

# AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

## The fief of Baghdad

When the allegedly unwinnable war in Afghanistan was entering its final sanguinary stage, two BBC panellists (one Labour, one Tory) were asked about the advisability of extending military action to Iraq. Both returned an emphatic 'No!' This drew loud applause from the audience, since proclaiming pacific intent provides easy access to the moral high ground, while hard-nosed belligerence jars modern sensibilities.

Would that things were so simple - particularly in the Middle East. The cradle of monotheism and of the Messianic hope for peace has, without doubt, been the most unstable region of the entire post-war world. Contrary to popular belief, the chronic instability is not primarily caused by its proximity to vast oil reserves. This contention is borne out by the fact that dirt-poor - in terms of oil revenues - Lebanon finds itself in the same politically parlous state as the oil-rich Saudis. Nor can the injection of alien Israel into the heart of the Arab/Muslim land mass be held remotely responsible for such endemic regional catastrophes as the Gulf War, the Iran-Iraq War, the long running Pakistan-India conflict, Syria's bloodbath at Homs, the Lebanese, Sudanese and Algerian civil wars, and the unresolved Kurdish question - not to mention warlordism in Somalia and Afghanistan.

In such a lethally volatile region the presence of megalomaniac dictators - Nasser, Assad, Saddam Hussein - inevitably ignites bloody conflicts. Saddam's continued control over Iraq - for all that the Allies clipped his wings in the Gulf War - puts one in mind of a time bomb



Israelis fit gas masks during 1991 Gulf War

awaiting its final detonation. He is a programmed killer who, since wiping out entire Kurdish villages with mustard gas in 1988, has assiduously built up an entire arsenal of toxic chemical weapons.

The arguments against extending the War on Terror to the Iraqi dictator usually boil down to two logic-defying interrogatives: 'How can yesterday's friend be today's enemy?' and 'After Iraq, where do you draw the line?'

The peaceniks who pose the first question cite Western arms supplies to Saddam in the Iran-Iraq war, and CIA support for Islamists fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan as examples of Machiavellian duplicity. Would they, one wonders, have queried Churchill's pact with Stalin in 1941 on the grounds that he had, two decades earlier, led the War of Intervention against the Bolsheviks?

A democracy facing a major totalitarian threat is fully entitled to undermine its adversary by bringing forces hostile to the latter - even if they are anti-democratic - into play. When the West supplied arms to Iraq in its war with Iran, the threat Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Revolution posed to the stability of the entire region was sufficiently dire to justify this. By the same token, the

absorption of Afghanistan into the Russian sphere of influence validated US support for Afghan Islamists on the grounds that on a global scale nuclear-armed Soviet power posed a greater threat than fundamentalism.

The question of whether Iraq will be followed by Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia etc. as targets of Allied anti-terrorist action can be answered briefly. Saddam's

removal from power would send such a powerful signal, and cause the petty dictators and warlords infesting those countries so radically to mend their murderous ways, that no further action might be required.

A change of regime in Baghdad would also remove a major obstacle to Israeli-Palestinian peace. If a majority of Israelis currently oppose the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state it is fully understandable in the light of Arafat's duplicitous conduct. Such recalcitrance is rooted in the suspicion that the Palestinian leaders view any Israeli acceptance of their statehood as merely a stepping stone towards the total destruction of Israel. Palestinian rejectionism has always relied on the backing of the hardline Arab states - Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. If the Iraqi keystone of the arch of rejectionism were removed, Israelis might be persuaded to make a leap of faith and accept a Palestinian state living cheek-to-jowl with their own.

On the other hand, allowing Saddam to stay in power would leave the outcome of the War on Terror as inconclusive as the end of the Gulf War. A decade on, can the son, benefiting from the father's experience, conclude his unfinished business?

## Letter from the editor

Richard Grunberger

Several readers have latterly accused me of subscribing to the Likud ideology of aggressive Israeli nationalism. Actually to dub me a Likudnik is similar to calling Gandhi a meat-eater. I simply take my cue from Shimon Peres, who felt that the crisis threatening Israel necessitated the formation of a "national" government.

The Jewish State currently faces a four-fold peril. More and more Palestinians are coming under the sway of death-worshipping fanatics whom nothing short of the destruction of Israel will satisfy. A majority at the UN is imbued with an anti-Israeli animus, as evidenced by the Durban Conference on Racism, which tried to de-legitimise the Jewish State. The European political establishment, including sections of our FO, view Israel as a *pays merdeux* potentially capable of triggering World War Three. At UK street level globaloney-spouting militants demonise the Jewish State - jeering at Melanie Phillips' description of it as a democracy - and pressure Selfridges to (temporarily) ban Israeli goods from its store.

Once Arafat turned down the courageously generous concessions Ehud Barak offered him, my last hopes for a mutually acceptable settlement evaporated. And there is another smidgeon of knowledge I gleaned from recent events, especially 11 September: even if Israel were to make the most self-abnegatory concessions to the Palestinians it would still not satisfy the likes of Robert Fiske, George Galloway MP, Tom Paulin, Emma Thompson, Harold Pinter *et al.* In their eyes, the trouble with Israel is not what it does - but what it is. The Jewish State is simply too European - a defect which mirrors the Nazi denigration of the Jews as Asiatic - too Western, too First World, and too closely linked to the USA to have a legitimate existence in a region where bullets rather than ballots have traditionally decided the composition of governments.

## University to research Manchester refugees' history

Ronald Channing



Prof Bernard Jackson, left, and Prof Philip Alexander, centre, co-directors of the University of Manchester's Centre for Jewish Studies, accepting bound copies of *AJR Information* for the last five years from AJR's Head of Community Relations, Ronald Channing.

The hitherto untold story of the settlement in Manchester and its environs of German-speaking Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution in the 1930s, and their impact on the religious, social, cultural and economic life of the city, is to be researched for the first time and a book resulting from the research is to be published. This exciting project, which has been initiated and supported by the AJR, is being undertaken by the University of Manchester.

Werner Lachs, Chairman of AJR's Northern Group, recommended that the 60th anniversary of the AJR be marked with a commitment to produce a history of Britain's second largest community of refugees from Nazi Europe. The Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Manchester was approached to carry out the project and, following proposals from the department's co-director, Professor Bernard Jackson, and discussions with AJR's Northern Group and head office, the university has now commenced the project.

### Research programme

The two-year research programme will centre on the experiences and impact of refugees from Hitler's Europe who settled in Manchester and its environs between 1932 and 1940. It will recall their European backgrounds and their hurried

exodus and arrival in Manchester, tell of their personal experiences before, during and after the Second World War, and describe the work of the agencies which offered them help. The study will evaluate the refugee community's influence on both the established Jewish community and the city of Manchester, and look at patterns of settlement, cultural activity, religious affiliation and personal identity in contemporary Manchester.

An enormous amount of untapped source material exists in Manchester, including extensive oral history archives and a collection of photographs at the Manchester Jewish Museum, papers relating to refugees, held mainly at the Manchester Central Reference Library, newspaper collections, mostly at the John Rylands University Library, as well as personal papers, autobiographies and institutional archives. A number of refugees will be invited to interview.

### Historian of Manchester Jewry

Although German Jews have, in the main, insisted on preserving their own special identity, few localised studies have been made. Certainly, no one has previously considered the experience of the German-Jewish population in Manchester, despite the fact that it contained the second largest settlement of German-Jewish refugees in Britain and still boasts the largest AJR group outside London.

The project team is to be supervised and co-ordinated by the highly-respected historian of Manchester Jewry, Bill Williams, who has undertaken to write the history resulting from the research. AJR members, scholars and others will be invited to attend seminars at which the progress of the research will be evaluated. The project will make a major contribution to recording the history of German-Jewish refugees in Britain and should arouse considerable interest in all concerned with the progress of minority communities in this country.

#### AJR Journal

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# A year of East-West Judeophobia

'May you live in interesting times' is the Chinese code for wishing somebody ill luck. Afghanistan, Kashmir and Palestine may make us think we live in uniquely interesting times, but a similar situation existed exactly half-a-century ago, with the 'Jewish question' obtruding on both hemispheres.

The post-war superpower conflict had climaxed in the Korean War - with both the USA and Russia showing symptoms of hysteria. The paranoid Stalin simultaneously targeted East European 'Titoists' and Russian-domiciled Jews. (Sometimes the two categories almost overlapped: 11 of the 14 accused in the 1952 Slansky trial in Prague were Jews.) For Soviet Jews themselves, 1952 was the 'black year'. The flower of the Yiddish intelligentsia was executed, the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia branded Zionists 'agents of imperialism', a group of Kremlin doctors were arrested, and Stalin planned the wholesale deportation of Russian Jews to Siberia. (Only the dictator's death early the next year prevented the implementation of his plan.)

In America antisemitism was - naturally - not state-sponsored. It resulted from the prevailing anti-Soviet psychosis, plus the fact that pre-war many Jewish intellectuals had moved sharply to the left.

As early as 1947 the partly Jewish-dominated motion picture industry had appeared in the gunsights of the McCarthyites. Of the blacklisted directors and screenwriters known as the Hollywood Ten a good half were Jews. (Not that Jews figured only as victims in all this; one of the witchfinders-general was MGM Studio boss Louis B Mayer.)

Next nuclear scientists came into the vigilantes' field of vision. Atomic research was an area where Jews were heavily represented - starting with Einstein, Szilard and Wigner, who alerted President Roosevelt to the Nazi

nuclear threat and thus triggered the Manhattan Project under Robert J Oppenheimer. Several years later Edward Teller was to earn the sobriquet 'Father of the H-Bomb'. In the interim Oppenheimer had been stripped of his security clearance because of earlier associations with communists.

In the midst of all this a major espionage scandal involving Jews blew up. This was the trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg on charges of transmitting wartime atomic secrets to Russia. They had obtained the top secret data from Ethel's brother David Greenglass, a scientist on the US atom bomb project at Los Alamos, and had forwarded them to Moscow. At the trial Greenglass, prompted by prosecuting counsel Roy Cohn, told blatant lies to exculpate himself, thereby tightening the noose around his sister's neck.

The Rosenberg trial became a worldwide *cause célèbre* comparable to the Sacco-Vanzetti case of the 1920s. In the United States it stirred liberal protests, but also a groundswell of antisemitism. Doubtlessly *mindful* of the latter, Judge Kaufman sentenced the Rosenbergs to death. They went to the electric chair in 1953, holding steadfast to their beliefs. Greenglass, who served seven years in jail, recently admitted having lied under oath, and added 'as a spy who turned in his family I sleep very well'.

The impenitent brother is only one of the villains of the piece. Judge Kaufman should surely have detected that Greenglass's evidence was a tissue of lies. As for prosecutor Roy Cohn, he remains a livid scar on the face of the American justice system.

Lastly, what of the Rosenbergs themselves? They faced death with dignity but deserve even more pity for having sacrificed themselves on the altar of 'The God That Failed'.

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RG

# Manchester's AJR chairman leads anniversary celebrations



Werner Lachs, centre, celebrating AJR's 60th Anniversary in Manchester with fellow members. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Jewish Telegraph Group of Newspapers, www.jewishtelegraph.com.)

Werner Lachs, Chairman of AJR's thriving Northern Group, which serves the Greater Manchester region, home of the country's second largest Jewish refugee community, gave some of his recollections at a 60th Anniversary celebratory tea and entertainment which brought together 70 refugees and their children.

"I doubt whether any two of us have the same story to tell. We all have a book to write, but there is a common thread - the trauma of being displaced in our youth, the hard road to re-establishing a new life in a new country, the loss of our loved ones left behind, but also the contemplation of our contribution to our host country.

Throughout these difficult times the AJR helped us to solve our problems. I still recollect the inaugural meeting here in Manchester. I was only a young lad then, but I accompanied my late father to a mass meeting at Chorlton Town Hall where a packed gathering heard Richard Crossman MP passionately plead the refugees' cause. We started a youth club in premises on Oxford Road where we

had some good times and formed friendships which have lasted until today.

The Association really came into its own after the war when, through the United Restitution Office, it helped thousands with their restitution and compensation claims against Germany and Austria. In these last few months, we have once again been very active in dealing with the final phase of the claims saga.

And, of course, there is the magazine *AJR Information*, now called *AJR Journal*. No one can deny its high editorial and reporting standards. Just imagine: there have now been some 700 editions. Interestingly, there has been debate about its title and, in fact, about the name of our organisation. After all these years we have become a part of British society, so why do we not discard the name 'refugee'? Indeed, we are no longer refugees, but we share a common history, experiences, traumas and a cultural and linguistic background.

Sixty years is a long time, but our Association is still thriving; we should recall our happiest memories and have much to celebrate."

## Justice denied



In a talk to Leeds HSFA group entitled 'Nazi War Crimes Investigation - Lack of Will or Lack of Skill?', award-winning BBC correspondent Jon Silverman, pictured here with group chairman Trude Silman, asked: 'Was Britain a haven for war criminals?' (answer: yes) and 'Should Britain, like the United States, have de-naturalised and deported these people instead of starting criminal proceedings, which were eventually defeated by the passage of time?'

## Mullah Omar's trauma

With robots he named Taliban  
 - Cloned from misshapen Caliban -  
 He crewed a ship without a rudder  
 Reduced to dust the giant Buddha  
 Snuffed out the life of men dubbed bent  
 (Made women dress up in a tent  
 To pre-empt sex crime out of doors)  
 Took a heavier toll than tribal wars  
 Shared the lurid vision of Bin Laden  
 Of Armageddon without pardon -  
 But Fuehrer-like before Valhalla  
 Balked at drawing close to Allah

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# 'Closure': Returning to Prague as a stranger

Gloria Tessler

You know what it feels like. The place you once called home no longer exists. The streets which saw the Nazis and the Communists come and go are changed beyond recognition. Apartment blocks built in the 1950s and scathingly referred to as rabbit hutches keep pace with ambitious edifices of the new democracy. The city is cleaned up, beautiful, but after a few days you sense its coldness. The shops provide little indigenous culture apart from garnet jewellery, glassware and the tourist tat of any Western metropolis. Dwarfed by the buildings, confused by the cobbled, pedestrianised streets, the old world is a strange place.

This was the world we encountered when I recently accompanied my Czech-born mother Gina back to Prague on a journey of rediscovery. My daughter Daliah joined us to make a documentary film of the entire experience.

## Memory and memorial

Gina had not seen Prague since she left the city in March 1939. Hours after she waved her mother, Irma, goodbye at the airport, Hitler marched in and mother and daughter were destined never to meet again. Gina had answered an ad in Scotland for a German teacher, which certainly saved her life; no such opportunity could save her mother's.

And so the girl who would never return made the trip back to the Czech Republic to place a memorial plaque for her mother in Terezin, the transit camp from which she was sent to her final destination, Riga. Like the rest of the victims, Irma has no known grave. Her name, like theirs, date of birth and presumed date of death on 15 January 1942, papers the walls of the Pincus Synagogue in Prague, almost illegible in red and blue. Irma Kien appears at the top of the ceiling and you have to squint to spot it. There is no trace of Irma's life apart from that still vivid in her daughter's memory. After so many years she seemed to belong here, alienated from us by the terrible events which overtook her.

## Terezin

Irma's plaque will be placed in a special site in the Terezin crematorium dedicated



Gina Tessler returns to her father's grave in Liberec's well-tended cemetery.

to the memory of Holocaust victims. It was supposed to contain their ashes, which were actually consigned to the river by the retreating Nazis. In Terezin Gina was shown the leather case which had contained the prints and drawings of her artist cousin, Petr Kien. Magically we opened his photo album, which revealed pictures of herself as a child and young girl.

My mother is, of course, not alone in retracing the steps of her traumatised history. Many survivors and refugees like her make such trips with great misgivings and even greater courage, out of some need to come to terms with their own past. Contemporary psychospeak calls it 'closure'. But as we traipsed in search of the familiar, which seemed to have gone into hiding, I had as many misgivings about my mother's return as she had.

On a visit to Varnsdorf, a small town bordering Germany north of Prague where Gina had spent her childhood, we found her parents' house. It proved shockingly dilapidated inside. The luxurious apartment she grew up in now had only rusting iron banisters and tarnished wooden doors. After the war, the Czechs drove out the Sudeten Germans and pillaged their property. This, plus the neglect and impoverishment of the Communist era, told the whole story.

## A restoration

But a moment of affirmation came when we visited her father's grave at the nearby town of Liberec. Expecting to navigate through broken, mildewed gravestones and high grass, we found this cemetery had been tenderly restored since 1992 by a Jewish community sensitive to its symbolism. Here beautifully preserved stone obelisks record the dates of those who died, all before 1939, mercifully freed from bitter knowledge of the Nazis, the destruction of their communities and a cruel, anonymous death. As we had done for Irma in the old Prague graveyard, Daliah and I recited *Kaddish* for Edmund Kien, who died in 1928 and whose farewell to his daughter then aged eight, just across the road from her school, remains one of Gina's most painful memories.

As for Prague, its synagogues, like those of Budapest, are mainly museums dedicated by Hitler to dead communities. Israeli tourists, as everywhere, roam its streets, marvel at the old square, and gather at the Charles V Bridge. Here a statue of Christ is covered with the gold-leaf Hebrew inscription 'Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh', paid for by a seventeenth-century local Jew convicted of blasphemy. Suddenly it seemed as though it had happened yesterday.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### PURIFICATION BY FIRE

Sir - Any letter over the imprimatur of Professor L Baruch Brent (January 2002) naturally catches my eye. But soon my eyebrows rose in incredulity, and I asked myself: can our normally discerning Editor really be guilty of supporting Israel as "my country right or wrong" and of "apparent inability to comprehend another side to the conflict in the Middle East"? So I rushed to open [www.ajr.org.uk](http://www.ajr.org.uk) to re-read the offending editorial (November 2001). Quite contrary to my eminent colleague, I could find no partisan support, except perhaps by implication, for Israel's right to exist. Rather, I found a grimly realistic comprehension of the mindset of that other side to the conflict which is bent on the destruction of Israel and of much else. Not that anyone needs to ride to the rescue of such a resourceful man as our Editor. With his next leading article ('My country wrong or wrong', January 2002), he neatly trumped those who forever counsel restraint on the West and on Israel in particular.

Otto Hutter  
Emeritus Professor, Glasgow

Sir - I should like to make some clarifications with regard to my January letter. My praise referred solely to the style and depth of knowledge shown by RG in the November editorial. This does not mean, however, that I share the sentiments expressed. My views are closer to those of the Israeli writer David Grossman.

Eva Trent  
London N6

Sir - As a reader of the *Journal* for many years, I was nearly sick when I came across the letter signed by Baruch Brent. Its purpose appears to me to propagate the elimination of the Jews living in Israel as an answer to the

world's problems. In a democracy, of which this country and Israel are shining examples, it is necessary to allow people to express their views, no matter how repulsive; exceptions to this include incitement to violence or racial hatred. Why did he need to invoke academic qualifications - to give his letter authenticity? I feel certain *he* will not cooperate, but it would help researchers in, say, 50 years' time, to draw the correct conclusions when studying the *Journal* for leads as to why the world is in such a sorry state.

H E Reiner  
London NW7

Sir - Prof Brent's and Inge Trott's letters show that the Jewish *Mea Culpa* Brigade is alive and well when it comes to thinking up some new angle to criticise the Jewish State. Our people have been robbed and murdered without having had the means to hit back for the last two millennia. It comes as a welcome change for them now to do just that.

Ernest G Kolman  
Greenford, Middx

### MY COUNTRY, WRONG OR WRONG

Sir - When I came to England as a refugee from Germany I was delighted to find that in this country people had freedom of speech. The fact that leaders in our society question the wisdom of recent military campaigns shows their maturity and sincerity and encourages the government to be restrained. I am surprised that you use derogatory and sneering language to describe very intelligent people and to suggest that they are decadent terrorists.

H L Vajifdar  
London SW13

Sir - Once again I am immensely grateful to the *AJR Journal* for its outspoken

editorial - thundering against those who, far from upholding the precious and hard-fought-for freedoms and values of Western civilisation, undermine and indeed betray those values by belittling or denying the true source of the danger and instead identifying the victims as the 'true' culprits. We, who lived in Britain in the 1930s, are horrified to find a replay of the predominant policies of those days, i.e. a wilful blindness towards the real intentions of the aggressor due to an understandable wish to avoid bloodshed. Let those who would avoid confrontation with evil remember that surrender leads to enslavement or else extermination.

Bernard Baruch  
London W5

Sir - In reply to Inge Trott's question, I see no similarity between the Palestinian terrorist who assassinated Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Ze'evi and Hershel Grynspan, who assassinated the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath in 1938. Vom Rath worked for the most evil political movement in history, controlled by a dictator who advocated the destruction of Grynspan's entire people. Ze'evi belonged to the democratic government of a society whose humanity and morality are shining beacons to the world. Nor do I see any similarity between the Nazis' response, which was to target and murder innocents for reasons of pure racism, and Israel's response, which was to search for those who are committing precisely such murders in the present day, and to prevent them from committing more. Even disregarding everything else, Grynspan was sentenced by a court of law in the country in which he lived. The terrorist who murdered Ze'evi is being shielded by the very authorities who should be bringing him to justice.

Tikva Deutsch  
London NW2

Sir - Ever since I began reading *AJR Journal* I have been impressed by its wisdom and good sense. I am therefore surprised and disappointed to find

myself at odds with your January issue. It seems to me that "treasonable malice aforethought" to describe debatable opinions and "deliberate misinformation", which is something all governments feed their populace in times of conflict, are emotive terms, meaningless in advancing any argument. That hundreds of Oxford students were "wilfully blind" to the threat of Islamic fanaticism is no likelier than that they thought you can't have a war without a defined enemy and if isn't a war, you can't win it. Yes, there are unpalatable aspects of Islam, although one could argue that it is not Islam the religion which is unpalatable but the way in which zealots choose to interpret it. The same applies to any religion, including ours. Take the arguments put forward in your articles to their logical conclusion and you end up with Enoch Powell and Senator McCarthy. If dreading such a possibility makes me an "ultra-liberal windbag", so be it.

Marc Schatzberger  
York

#### UNDER NELSON'S BLIND EYE

Sir - OK, CND almost certainly made a tactical error when their march 'Peace and Justice for All' on 13 October became merged with the Palestinian Solidarity campaign march. However, the Arafat supporters had booked the march route and Trafalgar Square, and I would presume CND did not wish to lose momentum for their anti-terror bombing campaign in Afghanistan - after all Blair had promised a 'considered and proportionate' response to the 11 September outrage, and four weeks of cluster bombs and 'daisycutters' was certainly not proportionate or justifiable.

That error does not, however, justify Richard Grunberger's comprehensive execration of CND which is, incidentally, historically so distorted as to be inaccurate. Grunberger complains that CND only criticised Washington during the Cuban missile crisis. In fact, its chairman made representations to the UN supporting the Canadian government's proposal for an

investigative commission.

Mr Grunberger's second criticism turns on the same point, except that he takes Chernobyl as his example. It is silly to blame the Soviet state, as he does, for a few young scientists not sticking to the rules. Also, has he forgotten Sellafield (in Britain) and 3 Mile Island (in the USA)? It is surely a matter of luck that only one of these incidents created a major international disaster.

Francis Deutsch  
Saffron Walden

#### LISETTE WATSON PROFILE

Sir - For a very long time nothing has upset me as much as the third paragraph of this article. To read the revolting details of what that poor child had to clean up was almost more than I could bear. I have never bothered to enquire as to the exact details of how my family met their end, and it cannot be worse than my imagination, but this article certainly has not helped me. I do wish that we could have gone on living our little lives normally, and that none of these awful things had ever happened to any of us.

Henny Rednall  
Birmingham

#### DOWNSIDE TO EXILE

Sir - I wonder how accurate Mr Francis Steiner (December issue) is in maintaining that exiles achieved more in their new country than they would have done 'at home': surely one Nobel-prize-winning exile who can say 'Cambridge made me' does not prove his case. Cambridge didn't make me, and I didn't make Cambridge. Family finances didn't even allow contemplation of such a course. So I live in the rich, comforting illusion that I might actually have had a career, and a solid income, had I been allowed to stay in Berlin. I once, when much younger, said to my mother that her life must surely have been enriched by the experience of having lived in two countries, and she drily replied that she would rather have remained the Berliner she was.

Peter Zander  
London W1

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# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The £20,000 **Turner Prize** awarded to **Martin Creed** by Madonna makes you wonder when conceptual art became a question of the Emperor's New Clothes. It's less difficult to connect it to the Saatchi aura of super-trendiness, which has clearly affected the way art is seen in the contemporary world. Today's Turner Prize has little to do with the artist who blended storm, ship and sunset into a multi-dimensional creative experience. The prize, which may well make Turner turn in his grave, was established in 1984 by a body worryingly described as the Patrons of New Art and is intended to "promote public discussions of new developments in contemporary British art".

Now take **Jacqueline Crofton**, a Jewish figurative artist whose work is in numerous private collections all over the world. Like many serious artists, Crofton is at odds with the fact that conceptual art is a negation of the very skills cultivated in traditional art schools. Meanwhile, the experimentalist Martin Creed, whose work is considered by the **Tate** a



*Edifice*, by Jacqueline Crofton, inspired by last year's New York tragedy of 11 September. Crofton is now searching her roots by working on the theme of the Forest of Ponar in Lithuania.

"mixture of seriousness and humour", wins the coveted Turner - an empty room installation at **Tate Britain** with lights going on and off. Enter Crofton, with an egg in each pocket to hurl at Creed's empty room, and soon she finds her protest has turned into a crusade against the cartel who "control the top echelons of the art world in this country, leaving no access for painters and sculptors with real creative talent". She describes Creed's work as at worst electrical, at best philosophy. But it is Turner judge Nicholas Serota who gets the lash of her tongue when she accuses him of not seeming to care how much the gallery's exhibits are ridiculed: "He just sits back and laughs."

It is the way of such things that when Crofton went to work on an egg she won critical acclaim for her brave action, but inevitably boosted Creed's own celebrity. Some applauded her vigour and some thought sour grapes. But there is surely a real question for all of us who believe art defines something greater than ourselves, a moment which conveys illusion and effulgence.

However, unquestionably, the corruption of beauty and sensitivity by harsh regimes like the Nazis has affected our perception of art. The effect of degenerate art is slow and subtle, distancing itself from its original reference. Knowing that beauty must self-destruct, we are asked to accept change. But if we do, where does change take place?

Internal, rather than visual, change leads to conceptual art, which by its very nature cannot be assessed. You can't qualify another person's imagination - it is present before it reaches us. And so Jacqueline Crofton's egg-throwing is as much an artistic achievement as Martin Creed's. It is right to criticise those who soullessly drive the public taste for outrageous nonsense and for having no sense of artistic direction. But to damn them completely is to leave no room for a new art to flow from this age of darkness and unreason. And this is the dilemma for all who want to see the dawn of a new Age of Enlightenment.

## RG's INTERFACE

**Generational continuity.** Having previously drawn attention to Matthew Neale (novelist son of Judith Kerr) and to John Krebs (scientist son of Sir Hans Krebs), we now focus on Tom Kempinski. Like the aforementioned two, Kempinski (almost) followed in his father's footsteps. While Gerhard had acted on the stage of the Free German League of Culture, Tom became a playwright, a calling for which his life provided ample material. Evacuated as a toddler to America, he grew so attached to his 'foster parents' that he experienced the postwar return to his real parents as a trauma. The long-term consequences of this were obesity and agoraphobia. Withal Kempinski is a gifted playwright, whose *Duet for One* (starring his then wife, Frances de la Tour) was a hit in the West End. Sad to relate, he has long espoused the anti-Zionist cause and refuses to have his work performed in 'racist' Israel.

**Controversial choice.** The German-Jewish *remigrant* Peter Zadek had long nursed a perverse ambition to stage a German-language version of Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. He realised his dream in December, when the play 'premiered' at the Vienna Burgtheater. The translation is by Elfriede Jelinek, a renowned author of a play about the pro-Nazi philosopher Heidegger. On the subject of her native country Jelinek has stated: "Deeply Catholic Austria is in denial about Christian antisemitism, and projects its guilt on to the 'heathen' Nazis. But by stigmatising the Jews as 'perfidious' and labelling them 'Christ-killers', the Church paved the way for Hitler."

**90th birthday.** The opera expert Marcel Prawy has turned 90. His colourful career has included a stint as Jan Kiepura's secretary in the wartime USA, the introduction of American musicals to post-war continental Europe, and the directorship of Vienna's second opera house, the so-called Volksoper.

## Verbal camouflage

### THE LANGUAGE OF THE THIRD

REICH: *LTI: LINGUA TERTII IMPERII*

Victor Klemperer

Tr. Martin Brady

Athlone

When Hitler came to power Victor Klemperer was teaching Romance languages and literature in Dresden; his special interest was philology. As Goebbels's propaganda strategy took flight, Klemperer began to make notes on the Nazis' use of language. As a Jew married to a gentile, he was able to avoid deportation, by living in a Gestapo-supervised *Judenhaus* and working at a menial job in a local factory. Following the bombing of Dresden he and his wife left the city, wandering around Germany in the concluding months of the war.

Given that Klemperer was without rights of any kind, his situation as a Jew living in Germany in this period enabled him to observe the Nazi culture with considerable psychic distance. *The Language of the Third Reich* provides an important adjunct to the remarkable insights of his recently published wartime diaries (currently dramatised at the New End Theatre, London), and a new perspective on the Nazi period.

Klemperer rightly attributes much of what came to pass in Hitler's Germany to the influence of Romanticism in German culture. The pseudo-Roman term *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, of his own devising, is used to describe the inflated sense of imperial grandeur that characterised the Nazis' attempt to seize the hearts and numb the minds of the German people.

There is a parallel between Klemperer and Primo Levi. In *The Periodic Table*, Levi used his professional interest in chemistry as a frame of reference from which to express broader existential perceptions. Similarly, Klemperer's special understanding of language gave him an overview on the culture of the Third Reich with a novel perspective.

In Nazi Germany, the more inevitable the prospect of Germany's defeat, so

# REVIEWS

the language employed was modified to suit the expediency of the situation. For instance, by 1945, when the rapacity of Nazi Germany was clear to all, the final verse in a party-sponsored school children's song book had transfigured from "Today Germany belongs to us and tomorrow the entire world" to "We will march on, when everything is smashed to pieces. Freedom arose in Germany, and tomorrow the world is hers."

Much research into the Holocaust has, of course, focused on the Nazi use of verbal camouflage. The term 'Final Solution' exemplifies this tendency. However, Klemperer has applied his analytical technique to everyday life in wartime Germany and observed its effects on ordinary people around him.

Klemperer's lack of Jewish commitment is in some ways an asset in his task. In a chapter in which he reflects on Zionism, he reveals his inability to identify substantially with the Jewish people on account of his ingrained sense of Germanness and his suspicion of anything smacking of nationalism - by virtue of his personal experiences during the war. But while his position as a Jew and his German acculturation make for an irreconcilable divide, this dichotomy in his identity produces a unique contribution to our understanding of this period.

John Adler

## 'Humane' monster

### BERIA, MY FATHER

Sergo Beria

Duckworth

This is the story of a man so steeped in blood that even his son, who loved him, cannot conceal his crimes.

Sergo Beria, then still a schoolboy, was present when his mother threatened to leave his father on account of mass arrests he had

ordered. Her cousins and her nephews were among the victims. Beria told her: "I do everything in my power." Later, Beria's wife suggested: "Pretend to be ill! Go on leave!" He replied: "At my level there are only two exits - one straight into the other world, the other into prison until they send you into the other world."

Beria very nearly took the second exit. Yezhov, the head of the NKVD, ordered his arrest. Warned in time, Beria went to Moscow to see his fellow Georgian, Stalin. The result was that Beria took Yezhov's place in November 1938 and Yezhov was shot in 1940.

In 1939 Beria freed many thousands of people from the *Gulag*. The son describes another step his father took: "... three-quarters of the investigative magistrates and officials engaged in counter-espionage were Jews. Fearing that their too obvious presence in the organs of repression could give rise to antisemitism, he decided to replace them with Russians." So Beria, according to his son, sacked Jews in order to save them from antisemitism. The nightmare logic this implies made sense in Stalin's time. Since torturers are bound to be hated, they had better not belong to a hated minority. Russia had more than one of those. Beria used to tell his son about the slogan of the Black Hundreds, the pre-revolutionary pogromists: "Kill the Jews - and don't forget the Georgians!"

Sergo Beria describes his father's contempt for the antisemitic Malenkov. Françoise Thom points out that Malenkov sent Communist Party branches a list of jobs that ought not to be given to Jews. That was in June 1944, four years before the 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign. Once that campaign began, Malenkov made his daughter divorce her Jewish husband.

"The entire intelligentsia took part in that shameless campaign against the Jews, whatever they may say nowadays", according to Sergo Beria. "I say nothing of the masses, who had no need for encouragement. We came close to pogroms. The hounds were unleashed. I saw apparently normal people transformed into mad dogs."

"We regarded Professor Shcherbakov as a decent and highly civilised man. One day when he came to attend to my daughter and, as was our custom, he was invited to take tea with us, he began lamenting the fact that Jews occupied all the posts of responsibility in his clinic. The Jewish doctor at the head of his department had inoculated children with bacteria. My father rose and left the room without saying a word."

Did Beria murder Stalin? His son thinks not. If he did, he was doing the world a favour: Stalin's preparations to unleash a third world war are fully described here. The decision to release the Jewish doctors, taken immediately after Stalin's death, was a collective one. But it was Beria who insisted on making it public, and giving the reasons for it. After 48 years, I well remember the shock of reading the words "the use of methods of investigation which are inadmissible and most strictly forbidden by Soviet law". This was the first time the Soviet government had admitted that confessions had been tortured out of people. It was the first stitch pulled out of the fabric of Stalinist lies, which was rapidly to unravel.

Khrushchev, Malenkov and the others, whom Beria despised for their stupidity, perhaps understood better than he did what such admissions were doing to their prestige abroad. As Beria released over a million people from the camps, his comrades ganged up against him. They shot him secretly and the real date of his death is unknown. But it now seems certain that he died, not for the harm he had done, but for attempting to make restitution.

*Alison Macleod*

## The healing art

### A DOCTOR'S LIFE IN CHANGING TIMES

P E Roland  
*Minerva*

Though medicine is a complex matter, no reader need be put off by the subject, for Dr Roland's story is that of

one of us. Dr Roland went through the difficult stages of a medical career both in Germany - he was born in 1912 - and much more so in England. He worked in general practice, but the emphasis is on his work as an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist. He describes the changes from, one could say, old-fashioned medicine of 'the panel and the mixture' to the once-glorious NHS, up to the present agony we patients know so well. His views are sometimes idiosyncratic; for instance, he blames one-time Labour grandee Barbara Castle for some of the later woes of the NHS.

Most of his working life was concentrated in the East Midlands, although London and other areas of Britain had their share. Very interesting sidelights are working periods spent in Africa, particularly Uganda, and also, less extensively, in places like Hong Kong. He worked as long as the law allowed, and after that for a legal period as a high-profile locum.

He has some interesting things to say about his attitude to Germany, whose efforts at reconciliation led him to a calm and favourable view. He praises the AJR for helping him obtain a pension from that country. Generally, his retirement seems to be a happy one. The book reflects all this in an, on the whole, optimistic manner, and makes for an easy, interesting read.

*John Rossal*

## Moment of light

### THE FRAGILITY OF GOODNESS

Tzvetan Todorov

*Weidenfeld & Nicholson*

Bulgaria (with Denmark) was the only Nazi-controlled country in Europe not to comply with the order to deport her Jewish population during the Second World War.

*The Fragility of Goodness* brings together contemporary accounts, speeches, letters and personal memoirs, which are translated into English here for the first time.

These key documents demonstrate how, under King Boris III, parliamentarians - in particular, the Vice-President of the National

Assembly, Dimitar Peshev - priests and ordinary citizens came together to mount an unprecedented rescue operation.

Tzvetan Todorov reconstructs the complex history. By investigating different versions of events, he reveals the delicate nature of goodness: how the incidence of good depends on the particular and often chance union of political, economic, social and moral forces and how the slightest deviation from the path can jeopardise everything.

Furthermore, once evil takes hold in society, it spreads easily, while good remains difficult, elusive and fragile. And yet, as the book shows, possible.

*The Fragility of Goodness* is an important book that tells of a rare, and largely unknown, moment of light in an otherwise dark history.

*Gerald Holm*

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# PROFILE

Richard Grunberger

## Indefatigable octogenarian



Jenny Zundel

'Schooldays are the happiest days of your life' is a cliché which for Jenny Zundel embodies the truth. Born in 1915, Jenny was fortunate in that her salad days coincided with the halcyon years of interwar Austria. Not that, even then, fortune smiled on her parents, struggling to make ends meet from the proceeds of a small shoe shop in the Mazzesinsel. Her father, who happened to be a cousin of the sensational clairvoyant, Hanussen, died early. The mother, who emerges from Jenny's account as a remarkable personality, just managed to keep their chins above water. She also bequeathed to her daughter a rich store of Yiddish sayings such as *Nu, is a shoifer a trompet?* and *Bind mach oif hend und fiss und warf mach inter di mejnen!*

Jenny greatly enjoyed her days at grammar school, and three-quarters of a century on can still recall the names of teachers and classmates. School over, she became a medical student. The standard of instruction was high, but the political atmosphere became envenomed. The student body split into opposing factions, with right-wingers congregating around an Aryan professor - and Jews and (a handful of) gentile socialists receiving tuition from a successor to the legendary Julius Tandler.

One of the handful, Walter by name,

courted Jenny. In 1937 they had the holiday of a lifetime, hitch-hiking to the Paris World Fair. Jenny's outstanding impression of that daring adventure - apart from the sheer penny-pinching and belt-tightening fun of it - was the discovery that in Switzerland cowsheds looked cleaner and more spacious than peasants' huts in Austria.

After the *Anschluss* Jenny came to England as a domestic. Half a year later Walter followed, despite his parents' disapproval. He arrived here with a doctor's qualification, whereas she had been barred from sitting her finals. Early in the war they married, but, as ill luck would have it, he soon afterwards came down with TB, and had to spend months in sanatoria. Jenny meanwhile began a five-year stint with the pharmaceutical firm Allen and Hanbury in Ware, Herts. After the war Walter's work as a GP took them to various provincial towns, most notably Coventry. In Coventry, where they lived in rented accommodation, their son and daughter were born. Some years later they bought a half-acre plot of land on the outskirts of town; on part of it they had a house built. The rest was a wilderness of thick bramble bushes and bindweed, in the clearance of which they had to use a scythe and sickle. As the ex-TB patient was none too robust, Jenny had to use those formidable implements (which reminded her of her youthful dreams of making *aliyah* to work on a kibbutz).

In Coventry they also experienced the rebirth of the bomb-shattered city symbolised by the rebuilt Cathedral and the Belgrade Theatre. On a more personal cultural level, Walter played in an amateur chamber trio and Jenny pursued a lifelong interest in Italian.

They had little contact with the wider refugee community before retiring to London in 1990. Unfortunately Walter only had a few years to enjoy the riches the metropolis offered. Jenny, widowed in her 83rd year, keeps remarkably active. She tirelessly discharges her family obligations, receives overseas visitors, participates in an 'Italian Circle', attends University of the Third Age courses - and has lately become the contact person for the North London AJR group. Truly a role model for us 'young ones'!

## 'Continental Britons'

### Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe

The exhibition 'Continental Britons', which opens at the Jewish Museum in London's Camden Town this Spring, relates the unique history and shared experiences of AJR members who left Nazi-dominated countries to arrive in Britain as refugees with little but hope.

Their story is often only sketchily known by their own children, hardly recalled or appreciated by the Anglo-Jewish community and little remembered or understood by the wider community. Together with a broad programme of lectures, visits, films, concerts and discussions, the exhibition will help to fill this gap and explain how they came to make new lives and families, and contributed to their country of adoption.

Researched, planned and written by a special AJR Project Development Group, and funded by the AJR, the exhibition begins with a review of the life left behind in Germany and Austria, then follows the refugees' arrival and settlement in Great Britain, their experiences during the war, internment and military service, coping with wartime austerity, and the foundation of the AJR and other institutions. After the war it records becoming British, settling in the new homeland, forming a refugee community, and participating fully in the country's economic and cultural life.

Illustrated throughout with documents, pictures, personal memoirs, artefacts, photographs, and with a concise and authoritative commentary, the exhibition will also show audio-visual testimony from refugees in different walks of life. Continental café society will be evoked with memories of the Cosmo Restaurant and an illustrated map of the Finchley Road will help to recall the thriving refugee heartland.

RDC

# INSIDE the AJR

## Liverpool jazz session

A most enjoyable meeting was held at Harold House with 20 members present, some from North Wales. Everyone's feet were tapping to a very lively session of jazz from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s presented by Norman Heller, a former President of the Merseyside Jewish Representative Council and Senior Warden of Childwall Synagogue who is an avid collector of jazz records.

*Norman Fyne*

Next meeting: Thursday 7 February, Professor Jerry Jayson: 'The Bomb 1939'

## Manchester celebrates AJR's 60th Anniversary

The Manchester group celebrated the AJR's 60th Anniversary with tea and entertainment at the Nicky Alliance Centre with 70 people attending. The food was excellent and a talented group of young musicians played melodies from around the time of the AJR's beginnings, as well as more recent favourites. It was encouraging that second-generation guests got on so famously with older members. Sincere thanks to all who helped to make so memorable a gathering, not least Northern Groups' Co-ordinator Susanne Green, who was a great help in all the planning and arranging.

*Werner Lachs*

## West Midlands enjoy accordion performance

Under the ever-enthusiastic chairmanship of Henny Rednall, another well-attended and most convivial get-together took place on the premises of the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue. The highlight was Theresa Patrick's accordion performance and her inexhaustible repertoire of erstwhile hits and *Heimatsklänge*, for example *Ramona*, *Ich tanze mit Dir in den Himmel hinein*. We were saddened to hear of the death of our treasurer for ten years, Edgar Glaser.

*WEA*



Carol Rossen, AJR's Head of Administration and Personnel, holding a bouquet presentation, at a surprise buffet luncheon given in her honour at the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre with AJR Chairman, Andrew Kaufman, her colleagues and members of her family, as a mark of the Association's appreciation for having achieved twenty years of continuous service. Between them, Sylvia Matus, the centre's manager, right, and Susi Kaufman, left, the catering manager, have known and worked with Carol throughout her years in nearly every one of the AJR's departments.

Next meeting: Sunday, 24 March, Sheepcote Street Synagogue 2.30pm: Susie Bechhöfer

## South London celebrates seventh birthday

AJR South London celebrated its seventh birthday in traditional style, with birthday cake and candles. It's a lot easier to blow out seven candles than the more typical 70-80! There was a sad side to our meeting as four members had died since the last meeting: Ulrich Pick, Stella Rosenak, Else Hoxter and Conrad Gerald.

*Ken Ambrose*

Next meeting, March: a first-hand account of how British evacuee children fared in the war (details to be announced)

## Glasgow: first meeting

A successful inaugural meeting took place in Newton Mearns Synagogue. Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator, introduced Ruth Finestone, a social worker from AJR head office, who spoke about the services the AJR offers. The 30 people attending, both first and second generation, were each asked to give a brief

personal history and tell how they came to live in Glasgow. A planning group will be arranging future meetings and activities.

Next meeting: Sunday 17 March

## Gateshead: claims entitlement discussed

Michael Newman, of the Central Office for Holocaust Claims, which is based at AJR headquarters in London, explained claims entitlement to the 14 former refugees who attended.

## Pinner's Chanukah party

Famous Budapest-born opera singer Katinka Seiner, accompanied by the fine violinist, her husband Lazlo Eastern, with Malcolm Gee at the piano, entertained members at Pinner AJR's Chanukah party. Their programme included the Hungarian 'Katinka', a melody by Lehar, the duet 'Gipsy' from Carmen, as well as traditional Chanukah songs. After singing Happy Birthday to Irene Marcus who, together with programme organiser Vera Gelman, runs our group, members enjoyed a delicious tea with doughnuts and latkes.

*Walter Weg*

Next meeting: Thursday 7 February, 'Harmony and Horror', a talk by Irene Lawford-Hinrichsen of the Leipzig music-publishing family

### Wessex (Bournemouth) get lit up

Members took turns to light the candles on the Chanukia brought by Fausta Sheldon who, with Myrna Glass, provided a feast of doughnuts, mini latkes, grapes and chocolate *Chanukageld* which, in keeping with the times, was minted in Euros. Myrna talked about the festival and members exchanged reminiscences of their youth, sang traditional songs and exchanged New Year greetings.

*F Goldberg*

### Essex: new group to get together

AJR Essex group is to hold its inaugural meeting on Tuesday 5 February at Southend & Westcliff Hebrew Congregation, Finchley Road, Westcliff, from 11 am until 12.45 pm. For further details of this and subsequent meetings, or help with transport where necessary, please phone AJR's Groups Co-ordinator, Myrna Glass, at AJR head office 0207 431 6161, or on 0208 904 7499.

### Bournemouth Chanukah party: music, tea and good conversation

Our well-attended Chanukah party, at the New Ambassador Hotel, heard traditional songs sung in Yiddish to the accompaniment of music by Barry Weinburg from Wembley. The ambience, biscuits and very tasty doughnuts all contributed to a nostalgic and enjoyable afternoon of music, tea and good conversation.

*W Bergman*

### KT-AJR LUNCHEONS

**Monday 4 February**  
George Vulkan, 'Visit to Poland'

**Monday 4 March**  
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Advice Centre at the  
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**Wednesday 6 February**

**Thursday 14 February**

**Tuesday 19 February**

**Wednesday 27 February**

**Thursday 7 March**

No appointment is necessary, but  
please bring along all relevant  
documents, such as Benefit Books,  
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Mon	11	Kard & Games Klub
Tue	12	Sheila Games & Friend
Wed	13	Katinka Seiner & Laszlo Easton
Thur	14	Jenny Kossew Accordionist
Sun	17	DAY CENTRE OPEN - No Entertainment
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Tue	19	Roy Douglas - Keyboard and Singing
Wed	20	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	21	Alf Kieles - Jewish Influence on Jazz
Sun	24	DAY CENTRE OPEN - No Entertainment
Mon	25	Kard & Games Klub
Tue	26	PURIM - Rita & Jack Davis
Wed	27	Robert Lowe - Mozart to Musicals
Thur	28	Eddie Simmons with Bill Bradley at Piano

## Announcements

### Deaths

**Meisel.** Josefine Meisel, 101 years old, originally from Vienna and living for last few years at Leo Baeck House, The Bishops Avenue, died on 12 December after a full life of tragic and happy times. Sadly missed by her nephews, nieces, family and friends.

**Weiss.** Alice (Lisl). Beloved widow of Karl, mother of Marianne and sister of Victor, died 28 November after a short illness at the age of 94. Will be greatly missed by relatives and friends and all who knew her.

## Classified

### Miscellaneous Services

**Manicure & Pedicure** in the comfort of your own home. Telephone 020 8343 0976.

### Day Centre

**Courtesy Shoes** will be at the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre on **Wednesday 6 February** from 10 am onwards.

### Societies

**Kaffee Klatsch Klub**, established 1986. Monthly entertainment for Jewish Europeans, 60 plus. For further details telephone 020 8554 0443.

**DATE FOR YOUR DIARY**  
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**London Marriott Hotel**  
**Grosvenor Square**  
**Sunday 20 October 2002**

### AJR GROUP CONTACTS

#### North London

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#### Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)

Fausta Shelton 01273 688 226

#### Wessex (Bournemouth)

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#### East Midlands (Nottingham)

Bob Norton 01159 212 494

#### West Midlands (Birmingham)

Henny Rednall 0121 373 5603

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## Obituary

### Stefan Heym

Stefan Heym, who has died aged 88, was born Helmut Flieg in 1913 in Chemnitz, the son of a Jewish salesman. An active socialist, he fled Nazi Germany in 1933, changing his name to protect family members who remained behind. In 1935 his father committed suicide; other family members were to die in the Holocaust. He went to Prague, where he worked as a journalist, and eventually to the USA, where he edited the New York anti-fascist weekly *Deutsches Volksecho*. He enlisted in the US army in 1943 but after the war he was thrown out of the army on account of his communist leanings.

In 1948 he published *The Crusaders*, a

novel based on his army experiences during the liberation of Paris and the advance into Germany, which became an international bestseller. In 1952 he returned to Germany after handing back his war medals in protest against the war in North Korea and the anti-communist McCarthy witch-hunt. In East Berlin Heym, a committed Marxist, published novels, historical books on historical subjects and journalistic articles in which he did not hesitate to criticise the East German administration, directly or indirectly. Following German reunification, he was elected to parliament as a member of the Party of Democratic Socialism, the successor of the GDR Communist Party. He resigned his seat a year later but continued to participate in the debates of the day.

## Search Notices

From January 2002 Search Notices also appear on the AJR's website [www.ajr.org.uk](http://www.ajr.org.uk) unless otherwise requested.

**David Baddiel.** Presently writing novel about a Jewish refugee family from Königsberg who came to Britain in 1939. Would like to hear from anyone with experience of refugee life in Britain during the war, especially tales of internment and of women who were not interned but whose husbands were, particularly if anyone was a refugee in Cambridge at the time. Email: [ronskanky@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:ronskanky@blueyonder.co.uk).

**Weiss.** Seeking to contact any relatives of **Hilde or Rosie Weiss** who lived in the Highbury area of north London about 1940 to 1960. Please reply to PO Box 607, Blenheim, Ontario, NOP IAO, Canada.

**Sir Eric Ash (or Asch),** born Berlin late 1920s, came to London in 1930s. German name Ulrich, known as Ulli by family. PhD in electrical engineering or physics, son of Walter and Dora, has a sister (name unknown). Purpose of enquiry: family genealogy. If you have any information, please contact Alfred Zernik, 239 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA 10106-3906, USA, tel 001 215 925 0132 fax 001 215 925 4724 email [azernik@aol.com](mailto:azernik@aol.com).

**Kosice (in 1944 Kassa in Hungary), Eastern Slovakia.** Kosice branch of Slovak Hidden Child Organisation wishes to identify and publish names of every victim and survivor from the city (12,000 Jews were deported to camps in 1944; only 2/300 survived). Please contact Kende F Csaba, Sokolovska 24, 04011 Kosice, Slovakia tel 0042155 642 7725 email [kende.csaba@nexta.sk](mailto:kende.csaba@nexta.sk).

**Elfriede Lilley (née Poms) or family.** Last known address off Roman Road, Bow, London, married Frederick, around 1950. Previous address 1 Sefton Avenue, Mill Hill, London, 1948. Father's name Heinrich. Preacher in East End of London. Came to UK around 1939 with family from Germany (Berlin?). 1948 wants to say thank you. Do you still sing? Please contact Steven Bracher tel 01732 773063 email [stevenbracher@yahoo.com](mailto:stevenbracher@yahoo.com).

**Schlesinger.** Researcher into musicians in exile seeks information on **Charlotte Schlesinger**, composer, b.1909 Berlin, died 1976 London, where she lived the last 14 years of her life (previously USA). Any information about her or her family (e.g. brother **Hans Schlesinger**), resident in Golders Green in 1976, very gratefully received. Please contact Dr Anne Rhode-Juechtern, Heidebrede 30, D-33829 Borgholzhausen, Germany tel 0049 5425 6780 email [rhode-juechtern@t-online.de](mailto:rhode-juechtern@t-online.de).

## Arts and Events Diary February

**Until April 2002** Programme of lectures and events in Leeds in commemoration of one-time inmates, victims and survivors of concentration camps and their families, under the aegis of *Arbeitskreis der NS-Gedenkstätten in Nordrhein-Westfalen*. John Chillag 01937 844353 (evenings)

**Extended to 31 March 2002** Exhibition focusing on the Blechners, the fate of a Jewish family during the Holocaust. Munich Jewish Museum

**Until 10 February** 'I Will Bear Witness', by Victor Klemperer, adapted for the stage by Karen Malpede and George Bartenieff, New End Theatre, London NW3 Tues-Sat 7.30 Sun 3.30 Tel 7794 0022

**Mon 4** Dr Christine Pullen, 'The Life and Works of the Anglo-Jewish Writer Amy Levy (1861-1889)', Club 43, 7.45 pm

**Tues 5** Hanna Braun (London), 'Zionism and Judaism from the Personal Perspective of a Survivor', Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex, Room A155, 5.15 pm

**Mon 11** Prof Michael Alpert (University of Westminster), 'Secret Jews and the Spanish Inquisition', Club 43, 7.45 pm

**Tues 12** Iris Guske (Ofterschwang and Sussex), 'Research on Kindertransport Narratives', Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex, Room A155, 5.15 pm

**Mon 18** Dr Jonathan Katz (Wolfson College, Oxford), 'Transposing Transposed Heads: Thomas Mann's Indian Story', Club 43, 7.45 pm

**Tues 19** Professor Rodney Livingstone (Southampton), 'Eduard Fuchs and his Publication *Die Juden in der Karikatur*', Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex, Room A155, 5.15 pm

**Mon 25** Club 43 No lecture: hall not available

**Tues 26** Andrea Hammel (Sussex), 'Austrian Women Writers in British Exile, 1936-61', University of Sussex, Room A155, 5.15 pm

### ORGANISATION CONTACTS

Centre for German-Jewish Studies, University of Sussex Diana Franklin 020 8381 4721

Club 43 Belsize Square Synagogue. Hans Seelig 01442 254360

## English-speaking (dis)union

Richard Grunberger

'Two countries divided by a common language' was George Bernard Shaw's description of England and America. Others called England the Greece to America's Rome - meaning that the former had wisdom, and the latter power.

Alas, nowadays this country is less wise than the US. The run-up to the Gulf War did not see American politicians of the eminence of Edward Heath or Tony Benn pay court to Saddam Hussain. Ten years on, British media pundits - unlike their US counterparts - exuded defeatism from every pore. Some asserted with absolute conviction that the the Afghan fighters' ferocity, and the mountainous terrain, made the war unwinnable. Others issued dire warnings about the counterproductive effect the continuation of bombing raids into Ramadan would have on the world's billion Muslims.

The fact that none of their dire predictions came true does not fill the prophets of doom with anything resembling contrition. The least contrite is Will Self, bile-spewing peacenik and counsel for the prosecution of the 'warmonger' Tony Blair. Having had to abandon the moral high ground over Afghanistan, Self has reheated the bubbling cauldron of his indignation on the fires of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In a BBC TV *Question Time* clash on this issue, he discomfited that doughty fighter for the Jewish cause, Melanie Phillips, by declaring himself a Jew. (Warning to readers: do not confuse the handful of self-hating Jews - e.g. Harold Pinter, Alexis Sayle, Michael Rosen - with the mass of Self-hating Jews!) In sitting in stern judgment on Israel, ex-druggie Self was joined by ex-Health-Minister-turned-tobacco-salesman Ken Clark, and Diane Abbot, the MP who once famously complained about the culture shock inflicted on black patients in Hackney hospitals by the recruitment of blonde, blue-eyed Finnish nurses. More immediately relevant is the fact that Abbot (whose constituency contains a sizeable Jewish minority) has a defective

grasp of Middle Eastern history. She referred to the Irgun as the shadow Israeli government in pre-independence days. In fact, the leader of the Yishuv was the Labour Zionist David Ben-Gurion, who actually deployed armed force against the Irgun in the *Altalena* gun-running incident of September 1948.

Abbot's two Labour colleagues with junior Foreign Office portfolios, Peter Hain and Ben Bradshaw, also deserve dishonourable mention in this connection. Counselling the Israelis to imitate the UK - which refrained from missile strikes on Catholic-populated areas in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing - combines casuistry with hobnailed insensitivity. To the UK the Omagh outrage - however sickening - is peripheral, while to Israel bombs exploding in Jerusalem are stabs to the heart. Nor is the Real IRA bent on the destruction of mainland Britain as Hamas is on that of Israel. Last, but not least, Irish terrorists - unlike their Palestinian counterparts - have not descended to the lowest level of bestiality represented by suicide bombings.

Just as no US newspaper reporter would file the tendentiously slanted copy of a Robert Fisk or John Pilger, so no assistant to Colin Powell at the State Department would indulge in the ill-thought-out admonitions of Israel that trip off the tongues of Messrs Hain and Bradshaw. Does Prime Minister Blair, who gained global stature during the Kosovo and Afghan crises, realise what his appointees are saying?

And apart from politicians, what about laying down rules of conduct for other opinion-formers? The literature pundit Tom Paulin, a semi-permanent panellist on BBC 2's *Arts Review*, recently stepped right outside the confines of a purportedly cultural programme by dubbing Ariel Sharon a 'war criminal'. This sort of allegation, unsubstantiated by the findings of a court of law, helps muddy the waters as perniciously as equating Israel with the Nazis.

## Newsround

### German magazine rebuked

Israel has protested to Germany's leading news magazine over a comparison of Ariel Sharon's measures against Palestinian suicide attacks with Hitler's annihilation of European Jewry. In a letter to Rudolf Augstein, *Der Spiegel's* publisher and the author of the offending article, Ambassador Shimon Stein called the comparison "an insult to any Holocaust survivor and the entire Jewish people".

### Hungarian righteous

Israel's ambassador to Hungary has awarded the title of 'Righteous Among the Nations' to 31 non-Jewish Hungarians, 23 of them posthumously, reports the *Jewish Chronicle*. Since 1989, when diplomatic relations between the two countries were resumed, 450 Hungarians have been so recognised.

### Czech presidential aide forced to quit

Tomas Jelinek, a senior economic aide to President Vaclav Havel for the last five years, was required to leave his post following his election as chairman of Prague's Jewish community. A conflict of interest in 'conducting financial transactions' was alleged. Jelinek has now taken up the chairmanship on a full-time basis.

### Israel anticipates Argentine immigration

Following political and economic unrest in Argentina, Israel is encouraging potential immigrants from the Argentine's 200,000-strong Jewish community with offers of additional loans and relocation grants. More than 60,000 Argentine Jews have already made a major contribution to Israel's development since 1948.

### Jewish radio stations on air

A new London Jewish radio station, Shalom FM, will broadcast on 87.9FM from Hendon on a month-long temporary licence. Spectrum Radio will also be back on the air putting out two Jewish programmes a week in the early hours.

### Brussels exhibition on Jewish resistance

An exhibition on Jewish resistance to the Nazis has opened at the Brussels-based Royal Air Museum. The exhibition is a B'nai B'rith Europe initiative in partnership with the museum and with backing from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.