Bertha – you simply accepted what she said!', Hermann declared to much laughter.

Bertha was awarded the OBE in 2005: 'To think that a child who lived through Nazi times in Germany, escaped on the Kindertransport to England, built a life here, raised a family, and was so very fortunate to have been reunited with her parents!', Bertha remarked at the time. 'I came as a bedraggled refugee – really, like we all came – and made it to Buckingham Palace to receive an honour from Her Majesty the Queen for the work I have done in reuniting those former refugee children. That is, I think, the pinnacle of my life.'

## **NEWTONS**

Leading Hampstead Solicitors  
advise on  
Property, Wills, Family Trusts  
and Charitable Trusts

French and German spoken

Home visits arranged

22 Fitzjohn's Avenue,  
London NW3 5NB

Tel: 020 7435 5351  
Fax: 020 7435 8881

**JACKMAN** ■  
**SILVERMAN**

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

Telephone: 020 7209 5532  
robert@jackmansilverman.co.uk

### **AUSTRIAN and GERMAN PENSIONS**

#### **PROPERTY RESTITUTION CLAIMS EAST GERMANY – BERLIN**

On instructions our office will assist to deal with your applications and pursue the matter with the authorities

**For further information  
and an appointment  
please contact:**

**ICS CLAIMS**  
707 High Road, Finchley  
London N12 0BT

Tel: 020 8492 0555  
Fax: 020 8348 4959  
Email: keylaw@btinternet.com

## Last trip to Vienna?

For our recent golden wedding anniversary, friends generously gave us travel vouchers. There was no doubt in my mind where I wanted to go – Vienna! But it wasn't easy to persuade my wife to do so. She wanted sunshine, but I had business to conclude in Vienna and she finally agreed. Business? Well, I had promised my late parents that I would always tend the graves of my late sister and grandfather, who are buried in the Zentralfriedhof. I hadn't been to Vienna for years. It was time to find Schreiber, the stonemason, to pay him to clean the graves.

Then, the newly built Hakoah sports club had agreed to put up a plaque to my father, Marcus Pfeffer, who had been a doctor there for many years before the war. He had always boasted how good a football team Hakoah was, particularly in the late 20s and early 30s. Sadly, although there is a wonderful gymnasium as well as a running track, swimming pool, tennis courts, a basketball court and table tennis facilities, Jewish football has now been taken over by Maccabi. Rebuilding Hakoah in the former Jewish area of Leopoldstadt was the brainchild of Professor Karl Haber, whose name it bears. It is now run by Professor Paul Haber, his son, one of the most charming men I have met for a long time. He has opened up the stadium to non-Jews and takes particular interest in maintaining the good health and mobility of the elderly. A doctor himself, he helps train the physiotherapists on site.

I have to thank Mag. Hannah Lessing of the Nationalfonds for arranging the placing of the plaque. I had not received any compensation for my grandmother from the General Settlement Fund because the social attaché at the Austrian embassy had made a mistake in filling in the necessary form – a mistake I hadn't noticed since my German isn't good enough but which I had signed. Hannah Lessing appealed on my behalf to Judge Franklin Berman, who was a final arbiter on



Peter Phillips, right, and Professor Paul Haber

disputes. He turned down my appeal, which was particularly galling in that he had read law at the same Oxford college as I. Perhaps he was afraid to show favouritism! Anyway, as a compromise, Hannah Lessing agreed to speak to Professor Paul Haber about the plaque to my father, and he kindly agreed to display it.

I apologise to readers who expected me to be my usual provocative self! I will try now! I met Dr Ariel Muzicant, President of the Austrian Jewish community. It was not an easy meeting to set up. He is a very busy man but he was able to spare us an hour. We had seen him on TV the previous evening. He is most formidable. I wish we would have had him fighting our corner for compensation from the Austrians – we would certainly have received more than the \$210 million that was agreed. Dr Muzicant blamed the Claims Conference for poor negotiating and, to a lesser extent, the World Jewish Congress. I tried to provoke him by asking whether he didn't feel guilty about the amount of money he had received from the Austrian government on behalf of the Jews living in Austria now – should that money not have been shared by all the survivors, wherever they lived?

He assured me – and I believe him – that this money was extra to that negotiated by the Claims Conference, and he fought for it because he

wanted to rebuild the once highly successful Austrian-Jewish community. The money seemingly came from Bank Austria and the Swiss banks.

There are new synagogues in Vienna (even a Progressive one!), 15 rabbis, Jewish schools, kosher restaurants and kosher shops (20 per cent keep kosher). An *eruv* is being considered. It is difficult to know exactly how many Jews live in Austria. Not all by any means have joined the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (7,500 have registered) but it is possible that the figure now is as high as 20,000, most of whom live in Vienna. Also, some Jews are now in prominent positions again, like, for instance, Ioan Holender, director of the Vienna State Opera, who, by 2010, will have held the position longer than anyone. Bruno Kreisky, the former chancellor, was, of course, Jewish but perhaps the less said about him the better. I again tried to provoke Dr Muzicant by arguing that the Jews coming to Austria were mainly the poorly educated from the Eastern bloc. He agreed but retorted smartly that so were the Jews who came to Vienna around the time of the First World War – and see how successful they turned out to be!

I like Hannah Lessing. I liked Paul Haber. I respected Ariel Musicant. He was born in Israel and, though he left at the age of three, he is a typical Israeli. I left Austria at the age of three. Perhaps I am a typical Austrian!

Before you think all these meetings weren't much fun for my poor wife, let me tell you we went to see *Madame Butterfly* at the Staatsoper and *Die Lustige Witwe* at the Volksoper (buy your tickets here – I paid as much for the Volksoper as for the Staatsoper because I bought the tickets for *Madame Butterfly* beforehand, whilst our hotel put a 25 per cent commission on the tickets for *Die Lustige Witwe*). We had tea at the Sacher and ate some of their wonderful Sachertorte; had coffee at the Hawelka after visiting the Jewish Museum; went to Grinzing to a Heuriger; ate at the Paulusstube after coming out of the Staatsoper, where,

*continued opposite*

# VIENNA

## 'I want to come back again'

Some months ago, I was delighted to receive an invitation from the Jewish Welcome Service to spend a week in Vienna, the city of my birth, which we were forced to leave in 1939. This wonderful idea was the brainchild of the late Leon Zelman, himself a Holocaust survivor. He thought that Jews who had been persecuted and forced to flee should return to Vienna and spend time there as a period of reconciliation.

We were a group of 80 – 50 ex-Viennese and 30 accompanying relatives. The majority were American, there was a large group of Israelis, and just eight of us were British. For all of us this was a unique opportunity to meet people whose early years had all been similar but whose stories of escape differed.

I was surprised and pleased that our hotel was in the Second District, where I had been born and where all my close family had lived. Our block of flats was no longer there: it had been bombed and replaced by an ugly post-war block. My grandparents' block was still standing, although refurbished and modernised. There was another surprise. The Second District was full of Jews – just it was in my childhood! There are three kosher restaurants, a bakery and two supermarkets. My husband had to go to synagogue every day as he was saying *Kaddish* for his mother. He had a choice of four synagogues but attended the *Schiffshul*, which had been my family's synagogue. It was no longer the proud edifice it had once been – the Nazis had burnt that – but a synagogue had been set up in the building next to the site, which had been the former administrative centre of the synagogue. There are many plaques in the Second District commemorating destroyed synagogues, schools and places where Jews had been rounded up for deportation. However, Mrs Timmerman, our guide on a wonderful three-hour tour of Vienna, said to us: 'I am not going to show you places of sadness – we want to replace that feeling and leave you instead with a sense of happiness.'

The trip did exactly that. On the very first evening, at our welcome dinner,



Susan Bryant from Florida (second from left) and Thea Valman (fourth from left) with headmistress and teachers in front of plaque at Bundesrealgymnasium Wien III, commemorating pupils and teachers expelled from the school by the Nazis

our group was made to feel very special by our hosts, Mr and Mrs Mariotti, Mrs Monica Van Loo and, particularly, Susanne Traunek, Secretary General of the Jewish Welcome Service. This set the tone for the rest of our time in Vienna. At a subsequent *Wiener Jause* (Austrian tea) at the City Hall, we were movingly welcomed by the Deputy Mayor of Vienna. She acknowledged that our suffering could never be erased but told us of the Austrians' sincere regret for the events of the past and their empathy for our feelings.

I spoke of those events at an inner city school. Although I had been very young when we left, I recounted my bewildered childhood memories and my feelings of loneliness on reaching this country and being unable to communicate or understand English. Many of the children were themselves refugees from areas of conflict such as the Balkans and Afghanistan. One boy from Afghanistan said he knew how I had felt as he had experienced the same feelings when he had arrived as a stranger in Vienna. The school had a memorial wall with the 221 names of Jewish pupils and teachers who had been expelled in the Nazi era. One of the teachers at the school told me she was taking a group of pupils to the Jewish cemetery to clear the weeds from some of the old graves.

Our group too visited the cemetery. An example of how sensitive the Jewish Welcome Service were to our needs was that they had made detailed plans showing us how to find our relatives'

graves – a very difficult thing in that cemetery, where sections, rows and numbers are in no particular order and often not even marked. They had even brought a bag of stones for us: 'We know Jewish people like to leave stones on graves and there are none at this cemetery', said Mrs Mariotti.

We attended Friday evening service at Vienna's main synagogue in the Seitenstettengasse. This was the only synagogue not burnt by the – Nazis because of its proximity to other buildings and it has been restored to its former beauty. The Chief Rabbi of Vienna, Rabbi Paul Chaim Eisenberg, gave our group a particularly warm welcome.

On our arrival at Vienna airport, one of the English contingent had said: 'I left Vienna at the age of one and have never been back. I feel very nervous.' On our departure from the same airport, he was smiling. 'I want to come back again', he said. I think Leon Zelman had achieved his aim.

Thea Valman

### LAST TRIP TO VIENNA? *continued*

to our amazement, the small band played a medley from *Fiddler on the Roof*, the theme from *Schindler's List*, and, most astonishingly of all, *Hava Nagila*; went to the Weisse Rauchfangskehrer, where I teased the waiter into allowing us to taste eight different Austrian wines – free – and, from what I can remember, the food was excellent too; and went to Vienna's oldest inn, dating from 1447, the Griechenbeisl. I ate lots and lots of Tafelspitz, Goulash, Wiener Schnitzel, Rostbraten, Strudel and (my wife's favourite) Palatschinken, with apricot jam. The best white wine I found to be Grüner Veltliner, the best red wine Blaufränkisch.

Will we ever return to Vienna? Who knows? I have done everything I needed to do. I don't hate the Austrians of today. Their parents or grandparents were probably Nazis but you can't hold this against their children. Perhaps we will return to Austria but next time we will, again, go the Salzburg Festival. Now this my wife really loved.

Peter Phillips

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### WITH THE AJR'S HELP

Sir – As the daughter of refugees from Vienna, I knew very little until a few months ago about how my parents came to England as they hardly spoke about their lives from 1936 to 1939. Now, thanks to the AJR, I have a much greater insight into what happened to them.

My mother, Zofia Gelber, entered, thanks to the Quakers, into domestic service and my father, Samuel Willner, had a transit visa for America which brought him to Kitchener Camp and then to the Pioneer Corps.

Over the past six months I have learned so much about my parents' early life in the UK so I am indebted to Anthony Grenville and the *AJR Journal*. As Dr Grenville mentioned in his articles relating to both subjects, very little has been written or mentioned about the Jewish refugees from Greater Germany who came into domestic service or arrived here on transit visas. If anyone can help me, I am interested to learn more about how they would have obtained their visas and what this would have entailed.

I was also fortunate to hear recently an excellent talk by Professor Clare Ungerson about Kitchener Camp at a meeting of the Manchester AJR Group.

Whilst in the Pioneer Corps, my father was reconnected with my mother, through an acquaintance he had met in an air raid shelter during the Blitz, as they had lost contact for two years. They were married in December 1940.

I have only ever known a little about my parents' background so, with the help of the AJR, I now feel I have a much better understanding of their experiences as refugees from Austria in the UK.

Judith Gordon, Handworth, Wilmslow

### CONTINENTAL BRITONS EXHIBITION

Sir – As a refugee who came with my parents from Czechoslovakia in July 1939, I should like to thank you for the excellent exhibition you organised and which I recently saw at Burgh House.

I also would compliment you on the excellent booklet which accompanies it. I do feel, however, that there was one more display board which should have given more prominence to the enormous economic, commercial and industrial contribution made by so many of the refugees. Harry Kissin (Lord Kissin) of Guinness Peat Group, R. J.

Hulse of MedoChemicals, Victor Fox of Medopharma, Richard Mattes of Mattesons meats, Paul Somlo of Somportex, Tom and Richard Tait of Sterilin are just a few of the names that come quickly to mind and there are so many more which would justify research.

I did also regret to note that there was only cursory mention of people from Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which I felt was a major omission. Also, little mention was made of famous scientists and the well-known Kindertransports from Prague organised by Sir Nicholas Winton.

I have taken the liberty of suggesting to Mrs Trudy Gold of the London Jewish Cultural Centre that they might consider the exhibition for Ivy House!

Peter Briess, London NW3

Anthony Grenville, *AJR Journal Consulting Editor*, who co-directed the 2002 exhibition, writes: *The exhibition shown at Burgh House was a much reduced version of the 'Continental Britons' exhibition originally shown at the Jewish Museum in 2002. That covered some of the areas mentioned in this letter. 'Continental Britons' was specifically intended to depict the experiences of the mass of 'ordinary' refugees, not the prominent high achievers or the British rescuers. It focused only on the Jews from the German-speaking lands, as the story of those from Hungary or Poland would have required another exhibition. To include fresh display boards would necessarily have meant omitting some of the existing ones.*

### CONTRIBUTING TO THE WAR EFFORT

Sir – I read Anthony Grenville's article about Fred Uhlman in your June issue with particular interest as it concerned the Free German League of Culture (Freie Deutsche Kulturbund, FDKB).

I feel that more mention should have been made of the literary merits of this organisation, with which my late brother (pen name Egon Larsen) was much involved, at least as far as their entertainment output was concerned.

Dr Grenville makes no real mention of the fact that many of the FDKB's actors (e.g. Agnes Bernelle/Bernauer) were later given a chance by the BBC to take part in satirical plays to help in the war effort. While it is perfectly true that satirical plays do not win wars, I think it is fair that future generations should appreciate that there are many ways in which non-combatants were at last able to contribute to the endeavours to make Germany a decent country again. Their political efforts may

not have been successful – but there are many ways to skin a cat!

Marion Smith, Harrow, Middx

### WILTON PARK TRAINING CENTRE

Sir – I read Eric Bourne's piece (June) with great interest as I was myself in the Intelligence Corps and was posted to Wilton Park after Armistice in 1945 and remained there until demobbed in 1947. I was attached to the Foreign Office, which ran the educational side under Dr Heinz Koeppler.

I agree with Mr Bourne and believe this unique re-educational experiment was well thought-out, well run and successful. The idea was to re-educate minds poisoned by years of Nazi indoctrination and to re-introduce them to democracy.

My task there was to organise transport for the many guest lecturers from public life – MPs, writers, politicians and journalists.

I still have the many press reports which were reprinted by the 'students' on the camp's own printing machine. It also produced Wilton Park's own paper *Die Bruecke*, in which thoughts about censorship could be expressed, thus getting them used to a free press in a new, democratic Germany.

I had daily contact with the 'students' and admired their cultural activities, which reminded me of the time I was interned in France as an 'enemy alien' and later as a prisoner of the Germans after the invasion.

My favourite task at Wilton Park was my weekly visit to London with eight prisoners in tail. Before departing, they were fitted out with civilian suits and the army vehicle left us at Oxford Circus to continue on foot. The purpose of these visits was to show them that London was still standing, with hardly any damage except around St Paul's – and not a city in ruins as told by their leaders. We visited all the important places, including Speakers' Corner, finishing at the Salad Bowl in Lyons Corner House, where they couldn't get over the fact that they could eat as much as they wanted (except sweets)! When I went there a year later, I found the same girl still at the sweet counter and asked whether she remembered me. Her reply was: 'Oh yes, you were that gentleman who always came with them foreign buyers from the British Industries Fair.'

I'm glad to say I always returned to Wilton Park with the same number of men I set out with.

Peter Hart, London NW2

### BUDAPEST JUDENRAT AND WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

Sir – May I add to Rubin Katz's well-informed article about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and his defence of the organisers of that uprising (May issue)? The Jewish armed defence organisation *ŻOB (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa)* was not only preparing

for the final armed resistance but was also organising help for the doomed Jewish population in the ghetto and later trying to help those few who managed to be in hiding outside the ghetto and whom they managed to contact.

In the ghetto, ZOB organised the printing and distribution of news bulletins, the building of bunkers as hiding places during the deportation raids, secret passages in the ghetto, and some secret passages in and out of the ghetto.

The few couriers of the organisation who managed to live outside the ghetto (among them Michal Klepfish and Fajga Pelitel Mead – 'Wladka') were also looking for safe places for Jews to escape to. This was almost an impossible task in Poland. They provided false papers and some contact, especially for children. They also managed some contact with a few smaller concentration camps, with the Polish underground, and with Jewish partisan groups in forests. In 1943 my twin sister and I were eleven years old: we owe our lives to these activities of ZOB.

*Wlodka Blit-Robertson  
London SE26*

Sir – I fail to understand why Henri Obstfeld (June issue) should wish to question the fact that the Warsaw Ghetto revolt was the first Jewish uprising in almost 2,000 years, since 132 AD in Judea. He instead cites the case of the Amsterdam non-Jewish tram-drivers, who struck in sympathy with the Jews. Admirable as their action was, it's hardly relevant to the subject under discussion. Nothing compares with the Ghetto revolt, which will go down in the annals of Jewish history as the most poignant and heroic event, alongside the modern miracle of the rebirth of Israel.

Since Mr Obstfeld seeks to widen the issue, I would like to make some observations about the Dutch. They rank with the Poles as the most prolific wartime betrayers of Jews, yet they also comprise the highest number of Righteous Gentiles recorded at Yad Vashem – an honour they share (pro-rata) with the Poles. But the similarity ends there: whereas Poland has become one of the staunchest supporters of Israel in the international arena, the opposite is true of Holland. That country remains an enigma – they were very supportive of Israel in its infancy, but all that changed when they went on to embrace the Palestinian/Arab cause. The rest is history. Many of the Dutch would like to turn the clock back but it's too late – the Muslim population of Rotterdam and Amsterdam equals, or will shortly surpass, that of the indigenous Dutch.

*Rubin Katz, London NW11*

#### DISCOVERIES IN HESSE

Sir – Ernest Simon's recent article reminded me of my visit to the resurrected synagogue in Romrod three years ago.

This village belongs to the rural district of Alsfeld, where the local museum has been active for many years in rescuing the cultural remnants in many villages, as well as in Alsfeld, of once thriving and old established Jewish village communities.

The guiding force in this work is H. Dittmar, a now retired headmaster and member of the local museum committee. He was honoured for his work in the Berlin parliament a few years ago under the auspices of the Obermayer German-Jewish History foundation.

The large community in Romrod lost many of the congregation by moving to other villages in the 1880s through the activities of the anti-Semitic movement founded by Stöcker, which became sufficiently powerful in some localities to cause this early exodus.

*Michael Maynard, London N22*

#### A REMARKABLE MAN

Sir – May I add a few words to Andrew Kaufman's excellent obituary of his father, Eric Kaufman? I got to know Eric after reading his profile in the March 2003 issue of the *AJR Journal*. In this article there was a reference to a niece of Sir Herbert Samuel, whom I recognised as Mrs Franklin-Kohn, under whose auspices I came to school in England in 1936. I contacted Eric to find out more, and we soon became friends.

Andrew says that on every Thursday Eric went to town to tour galleries and attend exhibitions, but in fact, on some of these Thursdays, Eric and I met for lunch at a restaurant in West Hampstead. These were most stimulating occasions, when the talk covered art, art history and the troubled history of Germany in the twentieth century – all matters on which Eric had expert knowledge. Although I was more than ten years younger than Eric, I had difficulty keeping up with him on our walks to and from the restaurant. He was indeed a remarkable man, and I miss him greatly.

*Professor Ernst Sondheimer, London N6*

#### 'CHURCHILL'S GERMAN ARMY'

Sir – Your television review in the June 2009 issue deals with a new documentary film of major importance, as your reviewer points out and accepts.

Why, then, does he not concentrate on reviewing the film – it is one hour long (!) – instead of using about half of his available space just to find fault with its title?!

*Geoffrey H. Perry JP, London NW6*

#### COMPOSITION CORRECTION

Sir – May I correct your kind review of my composition *Enosh* in your June issue? 'El male rachamim' does not feature in *Enosh*, but I *did* sing it, to the Chief Rabbi's acclaim, afterwards, at the National Holocaust Memorial Event in Coventry at the Belgrade Theatre on 25 January.

*Rudi Leavor, Bradford, Yorks*

#### 'GOD ON TRIAL'

Sir – So Mrs Stern, poor deluded creature that she is, believes that the Torah, including the Ten Commandments, was actually written by God and not by man (see June issue). How did He do this? On stone? On papyrus? Men wrote the Torah just as men wrote the Books of the New Testament and the Koran.

But surely there is more to Judaism than the Torah? What about the Jewish race and the feeling of belonging? I am glad that Mrs Stern says I do not belong to the same religion as her. I do not seek recognition, as she states, because I would not want to belong to a religion as divisive as hers. I am a Jew – a Liberal Jew – and very proud to be one.

*Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts*

#### SPINACH ON THE ROOF

Sir – I am one of those eccentrics who, even as a very small boy, loved spinach. I still do. It was therefore with great satisfaction that in the May issue of your learned journal you saw fit to print Hans Danziger's letter, which quotes the original German, which translates roughly 'How does the spinach get onto the roof as the cow cannot fly?'

My dear wife serves it up regularly – though *she* abstains – and every time I say 'Ah, the flying moo-cow!', which alludes to the great poem of which she was unaware. Now, I know there are kindred spirits among our fraternity who contribute to the immortality of such sentiments. On the other hand, it has also confirmed my wife in her belief that all foreigners are mad.

*Frank Bright  
Martlesham Heath, Suffolk*

#### OH WHAT A DREADFUL SITUATION

Sir – Oh what a dreadful situation  
Has befallen our nation  
We cannot yet travel into outer space  
But ordinary folks don't know their place  
Continuous eruptions via the news  
For once, the scapegoats are not our Jews.

Our Members of Parliament are under scrutiny  
Their greed for money lured them into iniquity  
This is the daily theme – from everywhere it seeps  
But, dear reader, this analogy gives me the creeps.

Let us stop these negative themes  
Don't we fear the peril that therein teems  
Many indulge in some escapades  
Then enjoy blaming others for their mistakes  
We must not forget that human beings are frail  
I, for one, will not participate in this destructive trail.

*Laura Selo, London NW11*

# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

**L**ithuanian-born sculptor Jacques Lipchitz is a jewel in the crown of the **Ben Uri**, which has launched the first major UK survey of his work for 20 years. Now, the Ben Uri is showing 152 of his drawings until 26 July in its show **Jacques Lipchitz, Master Drawings: The Anatomy of a Sculptor**.



Jacques Lipchitz *The Sacrifice*, Bronze. The Jewish Museum, New York ©The Estate of Jacques Lipchitz, courtesy Marlborough Gallery

Lipchitz joined the Cubist movement in 1911, settling in Paris. He became interested in his Jewish heritage around the time of the birth of the state of Israel in 1948, following his marriage to Yulla. Powerful female figures, shapes spiralling or embracing a child share this sculptural volume. Many suggest dancing movements in space, yet his love for pencil on paper is as evident as his energy in stone. The sculptor's focus on Israel and the Jewish community illuminates several of his studies for *Miracle* or *Between Heaven and Earth*, which feature the Hebrew word 'Yerushalayim' at the top of the page.

Lipchitz spent the second half of his career in America, which considerably reduced his influence in the UK since much of his work is in overseas collec-

tions. Complex and anguished in the 30s and 40s, with a strong narrative theme, the drawings become more whimsical and linear in the following decades, when he was planning his great work *Between Heaven and Earth*. Some of that earthiness is recaptured in his studies for *Our Tree of Life*, between 1962-72, and, as the drawings literally spring to life and leap off the page, there is little doubt that this artist's real power lies elsewhere – in the magisterial and elemental sculptures for which he is renowned.

The long-awaited reopening of the **Whitechapel Gallery** is a moment when the history of the East End and its future fuse – particularly in its nod to Jewish artists **David Bomberg**, **Mark Gertler** and **Isaac Rosenberg**, founding fathers of the Vorticist movement in the former Whitechapel Library 100 years ago. The gallery's expansion follows a £13.5 million campaign supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Designed by Belgian architects Robbrecht en Daem in association with artist Rachel Whiteread, the gallery opened with a display of rare documents and letters from its century-old archive.

The annual Bloomberg Commission launches there with a tribute to the Spanish Civil War, a life-size tapestry reproduction of **Picasso's Guernica** by **Goshka Macouga**. Created for the Republican cause during a time when art materials were hard to come by, the original painting is deteriorating but remains a milestone as a piece of political art. This is a near-perfect transition to the weaving process, even if lacks the original's depth of colour.

Elsewhere, you can find colourful sculptures in epoxy resin, films and kilns, and the newness is reinforced with the smell of plywood and new paint. Many artists were working during the East End's vibrant rough-and-tumble days of a century ago. **Bridget Riley's** swirling, dizzy lines, **Leon Kossoff's** *View From Dalston Junction*, **Frank Auerbach's** *Camden Theatre* – you can almost feel them in the act of painting.

## Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street (off New Bond Street)  
Tel: 020 7629 7578 Fax: 020 7491 2139

CONTEMPORARY PAINTING  
AND SCULPTURE

## REVIEWS

### THEATRE

#### Art versus conscience

#### TAKING SIDES/ COLLABORATION

by **Ronald Harwood**

directed by **Phillip Franks**

*Duchess Theatre, London WC2*

to 22 August 2009

**E**ach day while writing the play *Taking Sides*, which is set during the postwar de-Nazification programme, Ronald Harwood asked himself 'What would I have done?' But Harwood does not flinch from tackling life's uncomfortable moral issues, and musicians who face them – Gustav Mahler in his tactical conversion from Jew to Catholic and, in this double bill, Richard Strauss and the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, both perceived Nazi sympathisers – are all targets for his scrutiny. What is so uplifting about these plays is not just the power of Harwood's writing, but his refusal to adopt a moralising tone. Furtwängler and Strauss each have to face the consequences of flawed genius as layer by layer the playwright uncovers their human frailty with perception, compassion and detachment. It is we, the audience, who make the final judgements.

Fresh from an acclaimed run at the Chichester Festival Theatre, the plays are companion pieces, expressing the same moral dilemma and involving the same cast. In *Taking Sides*, Furtwängler (Michael Pennington) is interviewed by the rumbustious American major Steve Arnold (David Horovitch), who gleefully sets about his task of extirpating anyone with the slightest gleam of Nazi appeasement with an attitude of 'Gotcha, now just you try and get away!' But when the dignified Furtwängler enters the room, the question is who has the moral high ground – the insensitive insurance man-turned soldier, who describes a case of arson as 'Jewish lightning', or the artist, whose attachment to his homeland transcends his contempt for the Nazis he wished to dismiss as a passing phase?

Arnold's flagrant disrespect for high culture is matched by Furtwängler's bewilderment in the face of the other's sanctimony. Arnold fails to notice when both his lusted-after secretary Emmi Straube (Sophie Roberts) and lieutenant David Wills (Martin Hutson) stand to attention as the great conductor enters and, when Emmi puts Beethoven on the gramophone, he yells at her to turn it off. But Furtwängler's emotional speech expressing the ineffable power of great music to overcome evil fails to divert the major from his task.

While both main actors give transcend-

ing performances, it could be argued that Arnold's role is too naive, too simplistic to be credible in a situation calling for some element of discernment in his interrogation techniques. While hugely entertaining, it veers occasionally towards the burlesque, suggesting the American philistine Europeans love to laugh at. Yet, according to Harwood's research, young Milwaukee German-speakers who 'didn't know Beethoven from the Samba' were hired.

David Horovitch as the crudely bombastic major and Michael Pennington as the refined musician share a more subtle apotheosis as the tables are turned in the second play, *Collaboration*. Here, Pennington portrays the whining, self-regarding Richard Strauss and Horovitch his ill-fated Jewish librettist, Stefan Zweig. As Nazi antisemitism looms, Strauss fails to perceive anything more important than the damage to his operatic status that the loss of his favourite librettist means. Goebbels appoints him president of the Reichsmusikkammer and the composer is forced into collaboration with the Nazis in order to save the lives of his Jewish daughter-in-law, Alice, and his grandchildren. However, he tempestuously insists on Zweig's name being restored to the opera playbill when it is removed by the Gestapo. Although this valiant act appears more like the wilfulness of a toddler in a tantrum, it also proves his self-righteous rage and his humanity. Later, facing his interrogators, Pennington visibly ages in his fragile self-defence and his moving expression of love for Stefan Zweig. Isla Blair has great presence as Strauss's formidable, titanic wife Pauline.

As a Jewish playwright undertaking these themes, Harwood faced both praise and criticism for his clear sympathies with these artists. Of Strauss, he says: 'I come out in favour of him because I wouldn't like my grandchildren to be threatened by the regime.'

Gloria Tessler

## MUSIC

### A heart-warming experience TODAH V'ZIMRAH (GRATITUDE AND SONG): THE FESTIVAL MUSIC OF BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE, LONDON

CD available from Belsize Square  
Synagogue, tel 020 7794 3949, £15.00

**B**elsize Square Synagogue came into being in March 1939. In the 70 years of its existence, it has grown from a small congregation of German-speaking refugees anxious to keep up their 'Liberale' tradition into a landmark institution in London's Jewish community.

A key element of the synagogue's reputation has been its commitment to its own music, sustained by the dedication

of its learned rabbis and gifted cantors, its talented organists, excellent choir and superb musical direction. Thus, as part of its special 70th anniversary celebrations, and inspired by Rabbi Rodney and Sue Mariner, the synagogue has produced a CD, not merely a recording of the melodies of its Festival Music but a record of its 'renewed life and growth' out of the darkness surrounding its beginning as the 'refugee shul' into the broad light of the present and the future.

The production of the CD was overseen by Sue Mariner and its contents performed by Cantor Norman Cohen-Falah, organist Michael Clayton and the synagogue choir directed by Benjamin Wolf. It features music by Lewandowski and Sulzer but, as 'the musical structure of the Synagogue is not static' (introduction by Rodney Mariner), also by some contemporary composers whose music is sympathetic to the synagogue's musical tradition. Many of the tunes are, of course, familiar, even to only occasional synagogue-goers. All are beautifully rendered and movingly evocative.

The highlight of the track is Benjamin Wolf's *Tree of Life Concerto for Cello and Orchestra*, commissioned by Rodney and Sue Mariner. Similar in concept to Smetana's *Ma Vlast*, this modern masterpiece 'does to some extent try to tell a story: the story of the transfer of a community (and a body of music) from nineteenth century Germany to twentieth century England, as a consequence of the enforced exile of European Jewry before and during the Second World War' (Benjamin Wolf). The work received its first performance by the Wallace Ensemble with the distinguished musician Gemma Rosefield as soloist and conducted by the composer himself at the synagogue's Celebration Concert and was given a standing ovation.

The CD's soundtrack encompasses a precious heritage. Listening to it, from the first note of *Mah Tov* to the final chord of the *Cello Concerto*, is an extraordinarily heart-warming experience.

David Maier

### Nuggets of poignant expression

GREY DAWNS  
by Harold H. Rossney  
edited by Helen Fry  
London: HistoryWeb  
[www.britishlocalhistory.com](http://www.britishlocalhistory.com)  
66 pp., paper £9.99

**H**elen Fry, author of the acclaimed book *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens: Germans who Fought for Britain in the Second World War* (2007), has edited this slim book of verses, sketches and autobiographical reflections. There is also a foreword by Suzanne Bardgett, Director of the Holocaust Exhibition at the

Imperial War Museum.

*Grey Dawns* centres around 'thirteen unprecedented years', as the author (born Helmut Rosettenstein in Königsberg) puts it, 'six and a half years serving in Germany under Hitler and the Nazis, and six and a half serving in the British Army during the Second World War.'

Evoking his childhood before the Nazis, Rossney remembers 'cornfields, secretive woods, hiding smooth lakes' and the change that followed. A half-Jew, he understands very well the dilemmas of his Aryan friends, who resist Nazi dogma 'till the odds became too great ... for liberty had lost its voice.'

He describes the fear that surrounded Kristallnacht, of 'the rasping voice, curt in command: "Get up, get dressed and come with us, don't waste your time to pack!"'

Another poem describes a scene familiar to many of us – the parting from his mother at the station: 'The whistle blew, she turned to walk alone, into uncertain years.'

Then there is England – damp, civilised and welcoming, away from 'studded jackboots' to 'hands cutting hedgerows, nursing trees.'

And then to action in Normandy: 'Each dawn brings movements up the line, Each tired, shuffling foot a coded signal rising tall.'

In the last section, the author reflects on war: 'When all is said and done, WAR IS THE ENEMY – MY SON ... a red-eyed dragon, made by man, fiery of tongue and bred to kill ...'

While there is nothing particularly startling about the author's views, the interest of this volume lies in the details of his experience. Despite an imperfect poetic technique, there are nuggets of poignant expression which make these verses well worth reading.

Martha Blend

### 'A sort of counter-insurgency James Bond'

MAJOR FARRAN'S HAT: MURDER,  
SCANDAL AND BRITAIN'S WAR  
AGAINST JEWISH TERRORISM,  
1945-1948

by David Cesarani  
London: Heinemann, 2008,  
xiv + 290 pp.

On 6 May 1947 Alexander Rubowitz, aged 16, was chased through the Jerusalem district of Rehavia by a burly, fair-haired man who, with the aid of a second man, bundled him into a waiting car. Rubowitz was never seen again, nor was his body found. Just an everyday story of abduction in 1947, in the triangular Jewish-Arab-British confrontation in Mandated Palestine.

*continued overleaf*

REVIEWS *cont. from page 9*

The episode, however, became a *cause célèbre* and contributed to the decision of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine to recommend that the British Mandate be ended and a partition plan implemented. The declassification of relevant files of the British security services in 2004 made it possible to reconstruct the events surrounding the abduction, and this is what Professor Cesarani has done.

Rubowitz was a low-level member of LEHI, aka the Stern Gang, engaged in circulating anti-British posters. In the struggle to abduct him, a hat was dropped, marked with the name Farran. Major Roy Farran is a name to conjure with. He had

had an immensely distinguished career during the Second World War, with a series of brave, sometimes unauthorised exploits, winning numerous medals. He was sent to Palestine as a sort of counter-insurgency James Bond – not exactly licensed to kill, but with duties that were, let us say, ill-defined.

The day after Rubowitz's disappearance, Farran confessed he had taken Rubowitz to a remote spot on the Wadi Kelt, 'interrogated' him unsuccessfully and killed him. Farran was arrested, escaped twice and then surrendered voluntarily. At his court-martial, his confession was ruled inadmissible and wit-

nesses to the abduction failed to identify him: apart from the hat, there was no evidence. He was acquitted and returned to Britain as a hero.

Farran was probably not anti-Semitic or anti-Zionist before his mission to Palestine. He was doing the job that, implicitly at least, he had been asked to do. He was nonetheless pursued by the Irgun and LEHI, who succeeded only in killing his brother Rex with a letter bomb. Cesarani makes this a thrilling and readable account of events leading up to the British withdrawal from Palestine and the foundation of the state of Israel.

Bryan Reuben

## In grateful memory of George Clare

George Clare (see obituary in May issue of *AJR Journal*) came to my synagogue to talk about his book *Last Waltz in Vienna*. At the end of the meeting, I asked him to advise me on how I could claim for restitution from Austria. Until this meeting I had been totally unsuccessful in my efforts to make any claim.

George mentioned he was the recipient of an Austrian state pension and suggested I too should make an application, even though I was still four years away from pensionable age. I thought it was too early but he said it would take years of continuous harassment of the Austrian authorities to make them change their attitude towards us elderly emigrants. Furthermore, it required a change in the law. However, it was a price worth fighting for.

Pre-war Austria had no state health service and families were dependant on private health insurance. I wrote to my family's insurer requesting a pension. They advised me to apply to the Pensionsversicherungsanstalt, which was now dealing with state pensions. They would require bona fide proof of my identity. They quickly spotted a get-out clause in my application. I was sent a notification from the Polizeipräsidium in Vienna that I had neglected the law by failing to inform them of my change of address. My last registered address was March 1938. They required information on where I had spent the intervening years. Flouting the law was an offence and the matter was now under investigation.

It was time for me to get an Austrian lawyer! I studied the list of practising Viennese lawyers and chose a gentleman whose name conjured up success. We

discussed the matter of my application for a state pension on the telephone and there was an immediate meeting of minds. He was keen to lift the cloak of party cronyism and, most of all, the shame and silence concerning the tragic events of 1938.

However, getting justice is a costly business and I suggested a 'no win no fee' basis of payment, but that success could be paid out of my first year's pension. He turned out to be a winner.

He took the Pensionsversicherungsanstalt to court and promptly lost. However, the judge ruled that there was a case to be answered though he had no jurisdiction to give a ruling. He awarded us costs and suggested the case be referred to a higher authority. My lawyer now had the official blessing of the law and went to a higher court. The verdict, however, was the same. Nevertheless, he persevered until the case finally reached Austria's supreme court.

Whilst the law was slowly meandering over the finer points, it became essential to cut to the chase by opening a second front. Jörg Haider was at the zenith of his power and the Austrian government was shaky and very worried.

The beleaguered chancellor, Franz Vranitzky, badly needed allies and membership of the European Union became essential. But before he could consider such an important step he had to cast an unwelcome light on the country's Nazi links and war records. This involved tough questions that went to the heart of Austria's national character: secrecy, a culture of cronyism and shielding those who had committed the most horrendous crimes against their Jewish fellow citizens. In short, admitting Austria's guilt!

The chancellor eventually appointed a member of the Austrian foreign office to listen to and deal with emigrants' problems.

In the meantime, I was requested to visit the Austrian embassy for informal discussions. They required, among other documentation, my old school reports. The director of my last school in Vienna had been given my London telephone number and called, requesting permission for copies of my reports to be forwarded to the Pensionsversicherungsanstalt. A gentleman from the Austrian press association came to interview me. He had papers proving his status and the Austrian embassy confirmed his accreditations. Other media people called too.

The rest is history! Thank you, George Clare, it was all worthwhile!

Henry Werth

### ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY JULY 2009

**Mon 6** End-of-season informal get-together with readings and music. Club 43 At Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Hans Seelig on 01442 254360

**To Sun 19** 'A Personal Journey' Retrospective exhibition of Holocaust art by Lucienne Pszenica Morrison. At Etz Chayim Gallery, Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue. Tel 01923 822 592

**Mon 20** Professor Mitchell Hart (Florida Atlantic University), 'Nature's Chosen People: Darwinism and Eugenics in Modern Jewish Thought' Max and Hilde Kochmann Memorial Lecture. At UCL, Roberts Building G08, Sir David Davies Lecture Theatre, 6.00 pm (tea 5.30 in foyer). Tel Diana Franklin 020 8381 4721 email d.franklin@sussex.ac.uk

## Dunera Boys – who and what we are

Seventy years ago, we were the first refugees to land in Australia without valid entry documents. Essentially, we were Jewish refugees of German and Austrian background who had entered British territory with valid permits, having been fortunate enough to leave the Nazi terror before the onset of the war. There were some 75,000 of us refugees in the UK. Expecting a possible invasion, Britain was concerned that there were 'Fifth Columnists' among us. The country was ill-prepared for a full-scale war and there was a great deal of anxiety. In order to sort out genuine refugees from suspected enemy agents, the Government introduced internment.

About a third of the refugees were interned. Britain also requested Canada and Australia to accept some of the internees. Three transports were destined for Canada, one of which was sunk with many lives lost. One transport went to Australia – the *Dunera* with 2,500 internees, of whom about 2,000 of us were refugees from Central Europe.

Conditions on the vastly overcrowded ship were appalling. We endured abuse, harassment – even physical maltreatment – by the British guards, including loss of personal property. The British later paid some compensation but this in no way replaced the many valuable items lost with about 25 per cent of our luggage. The officers responsible were court-martialled.

The British Government had failed to inform not only the troops and crew on the ship but also the Australian authorities that we were refugees and not German PoWs. The Australians were amazed therefore when inspecting us in Fremantle after our seven weeks' journey to see such a bedraggled-looking lot of men ranging from 16 to 60.

We proceeded to Melbourne and Sydney, disembarking on 6 September 1940 and going by train to Hay. The moment we stepped on to Australian soil there was a different atmosphere. The guards, most of them First World War veterans who had been to Palestine, soon learned of our true status and, like real Aussies, gave us cigarettes as well as excellent sandwiches and fruit at various stops. In Hay, only one compound, for 1,000 men, was ready. The Australians stressed: 'We have been asked by the British Government to hold you on their behalf for the duration' – they had no jurisdiction with regard to our status.

From here on, events took a different turn. We were well looked after, had plenty of good food, and established our own internal government, including schooling, particularly for the many youngsters among us. The one restriction – the barbed wire fence surrounding the camp with watchtowers – was a constant reminder of our situation. The climate was harsh, but there were no major health problems.

The British Government released conditionally about 1,100 of our 2,000 *Dunera* arrivals for return to Britain. A number of shipments got through with the exception of one which was sunk with the loss of 40 lives.

Many of the returnees had volunteered to join Britain's Forces and were drafted into the Pioneer Corps, participating in the invasion and subsequent tough campaigns in Germany. Quite a number of the refugees transferred to fighting units, some paying the ultimate price.

*We have played a significant part, of which we are proud, in the post-war development and enrichment of Australia'*

At the end of hostilities, many again volunteered to join the occupation forces, becoming involved in finding war criminals. Some *Dunera* Boys played a role in the Nuremberg Trials.

Following America's entry into the war, Britain and Australia agreed to the conditional release of volunteers for the Australian army. Some 600 of us, especially the younger ones, volunteered.

We were inducted on 8 April 1942 at Caulfield Racecourse, in an area of Melbourne which has become a principal domain of post-war Jewish settlement. We were most fortunate in having as our commanding officer Captain Edward Broughton, a New Zealand Maori, First World War and Boer War veteran, and

highly educated and understanding man who has become a legend for us. With his fellow officers and NCOs, he managed to instil in us great respect and discipline, combined with a deep understanding of our history.

We underwent no basic training and were thrown to the wolves from day two, our duties being labouring – handling war materials and supplies on the wharves, railways and in storage sheds – extremely hard work until we learned a few tricks from the 'wharfies'.

On the lighter side, from the day we left the internment camps, we became free individuals, at first mixing with the people in the fruit-picking areas of the Goulburn Valley and then with the city folks of Melbourne. Contact with earlier refugee arrivals, some of them relatives, helped us to build up social contacts. At the same time, thousands of American servicemen virtually flooded Melbourne – foreigners in accent, habits and demeanour. Often we were looked on likewise and confused with them.

Being stationed the first year in Melbourne greatly facilitated our integration. We also made the most of going to dances, which often resulted in invitations to Australian homes, Jewish as well as non-Jewish. Our first camp was part of a huge American one, what is now the Royal Children's Hospital in Parkville, close to the city and St Kilda.

Specialist qualifications, knowledge and experience of any use at all to the war effort enabled some of our older internees, with the help of friends and employment agencies, to make successful applications for release.

Many younger *Dunera* Boys who had begun their higher education at our camp schools were able to enter university or use correspondence courses through army education, facilitated by connections built up in camp. Many of these youngsters became specialists in their fields – scientists, artists, university lecturers, economists, lawyers. Some went into manufacturing and business on an international level. We have played a significant part, of which we are proud, in the post-war development and enrichment of Australia.

**Mike Sondheim**

*Mike Sondheim is President of the Australian Dunera Association. This is an edited version of a talk he gave recently to pupils of the King David School in Melbourne.*

# INSIDE the AJR

## Norwich Re-Union

Once again, we hardy souls from the region assembled in Norfolk's capital city to sample the delights of Wembley cuisine courtesy of Myrna and Eva's potatoes, baked to the usual high standard. Full of vigour and undiminished enterprise, our next meeting may well include a trip to Sheringham. Don't say we lack ambition!

*Frank Bright*

Next meeting: 24 August. Usual venue

## Newcastle upon Tyne: Finding families

Michael Tobias, our guest speaker at a well-attended meeting, gave us a fascinating account of his work on Jewish genealogy, an area of research in which he has an international reputation. His talk was appropriately preceded by a brief account by Dorothy Sadlik of our recent Yom Hashoah commemoration service.

*Kurt Schapira*

Next meeting: 6 September

## Welwyn Garden City: 'Where there's a will'

Michael Anvoner gave us a talk on 'Wills and Related Matters'. His main point was that unless we have made a will, it is the law which will determine who (including the Treasury) will get what we leave. We were joined by the Radlett Group and we had a surprise visit by Ron and June Wertheimer from the Surrey Group.

*Fred Simms*

Next meeting: 23 July. Martin Calms, 'The Heritage of Southern Poland'

## Entertained in Ealing

We were highly entertained by Walter Woyda, who played us extracts from the musical *Milk and Honey*, an enormous hit in the 1960s. *Milk and Honey* was written by Jerry Herman, who also wrote the music and lyrics of *Hello Dolly*.

*Chana Tal*

Next meeting: Details to follow

## Temple Fortune: 'Watch this space!'

Suzanne Lewis gave us an inspirational talk about the past, present and future of the Ben Uri Gallery. Looking to the future, the gallery is planning to move to a central London location. As Suzanne said: 'Watch this space!'

*David Lang*

Next meeting: 16 July. Andrea Cameron, 'The Pears Family Tree'

## Ilford: Mid East update

Inna Lazareva from the Israeli Embassy updated us on the implications of the recent election in Israel as well as the Iran situation. An enlightening morning even if optimism was somewhat scant for Israel at present.

*Meta Roseneil*

Next meeting: 1 July. Anne Frank Trust

## Harrogate CF remember John Chillag

First of all, we missed and remembered John Chillag! Susanne then informed us about past and future events, including the popular annual holiday in St Annes. We agreed it might be interesting to recall people who have helped us to shape our present and future: there were many who deserved to be remembered but were rarely mentioned. As always, an enjoyable afternoon. We plan to meet again in August at the home of Rosl and Marc Schatzberger in York.

*Inge Little*

## A good chat in Kingston

Drinks in Susan Zisman's garden were followed by an array of her homemade cakes in her spacious lounge. We enjoyed a good chat. Our next meeting will be at the same excellent venue.

*Jackie Cronheim*

Next meeting: 12 August

## Pinner: A health service for the elderly

Sister Helen Jenner, speaking about her Hatch End GP practice, which strives for exemplary treatment of the elderly based on government recommendations, told us people are now living much longer. She ably answered questions from the large audience regarding dementia, stroke, heart and other pressing problems.

*Walter Weg*

Next meeting: 2 July. 'The Remarkable Life of Arieh Handler'

## HGS's fifth anniversary

After celebrating our fifth anniversary, we discussed future speakers and our finances. Our own Siggy Reichenstein then gave us an account of the unveiling of a plaque at the Foreign Office for British diplomats who saved lives in WWII.

*Laszlo Roman*

Next meeting: 13 July. David Merron, 'The Kibbutz Crisis'

## Essex looking for green shoots

Janette McCarthy of the Bank of England gave us amazing insight into the meltdown of the world's economies. Very informative and thought-provoking. We are looking forward to the tiny green shoots of recovery.

*Miriam Stein*

Next meeting: 14 July. 'World Jewish Relief'

## Wembley: Variety of subjects discussed

Many subjects was discussed with much interest: holidays taken and looked forward to; health checks GP surgeries should be providing for people of a certain age; and the (then) forthcoming Euro elections. Tea, coffee and cakes were of the usual high standard thanks to Myrna's efforts.

*Irene Stanton*

Next meeting: 8 July. Special Event, details sent out

## 'A great day out at Kew'

Ten members from Ilford joined HGS, Cleve Road and Ealing Groups for a great day out at Kew Gardens. Having learned

the history of the gardens, after lunch we took the little train which runs round the perimeter to observe the impressive trees and shrubs in a leisurely way. By no means least, we were able to make contact with Landsleute from other groups – always a pleasure as it enables us to reminisce over days gone by.

*Meta Roseneil*

## Brighton & Hove Sarid 10th birthday

We celebrated our 10th birthday with goodies and a cheese cake, courtesy of Ceska. It was good to look back at how we started and to make plans for the future. The turnout was high and we all enjoyed the party.

*Fausta Shelton*

Next meeting: 20 July. 'World Jewish Relief'



Bradford CF: From left (at back) Val Ginsberg, Anna Greenwood, Din LeBoutillier, Frank Reinman, Ralph Black (at front) Bronia Veitch, Ibi Ginsberg, Hanneke Dye (holding family photos), Lola Michaelis, Lilly Waxman

Susanne Green showed us another of the moving Memorial Books and discussed the presentation of books completed so far to the Imperial War Museum. Edgar Rothschild talked about a trip he and his family had made to his birthplace in Germany, which he hadn't visited for over 40 years. Hanneke Dye brought family photos from the 1930s-40s she had recently discovered.

*Hanneke Dye*

Next meeting: 13 August

## Hendon talk by charity worker

Shirley Rodwell, one of our members, who has been active in charity work since 1962 – caring for children and adults with 'learning difficulties', opening nurseries and even residential centres for them – spoke to us. Shirley was awarded an MBE for her services to charity.

*Annette Saville*

Next meeting: 27 July. Walter Woyda, 'A Musical Afternoon'

## Edgware address by Wiener Library archivist

The Wiener Library's Howard Falksohn showed us exhibits and memorabilia relating to the Nuremberg trials. Along with personal photos and fascinating stories to go with them, we were shown the first copy of the *AJR Journal*.

*Hazel Beiny*

Next meeting: 21 July. 'Bea Klug – Her Life and Extraordinary Times'

## Veterans' monthly roll call

A band of doughty war Veterans gathered at the Cafe Imperial in Golders Green for our monthly roll call. While the conversation lingers on the past, it regularly touches on the present.

*Bill Howard*

**Manchester: Kitchener 'not a holiday camp'**

Professor Clare Ungerson, who had kindly come all the way from Kent to address us, spoke in a scholarly and charming way about Kitchener Camp in Kent, where hundreds of young Jewish men who had to leave Germany after Kristallnacht were given shelter. No, it was *not* a holiday camp, but there was a thriving atmosphere.

*Werner Lachs*

**Oxford: An education and a delight**

Dr Scarlett Epstein thrilled us with an illustrated talk on the many tribes of Papua New Guinea – their lifestyles, costumes, festivals and history – where she and her husband had lived for several years. What an education and a delight!

*Anne Selinger*

Next meeting: 21 July. Annual Lunch, details sent out

**Radlett: History of Pears soap**

Andrea Cameron discussed the history of Pears soap, proving that even a minor byway of history can be made interesting if it has been well researched and presented in a lively fashion. We greatly enjoyed her talk.

*Fritz Starer*

Next meeting: 15 July. Regional Get-together

**A musical feast at Cleve Road**

Judith Kellner, a classical pianist and music teacher, presented her 'Desert Island Discs', including Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto*,

works by Brahms, Yves Montand, Peggy Lee, and jazz. A musical feast.

*Esther Rinkoff*

Next meeting: 28 July. David Merron, 'The Kibbutz Crisis'

**Kent: A worrying subject made enjoyable**

The Bank of England's Janette McCarthy gave us a well-informed talk about the credit crunch, making a worrying subject enjoyable! The coffee and cakes provided by members were, as always, much appreciated.

*Inge Ball*

**North London regaled royally**

Walter Woyda regaled us royally with his presentation of musicals by well-known US composers/writers not previously shown in the UK. This time, it was *Two by Two* by Richard Rodgers (of Rodgers and Hammerstein fame), which, in its US performance, featured Danny Kaye.

**ALSO MEETING IN JULY**

**Birmingham (West Midlands) 12 July.** Annual Garden Party

**Regional Get-together in Welwyn Garden City 15 July.** Groups beside Welwyn to be invited: Cambridge, Oxford, Radlett

**South London 16 July.** Lunch with speaker Tom Pike from the Bank of England

**'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

**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

**Radlett**

Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

**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

**Temple Fortune**

Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

**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

**KT-AJR**

Kindertransport special interest group

Monday 6 July 2009  
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

**Bernice Kranz**

'Homeopathy'

KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH WILL BE SERVED AT 1.00 PM ON MONDAYS

Reservations required  
Please telephone 020 7328 0208

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday  
9.30 am – 3.30 pm

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS CLOSED ON TUESDAYS

**July Afternoon Entertainment**

Wed	1	Jack Davidoff
Thur	2	Madeleine Whiteson
Mon	6	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue	7	CLOSED
Wed	8	William Smith
Thur	9	Margaret Opdahl
Mon	13	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	14	CLOSED
Wed	15	Ann Shirley & Colby
Thur	16	Katinka Seiner
Mon	20	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	21	CLOSED
Wed	22	Douglas Poster
Thur	23	Mich Ryan
Mon	27	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	28	CLOSED
Wed	29	Ronnie Goldberg
Thur	30	Fast of Av – No Entertainment

**DIARY DATES**

AJR Annual Tea 13 September

**Trip to Israel**

29 November–8 December

For further information, please call us on 020 8385 3070

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

Agnes Isaacs, Scotland and Newcastle Co-ordinator  
0755 1968 593

Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator  
020 8385 3077

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)  
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Child Survivors Association-AJR  
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

**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  
Agnes Isaacs 0755 1968 593

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

**FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Deaths**

**Walter Hoffman**, passed away Monday 18 May 2009 (24th Iyar), aged 79. A brilliant but modest, loving and well-loved man, who will be greatly missed by his wife Shoshanah, sister Hilde, relatives and friends.

**Marianne Lopez (née Rosenbaum)**, born Breslau 16 September 1914, died Kingston, Jamaica 22 May 2009. Sadly missed by her son Henry Cohn, daughter-in-law Loretta, granddaughter Carolyn, great-grandchildren, great-niece, great-nephew, great-great-nieces and nephews, the Lewis family in Jamaica, and friends.

**Ursula Webster (née Singermann)**, widow of Freddy, passed away peacefully in Jerusalem on 31 May 2009. Deeply mourned by her son Michael and family, the family of her late son Arnold, sister Margot, brother Paul and their families.

**CLASSIFIED**

**CREATIVE? Very flexible hours, approximately 5-10 per week.** I am writing a novel. I dictate, you type the words onto the computer. Please phone before 10 am. Mrs Top, 0207 722 9567.

**PAUL BALINT AJR CENTRE**  
**Chiropodist Trevor Goldman** at the Paul Balint AJR Centre, Wednesday 29 July, 10-11.30 am

**SWITCH ON ELECTRICS**

Rewires and all household electrical work

**PHONE PAUL: 020 8200 3518**  
**Mobile: 0795 614 8566**

**SPRING GROVE**

**RETIREMENT HOME**

214 Finchley Road  
 London NW3

**London's Most Luxurious**



- Entertainment – Activities
- Stress Free Living
- 24 House Staffing Excellent Cuisine
- Full En-Suite Facilities

Call for more information  
 or a personal tour

**020 8446 2117**  
 or 020 7794 4455

enquiries@springdene-care-homes.co.uk

It is March 1938. Hitler has marched into Vienna to a triumphant reception, but the 180,000 Jews living in the city fear the future. Katharine Simmons, an undercover SIS agent working at the British Passport Office, is distraught when her husband, also an undercover agent, is taken from their home and disappears without trace. Can the love of a mystery man save her? Who is the betrayer?



A thrilling novel of love, lust and betrayal set against the backdrop of Nazi Vienna.

Available from Amazon or local bookshops.

**WANTED TO BUY**

**German and English Books**

Bookdealer, AJR member, welcomes invitations to view and purchase valuable books.

**Robert Hornung**  
 10 Mount View, Ealing, London W5 1PR  
 Email: hornungbooks@aol.com  
 Tel: 020 8998 0546



**FIRST FLOOR RETIREMENT FLAT FOR SALE IN KENTON**

First floor retirement flat with lift. Warden-assisted. Entryphone system  
 1 fitted bedroom, lounge/dining room, fitted kitchen, modern bathroom/WC  
 Electric economy heating, residents' lounge, laundry-room and games room

Communal gardens  
 New 99-year lease

In excellent condition  
 Near shops, synagogues, buses and trains

Asking price £150,000  
 Please call Carol on  
 01923 857 822 or 0794 7694 844

**PillarCare**

Quality support and care at home

- Hourly Care from 1 hour – 24 hours
- Live-In/Night Duty/Sleepover Care
- Convalescent and Personal Health Care
- Compassionate and Affordable Service
- Professional, Qualified, Kind Care Staff
- Registered with the CSCI and UKHCA

Call us on Freephone 0800 028 4645  
 Studio 1 Utopia Village  
 7 Chalcot Road, NW1 8LH

**HOLIDAY FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS**

Sunday 12 July 2009 –  
 Sunday 19 July 2009

**INN ON THE PROM**

(formerly known as  
**THE FERNLEA HOTEL**)

11/17 South Promenade, St Annes  
 Tel 01253 726 726

The cost, including  
**Dinner, Bed and Breakfast,**  
 is £530 per person  
 The hotel charges a supplement per  
 room for sea view or deluxe room  
**Book early to avoid  
 disappointment**  
**Booking form – contact  
 Ruth Finestone on  
 020 8385 3070 – 07957 665468**



**PORTRAITS FOR POSTERITY**

Holocaust Survivors photographed by Matt Weisz

ARE YOU or do you  
 know a **CAMP SURVIVOR?**

Portraits for Posterity is building a national portrait collection of Holocaust survivors in Britain. We are particularly keen to include Camp and Ghetto Survivors living in all parts of the country.

For more information contact:  
 020 8341 7086  
[www.portraitsforposterity.com](http://www.portraitsforposterity.com)  
[info@portraitsforposterity.com](mailto:info@portraitsforposterity.com)

**Colvin Home Care**

Care through quality and professionalism

Celebrating our 25th Anniversary  
 25 years of experience in providing the highest standards of care in the comfort of your own home



**1 hour to 24 hours care**

Registered through the National Care Standard Commission

Call our 24 hour tel **020 7794 9323**

[www.colvin-nursing.co.uk](http://www.colvin-nursing.co.uk)

**ACACIA LODGE**

Mrs Pringsheim, S.R.N. Matron  
**For Elderly, Retired and Convalescent**  
(Licensed by Borough of Barnet)

- Single and Double Rooms.
- Ensuite facilities, CH in all rooms.
- Gardens, TV and reading rooms.
- Nurse on duty 24 hours.
- Long and short term and respite, including trial period if required.

Between £400 and £500 per week  
 020 8445 1244/020 8446 2820 office hours  
 020 8455 1335 other times  
 37-39 Torrington Park, North Finchley  
 London N12 9TB

## OBITUARIES

### Hannah Striesow, 1908-2009

**H**annah Hedwig Striesow (née Kohn) died on 15 February at the age of 100, after a long career as a GP in the East End of London.

Born in Bamberg, Franconia, Hannah decided at a very early age to be a doctor. She was thus very happy when it was decided that girls would be admitted as exceptions to the local boys' grammar school. When she was 16 her ambition was threatened: her mother died and her father had to move to Halle. The family proposed that Hannah leave school and train in a kindergarten but she threatened them with unspeakably bad behaviour if she were not allowed to continue her schooling! She continued her schooling in Berlin. She studied medicine in Halle but moved to Hamburg, her boyfriend's home town, for the final period of hospital training.

She qualified in 1933 but, being Jewish, was banned from practising and found employment as assistant to a Jewish dentist in Hamburg until he emigrated to Palestine. An ardent socialist, she had been the immediate subject of Gestapo inquiries in Halle after the *Machtergreifung* and was careful to return there only for short visits to her father. In 1936 she left Germany for London, where her elder sister, Nora Hellman, already lived.

Unable to practise here – her German qualifications counted for nothing – Hannah joined the London Jewish Hospital as a student nurse. Student nurses were not allowed to be married

and it was only after passing her SRN exams in 1939 that she was able to marry her boyfriend Hans.

During the war Hannah worked as night sister at Lingfield Epileptic colony, where her husband joined her on release from internment. He had been a lucky survivor of the torpedoed *Arandora Star* and was to have been sent to Canada a second time, but Hannah successfully claimed the right of a married woman – that she had to give permission for her husband to be sent overseas. Hans was interned on the Isle of Man instead.

A first son was born in 1944, the second two years later. After the war Hannah returned to the London Jewish Hospital. Here, following an act of parliament to benefit foreign doctors, she was able to qualify again as a doctor and in 1950 successfully applied to take over a small general practice in Forest Gate.

Finally, at the age of 42, she became a GP, living next to the practice so she could be available for patients and family alike.

For Hannah, medicine was a calling. Initially unable to afford a car, she did her 'rounds' and locums for other doctors on a bicycle. Her practice grew rapidly to the 3,500-patient maximum allowed by the NHS and, after her husband died in 1960, it became her all-consuming passion. She ran this practice single-handed until the age of 76.



When she retired at 81, Hannah was the oldest full-time doctor in the country and she continued working as a locum until she was 90. From the start, frequently asked to do home deliveries, of which she was a strong supporter, she played a leading role in the establishment of GP delivery units at local maternity hospitals. She also served as a police surgeon for 36 years, always willing to be called out to deal with the aftermath of violent crime, rape and child abuse. An excellent listener, Hannah believed that successful treatment was not just a matter of medicine but of seeing patients as a whole. She wanted to have the entire family as patients, not just women and children (for whom she started a special clinic very early on) and knew that advice was frequently more needed than a prescription. In 2001 Hannah's work in the community was recognised by the Outstanding Citizen Award given to her by Newham Council.

Hannah and her husband had a flair for making friendships with people from all walks of life and many nationalities. She enjoyed seeing her two sons Jan and Michael, their wives, her four grandchildren and her first great-grandchild, born two days after her 100th birthday.

Hannah never felt herself to be an immigrant: her home was here. In her life and work she repaid her adopted country a thousandfold for the refuge it had provided.

**Jan and Michael Striesow  
(edited by Gerald Hellman)**

### Erich Ruschin

**E**rich manned the front desk at the Paul Balint AJR Centre in Cleve Road for some years until serious illness prevented him from doing so any longer. I first met him in April 1939 at the Wilderwick Agricultural Training Centre for German and Austrian Refugees, where one day we 50 residents were surprised by a display in the common room of a variety of delectable pastries. Among us, a smiling little man in a white apron was soon identified as the talented *Zuckerbäcker* (pastry chef) who had created this tempting display.

Our course lasted about a year and only those who had by then reached a certain proficiency in English could benefit from the principal's lectures. Afternoons were devoted to practical work in the gardens and fields of our sponsors. Inevitably war conditions caused the dispersal of our group and I lost track of Erich and other friends.

Forty-six years had passed when by chance I saw Erich at the Burnt Oak street market. He and his wife Peggy lived close by and, as I recall, Erich still worked as Chief Pastry Manager at Fortnum & Mason in Piccadilly. That brings to

mind another noteworthy event in Erich's life. One of the important customers of Fortnum & Mason was King Hussein of Jordan. When the King was to be married, Fortnum & Mason was asked to bake a wedding cake that would remain fresh over a period of time. Fortnum's had the man for the job. Erich was asked to bake the long-lasting cake and deliver it himself, an invitation to Jordan he was not able to accept. However, a token of appreciation from the King was forthcoming and in due course Erich received a most beautiful wristwatch.

**Ken Saunders**



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL



### A question of double standards

The item headed 'Britain: Unorganised boycott of Israel' was tucked away inside my Hebrew newspaper. The body of the article described the response of a researcher in the UK to a proposal by an Israeli colleague to conduct a joint cancer research project. 'Don't take this personally', her email stated, 'But I don't feel able to co-operate with you at a time when Israel's government is killing innocent people, many of them children, and bombing UN schools and food supply depots. When these atrocities end, peace reigns and compensation is paid, I'll be ready to think about it' (my translation).

Her Israeli counterpart replied that British and US forces were responsible for worse atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan and that they, unlike the IDF, did not warn civilians before they launched attacks.

Be that as it may, the sad truth remains that public opinion in England and elsewhere is decidedly unsympathetic to Israel. There seems to be a double standard when it comes to the way certain countries are expected to behave. Iran's Holocaust-denying president can rant and rave about Israel's very existence being an abomination, and only a few eyelids are batted. Hamas leaders in Gaza and Hezbollah spokesmen in Lebanon can announce that their sole objective is to put an end to Israel's existence, and all one hears are sympathetic noises about the suffering of the Palestinians.

When rockets were being fired from Gaza on civilian targets in Israel, there was no outcry or condemnation from the great British public. The people firing those rockets would have been only too happy if they had landed on a school or kindergarten in Israel. This didn't happen, mainly because Israel had built shelters and an alert system that enabled civilians to take cover when rockets were launched. Nonetheless, some people were killed and

wounded, though not in the quantities that the perpetrators would have liked and not enough to arouse worldwide sympathy. The fact that the lives of thousands of people were constantly disrupted did not seem to bother anyone.

What happened in the 'Cast Lead' campaign was that, after several years of daily disruptions and occasional casualties, Israel made a concerted effort to put a stop to them. This had some success, but no one in Israel deludes themselves that this is a permanent solution. When Israel governed the Gaza Strip and came under constant attack, withdrawal seemed to be the best solution. Once Israel had pulled out, rocket attacks were launched on towns and villages in Israel proper. That is hardly any encouragement for Israel to repeat the exercise elsewhere.

The question is: What would any other government do if its citizens were being constantly attacked by a neighbouring country? Some people seem to take Israel's very existence to be untenable, and deny it the right to defend itself. Or allow that it may do so provided no civilians are hurt. But that's easier said than done when rockets are fired from the heart of civilian areas. Putting an end to Israel's existence will not really solve anything either. Even now, the Palestinians cannot agree to form a united government. Nor will finding an alternative solution for Israel's population be simple. Or is the world ready to face the moral and physical consequences of another Holocaust?

All one can say to the protestors, the boycotters, the poor, misguided souls who support such organisations as 'Jews for Justice for Palestinians' and those who think that whatever Israel does is wrong is: Life ain't so simple! The post-WWII world is not the same as it was before the war. Nor are post-WWII Jews.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

## Newsround

### Holocaust survivors said to cope better with trauma in Israel

Holocaust survivors in Israel cope better with the traumatic effects of the Holocaust than those living in the USA and Australia, according to a study by researchers from the University of Haifa. The study, carried out by the university's Centre for the Study of Child Development, encompasses the results of dozens of research works on some 12,000 Holocaust survivors living in the three countries. Dr Efrat Barel, who performed the study, said that although there was no definite scientific way of interpreting the results, the 'national sense of purpose' in Israel and 'togetherness' offered a more supportive environment than elsewhere.

### German film on *Jud Süß* director

A new film has turned the spotlight on Veit Harlan, director of the Nazi propaganda film *Jud Süß*. *Harlan – Im Schatten von Jud Süß* (Harlan – In the Shadow of Jew Süß), which recently opened in Germany, focuses on the filmmaker's most notorious work, looking back at his output through the eyes of the extended family he left behind.

### Tyrol hotel refuses Jewish guests

A hotel in Austria's Tyrol region has said it does not accept Jewish guests. According to a report in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, a Vienna family of seven tried to make a reservation in the village of Serfaus, but the owner replied by email that she didn't want to take in Jewish guests because of 'bad experiences' in the past. The region around Serfaus has become popular with Orthodox Jewish tourists in recent years.

### The Producers staged in Berlin

Berlin's Admiralspalast Theatre has begun staging the show *The Producers*, which features a singing and dancing Hitler. *The Producers*, a 1968 Mel Brooks film he turned into a Broadway musical in 2001, went on to receive a record 12 Tony Awards.

### Sales of *Mein Kampf* on rise in India

Sales of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* are rising fast in India. Over the past six months sales of the book have topped 10,000 in New Delhi alone. Booksellers said the rise in sales was due to demand from students who see it as a self-improvement and management strategy guide for aspiring business leaders.