

# AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

## A Central European tragedy

This month marks the fiftieth anniversary of a Cold War tragedy, the suppression of the Hungarian uprising by Soviet troops in November 1956. This can perhaps be seen as the last in the series of violent episodes that convulsed Hungary from 1918; even allowing for the current bout of political turbulence, Hungary has in the main settled down peacefully since 1989, becoming a dutiful new member of the EU, a tourist hotspot and a purveyor of fiery red wines to the dinner tables of Western Europe.

With the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire, power in independent Hungary passed rapidly from the moderate government of Count Michael Károlyi to the radical left-wing regime of Béla Kun. Hungary seemed to be falling to a tide of revolution flowing westwards from Soviet Russia. But, as in Bavaria, the 'Red' regime in Hungary was swiftly and bloodily suppressed by counter-revolutionary 'White' forces, which instituted a reign of terror far worse than that of the left.

Admiral Horthy, one of the tinpot authoritarians who ruled in Central and Eastern Europe between the wars, took power; he duly threw in his lot with Hitler, sending Hungarian troops into the Soviet Union alongside the Germans. When disaster overtook that campaign, Horthy sought to extricate himself from the German alliance. That prompted Hitler to occupy Hungary in 1944, leading in turn to the genocide of Hungarian Jewry and to the invasion of the country by the Red Army, which proceeded to install its own dictatorship under Mátyás Rákosi, 'Stalin's best Hungarian disciple'. Hungarian politics seemed doomed to alternate between the extremes of the murderous pro-Nazi Arrow Cross and the hated Communist secret police, the ÁVH.

By 1956, discontent in Hungary had been fuelled by the failures of its Soviet-style economy, by the excesses of Rákosi's Stalinist regime, and by the wave of liberalisation that followed Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of



**Hungarian freedom fighters force back Soviet tanks and troops**

Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. Rákosi was compelled to resign as General Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party in July 1956. The trigger for the uprising was a demonstration by university students in support of the newly installed regime of Wladyslaw Gomulka in Poland. On 23 October 1956, as they marched through Budapest to the statue of General Józef Bem, a Polish hero of the Hungarian national uprising of 1848 against Hapsburg rule, they were joined by tens of thousands of other demonstrators; but when the crowd marched on the parliament building, ÁVH security police opened fire on them.

It was this that ignited a full-scale armed insurrection: the Hungarian Communist Party collapsed and a new government was formed under the reformist Imre Nagy. Soviet forces proved unable to re-establish the former government and withdrew in face of the independent popular organisations that sprang up across the country. But Nagy's announcement that Hungary would leave the Warsaw Pact, which had been founded the previous year, was unacceptable to the Soviet leaders, who feared the loss of their Central European buffer zone of satellite states, designed to protect them against invasions like Hitler's.

On 4 November, Soviet forces invaded Hungary, crushing all resistance. The Soviet leaders calculated correctly that the West would not intervene, especially as the looming Suez crisis was setting Britain and France at

odds with the USA. Thousands of Hungarians were deported without trial to the Soviet Union. A new Hungarian government, installed under János Kádár, held trials and executions. Imre Nagy sought refuge in the Yugoslav embassy. Despite a promise of safe conduct, he was arrested when he left the embassy; Nagy was executed in 1958, along with Pál Maléter, the military leader of the uprising. Some 200,000 Hungarians fled to Austria, among them a considerable number of Jews. The AJR gave generous support to Hungarian Jews who reached Britain: for months after the uprising, its employment agency sought to find jobs for this fresh wave of refugees, and the employment columns of *AJR Information* brimmed with requests for positions for unemployed Hungarians.

The aftermath of the uprising proved unexpectedly positive. János Kádár set Hungary on a path of moderate reform, keeping the population satisfied while avoiding further confrontation with the Soviets. Without the backing of mass organisations like Solidarity and the Catholic Church in Poland, he nevertheless achieved a measure of freedom in Hungary, which never experienced the stifling repression of Ulbricht and Honecker in East Germany or of Husak in Czechoslovakia. Fittingly, it was Hungary that first breached the Iron Curtain, when in summer 1989 it allowed East German tourists to cross its border into Austria. Since 1956, Hungary has abandoned the path of violence and extremism, along with the expansionist dream of recreating the realm that it controlled until 1918 in its half of the Dual Monarchy, when its territories extended in a great arc from Transylvania in the east and Slovakia in the north to Croatia on the Adriatic coast. It will, I think, resolve its present problems in a broadly constitutional manner, either through fresh elections or through the fall of the discredited prime minister and/or his government.

**Anthony Grenville**

## Elections in Austria

October's parliamentary elections in Austria proved a mixed blessing for opponents of the Austrian far right. The ruling coalition of the centre-right ÖVP (Austrian People's Party) with the far-right FPÖ (Freedom Party) was defeated, and the FPÖ left the government, as the two parties no longer controlled a majority in parliament. Good riddance! At the time of writing, it seems likely that the SPÖ (Social Democrats), now the largest party, will form a new coalition government with the ÖVP.

But the FPÖ's vote, at 11.2 per cent, held up well, especially given that the party's leader, Jörg Haider, had split it, creating his own new secessionist BZÖ (Alliance for the

Future of Austria), which also squeaked into parliament, narrowly securing the 4 per cent of the vote required for a party to gain parliamentary representation. The far right has shown again that it has an entrenched following of some 15 per cent of the electorate, though this is some 10 per cent less than its high point in the elections of 1999.

The setback for Haider, the demagogue of the far right, is welcome, as his BZÖ looks likely to vanish from parliament next time, and with it the far right's only charismatic figure. Unfortunately, the FPÖ, the larger of the two right-wing *frères ennemis*, is controlled by elements yet more radical than Haider. In Austria, unlike (West) Germany, the task of confronting the nation's guilty past is evidently still incomplete, leaving a tangled backlash of guilt and resentment on which the far right can feed; its main appeal is to those who resent foreign immigrants. But the relatively modest performance of the far right in both elections since 1999 does perhaps show that a generational change has taken place in Austria and that the reservoir of antisemitic, neo-Nazi sentiment on which the FPÖ draws is gradually but irreversibly diminishing. Let us hope so!

### ... and in Germany

The elections in September in the *Land* of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in North-Eastern Germany gave rise to a good deal of inaccurate reporting. For the umpteenth time, the British press presented the local success of a neo-Nazi party as heralding its imminent entry into the federal parliament, the Bundestag. No far-right party has ever won a seat in the Bundestag, despite the successive waves of short-lived support for such parties at local level in the early 1950s, the late 1960s and the 1990s (and beyond in Eastern Germany). If I had £100 for every time I have read that local election results show that the Nazis are marching to power in

Germany, I would not need to earn my bread writing this article.

In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the neo-Nazi NPD managed to win 7.3 per cent of the vote, placing it triumphantly in fifth place among the competing parties. Mecklenburg is a tiny *Land*, with 1.7 million inhabitants, some 2 per cent of the country's population. It is also one of the least representative; it has a rate of unemployment well over double that of the more populous *Länder* of the West and has suffered hugely from a drain of skilled labour, leaving its remaining poorly skilled workers competing for jobs with cheap Polish labour from across the border. If the best that the NPD can achieve, at the low point of an economic depression and in a region packed with the losers of reunification, is 7.3 per cent, then ...

The British press also largely ignored the elections in Berlin, which were held on the same day as those in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Berlin, the capital, has more than twice the population of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and is far more integrated into the national economy. But here the NPD failed even to obtain the 5 per cent of the vote needed to gain seats in the local parliament. Not that that will stop the misreporting of German politics in the British media, which seem to view events in European countries through the prism of national stereotypes: if it's France, it's knickers, if it's Italy, it's knockers, and in Germany it's got to be Nazis.

Anthony Grenville

### Daniel Finkelstein at the Imperial War Museum

*Times* columnist Daniel Finkelstein will be the guest speaker at an AJR national get-together at the Imperial War Museum on **Wednesday 8 November**.

The day-long gathering – **open to all members of the AJR** – is part of a three-day trip to London by members from Scotland and Northern England and includes an opportunity to meet members from around the country.

The visit also includes a tour of the Holocaust Exhibition and lunch at a price of £12.50.

If you would like to reserve one of the limited places for this visit and lunch, please contact Susan Lewis on 020 83885 3078 or at [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk)

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## Every Jew's duty



Six million Jews died in the Holocaust and that is why the State of Israel was born. Herzl did not create Israel; nor did Ben-Gurion. There would be no Israel but for Hitler and the other Nazi criminals. Israel was created by the United Nations in 1947. The purpose was to give a homeland to Jews from all over the world. A total of 33 countries voted in favour, 13 against, 10 abstained. Israel was born from the ashes of the Holocaust victims of Europe – our families – who went to their deaths without knowing that they were about to give birth to a new country.

The United Kingdom abstained at the crucial vote. Palestine was its mandate and this country's policy was pro-Arab. Remember the ship *Exodus*? The European Jews were not allowed to land in the Holy Land. Also, it was, of course, against the British that the Stern Gang and the Irgun Zvi Leumi fought. I know how upset my father was when asked by a fellow doctor to justify the murder of the two British sergeants. The British at home also had a record of antisemitism at that time. Why were Jews interned in the Isle of Man? How many Jews were MPs – particularly Conservatives? Why did David Lean portray Fagin so hideously in *Oliver Twist*? Why was Shylock always seen as one of the biggest villains in English literature? Public schools had Jewish quotas. So did golf clubs. (In the early 70s I decided to take up golf. One nearby club did not gladly take Jews so I didn't apply. Somehow it got to hear of me and telephoned to say I could join because I had been to Oxford! After stating that I would not be patronised, I heard no more. Ironically, 20 years later, Jews are now most welcome, and the club has even had a Jewish captain!)

Why did this change of attitude towards the Jews come about? Because they started to integrate. Mrs Thatcher had five Jews in her government. Israel became a nation to admire, winning a war in six days. Do you remember the

sticker 'Come to Israel and see the Pyramids!'

Except for the Hasidim it was not too difficult for us to join in. We were white! The immigrants from the West Indies were black and poor; those from Asia suffered from the same faults as the early Jewish immigrants – isolationism and overt ambition. So the Jews were left alone and the hatred was directed towards the West Indians and, in particular, the Asians. (At that time, we did not differentiate between Muslims and Hindus.) Antisemitism went underground.

In the 80s Israel began to be attacked in the media, receiving negative coverage from left-wing newspapers like *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, and from the 'unbiased' BBC. Israel's treatment of the Palestinians was questioned. Jews – even some rabbis – wrote anti-Israeli articles. Recently, 100 Jews took out an advertisement to attack Israel's conduct in its war against Hezbollah. Their attitude wasn't antisemitic, they argued, it was anti-Zionist. This is what the real antisemites were waiting for: unrest in the Jewish camp! We were now told that Judaism was not a religion, it was a race. 'If England played Israel at football, whom would we back?' Our loyalty to the UK was being questioned. Antisemitism was showing its ugly face again and becoming acceptable. Many could not differentiate between Jews and Israelis. Israel was seen as a puppet of the United States, a country not in favour in the UK since the Iraq war.

I admit that I feel more Jewish racially than religiously. I support Israel in almost everything it does (not, I admit, if it comes up against England at football!) and I think it is every Jew's duty to be loyal to Israel. If you want to criticise the Israelis, do so among yourselves. Israel is *your* family of people. Remember the 6 million who died for Israel's creation. Make sure they did not die in vain.

Peter Phillips

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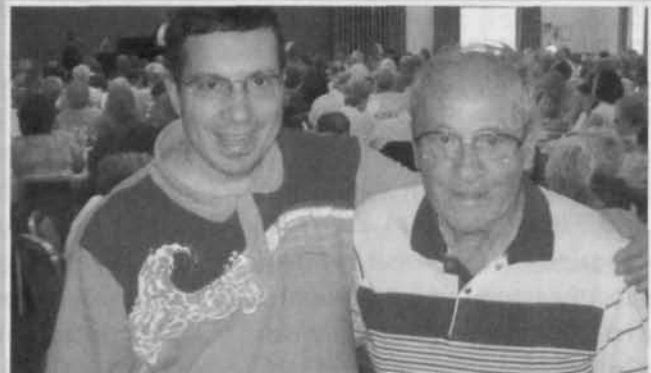
## Summer Serenade: AJR hosts members' tea in Watford

This year's AJR Celebration Tea took place once again in the Watford Hilton Hotel. Over a delicious tea, well over 300 members and guests were treated to *A Summer Serenade with Strauss and*

*Friends* – favourite melodies by Johann Strauss, Franz Lehár and others, performed by Royal Opera singers Glenys Groves, Andrea Hazell and Alexandre Naoumenko with piano

accompaniment by Elaine Korman.

This montage provides a taste of the highly successful event. The photographs were taken by Michael Newman.



### Tale of a Vienna Wood

'In the 1960s', writes Beatrice Tiger, 'my husband, Dr Max Tiger, who was Viennese-born, had a number of friends, mostly from Vienna, who met most Sundays in the summer picnicking and playing volleyball or basketball in the Whippendell Woods in Watford. There was a particular spot in the woods which we called "the Wienerwald", where we would meet and spend a lovely afternoon with people of our own ilk.



On one such afternoon I took this photo of some of the group. Some readers might remember the gentleman standing in the centre with a hat as Friedrich Schiller, who was a character actor on the British stage and screen. The gentleman standing next to him is Dr Emerich Weissman, a psychologist.' 'I thought this photo might be of interest to those shown on it or to their children,' Beatrice Tiger adds.

# The undesirable schoolboy becomes desirable

In June 2005 I was a member of a group sent to Vienna by the London Jewish Cultural Centre to speak at schools in that organisation's Holocaust education programme. One of the schools I went to was the Amerlinggymnasium, from which I, and 70 other Jewish boys, was expelled in April 1938.

I spoke to about 100 16-year-olds about my life under Nazi rule until I arrived in England with the Kindertransport, my life without parental guidance, the death of my father in 1940, and the deportation of my mother and her sister to Sobibor in 1942.

The audience, as well as a number of senior school staff, was taken aback by my revelations. I suggested the idea of erecting a plaque on the school's premises in memory of the expelled Jewish boys.

This January the school informed me that it had not only adopted my idea, but had also initiated a project in which the pupils I had spoken to would make every effort to trace the 70 expelled Jewish boys. The school also invited me to unveil the plaque this summer. The event duly took place at the end of June 2006 and attracted considerable media attention.

The ceremony began with a presentation of Schönberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*. After this the headmistress of the school, Mag. Sivia Naetar, described the project the class had undertaken as well as giving details of a visit to the school during the year by Norbert Kristianpoller, who was expelled in 1938 and now lives in Israel. The Education Director of Vienna's 6th district, Renate Kaufman, spoke passionately, saying how important it was that pupils of the school should be aware of the deeds committed in the name of Nazism in Austria.

The results of the project were presented by the class's head girl, Livia Kubelka. She asked her schoolmates to imagine a normal school day. How would they react to the sudden disappearance of friends labelled 'a scourge on civilisation'?



**Unveiling ceremony: Class Head Girl Livia Kubelka, District Education Director Renate Kaufman, Headmistress Mag. Sivia Naetar, Harry Bibring**

Would they try to find out what had become of them? Would they fight for their rights? Livia confirmed that the origin of the project had been my visit to the school the previous year – a visit which had made an indelible impression on her fellow classmates as well as on the year leader and Head of History, Mag. Professor Eva Burghart. Her class had indeed, she continued, traced some of the expelled Jewish pupils, but many had proved untraceable. The class was planning to visit Mauthausen next autumn. I, for my part, presented the school with a DVD copy of the testimony I had given several years earlier to the Steven Spielberg Shoah Visual History Foundation.

It then came to the unveiling of the plaque, which is made out of polished stainless steel and has an uneven surface which is intended to symbolise bullets shot into the back. The inscription, from a poem by Rose Ausländer (1901-88), reads:

### **Nicht Bewährt**

Wir haben uns noch  
viel zu sagen  
ehe wir uns verschweigen  
dass wir uns nicht bewährt haben  
im Weltgespräch.

The ceremony concluded with 70 children placing the names of the expelled pupils one by one on slips of paper in a glass bowl close to the memorial.

I found the names of some very

interesting people on the list. Since last year I have been trying to trace the whereabouts of 12 of my Jewish classmates whose names I was given. I remembered only one of them: Hans Hortner, who came to England with his brother Bobby on the Kindertransport. We had met up in London in 1947 but subsequently lost contact.

Another pupil in my class was Friedrich Schatz, who, according to the Yad Vashem database, had died in Vienna in April 1945 at the age of 18. Apparently he had continued to live in Vienna's second district and survived the war. On 12 April 1945, a few days before the Russians entered Vienna, he and his father had gone to fetch water from a hydrant. An SS officer had shot them dead.

More pleasant reading was the name of Theodore Bikel, who had been two classes above me. He had fled with his family to Palestine in 1938, and learnt agriculture there but hated every minute of it. Then he had gone to a theatre seminar, fallen in love with acting, and left the kibbutz to join the Habimah Theatre. After the war he had come to London and appeared on the stage in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. His first Hollywood film was *The African Queen*, in which he played a German officer. Theodore now lives in California and I have made contact with him.

Another name which stood out was that of Herbert Seinfeld, who was in the same class as Theodore Bikel. At the time of writing, I am attempting to find out whether or not he is the father of the Seinfeld of television fame.

I cannot possibly overstate the kindness and hospitality of the staff of the Amerlinggymnasium, in particular the Headmistress, Mag. Sivia Naetar, the Head of History, Mag. Professor Eva Burghart, and the English teacher, Mag. Angelika Fritsche, who has become a personal friend.

**Harry Bibring**



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right  
to shorten correspondence  
submitted for publication

### HEZBOLLAH AND HAMAS: THE CHALLENGE

Sir – Further to Ronald Channing's article (October), on 20 September the German parliament agreed to contribute 2,400 soldiers to the UN forces in Lebanon, with the task of stopping illegal arms deliveries to Hezbollah in the coastal area, in accordance with UN Resolution 1701. On 21 September the German navy put to sea, having established that suspicious vessels could not only be checked against the resistance of the ship's crew but also against opposition by the Lebanese government and vetoes by Lebanese officers who, in the 'spirit of co-operation', would also be on board the German warships.

The following day, before an audience of 100,000 fanatical Shiites, Hassan Nasrallah threw abuse at Angela Merkel for 'pursuing the aim of protecting Israel', sneering that no army in the world was strong enough to disarm Hezbollah.

UN Resolution 1701 is unusual. Usually a peacekeeping force is established to supervise an agreement between warring parties. But Hezbollah and Iran oppose an agreement: their aim is to liquidate Israel. Therefore in its preamble the resolution describes Hezbollah's attack on Israel as the cause of the latest Middle East war. Consequently Article 8 demands: total disarmament of all paramilitary groups, expulsion of military (Iranian) instructors, and the prohibition and cessation of all illegal arms transports. Whereas the resolution demands the immediate termination 'of all attacks by Hezbollah', it requires of Israel merely the 'cessation of all offensive military operations'.

The problem is the absence of effective enforcement measures. On 10 August UN representatives of Lebanon and the Arab League declared that the approval of a 'robust UN mandate', based on Article VII of the UN Charter, was unacceptable: Hezbollah, as a member of the Lebanese government, would 'not consent to any resolution which apparently gives foreign armed forces the right to disarm them'. They succeeded: the Council agreed to the Lebanese army being the main authority in charge of all matters concerning

Hezbollah. Furthermore, since Syria declared the stationing of European UNIFIL troops on her borders a *casus belli*, only Lebanese government troops have been stationed there; their commander has stated that, unless he has incontrovertible evidence to the contrary, no transports between the two countries will be stopped.

Israel's Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev has declared: 'With his refusal to allow his militia to be disarmed, Nasrallah has not only challenged the Lebanese Government, but the whole international community.' Will the international community take up the challenge?

Eric Sanders  
London W12

Sir – Ronald Channing asks how to prevent further aggression by Hezbollah and Hamas. The answer is for Israel to start peace negotiations with Palestine and Syria. When Israel decided to withdraw from Gaza, the Palestine Authority was very keen to use the withdrawal as the beginning of peace negotiations. So was Blair. Israel refused and instead withdrew unilaterally.

If Israel declares its willingness to withdraw to the 1967 borders as the Saudi peace proposals of 2002 envisage, and which Saudi Arabia has again proposed, all Arab states have agreed to sign peace agreements with Israel and establish diplomatic representation. This has been endorsed by the Arab League. The difficulties with Hamas and Hezbollah will disappear overnight. Why not give peace a chance?

Peter Prager  
Ilford, Essex

### OPEN LETTER TO ANTHONY HOWARD

Sir – I was at Oxford University at the same time as Anthony Howard and Sir Peter Tapsell. Both were presidents of the union, Tony Howard on the Labour ticket, Peter Tapsell on the Conservative one. I am not in denial of any part of Anthony Grenville's article (October) criticising them, except to assure your readers that Tony Howard was, at that time, in no way antisemitic, nor anti-Israeli, and I don't believe that he is either of these now. I thought Anthony

Grenville's article particularly harsh on Tony but, then, I thought he let Peter Tapsell off lightly. Peter, in the early 1950s, was no friend of the Jews; Tony certainly was. This letter is simply to put the record straight.

Peter Phillips  
Loudwater, Herts

### 'SEPTEMBER SURRENDERS'

Sir – I had occasion before to write to the *AJR Journal* about an objectionable photograph 'adorning' your article. Then, it was a Nazi photograph; this time, it is a nationalistic German historical figure in all his First World War glory. Although you printed my letter there was no further reaction. The inclusion of the Ludendorff picture in Mr Grenville's article in September seems to prove your indifference or approval of such procedure. Does the general readership of the *AJR* not care?

Leo Eisenfeld  
London NW3

*If we exclude photos of all Germans with right-wing views which we find distasteful, where do we draw the line? Kaiser Wilhelm II? Bismarck? Luther? I also find the use of the well-known photo of SA men outside a Jewish shop on 'Boycott Day' acceptable as an accompaniment to my article on that boycott; the same applies to the Nazi flag in the background of the photo of an early Volkswagen, which underlines the point that the Volkswagen changed its image several times over the decades. I try to strike a balance between respecting the sensitivities of readers and using photos that illuminate the historical issues raised by the articles (Anthony Grenville).*

Sir – I always enjoy Anthony Grenville's scholarly yet highly readable articles. I was particularly taken with the last sentence of this one. However, I feel that two words have been omitted. Shouldn't the relevant sentence read: 'All wartime readers need a Plan B – especially if, as seems to be the case with the American and British occupation of Iraq, they have no Plan A either?' Surely, our own winsome prime minister is as much to blame for this tragic fiasco as the unlovable George Bush.

Edith Argy  
London W9

Sir – Far from being 'little known', Wilfred Owen's *Akedah* poem is one of the best remembered – not least because of its use at the centre of one of the finest musical works of our time: Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*.

S. S. Praver  
Queen's College, Oxford

### VIENNA AND THE VIENNESE

Sir – I would like to bring to the attention of your readers the following project,

which commemorates our loved ones who lived in Vienna and were murdered in the Holocaust. The project – a path of remembrance in Vienna's 2nd district – will entail small commemorative stones being placed in front of, or near, the house in which the victims previously lived. You can read more about it on [www.steinedererinnerung.net](http://www.steinedererinnerung.net). If you would also like a note in English about the project, please contact me via the *AJR Journal*. The project was initiated by Dr Elisabeth Ben David-Hindler, Chairwoman of the Stones of Remembrance Association ([info@steinedererinnerung.net](mailto:info@steinedererinnerung.net)).

*Charlie Roberts  
London SW10*

Sir – In June 2003 I received an invitation to attend the 100-year celebration of the school to which I went in 1930-38, the GRG XIX (in my days called the Döblinger Mädchenmittelschule). They had obtained my address, and that of my friend Henny Link, through the Nationfond of the Austrian parliament.

The history teacher prepared an account of the history of the school and asked Henny and me to supply details of our experiences after the Anschluss. Our accounts are included in the book. The school was originally a private Jewish one. Anna Freud was one of its first pupils and later taught there. Past pupils include Hedy Lamarr (Kiesler) and other well-known actresses. From the book I learned that our headmistress (Direx) had been an ardent Nazi who committed suicide because Germany lost the war. I remember her as a very strict but fair teacher.

Henny and I had expected to meet some of our classmates, but we were the only ones present. We also discovered that only the Jewish ex-pupils had been invited. Through some detective work, I have discovered two non-Jewish classmates. Sadly Henny died two years ago but she was still able to experience the joy of rediscovering our schoolfriends.

*Inge Trott  
Cheam, Surrey*

#### BERLIN CLASSMATES

Sir – Thank you for forwarding my letter to Ms Stephanie Steiner. She was indeed an old classmate in 1935-36! Her life story was featured in your September issue – maybe there are others still around who were pupils at the Fasanenstrasse school in Berlin. Our teacher was Dr Kurt Aron. Perhaps other old pupils might get in touch with me via the *Journal*.

*Daisy Roessler-Rubin  
Raana, Israel*

#### BACK FROM HAMBURG

Sir – I have just come back from Hamburg, a city I left 67 years ago on the Kindertransport. It was a very nostalgic trip. Some places were exactly as I remember; others had disappeared. Hamburg is still a beautiful city and I am glad I have lived long enough to see it again.

*Ilse Wylie, Stranraer*

#### NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM

Sir – Further to my letter in the October issue, York Museum have now said that as Dr Gottwaldt, who was going to be instrumental in supplying a *Güterwagen*, cannot substantiate the authenticity of such a vehicle, although he has several to dispose of, the Museum cannot acquire it. Has any member got any ideas?

*Rudi Leavor, Bradford*

#### THREE RABBIS IN A VICARAGE

Sir – Very disappointed to read the abysmal comments in your October issue regarding *Three Rabbis in a Vicarage*. I am on the last chapter and will be very sorry to reach the end.

*Betty Zikel, London N2*

#### WORLD NEWS

Sir – I always look forward to reading the *AJR Journal* but I think that world news, especially news on Israel, is sadly missed.

*Anita Lewy  
Las Vegas, Nevada*

#### TEA-OPERETTA AND DAY CENTRE

Sir – I would like to express my thanks and appreciation of the wonderful operetta concert and annual tea at the Watford Hilton. It was a real joy. I was accompanied by my family, who also enjoyed the entire event and we all hope you will arrange a repeat next year.

I would also like to say how much I appreciate the Day Centre in Cleve Road. The meals are always excellent, the staff always friendly, and I enjoy the musical entertainment and interesting talks at Luncheon Club and Kindertransport meetings. Many thanks for providing us with this facility.

*Josie Dutch, London NW2*

#### CONTACT THROUGH AJR

Sir – I would dearly love to come to meetings of the Liverpool group but I find it quite impossible as my health will not permit it at the moment. I do, however, appreciate AJR members keeping in touch. I love to be informed of all happenings and I enjoy knowing what's going on.

*Josie Atherton  
Abergele, Conwy*

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# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler



*The Kiss*, 1900–4, by Auguste Rodin. Pentelic marble, executed by Ganier, Rigaud and Mathet. 182.2 x 121.9 x 153 cm. Tate, London, NO6228. Purchased with assistance from the National Art Collections Fund. © Tate, London 2006

Rodin's sensuality as a sculptor is self-evident, but for all the romance of his famous *Kiss*, in which the embracing lovers emerge seamlessly from the rough stone plinth, the sculptor also demonstrates a darker, more introspective talent. *Balzac*, *John the Baptist* and the *Burghers of Calais* reflect the emotional depth which indicates how his monumental public works not only broke with tradition, but introduced a more naturalistic humanity.

Rodin, at the Royal Academy of Arts until January 2007, shows how, after he exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1882, British collectors boosted his reputation well before Paris. In fact, his earliest artistic ambitions were thwarted by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts – which rejected him three times – but eventually his career soared with commissions for several municipal monuments, beginning with the *Gates of Hell*, clearly influenced by Dante's *Inferno*. It is here that you can see the convoluted shapes and graceful muscularity which are Michaelangelo's inspiration.

The exhibition shows several maquettes

and models for this work, as well as busts of the *parvenues*, celebrities and society beauties of his day. The likenesses of Lady Sackville and proto-interior decorator Eve Fairfax are fashioned with the delicacy which proves Rodin's love of beauty. Some he renders in a glittering granite within the marble. He was also interested in Javanese and modern dancers, inspired by Nijinsky. Less known perhaps is Rodin's near-obsession with Greek and Assyrian antiquities, of which he built up a personal collection, some inspired by his drawings of the Parthenon Frieze at the British Museum. The goddess head known as the *Warren Head*, which he longed for but failed to acquire, has a stunning simplicity, a perfect symmetry of feature which you can see has inspired some of these society commissions.

His monument to Victor Hugo shows the writer in deep contemplation on the rocks of Guernsey during his exile there. Perhaps most significant is his rotunda of the six *Burghers of Calais*, which commemorates their 1347 protest to the English king, Edward III, on behalf of besieged fellow citizens. Rodin rejects the conventional pyramidal style by presenting them each in strikingly different attitudes. It is so effective that they appear to be moving on a slow roundabout. Two free-standing works, *The Age of Bronze* and *St John the Baptist*, also indicate this courageous break with tradition, since each is shown with a flawed humanity.

Simeon Solomon – described by fellow Pre-Raphaelite Edward Burne-Jones as 'the greatest artist of us all' – is celebrated in Ben Uri's current exhibition, *Love Revealed*, until November 26. He was vindicated as a genius, but his tragic life ended in a Victorian workhouse in 1905. Solomon's early work drew on his Jewish heritage and later incorporated a mysticism which influenced Symbolism in Britain and Europe. Some of those early drawings feature biblical stories, and one of his most beautiful works is his painting of a rabbi carrying the scrolls of the Law. By contrast, his dramatic depiction of Roman women watching a gladiatorial combat shows their mixed emotions in striking detail.

## REVIEWS

### Vengeful volunteer AND THEN THE MUSIC STOPPED PLAYING

by Ken Ward

*Braiswick*, 2006, 201pp, available at reduced price from Amazon website or send cheque for £9.95 to K. R. Ward, 1 Whist Avenue, Wickford, Essex SS11 8LN

The Holocaust has inspired a host of literary endeavours, not least the personal memoir. *And Then the Music Stopped Playing* falls within this category since Ken Ward, born Karl Robert Würzburger in Frankfurt in 1922, was obviously profoundly affected by the Nazi takeover of his native country.

From this standpoint, there is little remarkable in Ward's story. Known as 'Bubie', the indulged youngest of four brothers, he paints a disarming picture of his engaging Liberal Jewish family – his father an admired, though virtually blind, music teacher, his capable mother, the celebrated parties they threw on New Year's Eve, and other facets of family life. Certainly the family were distressed when Hitler came to power, his second brother, Walter, leaving Germany for Paris shortly after. Clearly the young boy, who was doing well at school and had several friends, found life very different. Indeed, the phrase 'second class citizen' is repeated frequently – yet this is hardly a 'heart-rending' story, as claimed on the book's jacket. Most noteworthy is the evidence that some of his father's German pupils were reluctant to lose such an inspired teacher.

Ward's experiences in the British army, a few years after he arrived in England, an escapee on the last Kindertransport, are, perhaps, more unusual. On learning that his parents and eldest brother had been deported to Poland and killed, he decided to volunteer for active service in revenge.

Originally assigned to the Pioneer Corps, as were most Jewish refugee soldiers, Ward was eventually accepted in the Royal Tank Regiment and, nicknamed 'Buzz' because of his big ears, saw service from the beaches of Normandy to Hamburg. While some overly personal details of field life are superfluous, the frequent brushes with death are well recorded and the author's meditation on his survival is

quite moving. Most intriguing is the later period, when Ward's double identity as a fluent German-speaking 'British' soldier is put to full use.

Ward's 'Jewish' identity appears very 'liberal', from his obvious enjoyment of 'forbidden' foods to his marriage to a German Christian he met in Berlin while working as an army interpreter after the war, which earned him the reprimand of the (surprisingly) Jewish registrar that 'he deserved to be castrated'!

An 'epilogue' tells of the breakdown of this marriage and of a second marriage, of various achievements in Ward's career, and of a visit from his brother, Walter, later based in Australia. There is no further mention of his brother, Paul, whom Ward encountered after the liberation of Brussels, where Paul was serving in the Jewish Brigade. And it is frustrating that there is no explanation of why his eldest brother, Hans, was murdered with his parents, when all the other brothers left Germany in time.

More irritating is the not infrequent use of completely ungrammatical sentences and inaccuracies such as the reference to the king who inspected Ward's regiment as George V rather than George VI, and the labelling of a photo of a veteran's memorial meeting - '14 September 2006' - after the book had already come out.

Emma Klein

## A step ahead of trouble

LORENZO DA PONTE

by Rodney Bolt

Bloomsbury, 2006, 428 pp., £20.00

Everyone has heard of Mozart but not of da Ponte. Yet it should be acknowledged that Mozart's three great operas - *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Così Fan Tutte* and *Don Giovanni* - owe their success not only to the ravishing music of the composer but also to the inspired wit and delicacy of the librettist.

Emanuele Conegliano, the son of a Jewish leatherworker, was born in Caneda, Italy. Soon after his barmitzvah, his father, a widower, remarried, moved his family out of the ghetto and had them baptised. Emanuele had to take the name of Lorenzo, after the bishop who baptised him, and to abandon his friends. His growing thirst for knowledge could not be satisfied because there was no money for education, while his appe-

tite for Italian literature had been whetted by the discovery of dusty books in his father's library.

Displaying true Jewish *chutzpah*, Emanuele petitioned Bishop da Ponte, whose surname he later adopted, for a place in his seminary. The bishop agreed and paid his tuition. Lorenzo graduated from the seminary as an ordained priest with the title Abbé da Ponte. Appointed vice-rector at the age of 23, he now had financial independence. However, his priestly duties do not seem to have prevented him from falling in love with a married woman, Angela Tiepolo, with whom he had a long and complicated relationship - the first of many.

Meanwhile, his literary skills earned him appreciation beyond the seminary and envy within it. He moved to Venice as tutor to two patrician boys, where he led a life of gambling and womanising in the hedonistic atmosphere that prevailed there and acquired a new love, Angoletta. His adulterous affair with her put him in danger with the authorities, and once again he had to flee, this time to Vienna. Here, he began to find work as a reviser of opera libretti. This brought him to the attention of the composer Salieri, who helped to put in a word for him to Emperor Francis II, who was keen to establish an operatic company in Vienna.

By now, da Ponte had considerable experience in the art of writing libretti and, when Mozart was looking for someone to adapt a play by Beaumarchais, it was to him that he turned. Da Ponte was responsible for toning down the politically risky themes of *The Marriage of Figaro*.

While the stresses of this life no doubt contributed to Mozart's untimely death, da Ponte was made of sterner stuff: in his forties he married the daughter of a German Jew in a synagogue (a Christian marriage would not have been possible for a man of the cloth), lived for a spell in England, and became a shopkeeper and, finally, a professor of Italian literature, in America. There he survived into his eighties. He was permanently in financial straits and having to keep one step ahead of trouble, yet his protean energy and ability to adapt and reinvent himself make him a truly fascinating subject for a study of this kind. Bolt's biography is long and detailed, a book to browse with pleasure.

Martha Blend

## The story of Britain's 'friendly aliens'

WAR OR REVOLUTION: RUSSIAN JEWS AND CONSCRIPTION IN BRITAIN, 1917

by Harold Shukman

London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006, 157 pp. £18.50 paper

In 1916 Britain, the only one of the First World War belligerents that had hitherto relied on volunteers, introduced conscription. Following an agreement between the British and Russian governments, the 30,000 Jewish refugees from Russia of military age in the country were offered Hobson's choice: either they served in the British army or they returned to Russia and joined the army there. Many signed up with the British army; others disappeared from view. Eventually some 4,000 Russian Jews found themselves boarding ships taking them back to the country they had fled. Their return followed the demise of the tsarist autocracy and coincided with the collapse of its democratic successor, leaving a void the Bolsheviks eagerly filled. In truth, the British had no great desire to send the refugees back, regarding them as 'friendly aliens', and the Russians had little use for them.

Many of the refugees were leaving behind families to fend for themselves. Others were going with the agreement of an unhappy wife. When her husband Abraham went back to Russia, Shukman notes with a trace of humour, Hinde Esther Kreitman, sister of the Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer, was more than happy to see the back of him.

One of the 'returnees' was David Shukman, the author's father, who had arrived in Britain four years earlier. Aged 37, with two small children and a third child on the way, he had spent four years in the Russian army. Having fought in the 1905 Battle of Mukden, in which almost 400,000 Russian troops had faced over 200,000 Japanese, he, like many others, recoiled from taking part in what seemed an even bloodier conflict on the Western front.

Dr Shukman, the author of numerous authoritative publications on Russia including biographies of Lenin and Stalin, examines on the basis of copious documentation the attitudes to their plight of the Russian Jews themselves as well as of other

continued on page 10

## Arts and Events Diary

### November

**To 11 Jan 2007 *Absence and Loss* A photographic Holocaust memorial exhibition** Manchester Jewish Museum tel 0161 834 9879

**To 12 Nov *Identities 2006*** Exhibition marking minority identities in Britain. Jewish Museum, Camden Town, tel 020 7284 1997

**To 12 Nov *Abayudaya: The Jews of Uganda*** Exhibition of photographs on the 'Children of Judah'. Jewish Museum, Camden Town

**Thur 2 *The Voice of Freedom: Memories of Budapest*** Hungarian émigrés have profoundly influenced medicine, science and the arts in their new homelands in the West. With Judith Szekacs, Tom Keve and Norman Lebrecht. London Jewish Cultural Centre (LJCC), 7.30 pm

**Sun 5 *A Spielberg Archive Screening: Once Lost Now Found*** Rare footage documenting Jewish life across the Middle East and Europe in the early-mid twentieth century. LJCC, 3 pm

**Mon 6 *The Voice of Freedom: From Goldmark to Seiber, a Hungarian Music Soirée*** LJCC, 8 pm

**Mon 6 Ernst Flesch and Hans Seelig, 'A Heine (d. 1856) Evening'** Club 43

**Mon 13 Hilary Corfan, 'Researching Your Family History' (with illustrations)** Club 43

**Tues 14 Concert: Eva Meier, Berlin**

cabaret-style singer, performs music from Weill, Spoliansky and Brecht. LJCC, 7.30 pm

**Wed 15 Yoram Leker, Prof Ladislaus Lob, 'Kasztner: Saving Jewish Lives and the Dilemma of Dealing with the Nazis',** Wiener Library, 7.00 pm

**Mon 20 Hans Seelig, 'Robert Schumann (d. 1856), a German Romantic Composer'** Club 43

**Wed 22 'Second Generation Poets: Journey of the Emotions?'** Exiled Writers Ink and Second Generation Network with the School of Advanced Study, University of London. Room 273, Stewart House at Senate House, Russell Square, London WC1, 6.30-8.00 pm

**Thur 23 Dr Donald Bloxham, 'Nuremberg and After: A Dissenting View on the Role of "War Crimes" Trials',** Wiener Library, 7.00 pm

**Sun 26 *The Voice of Freedom: Arthur Koestler*** David Cesarani will discuss his biography. LJCC, 7.30 pm

**Mon 27 Ernst Flesch, 'A Trip through South-Western Europe: France, Spain and Portugal (with slides)'** Club 43

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

*London Jewish Cultural Centre, Ivy House, North End Road, London NW11, tel 020 8457 5000*

*Wiener Library, 4 Devonshire Street, London W1, tel 020 7636 7247*

### REVIEWS *continued from page 9*

interested parties including Anglo-Jewish spokesmen, Zionist representatives and the British authorities. He describes how, in circumstances of poverty and chaos and facing the virulent antisemitism of the anti-Bolshevik Whites, many of the returnees eventually found their way back to Britain. Shukman's greatest debt is to the survivors he found, without whose testimony, and that of their families, he would not have attempted to write this book.

Against the backdrop of the First World War, the cataclysmic Russian Revolution and the ensuing civil war in Russia, the episode described here is necessarily a marginal one, but the author's mastery of detail coupled with a penetrating clarity of expression conveys a complicated story in all its poignancy.

Howard Spier

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### Letter from Israel

When I was a child in London the nursery was the room at the top of our house which I shared with my sisters. Later, it was the place where we were deposited for a few hours each day to play and sing with other children, under the care of 'Auntie Gina', before we were old enough to go to school.

Today the word 'nursery' has an entirely different connotation for me. It is the place where I go about once a month to stock up on plants for my garden.

I'm obviously not blessed with green fingers, otherwise I wouldn't have to go so often. But I'm reluctant to entrust the care of my small plot of land to anyone else, however professional and proficient. I prefer the trial-and-error method of gardening – hence the high plant turnover. And the joy I experience when plants succeed far outweighs any pangs of chagrin when they fail.

Perhaps it's my love of nurseries that gives me my philosophic take on the life of plants. Although I'm not exactly jubilant when a plant dies, I'm glad of the opportunity to pay a visit to that other Eden down the road where bright petunias jostle one another, fuchsia plants flaunt their drooping, radiant flowers, and even humble geraniums seem exotic. I don't seem to be alone in this, and can see that many of the other customers are regulars too.

A small confession: my pride and joy this year was my hydrangea, which survived the harsh Jerusalem winter in a sheltered corner and produced ten reddish-pink blooms all at once. Now that I've seen the ones in the nursery, however, I know that my blooms should be bigger and brighter. I'll have to do better next year.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

At an impressively youthful 80 years of age, Frank Meisler, Israel's leading sculptor, exudes charm and *joie de vivre*. With major commissions completed in many parts of the world, he conceived, sculpted, cast, delivered and erected a new bronze statue to the 'Children of the Kindertransport', which, thanks to the generosity of the AJR Charitable Trust and World Jewish Relief, now stands on Hope Square, the recently named concourse at London's Liverpool Street Station (see p.16). He first arrived there as a refugee on a Kindertransport in 1939 and drew on this experience for inspiration. 'It could not be more appropriate for me', he declared, 'than to express the arrival of a group of refugee children in the form of a sculpture.'

Frank Meisler was born in 1926 in the free port city of Danzig between Germany and Poland. His father had emigrated from Poland to set up a grain and timber haulage business. His mother's family were Sephardi in origin, having left Spain in the fifteenth century for Protestant Holland rather than convert to Catholicism.

At six Frank entered a *Volksschule* whose Prussian education was based on authority, obedience and fear and in which the cane was frequently wielded by the headmaster. When Hitler became Chancellor, most of the staff and his classmates took to wearing Nazi uniforms. Hitler Youth street gangs were best avoided, though some fights were inevitable. In his last year at the school the class was marched off to see Leni Riefenstahl films, with swastika banners, fanfares and drums, and street fights between 'vicious' Bolsheviks and 'heroic' Nazis.

When the Nazis governing Danzig banned Jewish children from their schools, the Jewish community organised its own school system, but Frank's parents decided that he would be better off learning Polish and taking the entrance exam for Danzig's independent Polish High School. Many of its pupils and staff came from Poland by train every day, bringing their Polish antisemitism with them. Before long he was pushed, kicked and called a 'dirty *zyd*' and had to fight often and hard.

Polish antisemitism was rooted in

# PROFILE

Ronald Channing

## Frank Meisler Master of Art



Photo: Ronald Channing

centuries of religious hatred and economic antagonism and Jews were soon banned from entering all shops and public places. Frank's father pre-empted Nazi deportation by escaping to Warsaw in 1935, so Frank and his mother moved into an apartment, ironically next door to a senior Nazi whose daughter he befriended. The Nazis and he had grown up together and he remembered no time in his life without them.

Kristallnacht brought mass arrests of Jews and extensive vandalism of their property, including the destruction of two suburban synagogues. The majestic Central Synagogue, defended by Jewish First World War veterans, was reprieved until its 'official' demolition six months later. The last 1,500 Polish Jews fled back across the border, but the remaining 2,000 Danzig Jews had no such option. A wealthy Polish-Jewish merchant and militant Zionist, Zvi Hermann Segal, negotiated the release of Jews by the Gestapo and organised the sale of the Jewish community's property to be used for their emigration, preferably to

Palestine.

The head of Danzig's Jewish community, Dr Itzig, who went to London to plead their cause but came up against Britain's refusal to allow them into Palestine, also contacted the organisers of the Kindertransport and managed to include the children of Danzig, which act saved Frank's life. His departure for England was mainly due to pressure on his mother by her sisters in London. Having bid goodbye to his father in Warsaw, Frank left with 15 other Danzig children on 25 August 1939 in the last of three groups, days before the outbreak of war, waving a last goodbye to his mother from the bus.

Learning rudimentary English was a priority, after which he was sent off to King's boarding school in Harrow. As the phoney war became real, he remembers the searchlights, guns and falling bombs. Postcards from his parents, now together in Warsaw, were a comfort, but terrifying rumours grew about extermination camps. At 16 Frank volunteered for the Polish Air Force and was trained by the RAF as a meteorologist. Posted to a Lancaster bomber squadron in Yorkshire, he prepared and assessed weather charts in flights over the Atlantic. At the war's end he photographed the destroyed towns of Holland and northern Germany from the nose of a Lancaster, feeling no pity when circling over the grey gutted ruins of Cologne. With Frank's demobilisation in 1945 came news of his parents' deaths.

An unanticipated scholarship enabled him to study architecture at Manchester University, where he spent a happy four years, after which he was taken on by the architects Sir Frederic Gibberd & Partners in London. While architecture was his profession, sculpture increasingly became his hobby. Though a career in England would have been a practical choice, he could not forget that his parents had not been among the camp survivors and this void drew him to Israel and the challenge of the new Jewish state. In 1960 he worked for an architectural practice in Tel Aviv but, encouraged by Teddy Kollek, joined the new artists' quarter being established in the old town of Jaffa. It became his home as well as his workshop and remains so to this day.

# INSIDE the AJR

## Glasgow group at Kelvingrove Museum

We paid a visit to the refurbished Kelvingrove Museum, where a section is dedicated to the experience of the Jewish people who moved to Scotland in the last century. The newcomers' contribution is described through oral accounts by local people, including AJR member Rev Ernest Levy and Kindertransport member Rosa Sacharin. We learned about the origin of the exhibition from Deborah Hasse, who was instrumental in ensuring it became part of the museum.

*Claire Singerman*

**Next meeting: Sun 3 Dec. Chanukah party with special tea!**

## Ilford résumé of Jewish antisemites and German philosemites

Dr Fred Rosner gave us a résumé of Jewish antisemites and German philosemites: happily the former were briefly dismissed, and we were pleased to learn of the few brave Germans on our side. A very enlightening session.

*Meta Roseneil*

**Next meeting: Wed 1 Nov. Medium/faith healer Rita Aangelder**

## Delicious lunch in Cardiff

Myrna and Hazel welcomed members and guests and treated us to a delicious lunch. We were fewer than usual with some members still away on holiday.

*Charles Meyer*

**Next meeting: Tues 28 Nov. Speaker from Wiener Library**

## Liverpool talk on life on a refugee settlement farm

I gave a talk on 'Life on a Refugee Settlement Farm'. The farm, in Millisle, Co. Down, Northern Ireland in 1939-47, was funded by the Belfast community, to whom many thanks were given.

*Gerald Jayson*

**Next meeting: Thur 7 Dec. Pre-Chanukah celebration**

## Edinburgh Mid East discussion

Meeting at the home of Irene and Phillip Mason, we discussed, among other things, the Lebanon war – concern was expressed at escalating 'anti-Israel' views in the media and at ground level. Also, we were reminded of testimonial projects such as Heartstone and the Leeds Memorial Book.

*Jonathan Kish*

## Pinner talk on a faraway country

Lawrence Landau, Honorary Consul for

Benin for some 40 years, told us about the duties, pleasures and problems of his work. Thus we learned something about a faraway country of which we had known little. Before the meeting we shared apples and honey, brought by Myrna Glass, which are traditional for Rosh Hashanah.

*Paul Samet*

**Next meeting: Thur 2 Nov. Hagai Segal, 'War and Peace in the Middle East'**

## Brighton & Hove Sarid: the Rothschild dynasty

Genealogist Vivien Harris told us that the Rothschild family originated in Frankfurt and that Meyer Amschel, born in 1744, began trading in foreign exchange and coins to become a crown agent to Prince William of Hesse-Hanau. His children moved to France, England, Austria and Italy to establish branches of the business. Nathan came to England; his son Lionel became an MP in 1858 and his grandson Nathaniel was the first Jew to enter the House of Lords. There are still Rothschilds in England, though their empire has shrunk.

*Fausta Shelton*

**Next meeting: Mon 20 Nov. Writing group**

## Exchanging experiences and memories in Hull

Susanne Green updated us on get-togethers of northern groups and holiday events. The five members joining the 7-9 November London visit finalised planning. Several members expressed interest in attending the pre-Chanukah party in Bradford.

*Bob Rosner*

**Next meeting: Sun 4 Feb 2007**

## Leeds HSFA: from Belarus to Hull

Prof Howard Cuckle, speaking on 'My Grandfather's Shtetl', told us that his grandfather had settled in Hull, his place of birth being the village of Igumen (now Cherven) in Belarus. He gave a fascinating account of his efforts to trace relations who had emigrated to various countries, illustrating his talk with slides depicting places and family members.

*Martin Kapel*

## HGS talk on refugees in North Devon

Helen Fry, who has just published a book on this subject (see *AJR Journal*, Sept), gave us a most interesting talk. She also gave us copies of the prospectus for the book with photos of refugees who had enlisted in the Pioneer Corps as a means of being released from internment.

*Max Sulzbacher*

**Next meeting: Mon 13 Nov. Prof Leslie Brent, 'Transport Immunology'**

## Essex talk on Wiener Library

The Wiener Library's Katharina Hübschmann told us that Alfred Wiener had begun collecting evidence of the Nazi threat as early as 1929. Following Hitler's

defeat, the Wiener Library had the largest collection of anti-Nazi material in the world, ensuring that the Holocaust would never be forgotten.

*Julie Franks*

**Next meeting: Tues 14 Nov. A reflexologist**

## Turkish coffee and bagels in South London

Who would have thought that a talk about bagels would provide enlightenment on the siege of Vienna by Turkish Muslims in 1683! Frank Miller spoke of how bagels had evolved in Turkey and stressed the significance of 11 September 1683 – the date of the defeat suffered by Turkish Muslims in Vienna following their two-year siege.

*Joan Rattner*

**Next meeting: Thur 16 Nov. 12th birthday and Rabbi James Baden**

## East Midlands (Nottingham) and Meta's 100th



'Bis 120!' Meta Weinstein, third from right, celebrates her 100th birthday

Our late summer social get-together, at Gerry and Bob Norton's home, was a wonderful occasion, in particular for Meta Weinstein, who celebrated her 100th birthday. Meta is well looked after in the Jewish rest home in Nottingham near her son, two granddaughters, and five and three-quarters great-grandchildren. 'Bis 120!'

*Bob Norton*

## Big thank you for Edgware/Hendon outing

A most enjoyable day at Wimpole Hall! The arrangements, by the AJR's Hazel Beiny, worked extremely well and the guided tour was most interesting. We owe Hazel a big thank you and look forward to her next good idea.

*Edgar H. Ring*

## Absorbing afternoon in West Midlands (Birmingham)

Almost 30 of us heard Fred Austin MBE on 'My Various Escapes'. He ranged widely over aspects and periods of his life, kept us fascinated, and his talk gave rise to many questions. A thoroughly absorbing afternoon.

*Philip Lesser*

**Oxford: 'Jewish life in England'**

We enjoyed a humorous account by the Jewish Museum's Susannah Alexander of the history of the Jews in England and celebrated Rosh Hashanah with honey cake and apples dipped in honey which Myrna kindly supplied.

*Susan Bates*

**Next meeting: Thur 23 Nov. 'The Wiener Library'**

**Pinner/North London visit to Hatfield House**

Our tour guides imparted considerable information with great enthusiasm. Of particular interest were symbolic details pointed out in portraits of Elizabeth I which a casual observer could easily miss. Afterwards we gathered for a delicious cream tea, chatting with 'old' and 'new' faces. Our thanks to all involved in making the visit so successful.

*Hanne R Freedman  
(North London Group)*

**Wessex: inside the Wiener Library**

Following a delicious lunch, we heard an absorbing report by Katharina Hübschmann on the Wiener Library, which began as Dr Alfred Wiener's collection of documents at the Jewish Zentralverein in Berlin.

*George Ettinger*

**FUTURE MEETINGS**

**SW Midlands Sun 12 Nov.** Lunchtime social get-together

**Edgware Tues 21 Nov.** Walter Woyda, 'The Rothschilds, The Musical'

**Norwich Wed 22 Nov.** Lunchtime social get-together

**Hendon Mon 27 Nov.** Jeanette Rosenberg, 'Genealogy'

**North London Thur 30 Nov.** James Taylor on Churchill

**AJR GROUP CONTACTS**

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

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

**Cambridge**  
Anne Bender 01223 276 999

**Cardiff**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**Dundee**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

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

**Edgware**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**Edinburgh**  
Françoise Robertson 0131 337 3406

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

**Glasgow**  
Claire Singerman 0141 649 4620

**Harrogate**  
Inge Little 01423 886254

**Hendon**  
Hazel Beiny 020 8385 3070

**Hertfordshire**  
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

**HGS**  
Gerda Torrence 020 8883 9425

**Hull**  
Bob Rosner 0148 2649156

**Ilford**  
Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

**Leeds HSFA**  
Trude Silman 0113 2251628

**Liverpool**  
Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

**Manchester**  
Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

**Newcastle**  
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

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

**North London**  
Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

**Oxford**  
Susie Bates 01235 526 702

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

**Sheffield**  
Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

**South London**  
Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

**South West Midlands (Worcester area)**  
Ruth Jackson 01386 552264

**Surrey**  
Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

**Weald of Kent**  
Max and Jane Dickson  
01892 541026

**Wessex (Bournemouth)**  
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

**West Midlands (Birmingham)**  
Ernest Aris 0121 353 1437

**Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups  
Co-ordinator**  
020 8385 3070

**Myrna Glass, London South and  
Midlands Groups Co-ordinator**  
020 8385 3077

**Susanne Green, Northern Groups  
Co-ordinator**  
0151 291 5734

**Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator**  
020 8385 3070

**KT-AJR (Kindertransport)**  
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

**Paul Balint AJR Centre**  
15 Cleve Road, London NW6  
Tel: 020 7328 0208

**AJR LUNCHEON CLUB**

**Wednesday 15 November 2006**  
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

**Alexa Tilley**  
'The Television Programme  
*The Apprentice*'

**KT-AJR**

**Kindertransport special  
interest group**

**Monday 13 November 2006**  
11.45 am for 12.15 pm

**Frank Meisler**  
Sculptor of the new  
Kindertransport statue  
at Liverpool Street Station

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**Monday, Wednesday & Thursday**  
9.30 am - 3.30 pm

November	Afternoon entertainment
Wed 1	Jen Gould
Thur 2	Sheila Games
Mon 6	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 7	CLOSED
Wed 8	Margaret Opdahl
Thur 9	NO ENTERTAINMENT
Mon 13	KT LUNCH - Kards & Games Klub
Tue 14	CLOSED
Wed 15	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur 16	Jenny Kossew
Mon 20	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 21	CLOSED
Wed 22	Jack Davidoff
Thur 23	Ronnie Goldberg
Mon 27	Kards & Games Klub
Tue 28	CLOSED
Wed 29	Paul Coleman
Thur 30	Douglas Poster

**DIARY DATES**

<b>October 29-</b>	
<b>November 5</b>	Bournemouth holiday
<b>November 8</b>	Visit to Imperial War Museum
<b>November 9</b>	Kristallnacht service at AJR Centre

For further information about any of these events, please call us on 020 8385 3070.

**'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE**

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

**FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Deaths**

**Brainin** Harald. Died in Vienna 4.9.06. Editor and columnist, polyglot and poet, political commentator and satirist and one-time chess champion. Having survived the war in England after emigration in '38, he returned to Vienna, where he lived and raised a family. Devoted father and grandfather, much loved brother of Ruth, Hedy and Putzi, Harry leaves a huge gap in the lives of his family and friends.

**Juda** Annely passed away on 13 August 2006, aged 91.

**Schweitzer** (née Schoenewald) Adelheid died 3 September aged 93. Adelheid, widow of Alfred, will always remain in the loving memory of her family, her children Caroline and Julian, her grandchildren Rachel, Vivien, Nicholas and Gareth, and her great-grandchildren.

**AJR Centre**

**Chiropodist. Trevor Goldman at the Paul Balint AJR Centre, Wednesday 8 November 10-11.30 am.**

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## Obituaries

### Professor Peter Ganz

In the 1950s–80s, the study of German at British universities passed through something of a golden age, not least because the generation of great scholars who had emigrated to Britain from Hitler's Reich were then in their prime. With the passing of Peter Ganz, we mourn one of the greatest of British experts on medieval German language and literature.

He was born in Mainz in 1920. His studies at the local Realgymnasium were interrupted by Nazi persecution, but he was able to emigrate and complete his education at King's College London. In 1960 he was appointed to a readership in German at Oxford, attached to Hertford College, and in 1972 was appointed professor. He was a popular and conscientious teacher with a distinguished record as a researcher.

As I later realised, it was my misfortune to be taught by him only in the summer term of my first year at Oxford, when the delights of parties and punting tended to take priority over the grammar and syntax of medieval German. I never experienced him personally as a teacher of texts like Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, which flowered exquisitely in his edition. Students soon saw that his bark was worse than his bite.

I was to encounter Peter Ganz again, when he acted as external examiner in German, first at the University of Reading, where I was a novice lecturer, then at the University of Bristol. Humorous – often mordantly so – he delighted final-year students at Bristol, whom he grilled in their viva voce examinations, by appearing clad in the local T-shirt with the logo 'Bristles' on it.

His academic reputation ensured him recognition in Germany and his impatience with aspects of university life led him to leave Oxford in 1985 for a fellowship at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, famous for its connection with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. It is doubtful that he found German academic life, with its strict hierarchies, more congenial than Oxford, though he continued his research according to his own high standards. Our sympathies go to his four children and to his second wife.

Anthony Grenville

### Liselotte Steinacher

My mother was born in 1920 in Nuremberg, the second child of Justin and Tilly Steinacher. Tilly was, in fact, the second wife of Justin Steinacher, her own family being the Wilmersdoerffers, who originated in Bayreuth where they had a haberdashery shop and were

on nodding terms with the Wagners. My great-aunt used to speak of Cosima Wagner coming to the shop on occasions.

My mother's parents had forewarning of the Holocaust and arranged passage for my mother, then 19 years old, to come to England. She worked as a nurse at Lambeth Hospital, performing unenviable tasks such as washing corpses. Despite having no knowledge of English when she arrived, she learned the language quickly.

She met and married my father, George Taussig, and we lived in Kensington in the 1950s before moving to a semi in west London. My father died in 1965. My mother continued with his stationery business until the mid-1970s. She then retired and spent her remaining years looking after our house in East Acton. Liselotte is survived by her son, Dr Peter Taussig, an electronics engineer and professional pianist.

Peter E. Taussig

## Search Notices

The **Centrum Judaicum in Berlin** is preparing a book on the subject 'German Field Rabbis in the First World War'. We are seeking materials on the lives and works of these rabbis and any witnesses and descendants who may have materials or information relating to them. Some of the rabbis may have emigrated to Britain. Any information please to Stiftung Neue Synagoge Berlin-Centrum Judaicum, Oranienburger Str.28-30, 10117 Berlin, z.H. Frau Sabine Hank (hank@cjudaicum.de)

My father **Dr Raymond Lévy** was director of Montintin château in 1943-44. I am seeking information relating to this period. Pls contact Jackie Lévy at levy\_jackie@yahoo.fr

An exhibit at the recent Victoria & Albert Museum Modernism exhibition was a Pohl Omniscope, an X-ray machine used by my late father **Dr Ernst Rachwalsky**. He practised in the Hygeia Klinik in the Augsburg Strasse in Berlin and at 9 Upper Wimpole Street, London, retiring in 1962. The curators are eager to find out as much as possible of the history of this machine. Any information please to Peter Rockwell, 7A Courthouse Road, London N12 7PH, tel 020 8445 3574, email rockwplev@aol.com

Central Office for  
Holocaust Claims  
Michael Newman

### French railway litigation

Following the successful claim for compensation brought jointly against the French government and the national railway company, Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer (SNCF), French lawyers are considering filing further lawsuits.

In June Alain Lipietz, a French member of the Green Party in the European Parliament, was awarded €62,000 (approx. £42,000) in recognition of the SNCF's complicit role in deporting to concentration camps some 78,000 Jews from French transit camps such as Drancy and Pithiviers. The Toulouse court heard how the SNCF billed the government a third-class ticket for each prisoner.

In the light of the court's groundbreaking decision, lawyers in France are now investigating whether further lawsuits on behalf of individual plaintiffs can be brought.

Under the proposed lawsuits, the amount of compensation an applicant would be entitled to claim would be dependent on the fate of the deported person. Where a family member died as a consequence of the deportation, an applicant should claim €150,000. Alternatively, a claim for €10,000 should be entered if the person was deported to a concentration camp but survived the Second World War. The final category is a claim for €5,000, where the victim was taken to a holding camp but was not actually deported from France.

Potential applicants are advised that they will be asked to pay €500 (approx. £340) to bring a lawsuit.

Although the AJR would not be involved in any litigation, we have been given initial questionnaires to distribute. The questionnaires are available from this office.

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 mnewman@ajr.org.uk

## New Kindertransport statue installed

### Sculptor receives Freedom of the City

At a reception marking the installation of a new statue to the 'Children of the Kindertransport' on the concourse of London's Liverpool Street Station, Linda Rosenblatt, Vice Chair of World Jewish Relief, expressed her pride in having cooperated with the AJR to complete the project. Thanking all individuals and organisations for their contributions, she particularly appreciated the key role played by Erich Reich, a member of the AJR's Management and Kinder Planning Committees and an active supporter of World Jewish Relief. She also expressed deep gratitude to the sculptor, Frank Meisler, also one of the Kinder, who had passed through Liverpool Street Station in 1939; he richly deserved to have received the award of the Freedom of the City of London.

In responding, Frank Meisler, a leading Israeli sculptor with an international reputation, remembered his first arrival among a group of 16 Jewish children from Danzig, with identification labels around their necks – tired, bedraggled and apprehensive of their fate. At last year's reception for Kinder at Clarence House, Prince Charles had referred to the many positive contributions the children had subsequently made to Britain. It was at this reception that Erich Reich had invited him to consider the design of a new Kindertransport statue. It had taken little more than a year for the original concept to be installed, for which he particularly thanked his staff in Israel. Frank Meisler dedicated the statue to the parents who, in an act of supreme sacrifice, had remained behind knowing they would probably never see their children again.

On behalf of the AJR Charitable Trust, which had funded the major proportion of the new project, AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman said how delighted and honoured



'Children of the Kindertransport'

the AJR was to be associated with the statue. As the son of German-Jewish parents, he felt a close affinity with the children of the Kindertransport, who were an integral part of the organisation. He congratulated all who had helped to bring the project about. Eric Reich said that in his many contacts with Frank Meisler they had retained their friendship and sense of humour. The statue which now stood in the recently named Hope Square was a wonderful and moving creation which marked a significant moment in recording the unique history of the Kindertransport.

Hermann Hirschberger, Kindertransport Chairman, recalled that it was 67 years since their arrival in England. Many parents decided only after Kristallnacht to attempt to include their children in the Kindertransport, which the British government approved on 22 November 1938. The Central British Fund (now World Jewish Relief) had played the major role in saving most of the 10,000 unaccompanied, mainly Jewish children who were allowed into the country. Having viewed the new statue during its installation, he felt that it captured the atmosphere of the days the children had arrived and would bring their story to life. Frank Meisler presented a model of the statue to Andrew Kaufman.

## Newsround

### First rabbis ordained in Germany since Hitler

Thomas Kucera, Daniel Alter and Malcolm Mattitiani have taken their vows in Dresden's main synagogue before a congregation of prominent Jews from around the world. The three men are the first rabbis to be ordained since 1942, when the Gestapo closed the last seminary.

### Museum of Polish Jews to open in Warsaw

Construction of a Museum of the History of Polish Jews is to begin in Warsaw next autumn. The Museum, expected to open within three years, will focus not only on the Holocaust but also on the 800 years of Jewish life in Poland. It is financed by the Polish government, Warsaw city council and private donors.

### Righteous Gentile nominated for Nobel Peace prize

Polish President Lech Kaczynski has nominated a Righteous Gentile for a Nobel Peace Prize. Irena Sandlar, 96, was a member of the Polish underground group *Zegota*, which was dedicated to saving Jews in the Holocaust. In 1965 she was recognised by Yad Vashem for smuggling Jewish children out of the Warsaw ghetto.

### Historic shofar found in warehouse

A 200-year-old *shofar* believed to have been hidden in a German beer cellar in the Second World War has been discovered in the warehouse of Haifa's Gordon College, whose former deputy director served as a rabbi with the Allies against the Nazis. The *shofar* has been donated to Yad Vashem.

### Cartoons mocking Holocaust prove a flop

An exhibition in Teheran of cartoons about the Holocaust has drawn small audiences. An Iranian Jewish student said: 'This regime is crazy. Everybody knows the Holocaust happened. Over the past year things have become more difficult and this exhibition shows that they don't care what we think.'

### Baghdad's last rabbi to leave Iraq

Baghdad's last remaining rabbi is planning to leave Iraq. Emad Levy, one of about a dozen remaining members of the city's Jewish community, which once topped 100,000, compared his life to 'living in a prison'. He said that most Iraqi Jews were homebound out of fear of kidnapping or execution, adding that 'I have no future here. I must go out to have a life for myself.'