

# AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

## AJR advises government on tax exemption

The British government will introduce legislation in next year's Finance Bill to make exempt from income and capital gains tax Holocaust-era restitution awards.

With the establishment of international indemnification procedures such as the \$1.25 billion Swiss Bank Settlement, it was clear that successful applicants would receive significant restitution awards. Balances held before and during the Second World War would be returned, together with interest and capital adjustments, to reflect the change in the cost of living.

It was also apparent that today's beneficiaries of restitution would have to pay income and capital gains tax on these awards. In real terms, this meant that the Swiss - and other banks - that kept assets belonging to Jewish victims of the Holocaust would effectively be transferring money to the British government.

In responding to this patently unjust situation, the AJR advised the British

government of the need to make exempt from tax Holocaust-era restitution awards.

The government's initial response was favourable. But they needed to investigate the precise parameters of our request. They did not want to spend time and money introducing legislation that would quickly become obsolete. Any change in the law would have to be as comprehensive as possible.

Investigations necessarily included extensive contact with the department of the Swiss Banks Settlement responsible for processing dormant account applications: the Claims Resolution Tribunal. The Claims Resolution Tribunal was able to provide detailed explanations of their work as well as the numbers of UK claimants, which would help give the government some approximation of the likely tax bill it was being asked to waive.

The government also took advice from the AJR as to other, comparable restitution

schemes, including initiatives in The Netherlands, France and Belgium, to return unused bank assets.

The government was able to appreciate fully the terms of the AJR's request because of the extra-statutory concession A100 that was introduced in 2000 to make exempt from tax awards made in connection with dormant accounts in British banks. Included at that time were assets originally sequestered under the 1939 Trading with the Enemy legislation.

In her statement announcing the introduction of legislation, the Paymaster General, Dawn Primarolo MP, said: 'Since the introduction of the extra-statutory concession it has come to light that comparable payments may be made to Holocaust victims or their heirs in respect of monies held by the banks of other countries.'

Following discussions with the

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## Israeli museum opens honouring 'yekke' immigrants from Germany

**Gil Sedan**

At his modest office in Tefen, Stef Wertheimer leafed through the frayed, disintegrating family documents he had found locked in an old file, hidden away in a remote drawer. He read a letter he had written to his parents when he was ten years old in their home village of Kippenheim, Germany, and admired a copy of his Bar Mitzvah sermon, delivered more than six decades ago at the Shivat Tzion synagogue in Tel Aviv.

Wertheimer, 79, is a legendary figure in Israel. In the 1950s he founded Iscar, an advanced-technology factory set up in



Visitors view an exhibit at the newly opened German-Speaking Jewish Heritage Museum in Tefen, Israel

the remote Galilee hills. Today, multinational ISCAR Ltd. ranks No. 2 in the world among global companies producing carbide-metal cutting tools for industry. The Tefen Industrial Park emerged around Wertheimer's company, the jewel in the crown of industries in the Galilee.

Wertheimer handed the precious file to Ruthi Ofek, seated across the desk from him, asking her to make copies of the old documents. Ofek has just opened the

new German-Speaking Jewish Heritage Museum, popularly known as the Yekkes Museum, within the Open Museum complex in the heart of Tefen Industrial Park, where she is manager and chief curator. The new museum is filled with documents and artifacts similar to Wertheimer's family treasures.

'Yekke' is a slang Yiddish term that refers to Jews of German, Austrian or Czech origin. It is derived from the German word 'Jacke', meaning jacket, because many of the German immigrants, reserved and formal, continued to wear jackets and ties under the blazing Middle Eastern sun. The word often was used by earlier immigrants from Eastern Europe to mock the German Jews' attention to detail and obsessive punctuality. 'That's why we didn't use the term "yekke" in the English and German titles of the museum', explained Ofek, 'It only goes in Hebrew.'

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## Tax exemption

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Association of Jewish Refugees, the Government proposes to bring forward legislation in the next available Finance Bill. The legislation will make exempt from income tax and capital gains tax payments made to Holocaust victims or their heirs when they are broadly comparable to the awards made under the "Restore UK" scheme run by UK banks. This will include any amount designed to cover interest and inflation by increasing the account balance to make it a fairer reflection of the amount originally deposited.'

Recipients of qualifying awards where tax has already been paid will be entitled to a rebate, while claimants expecting a payment do not need to include the award in future tax returns. The Finance Bill will also make provision for an exemption from retrospective inheritance tax where the estate or heirs receive an award in respect of someone who died before the schemes were introduced.

Responding to the ministerial statement, AJR Treasurer and Vice-Chairman David Rothenberg said: 'We are delighted that the government has responded positively to our request to introduce this important extension to Holocaust victims and their families of the concessions which applied to compensation from British banks. The new legislation will enable the families of Holocaust victims to receive the full benefit from their awards.'

Michael Newman

**JACKMAN ■  
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## Israeli museum

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The generation of Israelis of the Fifth Aliyah - the 200,000 Jews who emigrated in the 1930s from Nazi Germany to the Jewish state - today is very old. Only now can the second generation of yekkes break free of the stigma associated with the name.

The new museum tells the story of the German *aliyah* to Israel. A rather modest version of it was located for years in a small room in the municipality of the northern coastal town of Nahariya, which had been the capital of the German immigration. However, the town recently asked the museum to find other quarters, and it was thanks to Wertheimer that it found shelter in Tefen.

Moving through the gallery of yekke memorabilia at the new museum, one wonders if the whole Jewish state could have looked like the blooming industrial park of Tefen had there been more yekkes around.

'Too bad that not much of the yekkes' fingerprints remained in the country', Jerusalem resident Arye Ron recently wrote to *Ha'aretz*. By 'fingerprints' he referred to yekke contributions to all spheres of life, personified by giants such as Pinchas Rosen, originally Felix Rosenblitt, Israel's first justice minister; Dr Yosef Burg, leader of the National Religious Party; philosophers such as Martin Buber; actresses and actors like Hanna Maron and Yosef Yadin; poets such as Yehuda Amichai and Natan Zakh; jurists such as Haim Cohen; journalists like Uri Avneri and Gershon Shochen, the founder and editor of *Ha'aretz*; writers like Amos Elon; and industrialists like Yekutiel Federman and Wertheimer. The list goes on and on.

Wertheimer remains realistic about the contributions of the German *aliyah* to Israeli life. 'If German Jewry would have come here without Poles and Russians, I am not sure that we would have a state. There would have been too much order', he told JTA. 'Every community could use a little modesty.'

The German *aliyah* in the 1930s more than doubled the Jewish population of Palestine - from approximately 160,000 to 400,000. 'Had it not been for Hitler, it's doubtful they would have come', Wertheimer said.

The focus of the Yekkes Museum is the story of proud, displaced Europeans - many of them highly educated - struggling valiantly to adapt to a new country, a new climate and a different culture.

The exhibit is rich in faces of now-famous yekkes, accentuating their contribution to Israeli society. Cartoons and jokes from the 1940s-50s show how different they were from mainstream Israeli society, which was dominated by Russian and Polish immigrants.

'Their main contribution was in medicine', Ofek explained. 'Language was no problem, and they could speak to each other in German. Their influence in music was great. But in law, unlike medicine, they did not really make a difference because of language barriers.'

The steadily shrinking yekke community comes to visit a place that brings back many old memories. Yehudit Katz of Moshav Ganei Am, which was largely populated by German Jews, brought her elderly mother, Ruth Silbermann. 'I came here in 1935 from Berlin', Silbermann said. 'It's good that one can finally see it all here.' 'When I was a child, children used to mock me as a yekke', recalled her daughter Yehudit. 'Now I'm proud to be one.'

The yekke community has finally found its lost honour. Young Israelis acquire German passports because their parents were German citizens, and dozens attend German classes at the Goethe Institute.

'Had I been the prime minister', Wertheimer said, 'I would have allocated funds for every community to create its own museum to promote communal pride, also among the Arabs.'

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Sixty years after the war: On a recent visit to Karlsruhe, Kindertransport Chairman Hermann Hirschberger is received by the city's Mayor, Ullrich Edenmüller. Hermann was born in Karlsruhe in 1926 and left for England with his brother in 1939. His parents were murdered in Auschwitz.

PHOTO: Jodo

## Recollections of a junior doctor's wife

Martha Blend

'You'll need to make sure the brass plate is kept bright, the surgery cleaned and to act as your husband's receptionist when he does his morning and evening surgeries.' My duties were thus spelt out by the wife of the senior partner.

To aid me in the first of these tasks I inherited a gaunt and rather intimidating helper, Mrs Milligan, or 'Millie', as she preferred to be called. She did indeed polish the brass plate. Apart from that, she had a highly idiosyncratic approach to her job. She would start by lifting the coconut matting in the waiting room and shaking it in the garden, sending out clouds of dust. She then swept up the dust that had fallen between the holes in the coconut matting and on to the powdery composition floor before replacing the mats. Next she ewbanked the doctor's carpet and polished his desk. In the little dispensary adjoining the consulting room she would single out for attention the brass tap, the scales used for weighing medicines and a few other choice items. Other objects she considered beneath her notice.

I remember looking with puzzlement at the galley pots containing the ungs: ointments, the Winchesters containing the mists mixtures (some coloured blue, which denoted 'poisonous') and the tincts - tinctures. Later I learned about their uses: mist pot cit cum hyasci for bladder troubles, tinct rei for sluggish bowels, and a sticky pink liquid called Gastroseda for indigestion. Intriguingly, all but the most recently acquired containers had a heavy coating of dust and many a bottle was spliced to its neighbour by a cobweb. Millie's gaze obviously did not stray to these so I tackled them myself.

My duties as a receptionist weren't onerous: I had to greet the patients as they came in, ask their names and get their record cards out of the filing cabinet. I learned the meaning of many mysterious initials: NAD - nothing abnormal discovered; REP MIST - repeat the medicine; and RIF - right iliac

fossa (for suspected appendicitis). There were no computers and prescriptions were couched in scholarly Latin headed RE - recipe. The patients would leave the consulting room clutching these or the 'certificates' they asked for 'for the firm'.

The patients were mostly solid working class with a sprinkling of professionals, eccentrics, landladies and, as the neighbourhood became gentrified, journalists and actors. My husband, through his home visits, knew these people in their setting but only their clothes and accents gave me a clue to their lifestyles. I found relating to such a variety of people bewildering. But the job had its funny side. I remember one lady who came in regularly for her bottle of Mist Pot Cit. She was afflicted with a speech defect and deafness. We had many a bizarre conversation.

'Nice day', she would begin.

'Yes, it is bright.'

'Rain tonight?'

Try another tack:

'Is your husband well?'

'That's right - you never can tell.'

'Goodbye now!', handing her the bottle.

Occasionally I would be asked to act as chaperone for gynaecological examinations and once I became a surgical assistant. The patient was a young girl who had injured her leg. The stitches were due to come out. When I came into the consulting room the patient was already on the couch and her mother was seated a long way off. The instruments had been sterilised and the wound cleaned. I was given the job of holding a light above the girl's leg. The operation began: snip, snip as the stitches were cut open and removed. I remember a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach and my hand beginning to shake. The next thing I knew I was on the floor and the patient's mother was comforting me. I was never asked to assist in surgical procedures again.

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## The children of Blankenese

In April 1945 the British army liberated the 60,000 remaining inmates of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Among them were around 200 children, many of them orphans. The banker Eric Warburg and his parents had emigrated from the Blankenese district of Hamburg in 1938. Returning to his family home on the Koesterberg in Blankenese in the summer of 1945, he gave permission to the American Joint Distribution Committee to use his home to accommodate displaced persons. A plan soon emerged to host the surviving children from the concentration camps there, to provide them with an education, and to prepare them for departure to Palestine.

The first children from Bergen-Belsen arrived at the Koesterberg in January 1946. Up to 1948 300-400 children from various camps spent a number of months here. Most of them have never forgotten the time they spent in this home. They founded a club in Israel and to this day describe themselves as the 'children of Blankenese'.

In the last few years the children's home has been remembered in Blankenese too. In May 2001 the German-Israeli Society of Hamburg organised a concert by an Israeli youth orchestra in the Elsa-Braendstroem-Haus in memory of the building's past. Today a convention centre for the German Red Cross, this building was once one of the houses in which the children lived and was known as the 'White House'.

In the spring of 2004 the Society for Research on the History of the Jews of Blankenese organised an exhibition entitled 'Four Lives: the Jewish Fate in Blankenese'. The exhibition followed the lives of four local citizens who had been persecuted for being Jewish and had eventually committed suicide. With this as a background, the exhibition depicted the history of Blankenese during the Nazi period and retraced the lives of all Jews who had lived there during this time and had been persecuted,

exiled or murdered (see [www.viermalleben.de](http://www.viermalleben.de)).

One item contained in the book which accompanies the exhibition, 'The Book of Memory of the Jews of Blankenese', describes the Warburg Children's Health Home. Both before and during the exhibition we received letters and messages from people who, as children on the Koesterberg, were given preparation for their new lives here.

In 2004, following the example of the city of Hamburg, which had for years regularly invited those of its former citizens who had suffered persecution under National Socialism to return for week-long visits, the German-Israeli Society of Hamburg and the Society for Research on the History of the Jews of Blankenese sent out invitations to the children of Blankenese. A surprising number of the children responded and, from 26 September to 3 October 2005, over 40 of them are due to return as visitors to remember their first step away from the hell of the camps towards a new life. Most of their memories will hopefully be good ones. But there will be others too: at times the children faced hostility from the people of Hamburg.

Most of the guests will come from Israel, with some from the USA and others from elsewhere in Germany. They will stay either in the Elsa-Braendstroem-Haus or in private homes. Max Warburg, the son of the late Eric Warburg, will welcome them and the Mayor of the Hanseatic City-State of Hamburg, Ole von Beust, will invite them to a reception. They will re-acquaint themselves with Blankenese and pay a visit to Bergen-Belsen.

The cost of the invitations is covered by private donations. We hope to be able to send out new invitations in the coming year so that even more of the children of Blankenese will be able to revisit their former home.

**Martin Schmidt**

*Dr Martin Schmidt is President of the Society for Research on the History of the Jews of Blankenese.*

## From Nazi Germany to Clarence House

Marion Charles



Susan Charles, who helped bring Prince Charles into the world

At 2 pm on 5 July 2005 my life came full circle. Exactly 66 years before, aged 11, I arrived at Liverpool Street Station on a Kindertransport from Berlin. Now here I was, at Clarence House, being presented to Prince Charles at a reception for Kindertransport survivors organised by World Jewish Relief (see *AJR Journal*, August issue).

I was among 100 survivors chosen to attend, partly because I had been invited to represent my sister, Susan Charles born Czarlinski. My sister, also a German Jewish refugee who had come to England on the Kindertransport with me, was chosen to assist in the delivery of Prince Charles.

Thus it was that she became the first person in the world to hold the future King of England in her arms. A beautiful brunette, my sister, then 25, was chosen to assist royal obstetrician Sir William Gilliat because she was not only a dedicated nurse but also exceptionally discreet. Prince Charles was delivered by Caesarean - a fact which was kept from the public at the time. I guessed the truth on 13 November 1948 when I invited my sister to tea at my flat in Clapham, and, just before she was due to arrive, the telephone rang and an official voice asked her to ring a Whitehall number immediately.

When I gave my sister the message, she turned white. A car soon came for

*Continued on page 5*

## Social responses to terrorism

'Terrorism: Coercive and violent behaviour undertaken to achieve or promote a particular political objective or cause ... Terrorist activity is designed to induce fear through its indiscriminate, arbitrary, and unpredictable acts of violence, often against members of the population at large.' Thus the 2004 edition of *The Penguin Encyclopaedia*.

So what's new? When expressing horror at the events of 7 July, or the abortive bombings two weeks later, the media speak as if it were a first. But we have been there before. What was Germany's and Austria's Jewish population, or occupied Europe, exposed to if not indiscriminate and arbitrary violence from puffed-up Nazi and Quisling sections of the population after 1933 and, more particularly, after 1939? That in addition to discriminatory legislation. And even before that, colonisation, and thereafter keeping 'the natives' in order, caused white settlers to use terrorist means.

However intensely we experienced 7 July, our second thought must be for Israel, which has suffered suicide bombing for years and has virtually learned how to live with the phenomenon. The British mass media is probably right in regarding the terrorists, alive or dead, as 'foot soldiers'. But it is almost certainly wrong to be shocked that the dead terrorists, at least, are UK citizens. Nationality is a legal concept: the really shocking factor is that they are not just human beings, but apparently otherwise well-balanced and reasonably educated ones. That one of the 7 July bombers was a well-regarded, caring worker with young children makes it worse. An illiterate, unkempt, introspective paranoid would present a more re-assuring stereotype!

Far more controversial is the possible link between the Muslim faith, the Middle East (both Iraq and Palestine/Israel) and the bombings in London. Islam is not the only faith whose guiding text sometimes lacks internal consistency. There are *surah* commending peace and tolerance, but there are others demanding the slaying of non-believers. Islam's social role is perhaps more important. We are, by culture and faith, more affected when we read of the suffering of Brits

or fellow Jews in Russia or elsewhere. Should we be surprised when Muslims unself-consciously refer to co-religionists as 'brothers' and have stronger views about events in Muslim countries than the rest of us?

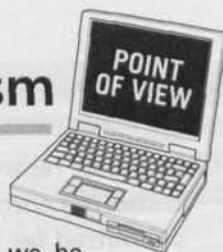
There is something stirring within British Muslim society to which we might usefully pay attention. Their sociologists are posing questions. Why are young Muslims being attracted to extremist madrassas and mosques? Even the role of the faith school is being questioned: does it promote cohesion or dissent? A primary conclusion is that the mainstream mosque is run by the elderly for the elderly, that it is not welcoming to the young, and that the leaders are out of touch with modern thought, skills and opportunities. The drift away from traditional values - or, worse, away from the community - has for decades been the concern of British Asian parents. Attention is now being paid to the drift in the opposite direction.

Perverse though it is, the irrationality of forcible extra-political expression of political aims, even when not murderous, may be an expression of current societal values - instant satisfaction of perceived aims or desires, with suicide bombing seen as the maximised assertion of the 'I' versus society.

The scale of suicide bombing - currently hundreds of victims a month in Iraq alone - has expanded exponentially, and that must mean that there are many more volunteers in reserve. Could Muslim youth see 'the war' as legitimate resistance to an Anglo-American juggernaut which demands the sacrifice of the common Muslim good to Western values and profits? Killing mainly their own people - is this illogical? Yes, but ... Could we in Britain be facing the consequences of another social change: the increasing disempowerment of the population at large?

That the bomber 'will always get through' was conventional wisdom, especially after Guernica. Perhaps he still can, but only if the free society fails to protect - indeed expands - its freedoms.

Francis Deutsch



*Continued from page 4*

her. Later, swearing me to secrecy, she told me the whole story. When she got to the Palace, she prepared the Princess for the delivery. While the senior nurse assisted Sir William Gilliat with the operation, my sister waited in an ante room with Prince Philip, who told her that she reminded him of the beautiful Greek girls he had known when he was very young. She was then called into the delivery room and given Prince Charles to hold until his grandmother, the Queen Mother, took him from her.

Two years later, my sister was again asked to assist when Princess Elizabeth was giving birth to a second child. But she was not needed as Princess Anne was delivered by natural birth.

A month later, she was invited to tea at Buckingham Palace and allowed to be present when Prince Charles was bathed. On 14 November 1973 my sister and her husband, Manny Michael, were invited to Princess Anne's wedding.

Now here I was, at Clarence House, looking into the eyes of my future King. As he took my hand and smiled, I said: 'Your Royal Highness, I was lucky enough to arrive in England 66 years ago today. And my sister was even luckier: she was the first person in the world to hold you.' He seemed fascinated, so I told him the whole story.

At the end of the reception, he made a moving speech, finishing 'What a small world it is. Here is the sister of the nurse who looked after me when I was born. She even saw me being bathed. What an ugly sight I must have been!'

Amid all the amusement that followed the Prince's joke, I was overwhelmed by three emotions: the memory of my sister, who died in 1994, and the memory of myself, a shy 11-year-old, arriving at Liverpool Street Station on a gloomy July day, clutching a small suitcase, my new gabardine coat covered in soot, my mother and father left behind far away. Finally, I was overwhelmed by the honour of being at Clarence House, standing next to the Duchess of Cornwall and Prince Charles - the future King of England, the country which saved my life. My pride in being British soared. I knew this was the highlight of my life.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### AUSTRIAN RESTITUTION GROUP

Sir - Following a letter to the *AJR Journal* last year by Peter Phillips, the Austrian Restitution Group was formed. He received numerous communications from Holocaust survivors pointing out the unfairness of the Austrian government's policy and the inaction of the General Settlement Fund. A committee has now been formed consisting of survivors Richard Degen, Evi Labi and Peter Phillips, plus Roger Juer, whose parents were victims. Below is a copy of a letter they have sent out.

The letter was addressed to Elisabeth Gehrler, Federal Minister for Education; Hubert Gorbach, Vice Chancellor; Karl-Heinz Grasser, Federal Minister of Finance; Moshe Jahoda, Claims Conference; Lord Greville Janner; Andreas Kohl, President of the Austrian Nationalrat; Hannah Lessing, Secretary General of the National Fund of Austria; Ariel Muzicant, President of the Jewish Community of Austria; Ursula Plassnik, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs; Dr Wolfgang Schüssel, Federal Chancellor of Austria; Israel Singer, Claims Conference; Gideon Taylor, Claims Conference.

In light of the recent agreement between the Austrian government and the Austrian Jewish Community, we are writing to insist that all necessary steps are taken to ensure that payments from the General Settlement Fund (GSF) now proceed without further delay.

At the outset, we would like to say that we are all applicants to the GSF and are not participants in any class action litigation. We do, however, want to express our dismay and extreme frustration at more than four years of delay with the disbursement of GSF monies.

Also, whilst the Claims Conference asserts its position as representing Holocaust survivors worldwide, and is party to the Washington Agreement that provides for the GSF, we would like to emphasise that we ourselves are

not members of that organisation, and that they in no way speak for us.

As such, we now seek your guarantees that the full \$210m will be deposited into an interest-bearing account ready for distribution. We also want you to confirm that funds used to pay the staff of the National Fund for processing GSF claims will not be drawn from the GSF itself and that the interest, which we estimate to be almost \$50m, that should have accrued on this capital since the Washington Agreement was signed, will also be made available for distribution.

Further, as a signal of the Austrian government's intent, and on your acceptance that the Class Action lawsuits will be dismissed, we feel strongly that an advance payment from the GSF should be made to all survivors who applied.

It must also be incumbent on the Austrian government to provide the National Fund with whatever staffs are necessary to process outstanding GSF claims as quickly as possible so that we, the survivors, can enjoy a modicum of justice in our latter years.

Lastly, we strongly urge you to explain the formula being used to calculate awards, and to publish a timetable for the distribution of GSF monies as well as a breakdown of how all reparations paid by Austria have been distributed.

Whether or not the principle of legal peace applies, Austria has not yet settled its Holocaust-era debts, and continues to hold on to the properties and other assets appropriated from our families.

Time is now against us. Moshe Jahoda, with whom you are no doubt familiar, has gone on record to refer to the alarming mortality rate among Austrian Holocaust victims - as many as two survivors per day are dying. We are

now looking to you to bring a satisfactory end to this long overdue matter so that we may have the opportunity to benefit from our rightful inheritance.

We look forward to your early reply.

Peter Phillips  
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peterphillips@supanet.com  
Richard Degen, London N2  
Roger Juer, London NW3  
Evi Labi, London NW3

### TWO TRULY RIGHTEOUS GENTILES

Sir - I was pleased that you published an obituary of Irene Corbach (May issue) and I also very much welcome Ilse Eton's letter in your July issue. Irene and her late husband Dieter did so much for the Cologne Jewish community. No praise is sufficient to cover the versatility of their humane actions over many years in assisting their Jewish Mitbürger.

A German friend of mine was a close friend of both Corbachs and was present when they began cleaning up the Jewish cemetery in Köln-Lindenthal after the years of Nazi neglect. One should also not forget the 804-page volume Dieter Corbach published in 1994: *6.00 Uhr ab Messe Köln-Deutz: Deportationen 1938-1945*. Every single transport is mentioned and all names and all relevant dates are provided. It is not a pleasant book to read but I am glad to own it, so as never to forget the humanity of this German author. The Corbachs were two truly righteous gentiles.

Eric Kaufman  
Harrow, Middx

### ANTISEMITISM THEN AND NOW

Sir - The 1930s were dreadful years. I am frequently reminded of them and I recall how we in Glasgow reacted. Of course we collected money, helped refugees and hosted Kinder. In the wider community, we arranged lectures, often with the title 'The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation'. We even had a Jewish Book Week to back this up.

All this was good stuff. It boosted our morale and educated those who sympathised with our plight. But that was all. It did nothing to deal with the

increasing persecution in Germany or with the latent antisemitism in Britain.

But we did something else. We sought to tell opinion-formers that we Jews were just one of the first victims of a highly aggressive and dangerous regime. I recall one particular success: a leading article in the *Glasgow Herald* condemning the Munich agreement - an article which nearly cost the editor, a friend of my parents, his job.

Today, the situation is similar. Jews and Israel are targets of a turbulent Islam, an Islam seeking recovery from its long domination by the Western world - just as Germany sought revenge for the Versailles treaty. Of course not all Muslims - perhaps only a small minority - support it. And the targeting of innocent civilians is, as we know only too well, a particular horror.

This is the line I develop, often in greater detail, with my friends, Jews and non-Jews, who criticise us and especially Israeli policies. So far, alas, no one has argued that I am wrong.

Michael S. Morris  
London NW7

#### UK SUICIDE BOMBERS AND THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

Sir - I am astonished that our journal - apart from the regular Letter from Israel column - does not mention that country. Dorothea Shefer-Vanson briefly refers to the brilliant weather in Eilat 'while storms rage in the rest of Israel' (July issue). Presumably, she is not referring to the weather!

The Israelis must be longing for peace in their country - living under the constant threat of suicide bombers. After the latest attack Sharon ordered the assassination of a Hamas leader. Apart from being illegal, is this likely to promote peace? I also believe that the present spread of terrorism to Britain is partly due to what is happening in Israel/Palestine.

Inge Trott  
Cheam, Surrey

#### LORD WEIDENFELD PROFILE

Sir - Contrary to what Victor Ross (June issue) says, George Weidenfeld's achievements deserved a well-written

profile in a magazine which is not mediocre, as he erroneously states.

Peter Levy  
London SW20

#### 'IRRELEVANT' COMMENTS ON BERNHARDI REVIEW

Sir - I find Francis Steiner's comments on my review of *Professor Bernhardt* in your August issue totally unjustified and irrelevant. Mr Steiner overlooks the fact that my job as reviewer was not, in this instance, to write about the play *per se*, but about the superb English adaptation by Samuel Adamson. Mr Steiner is therefore attacking windmills when he mentions my 'mistranslations'. When I refer to Flint as Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs, I merely quote Adamson's English adaptation verbatim.

My family were all members of the Vienna Kultusgemeinde and two of my uncles acted as *Regimentsärzte* during the First World War. So much for Mr Steiner's imputation that 'I may not be aware of' etc. For future reference, Mr Steiner should perhaps get his facts right prior to pontificating.

Fred Rosner  
Chigwell, Essex

#### FORGOTTEN VETERANS

Sir - On a visit to England recently I came across the article 'Forgotten Veterans' by Max Sulzbacher, in the *AJR Journal* of November 2004. I too had this RJF *Gedenkbuch* for the 12,000 fallen Jewish soldiers of the First World War. It listed my uncle, whom I never knew and after whom I was named. I also had a book of letters written by fallen Jewish soldiers to their loved ones at home. Such love of country, such respect for the Fatherland! I donated both books to the Holocaust Museum in St Petersburg, Florida. They had a special exhibition depicting former Jewish life in Frankfurt, Vienna and London (the latter containing quite a bit about the Kindertransport). The curator and staff were fascinated by these books, which opened their eyes to aspects of Jewish history with which they were not too familiar.

Walter Clifton  
Boca Raton, Florida, USA

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# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler



Queen Victoria by Alexander Bassano, 1887 © National Portrait Gallery

In an era when the celebrity cult could hardly be more intense, the **National Portrait Gallery** has launched its latest exhibition, **The World's Most Photographed**, until 23 October.

Ten outstanding figures from the world of politics, film, sport and the monarchy highlight the many ways in which photography has been used to enhance or even cover up their celebrity.

Ironically, Queen Victoria used the camera to preserve her privacy. Her poses of choice opened a royal window to subjects who, for the six decades of her reign, regarded her as their invisible queen. Now, her public could see the 'widow of widows', as she became known vicariously, with all due pomp and circumstance. Victoria became the most photographed woman of her age and is said to have smiled for the first time at her subjects in 1887 during her Golden Jubilee.

Political leaders like Hitler and Kennedy used the camera to reinforce a different message. Although Ghandi, with a full head of black hair fashionably centre-parted in 1888 is less familiar, the

simplicity of his home-spun Indian dress became the eternal hallmark of his purity.

By contrast, Hitler was obsessed with the brutal power of his image and vigorously pursued those who held unauthorised photos of him. And no wonder. In some he looks more like a Charlie Chaplin send-up. There is one showing him in *Lederhosen*. Of course, such self-serving portrayals render the demagogue ridiculous years later. Hitler eschewed political mystery when he saw the potential of the camera to force his way into the public psyche. His official photographer, **Heinrich Hoffmann**, took more than two and a half million unremarkable pictures of him.

The camera best preserves the mystique and the power of the beautiful, like Monroe, John Kennedy, James Dean, Greta Garbo and Audrey Hepburn. A rare picture of Hepburn after ballet class in New York underscores a little-known fact about the actress, who eventually became a UNICEF ambassador in Somalia. Her celebrated elfin shape derived from starvation in wartime Holland, preventing her from following her chosen ballet career. **Betty Press's** haunting 1992 photograph of her holding a skeletal child brings the memory back to her face. And yet - if we are talking about the most photographed - where on earth is Princess Diana?

Another memory preserved through photographs is the exhibition of postgraduate art student **Bonny Zhu** at Cork Street's **Arndean Gallery**. Her pictures are hidden images of the Jewish refugees of Shanghai, granted sanctuary by the Chinese and later their wartime Japanese occupiers, who granted transit visas to more than 2,000 Polish Jews during the war. They were musicians, doctors, professors and tailors, who opened shops and businesses in the ghetto. They even influenced Shanghai's architecture, as Bonnie's photos of 'White Russian Jewish onion shapes' show - but vanished with the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

Bonnie takes a sentimental journey through the streets like Zhoushan Road, where they lived - replaced now by Chinese children. Some of her work uses the solarisation technique, irradiating black and white prints with flashes of colour.

## REVIEWS

### Rescue extraordinaire

#### RESCUED FROM THE REICH: HOW ONE OF HITLER'S SOLDIERS SAVED THE LIFE OF THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

by Bryan Mark Rigg

Yale University, 2004, 284pp., £18.00

This is an astonishing story and, if the author had not been a historian, with a previous book about Nazi Germany to his credit, one would have been tempted to question its veracity. It is, however, a well-researched and heavily referenced account of the rescue of the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Joseph Isaac Schneersohn) from German-occupied Warsaw in October 1939.

The Lubavitchers are a religious dynasty of Hasidic Jews who stemmed from Byelorussia in the late eighteenth century. Later, they spread throughout Eastern Europe and then worldwide, with a particularly strong presence in the USA. Their Rebbe was regarded as a prophetic leader and a revered father figure. Joseph Isaac was the sixth in a dynasty of Schneersohn Rebbes, having succeeded his father in 1927. He soon came into conflict with the antisemitic authorities in the Soviet Union, and this included arrest and release after pressure from the USA. In 1927, having set up hundreds of clandestine Jewish schools in the Soviet Union, he moved to Poland, where he established the main Lubavitcher *yeshiva* near Warsaw. With the help of funds raised by the American Jewish community, he first, however, evacuated his large library to Riga and it was from there that he organised his base near Warsaw.

Thus it was that, following the German attack on Poland in September 1939, he found himself stranded in Warsaw, surrounded by

numerous members of his family and his immediate supporters.

The bulk of this book is a description of how the complex rescue operation to return the Rebbe first to Riga and then to the USA was organised once the Germans had occupied Warsaw. The pressure came from the USA and the Germans felt it was opportune to humour the Americans. The co-operation of the head of the German military intelligence (the *Abwehr*), Admiral Canaris - an enigmatic figure who was later involved in the plot against Hitler - was obtained. Canaris chose a squad of four men, led by Captain Ernst Bloch, a World War I hero who, despite his father's Jewish identity, was allowed to serve in the German army in World War II. Two members of his team were likewise part-Jewish (*Mischlinge*) and the fourth was a major who was head of the *Abwehr* in Warsaw and was able to play a key role.

One major problem was to establish contact with the Rebbe, who moved secretly to Warsaw; his followers were loath to trust approaches made by Bloch's team. The rescue was ultimately successful and also involved numerous members of his family and entourage. The Americans readily issued visas and the story reads like an improbable thriller with a happy ending.

What was the fate of the rescuers? Bloch continued to serve in the army on the Russian front and was killed in the battle of Berlin, his family having escaped to the West. Canaris was arrested after the foiled plot against Hitler and hanged by the SS in April 1945.

What was the motivation of those involved in the rescue? Bryan Rigg does not think that altruism was a major factor: each participant seemed to have his own agenda. American policy towards Jewish emigration before the war had been shamefully indifferent and was often punctuated by rank antisemitism in high places. The influence of the

American Lubavitchers must have been a key factor. Göring's chief administrator of his four-year plan, who played an important role, wanted Germany to maintain good relations with America. Captain Bloch probably distinguished between his loyalty to the German state and his distaste for Hitler, and may have been influenced by his father's Jewish identity.

The reader of this extraordinary story is entitled to ask whether the Lubavitcher Rebbe really merited this intricate, dangerous and costly mission, when there were so many other Jews equally deserving of rescue. There can be no answer to this.

Leslie Baruch Brent

### Flawed page-turner

#### BERLIN MOSAIC

by Eva Tucker

*Starhaven (42 Frognaal, London NW3 6AG), 2005; paperback 154 pp., £10.00*

Mosaic refers to the lives of a wealthy, extended Jewish family living in Berlin in the twentieth century. The Uhr-family of Oskar and his sister Rebecka still keeps some vestiges of Jewish ritual but considers itself German first and foremost. The members of the next generation have a more ambivalent relationship with their religion: the first to reject it completely is Oskar's grandson Ferdinand, who secretly keeps a silver cross in his desk and contemplates baptism.

The novel follows the well-known events of German history from the time of the Kaiser, through the Weimar republic, the murder of Rathenau and the rise of Nazism. Like many of their kind, Oskar and co - they don't appear to have a surname - refuse to take Hitler seriously, calling him 'a demented minor politician who blames everything on Jews'.

On a personal level, the family has more than its share of troubles. The

novel opens with the dying words of Oskar's first wife, Frasziska; her successor, Laetitia, is confined to a mental home; Oskar himself becomes an alcoholic; his daughter Magda leads a promiscuous existence and finally dies after an unsuccessful abortion. When the author decides to kill a character off, she doesn't hang about but polishes him or her off in a single sentence: 'One day Oskar turned up at the Friedrichstrasse, sat down to Elisabeth's [his daughter's] roast chicken ... lay down to rest and died.' Or: 'Max [another grandson] suddenly died. He had caught polio from a patient.'

As the old order changes, granddaughter Ruth marries Hugo, a non-Jewish Communist, and her half-Jewish cousin Eduard ends up joining the Hitler Youth. Meanwhile, his uncle Ferdinand is devastated when suddenly relieved of his research post despite his conversion to the Christian faith. As the screw of Nazi persecution tightens, his parents are forced to move to less salubrious quarters and to give away their precious carpets and expensive furniture. Ultimately, Elisabeth, the daughter of Oskar, and her husband Theodor share the fate of other Jewish Berliners.

The author knows well her topography from the Friedrichstrasse to the Tiergarten and her characters' discussions of historical events are interesting, if predictable. Her style is uncomplicated, sometimes to the point of bathos: "This cannot go on!" Hugo was outraged. But it did.' Or: 'As soon as she got back to Berlin [Bella] told Ferdinand she would marry him. That night he invited her into his bed and twins were conceived.'

Despite its faults, *Berlin Mosaic* is a page-turner and, if you relish a trawl through German history in the company of a Jewish family, then this is the book for you.

Martha Blend

## FILM

### Intoxicating cocktail

#### WALK ON WATER

Directed by Eitan Fox

At selected cinemas

Revenge and reconciliation are two most powerful themes. Add in Nazi crimes, German war guilt, Christian mythology, Israeli-Palestinian tensions and sexual diversity to make an overwhelmingly intoxicating cocktail. *Walk on Water*, the acclaimed film by Israeli director Eitan Fox, packs all this and much else into a riveting one hour, forty-five minutes, leaving the spectator eager for more.

Eyal, beautifully played by Lior Ashkenazi, successfully eliminates a leader of Islamic Jihad in Istanbul but, rather than being greeted as a hero on returning home, finds his wife has killed herself. The contents of a note addressed to him, which remain a mystery until the film's dénouement, will ultimately change his life.

In the meantime, preferring action to the time out offered by his laudatory Mossad superiors, he is assigned the task of assassinating Alfred Himmelman, an elderly Nazi war criminal. Fortuitously, Himmelman's granddaughter, Pia (Caroline Peters), is volunteering on a kibbutz and her brother, Axel (Knut Berger), is due to visit her. Posing as a tour guide, Eyal befriends the two young Germans but not before bugging the light socket in Pia's kibbutz room. In the course of escorting Axel around Israel, Eyal is perturbed to discover that the visitor is homosexual but nevertheless comes to the defence of some

transvestites who are attacked in a gay nightclub Axel wanted to visit.

Much of Axel's visit is spent near the Sea of Galilee and Eyal is impressed when the young German imitates Jesus in appearing to walk on water, a feat which, Axel explains, demands spiritual purification.

Axel fails to persuade Pia to come home for their father's 70th birthday party but duly invites Eyal along when the latter makes an unexpected appearance in Berlin. While Axel's attempt to surprise his father by teaching the guests an Israeli folkdance does not go down well with his mother, the emergence of the guest of honour - Alfred Himmelman himself - will surely facilitate Eyal's task.

The unanticipated dénouement is particularly moving, cementing the bond between the two young men. And while not everyone might share my enjoyment of the possibly predictable 'happy ending', a beautiful blond child, the great-grandson of a Nazi and his Jewish victim, serves as a compelling symbol of reconciliation.

Emma Klein

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## Letter from Israel

Fed up with the poor performance of Israeli pupils by international standards, Israel's energetic Minister of Education, Limor Livnat, appointed a committee, headed by businessman Shlomo Dovrat, to review the education system and recommend changes.

After months of deliberations, the committee came up with a number of suggestions: the American-style junior high schools, introduced with considerable pain, expense and effort 20 years ago, should be abolished, the system reverting to its original primary- and secondary-school arrangement.

The committee also recommended cutting the school week from six to five days, with pupils remaining in school until 4 o'clock instead of the current school day, which ends at 1 or 2 o'clock (and 12 noon on Fridays). Sunday is an ordinary weekday in Israel, of course.

Public reaction was mixed. But then a new element erupted onto the scene. A red-haired teenager living in Ramat Gan sent SMS messages to his friends, information was disseminated via the internet, and, before anyone knew what was happening, a general walk-out by 200,000 junior-high and secondary-school students ensued.

The pupils objected to the fact that no one had consulted them in deciding to make radical changes in their lives. Schoolchildren in Israel are accustomed to long afternoons in which they are free to engage in extramural activities, swim, socialise and pursue their hobbies. Above all, they are not prepared to sit through a long, boring school day without a hot meal. The Dovrat Commission made no provision for school dinners, suggesting that pupils bring sandwiches from home.

Threatening dire consequences for the pupils involved, the Ministry of Education has been forced to rethink its plan. Statements have mentioned logistical problems, budgetary constraints, and so forth, and the changes have been put on hold for the moment. It looks as if that moment is going to be quite long.

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING  
AND SCULPTURE

First the name. 'Why T. Scarlett?', I wanted to know as we sat down in Dr Epstein's flat overlooking the Hove shoreline (I love hearing the crashing of the waves'). Her answer was that at the time of applying for UK citizenship, she became convinced she had something of the legendary Scarlett O'Hara in her - 'a fighter to the end'. And the T? 'It's short for Trude. I've never liked that name. Too harsh-sounding. Everyone calls me Scarlett.'

As Scarlett's autobiography\* shows vividly, much of her life has been an attempt to escape from what she sees as marginalisation, personal and professional, and to overcome the many obstacles life has put in her way.

Scarlett was born Trude Grünwald into an assimilated family in a Jewish working-class district of Vienna. Her problems began from the start: she felt inferior to her two brothers, Otto and Kurt, both older than she and, to her mind, a lot better-looking and cleverer. The 'ugly duckling' of the family became surly and moody.

Scarlett encountered antisemitism for the first time at the age of eight, when several children at her new school shouted at her 'Saujüdin, Saujüdin!' (Jewish pig). The only Jewish child in the school, she developed a hard shell. Always being top of the class didn't, of course, endear her to her classmates. Seeing Jews react to the indignities imposed on them by the Nazis, she swore she would do all in her power to instil a positive Jewish identity in her children.

Following the Anschluss, with her father having found work in Yugoslavia, her brother Otto, on whom she depended so much, away, and her mother increasingly dependent on her, she became emotionally self-sufficient on the surface, while remaining frightened and vulnerable inside. Emigration, with Scarlett having to take control of the process from her parents, entailed difficult stop-offs in Yugoslavia and Albania.

In London, Scarlett took a job as a sewing machinist, receiving at the end of her first working week a wage packet of 15 shillings. She and her mother

# PROFILE

Howard Spier

## T. Scarlett Epstein A fighter to the end



moved to the Manchester area when Scarlett's brother Kurt found a house they could rent cheaply. She took another job as a machinist. Scarlett had never given up her dream of becoming a doctor: she happily enrolled at Salford Technical College on a chemistry evening course - the closest course to medicine she could find.

She was unlucky in love. One particular rejection made her resolve never to allow such vulnerability in the future. 'I had opened up the crack in my shell and it had cost me dearly. I was not going to make the same mistake again', she was to write.

Life took on a different routine as she moved from shop floor to office work. But with the end of the war she found there was nothing to keep the family in England and nothing to go back to Vienna for - 'Hitler had robbed us of something that we could never recover: a normal life.'

Frustrated at work, Scarlett took a night-school course leading to a diploma in industrial administration. Uncertain how best to use her qualifications, she

studied economics in her final year. Her lecturer enthusiastically recommended that she apply to Ruskin College, Oxford. Her application was successful and she completed a two-year diploma in economics and political science in one year - previously unheard of - and was offered a scholarship to Manchester University to study economics. Tragically, a few days before her final examinations she was seriously burned in an accident. The university permitted her to dictate her answers from her hospital bed.

In 1954 Scarlett set off on a postgraduate research project: a two-year study of the impact of an irrigation scheme on village life in southern India. A photograph on the cover of her autobiography shows Scarlett, rifle in hand and surrounded by village hunters, having just 'bagged' a tiger. 'I was startled to see that very same tiger staring up at me from the floor in her flat.'

Not long after her return from India Scarlett met Dr Bill Epstein, an anthropologist like herself. At last Mr Right had arrived. Despite problems with members of Bill's Orthodox Jewish family, they married, beginning a wonderful personal and professional relationship. Her life, plagued by childlessness and health problems, was eventually crowned with children and grandchildren.

Scarlett is a very busy lady. She is an honorary fellow of several associations, acts as a consultant for a number of developing countries, and is the director of three voluntary agencies. I was squeezed in a couple of days before she was off on a three-week return trip to Papua New Guinea.

Scarlett is the author of 12 books and was awarded an OBE in the December 2004 Honours List for 'services to rural and women's development, especially in Papua New Guinea'. She has made the long journey from assimilation to Judaism, she stresses. She no longer feels an outsider.

\*Swimming Upstream: A Jewish Refugee from Vienna is published by Vallentine Mitchell, tel 020 8952 9526, at £17.50 paperback, 20% discount to AJR members for six weeks.

# INSIDE the AJR

## Northern Groups: Visit to Dewsbury Museum, Bradford and Salts Mill

The Bradford, Harrogate, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield Groups of the AJR and Leeds HSFA combined for a very enjoyable occasion, which began with a visit to Dewsbury Museum, where the AJR Continental Britons Exhibition and the Leeds HSFA Testimony Project Exhibition were on view. Participants were then provided with transport to Shipley, where we had lunch at the Bradford Synagogue Hall. After lunch, some preferred to remain in Shipley for conversation, while others were conveyed by coach to Salts Mill at Saltaire to see the Hockney exhibition as well as an exhibition of photographs explaining the history of Salts Mill.

*Martin Kapel*

## Essex: concern over Israel's image in the media

Having recently returned from Israel, Rona Hart told us that many Palestinians did not want peace. How could Israel defend its image, she asked. Why did we never hear of the positive side of Israel - for example, that sick Palestinian children are being treated free of charge in Israeli hospitals? Let us never again see on TV Israeli soldiers fighting Israeli settlers or read shameful articles in which Jews like Gerald Kaufman abuse the name of Israel, Rona demanded.

*Julie Franks*

## Next meeting: Tues 13 Sept. Erich Reich, 'Long Past, Ever Present'

## Musical session in HGS

Walter Woyda presented *The Rothschilds: the Musical* with illustrations at a well-attended meeting. For various reasons this musical, by the same team that produced *Fiddler on the Roof*, has never been shown in this country.

*Max Sulzbacher*

## Next meeting: Mon 12 Sept. Peter Sinclair, 'Journeys through Europe', tbc

## Bristol/Bath get-together

This was the group's second meeting, once again hosted by the Balint-Kurtis.

Five new members were present. Following an opportunity for people to get to know each other and discuss their experiences in this country, a video on Beth Shalom, of which most of those present had not heard, was shown. All enjoyed the delicious tea provided by Kitty Balint-Kurti.

*Myrna Glass*

## Next meeting: tba

## Lively meeting in Bradford

We had another successful meeting in the Mornington Hall of the Bradford Hebrew Congregation. Though quite a few of our regular participants were away on holiday, the meeting was well attended and a lively exchange of views and information took place. AJR Northern Groups Co-ordinator Susanne Green outlined planned future activities. We were also informed that meetings of the group were scheduled to be held about every two months and that notices containing details and dates would be sent out in due course.

*Albert Waxman*

## Leeds HSFA talk on the Welfare State

Prof D Fraser began with the 1834 Poor Law, in accordance with which relief was granted to the able-bodied poor in a workhouse. But the relief became associated with such a stigma that between 1880 and 1900 only 3 per cent of the population were said to be living in poverty. To remedy this situation, pensions were introduced in 1908, to be financed through an insurance scheme depending on individual contributions and run in conjunction with the Post Office. Following the Second World War there was a demand for an insurance scheme to cover all benefits, resulting in the Beveridge Report. National Assistance was introduced. This, together with health charges, effectively reintroduced the means test, which the scheme was intended to avoid.

*Martin Kapel*

## Specialist on Indian life at Brighton and Hove Sarid

Our speaker, Scarlett Epstein OBE, a professor in economics and social anthropology, had lived for two years in two villages in southern India. One had the benefit of water from the canal; the other did not. She described the differences this made to their development and the effect of the Indian caste system. A most fascinating talk (see Profile).

*Rudi Simmonds*

Next meeting: Mon 19 Sept. Speaker: Joy Markham

## Pinner: Nazis' use and misuse of photography

A day of terrorist bombs in London did not keep us away from Rabbi Frank Dabba Smith, who led us in a two-minute silence for the victims of the outrage before his talk on the use and misuse of photography during the Holocaust. He showed us how Nazi propaganda had distorted the facts at a time when the current thought was that photos could not lie, but there were also 'grey' areas where records were made openly or secretly by German soldiers or courageously by prisoners.

*Walter Weg*

Next meeting: Thur 1 Sept, 2.00 pm. Gilly Middleburgh (the very last Chief Clerk to the Queen at Buckingham Palace), 'On Her Majesty's Service'

## North London: Walking for Water

Following an account by Ruth Jacobs of the Clarence House meeting hosted by Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall, Myrna Glass gave a fascinating talk on her previous existence as head of the JNF's Youth and Education Department. There she took part in several 'Walks for Water' hikes in Israel sponsored by members of the public, with the funds collected being used to develop water resources in Israel.

*Herbert Haberberg*

Outing: Thur 8 Sept. Call Jenny Zundel for details.

Next meeting: Thur 29 Sept. Bertha Leverton, 'Aspects of the Kindertransport'

## South London: Retribution and reparations

Our meeting, at the Preston Road Streatham synagogue, was addressed by Michael Newman from AJR head office on the subject 'Retribution and Reparations'. Many questions were asked and good advice given by the speaker. We heard an up-to-date report on the progress of negotiations with various organisations holding reparation funds to be released for payments to applicants, hopefully in the not too distant future.

*Inge Gredley*

Next meeting: Thur 15 Sept. Tanya Stern from the Israeli Embassy, 'Israel Update'

## A hot, sunny, summer Sunday in West Midlands

Twenty-seven of us met on a hot, sunny, summer Sunday for a garden party at the

home of Leon Jessel MBE - by now an annual event. We were treated to a delicious lunch in his beautiful garden. Members came from all over the area, a number of them making use of our travel budget or giving each other lifts, thus enabling those who have difficulty with transport to meet others of a similar background. *Myrna Glass*

Next meeting: Mon 26 Sept. Details tba

#### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Wessex Tues 6 Sept. Walter Woyda on 'Jakubovsky and the Colonel - the Musical'  
East Midlands Wed 7 Sept. Social get-together in Market Bosworth. Call Bob Norton for details

Cambridge Thur 22 Sept. The poet Lotte Kramer

Norfolk Tues 27 Sept. Get-together in Norwich

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And everyone thought that was very nice.  
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This skill is very rare in this land.  
But most of all the friends who were here  
Thought the best outing was Lake Windermere.

But who helped the lame to mount the bus  
And lifted you up without any fuss?  
Who arranged the outings, efficient and kind  
And made sure that nobody was left behind?

Two wonderful ladies, I tell you the truth:  
You know who I meant: Susanne and Ruth!  
No praise is too high, too low all cheer  
And therefore make sure: you will all come next year!

Trude Black, aged 93, Glasgow

#### AJR GROUP CONTACTS

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KT-AJR (Kindertransport)  
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

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Wednesday 21 September 2005

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Curator, AJEX Museum

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| Sun 4   | CLOSED                          |
| Mon 5   | KT LUNCH - Kards & Games Klub   |
| Tue 6   | CLOSED                          |
| Wed 7   | Katinka Seiner                  |
| Thur 8  | Rita & Jack David               |
| Sun 11  | CLOSED                          |
| Mon 12  | Kards & Games Klub              |
| Tue 13  | CLOSED                          |
| Wed 14  | Jenny Kossew                    |
| Thur 15 | Madeleine Whiteson              |
| Sun 18  | DAY CENTRE OPEN                 |
| Mon 19  | Kards & Games Klub              |
| Tue 20  | CLOSED                          |
| Wed 21  | LUNCHEON CLUB                   |
| Thur 22 | Joe Kay                         |
| Sun 25  | CLOSED                          |
| Mon 26  | Kards & Games Klub              |
| Tue 27  | CLOSED                          |
| Wed 28  | Guyathrie Peiris & Bill Patrick |
| Thur 29 | Margaret Opdahl                 |

#### DIARY DATES

|               |                     |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 18 September  | Annual Tea, Watford |
| 3-10 November | Bournemouth holiday |
| 9 November    | Kristallnacht       |

Please make a note in your diary - this year's annual tea will be held at the Hilton Hotel in Watford on Sunday 18 September. For information about any of the above events, please call us on 020 8385 3070.

Editorials and articles published, and opinions expressed, in *AJR Journal* are not necessarily those of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.

**FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Birthday**

The AJR would like to congratulate Mrs Serafin Andrews on her 100th birthday on 10 September.

**Deaths**

**Gross.** Ernest, born in Vienna 3 May 1914, died in London 10 July 2005. He was loved and respected by all who knew him and will be greatly missed by his wife Erika, son Roger, grandchildren Claire and Paul, and many other family and friends.

**Jonas.** George Siegfried. Devoted husband, father, grandfather and father-in-law. Deeply compassionate and caring to all who came into contact with him, whilst always maintaining his principles and integrity. Loved by far more than just his family, he will be missed by many.

**Classified**

Do you - or anyone you know - have a birthday on 17 September 1955, 26 September 1954, 28 September 1943, 4 October 1945, or 9 October 1950? If so, please contact wendy@wendyleigh.co.uk regarding interesting project.

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By participating in Shaare Zedek's Yahrzeit programme you have the opportunity to perpetuate their memory in the sacred city of Jerusalem.

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For further details please call Joanna on  
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## Yad Vashem: 11th hour appeal

The AJR is co-operating with Yad Vashem in its worldwide 11th hour campaign to gather the names of all victims of the Holocaust.

Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names - now available at [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org) - memorialises and preserves for future generations the legacy of each Jew who died at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators.

A revolutionary milestone in Holocaust remembrance, this site provides an opportunity to search for names, photographs and brief histories of over three million Holocaust victims. By promoting this project and making the resource available on the internet, Yad Vashem hopes to increase the number of victims in its database to five million.

As many names are still missing, those

who possess information on victims who are not recorded in the Database are urgently requested to submit them. Names can be submitted to Yad Vashem online via the website [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org) or by completing a Page of Testimony. A sample form of the latter is enclosed with this issue of the *AJR Journal* and can be reproduced for multiple submissions. If you have access to the internet, additional pages may be downloaded at [http://www1.yadvashem.org/download/index\\_download.html](http://www1.yadvashem.org/download/index_download.html) or requested from the AJR.

So that the AJR can monitor how effectively the campaign is operating and so that we can inform Yad Vashem of our own efforts in this major project, kindly return any completed forms to the AJR office.

Michael Newman

### Search Notices

Was anyone in **Cologne** in spring/summer 1939? I am anxious to establish whether and how the local Jewish community helped Austrian refugees in their attempts to cross the border into Belgium. Any information, please contact Hilda Schiff on tel/fax 01865 310 791.

**Marx (or Marks), Ruth**, born Bettingen, Germany, 4.4.1922. She and her sister were on last train to reach England before war. Her sister did not survive the war. The sisters may have stayed in a centre in Tunbridge Wells. During the war Ruth worked as nanny with a family in Birmingham, where she also stayed with the Isaac family, specifically in Olton, Warwickshire. She may have married a Canadian soldier and be living in Toronto. She had an uncle named Leo Abraham. Any information please to David Lewin at [davidlewin@btinternet.com](mailto:davidlewin@btinternet.com)

Has anyone memories, fond or otherwise, of the **Regent's Park School**, run by Alma and Bruno Schindler (formerly of Leipzig) in the 1930s at 5 Maresfield Gardens, London NW3 and later evacuated to Slough? Any information please to Albrecht B. Strauss, 396 Lake Shore Lane, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, USA tel 001 919 967 3318 email [strausshaus@mindspring.com](mailto:strausshaus@mindspring.com)

### Arts & Events Diary September

**Until 2 October** 'The Last Goodbye: The Rescue of Children from Nazi Europe' Jewish Museum, Finchley tel 020 8349 1143

**Sun 4 September European Day of Jewish Culture and Heritage: United Kingdom.** For details of events in your area, tel 020 7387 5278 or visit [www.bbuk.org](http://www.bbuk.org)

**Sun 4 September 'Talk by a Survivor'.** Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, 2.00 pm, tel 01623 836 627

**Mon 5 Club 43. AGM.** All meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Contact Hans Seelig tel 01442 254360

**Mon 12 Dr W. F. Rosner, 'Sir Rudolf Bing: His Contribution to World Opera'**

**Mon 19 Dr Vincent C. Frank (Basel), 'Dr Paul Rosbaud, 'The Griffin': Scientist and Spy in World War Two'**

**Mon 26 Dr Jennifer Taylor, 'Dachshund or St Bernard: The Early Years of Club 43'**

**Wed 28 Dr Hans Keilson** will talk about his life's work in **psychiatric trauma** (in German). Joint lecture series: Wiener Library/Centre for German Jewish Studies/Leo Baeck Institute. At Wiener Library, 7.00 pm. Tel Almut Becker on 020 7 5 8 0 3 4 9 3 or email [a.becker@leobaeck.co.uk](mailto:a.becker@leobaeck.co.uk)

### Central Office for Holocaust Claims

Michael Newman

#### Tax concession

Following discussions with the AJR, the British government announced in July that restitution awards made in respect of dormant bank accounts in foreign countries will be exempt from income and capital gains taxes.

For details of the tax exemption made by the British government, see article on page 1.

#### Hardship Fund - a clarification

As stated in last month's column, the Claims Conference Hardship Fund is open to any Austrian Holocaust survivor who did *not* receive compensation from the German government in the 1950s or 1960s.

Survivors from Austria who have received payments from the Austrian National Fund or who are in receipt of an Austrian social security pension are entitled to apply.

Application forms and guidelines are available from the social and welfare department of the AJR. Further details about the Hardship Fund are available at [www.claimscon.org](http://www.claimscon.org)

#### Insurance Claims Commission

The free-phone number for claimants wishing to check the status of applications submitted to the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims is 00800 2525 3535. As an alternative, claimants can call, at regular rates, the following number in the United States to receive updates: 001 646 519 8767.

Please note that when contacting the Commission you should have available your claims reference number(s). For further information about the work of the Insurance Commission, please visit [www.icheic.org](http://www.icheic.org)

Written enquiries should be sent to Central Office for Holocaust Claims (UK), Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL, by fax to 020 8385 3075, or by email to [michael@ajr.org.uk](mailto:michael@ajr.org.uk) Assistance can be provided strictly by appointment at the Holocaust Survivors Centre in Hendon, north London. For an appointment, please ring 020 8385 3074.

## Tragedy, triumph and transformation The Jewish experience 1905-2005

The warm reception AJR's Manchester chairman Werner Lachs and I received at Mamlock House, from a generation that remained devoted to the State of Israel, was extended to Professor Barry Kosmin, Executive Director of Jewish Policy Research, delivering the first of this year's Shermann Lectures on the theme 'Rethinking the Jewish World for the 21st Century'.

Professor Kosmin saw migration and dislocation as the key elements in the twentieth century's transformation of world Jewry from a predominately impoverished and downtrodden people into a well-educated, economically successful and confident citizenry. 'The vast majority relocated to our ancient homeland and North America where 80 per cent of the world's Jews now reside in prosperity and freedom', he said. Jews were unique among ethnic and national groups in that the great majority lived in different countries to their great-grandparents and spoke different languages.

Jews were relatively few in number in the Middle Ages, while the expulsions, from England in 1290 and Spain in 1492, brought their exiles to the European margins of Poland, Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire. An unprecedented period of relative peace in Poland led to a Jewish population explosion, reaching over 5 million by 1900. 'In any society, once a human population expands beyond the capability of its social economic system to support it', suggested Professor Kosmin, 'a crisis occurs.' He believed that rising antisemitism, Nazism, communism, and the Jewish movements of Bundism and Zionism were all consequent responses.

The failure of the 1905 Russian revolution to relieve the 'oppression and discrimination' extant since 1881 put paid to the hopes of East European Jewry for emancipation and prosperity. That same year saw the introduction of Britain's Aliens Act to stem further Jewish migration from Eastern Europe.

Of all European peoples who emigrated between 1880 and 1914, East European Jews took the greatest advantage, with an average of 135,000 leaving Eastern Europe each year prior to the Second World War. After the war

opportunities for the oppressed Jews of Europe to emigrate were severely curtailed. Professor Kosmin believed that the influences of 'Social Darwinism' and the pseudo-science of eugenics meant that potential countries of migration became more concerned with 'the quality of the population'. 'Undesirable' racial types, particularly Jews, were excluded. The economic depression reinforced the imposition of US quotas and other restrictions.

German and Austrian refugees in the 1930s exacerbated the problem, while Britain's 1939 White Paper closed the doors of Palestine and condemned millions of Europe's Jewry. Nazi efforts to export their Jews in 1936-39 served only to highlight the paucity of willing destinations. 'The war against the Jews was the one permanent Nazi victory of the Second World War', Professor Kosmin pointed out.

In the USA, educational opportunities were eagerly taken up by returning Jewish-American GIs, who were eventually to reach top status in educational achievement, income and political muscle in support of the re-born Jewish state. In Israel, the core of the 5,000-strong disbanded Jewish Brigade of the British Army formed the basis of Israel's defence forces in its War of Independence.

Though half a million Jews served in the Red Army and Jews were disproportionately represented in the military forces of the other Allies, following Stalin's 'anti-Zionist' persecution Russia deprived itself of the services of one of its most creative minorities. Most did not hesitate to take up the opportunities for emigration in the 1970s and 1980s, which meant a million new citizens for Israel and a further half a million settling in the USA or Germany.

Before the Second World War, 'World Jewry was low-key and supplicating in its approaches to Roosevelt and other Western political leaders.' Professor Kosmin contrasted this with today's Jewish populations, which provided 'migrants rather than refugees', who can choose where and how they want to live - which was 'a revolution in circumstances and a truly historic transformation'.

## Newsround

### Schindler museum for Cracow

The enamel and tinware factory in Cracow owned by Oskar Schindler, who saved more than 1,000 Jews from the Holocaust, is to be transformed from a derelict ruin into a museum. Pressure from international groups and the local Jewish community has spurred the city into allocating around £700,000 for a renovation project and potential sponsors are being lobbied for funds. The museum is due to open this December.

### Nazi links of German diplomats to be investigated

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer has established a panel of historians to shed light on the Nazi past of its foreign ministry. The move is intended to squash a revolt by ageing diplomats who have been arguing that former ambassadors with a Nazi past should be honoured by the ministry when they die. The panel is due to meet this month and its work is likely to take up to five years.

### Hitler art sold

Sketches by Adolf Hitler and greeting cards with his signature fetched around £15,000 at auction in Canada. The sketches included some of Berghoff, his Bavarian country home, and cards to Albert Speer, the architect. Jewish groups had objected to the sale.

### Jewish comedy sweeps German film awards

*Alles auf Zucker*, a comedy on Jewish life in Germany, has won six awards in the German Film Prize, the world's most lucrative film contest. The film was the runaway winner at the awards, beating the blockbuster *Der Untergang*, on Hitler's final days, which went home empty-handed.

### Iraqi children treated in Israeli hospitals

Five Iraqi children with heart problems have been given medical treatment in Israel. According to a report in the *Jewish Chronicle*, the patients and their families were sponsored by the Save A Child's heart foundation, which provides care for children from the Third World.