

# AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

## Failure of a revolution: Germany 1918/19

The passing of Susanne Miller, who died last year at the age of 93, breaks a rare remaining link with the pre-1945 history of German and Austrian Social Democracy. Born Susanne Strasser, the daughter of a Viennese banker of Jewish origin, she had already joined the Socialist camp by the time of the suppression of the Austrian working class by Chancellor Dollfuß in February 1934. After the Anschluss, she went to London, where she secured residence through a marriage of convenience to a Mr Miller, from which she retained only the name.

In London she met Willy Eichler, her lifelong partner, who was to become a leading figure in the post-war German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Both were then members of the ISK (Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampfbund, International Socialist League), one of the small splinter parties that occupied the ground between the bitterly warring SPD and KPD (German Communist Party). Willy Brandt, who in 1969 became the first Social Democrat to be elected chancellor of West Germany, originally came from the Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (German Socialist Workers' Party), another party of the radical non-Communist left.

After leaving Britain for Germany with Eichler in 1946, Miller devoted herself to her work in the SPD, emerging as an expert on the party's history, and in particular on its highly contentious role during the revolutions of 1918/19 in Germany, where it stood accused of combining with the forces of the reactionary right to suppress the infant movements of the radical left. From the experience of her ISK years, standing politically between the moderate Socialism of the SPD and the revolutionary Marxism of the KPD, Miller was ideally placed to contribute to a more balanced re-evaluation of the events of 1918/19.



Revolutionary workers and soldiers at the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, 9 November 1918

In the 1950s, with the Cold War at its height, West German historians tended to see the role of the SPD, which became the dominant party in the German government when the German empire collapsed in November 1918, as having warded off the threat of a Bolshevik revolution in Germany by establishing the Weimar Republic, which was a parliamentary democracy on the Western European model, not a Communist dictatorship. This analysis plainly reflected the post-1945 confrontation between Western parliamentary democracy and Soviet Communism, embodied in the division of Germany itself between the two contending power blocks; faced with a choice between a Marxist dictatorship and democracy, the SPD had, on this interpretation, thrown its weight behind the successful containment of the Communist threat in 1918/19, as it had after 1945.

But by the 1960s a more nuanced analysis was emerging. Inspired in part by Arthur Rosenberg's pioneering pre-war studies, historians showed that in the brief revolutionary interlude of 1918/19 the choice had not been between parliamentary democracy and a Soviet-style dictatorship of the proletariat. For a start, the party of the extreme left, the Spartacists (later Communists), were far too weak and few in number to have imposed such a regime, even had they wished to. The real choice lay be-

tween the Social Democrats, who wished to contain and control the revolutionary upsurge, and the left-wing Independent Social Democrats (USPD), who had split from the SPD in 1917, refusing any longer to support the war.

The USPD was closely associated with the most characteristic political phenomenon thrown up by the revolution, the workers' and soldiers' councils that arose across Germany as the imperial regime disintegrated in November 1918. The Independents saw these councils as genuinely proletarian institutions that represented popular opinion at grassroots level, and they hoped somehow to build upon them a system of proletarian democracy. The SPD, on the other hand, was quite content with Germany's transformation from a monarchical autocracy into a parliamentary democracy, which had already been achieved in October 1918 by the reforms instituted by the short-lived government of Prince Max of Baden.

When the Kaiser abdicated and Prince Max resigned on 9 November 1918, the SPD was swept into power, supported by a wave of revolutionary fervour that it wanted, in reality, to rein back and channel into conventional parliamentary paths. The 'revolutionary' government that the SPD formed in coalition with the USPD on 9 November was thus divided at the most fundamental level, and it lasted only some seven weeks. When the USPD members withdrew from the government in late December, in protest against their SPD colleagues' moderate, un-revolutionary policies, the extreme left saw its chance and tried to launch a 'second revolution' to match Lenin's in Russia. But this merely forced the SPD, now governing alone, to call in the military in its defence, in the form of the Freikorps, right-wing militias more than willing to kill Communists. The result,

*continued overleaf*

## End of an era as Katia Gould retires from AJR voluntary work

**A**t an emotional lunch party marking Katia Gould's 90th birthday and her retirement from AJR voluntary work, AJR Director Carol Rossen paid tribute to her almost three decades of dedication to the organisation. Carol pointed out to those present – members of Katia's family, AJR Honorary Officers and current and former AJR staff – the fundamental changes the AJR had undergone during the years of Katia's involvement, some of those changes the direct result of Katia's work.

Born Katerina Löwova in the small Moravian town of Mistek, Katia traces her family back to the latter part of the seventeenth century. Her inn-keeping forefathers developed distinctive brandies for sale, while her grandfather built a distillery which was to become the third largest processor of drinking alcohol in the Austrian Empire.



Katia with grandson Michael at 90th birthday and retirement party

Katia's childhood was a happy one, though the family were aware of the latent anti-Semitism around them. Many Jews, her family among them, had adopted the minority German-speaking culture.

In 1937, at the age of 18, Katia came to London to improve her English and intending to study journalism. In January 1939 her mother visited her to celebrate her engagement to Eric Goldberg. Two months later the Germans occupied the remainder of the Czech lands and Katia

never saw her parents again.

Katia married Eric at the outbreak of war. The following year he joined the Pioneer Corps and, on army orders, anglicised his name to Gould. The couple had two sons: David and John.

In January 1950 Katia was engaged as a bilingual secretary by a (Berlin-born) literary agent. She stayed with the firm for 32 years, eventually heading her own department.

Having become a volunteer at the AJR on her retirement, Katia worked with the then chairman, Ludwig Spiro, in running the organisation's sheltered flats. She visited the tenants, listening to their problems and helping them to fill in forms and deal with the British and German authorities. Her major responsibility was interviewing prospective tenants at Eleanor Rathbone and Otto Schiff Houses, and later at the Cleve Road Centre. She

*continued on opposite page*

### FAILURE OF A REVOLUTION *continued from page 1*

tragically, was the murder of the Spartacist leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, in January 1919 and the brutal suppression of the uprising, by right-wing forces nominally under the control of Social Democratic ministers.

The Spartacist Uprising led to a fatal split in the German left. After the elections of January 1919, which gave power to the SPD in coalition with moderate non-Socialist parties, the USPD moved decisively to the left. It opposed the SPD over the latter's relations with the military, its refusal to embark on a radical programme of nationalisation of industry and its entire strategy of establishing a 'bourgeois' parliamentary democracy in Germany instead of some form of workers' government. In 1920, the majority of the USPD voted to join the Communist Party; when the remainder rejoined the SPD in 1922, the division within the German working-class movement became permanent.

Even when faced with the rise of Nazism a decade later, the hostility between SPD and KPD made a united working-class front against Hitler impossible. The events of 1918/19, including the demise of the USPD and the forms of proletarian democracy it espoused, had led to the creation of Germany's first democratic republic – but at the cost of the alienation of much of the working-class left and of an unhealthy dependence on the forces of the unregenerate right. These later proved only too ready to jettison the republic they despised and throw in their lot with Hitler.

Anthony Grenville

### Harold Pinter: Words and silences

**H**arold Pinter, who died on Christmas Eve, was one of the most remarkable literary talents to emerge from Anglo-Jewry and a strong candidate for the title of greatest British playwright of the twentieth century (admittedly in a thin field). His early plays, especially *The Caretaker* (1960) and *The Birthday Party* (1958), electrified the British stage with their astonishing ability to render the everyday speech rhythms of lower-class British urban life into poetic and dramatic cadences. Nearly 50 years later, I can still hear in my mind's ear the intonations with which Donald Pleasence, as the tramp Davies, and Alan Bates, as the unpredictably violent Mick, brought their rambling, apparently incoherent exchanges in *The Caretaker* to dramatic life at the Duchess Theatre.

Pinter's texts brought the best out of his actors. The film of *The Birthday Party* (screenplay by Pinter) features unforgettable performances from Robert Shaw as Stanley, the hunted lodger in his shabby seaside digs, from Sydney Tafler and Patrick Magee as Goldberg and McCann, the sinister pair who come for him, and from Dandy Nichols as Meg, the half-suspecting landlady too lost in a make-believe world of feather-brained contentedness to act on her suspicions.

In the drumbeat duet between Goldberg, the East End Jew dripping with sentimentality, and McCann, the Irish thug, as they subject Stanley to an interrogation so laced with barely controlled violence that it unhinges his mind, Pinter created one of the

nearest equivalents on stage to the nightmare interrogation scenes in George Orwell's 1984 or Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*. But in Pinter's play the indefinable menace of a motiveless persecution haunts the drab, humdrum realm of the seaside boarding houses familiar to Pinter from his days as a repertory actor. It is as if the absurd, unfathomable world of the plays of Samuel Beckett had been transferred from the sphere of high existential significance to the mean streets of down-at-heel English cityscapes, where conflicts that defy rational explanation are played out over cooked breakfasts and pairs of old shoes.

Admittedly, Pinter mined a narrow seam. Already in the plays of his middle period, like *The Homecoming* (1969) and *Old Times* (1971), one senses a certain repetitiveness, a mannered quality in the dialogue and a diminishing of dramatic power. This was evident in the recent revival of *No Man's Land* (1975), which, despite a marvellously blank-faced performance from Michael Gambon as the writer Hirst, never quite caught fire. Even the detailed rendering of a chunk of London's street map, that favourite set-piece of Pinter's, works less effectively in *No Man's Land's* convoluted directions to Bolsover Street than do the Islington bus routes that feature so memorably in *The Caretaker*. The plays of Pinter's last years scarcely bear comparison with his early work, while his politics forms a chapter apart. But his best-known works, with their trademark use of silences, have left a permanent legacy to the British theatre.

Anthony Grenville

## MY SECOND MOTHER

I don't like the word 'stepmother' with its negative overtones. On hearing it, one involuntarily associates it with 'wicked'. And Claire wasn't that – not at all. That's why I prefer to call her my second mother.

Of my mother I have only one clear memory. Someone holding me by an open window. 'There goes Mama. Wave to Mama!' And a figure waving, waving and disappearing ...

On 24 July 1924, when I was in my fifth year and my brother in his fifteenth, my mother, while on a walk with me, was run over and killed by a car in Schladming, an Austrian village. She was 39 years old.

My father – faced with a difficult teenager and me, who had to be left in the care of unreliable maids during the day and had trouble understanding that 'Mama is in heaven' – couldn't cope. In May 1925, less than a year after my mother's death, he re-married.

Enter Claire, my second mother. Claire, aged 44 and probably relieved to rid herself of the stigma of spinsterhood, came from a German-speaking Jewish family in Prague. I was still only five at the time and didn't object to calling her Mutti, but my brother's resentment of her was implacable. There is no doubt that he made her life a misery from the day she came to live with us. In his eyes, she was an intruder who had come to replace the mother he had adored. He left home shortly after his sixteenth birthday.

When I was about eight, my father stopped 'going to the office'. Until then I was what was known as 'ein besseres Kind', which meant that we were fairly comfortably off, with a decent flat and a live-in maid. Did I become a worse child when we plunged into abject poverty? A less happy child, certainly – but a worse one?

It was my mother who had been the businesswoman. All my father ever wanted to do was to write plays. He did write the libretti for two operettas which were performed and well received, but

both times some disaster befell the theatre and fame and fortune eluded him. Nevertheless, I believe we survived the hard years mainly through his literary efforts. Some royalties did arrive from time to time and he also ghost-wrote for some wealthy people with little talent but much literary ambition.

My mother's family – scandalised by my father's early remarriage – understandably did their best to keep her memory alive. But by telling me constantly of her beauty, vivacity and intelligence, they created a myth poor Claire was unable to compete with. I remember hissing at her one afternoon on a walk in the Prater 'I don't have to listen to you. You're not my mother!' The shame and guilt I felt immediately afterwards are with me still.

Although I neither realised nor appreciated it at the time, she was the true centre of my life. She nursed me through all my illnesses, she washed and ironed my clothes, she cooked all my favourite dishes. She would have one egg instead of two so that I could have fruit.

In 1938 my father, brother and I all got out. She stayed behind. On 10 November of that year I had been in England for exactly two months and was working for a young Jewish couple in Hampstead Garden Suburb (my third job). When news of Kristallnacht broke, the wife, who spoke English with an Eastern European accent, and I wept together. I begged her to find an employer for Claire and explained that, unlike me, she was a 'treasure'. The woman did find her a sponsor, but the Home Office turned her down. Claire was two years too old. All my entreaties at Bloomsbury House fell on deaf ears. In July 1942 Claire was deported to Poland.

My second mother – the only mother I ever really knew – was always there for me. Yet the one time she needed me I failed her. I'll have to live with this failure for the rest of my life.

Edith Argy

### Katia Gould retires

*continued from previous page*

was of enormous help to Ludwig in changing the AJR from an organisation with political aims to one with social aims. Katia was 'fully involved in all these changes,' Ludwig says.

In later years, Katia became a proof-reader for the *AJR Information* (later *AJR Journal*), at first under the editorship of Richard Grunberger and then Richard's successors, applying her wide knowledge of refugee history and enormous literary experience to ensuring that 'howlers' didn't get into print.

At the conclusion of the lunch party,

Katia, deeply moved, thanked everyone at the AJR for 'all the friendship and goodwill' she had received over the years.

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## 'UNDERPAID, UNDERFED AND OVERWORKED'?

*This is the second part of a selection of letters received in response to the article "Underpaid, Underfed and Overworked": Refugees in Domestic Service' by Anthony Grenville in our December issue. The first part appeared in last month's issue.*

I came over at the beginning of 1939 as a domestic servant to a couple of retired doctors who had practised in Burma and had previously employed a large number of Burmese servants. My tasks were to bring the couple early morning cups of tea, make breakfast, do light housework, prepare lunch, and provide afternoon tea and supper. I was allowed to eat as much food as I wanted, although if we had a joint of meat it was served directly on to my plate.

I finished at about 8.00 pm. I had one afternoon a week off and once a month I had a whole day off. If I went out, I had to be in at 10.00 pm and report my return. This may seem harsh. However, the gardener's wife did the heavy work in the morning and my employer, the husband, helped me with the lunchtime washing up. For this I was paid 15 shillings a week all found. This never seemed a fortune but I had no other expenses. I could get up to London to see my fiancé only on my full day off. Just once a month.

I had a very pleasant room and was allowed to sit and read in the morning room. My employer allowed me to read the *Daily Telegraph* after she had finished with it. After the war broke out, I would sit in the study with them and listen to the 6 o'clock news. After a while I had saved up enough money to buy a small radio for my own room. I was living deep in the Surrey countryside, where I went for lovely walks in my time off.

When we lived in Germany before the rise of Hitler, my family had a cook/housekeeper and, when my brother and I were small, we also had a nanny. The cook/housekeeper's room was disgustingly small and she had no real sitting accommodation. She probably had pretty much the same hours off that I did. Of course, she had to go in 1933 because Jews were not allowed to employ Aryans.

Whatever happened, we must never forget that our employers saved our lives. If they had not employed us, we would probably have ended up in concentration camps, like many people did.

**Lisa Klein, Reading**

I came to England in June 1939 after being refused entry to Cuba on the *St Louis*. I was not yet 16 and Bloomsbury House sent me to a Jewish convalescence home in Broadstairs as a domestic. I was

paid the princely sum of half-a-crown. There were three of us of about the same age. We had to work very hard and were always hungry. Fortunately we made the acquaintance of Czech soldiers stationed there and their cook gave us some food.

Three months later I met a Jewish family on holiday in Broadstairs and they offered me work in London for 10 shillings a week. I had never done anything domestic in Berlin but I ran their home, cooking, cleaning and looking after two girls of six and eleven. If they were sick, I had to write a note to the teacher. He must have been very amused as, after only three months in England, my English wasn't great.

Once war broke out, I was allowed to do war work, making soldiers' uniforms and gun powder bags. But we survived and did not suffer like the rest of our families who did not get out.

**Gisela Feldman, Manchester**

My step-mother, Trude Schrecker, who was an active member of the AJR, died in 2006. When I went through the family papers, I came across about 20 letters, which my mother had written in Prague to my father in Shanghai between August 1940 and August 1942. (My parents had divorced in 1935, when I was three years old, but maintained a friendly relationship.) Many of these letters are heart-rending, especially the last one, in which my mother wrote how much she regretted taking my father's advice not to leave Prague when she had had the chance to accept an offer of domestic service in England. About two weeks after she wrote this letter, she was sent to Terezin and then Auschwitz, where she was killed aged 37.

My father (who survived the war and married Trude Engel) never liked to talk to me about my mother. I assumed it was out of consideration for my step-mother. However, the discovery of this letter has made me wonder whether it was not also due to a guilty conscience for having given my mother well-meaning but tragic advice.

My mother was beautiful and, from all I have learned, intelligent, a linguist and, *inter alia*, an excellent pianist. She lived for a while with a conductor at the Scala Milan so must have been socially sophisticated. Although these may not sound like the best talents for a good domestic servant in England, how I wish

she had become one – even if 'underpaid, underfed and overworked'.

**Tom Schrecker, Val d'Isère, France**

Sir - In early 1938 my father had been released from Buchenwald, then interned in Kitchener Camp. In late 1938 he obtained visas for his wife Ettel and sister Gusti to enter England from Vienna as domestics.

The position he found for his wife was with an apparent lesbian, who asked him 'Does your wife wear trousers?', to which he replied 'She does, all the time.' For his sister he found a job as a serving maid. On the first day of work my aunt, handicapped with one leg shorter than the other, spilled a tea tray on the laps of the upper-class women she was to have served. She was fired. Whether what she did was deliberate or not was never admitted to at home – there were only sly smiles. My aunt had her own domestic in Vienna and was not going to be someone else's maid!

My mother weighed about 75 pounds at the time and my father had found them a room to share in Whitechapel with an elderly Jewish woman. As for my mother, at my father's insistence she never reported to work and my father sneaked out of Kitchener at night to work for a local farmer so as to send money to support his wife and sister and keep them 'out of sight' of the authorities.

My parents left Liverpool on the last transatlantic voyage of the *Lancastria*, on 9 March 1940. I was born in the USA on 22 February 1941. My childhood memories include remarks about how good the English working class was and how revolting the 'upper class' was.

**Ellen Minkwitz  
Dover, Delaware, USA**

It took a British author in Japan – Kazuo Ishiguro – to bring the plight of bewildered German-Jewish refugee girls reduced to below-stairs status and falling victims to anti-Semitism in an upper-class British household into a Booker Prize-winning novel, and thus into the mainstream of English narrative fiction. It took my equally Booker Prize-winning sister, Dr Ruth Praver Jhabvala CBE, born in Germany of a Polish father and a German mother, working with an Indian producer and an American

*continued col. 3 opposite*

## Vienna, March 1938: Prepared for the Anschluss

**A**nschluss. The annexation of Austria takes place on 12 March 1938. Anxiety, apprehension, hope against hope, intimations of violence and fear. But nothing is definite yet. We are with our neighbours, listening to their radio, tense, wordless, nearing despair. We do not possess a radio of our own. My mother got rid of the only one we ever had because my father continually fiddled with the tuning to find foreign stations. Now we share this Jewish tragedy with our non-Jewish neighbours.

Schuschnigg, the Chancellor, is speaking. He tells us that he can no longer resist the pressure to unite with Germany. Pressure from within the country, from his own government, from the people. He resigns and, as soon as he has finished, the Austrian anthem will be played. For the last time, he says. But half-way through, the tempo quickens: it becomes the German anthem. It is the same Haydn melody played at a different speed. And it is followed by public jubilation. We hear people cheering on the radio and we hear them cheering in the street outside.

Although I am only eight years old I comprehend what is happening. I see Dr Richter, my childhood idol, and her elderly parents, weeping and helpless. What will they do? How will they continue to lead their decent lives? And then I see my father – my tolerant and judicious father – rise and strike his forehead and declaim in a voice I have not heard before: 'It is not a question of how we Jews will live. It is a question of our very existence!' I will never hear or see the word 'existence' again, in English or in German, without hearing and seeing my father, forever in that room, striking his forehead.

The Anschluss is sudden, savage, but not unprepared for. My headmistress is prepared to throw me out of school the next day. She was prepared months before: she would not allow me to take part in the school pageant about the River Danube – not even the least significant tributary was permitted to be Jewish. Our maid is prepared to leave us as soon as she has stolen all she can carry. The emerging local Nazi Party is prepared to confiscate my father's legal practice. Some of the Party members

are prepared to fetch him regularly from his bed to scrub the streets and public lavatories. When he refuses to paint 'Jude' on a local shop window, a former client, now wearing the brown uniform, quietly brings my father home and apologises to my mother. She tells him he is brave.

Fräulein, my father's secretary, is also brave: she comes to see me and to comfort me. Our neighbours are brave: they do not evict us from our home. They *could* because they are also our landlords. When I have a minor accident Dr Richter takes me to the hospital where Jews are not allowed to go. She tells them that I am Elfi Binks and that I am a relative. When I wake from the anaesthetic I have to remember that my name is Elfi Binks. My beloved Dr Richter survives the war and visits us in England when it is over. She believes that both her parents died of shame.

Overnight we become fugitives. We stay indoors. We no longer meet with friends or relations in coffee houses. My parents do not go to the opera. I had a new pair of skates for my last birthday and I am miserable because Jews are forbidden to use the ice rink. We begin the yearning trail to another country. It will fill all our days for the next 16 months. I become knowledgeable about how other nations control our emigration. I understand what a visa is, a quota, an affidavit, a guarantee. Some or all are needed to get in anywhere. Only one document is needed to get out – our agreement that we willingly leave behind all that we own.

I also experience a sense of relief when the Anschluss happens. What I have been afraid of is here. My earliest memories contain the threat of Hitler. 'Washing your hair,' my mother would say when I made a great fuss as a three-year-old, 'comes straight after Hitler.' How she must have regretted that remark later. But perhaps, mercifully, she didn't remember it because the loss of nearly her entire family clouded her mind.

By the time Hitler came to power in Germany I was used to adult conversation. I am an only child – 'These are not the times to have more than one,' I heard them say. I listened, I didn't interrupt and the grown-ups forgot I was there. I knew they were afraid that

Hitler would come to Austria. I did not tell anyone that it made me too afraid to go to sleep when my parents went out in the evening. That I secretly made myself lie awake, wait for the last tram, which I knew would arrive at our terminus at midnight, and count their footsteps home, in my mind. When I heard their key in the door I would pretend to be asleep. Now all that is over.

When the Anschluss comes, in quite a different way, I am as prepared as my headmistress.

Hedi Schnabl

### 'UNDERPAID, UNDERFED AND OVERWORKED'? *cont. from page 4*

director, to convert Ishiguro's vision into a successful film. I refer, of course, to *The Remains of the Day*. The novel was first published in 1989; the film had its premiere in 1993; the producer was Ismail Merchant, the director James Ivory.

S. S. Prawer, Queen's College, Oxford

My mother entered domestic service in the large Victorian house of a retired coal merchant and his family near Birmingham in April 1939.

At that time, my father was given shelter by my mother's sister in Edgware but was penniless. My brother and I had been sent to Brussels on a Kindertransport and were living there when in August my mother's employer decided to take his wife and three adolescent children on a caravanning holiday. Reluctant to leave my mother alone in a large house in the country, he paid all the expenses of bringing my brother and me from Ostend to Dover (an old business friend of my father had taken us from Brussels to Ostend), my father's fare to Dover, and the rail fare for the three of us to his village for a holiday while he and his family were away.

I remember an unbelievably happy fortnight, picking raspberries and plums and being reunited with my parents. Imagine my father's delight when, on the thirteenth day of our holiday, war was declared and my brother and I couldn't return to Brussels! These people in their generosity saved my brother's and my life.

Susie Shipman (née Davids)  
Ilford, Essex

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### GOD ON TRIAL

Sir - Peter Phillips (February) is right to call for greater tolerance among the different sects of Judaism, but for him to attach this to a denial of God and the *mitzvot* seems extreme. It was, in fact, tried before in Germany. Many of those who should have been leaders of the community converted to Lutheranism (if you disbelieve in God, it does not much matter if he is Jewish or Lutheran) and the remainder of the community replaced belief in Judaism by belief in German culture with iconic figures such as Wagner, Nietzsche and Heidegger. Had the community remained united, it could have provided a much more effective opposition to Hitler.

I am intrigued that Mr Phillips sees *kashruth* as out of date. Kosher animals can eat and digest cellulosic materials such as grass, while most other animals compete with humans in the food chain. Short of vegetarianism, this is the 'greenest' option one can imagine. *Kashruth* also has a strong element of public health about it and, while conditions in the UK are not too bad, on a worldwide basis there are good reasons for the prohibitions Mr Phillips deplors. One can't remake religious commandments for every country in every era. Nonetheless, he might have noticed a gentile campaign to persuade people to wash their hands after using the toilet and before meals - some of us have done this (with or without a *bracha*) for many years.

As far as the other *mitzvot* are concerned, I think one might still be uneasy about adultery, murder, and hating one's neighbour. There is also much to be said for a day off each week.

I wonder what would be left of Judaism if Mr Phillips were to have his way. How would one express one's commitment to the Jewish people? By signing anti-Israel advertisements in the press? Hopefully not.

Prof Bryan Reuben  
London N3

Sir - Peter Phillips comments on the fictional BBC trial in Auschwitz. Apparently, such a trial did indeed take place in the Kovno ghetto, Lithuania, a notable seat of Talmudic scholarship. The learned men present arrived at the same verdict - that there was no 'Jewish' God in heaven; how else would He have allowed all that suffering to afflict His People. The mock trial over, they rose to a man to *daven* afternoon *Mincha* service!

I come from a modern-Orthodox home in Poland, imbued with a love of Zion. After the *Shoah*, my mother in Israel gave up all faith in God, having lost her husband and two sons. Yet she always lit Shabbat candles and never mixed meat with milk, and so on. She couldn't do otherwise: it was inbred in her - not unlike those wise men of Kovno.

Rubin Katz, London NW11

Sir - I agree with Peter Phillips 100 per cent. I have asked myself the question he asks 1,000 times. If there was a god, who sees and knows everything, why did he not show his hand and let 6 million people, including my whole family, get murdered in so many concentration camps?

I believe in the Ten Commandments. That makes sense to me. Shabbat dinners are important to me to sit together with the family to share the events of the week over a good meal. The candles look festive. I don't believe in praying. I believe in doing. Volunteering and helping people where there is a need - that is my understanding of being a good and decent Jewish person.

Judy Benton  
Edgware, Middx

Sir - I agree that there should not be animosity in religious matters among ourselves, but this is due to many factors, including different attitudes to the Bible. The Orthodox believe that the Bible is a holy book - 'as if' written by God - and therefore we cannot question it by considering that the laws of *kashruth* etc are not relevant today. Mr Phillips's quotation of the *Akedah* in Chapter 22 of Genesis is also incorrect: it is the Angel of the Lord who saved Abraham from sacrificing his son (v.11), not a ram. The ram Abraham sacrificed was an afterthought (v.13).

I also agree that the Chief Rabbi should have gone to the funeral of Reform Rabbi Hugo Gryn. On the other hand, Reform Rabbi Tony Bayfield should not have ridden in the Lord Mayor's procession on the Sabbath. He was a representative of the Jewish people. Many years ago, at the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill, the late David Ben-Gurion, who certainly was not an Orthodox Jew, walked from the Savoy Hotel to St Paul's Cathedral on the Sabbath. He felt he was a representative of the Jewish people and did not want to ride in public on the Sabbath.

Mr Phillips also thinks that if the different sects of Judaism are not more tolerant of

each other, 'we will not survive as Jews.' Our survival depends on many things - but the greatest danger is the soaring rate of inter-marriage. The Orthodox Jewish schools have done much to stem this disaster and even the Reform have now belatedly set up Jewish schools. In Israel, the religious parties are fighting for our religion as they see it.

Max Sulzbacher, Jerusalem

### 'NEW' JEW

Sir - Recently, the story of Anne Frank was shown on TV. It is significant that this story should be shown at the same time as the bother in Gaza.

For more than 2,000 years the world has viewed Jews everywhere as small, weak and only too willing to roll onto their backs, to play dead. The same, prejudiced world is too thick to admit to itself that, as everywhere, attitudes have changed and things have moved on. Jews have evolved and moved on also.

Unfortunately, both Christians and Muslims are still only able to relate to the Jew - any Jew - as a feeble being wearing a long coat of silk and with a long beard smeared with his own blood. They are scared of this 'new' Jew, who is a young man wearing combat gear. Tucked under this man's arm are not a few holy books or well-read scrolls but a deadly machine gun, ready to be used in defence of the smallest sovereign country in the Middle East.

This mercifully aggressive young soldier knows nothing of the small, bent man his ancestor used to be in centuries past. This young Jewish fighter is ready, willing and able to defend the tiny country of Israel - established through dire necessity after the Holocaust. Wake up, world - times have changed: kick a Jew in the face and you will get the same treatment back!

L. Levy  
Wembley, Middx

Sir - My attention was drawn to an article in *Metro* stating 'Jewish MP says Israeli soldiers are like Nazis.' As the sole victim-survivor of my family, I suffered Junior Forced Labour under fascism; afterwards I suffered Nazism and then Stalinist imprisonment and exile. I wonder what sort of Nazism Gerald Kaufman MP experienced in his comfortable home in England. I do wonder how much time he spent in Gaza with the Jewish soldiers whose 'Nazi' activities he knows so well. I wonder how much research the 'Honourable Member' did to assess the background of Nazism and the root of the 'Nazi' activities of Jewish soldiers. For the sake of my adopted country, I beg politicians not to follow the example Neville Chamberlain set at Munich.

Freiherr von Treuenburg MSc  
London N2

### AUSTRIANS REVISITED

Sir - What Rubin Katz (January) describes as my unwarranted strong reaction was essentially directed at two statements in

his original letter. One expressed his 'dismay at those who praise Austria for its laudable changes, while survivors are still around.' The other suggested that 'this willingness to promote everything Austrian lies between those happily ensconced in this country during the war and those unlucky enough to be trapped in Europe.' This statement still sounds to me unfair, putting it mildly. Using the phrase 'promote everything Austrian' is unjustified because surely nobody does that. Nor does anybody suggest that those who survived the war trapped in Europe did so in happy circumstances. To imply this is absurd. In any case, Mr Katz has no reason – and certainly no evidence – that supports his theory.

As for the first statement, I am pleased to accept that he is not opposed to visiting Austria and apologise for my interpretation. But Wiesenthal *did* live in Vienna. The discussion is not about where people are buried. Fifteen thousand Jews *do* live in Vienna. I do not understand what Mr Rubin means when he writes 'Not all of them are Jewish.' Where they come from is irrelevant, but I do know that quite a few returned to Austria from this country, from the US and from Israel. And there is an Israeli embassy in Vienna.

According to the EU, both Germany and Austria show up badly in respect of anti-Semitism but I agree that the mayor of Berlin is a good man. So is Austria's president.

I will not react to any further letters on this subject. I feel much more deeply about what is happening in Israel, especially about the biased, and even false, reports presented by a large part of the media in European countries.

Eric Sanders  
London W12

### SHYLOCK'S POUND OF FLESH

Sir – I found Netta Goldsmith's recent letter surprising. How exactly does Shylock demonstrate that he is a man of principle or a just man? Shylock takes the bond seriously simply because he wants vicious revenge on Antonio. He is offered three times the amount of the loan and rejects it. This is nothing to do with being a man of principle or justice.

Portia cleverly turns the table on Shylock, saying that if you want your pound of flesh you shall have it – but only the flesh and no blood and only exactly one pound and no more, thus using his demand for the letter of the law to defeat him.

Portia's magnificent 'quality-of-mercy' speech, which attempts to get Shylock to change his mind, speaks to us of the superiority of following the spirit of the law rather than the letter, and that justice should always be tempered with mercy.

Actually the 'Merchant of Venice' is not Shylock but Antonio – Shylock disappears from the play at the end of Act IV. Although Shakespeare generously gives him the wonderful speech about 'If you prick us,

do we not bleed?', it is difficult in terms of what is actually written to have much sympathy for Shylock's savage behaviour despite modern interpretations of the play. However, none of the characters in the play exits smelling that sweet.

Philip Goldsmith  
Uzes, France

Sir – I was particularly glad that Gerald Curzon mentions (November) Leone Modena. Modena (1571-1648) was the first Jew to write, in a book intended for Christian readers, an extensive account of Jewish rites, customs and everyday life, with particular reference to the Venetian ghetto. The book was at first forbidden by the Inquisition but, after revision, was published in Venice in 1638.

A German version, translated and edited by Professor Rafael Arnold, was published in Germany in 2007 under the title *Jüdische Riten, Sitten und Gebräuche*. Professor Arnold, a leading authority on the Jews of Venice, is the son of a friend of mine with whom I went to school in Stuttgart in the early 1930s.

Prof E. H. Sondheimer  
London N6

### SUPPING WITH THE DEVIL

Sir – Andrew Elek, Samu Stern's grandson, writes (January) that Stern was 17 years old when the leaders of the Budapest community were faced with the stark choice of divulging the ultimate destination of the deportation trains. In the event, they withheld information that the deportations were going to anything but 'humanitarian German labour camps'. He defends this act of disinformation to their Jewish brethren with, *inter alia*, the following: Divulging the true destination of these transports would, in any case, not have saved Jewish lives because in Poland, 'where Jews had revolted when they learned about the death camps, their uprising triggered massive German reprisals and very few people survived.'

This defence is unjustified. Your esteemed correspondent forgot that smuggling oneself over to the Aryan side and living as a non-Jew had a far greater success rate than revolts such as the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. He also forgot that Hungary did not have sealed-off ghettos like Poland and 'disappearing' was a little easier. Indeed, even in Poland, but more so in Hungary, many thousands survived in this way despite the danger of being betrayed. However, it required an immensely strong 'push' to take this dangerous route. Unfortunately, the vast majority who fell for the Nazis' lies about being taken to 'humanitarian labour camps' did not see a need to do this.

It is tragic that the Budapest Judenrat co-operated with these lies, buckling under Eichmann's death threats if they were to spread their 'false horror stories'. A clear revelation that they were to be taken to concentration camps would have pushed

many thousands more into the *only* direction which had a reasonable success rate: disappearing among the non-Jewish population. In the event, it was a trickle rather than a deluge that availed themselves of this route. Never were more Jews gassed in less time than the Hungarian deportations to Auschwitz. We paid for the Judenrat's co-operation with over 400,000 lives.

Had the Judenrat stood up to the pressure, they themselves might have lost their lives, but a significant minority would never have reached the Birkenau gas chambers. The head of the Warsaw Ghetto, Cerniakow, took his life at the first request to hand over his brethren. Perhaps we cannot be judgemental, but we cannot defend them on the basis of incorrect facts.

M. D. Spiro, Gateshead

### 'TO THE RIGHT OF GENGHIS KHAN'

Sir – The answer to Shir's question 'How could anyone kill children, women, men, indiscriminately, day after day, as if it was just the most natural thing in the world?' (Letter from Israel, February) is that that's how human beings tend to behave if they think (rightly or wrongly) that other people are out to kill or enslave their own people. They may be lovely people in other ways but, where the enemies of their people are concerned, they are, as Rubin Katz puts it in his letter in the same issue, to the right of Genghis Khan. And so it goes on.

Theodor Gang  
London W3

### STOLPERSTEINE UNEASE

Sir – The recent showing of the film *Stolperstein* at the Goethe Institute was a moving experience but it left me with some unease about the project it described. My unease is not only because of the refusal of the city of Munich to allow the stones to be placed but also because of the enthusiasm with which a small band of well-meaning people in Europe have embraced a controversial project.

To remember the Holocaust is, of course, essential and, as such, is well presented by events, literature and memorials. The German nation, more than any other, has shown its willingness to accept responsibility and try to make amends for the atrocities of the Nazi era. Those who are guilty are all but gone. The following generation wished not to speak of the involvement of family and friends. The third and fourth generations now show a new enthusiasm to know why and how it all happened but they, like our children, are too far removed to bear the grief or responsibility for what occurred nearly 70 years ago.

*Stolpersteine* are a personal memorial, with meaning only for those who knew the victims. They should not be a source for guilty feelings on the part of those who walk by them. Memorials have their place

continued on page 15

# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Several London exhibitions dedicated to National Holocaust Day featured survivors as their theme. The words of the prophet – in this case, the writer Ben Okri – are written on the City Hall in a photographic show, **Holocaust Survivors**, by Matt Writtle.



Gena Turgel was born in Cracow. She and her family were confined to the Plaszow ghetto. Gena was made to march through the ice and snow to Auschwitz and, in January 1945, to Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen, where she and her mother were liberated. She was awarded an OBE for services to the Holocaust Foundation.

'Remake the World under the Guidance of Inspiration', Okri wrote along the wall leading to the exhibition. Indeed, Writtle's sometimes tender, sometimes acerbic photographs show a people not so much defiant as radiant with energy as they brought talent and inspiration to Britain. The photographs reveal tragedy – families wiped out, refugees transported to a strange land – yet the faces are illuminated with beauty, delicacy and wisdom.

Cellists like Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, Olympians like wrestler Ben Helfgott, swimmer Susan Halter, wife of artist Roman, and Gena R. Turgel MBE are among many.

Other survivors feature in the revival exhibition **Continental Britons: Jewish Refugees from Nazi Europe**, at Burgh House and Hampstead Museum, sponsored by the AJR. The term European Jewry has become so synonymous with persecution that outsiders may forget that Jews had lived

in Germany and Austria since Roman times, had been fully and powerfully integrated into German society since the Enlightenment, and had brought to Britain a variety of incipient skills, plus an indomitable dignity and courage.

The show's debut at the Jewish Museum in 2002, conceived by Anthony Grenville, Bea Lewkowicz and Carol Seigal and chaired by Ronald Channing, is the story of the AJR itself, which was created as a self-help organisation by these refugees, 60,000 of whom arrived in Britain in 1938-39 and 29 of whom have now reached their centenary.

Some faces are no longer with us. Other aspects of Continental Britain have passed into the history books. European café society was recreated in the Finchley Road in restaurants like the Cosmo and the Dorice, where frankfurters and Kartoffelsalat, cheesecake and Schwarzwälder Kirschtorten were served to a crowd whose vitality no doubt helped lift dour post-war Britannia out of the doldrums.

Back in 2002, the organisers actually reconstructed the Cosmo as part of the exhibit; this time visitors made do with a table map of Swiss Cottage and Finchley Road. The map shows ads from the then *AJR Information*, including the AJR's own Employment Agency, plus a chocolatier and an optician.

The exhibition was opened by actor Andrew Sachs, born to a Jewish father and a 'Tyrolean mountain mother', who quoted John F. Kennedy's unforgettable words 'Ich bin ein Berliner.' The photographs tell the story of life before and after. A family holiday in 1913; a soldier with his unit; swimmers at the Wannsee; batmitzvah girls in white dresses; and, later, a holiday memory of Nazi storm-troopers screaming anti-Jewish slogans.

So did they ever become true Brits? Many brought that indefinable Euro spark to Hampstead and Primrose Hill. But there was undeniable exploitation of au pairs: the memory of a first winter in a cold English council house; the quirky chaos of British life.

Perhaps Dr Bea Lewkowicz's accompanying film, *Continental Britons*, has the answer. 'British?', ponders survivor Daisy Hoffner. 'I prefer to say North West Londoner.' The show runs until 5 April.

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING  
AND SCULPTURE

## REVIEWS

### CINEMA

#### From illiteracy to remorse

##### THE READER

starring Kate Winslet  
and Ralph Fiennes  
directed by Stephen Daldry  
at selected cinemas

One incongruity of the Holocaust is the proximity of barbarity and high culture. Guards in the death camps, for example, would often listen to Beethoven at the end of a day's work. This premise has influenced some reviewers of *The Reader* to react with scepticism to one of the central themes of the film, which is based on Bernhard Schlink's powerful novel of the same name.

The key question is whether the life of the female protagonist, Hanna Schmitz, would have been different had she not been illiterate. For the sceptics, of course, illiteracy offers no more inducement to participate in criminal activity than education serves as a prophylactic.

In a flashback to 1958, Hanna, played by award-winning Kate Winslet, is a tram conductor who rescues a teenage boy who has collapsed, sick, outside a block of flats. The 18-year-old German actor David Kross gives an outstanding performance as the young Michael Berg, first seen as a 15-year-old seduced by a woman more than 20 years older and later as a student. The often graphic sex scenes are not voyeuristic but an effective means of conveying the hold Hanna is to have on Michael's life. As the relationship develops, Michael is required to read to Hanna from books he is studying at school before they have sex. Her disappearance, in the wake of being offered promotion to working in the tram company's office, leaves him traumatised.

The crux of the film is another flashback, years later, to Michael, then a law student, observing a trial of Nazi guards accused of leaving 300 Jewish women to die in a burning church on a death march. He is astounded to find Hanna one of the defendants. When questioned by the judge, it emerges that Hanna chose to join the SS rather than accept promotion at Siemens, where she was working at the time. She shows no remorse when accused of routinely 'selecting' prisoners to be sent to Auschwitz and is prepared to be convicted on the charge of writing a report about the church fire rather than provide a sample of her handwriting.

Michael, now certain that she is illiterate, opts out of providing evidence that might have helped her, realising that in her eyes to be exposed would be a greater shame. Years later, the mature Michael, admirably played by Ralph Fiennes as an emotionally crippled lawyer,

sends Hanna in prison tapes of a variety of books which enable her to teach herself to read. An encounter between the two, shortly before she is due to be released from prison, reveals her changed and remorseful.

While some have objected to Hanna being portrayed as a dysfunctional woman rather than a monster, I find the development of a character whose life choices have been dominated by her illiteracy plausible and in no way a 'whitewash' of the Holocaust.

This stirring film was directed by Stephen Daldry with a script by David Hare. The acting of all three protagonists is superb, with facial expressions as eloquent as the words, spoken, effectively, with a faint German inflection. Also to be commended is Lena Olin in a cameo part as a Holocaust survivor.

Emma Klein

## A controversial figure

**FRIEDRICH TORBERG: AN AUSTRIAN CHARACTER BETWEEN LITERATURE, SPORT AND JUDAISM**  
(ON THE OCCASION OF THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF FRIEDRICH TORBERG)

an essay by Frank Tichy

Vienna: Federal Ministry for European & International Affairs, 2008, 63 pp., English translation by John Winbigler

**F**riedrich Torberg, born Friedrich Ephraim Kantor in 1908, was a sporty young man but for him joining Hakoah Vienna was a political act. He considered membership more important than the playing of a particular sport. He had wanted to join the over-subscribed football department but had to be satisfied with swimming instead. Following success with Hakoah, in 1928 he was a member of the Czech national water polo team in the Prague Hagibor sports club. In 1930 his novel *Der Schüler Gerber hat absolviert* was published in Vienna. It described a schoolboy's nightmare existence (schoolboy suicide was not uncommon) and was an explosive literary debut.

Torberg exchanged sport for a Bohemian life as a freelance journalist, commuting between Vienna and Prague. He spent many hours in cafés – there is a section in the booklet entitled 'The Religion of the Coffee House' – and, even after his 1938 'emigration' to Switzerland (as it is politely termed on page 62), he continued to correspond with his many scattered coffee house colleagues. He embraced good living with such fervour that his health was seriously affected and at the age of 36 had to go on a 'serious' diet as he had circulatory and heart problems. In 1978 he listed his maladies in a humorous confession: 'Non-smokers also have to die.' He had wanted the epitaph 'Food was his favourite food' on his tombstone (it isn't) and his conversation was full of foodie words like crispy, crunchy

and juicy, along with references to bodily functions.

Torberg's war reads like a travelogue. In 1938 he fled Prague, arriving in Paris via Zurich. When the Nazis entered France, he escaped to Palestine via Spain and Portugal. He spent several years in Hollywood and New York but, although he had a contract with Warner Brothers, he was never comfortable writing in English. In America he began a long and probably unrequited relationship with Marlene Dietrich, which lasted until his death in 1979. In 1951 he returned to Vienna and became editor of *Forum* magazine, for some years sponsored by the CIA. Possibly because of this his reputation became that of an 'anti-

Communist cultural executioner of the Cold War era', although he was one of the most prominent figures on the Austrian cultural scene. His activities included countless theatre critiques and screenplays, translating Ephraim Kishon into German, and publishing forgotten authors like Peter Hammerschlag and Fritz Herzmanovsky-Orlando.

Although Torberg's archive up to 1938 has been lost, the estate in the Vienna City Library contains more than 50,000 letters, possibly the largest collection of correspondence in post-war Austria. An exhibition on Torberg's life, 'The Dangers of Versatility', was recently held at the Jewish Museum in Vienna.

Laraine Feldman

## Schnorrers of distinction

**P**eter Altenberg (1859-1919, born Richard Engländer) had two main weaknesses: he was excessively fond of the fair sex – ranging from ten-year-old schoolgirls to mature prostitutes – and even fonder of money.

On one occasion, he was invited for lunch by Muhr, Prague's leading shirt manufacturer and a generous patron, who, in keeping with Altenberg's new vegetarian health book, ordered a strictly meatless menu. Altenberg, who had looked forward to enjoying a roast goose or perhaps an outsize Wiener Schnitzel, had, as the book's author, to follow suit whether he liked it or not. When he saw the third member of the luncheon party, Anton Kuh, enjoy a gigantic Rostbraten, he couldn't contain himself and whispered to him: 'How can a talented chap be such a glutton!'

Like most distinguished schnorrers, Altenberg firmly believed that the world – the world of millionaires, that is – owed him a living.

Altenberg demanded, and occasionally received, annuities from the wealthy businessmen on the fringe of his circle of friends at the Vienna Löwenbräu and the Café Central. Members of Vienna's super-rich felt flattered at being able to refer to brilliant, unconventional writers and speakers like him and Kuh as their court jesters.

When Altenberg found that only very few of his patrons were prepared to commit themselves to paying regular annuities, he suggested that collections be made on his behalf.

Of all Altenberg's friends, the most generous proved none other than Karl Kraus. In this context, the revolutionary architect Adolf Loos too deserves mention. None of Altenberg's far from grateful outbursts could alter their friendship with the schnorrer *par excellence*.

On his death at the age of 60 in his



Peter Altenberg

tiny, dingy room on the third floor of the Graben Hotel, Altenberg was found to have cash savings equivalent to £250,000 ...

Anton Kuh (b.1890, died New York 1941, pseudonym Yorick) fully deserved his reputation as the most sophisticated and elegant schnorrer of all times. When on one occasion the head of the Vienna Rothschilds handed him a 'loan' of 5,000 Austrian

schillings instead of the usual 10,000, Kuh asked: 'What is the position now, Baron? Do I owe you 5,000 or do you owe me 5,000?'

Kuh was one of the most brilliantly humorous and one of the laziest feature writers of his generation. He was also without any doubt the most outstanding extemporising speaker of his time. Yet he would always find himself short of cash.

Kuh's Berlin address was invariably the posh Adlon Hotel. The tiny room didn't matter as long as it was a good address to put on his business card. Asked by a friend how much he owed, he answered: 'It's mounting all the time – so much so that I will soon owe the entire hotel!'

Kuh was always arrogant and aggressive. Reproached on this count by his close friend Geza von Ciffra, his reply was: 'With a name like Kuh, I have to behave like a Bull!'

Kuh made a point of wearing only bespoke suits, made by Vienna's most expensive tailor – his bills, needless to say, unpaid.

How did Kuh get away with his life of luxury without paying for it? He was a forerunner of today's 'celebrities'. By associating their businesses with his name, the tycoons of the pre-Nazi era knew that Kuh's name gave them an aura of cultural exclusivity in return for granting him unlimited credit. In today's language, freebies.

Fred Rosner

This article is based on a talk by Dr Rosner to Club 43.

## 'STAND UP TO HATRED': HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2009

### 'CONFRONTING THE UNSPEAKABLE'

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch gave a moving address to around 150 people who took part in the AJR's annual Holocaust Memorial Day service at Belsize Square Synagogue in London. For half-a-century, she said, she had kept her vow never to return to Germany, but in recent years she had returned to the cemetery at the former concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen and she now went back regularly to Germany, where she was invited to speak on her experiences. 'The poison of hatred still exists in the world,' Ms Lasker-Wallfisch declared. 'We must confront the unspeakable.'

Six candles were lit by AJR members in memory of the 6 million who died in the Holocaust and Kaddish was recited. Rabbi Stephen Katz, who officiated, concluded the service by calling on those present to 'Share your story!'



Anita Lasker-Wallfisch

PHOTO: SAUL ENY

### FOCUS ON GENOCIDE



Philip Spencer

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch was also the main speaker in the Centre for German-Jewish Studies' HMD programme. The University of Sussex's largest lecture theatre was filled to capacity to hear her personal narrative, supplemented by a screening of the documentary films *Auschwitz: The Business of Death* and *Playing to Survive*.

Earlier in the afternoon, those events had been put into a wider context by two lectures marking the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Genocide Convention. Philip Spencer of Kingston University focused on genocides that had occurred since the Holocaust, while Stephen Smith of the Aegis Trust, the UK-based organisation to combat genocide, described the measures that can be taken to forestall ethnic conflict. The programme, co-ordinated by Diana Franklin and Christian Wiese, was supported by the AJR.

### Did you or a relative go to Australia on the *Dunera*?

In 1940 Britain interned many German and Austrian refugees from Nazi Germany. Over 2,000 of these were transported on *HMT Dunera* to Australia, where they were incarcerated for up to two years. They endured many injustices, both at the hands of British guards and while interned in camps in Australia.

My grandfather was one such internee. In 2006 I travelled to Australia to attend *Dunera Day* in Hay, NSW, where most of the internees were initially interned, and Sydney to learn more about what happened. Working in TV professionally, I decided to interview some *Dunera* boys so I hired a car and a video-camera and set off.

Over two weeks I met many people, all striving to keep the *Dunera* story alive. In the sleepy town of Tatura, Victoria, I tromped through fields which had once housed internment camps with a couple who maintain the Tatura Wartime Camps Museum and keep alive the memory of those who were interned in the locality.

I spent two glorious days in Hay with local people, schoolchildren, three octogenarian *Dunera* boys and over a dozen *Dunera* descendants discussing *Dunera* history. I visited Sydney's Australian National Maritime Museum and spent a morning marvelling at stories about what some of the *Dunera* boys had got up to before, during and after their internment. And I tried frantically to obtain interviews with *Dunera* boys.

Now, I realise that my footage is insufficient to do the story

### PLANTING A ROSE



94-year-old AJR member Eric Strach plants a white rose on the Liverpool Holocaust Memorial

### NEIGHBOURS ON THIS PLANET

We are all aware that young people of today are not as tuned to world disaster and significant aspects of history as they are to the latest fashion and what's going on in the music world. Therefore, if we want to educate them on the basis of learning about the Holocaust, school is obviously the place to start as it's very vital indeed.

But if we want them to truly understand the importance of the Holocaust, then I don't think a classroom can compare to actually being at Auschwitz as I believe the visit makes it more real and raw. When taking part in the Lessons from Auschwitz project, I heard the testimony of Jo Perl, which will remain with me for a long time because his story was so unreal – though what shocks me the most is that he has forgiven these people. When I was in Poland, his words came back to me and I was furious and loathed the people who made the choice to carry out these inhumane acts.

Every person is an individual, a human being, whether they are Jewish, Muslim, Christian, non-religious or whatever. People recognise the horrors of the death camps of 60 years ago. Yet the genocide still goes on and we are faced with threats from far-right political people who preach hatred.

We are all neighbours on this planet. Every religion teaches us to respect and help our fellow humans. At present, our politicians and our backs are turned away from the plight of so many people. When people in 60 years' time travel to the sites of Rwanda and Darfur, will they ask the same questions that I asked about the Holocaust? How could people let this happen? How could people who knew of the suffering stand by and do nothing? When the future writes about us in the twenty-first century, let it be for positive reasons – the fact that there are some difficulties and troubles but we can overcome it and change the path if we set aside our differences and work together as humans. So I ask again: What can we do? When can we do it? And how can we do it?

Ifraah Samatar

*This article is adapted from an address to a meeting held by the Holocaust Educational Trust. The address was given by a Muslim student who visited Auschwitz.*

justice and I am collating a database of *Dunera* men and their stories as well as archival material. My aim is to gather as much information as possible before approaching potential sponsors for funding to help me complete the film, with a view to telling the story of the *Dunera* episode in the UK and keeping it alive.

If you – or a relative – were on *HMT Dunera*, please telephone me on 07956 541 247 or email me at noniecb@googlemail.com I look forward to hearing from you.

Nonie Creagh-Brown

## How I missed out on a peerage

Once worked for six months as a song plugger. While it may be the fear haunting every Jewish mother that her budding Rubinstein of a son will end up playing the piano in a brothel, there is a still lower form of musical life: the song plugger.

Let me explain. Before the war and right up into the 'fifties, music publishers made much of their income from the sale of sheet music. And just as literary agents send their authors' manuscripts to book publishers, so music agents used to send their songwriters' work to music publishers. Most of these powerful men could not read music and were tone-deaf. This was long before the day of the demo disc. Human demonstrators – sub-human in the eyes of the publishers, otherwise known as song pluggers – were the means of conveying new songs from agent to publisher. It meant sneaking past some unchained gorilla in reception, sitting down at an out-of-tune piano with sticky keys, and starting to play and sing. It was hard to get past the 'intro' and into the 'chorus' – the 32-bar heart of the song. The audition was usually cut short by your being told to f... off or worse.

In some ways, one could not blame these masters of the universe: we entered uninvited, interrupted their sleep, most of the songs were rubbish and, more often than not, voice and accompaniment left something to be desired. But that wasn't the point: song pluggers were salesmen, not performers – otherwise they would have found steady employment in that brothel. My objective was to smuggle my own songs in among those I was paid to plug.

I didn't have much of a track record but, together with a more talented partner, I had written what became the marching song of the Canadian army. One of our best songs was actually written in Canadian internment for a camp show and later adapted to become successful on the other side of the barbed wire. One of the more enjoyable aspects of hawking music door-to-door in Charing Cross Road, where all the music publishers had their offices, was that I met some talented people. Gracie Fields was a favourite of mine and I was allowed to do a bit of work for her ('No sibilants!', pleaded her manager, because she had trouble with her teeth, yet *Sally* was her greatest song).

I was cruelly patronised by Eric Maschwitz but finished up in a grand office

in Berkeley Square, a finer perch than his wretched nightingale ever occupied. I took piano lessons by mail from the great Billy Mayerl and have a certificate to prove it.

I suppose my greatest triumph came when I was working for an advertising agency in the early days of commercial TV, before specialist writers and directors appropriated the medium. Then, the copywriter was king and one of the earliest commercials for Unilever was written and

*At that time, I was part of a group of friends, with loose links to this day among the survivors. This is who we were, in alphabetical order: Tim Beaumont, Robert Gavron, Paul Hamlyn, Claus Moser, David Owen, Victor Ross, George Weidenfeld, Michael Young. Notice something? Every one ended up in the House of Lords except me. I should never have done that stint as a song plugger.*

directed by me, with my own jingle to crown it. Those were the heady days of the amateur. I had never before stood behind a camera, never shouted 'Cut', let alone 'Take five'.

The idyll did not last: specialists moved in and I was demoted to providing just the words. 'I can tell from your music you're a born copywriter,' marked, I suppose, the end of my career as a composer. Instead, I started moonlighting as a script writer, supplying single jokes and, less often, entire sketches to the likes of Max Bygraves, Charlie Chester, Issy Bonn and, on one memorable occasion, the legendary Jack Benny, who actually wrote me a thank-you letter after a successful London engagement. This was for three lines at a guinea each; 20 other writers tweaked the rest of his act.

From Jack Benny it was but a short step to Conservative Central Office as a speech writer for Mrs Thatcher. I had three things going for me: holding down a job in the media meant I didn't need to be paid; not

wanting to make policy but, being a true hack, content to put over any brief I was given; and finally – this I think impressed Norman Tebbit – pointing out that they were still writing speeches as if Mrs Thatcher were a man, ignoring the fact that women use different words, different sentence structures, different cadences. Not that a lot of my speeches made it to her lips. Oh, those lips! It was sufficient reward when now and then I recognised a phrase picked up from one of my drafts.

These things never last. New cliques form around the leader: one day you're in, out the next. But not completely out. I noticed that people rang to ask whether I would serve on this committee or that – honorary, of course, old boy. My name came up for a job alongside Heseltine and Wakeham, advising on how best to put over jobs policy. I was appointed a member of the Home Office Data Protection Tribunal; I did serious work on turning the Post Office into a commercial enterprise; my name appeared in *Who's Who*.

Had I, unbeknownst to myself, joined the establishment? Strictly B-list, of course: never chairman, always member of .... At that time, I was part of a group of friends, with loose links to this day among the survivors. This is who we were, in alphabetical order: Tim Beaumont, Robert Gavron, Paul Hamlyn, Claus Moser, David Owen, Victor Ross, George Weidenfeld, Michael Young. Notice something? Every one ended up in the House of Lords except me. I should never have done that stint as a song plugger.

Victor Ross

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# INSIDE the AJR

## Ilford members told 'Write to the media!'

Jerry Lewis of the Board of Deputies told us that *The Sun* was the only British daily which had highlighted Israel's side of the Gaza conflict and that the BoD was doing its utmost to combat the constant media bias. We were urged to phone or write to the media pointing out their misrepresentation. A fascinating morning for all.

*Meta Roseneil*

Next meeting: 4 March. Roger Beales, Bank of England

## Enjoyable morning for Wembley CF

Despite the wintry weather, hospital appointments and sickness, ten of us, including a new member, had an enjoyable morning socialising and being updated on the many forthcoming AJR events. As usual, the refreshments were warmly received.

*Myrna Glass*

Next meeting: 11 March

## HGS: The Jews of Ostrava

When a Torah scroll acquired by Kingston Synagogue turned out to have originated in Ostrava, Czech Republic, David Lawson decided to research the story of the Jews of that city. The first Jew, he told us, settled there in 1792 and there were over 10,000 of them by 1942, when they became the first Jews to be transported to Treblinka. In the intervening years they prospered and made a significant contribution to the life of the city. Today there are around 150, mainly Russian, Jews there.

*Laszlo Roman*

Next meeting: 9 March. Rabbi Daniela Thau, 'Diversity in Faith'

## Hull: A visit to Darmstadt

A member told us about a visit to Darmstadt to take part in the commemoration of 'Pogromnacht' and to mark the 20th birthday of the beautiful synagogue there. There were other matters of interest about Darmstadt too, e.g. an exhibition about Karl Knagge, a German army officer who saved the lives of some 200 Vilnius Jews and is now recognised as a Righteous Gentile. We watched a short film featuring three former citizens of the town who told of their experiences as Jewish children in Nazi Germany.

*Rose Abrahamson*

## Essex encore by Alan Bilgora

Returning for an encore, Alan Bilgora played songs recorded by European and

North American Jewish opera singers from the 19th and 20th centuries. Some of the singers made the 'big step' to the Met and became world famous.

*Larry Lisner*

Next meeting: 17 March (~~not~~ 10 March). 'The Jews of England from Disraeli onwards'

## War Veterans: A salute in order

Our first meeting of the new year at Cafe Imperial saw a new participant – Freddie Edwards, who met his captain, Geoffrey Parry, from the 93rd Regiment. A salute was in order.

*Esther Rinkoff*

## Welwyn GC: Sam's anniversary

Our meeting, at the home of Monica Rosenbaum, coincided with the 70th anniversary of the arrival in this country of WGC's well respected member Sam Ostro. Sam supplied a delicious chocolate cake.

*Hazel Beiny*

Next meeting: 26 March. Social Get-together

## Extraordinary afternoon in Hendon

Ruth Bourne, who worked at Bletchley during the war, spoke about the life and work of the painter John Constable. She showed us slides of some of his paintings as well as landscape photographs she had taken of places where he stayed – all accompanied by beautiful music. An extraordinary afternoon.

*Annette Saville*

Next meeting: 23 March. Rochelle Hodds, Anne Frank Trust

## Tears in the eyes in Temple Fortune

Alan Bilgora played us wonderful historic recordings made by Jewish opera singers. The singing brought tears to our eyes. Thank you for a lovely afternoon.

*Gisele Tosh*

Next meeting: 19 March. John Marshall, Mayor of Barnet

## Brighton & Hove Sarid: 'People I most admire'

Friedl and Joyce were into spiritual healing: Friedl's life had been changed by a healer, Joyce's by a neighbour's kindness. Alfred, a camp survivor, remembered the caring Sister Maria at the Ashford Centre; Leon recalled visits to a Sephardi synagogue; and Fausta's father, though very strict, was the person she most admired.

*Ceska Abrahams*

Next meeting: 16 March. Dr Sam Barsam, 'The Jewish Contribution to Science'

## North London: Correcting an administrative error

Shirley Bilgora told us how she had succeeded in finding her uncle's grave in a military cemetery in northern France. He had served in the Czech army and fallen

## Liverpool entertained with music and song



Tom Reti, Inge Goldrein, John Goldsmith, Sylvia Jayson, Kay Fyne and her daughter Tamar Samson. Tamar entertained the Group with music and song at their Chanukah Party

after the D-Day landing. Shirley's effort to trace and correct an administrative error drew universal admiration. A wonderful morning.

*Herbert Haberberg*

Next meeting: 26 March. Alan Cohen, 'Women of the Bible'

## Edware: The Anne Frank Trust

We were privileged to hear Rochelle Hodds speak about the Anne Frank Trust. The Trust uses this wonderful Diary as a means of promoting tolerance and better understanding between hostile communities.

*Eve Glicksman*

Next meeting: 17 March. Ladislaus Löb, 'A Jewish Schindler'

## Cleve Road: The Last Jews of Kerala

Edna Fernandes gave us insight into *The Last Jews of Kerala*, the title of her latest book. There are now very few Jews left in the city of Cochin in Kerala, many having emigrated to Israel. The fair-skinned Jews known as Paradesi, who arrived after the Spanish Inquisition, live in Synagogue Lane, where there is only one synagogue. A dark-skinned group of Jews, known as Malabari, arrived in Kerala 2,000 years ago following the destruction of the Temple.

*David Lang*

Next meeting: 31 March. Bea Klug, 'My Life and Times'

## Radlett: Experiences of a broadcaster

Nicky Horne is writing a book recording his experiences as a DJ, interviewer and presenter on radio and TV. He read us two amusing extracts from his book, the second recounting an early interview with John Lennon. We had an interesting discussion on the art of interviewing and the broadcaster's responsibilities to his audience.

*Fritz Starer*

Next meeting: 18 March. Anita Parmar, 'Holocaust Education Trust'

**Kingston CF: Members meet up again for first time since childhood**  
Once again Susan Zisman kindly allowed us to use her house for our meeting. We very much appreciated the sit-down-lunch-cum banquet she laid on. Two of our members discovered the whereabouts of another AJR member with whom they'd had no contact since childhood.

*Jane Cronheim*

**ALSO MEETING IN MARCH**  
**TUES 3-THUR 5 MARCH. LONDON**  
**VISIT FOR REGIONAL GROUPS**  
Details sent out

**Ealing 3 March.** Michael Newman, 'The Work of the AJR'

**South London 12 March.** Lunch with speaker: Ladislaus Löb, 'A Jewish Schindler'. Details being sent out

**Wessex 17 March.** David Lawson, 'The Jews of Ostrava'. Details being sent out

**Bromley CF 24 March.** Details being sent out

**Oxford 24 March.** Prof Clare Ungerson, 'Kitchener Camp', tbc

**Cardiff 30 March.** Lunch and speaker. Details being sent out

#### AJR GROUP CONTACTS

**Bradford Continental Friends**  
Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

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

**Bristol/Bath**  
Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

**Cambridge**  
Anne Bender 01223 276 999

**Cardiff**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**Cleve Road, AJR Centre**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**Dundee**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**East Midlands (Nottingham)**  
Bob Norton 01159 212 494

**Edgware**  
Ruth Urban 020 8931 2542

**Edinburgh**  
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

**Essex (Westcliff)**  
Larry Lisner 01702 300812

**Glasgow**  
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

**Harrogate**  
Inge Little 01423 886254

**Hendon**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**Hertfordshire**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**HGS**  
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

**Hull**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**Ilford**  
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

**Leeds HSFA**  
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

## MOCK SEDER

**THURSDAY 2 APRIL 2009**

**Rabbi Katz will lead our Pre-Seder Service**

**at 11.30 am for 12 noon**

**Cost £12.00, payable in advance to AJR**

**15 Cleve Road, London NW6**

**On first-come-first-served basis**



**Celebrating Westcliff's 7th birthday:**  
Pictured are Doris Foreman, Otto Deutsch, Ena Birch and Larry Lisner

#### DIARY DATES

**Sunday 21 June**  
Trip to Beth Shalom

**Friday 17-Friday 24 July**  
Holiday in Eastbourne

For further information, please call us on 020 8385 3070

**Liverpool**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**Manchester**  
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

**Newcastle**  
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

**Norfolk (Norwich)**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**North London**  
Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

**Oxford**  
Susie Bates 01235 526 702

**Pinner (HA Postal District)**  
Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

**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

#### AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

**Wednesday 18 March 2009**

**Carol Seigal**

from Hampstead Museum on  
'The German Jewish Exhibition'

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

#### KT-AJR

Kindertransport special  
interest group

**Monday 2 March 2009**

**Elissa Bayer**  
on her work in  
'Stockbroking and Life in the City'

**KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH  
WILL BE SERVED AT  
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**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS  
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March Afternoon Entertainment

Mon 2	KT LUNCH - Kards & Games Klub
Tue 3	CLOSED
Wed 4	Ann Kenton-Barker
Thur 5	Out of Town Members Lunch
Mon 9	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 10	CLOSED
Wed 11	Evelyn True & Glenn Russell
Thur 12	Ronnie Goldberg
Mon 16	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 17	CLOSED
Wed 18	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur 19	Barry Leigh
Mon 23	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 24	CLOSED
Wed 25	Madeleine Whiteson
Thur 26	B I N G O

#### 'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

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

**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

**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

**FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Deaths**

**Irmi Elkan**, psychoanalyst, died 12 January 2009 aged 90. Much missed by family and friends.

**Frank Henderson** Our dear father passed away on Shabbos 7 February 2009. He will be deeply mourned and sadly missed by his children Ruth Finestone, Judith Abbey and George, daughter-in-law Sharron and son-in-law Eric. He will forever be in the hearts of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**Adolf (Dolfi/Don) Mayer**. Born Vienna, died 21.1.09 aged 90. Much loved husband of Gerda.

**Peppi Rulf (Unger)** died suddenly in Israel on 25.11.2008. Mourned by husband Alfred, twin sons Rami and Jochi, daughter Tami and eight grandchildren. A graduate of Bunce Court School, this most attractive and vivacious lady will also be remembered by all her school contemporaries.

**Edward Stern** Born Berlin, died 21 January in his 91st year. A real gentleman, super host and true friend who will be greatly missed by us all. Dentist to refugees in Swiss Cottage. He is survived by his daughter Vivienne.

**In Memoriam**

**3-4 March 1943** Martin and Lotte Reichenback and the other 281 Dresden Jews departed from Hellerberg camp and murdered at Auschwitz on this night.

**Paul Balint AJR Centre**

**Pamela Bloch** Clothes sale, separates etc. Thursday 26 March 2009, 9.30-11.45 am

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**HOLIDAY FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS**

**Sunday 12 July 2009 –  
Sunday 19 July 2009**

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(formerly known as  
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11/17 South Promenade, St Annes

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The hotel charges a supplement

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deluxe room

Book early to avoid

disappointment

Booking form – contact

Ruth Finestone on

020 8385 3070 – 07957 665468

**HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL**

are planning an exhibition in July 2009 to commemorate 70 years of the Kindertransport.

Many of the 10,000 children arrived in this country via Harwich between December 1938 and September 1939.

If anyone has any personal accounts or photographs relating to this, or to anyone who was temporarily housed in Dovercourt, please contact Ray Plummer, Hon Archivist, on 01255 886249

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**TRIP TO ISRAEL POSTPONED**

Owing to low demand, we have postponed our March-April trip to Israel

We are now re-arranging this trip for **OCTOBER 2009**

Those who confirmed for March-April will automatically go on the October list

For further information, please contact Carol Rossen or Lorna Moss on 020 8385 3070

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NW11 0DA

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The Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA) is looking for a **Voluntary Researcher** to spend some time researching various sections of its archive (1933-1960s) in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

*CARA's predecessor was founded in 1933, to save academics from the onslaught of Nazism and to preserve the wealth of knowledge under threat at the time. Today, CARA continues to assist persecuted academics to rebuild their lives so that their specialist knowledge and abilities may continue to benefit Britain and the wider world.*

If you would be interested in volunteering, or would like further details, please contact Laura Wintour on 0207 021 0884 or at [wintour.cara@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:wintour.cara@lsbu.ac.uk)

Please see [www.academic-refugees.org](http://www.academic-refugees.org) for information about CARA's work.

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## OBITUARY

## Ellen Shiffman

Dr Ellen Shiffman, who has died at the age of 84, was a much loved and highly regarded member of the Liverpool Jewish community. A member of the local AJR branch, she guided visitors only last year around the Anne Frank Exhibition while Liverpool was European Capital of Culture.

Ellen came from a distinguished family. Her great-uncle was the scholar David Kaufmann; her grandfather, Ferdinand Rosenthal, was Rabbi of Breslau; her uncle was Chief Rabbi Margulies of Florence; her mother, Else, was a Jarislowsky (a notable banking family in Germany); and her father, Felix, was appointed Head of the Jewish Hospital in Hamburg in 1930.

She wore this rabbinical, medical and financial genealogy lightly, becoming herself a doctor so highly esteemed that she was elected a Fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners in 1980.

Ellen came to England from Germany in 1938 at the age of 14. Born in Breslau, she went to school in Hamburg, forced to move to the Jewish Girls' School in 1933. She maintained contact with several school-friends throughout her life. Having re-started school in Leicester, Ellen was then interned on the Isle of Man, being marched, ironically, through the streets of Liverpool on the way, where she was pelted with



insults and worse. She was among the first women to be released.

Medical study, at Edinburgh University, followed and marriage to her fellow-student Ken in 1949. This year would have marked their diamond wedding anniversary.

For years, Ellen balanced full-time work as a doctor with bringing up her three children and looking after her mother-in-law. She was a strong swimmer and an excellent golfer and enjoyed her bridge. She took a keen interest in politics and was entertainingly scathing about politicians' humbug and what she saw happening to the NHS and education. She was a marvellous doctor in a tough part of Liverpool, renowned for the empathy she brought to her patients' care.

Ellen's self-effacing kindness, however, was her defining quality. Her quiet, unobtrusive but constant concern for others knew no bounds. She truly spent her life doing good. Her Judaism was practical rather than spiritual, reflected in her wonderful *seders*, and indeed every Friday night.

'The one who is pleasing to man is also pleasing to God' (*Pirkei Avot*) – Ellen's life exemplified that simple truth. She is survived by her husband Ken, her three children, David, Ian and Susie, and eight grandchildren.

John Dunston

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY  
MARCH 2009

Mon 2 Ralph Blumenau, 'Classicism and Romanticism' Club 43

Tues 3 Clemens Jabloner, 'The Legacy of Nazi Appropriation in Austria: The Impact of the Historical Commission on Research and Restitution' Wiener Library/Austrian Embassy London/Austrian Cultural Forum London. At Austrian Cultural Forum, 28 Rutland Gate, London SW7, 7 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247

Mon 9 'Out of Austria': Remembering the Austrian Centre An evening with presentations by the authors of *Out of Austria: The Austrian Centre in London in World War II* Room 274/275, Stuart House, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1, 7.00-9.00 pm. Registration necessary: tel 0207 862 8966 jane.lewin@sas.ac.uk

Mon 9 No lecture (hall not available) Club 43

Mon 16 Prof Ernst Sondheimer, 'The Big Train Ride: Moscow to Vladivostok by TransSiberian Express (with slides)' Club 43

Thur 19 B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Jaclyn Chernett, 'Where Have All the Cantors Gone?' Kenton Synagogue Hall, 8.15 pm

Mon 23 Ernst Flesch, 'A Journey through Iran (with slides)' Club 43

Mon 30 Dr Gwen Williams, 'Fairy, Fantasy and Enchantment (Part 2)' Club 43

Wed 1 April Winfried Garscha, 'An Attempt at Justice: New Research on NS-Trials in Austria after 1945' Wiener Library/Austrian Embassy London/Austrian Cultural Forum London. At Wiener Library, 7 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247

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

LETTERS *cont. from page 7*

– but not to be walked over in many streets. A few years ago I visited the little town of Idar-Oberstein in Germany. By chance, walking along the main street, I came across a small flowerbed in the centre of which was a stone engraved with the names of those who were deported and murdered. It was a beautiful, dignified memorial – a credit to a small German community.

Walter Wolff, London W11

## DACHAU GRANDPARENTS

Sir – To my surprise, I was recently invited by the mayor of Dachau as guest speaker at the 70th commemoration of their Kristallnacht service in the Rathaus. In the town of Dachau, I was also shown around the first German concentration camp, built on the site of a former munitions factory. While we were staying in the town, we were taken around by a group of specially

trained teachers who run a youth hostel and classes for young Germans, visitors and students, teaching them about life under the Nazis and the devastation of the Holocaust.

And what about the grandparents of these young Germans? Between 1933 and 1945 they had mostly also been Nazi supporters of their Führer and Fatherland.

(Mr) K. M. Treitel  
London NW11

## VIENNA GRAFFITI

Sir – Graffiti on the wall of my grandmother's house in Vienna, April 1938: 'Wenn ich seh ein Hakenkreuz, dann wird mir zu brechen reiz.' Somebody had chalked underneath: 'Glaub ich schon mein lieber Schloime.'

Henry Rado  
Harrow

## FAREWELL TO WOOLIES

Sir – The closure of Woolworths brings back memories of what the '3 and 6 penny store' meant to refugees in 1938-39. With the extremely limited sums of money we had (in my case, what my parents had – I had none!), this was one of the very few shops one could afford. I remember that after the initial two weeks in a hotel, paid for by a friend of my father's who was already established in London, we moved into two furnished rooms. So we had to buy minimal amounts of cooking equipment. A saucepan for 5d, with the lid an extra 2d, was one of the first purchases. It was one of our possessions for many years. We met friends who had a tin of pineapple – what luxury that would have been in Vienna! In London, it was among the cheapest tinned fruit Woolworths had on offer. Pineapples became a staple part of our diet for a while.

Paul Samet, Pinner, Middx



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL



### Museum of Tolerance for Jerusalem

A few months ago, a supposedly jocular reference to Jerusalem's projected Museum of Tolerance in this journal caught my eye. Having been involved in translating some of the material associated with the project, I feel that this is a subject which, in a roundabout way, I am qualified to address.

The purpose of the projected Museum of Tolerance, initiated and funded by the Simon Wiesenthal Foundation when the late Teddy Kollek was still mayor of Jerusalem, is to constitute an 'interactive social centre which will use innovative technology, amongst other things, to foster social interaction between all segments of the population, the object being to promote mutual understanding and respect for the values of others'. Renowned architect Frank Gehry was asked to design the building and, after visiting Israel several times and examining various sites, he chose a public site in the centre of Jerusalem. This site, on which a car park was situated, was approved by the Jerusalem municipality, which sought to revive the run-down downtown area which had suffered as a result of terrorist attacks.

When the plans were first submitted, over ten years ago, no objections were lodged with the municipality. The idea of building in the Mamilla district, in part of which a disused Muslim cemetery was situated, was not considered exceptional. In fact, in the late 1920s, during the period of the British Mandate in what was then known as Palestine, the entire area was intended by the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, to be the site of the projected Muslim University. The first building to be constructed there, which later came to be known as the Palace Hotel, was completed in 1929 and was initially owned by Arabs. When human remains were found there in the course of the construction work, the builders consulted

the Mufti and other Islamic clerics. In line with similar rulings elsewhere in the Arab world, they opined that the work could continue once the human remains had been re-interred elsewhere and provided they were treated with due respect.

The principal instigator of the recent legal proceedings brought to prevent the erection of the Museum of Tolerance is Sheikh Ra'ad Salah, leader of the extremist Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement and a leading opponent of Israel's right to exist. In the past, he has spent time in jail for his role in instigating violent opposition to Israeli rule. In 2006, under the aegis of the Al-Aksa Association, one of the radical organisations he heads, an injunction was brought against the Jerusalem municipality to prevent the construction of the Museum of Tolerance. Since then the issue has gone through Israel's various courts and, not long ago, a landmark decision to allow the project to go ahead was handed down by Israel's Supreme Court.

The area on which the State of Israel is situated has been the site of established civilisation for several thousand years. During that period, countless individuals of all faiths have died and been buried. It is hardly possible to find a single square metre of ground which does not yield archaeological finds or human remains of one kind or another. If one were so inclined, that could be used to prevent construction, modernisation and progress of any kind. It is patently obvious that the arguments put forward by those who oppose the construction of the Museum of Tolerance are specious, politically-motivated and self-serving. It is Israel's right, provided it shows due respect for whatever human remains may be found, to proceed with a project which will serve to stimulate growth and foster inter-faith relations.

**Dorothea Shefer-Vanson**

## Newsround

### New York exhibition of Jewish postcards



Courtesy of the Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary

An exhibition in New York has put a spotlight on postcards used at the turn of the twentieth century to depict aspects of Jewish life. Entitled 'Past Perfect: The Jewish Experience in Early 20th Century Postcards' and organised by the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary at the Bernard Museum of Judaica, the exhibition includes over 200 photographic postcards which portray, among other things, emigration from Europe, arrival in the New World, the building of synagogues, and Zionism.

### Steep rise in anti-Semitism according to new report

According to a Jewish Agency report, a total of 250 anti-Semitic acts were recorded around the world in January 2009 – a dramatic leap from the 80 cases recorded during the same period in 2008. In the view of the Jewish Agency, Israel's 22-day offensive in Gaza most likely prompted the increased animosity.

### South African politician apologises for anti-Semitic remark

Following pressure from South Africa's Jewish community, the country's deputy foreign minister has apologised for saying, at a pro-Palestinian rally in Lenasia, that 'Jewish money controls America'. Fatima Hajaig 'accepted that the comments were contrary to stated government policy', the government said, and 'apologised unreservedly and unequivocally for the comments and agreed to withdraw them unconditionally.'

### A mezuzah in space

US astronaut Garrett Reisman, who recently spent three months in space, is the first Jew to have lived in the International Space Station. On reaching the Space Station, he said, he was quick to put up a mezuzah in the bunk where he slept: 'I didn't consult any rabbi so I hope I didn't get into any trouble.'