

The early depiction of the Holocaust in literature

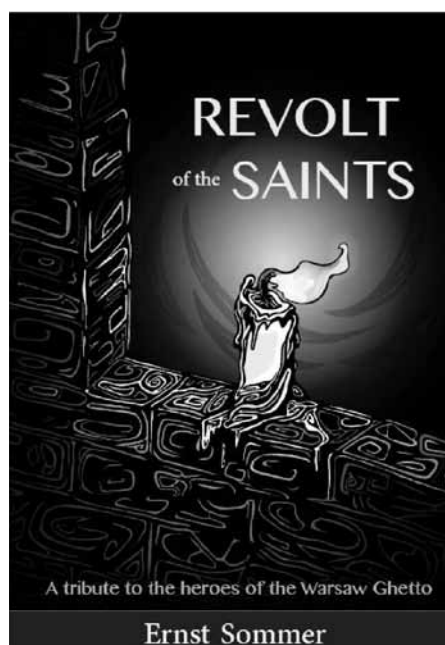
It is a pleasure to report that one of the earliest novels in the German language to take the Holocaust as its subject has appeared recently in an English translation. This is Ernst Sommer's *Die Revolte der Heiligen*, originally written in spring 1943 in London and first published in German in 1944 by the exile press El Libro Libre in Mexico City. An English translation, long forgotten, appeared in 1946. The present translation, *Revolt of the Saints*, is an adapted version of that translation, with a new translation of the novel's original ending; it also has an introduction by Dr Jennifer Taylor of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, Institute of Modern Languages Research, University of London, who has long championed the works of neglected German-speaking writers from the Sudetenland area of former Czechoslovakia.

Ernst Sommer was born in Iglau in Moravia (now Jihlava, Czech Republic) into a prosperous middle-class Jewish family. He qualified as a lawyer and, after wartime service in the Austro-Hungarian army, practised as a lawyer in Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary). But while still a student at the University of Vienna, Sommer had been bitten by the literary bug. He was also a convinced and active Social Democrat, writing for publications friendly to the party. As National Socialism took a growing hold on the German-speaking population of Czechoslovakia in the 1930s, Sommer's position, both as a Jew and a political opponent of Konrad Henlein's Nazi-friendly Sudeten German Party, became increasingly exposed. For all their attachment to German culture and the German language, the Jews of the Sudetenland were now a despised minority within the German-speaking community, itself a minority amidst the Czech-speaking majority.

In 1938, following the Munich Agreement that handed the Sudetenland over to Germany, Sommer fled first to Prague, then to London, where he settled with his wife Leontine and their young daughter Claudia Beate. Life in exile proved difficult for Sommer, who had to take menial jobs to keep his family, while at the same time continuing to write. During the 1930s, he had turned increasingly towards historical novels, of which the best known was *Botschaft aus Granada* (Message from Granada, 1937), which dealt with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492,

with its obvious parallels to developments in contemporary Europe. He also wrote studies of famous free-thinkers from history, literary assertions of humanist values against the menace of Nazi totalitarianism. After the war, Sommer did not return to live in Czechoslovakia, but instead took British nationality. He died in London in 1955.

Sommer is now principally remembered



for *Die Revolte der Heiligen*. Set in the town of L. in Nazi-occupied Poland in early 1943, the novel traces the fate of the Jewish slave labourers who are forced to work in a local factory as they struggle to survive, until the inescapable certainty of deportation and death leads them to rise up against their oppressors in a heroic but suicidal gesture of resistance. The novel begins with the arrival of Sebastian Wolf, one of the two principal advocates of active resistance to the Nazi machine, in the ghetto where the Jewish labourers are confined. Wolf, an active and energetic former engineer from a factory in northern Bohemia, is at once contrasted with the figure of Jonas, the Nazi-appointed *Judenrat* who, while appearing to exercise authority over his fellow Jews, is in reality a mere tool of the Germans. His small, owl-like face, framed by a thin white beard, endows Jonas with a frailty of stature that matches his inability to do

other than implement the orders of the Nazi authorities: he plays his part in the process by which those Jews judged superfluous to the production process in the workshop are selected for deportation to the east.

At the centre of the novel is the agonised debate among the work Jews as they struggle to decide whether to seek to avoid deportation by meeting the relentlessly increasing production quotas imposed by the Nazi authorities, or whether, as the futility of that course of action becomes ever more unavoidably clear, to stand up to their oppressors, even though that means death. Finally, when nearly half of the remaining workforce is threatened with immediate deportation, the Jews rise up in revolt, fighting and dying heroically to the last man and woman. This ending evokes echoes of Jewish heroes of old: Judas Maccabeus, Simon Bar Kochba and the defenders of Masada, who in the year 73 held out on their cliff-top fortress against the encircling Romans, opting at the end to fight and die by their own hand rather than surrender. *Die Revolte der Heiligen* is sometimes thought to have been inspired by the Warsaw Ghetto uprising that began on 19 April 1943, though it is known that Sommer began writing it before that date and only dedicated his novel to 'the heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto' after the event.

The fate of Sommer's work Jews is largely dictated by a key conflict of priorities, that between the German military machine's urgent need to extract the maximum productive benefit from their Jewish slave labourers and the ideologically driven demand for the extermination of those Jews. Even in spring 1943, when the hard-pressed German forces had been defeated at Stalingrad and were facing an unequal struggle against a vastly superior Allied coalition, the military imperative of preserving a skilled workforce was overridden by racial anti-Semitism, by the radical ideologues of the SS, for whom the ultimate objective was the elimination of all Jews from German-occupied Europe.

This conflict is closely mirrored in Sommer's novel. The first *Betriebsleiter* (works manager), Ludwig Schilling, though a convinced Nazi and brutal anti-Semite, still perceives the economic sense in keeping

The early depiction of the Holocaust in literature continued

the Jews alive and working. He is capable of thinking in terms of economic rationality, of the returns to be secured from the efficient utilisation of industrial plant. But Schilling's replacement, Ehrenfried Brigola, incompetent and motivated by his burning desire to revenge himself on the Jews for his own commercial failures and loss of status, allows his sadism and anti-Semitic prejudices to override considerations of economic advantage, finally driving the Jews to revolt. Parallel to the accession of this extreme anti-Semite to power in the workshop, the triumph of ideological anti-Semitism over economic and industrial logic is repeated at the highest level in the area of German-occupied Poland known as the 'Generalgouvernement'. In a scene set at the seat of government in the Wawel in Cracow, the advocates of radical anti-Semitism win the day: the Nazi authorities decide to press ahead with the full implementation of the 'Final Solution', despite its cost to the German war machine in terms of skilled labour and industrial production.

Within the Jewish workforce, the advocates of active resistance to the Nazis, Sebastian Wolf and his ally Jan, conduct a bitter debate with those who believe that by complying with the demands of their oppressors they will be able to save the lives of at least a portion of the Jews – though at the cost of consigning the others to deportation and death. This is the strategy of the first *Judenrat*, Jonas, whose narrowly religious education and limited experience are wholly inadequate to the situation in which he finds himself; he exemplifies the way in which the Jews' capacity for resistance is sapped by their long tradition of submission to persecution, bequeathed to them by a particular religious culture.

The most articulate spokesman of this point of view is the fanatically devout Luria, who believes that Orthodox Judaism gives its adherents the strength to endure suffering, placing his trust in the holy law, not in armed resistance. He succeeds only in postponing the Jews' decision to resist by force until it

AJR Chief Executive
Michael Newman

Finance Director
David Kaye

Heads of Department
Karen Markham Human Resources & Administration
Sue Kurlander Social Services
Carol Hart Community & Volunteer Services

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

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

Hungary and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

Special One-Day Seminar

Tuesday 19 May 2015
at the Wiener Library

Please join us for a special one-day seminar focusing on Hungary's role as Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. We are co-organising this event with the Wiener Library at the Library, 29 Russell Square WC1B 5DP.

We are delighted that Paul Shapiro, Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, will be giving the keynote address and are honoured that Auschwitz survivor and AJR member Susan Pollack will also be giving her thoughts.

Through this event we hope to critically assess the Hungarian Government's approach to memorialising the Holocaust and its impact on Hungarian civil society as well as evaluate their plans for the IHRA chairmanship.

RSVP to susan@ajr.org.uk

is too late to have any chance of saving their lives. Sommer's condemnation of the strategy of compliance emerges most clearly through the figure of Michael, Jonas's successor as *Judenrat*, a corrupt man bent only on his own survival irrespective of the cost and willing to enter into any compromise with Brigola to that end. The revolt takes place quite literally over his dead body: he is trampled underfoot as the Jews take to arms.

Sommer's novel is set on the margins of the Holocaust. The workshop in *L.* is the last place for the Jews before they are deported to the extermination camps, sites that Sommer, in company with many subsequent chroniclers of the Holocaust in fiction, considered to be so far beyond the normal world of human habitation as to defy representation, other than by those who had experienced and survived them. His short story *Die Gaskammer* (The Gas Chamber), published in December 1942 in *Einheit*, the newspaper for the German-speaking exiles from Czechoslovakia in London, is very likely the work that first introduced the apparatus of the Nazi genocide by name into world literature.

Anthony Grenville

Revolt of the Saints, published in 2014, is available as an e-book from Kindle Books at £5.81: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Revolt-The-Saints-Tribute-Heroes-ebook/dp/BOOKSDB3PK>



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SCOTLAND REGIONAL EDINBURGH WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 2015

Our keynote speaker

Agnes Hirschi,

the daughter of Carl Lutz, is coming from
Switzerland to join us

The title of her talk is

**'Swiss Diplomat Carl Lutz
on Dangerous Missions'**

Carl Lutz, Swiss Vice-Consul in Budapest from 1942 until the end of WWII, is credited with saving over 62,000 Jews, the largest rescue operation of Jews of the war.

Please bring along your family

Lunch will be provided

There will also be discussion groups and the
opportunity to socialise with friends old and new

For full details and an application form,
please telephone Agnes Isaacs on 07908 156361
or email agnes@ajr.org.uk

INAUGURATION OF KINDERTRANSPORT SCULPTURE IN HAMBURG 6 MAY 2015

The inauguration of the Kindertransport sculpture in Hamburg will take place at 14:00 on 6 May 2015 outside the Dammtor Station at Dag-Hammarskjöld-Platz (on the side of the Radisson Blu Hotel).

An official invitation from the Lord Mayor of Hamburg will follow shortly and we very much look forward to seeing you there.

Frank Meisler, Arie Ovadia

Who will remember the German and Austrian refugees who fought for Britain in the Second World War?

May 2015 marks 70 years since the end of the Second World War. There is one particular group of veterans who deserve recognition by way of a national war memorial for their extraordinary part in the defeat of Hitler and the liberation of Europe. They are the refugees from Nazism – men and women who enlisted in the British forces and fought against the Nazi regime. They include over 10,000 Germans and Austrians as well as Czechs and Poles – all forced to flee the countries of their birth.

Their contribution was not insignificant: one in seven of the refugees who came to this country served in the British forces. Of them, 90 per cent were Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution or survivors of concentration camps. All volunteered and could not be conscripted because they were not yet British citizens. They swore allegiance to George VI and became affectionately known as 'the King's most loyal enemy aliens'. Most of them began life in the Pioneer Corps, the unskilled labour unit, but went on to serve in frontline forces in all theatres of war, including top-secret intelligence work and dangerous missions behind enemy lines. Some died in action, including on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, fighting for the country that had saved them from the Holocaust.

Another as yet unacknowledged dimension of the refugees' contribution to the war effort is their return to Germany at the end of the war in British army uniform to begin the reconstruction of post-war Germany and Austria. Their fluency in German made their work indispensable to the Allies. This included vital work in the restoration of democracy, the



Refugees who fought for Britain
– section of 74 Company, Pioneer
Corps, 1941

hunt for Nazi war criminals, war crimes trials, military government and denazification.

Now, as these eyewitnesses pass into history, there is a real danger that their legacy will be forgotten. Who will remember them if a war memorial is not created? These veterans deserve their own special memorial, one that must be national – showing that our nation as a whole acknowledges their special contribution and sacrifice. Erecting a national war memorial

would provide a permanent and lasting monument to their unique part in the Second World War.

Helen Fry

Historian and biographer Dr Helen Fry has spent the last 15 years researching and writing books about the refugees who fought for Britain in the Second World War, passionately believing that their stories need to be told before they are lost.



Alice Anson (née Gross), from Vienna, Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF)



OUTING TO WESTCLIFF TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2015

Join us for our annual outing to Westcliff. This is always a most enjoyable and relaxing day out.

We will have the opportunity to socialise with members of the AJR Essex Group with a buffet lunch at Westcliff Synagogue on arrival.

After lunch we will have a short tour of Southend and then visit **Porters Civic House & Mayor's Parlour**, where we will have a tour of the premises and hopefully meet the Mayor. This will be followed by tea and pastries.

£18 per person includes refreshments on arrival, buffet lunch, tour of Westcliff, tour of Porters, tea and pastries, and return coach journey from London.

For further details and an application form, please call Susan Harrod, Regional Groups Administrator, on 020 8385 3070 or email susan@ajr.org.uk



Visit to Brooklands Museum, home of Concorde

Tuesday 30 June 2015

The first UK meeting between Great Britain and France to discuss Concorde took place at Brooklands and more than 30 per cent of every Concorde airframe, British and French, was manufactured here.

Now her flying days are over, Concorde G-BBDG is at Brooklands Museum. The first aircraft ever to carry 100 people at twice the speed of sound – 1,350 mph – she arrived at Brooklands in 2004 and, after a two-year restoration, largely by volunteers, was officially opened by HRH Prince Michael of Kent in July 2006.

Join us for a visit to the Museum. Sit inside Concorde. Lunch and refreshments included.

For further details, please telephone Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or email susan@ajr.org.uk

AJR Annual Report 2014

Highlights

We were once again deeply honoured and thrilled to host His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, this time as our special guest, at the London premiere of *The Last Train to Tomorrow*, the song cycle written by the acclaimed composer and conductor Carl Davis in tribute to the Kindertransport.

The event at the Roundhouse, originally a turning point for trains and located just around the corner from where many of the refugees settled, was an outstanding success and undoubtedly one of the best occasions in our illustrious history.

Carl's beautiful music was so evocatively performed by the City of London Sinfonia and the Finchley Children's Music Group, and we were treated to the prodigious talent of violinist Louisa Staples from the Yehudi Menuhin School.

The newsreader Natasha Kaplinsky compered the afternoon with her inimitable elegance and we were indebted to Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, who began the proceedings by overseeing a candle-lighting ceremony and giving his reflections to commemorate the anniversary of Kristallnacht.

The event concluded the series of gatherings we organised to mark the 75th anniversary of the creation of the Kindertransport, which included hosting Allan Noel-Baker, the grandson of Philip Noel-Baker, the MP who initiated the debate in Parliament in November 1938 in response to the devastation of Kristallnacht.

Allan was one of the speakers at our annual Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration, when we also heard from AJR member Professor Michael Spiro. We were also grateful to second-generation member Janet Weston, who gave a reading, and to Rabbi Stuart Altshuler and our friends at Belsize Square Synagogue for their hospitality.

Our thanks too went to Professor Clare Ungerson and Hannah Goldstone, a third-generation member, for addressing our members as part of our event in Manchester to commemorate Kristallnacht, and to Caroline Slifkin for chairing the event.

At a poignant (and noisy) event in June, we were delighted to welcome the international renowned author and illustrator Judith Kerr at the London Jewish Cultural Centre, when she read her famous book *The Tiger Who Came To Tea* to an audience which included the great-grandchildren of some of our members.

It was with great pleasure that I attended the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the AJR's special interest group, the Child Survivors' Association, at Speaker's House, the official residence of John Bercow MP, in June. AJR Child Survivor members were joined by several Members of Parliament as well as colleagues from communal organisations.

Personnel and administration

In December we bade farewell to Director Carol Rossen, who retired after 33 years' dedicated service to the AJR. Although she

will be greatly missed by the many members she came into contact with, we are delighted that she will continue to organise our members' holidays and the Annual Concert and Lunch.

Our social care worker Helena Reid also retired at the end of the year, having worked diligently for the AJR for 16 years and represented and supported numerous members throughout the south of the country. A farewell tea was held for each of them at Head Office which was attended by their families and many members of staff, including some past employees.

Also leaving us after many years of service was Joseph Pereira, latterly our Meals-on-Wheels delivery driver but best known and appreciated as the caring caretaker at the former AJR Centre in Cleve Road, West Hampstead.

Our Homecare administrator Andrea Rosner left us in July having joined in 2011, as did our Manchester-based social worker Barbara Dorrity Dresner after 11 years' service.

We welcomed three new remote social workers: Kathryn Williams for the Midlands, Chris Tweddle in Yorkshire, and Christine Brazier in the Manchester area. We also welcomed social worker Karen Barnes, based at Head Office, together with new colleagues in our accounts department, bookkeeper Samantha Cohen and financial analyst Mukesh Jethwa.

We are delighted that Lesley Woolfe, our Dementia Project Co-ordinator, who joined in 2013 initially for one year, will now be with us until 2017, and in November we welcomed Karen Markham as our new Head of Human Resources and Administration.

Membership

At the end of 2014, membership stood at 2,390, down from 2,615 the previous year. Last year, we enrolled 108 new members and received notice that 173 had passed away and that 76 members had moved away or not paid their subscriptions. A further 99 members cancelled their subscriptions.

In 2014, total second-generation membership was 522 (471 the previous year), including 61 who joined during the year, up from 37 for the preceding 12 months. At the start of this year, our database showed 668 members aged 90 or over and a further 37 who had reached their century.

Annual Lunch and Concert

The Annual Concert at the Watford Hilton was a thoroughly engaging afternoon, with over 200 members enjoying a tasty salmon lunch followed by tea with fresh fruit kebabs. As ever, Glenys Groves and her colleagues Cormac Browne and Ramon Remedios, accompanied by Diana Franklin on the piano, performed magnificently. The title of the programme was 'Songs with Strings', which featured music from *Showboat*, *The Merry Widow* and *Les Misérables*.

As part of my welcoming address, I

made a presentation to Carol Rossen on the occasion of her retirement and in recognition of her longstanding devotion to our great organisation.

Financial assistance

As lead agency for the administration of grants and assistance from Claims Conference programmes, which are made to an Umbrella Group of the AJR and four other UK charities, we administered the grants awarded to cover 2014-15. Last year, approximately £2.4m in grants was managed, of which over £500,000 was paid to AJR members to provide care in their homes and to address other urgent social and welfare needs.

Additionally, Umbrella Group clients have benefited from the continued generosity of our arrangement with Six Point Foundation, through which the AJR has administered a further £200,000 in awards, while the AJR itself has been supported by grants totalling £60,000 towards the costs of our care, volunteering and administrative services.

It gave us great pleasure to award above-inflation increases through AJR Self-Aid to those of our members with the greatest need, with over £560,000 distributed in monthly payments and to mark certain Jewish festivals.

My fellow Trustees and I have taken the strategic decision to ensure that our funds are managed in order to provide financial assistance for as long as it is likely to be needed.

Social and welfare services

The Social Services Department continued to identify new and existing members who need assistance from programmes supported by the Claims Conference, principally the Emergency and Austrian Funds and Homecare, but also through the AJR's Self-Aid.

As first-generation members increase in age there is a greater need to provide Homecare support to enable them to remain in their own homes and to help them to continue to lead independent lives.

Although assessments and applications now require a much greater level of detail, as well as the involvement of medical and care professionals and local authorities, we continued to make life-changing interventions and to improve members' welfare. In delivering our knowledgeable and professional assistance, we worked with colleagues across a number of community organisations as well as other social and welfare services across the country to support our members.

Volunteers

Following the success of the Phone Befriender Service, co-ordinated by our former AJR Centre manager Ros Collin and piloted for members over 90 living in Essex, we are expanding the programme to the Birmingham area.

We are also developing the Memory Loss Befriender Programme, managed in London

by Lesley Woolfe, with the appointment of a second co-ordinator, to be based in the Manchester area.

The Computerhelp Project, run by Jonathan Rose, has trained volunteers to help over 70 AJR members to use, or become more proficient with, their computers and iPads, while Fran Horwich, our volunteer co-ordinator supporting members throughout the north of the country, continued to recruit and support benefactors.

Moritz Stegmeir took over from Dora Kohler as the Action Reconciliation Services for Peace intern to co-ordinate much of the department's administration.

Community

We were delighted to continue in our role as part of the executive of the Forum for Yom HaShoah, which organises the national Yom HaShoah commemoration. The AJR also participated in the Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) Trust's collaborative group looking at ways to further the reach and impact of HMD.

The AJR also maintained its position as a member of the UK delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, led by the UK Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, Sir Andrew Burns. In 2014, the UK hosted the Alliance and we were represented at plenaries in London and Manchester where some members joined delegates for evening receptions.

AJR Journal

As in previous years, the *Journal* carried, *inter alia*, reports on members' group meetings and outings – the reports clearly illustrating the AJR's status as an established nationwide organisation – book (and occasionally theatre) reviews, search notices, items on compensation of specific interest to members, a diary of arts and events, obituaries, and news of national awards conferred on members.

A major theme of contributors to the *Journal* remained accounts of earlier days, including returning to locations they had left in very different circumstances, for instance a visit to a place of internment on the Isle of Man (Fritz Lustig) and a 'pilgrimage' to a Franco-Spanish border crossing seven decades later (Eve Kugler).

The anniversaries of Kristallnacht and Yom HaShoah were marked as always, as was *The Last Train to Tomorrow* concert, which attracted particular praise and appreciation.

With regard to regular contributors, Consultant Editor Anthony Grenville discussed historical issues relevant to the lives of members; Gloria Tessler reviewed current art exhibitions; and 'Letter from Israel' columnist Dorothea Shefer-Vanson considered issues which do not always hit the headlines. The correspondence columns, the Middle East issue as always especially controversial, remained a particularly lively section of the *Journal*.

Regional groups and holidays

Our extensive network of nationwide groups offered many opportunities for members to enjoy a mix of socialising, entertainment and cultural enlightenment.

We were delighted to organise outings to, among other places, the Florence Nightingale Museum and the Montefiore

Synagogue as well as to the Chelsea Psychic Garden and the Jewish Museum.

We arranged trips to see *The Handbag* at the Vaudeville Theatre, *Porgy and Bess* at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre and the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera (with Cream Tea), having also taken groups to see the film *Philomena* and Diane Samuels's highly acclaimed play *Kindertransport*. Among other highlights, members in the south enjoyed a delicious Viennese Tea at The Delaunay.

Members throughout the north of the country also enjoyed memorable occasions, including a trip to Burnby Hall Gardens near York, the Stanley and Audrey Burton Art Gallery at Leeds University, and Donisthorpe Hall residential home for 'cinema' outings. Among the topics covered by guest speakers were the Jewish history of Bradford and Geoffrey Perry's encounter with Lord Haw-Haw. The Northern Regional, this time in Manchester, was a great success and we were grateful to guest speaker Ros Merkin, who directed *Suitcase 1938*, the experiential theatre portrayal of the Kindertransport.

Members in Scotland enjoyed the opening of The Cultural Connections Jewish Art Exhibition in Ayr with photographer Judah Passow and an outing to the Vetriciano Exhibition at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and participated in the gala opening of the Jewish Film Festival with a screening of *The Forgotten Hero*, a film about Carl Lutz.

As well as the intergenerational Question Time on the theme of Scottish independence, highlights included a superb Chanukah lunch and dance in Glasgow and a talk on looted art by David Glasser. Jane Merkin, the producer of *Suitcase 1938*, was the guest speaker at the Regional in Edinburgh.

The annual trip to London proved as popular as ever and members greatly enjoyed a packed programme, including a visit to Kenwood House and a dinner at the London Jewish Cultural Centre with guest speaker Ian Austin MP. We also organised a guided tour of the National Theatre and a matinee performance of *A Taste of Honey* as well as a visit to the Camden Arts Centre and a boat trip down the Thames.

In July, 50 members enjoyed a week in Eastbourne with entertainment, trips to the theatre and outings to local places of interest.

AJR at the Sobell Centre

In January, Jewish Care's Sobell Centre welcomed our AJR Centre members into their family. Since that time, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the same days the Centre was open at Belsize Square Synagogue, our members have been socialising, playing rummikub, kalooki and bridge, eating, exercising, debating, making pottery, drawing and painting – although presumably not all at the same time!

At Sobell members can also book hairdressing and manicuring appointments and enjoy the afternoon entertainment with their longstanding (never old!) AJR friends as well as the rest of the Sobell membership.

Although the philosophy at Sobell differs from that of the AJR Centre, our members managed the transition well and have embraced the change. For those who require the service, we also retain a dedicated carer offering practical support.

We are delighted that our Meals-on-

Wheels service continues to deliver a delicious range of meals to members in north-west London.

Kindertransport

The *Kinder* continued their regular monthly lunches at Alyth Synagogue with musical performers and guest speakers on a range of subjects, including the playwright Diane Samuels and the philanthropist and former *Kind* Dame Stephanie Shirley.

Our largest attendance though was for the lunch we organised at the New North London Synagogue when Natasha Kaplinsky was the guest speaker. As part of her talk she spoke about her role as a member of the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission and *Kinder* had the chance to feed back their thoughts as part of the Commission's consultation on the future of Holocaust education and commemoration.

We continued to receive numerous enquiries from researchers and descendants of *Kinder* seeking information about the Kindertransport and sent out the regular *Kindertransport Newsletter* edited by Bernd Koschland, which contained its usual mix of historical overviews, search notices and members' contributions.

My special thanks go to my fellow Trustee Sir Eric Reich, Chairman of the AJR-KT, and his committee for their endeavours in staging *The Last Train to Tomorrow* premiere.

Child Survivors' Association (CSA)

In 2014, the Child Survivors' Association held six meetings, mainly as social gatherings, and, as in previous years, the Strawberry Tea, followed by the AGM, was a great success.

Members who receive the bi-monthly CSA newsletter continued to speak about their experiences giving testimony at schools in the UK, at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum, and on occasion to audiences at overseas events.

The Association was well represented at the Annual Conference of the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Descendants which, significantly, was held in Berlin.

Following the Conference, the Claims Conference concluded its negotiations with members of the Bundestag and announced the creation of the Child Survivors' Fund, a compensation programme through which many of our CSA members should benefit.

What originated as *Zachor*, a book of remembrance and a collection of accounts written by CSA members, was updated in 2012 and republished as *WE REMEMBER*. It has been a great success and is now in its third edition.

Grants

It gave us great pleasure to further support the work of two leading institutions dedicated to the memorialisation of the Holocaust and developing educational resources for future generations.

We converted our sponsorship of the National Holocaust Centre's Localities project to provide funding for their groundbreaking testimony programme and pledged assistance to the Wiener Library to enable them to continue to deliver their core activities.

We also made an award to the Manchester Jewish Museum, which is developing a Holocaust gallery, and were delighted to support once again the Council of Christians and Jews to sponsor two Fellows to participate in a study course at Yad Vashem and to work with the Holocaust Education Development Project (part of the Institute of Education) on the conference on genocide they organised.

As in previous years, we helped offset some of the costs for pupils from King Solomon School to make an educational trip to Poland and contributed to the Holocaust Memorial Day programme organised by Finchley Reform Synagogue.

Thanks

Keeping our extraordinary organisation going and in the best possible shape to

deliver our critical services is a real team effort and, together with my fellow Trustees, I would like to pay tribute to our professional and dedicated staff, capably led by our Chief Executive, Michael Newman.

While we are in the fortunate position of being able to help, we should all be justifiably proud that the AJR continues to make life-changing interventions that bring great comfort to our members and to arrange an extensive and varied programme of social and cultural events and unique opportunities to be among friends.

Please do continue to look in the *AJR Journal* for details of our forthcoming activities and I look forward to seeing you at our events this year.

Andrew Kaufman
Chairman,

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Treasurer's Report 2014

Two thousand and fourteen marked a second full year of operating as a limited company. Our finances have been further strengthened by the decisions made, and the events that originated in, earlier years. Our running costs have been reduced following the transfer of our Day Centre activities to Jewish Care, where our members enjoy continuing opportunities to meet, eat and participate in the various activities offered.

Last year we benefited from the vesting of a property legacy which had been professionally valued, and that value was included in our 2013 accounts. I am happy to say that we were able to sell the property for nearly twice this figure and the accounts that accompany this report show the significant further gain that was secured on its disposal. This, together with the earlier gain on the disposal of Cleve Road and further legacy income, places us in a better financial position. The Trustees naturally wish to make certain that the organisation has the resources to ensure that our members continue to receive benefits and services for their foreseeable lives, and we have been reviewing our longer-term financial position and, after taking appropriate professional advice, will structure our finances accordingly in the next few months.

The organisation continued to use its resources to provide a full range of social, welfare and educational programmes to its members and for the support it gives to other organisations. Using its stronger financial position to enhance those services, our Self-Aid programme benefited from inflation-beating increases as it continued to support those of our members with the greatest financial need; our social

services team was strengthened by the recruitment of additional social workers; and a volunteer befriending programme has become well established.

The Claims Conference, both for themselves and as administrators of German and Austrian Government programmes for refugees and Holocaust survivors, together with Six Point Foundation, continue to be at the heart of the funding of our welfare and social service activity. Their support increased by nearly £240,000 and is used to fund the Homecare and other service schemes from which many of our members benefit. They also assist in funding the administrative burdens associated with the management of these programmes. Our heartfelt thanks are extended to them.

Our strengthened financial position also allowed us to enhance the work we do in social and commemorative activity. Our accounts show an increase of over £300,000 in support given to other organisations. This largely reflects a five-year commitment to support the Wiener Library; the cost recorded in 2014 will be spent over that longer period. The concert performance of *The Last Train to Tomorrow*, our major commemorative event for the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport, virtually broke even by virtue of the generous donations and sponsorship we received.

Our finance team has had another busy year administering not only the affairs of the AJR but also in working on behalf of the Umbrella Group of five charities, which we lead, dealing with the distribution of funds and related administrative requirements of the Programmes supported by the Claims Conference and Six Point Foundation. We live in a world where,

Finance Report 2014

Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) Summary Income and Expenditure Accounts Year ended 31st December 2014

Income:	2014		2013	
	£	£	£	£
Claims Conference, Six Point & Other Grants	1,209,285		970,740	
Subscriptions/Donations	98,885		109,867	
Investment income	512,401		458,353	
Rent from Investment Property	131,162			
Other Income	5,129		28,552	
		1,956,862		1,567,512
Legacies		1,610,278		6,287,410
Total Income		3,567,140		7,854,922
Less outgoings:				
Day Centre	0		167,109	
Self Aid, Homecare and Emergency Grants	1,206,265		1,155,099	
Social Services and Other member services	866,784		660,744	
Other organisations	687,913		155,348	
Administration/Depreciation	1,140,739		1,015,685	
		3,901,701		3,153,985
Donated by AJR Charitable Trust				4,138,089
Gain in disposal of investment property		4,412,632		
Net incoming/outgoing resources for the year		4,078,071		8,839,026
Surplus/-Deficiency on realised and unrealised investments		215,273		1,112,149
Net movement in funds		4,293,344		9,951,175

Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) Summary Balance Sheet Year ended 31st December 2014

	2014		2013	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets and Investments		16,841,058		13,019,213
Current assets	12,828,813		11,574,457	
Current liabilities	832,273		469,416	
Long-term liability	400,000			
Net Current Assets		11,576,540		11,105,041
Net Assets		28,417,598		24,124,254
Reserves brought forward		24,124,254		14,791,602
Less Freehold property retained by AJR Charitable trust at beginning of year				618,523
Net movement in funds for year		4,293,344		9,951,175
Reserves Carried Forward		28,417,598		24,124,254

in the management of a public benefit organisation like ours, governance and compliance are rightly given due prominence; the reporting and control requirements are inevitably quite onerous. The team are to be thanked for their efforts which have facilitated the work of the AJR, the Claims Conference and Six Point Foundation.

David Kaye and all his team whose work is dedicated to the welfare of all the members have again been exceptional. Thank you.

David Rothenberg
Treasurer,
The Association of Jewish Refugees



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

'THE JOYS OF ADS'

Sir – Many of the names mentioned in Anthony Grenville's March article 'The joys of ads' on refugee businesses brought back memories.

My father (Hans J. Briess), whose company Briess and Co Ltd were importers of raw materials for the food industry, was a supplier and close friend of Fred Weldon of OP Chocolate and also supplied names such as Mars, Cadbury, Walls and Mattessons. Fred Weldon's wife Carola was the founder of Richoux cafés. My friend Richard Tait (Tietz) and his brother Tom founded Sterilin Products in South Wales, who are still the leading providers of plastic, sterile disposables to the Heath Service. Victor Fox, a pharmacist from Prague, founded Medopharma Ltd (later Regent Laboratories Ltd), manufacturers of Generic Pharmaceuticals, of which I later became Managing Director. LPC Chemicals and Dyes (Peter Straus) were well-known suppliers of Pharmaceutical raw materials. Harry Kissin, later Lord Kissin, took over old established British commodity broker Lewis and Peat Ltd and developed it into the conglomerate and banking firm Guinness Peat Group plc in the City of London.

Furthermore, Ralph Hulse was the founder of MedoChemicals Ltd in Kentish Town, manufacturers of various ethical pharmaceuticals. Gee Lawson Ltd in Finchley Road (chemical raw materials) was founded by Max Hoffmann; Michael Sherwood (Schwarzbart) from Leipzig founded Ealing Office and Typewriter Supplies; Asher Jedlin from Bratislava became the owner of Chelsea Flour Mills and many other mills throughout the country; Johnny Weiser and Henry Meyer formed Delbanco Meyer Ltd, which became a leading supplier of bristle and later of feathers and down; Leo Brenner was the founder of Brenner Brothers Ltd steel and textile merchants; and Ernest Weighman and his wife were the owners of the Fred Perry shirt company.

These are just a few names I remember but there must have been many more. Quite a contribution to the British economy by these 1930s refugees!

Peter Briess, London NW3

Sir – In Manchester's Fallowfield district, a bright young refugee operated a modest but highly successful commercial hotel in a quiet cul-de-sac staffed entirely by young Irish girls. All were in an 'interesting condition' and had made their escape to England before being found out by family and neighbours. Our friend had contacts with the church in Dublin and received a steady supply.

The girls all worked very hard as long as possible, were well treated, and their wages securely banked. Their babies were quickly removed for adoption by the local church, which had a constant waiting list. The girls then made a happy return to Ireland with their nest eggs.

Our friend was thus a true public benefactor. Sadly, after some years the hotel was demolished to make room for university halls of residence and we lost contact with the entrepreneur. I am sure he now owns a five-star hotel in Las Vegas!

(Dr) Hans L. Eirew, Manchester

Sir – Anthony Grenville's latest article was even more fascinating than his previous ones to me – it reminded me of my father's illicit occupation during the war. As a refugee with a guarantor, who was almost penniless herself, he had to do something to provide for his family: my mother was in domestic service and my brother and I were in England 'on holiday' paid for by my mother's employer.

The war broke out just before we were due to return to Brussels, where my father had been sent as a Kindertransportee from Germany.

A British friend of his told him that, if stopped by police with his suitcase full of cigars, cigarettes and chocolates, he was to say that he was just helping in his friend's business.

Among the articles my father sold to the refugee community were the Pischinger Torte from OP Chocolates and Werner Ackerman's wonderful chocolate. Did you know Werner and his wife made this chocolate in their kitchen on an old grey gas stove! I distinctly remember seeing a pot of chocolate on the cooker!

As for Silhouette, the owners, Mrs and

Mrs Hobbenberg, were good friends of my aunt and Mrs Hobbenberg came to visit me when I was in Shrewsbury hospital.

I remember many of the other firms Dr Grenville mentions but one I can vouch for was Mattessons sausages – absolutely superb!

Susie Shipman (née Davids), Ilford

Sir – To complete Anthony Grenville's fantastic memories of shops owned or managed by refugees on post-war Finchley Road, I would just add a Viennese restaurant, situated where the O2 Centre now stands. Straight opposite now is All Aboard, a second-hand shop. This was a small grocery shop, with chickens on the left and milky foods on the right.

Clare Parker, London NW11

Sir – I have been an avid reader of the *AJR Journal* for many years via my mother, who always passed it on to me. When she died in 2007 I took up membership myself and find myself looking forward to receiving the latest edition each month.

Your recent articles on Finchley Road and Swiss Cottage struck several chords with me because, as a child, I was often taken for *Kaffee und Kuchen* at the Dorice or shopped at Beverley for my father's favourite coffee, Jamaican Blue Mountain. The delicious coffee aroma that permeated that shop still lingers in my memory.

Yvonne Susan Maxwell (née Schueler), Oxford

HUNGARY TAKES OVER IHRA CHAIRMANSHIP

Sir – Hungary is proud to take over the chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) from the UK for the next 12 months. The IHRA and its 31 member countries focus on placing political and social leaders' support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance and research, both nationally and internationally.

It is a great honour for us that in 2015-16 Hungary is chairing this international body for the second time. Our main priorities are 1) combating anti-Semitism; 2) Holocaust education; 3) Roma genocide.

The response to the rise of anti-Semitic acts and incidents requires political determination and condemnation, via a comprehensive approach. The recent violent attacks on Europe's Jewish community are extremely worrying. In the framework of our IHRA chairmanship, the Hungarian Government has decided to organise an international conference dedicated to the phenomenon of rising anti-Semitism in Western and Central-Eastern Europe.

We will continue our excellent co-operation with the British Government and Sir Andrew Burns, the former Chair of IHRA. In order to take into consideration the concerns of the Jewish community in the United Kingdom, the Hungarian IHRA Chair and I have already engaged with Jewish

continued overleaf ➔

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
continued from page 7

organisations in the UK. It was my honour to attend and speak at the Yom Hashoah Evening last year at Pinner Synagogue. We will hold a panel discussion in London at the end of April with Sir Andrew Burns, the Hungarian Chairman and the Board of Deputies of British Jews. The discussion will cover the role of governments, politicians and civil society in combating anti-Semitism and in promoting Holocaust remembrance and education.

Hungary's chairmanship will hopefully contribute to our countries' efforts in the fight against anti-Semitism, extremism and racism in Europe and beyond. We are looking forward to working with our British counterparts on this important issue.

Ambassador Péter Szabadhegy, London

'NO FRIEND OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY'

Sir – I was very interested in Lesley Urbach's article on Herbert Morrison (April). Morrison certainly was no friend of the Jewish community.

On 16 May 1940 I was interned and, after a few weeks, sent to Canada. Two years later I was cleared for release and returned to the UK, initially to Hutchinson Camp on the Isle of Man.

Responsibility for internment of 'enemy aliens' had been transferred from the War Office to the Home Office, where Herbert Morrison was the Secretary of State. He came to 'inspect' the camp during the summer of 1942. His inspection consisted of a walk round *outside* the double barbed-wire fence. I can see him now with his black Homburg hat. He never came inside the camp, refused to see a delegation of the internees, and never spoke to a single internee.

It is ironic that his daughter married a Jew – and the offspring of that marriage is, of course, Peter Mandelson, Morrison's grandson!

Heinz Skyte, Leeds

Sir – Someone said to Ernest Bevin that Herbert Morrison was his own worst enemy. 'Not while I'm alive he ain't!' was the reply.

Peter Gildener, Truro

IDENTICAL TWINS

Sir – We refer to Jane Dickson's obituary of Geoffrey Dickson (formerly Max Dobriner) in your April issue.

We, identical twins, came to England from Karlsruhe in 1937 at the age of two. A year later, a distant relative came to us from Germany and changed his name to Leslie Wallen. He joined the Pioneer Corps and later entered the No. 3 Troup 10 Commando, as Geoffrey Dickson did. After the war he studied agriculture and became the farm manager of a large estate in the Midlands.

*Marianne Joseph, Birmingham
Irene Odenheimer, Basel, Switzerland*

'A GLORIOUS OLD BOOKSHOP'

Sir – Anna Nyburg's review of my book *Loose Connections: From Narva Maantee to Great Russell Street* in your April issue has been sent to me by Diana Athill. She was given it by a Jewish friend (clearly a subscriber to your journal), who, I imagine, lives in the same wonderful home in Highgate as Diana, now in her late nineties. I thought it would interest/amuse Anna Nyburg to know this as she evidently greatly admires Diana.

Anyway, I wanted to say how much I appreciate your having put the book out for review and am glad that, in spite of some reservations, your reviewer seems to have enjoyed it. I loved being compared to an old bookshop! I know just the kind she means.

Esther Whitby (née Menell), London NW1

THE FUTURE AMADEUS QUARTET

Sir – I am grateful to Mary Brainin Hutterer (April) for pointing out the error in my memoir *Send Me a Parcel with a Hundred Lovely Things*.

The sentence in question should read 'They were going to listen to concerts, which included artists who would eventually come together as the Amadeus Quartet.' The text of my memoir will be amended as soon as possible.

Carry Gorney, London NW5

ANCESTRY TRACED BACK TO 17TH CENTURY

Sir – It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have been invited to talk to different groups of the AJR in recent months and thereby share my genealogical enthusiasm with the membership. This is especially so since my UK ancestry for ten generations or more contrasts strongly with the family history experience of almost all AJR members.

However, in the report on my talk in Wembley, Avram Schaufeld describes his envy that I can trace my ancestry back to the late 19th century. I hope this is a simple misprint because the reality is that it is back to the late 17th century!

*(Dr) Anthony Joseph, Emeritus President,
Jewish Genealogical Society of Great
Britain, Smethwick, West Midlands*

*Our apologies to Dr Joseph for this misprint
(Ed.)*

BY EX-REFUGEES FOR EX-REFUGEES?

Sir – Your correspondent Ernest G. Kolman (March) is indeed under the misapprehension that the *AJR Journal* is 'produced by ex-refugees for ex-refugees'.

Although I am a member of the AJR I have never yet been a refugee but have made the odd contribution to the Journal. He also overlooks the many Second Generation AJR members.

Henri Obstfeld, Stanmore, Middx

THANK-YOU AWARD

Sir – I have recently heard from the British Academy that I have had the good fortune to be awarded the Thank-offering to Britain

Fellowship for 2015-16.

My proposal is called 'Taming the Beast', as I shall be examining responses in British philosophy to the philosopher Thomas Hobbes (the so-called 'Beast of Malmesbury'). Hobbes (1588-1679) was a tutor to the Devonshire family and, as they were royalists, he himself was a refugee from the Britain of the Civil War, from 1640-51 (he went to France).

His most famous work, *Leviathan*, was published in the year he returned to Britain. In this work he argued that the state can be justified as a 'contract' between self-interested individuals, for their own protection. It is his views on self-interest that I will focus on – Hobbes argued that no one ever has any reason to do anything that does not advance their own self-interest. British moral philosophy after Hobbes can be seen as a response to him, and I will be examining the views on the relation of the self to others, and of course morality, in the works of many philosophers, including Cumberland, Cudworth, Clarke, Locke, Hutcheson, J. S. Mill, T. H. Green, G. E. Moore, and many others, until the present day (I will include a final chapter on twentieth-century philosophy, in which the 'British tradition' was continued in the US as well as the UK!).

Though I believe that philosophy can make progress (and has made some, in certain areas), I think it can only do that with a proper understanding of its past – which is also, of course, our past. And in understanding the past, we can discover new ideas for the present.

It is a tremendous privilege to be given the opportunity to read and reflect upon this particular strand of our tradition, and I am writing to express my sincere gratitude to the Association of Jewish Refugees for funding this Fellowship. It is a great honour, and I shall do my very best to prove myself worthy of it.

Professor Roger Crisp, Oxford University

ISRAEL AND GAZA

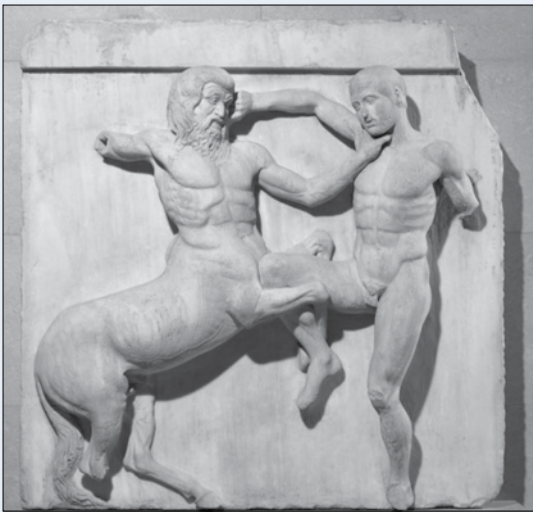
Sir – Your correspondent Frank Bright (April 2015) states that in last year's war 'Most of the 2,000 dead Gazans were Hamas operatives.' On what grounds does he disagree with both Israeli (52 per cent civilian deaths) and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs figures (69 per cent of 2,104 deaths)? Which would he prefer to rely on – the statement of an interested party or that of an international body which compiles data from a variety of sources, including Israeli?

On the same page, Mendel Storz blames Hamas for the high civilian toll (without any sense of proportionality – 6 Israeli civilian deaths versus over 1,000 in Gaza; did the IDF have no idea it was entering a densely populated area, where 43 per cent of the population was under 15 years old?). He then states: 'The Palestinians have had ample opportunities to make peace with Israel had they wanted to.' To do that, the Palestinian Authority needs a willing partner. Does a trustworthy and reliable peace

ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

In my sculpture class, before we were let loose on the model, we were given the task of copying the mouth, eyes and nose of the Michelangelo David. Of course the David has a Greek god-like perfection, tough to emulate. But in Michelangelo's



Centaur and Lapith, marble metope from the south side of the Parthenon, 447-438 BC
© British Museum

day most Greek statues had been plundered for their marble or bronze, valued only as scrap. It was left to the Romans to replicate what was lost.

Defining Beauty: The Body in Ancient Greek Art at the **British Museum** (until 5 July 2015) presents the focus on youthful beauty that characterised 2,000 years of Greek art. Athletic bodies represented military prowess at a time of protracted war between Athens and Sparta. The philosopher Protagoras said 'Man is the measure of all things' and in the 1st-5th centuries BCE it seemed to be a pun on this mathematical physical precision.

The three great Greek sculptors were a competitive trio: Myron, Polykleitos and Phidias all studied in the workshop of a single master. Nothing embodies this more than the famous image of the marble discus-thrower Discobolus, which is a Roman replica of a bronze Greek original of the 5th century BC. Then you see the naked Aphrodite crouching at her bath in what resembles a Yoga pose: it conveys the

sense of a woman trying to cover herself from a voyeur. This sculpture is said to be the only female Olympian deity to be shown naked. The Greeks were alone among contemporary nations in portraying nudity, although in some of the exquisite bronze miniatures women are also shown covering themselves in beautifully moulded robe miniatures.

What is rarely commented on is that Greek beauty is androgynous: there is no difference between the face of the male and the female – the same classical nose flows from the forehead, the same straight brow and well-defined chin, an idea culminating in the image of Hermaphrodite, a sleeping beauty with both male and female organs.

We are used to seeing Greek art in white marble but it's a misnomer: the Greeks painted their sculptures and you can see fading colour, some of intricate designs, particularly in the sarcophagus of the soldier Aristion. Some works are prehistoric abstracts; others betray Egyptian influences in the erect stance, the expressionless face and the long, straight hair flowing from a forehead band. If the Greeks were obsessed with beauty, they also had their mythic dragons – like the centaur half-man, half-horse – and one disturbing sphynx has a man's head, an eagle's wings and a lion's body.

With Alexander the Great came a new realism and the busts of Homer, Herodotus and Sophocles have commonplace features, shot through with intelligence.

There are in the exhibition over 120 objects, including several Greek originals. A recent find is an original bronze nude athlete scaping his body with a metal tool after exercise and before bathing. It was raised off the seabed near Croatia. There are also plenty of painted Greek vases, jugs and urns, some with images of cavorting children.

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REVIEWS

An enduring message

ERBSTEIN: THE TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY OF FOOTBALL'S FORGOTTEN PIONEER

by Dominic Bliss

Blizzard Media Ltd, 2014, £10.00, available in Kindle edition, ISBN 978-1-908940-96-4

Try to make a list of Jewish football managers and you'll probably be able to name only two: José Pékerman and Avram Grant! Dominic Bliss seeks to address this imbalance.

Ernő Egri Erbstein was a survivor of two world wars, an officer in a defeated army in the first and a victim of the Holocaust in the second. Between the wars, he plied his trade as a professional footballer in his native Hungary and joined a Zionist football club which toured the east coast of the United States.

When he began football coaching, his innovations on and off the pitch left an indelible mark on the game and changed the role of the manager forever. The teams under his charge went from strength to strength as he mixed motivational techniques, meticulous tactical planning and shrewd transfer dealings. In a football context, he was a visionary who set the norm for present-day football managers.

Even as his five-times Scudetto-winning Grande Torino side were taking Italian football by storm, Erbstein was battling rumours that he was a Communist spy and that he was undermining a celebrated national manager.

Then, in May 1949, just as his team appeared to be at the peak of its powers, he was killed, together with the rest of his team, in an air disaster on the Superga hilltop overlooking Turin. This story has a resonance with that of the 'Busby Babes' in February 1958.

It has taken Dominic Bliss five years to uncover the full story but what makes this story fascinating is that Erbstein was not British and did not manage a famous team – but was a Holocaust survivor from Central Europe.

Here is the man, described as a genius many times in interviews, explaining in his own words how he had learned to be a more pragmatic coach during his trip to the United States in 1927: while

continued on page 10 ➔

the rest of his Central European teammates on that tour had been disgusted by the direct style of their American opponents, he claimed to have learned a thing or two about levelling the playing field against superior opposition but equally he sought 'to portray Jews in a new light' through the promotion of 'Muscular Judaism'.

This book is about football and it goes into considerable detail about the tactics and games but you don't need to be a football fan to appreciate its content. Rather, I would see it as a book about a man who overcame so much in his life but found favour as a Jew.

The author handles Erbstein and his family's survival with sensitivity and one is left with the impression that he and his family survived the Holocaust not only by astonishing good fortune but that he was able to deal with the situation he faced through the very nature of his persona and attitude to life.

In the changing room Erbstein told his players 'to smile ... and when you go out on the pitch: smile' and 'if the opposition goes in hard or the referee is wrong: smile. If the opposition scores: smile. If we score: smile. If the opposition insults us or offends us: smile.' This more than anything carried him through his life. Perhaps there is an enduring message for us all.

Stephen Brownstone

'In Israel anyone who doesn't believe in miracles isn't a realist'

MY PROMISED LAND: THE TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY OF ISRAEL

by Ari Shavit

New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013, 480 pp. hardcover, available at amazon.co.uk

Ari Shavit, who was born in Israel in 1958, begins his journey through Israel's life and times with a personal account of his childhood fears for his own and his family's fate and his current sense of unease with what Israel has become.

Shavit goes back in time to describe the arrival by steamer in 1897 of his great-grandfather, the Rt Honorable Herbert Bentwich, a distinguished British lawyer, together with a group of upper-middle-class British Jews, on the shores of what was then a

distant corner of the Ottoman Empire. Using contemporary sources, family documents and correspondence, as well as making an impressive leap of the imagination, he describes their experiences and emotions, what they saw – and what they failed to see – and how the Bentwich family was among the first settlers in what was later to become the State of Israel.

Each of the subsequent 14 chapters describes a different aspect of Israel's history or provides an account of individuals who have left their mark on the country. Thus, we gain insight into the establishment by idealistic young pioneers from Eastern Europe, inspired and led by Yitzhak Tabenkin, of the first kibbutz, Ein Harod, in the Jezreel Valley in 1921. Other chapters describe in great detail the establishment of orange groves in the Rehovot area; Shmaryahu Gutman's creation of the idealistic concept of Masada as it defended itself against the Romans; the 1948 War of Independence and the exile of the Arab population of Lydda; stories of Holocaust survivors, who made a new life for themselves in Israel and contributed to making Israel a country in which impoverished immigrants from all over the world were absorbed and integrated into society; the clandestine creation of the nuclear reactor at Dimona; and the Six-Day War and the resulting resurgence of messianic Judaism and the insistence of those Jews on establishing settlements in Judea and Samaria ('the occupied territories'), with all that that policy has brought in its wake.

Based on his personal experience as a reservist, Shavit describes the anomalous situation in the Gaza Strip before that area was returned to Palestinian self-rule. He conducts interviews with numerous politicians and intellectuals on all sides of the political and ethnic divide and discusses Israel's existential situation with them. One of the most fascinating chapters describes his encounter with Israeli party leader Aryeh Deri, giving his analysis of what happened to the Jews from north African countries when they emigrated to Israel, where the dominant Ashkenazi ruling elite sought to impose its own values and culture on them. With admirable courage, Shavit braves the din, strobe lights and sexual explicitness of the Tel Aviv night-club scene in order to describe its clientele

and activities. He then goes on to analyse more recent events, such as the demonstrations expressing social unrest with its subsequent political changes, which are helping to create a new political scene.

What the book conveys most of all is the immensity of the undertaking, in which a sovereign state and independent nation has emerged from what was virtually nowhere and nothing to become a regional power, manufacturing powerhouse and high-tech superpower. At several points Shavit stresses the vitality, strength, good looks and creativity of Israel's population, extolling the buoyancy of the young families, whose fertility rate is considerably higher than that of Europe, attributing these qualities to the population's genetic mixture.

Shavit is an experienced journalist. His writing is erudite, his descriptions are fascinating and his insights enlightening. But however hard he tries, his conclusions cannot but be depressing as a two-state solution seems to slip further away with each day that passes. Israel's situation in the modern world seems to be going from bad to worse, so that all that is left for us to do is follow Ben-Gurion in claiming that 'In Israel anyone who doesn't believe in miracles isn't a realist.'

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

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A Very Special Day: Return to Dovercourt

AJR Southern Groups Co-ordinator Hazel Beiny sets the scene:

Harwich and Dovercourt High School, which has been conducting a research project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, on the Kindertransport, invited *Kinder* to the school for the day. Towards the end of March, five *Kinder* came over from London and Kent.

Our group arrived to an incredible welcoming committee, made up of Year 9 students, the Deputy Head, a teacher, the granddaughter of Mr and Mrs Bond, who had two chalets at the time of the Kindertransports, and a representative of the Harwich Society. Following refreshments, the *Kinder* were interviewed and filmed by two students.

We then went on a tour of Harwich and saw the site of the original Dovercourt Camp and the two chalets rented by Mr and Mrs Bond, as well as the site of the cinema where in 1939 the *Kinder* had all been taken to see *Snow White*.

Then it was on to the beach to see the Kindertransport plaque, then a second plaque at the ferry station where the *Kinder* had landed and been put through security and health checks.

Wonderful memories of a nostalgic visit which was emotional and uplifting! The schoolchildren were delightful and it was a very special day – to be remembered by all who attended.

Leslie Baruch Brent adds:

Five of us former *Kinder* visited Harwich and Dovercourt High School in order to meet senior pupils engaged in some very careful research into the part played by Dovercourt Camp in the reception of children in late 1938 and early 1939 and on the Kindertransports in general. I would like to add one or two personal impressions on what transpired that day.

I was deeply impressed by the pupils as well as the staff, in particular Deputy Head Simon Garnham, who welcomed us with open arms.

The research, aided and abetted by Mike Levy, a writer and Holocaust historian based in Cambridge, is throwing up some fascinating information. The pupils were delightful, deeply committed to their project, and with a genuine empathy for what transpired

on their doorstep in that cold, cold winter of 1938-39.

For me, as no doubt for the other four *Kinder*, the visit was deeply emotional as it took me vividly back 77 years to my first four tentative and anxious weeks in this country. To be taken on a tour of Dovercourt and Harwich in a red London double-decker bus of 1938 vintage (I was astonished that the space between the seats on the top deck was so narrow that I couldn't tuck my legs in!) was a stroke of genius. The three plaques dedicated to the Kindertransports – one outside what used to be the entrance to the camp, one on the harbour wall, and another in the railway station – recorded the arrival of the children very touchingly: the local Historical Society has clearly taken a keen interest in the role played by Harwich and Dovercourt in the Kindertransport story. The whole day stirred up some cogent memories for the five of us and we were deeply thankful for the invitation and to Hazel Beiny for arranging our transport.

It seemed a pity that not more *Kinder* had availed themselves of this unique opportunity. The pupils will be showing the results of their researches in an exhibition, and will perform a play based on the Kindertransports, on 1 July.

One document thrown up by the research project was a page from the *Radio Times* announcing the broadcast of a BBC programme on the Kindertransports, 'Children in Flight', in which I had the privilege to take part. We all remember the bitterly cold winter that year: the blurb for the broadcast mentions that it was so cold that the recording equipment froze, that a heater had to be installed in the recording van, and that the heater was so noisy that it had to be switched off whilst recording That is entirely in accord with my memory – we were kept from freezing at night in our small wooden holiday chalets by courtesy of Dunlop, who provided us with rubber hot water bottles!



The five *Kinder* (from left): Eric Newman, Inge Hack, Harry Fleming, Leslie Baruch Brent, Ralph Stanton

A REMARKABLE LIFE

At the Kindertransport Group monthly lunch meeting in March, our speaker was Herman Rothman.

Herman came here from Berlin on the Kindertransport in August 1939 aged 14 and joined the British Army at the age of 19. Transferring to the Intelligence Section and posted to the Fallingbostal POW Camp near Hamburg to interrogate high-ranking Nazi war criminals, he discovered the originals of Hitler's personal and political wills. The full story of Herman's remarkable life is in his book *Hitler's Will*, edited by our good friend Helen Fry.

David Lang

ARTS AND EVENTS MAY DIARY

Wed 20 'Turn of Century Vienna' Trudy Gold will address this subject after which there will be a discussion between her and Christoph Weidinger, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Austrian Embassy, about Vienna's past and present and its relationship with the Jews. Followed by a Viennese Tea of Apfelstrudel and Sachertorte. At JW3, 2.30 pm. Tel Immanuel on 020 8457 5021 or 020 7433 8988. Admission free

Wed 20 David Motadel (Research Fellow in History at Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge): **Fraenkel Prize Lecture: 'Islam and Nazi Germany's War'** At Wiener Library 6.30 pm-8 pm. Admission free but booking essential. Tel 020 7636 7247

Tues 26 Professor Judit Gervai (Eotvos University, Budapest): **'The Genetics of Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma'** Second Generation Network and Wiener Library event. Professor Gervai explains how, at a generic level, trauma can be transferred from one generation to another. At Wiener Library, 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm. Admission free but please book via Eventbrite

June 3-27 'Now This Is Not the End' To coincide with the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust, Rose Lewenstein's play receives its world premiere. The author explores the meaning of legacy, identity and our sense of belonging through the eyes of three generations of Jewish women. At Arcola Theatre, 24 Ashwin Street, London E8 3DL, box office 020 7503 1646

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<http://fromdorothea.wordpress.com>



CHESHIRE Sailing Close to the Wind

In a lively discussion we discovered that we had in our midst a runner who had earned numerous trophies, a musician who had descended from a musical/dental family and was still playing the cello in an orchestra, and a sailor who had sailed 'close to the wind' on more than one occasion.

Adele and Hans Rose

EALING A Great Place to Live

Ealing historian Jonathan Oates spoke about the history of Ealing from the 15th century to the present day. In 1599, he said, the census showed 400 persons; by 1901, when the Municipal Borough and Walpole Park were created, there were 33,000. The first synagogue was founded in 1919. Everyone agreed Ealing was a great place to live!

Esther Rinkoff

WHITEFIELD/PRESTWICH Super Turnout

There was a super turnout at the home of Ruth and Werner Lachs for a discussion about favourite films and actors. The afternoon finished splendidly with a table full of cream cakes, strudel, lemon drizzle cake and iced kuchen. A good time was had by all.

Wendy Bott

CAFE IMPERIAL Never a Dull Moment

Felix Frank brought along a beautiful photo album of pictures he had taken during the war. The men talked about having being paid one guinea a day and on leaving a £95 gratuity. The strongest currency was cigarettes. Harry Stanton proudly showed us his watch, bought for £5! Peter Wayne brought in an ID card, provoking a conversation about 'friendly enemy aliens'. Never a dull moment.

Hazel Beiny

ILFORD Life in the Home Office

Leslie Sommer took us through his very varied career in the Home Office and told us many interesting anecdotes. It is Civil Service policy to move their staff around and due

to this he became efficient in many subjects. He told us he had never experienced anti-Semitism in any of his jobs.

Meta Roseneil

PINNER Vanishing World of the Jewish East End

It was a particular pleasure to listen to London Guide Clive Bettington, who spoke about a wide spectrum of well-known individuals from the rapidly vanishing world of the Jewish East End, for instance Mark Gettler, Arnold Wesker, Lionel Bart, Charles Clore, Joe Loss and the Kray twins. Clive's personal mission was to honour the memory of WWI poet Isaac Rosenberg.

Walter Weg

ST JOHN'S WOOD The Two Savoy's

Rob Lowe gave a wonderful talk about the history of the two Savoy's – the Grand Hotel in London and the Savoy Theatre next door, where Gilbert and Sullivan operas were performed. We also heard the story of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, and Bob sang us an excerpt from *H.M.S. Pinafore* – an unexpected treat!

Kitty Balint-Kurti

GLASGOW Something for Everyone

There was something for everyone on the menu at Mark's Deli when both First and Second Generation members braved the heavy rain and high winds to meet up for lunch. A very pleasant time was spent eating and chatting and everyone is looking forward to another outing to the Deli soon.

Anthea Berg

WEST MIDLANDS (BIRMINGHAM) A Most Enjoyable Afternoon

Another most enjoyable afternoon spent at Birmingham Town Hall listening to Peter Donohoe deftly play Shostakovich and, in his encore, Mendelssohn, all beautifully accompanied by the Orchestra of the Swan. Thank you, Eva, for organising and so sorry you were unable to join us!

Esther Rinkoff

WESSEX CEO Should Visit Again

AJR CEO Michael Newman updated us on important AJR news and answered many questions. Members were delighted with his visit and hope he will come again on a regular basis.

Kathryn Prevezer

BRIGHTON & HOVE SARID Tea, Biscuits and Enthusiasm

Our co-ordinator Esther wasn't well but we held our meeting as usual.

Our speaker didn't turn up so we all took turns to speak, telling interesting stories about our first jobs. With tea and biscuits and some enthusiasm, it was a successful meeting.

Ceska Abrahams

LEEDS CF 'Feel-good Factor'

We were transported into the delightful world of a Steven Spielberg production – *The 100 Feet Journey*, shown at Donisthorpe Hall. Not only did the film give us a positive 'feel-good' factor, the delicious afternoon tea that followed was an extra unexpected pleasure. Thanks to all who organised this.

Ruth Rogoff

EDGWARE A Nice Change to Socialise and Chat

In the absence of a speaker we had a lovely discussion, talking about our most memorable days and telling funny stories. What a nice change to socialise and just chat.

Hazel Beiny

DIDSBURY Favourite Places to Visit

We enjoyed a discussion about 'A favourite place you have visited and/or somewhere you would like to visit'. Places ranged from the Lake District to Llandudno, Florida to Tel Aviv. We discussed favourite buildings and walks in the UK too. A most illuminating afternoon.

Wendy Bott

RADLETT Relatives in Israel Discovered

Esther talked to us about her recent visit to Israel, sparked off by a mysterious email purporting to come from an unknown relative. She eventually identified not only the sender but several other relatives previously unknown to her. This discovery led to her visit to Israel and she described vividly the joy that meeting these cousins gave her and her husband.

Fritz Starer

EAST MIDLANDS (NOTTINGHAM) Social Meeting over a Simple Lunch

We missed Esther, who was ill, and sent her our good wishes for a speedy recovery. We met as usual for a social meeting over one of Gerry's simple lunches at the Nortons' home. AJR social worker Kathryn Williams sorted out a few problems some members had.

Bob Norton

WELWYN GC A Fascinating Life Story

Jane Greenfield gave a fascinating talk about her life - interesting on so many levels. Her father was a PoW near Treblinka and his wish to be a farmer

originated there. His family then ran a dairy farm in England, where Jane happily milked cows, drove tractors and became a successful horse rider. A most enjoyable morning.

Lee Koos

EDINBURGH CF No Place Like Home

'My Favourite City/Place' certainly kept the conversation going. There is no place like home. Many liked Edinburgh, while some had a special place in their heart for the city they had come from – as well as Paris, Florence, Venice and Budapest, to name but a few. A lovely afternoon out with excellent company.

Agnes Isaacs

BOOK CLUB A Good 'Holiday Read'

Meeting at Joseph's Bookstore in Temple Fortune, we discussed *Forever a Stranger* by Linda Ferrer. It was a very good 'holiday read', with a surprise ending. The book to be discussed at our May meeting is *Butterfly's Shadow* by Lee Langley.

Irene Goodman

WEMBLEY 'Mishmash: A Walk through Jewish Trivia'

Kingston Synagogue member Tony Zandle gave a fascinating talk on 'Jewish Trivia', on which we learned some amazing facts on topics such as food, music, sport and entertainment. We all enjoyed tea and cakes afterwards.

Kathryn Prevezer

NORTH LONDON History of Chocolate

Chocolate has a history dating back to 900 AD. Initially the crushed beans (kibs) were mixed with chilli and vanilla, making a most unpalatable drink! Today's chocolate is the result of much research, making it the smooth, shiny and delicious sweetmeat that is so popular worldwide. Professor Michael Spiro is a most eloquent and entertaining speaker.

Hanne R. Freedman

GLASGOW BOOK CLUB *The Land Agent* Enjoyed by All

J. David Simons's new book *The Land Agent* was enjoyed by all. We're already looking forward to his next book, which is still in the making.

Agnes Isaacs

NORTH WEST LONDON Back to the Dorice

Tony Balazs and his cousin Charlotte spoke to us about Tony's mother's well-known Dorice Restaurant at 169a Finchleystrasse. Following a lively Q&A session, we had a lovely lunch, when it felt as if we had all been transported back in time and were eating in the Dorice once again.

David Lang

MAY GROUP EVENTS

Sheffield	3 May	Speaker: Ian Vellins
Prestwich	4 May	Social
Ealing	5 May	Paul Lang: 'Women in Aviation'
Ilford	6 May	Tony Zandle: 'Mishmash: A Walk through Jewish Trivia'
Pinner	7 May	Leslie Sommer: 'A Career at the Home Office'
Dundee	10 May	Social
Hull	10 May	Social
HGS	11 May	Katy Jackson: 'The Wiener Library: 80 Years of Evidence'
Cardiff	12 May	David Lawson: 'The Wild East'
Cheshire	12 May	Social
Essex (Westcliff)	12 May	Godfrey Gould: 'The Life of Rufus Isaacs'
St John's Wood	12 May	Toby Simpson: 'The Kaiser's Jewish Soldiers: World War One in the Wiener Library Collections'
Book Club	13 May	Social Get-together
Glasgow Book Club	14 May	Social and Discussion
Welwyn GC	26 May	Ruth Berman: Extend Exercise in the Chair
Wembley	27 May	Prof Michael Spiro: 'The Story of Chocolate'
North London	28 May	Debbie Pearson: 'London and the Wine Trade'

CAFE IMPERIAL Memories of VE Day

A morning of reminiscences. Two of our members had spent VE Day in Minden. It had been the birthday of one of them, Peter Wayne.

Hazel Beiny

KENSINGTON New Group Formed

Among those present were two Second-Generation members, one of them with her First-Generation mother, and two First-Generation brothers. Having been invited by Hazel to introduce ourselves and share our histories since arriving in Britain, we broke up into informal chat. The allotted two hours passed very quickly and we didn't manage to discuss the possible format of future meetings

continued overleaf ➔

Books Bought MODERN AND OLD



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CONTACTS

Hazel Beiny

Southern Groups Co-ordinator

07966 887 434 hazel@ajr.org.uk

Wendy Bott

Northern Groups Co-ordinator

07908 156 365 wendy@ajr.org.uk

Susan Harrod

Groups' Administrator

020 8385 3070 susan@ajr.org.uk

Agnes Isaacs

Scotland and Newcastle Groups

Co-ordinator

07908 156 361 agnes@ajr.org.uk

Kathryn Prevezer

Southern Groups Co-ordinator

07966 969 951 kathryn@ajr.org.uk

Esther Rinkoff

Southern Groups Co-ordinator

07966 631 778 esther@ajr.org.uk

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)

Andrea Goodmaker

020 8385 3070 andrea@ajr.org.uk

Child Survivors Association-AJR

Henri Obstfeld

020 8954 5298 h.obstfeld@talk21.com

INSIDE THE AJR
cont. from p.9

– such discussion will have to wait for the next gathering.

Edward Mendelsohn

BRADFORD CF A 'Yorkshire European'

John King, editorial board member of the Second Generation's *New Voices*, spoke of identity problems. Referring to his own background – that of an English non-Jewish father and an Austrian-Jewish mother who had come to England on the Kindertransport and been adopted by an English non-Jewish family – he concluded that he was a 'Yorkshire European'. He added that the Second Generation had its place as an intellectually independent forum.

Stephen Tendlow

NORFOLK Another Meeting with All the Right Ingredients

Another successful lunchtime meeting with all the right ingredients – from herring salad and rye bread to cheesecake. Frank gave the second instalment of his early life, from arriving in the Friedland slave-labour camp to returning to Prague after 22 eventful months. Many thanks to Kathryn and the 'local ladies' of the Synagogue for their help.

Frank Bright

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**FAMILY
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Deaths

Charles Maurice Regan (Curt Moritz Regensburger), born 31 October 1925, died peacefully 31 March 2015. He will be missed by his family and friends.

My mother, **Gerda Roland** (née Taussigova), born Hlinsko, Bohemia, on 21 May 1911, was the only survivor of her immediate family, having emigrated to India with her husband, Alfred Rosenfeld, before the war. She died peacefully in Bognor Regis on 3 December 2014 and donated her body to medical science. Her funeral took place in Oxford on 17 April this year. (Peter Roland)

KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH

Wednesday 13 May 2015
at 12.30 pm

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OBITUARIES

Margot Barnard (née Kober), born Bonn (Beuel) 24 December 1919, died Weston-super-Mare 6 February 2015

Originally published in German, *I'll Never See You Again** is the English title of an autobiography spanning over 90 years lived through, and in the shadow of, the Holocaust.

With the death of Margot Barnard, the cause of Holocaust education has lost an energetic advocate. As recently as two years ago – at the age of 92 – Margot was still visiting schools at home and in Germany, insisting that forgiveness is a prerequisite if the ‘never again’ message was to be inculcated into successive generations. Indeed, she can be considered one of the first practitioners in the field of Holocaust education when in the 1950s she found herself living in Germany as an army wife.

Born in 1919 in Beuel, now incorporated into the city of Bonn, Margot was 13 when she discovered Zionism, a passion her parents did not share. With others she founded a Zionist youth group in Bonn and went on to become a member of Hashomer Hatzair. It was this which gave her a way out of Nazi Germany. In August 1936, in the face of her mother’s plea not to go, Margot left for Palestine with her mother’s words ringing in her ears: ‘Ich sehe dich nie wieder!’ (I’ll never see you again). The words were prophetic – neither of her parents survived.

In April 1945 Margot, now married to Ted, arrived in England, her ‘second promised land’. Ted had been stationed in Palestine in the Pay Corps and was returning to south London to introduce his bride to his family. In 1956, after the birth of their two sons and army postings in Gibraltar, Nigeria and England, Ted was posted to Germany, where the family lived for four years, years described by Margot as ‘some of the most important’ of her life. It was undoubtedly during this time that Margot’s mission to ‘forgive and educate’ had its roots.

Back in England and widowed at the age of 44 and with two school-aged boys to support, Margot moved to London. She bought a run-down terraced house in Gospel Oak, had it converted to three flats, and lived in the top flat. As well as her grandchildren, who often stayed, there was a constant stream of visitors from all over the world. It was impossible to leave the house in Rona Road without having been persuaded to eat large quantities of home-baked cake! It was from here that Margot began what was to become the driving force of the rest of her life: visiting

schools both at home and in Germany, talking to young people about her childhood as a Jew in Nazi Germany, and setting an example of what was to become the norm in the field of Holocaust education.

In 2013, in recognition of ‘her extraordinary dedication to educating young people about the Holocaust’, she was honoured by the German Ambassador with the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. In the same year, the Medinghoven Secondary school in Bonn was renamed the Margot-Barnard-Realschule.

Dogged by increasingly poor health, Margot knew that staying in Rona Road was no longer an option. In 2014 she moved to a newly refurbished bungalow in Weston-super-Mare. With Stephen and Jill living next door and Jasper and family visiting regularly, she felt supported and cherished in the – sadly – short time remaining to her.

Marion Koebner

**Reviewed in AJR Journal October 2012 and available from Pomegranate Books www.pomegranatebooks.co.uk*



Josephine Spencer, born Vienna 1 December 1912, died Toronto 19 November 2014

My mother Josephine (Fini) Spencer was born in the second district of Vienna, the third daughter of Cipre and Leib Thumim. She grew up in a poor but happy and observant Jewish household. She had to leave school at 14 to help support her family. In 1937 she met Rudolf (Rudi) Spiegler, a law graduate, and they married in April 1938.

In 1939 they escaped to England, sponsored by a Quaker family in Haslemere, and worked briefly as domestics. Afterwards they went to London and Fini worked in many occupations – in a bakery, as a cashier in a restaurant, and as a seamstress. In 1942 the family moved to Coventry.

The postwar years were a struggle. In May 1946 twins, Maureen and Bernard, were born. Josephine, her mother and Rudi were naturalised in 1948. Josephine found work in the post office, walked miles, carried heavy bags, and got to know every district of Coventry.

As a result of the Holocaust, Fini didn’t have a lot of family – her middle sister Berta had perished with her husband in Terezin – but she and Rudi soon connected with a small group of Austrian and German refugees

(some from Vienna) who had also settled in Coventry and they became extended family.

Fini and Rudi returned to Vienna on holiday several times. They also went to the USA, where they met family members and had a wonderful reunion with surviving members of Rudi’s university class. Fini also travelled to Israel, where she reconnected with family. In 1975 Rudi died, aged 63, of heart failure after living with severe diabetes for almost 40 years.

In the years following Rudi’s death, Fini travelled a lot and saw even more of the world, visiting places as far away as Hong Kong and Thailand.

Fini emigrated to Canada in 1988 at the age of 76 to join her daughter, who had lived in Toronto since 1968. She was still relatively active for the next 20 years, with occasional travel and summers spent with her niece’s family in Milwaukee. At the age of 90 she went back to Vienna as the guest of the Austrian government.

In her 90s she enrolled in several classes at Life Institute, a university programme for seniors, and that became the highlight of her week.

Life became harder after 2005, when she fell

and broke a thigh and had surgery. For most people of her age, that would have been the beginning of the end; however, she continued to live independently with help.

She looked forward to, and enjoyed, the great milestone of her 100th birthday. The first celebration took place the summer before, with a gathering of four generations of the clan. Her niece Elise’s extended family came from the United States; her son Bernard and niece Jennifer came from Britain.

Then came the real birthday with a gathering of friends – and, of course, the card from the Queen.

However, age was taking its toll. Fini couldn’t do a lot for herself any more and needed daily help with bathing and meals. She had used a walker for many years but now she occasionally needed a wheelchair. She was losing her hearing and sight and life became very difficult with minimal external stimulation. Most of her friends were dead, including her great friend Jenny Zundel, who had lived in London and with whom she had enjoyed weekly telephone conversations until Jenny’s death in 2012.

Fini died just 12 days short of her 102nd birthday. Hers truly was a long and eventful life.

Maureen Spencer





LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

ITTA (It's That Time Again)

Each year, as spring comes round and daylight gets stronger and longer, the women of the Jewish faith get the urge. To clean, that is. They seem to have infected their non-Jewish fellow females, too, as Spring Cleaning has become a universal phenomenon.

Thus it is that dusters and polishing rags come out, corners left unattended throughout the year are swept and cleaned, cabinets are turned out, and many more women find themselves in hospital as a result of injuries incurred in the cleaning process.

One friend fell off a ladder and broke her leg – so no more cleaning for her this year. Another put her back out last year trying to reach into the furthest reaches of a cupboard – and that put a sock in the cleaning efforts of that particular *Hausfrau*. The amount of injuries caused by boiling liquid, caustic soda and the various fluids and preparations used in the cleaning process are limitless – no one has even attempted to assess their number.

The question is what came first: the cleaning bug or the commandment imposed

by the Jewish religion to rid one's household of every scrap of leavened bread? In typically Jewish fashion, however, the matter has been taken to ridiculous lengths. It's not enough for the dutiful Jewish housewife to clear out all the bread, biscuits and cake with which she has been sinning in the course of the year. No, she has to scrub and scour and wipe and wash every possible surface that comes into her ken. And then, as if that isn't enough, she has to change all her pots and pans, dishes and cutlery for her home to be considered ritually fit to entitle her to embark on cooking the enormous meal of the traditional *Seder* (twice over for those unfortunate enough to live in the diaspora). Did anyone say 'obsessive-compulsive'?

But that is what the sages and rabbis of yore have led us to believe is what the good Lord has ordained. Does the Bible contain an injunction against seething a kid in its mother's milk? Fine. Let's just embellish it a tiny bit. It shall henceforth be extended to encompass any kid anywhere and all milk of any kind. No more Spaghetti Bolognese with Parmesan cheese melting gently on top. No more creamy mashed potatoes together with

your juicy steak. And, of course, you must wait three or six hours after eating meat before you can eat anything with milk in it lest, heaven forbid, the contents of your stomach offend the Lord. At least Dutch Jewry was let off lightly and allowed to wait only one hour!

Would it be such a terrible thing if we didn't do our spring cleaning one year? I'm very much afraid that our consciences would rise up and torment us for the rest of the year. I must admit that although I do not regard it as a religious duty, I use the opportunity to go over my kitchen and other cupboards and am always amazed to find remnants of grime and dirt in what I thought were perfectly clean interiors. It's also an opportunity to meet forgotten objects which arouse happy memories – that beautiful hand-made lace handkerchief embellished with the initials of long-lost relatives that has been stuck at the back of a cupboard because I couldn't bear to part with it but didn't know what to do with it, or those ancient, tattered theatre programmes from my dim and distant youth, reminding me of those heady days when attentive boyfriends took me to every new musical or Shakespeare play on the London stage.

Although I really should get rid of some of those old things, I know I'll leave them where they are for another year, albeit in more pristine surroundings

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *cont. from p.7*

partner continue to expand settlements on land that, under international law, belongs to the Palestinians? And yes, Hamas remains a thorny and dangerous issue, but Israel's consistent refusal to include it in any negotiations has not helped, nor has the continued occupation and colonisation of the West Bank over the last 47 years.

If some of your readers do not believe the evidence of successive Israeli governments' actions then one only has to see the Israeli documentary *The Gatekeepers* (directed by Druh Moreh, shown on BBC2 in October 2014), which interviews six former heads of Shin Bet, to come face-to-face with some unpalatably hard truths.

Caroline M. Salinger, Leicester

Sir – I take exception to Judy Sherwood's letter (March) claiming that Israel's actions against Gaza dehumanise people. One of the many misjudgements about the conflict in Gaza is the call for proportionality.

That Israel is at war with Gaza – whether declared or not – leaves no doubt. The purpose of war is to achieve superiority, not proportionality. The RAF did not stop shooting down German planes when they had reached parity. When the Germans sent 500 bombers to Coventry, we sent 1,200 to Dresden.

The Palestinians have their own ideas about proportionality – an Israeli prisoner is worth 1,000 of their men. Peace (not necessarily contentment), which follows victory, is not achieved by a notional balance.

Freddy Berdach, Northwood, Middx

Sir – Frank Bright (April, Letters) concludes what he clearly feels is a well argued, rational insight into the Gaza conflict with the words 'Simple. Even grandmothers might understand that if they put their minds to it.'

Clearly we grandmothers should be grateful to be enlightened by such a great intellectual.

Joan Salter, London N10

Sir – I have three comments to make on reading your excellent April issue. First, I congratulate Mendel Storz and Frank Bright on writing two of the best letters I have read in your letters' pages – in other words, I completely share their opinions! Second, I agree with Lesley Urbach's criticism of Labour Home Secretary Herbert Morrison. Like his colleague, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, who tried to prevent the creation of the state of Israel, Morrison was no friend of the Jews. Third, surely the outcome of the Israeli election – and, most probably the British election – shows up the danger of small parties.

Netanyahu may have to rely on the three ultra-religious parties to govern, even though Israel was set up as a secular state. We may have the Scottish National Party deciding on what is right for England. Both eventualities scare me.

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts

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Telephone 020 8385 3070 Fax 020 8385 3080 e-mail editorial@ajr.org.uk

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