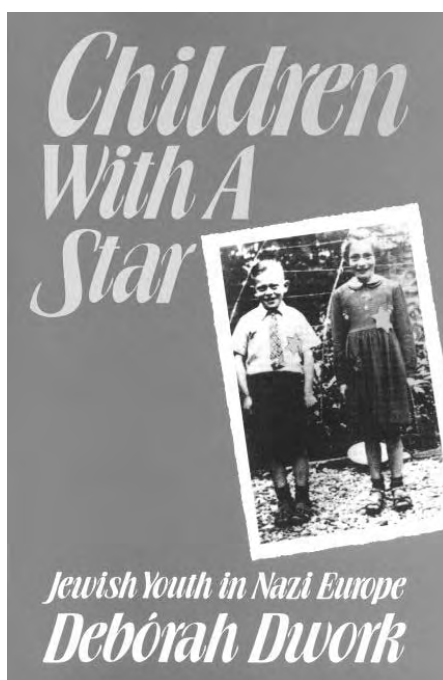


Books of interest

Over recent years, the literature on the Holocaust, including the fate of the Jews of Germany and Austria, has become so vast that it is as good as impossible to keep up with it. So perhaps the best that one can do is to bring to readers' attention a few volumes selected from the many that have appeared. If the sheer quantity of what is being written on the subject is daunting, that does not mean that there is nothing first-rate that remains to be produced. On the contrary, the quality of books published is remarkably high, and they often cover subjects as yet unresearched or offer new and challenging perspectives that go beyond the findings of existing studies.

One can hardly find a better book to begin with than Nicholas Stargardt's *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005). This monumental volume analyses a whole range of children's experiences, enabling the author to portray the totality of the war as it impacted on millions of children across Europe. In this respect, *Witnesses of War* marks a significant advance on books like Debórah Dwork's *Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe*, which takes as its subject the fate of Jewish children under the Nazis, of whom over a million were killed.

Stargardt shares, very broadly, Dwork's intention to bring a child-centred approach to the history of children under Nazism. He is exceptionally skilful at conveying the voices of the children and the specific perspective of the child, so often very different from that of adults, not least in the ability of children to accept the exceptional as normal, even under the extreme conditions of prisons and camps. And that voice can often be profoundly unsettling, as in the case of the eight-year-old Jewish boy overheard by Emmanuel Ringelblum, the



doomed historian of the Warsaw Ghetto, expressing the sense of impotent fury that adult Jews could not conceal from him: 'I want to steal, I want to rob, I want to eat, I want to be a German.'

At the centre of the book is the fate of the Jewish children who fell victim to the Nazi campaign of extermination.

Part II of the book, entitled 'The Race War', compellingly interweaves the historical background to the Nazi bid to restructure the conquered eastern territories along racial-colonial lines with testimony from individuals, drawing on both the accounts of the victims and the diaries of German soldiers who witnessed the atrocities. This is often harrowing to read. Stargardt expertly reconstructs the child's experience of the 'Final Solution', for example in his analysis of the games played by children in the Vilna ghetto or the rituals of daily life developed by the children deported from Theresienstadt to the 'family camp' at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

One of the book's great merits is that it gives a voice to otherwise marginalised groups, like the thousands of mentally or physically handicapped children murdered as part of the so-called 'mercy killing' operation, also known as 'T-4'. In two meticulously researched chapters, 'Disciplined Youth' and 'Medical Murder', Stargardt traces the descent from the incarceration of 'asocial' youngsters at harsh reformatories to the mass murder of

continued overleaf

Kindertransport leader awarded MBE

Hermann Hirschberger, a longstanding member of the AJR and former chairman of its Kindertransport Special Interest Group, has been awarded an MBE for services to the Jewish community and Kindertransport evacuees in the New Year's Honours list.

Hermann, 84, originally from Karlsruhe, Germany, said he was 'so proud to have been appreciated in this way.'

In 2008 Hermann won a long battle to secure a change in the pension law, enabling several hundred *Kinder* to receive improved annuities from the German government. In 2009 he oversaw the Kindertransport



Hermann Hirschberger

Questionnaire project, which broke new ground in recording the experiences and personal information of some 1,400 *Kinder* who fled to the UK.

AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman said: 'Everyone at AJR joins me in congratulating

Hermann on this wonderful award, which is rightful recognition of his dedication and determination to help others and to fight for justice. His efforts have improved the lives of so many people and, like other refugees who fled from Nazi oppression, he has made an invaluable contribution to life in Britain.'

BOOKS OF INTEREST *cont. from page 1*

disabled children at sinister locations like Hadamar, in effect the testing grounds for the death camps.

But, as Stargardt acknowledges, the inclusion of German children, some of them victims of Allied air raids or of rampaging Red Army soldiers, but others the children of perpetrators or members of the Hitler Youth, involves the breaking of a historical taboo, that of the separation between perpetrators and victims. However, the sections on German children focus to a considerable extent on the ways in which they sought in later life to come to terms with their actions and attitudes during the Nazi period, not on their victim status. Stargardt includes children from different racial and national groups precisely because the extreme contrasts between their experiences convey the impact of Nazism and the Holocaust as a whole.

Many readers will be interested to learn of the first full history of the Jewish refugees who fled to Britain from Austria and Germany on domestic service permits: Traude Bollauf's *Dienstmädchen-Emigration: Die Flucht jüdischer Frauen aus Österreich und Deutschland nach England 1938/39* (Vienna/Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010). Bollauf traces the history of the emigration of domestic servants from Austria and Germany to Britain back to 1918, revealing that there had been a steady and substantial emigration from Austria. As a result, by the time of the Anschluss in March 1938, there were networks in existence to facilitate the emigration of domestic servants from Austria to Britain – though these were now used by Jews fleeing racial persecution, not by non-Jews seeking employment. This explains why Austrians so greatly outnumbered Germans proportionately among the domestic service refugees.

Bollauf makes extensive use of published and archival sources to throw light on the various organisations set up to assist the domestic servants in their emigration to Britain and to support them once there. Her research gives proper credit to bodies like the Domestic Bureau, part of the complex of institutions in Bloomsbury House funded by Anglo-Jewry, and to the Germany Emergency Committee of the Quakers, not forgetting

the Hausgehilfenreferat (domestics' section) of the Emigration Department of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, the Jewish communal organisation in Vienna. This supplies the institutional framework to the personal memories conveyed, for example, in Lore Segal's *Other People's Houses* or in the articles of the *AJR Journal's* own Edith Argy.

The core of the book consists of the stories of the domestics themselves, in particular a group of about 20 with whom the author has conducted detailed interviews. The human dimension to history comes alive as Bollauf follows them through emigration, a demeaning life in domestic service, the war – which brought with it internment, air raids and a degree of integration into British society, but also the final separation from their families – and the coming of peace. The book ends with a discussion of the domestics' attitudes to their homeland, to which relatively few returned. For the first time, we have a comprehensive picture of the 20,000 or so refugees from Hitler who reached safety in Britain as domestic servants and of the conditions they endured.

Since 1989, when scholars gained full access to the wartime archives in the former Soviet Union, the history of the Holocaust has acquired an entire new eastern dimension, enabling it to be set in a truly Continental perspective. Indeed, Timothy Snyder's arresting study, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, focuses exclusively on the east, on the regions between eastern Poland and western Russia where the killing grounds of both Hitler and Stalin were located. New and detailed knowledge of what happened in eastern Poland and the borderlands of the Soviet Union underpins weighty tomes by German historians like Peter Longerich and Götz Aly on Nazi extermination policy and the 'Final Solution'.

Donald Bloxham's *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) is a detailed overall study of the Holocaust in the east by a British historian, one that is often challenging in its approach, not least when it confronts the issue of the uniqueness of the genocide of the Jews. Bloxham's particular expertise lies in his knowledge of the Balkans and Turkey, which enables him to take a new and illuminating approach to the development of policies of discrimination, exclusion and ultimately liquidation employed against unwanted minority groups.

Taking as his starting point the fracturing of the Ottoman Empire between 1875 and 1918, he argues that the well-known massacres of Christians in the Balkans and Turkey, notably the Armenian genocide of 1915, and the less well-known atrocities committed against Muslims by Christians in the Balkans were the forerunners of a new style of ethnic restructuring of societies and states, where minority groups could be forcibly incorporated into the majority community, deported or even killed. When the political fragmentation of eastern and south-eastern Europe was repeated in 1918 across whole swathes of the continent, it carried its potential for genocide with it.

Bloxham then switches to Germany, where he analyses the development of Nazi anti-Jewish policies and the way in which Nazi Germany embarked on and implemented the attempt to exterminate the Jews of Europe. He argues that the bulk of the killing occurred in what he calls 'the imperial cone', the territories that were directly under German control, stretching in the shape of a cone from Holland in the west to Poland and the occupied parts of the Soviet Union in the east.

Relying on documents like the Nazi 'Generalplan Ost', Bloxham maintains that the Holocaust formed part of an attempt to colonise the vast territories of the east along racial lines – an extreme variant of the measures taken by European settlers and colonists against indigenous peoples in Australia, North America or the German colonies in East and South-West Africa. The Jews were, of course, not a colonial people, but Bloxham asserts that their extermination took place within the framework of a grand colonial project.

Anthony Grenville

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

BUSINESS AS USUAL

'Got your gas mask? Got your torchlight?' was no longer a joke in September 1940. The 'phoney war' was over. At the time, I shared a room with my Aunt Ida in Sutherland Avenue in west London. My aunt worked as a finisher in the rag trade; I kept books in Roehampton in the private home of the managing director, in the accounts department of an insurance company most of which had already been evacuated to Maidenhead.

We had got so used to false alarms that the first time the air raid warning meant real bombs came as a great shock. Night after night when the alarm sounded we, together with the other tenants – some Jewish refugees like us, some English – took ourselves to the improvised shelter in the basement and stayed there until the 'all clear' siren told us the raid was over. My aunt always took a small case of her children's photographs with her. (Both her children were safe, one in Switzerland, the other in Australia.) Sometimes the boyfriend

of a Jewish refugee girl – a tall, handsome, well-educated Indian – joined us. Two English spinster sisters recoiled in horror. We, the refugees, were Jewish. Not good. We were also foreign. Possibly worse. But at least we had the grace to be white. To be *coloured*, however, was inexcusable. Every time this most presentable young man was with us the virgin ladies sat, tight-lipped, exuding genteel distaste, pointedly ignoring him.

When it became clear that these improvised shelters provided little or no protection against direct hits we, like many others, tried the nearest underground station but didn't much like it. So we reverted to 'our' shelter, if only for the companionship it offered. Sometimes we just went to bed trying to get some sleep during a raid – not easy with the din caused by planes, anti-aircraft gunfire and exploding bombs – prepared for the worst, but hoping

for the best.

In the morning my aunt went to her workshop somewhere in the West End and I set off on my long journey to Roehampton by tube and bus. Everything seemed so *normal*. Trains and buses ran according to schedule, people reported for work, and indeed everywhere, among the craters and the wreckage, it was 'business as usual', sometimes proclaimed in chalk on boarded-up windows.

One night, the house next to ours was hit by an incendiary bomb.

We, and everyone else in the neighbourhood, were evacuated and put up in a community centre, where we spent the rest of the night. The atmosphere was surprisingly relaxed; there was friendly banter, and some people even cracked jokes. In the morning we were allowed to return 'home'.

To celebrate my 21st birthday, a Young Turk – actually a Czech – took me to tea at Liberty's, the height of luxury and sophistication. A Lyons Corner House was more like it.

The nightly bombing went on and on, right until May 1941, and I was in London throughout it. Yet, 70 years on, I remember very little of the terror and the devastation and practically nothing of the inconvenience of blackout and food rationing – at that time, 'only' meat, bacon, butter, sugar and tea were rationed.

In fact – dare I say it? – I remember the Blitz with some nostalgia. All that has been said and written about the British during that period is, in my experience, true. When I witnessed people's stoicism and courage and sense of humour in defiance of Hitler's determination to break their spirit, I felt proud, almost privileged, to live in London – among the English – at that time. Also, I was fully aware of the fact that here I shared the fate of millions as an equal (fortunately I was the right colour) – and not, as I would have done in Austria, as an *Untermensch*.

Edith Argy

'In fact – dare I say it? – I remember the Blitz with some nostalgia ... When I witnessed people's stoicism and courage and sense of humour in defiance of Hitler's determination to break their spirit, I felt proud, almost privileged, to live in London – among the English – at that time.'

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SPEAKING TO THE ENEMY

Like Erwin Schneider ('The other Germany', August 2010), I too experienced a most fascinating stay in post-war Berlin.

Like Erwin, I was born in Vienna and, like him, I came to England in March 1939. *Deutsch ist also meine Muttersprache*. In England, of course, I had little opportunity to exercise it except in our inner family circle. Then, in 1950, as an army dental officer, I was posted to Berlin and this seemed to offer an excellent opportunity to test myself. I resolved to address the all-German staff in the Military Hospital's officers' mess solely in my best Hochdeutsch.

I thought it was working brilliantly but, after a week, I was cornered by their spokesman, an ancient barman called, of course, Fritz: 'Forgive me for troubling you, sir,' he said in his best pre-war English. 'But I must tell you that we have had a staff meeting about you. We realise, of course, that you learned German at school, but it cannot have been a good school and we would much prefer you to speak to all of us only in English.'

I was given a personal driver, a very competent German with the curious name of Schauzu (Look on). He had held very senior rank in the Waffen SS but had obviously been 'denazified' before being employed by the army. I don't

know if he guessed my antecedents but I always found him most polite and *arbeitswillig*, so we got on fine.

Late one evening he asked to see me urgently, evidently most upset. Our vehicle had been standing outside my clinic after hours and someone must have run into the back of it, causing some damage. He was terrified of losing his precious job. Would I please speak to his superior on his behalf?

'Look here, Schauzu,' I said, 'Your boss is a fellow German. Surely he will look after you.' 'No, sir,' he replied, 'You must speak to him. You know that all Germans are bastards!' There was one for the book! I spoke to the 'bastard' and all was well.

At Spandau Prison, however, where I had to provide emergency treatment for the inmates, my German was never queried. The inmates were, of course, senior Nazi war criminals like Hess and Funk who had survived the Nuremberg war trials.

At first I faced this duty with revulsion. Then, seeing what miserable wrecks they had become, particularly during the one-month-in-four Russian care, it became a routine task that had to be carried out. Rudolf Hess, for example, was by that time almost totally demented. His statement emerged in short bursts, he insisted on being treated standing up

– a near impossibility – and he refused all injections or medication for fear of being poisoned. Later, there were strong suspicions that the man we held in Spandau all those years was not the real Rudolf Hess but a ringer. I had extracted an upper molar for him, but, when I saw his pre-war X-rays later, I found there had only been an artificial bridge on that side. Similar questions were raised by Hugh Thomas, a senior army surgeon, but further discussion was discouraged from above.

The prisoners all tried to extend every conversation, presumably for the sake of a little human diversion. What struck me most forcibly at these times was that, with the notable exception of Albert Speer, they were a bunch of very second-rate people. It was astounding that they had been able to gain positions of such importance and cause so much damage and misery to the human race.

Military historians have often said that we could never have won the last war but for Hitler's enormous military incompetence and his constant obstruction of his gifted generals. Looking at this sample of his helpmates confirmed the theory for me. In the end, it was a relief to be posted to Münster in Westphalia and, later, to put on a kilt and learn melodious Highlands English.

Hans L. Eirew

A family story

In around 2002 two friends from the USA paid a visit to Freiburg, the capital of the Black Forest. While there, holidaying in the area in which they had once lived, they decided to visit their former school. This was the Lessing School, in which two rooms had been made available for Jewish children no longer allowed to attend their normal state school. The mandatory school for Jewish children, it covered a large part of southern Baden.

When the friends called at the school there was nobody who knew anything of this aspect of its past. However, a number of people in what is now the Lessing Realschule, encouraged by Frau Rosita Dienst-Demuth, the current history teacher and leader of the History Workshop, began researching the school's history as well as the city archives. In addition, the friends advertised for names and information in an American-Jewish newspaper. Some of

the former pupils couldn't be found, some had passed away, some were too old and frail to travel. Eventually, in October 2004, 17 former pupils, myself included, received an invitation to attend the unveiling of a memorial plaque on the outside of the school.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by the mayor of Freiburg as well as the mayors of several of the towns and villages from which the former pupils had come. Among these officials was Armin Roesner, the mayor of Friesenheim, my home town, and his chief executive, Ekkehard Klem. The mayor collected my wife Ella and me for the journey to Friesenheim town hall, where a large number of people had assembled, including some with whom I had attended the local school until it was no longer lawful to do so.

In his welcoming speech, Mayor Roesner handed me a presentation box containing five silver coffee spoons.

The spoons had been given to a former school friend of my mother in exchange for food at a time when nobody was allowed to give any help – food in particular – to a Jew. The friend later gave the spoons to her daughter-in-law with the proviso that should anybody from the Levi family ever return to Friesenheim the spoons must handed back to that person. I believe the spoons were a wedding present to my parents in the early 1920s and I'm now in contact with this lady, Frau Braun.

At the mayoral welcome, a flower-decorated cake plate was handed to me as well. It too was from an old school friend, whose mother had bought it in my grandfather's hardware shop in around 1929. It was the only remaining item of the tea service.

Since 2004 Rosita Dienst-Demuth has been researching my family history, and the results of her research, including

continued opposite

Return to Fuerth

Over the years, my own home town has barely been mentioned in the Journal and so I want to put that right. Fuerth (meaning ford), a town in Bavaria, was traditionally built by Charlemagne on the confluence of two rivers. It eventually came under the jurisdiction of the Margrave of Ansbach, the Bishop of Bamberg and the city of Nuremberg. This threefold division was to the advantage of the Jewish community which developed following the expulsion of the Jews of Nuremberg in 1498, with Jews allowed to settle in the area administered by the Bishop and the Margrave. The rivalry between these two attracted Jewish settlers as it brought wealth to the two powers. Though Jews settled in the town in the mid-sixteenth century, the first recorded burial took place in 1607.

The seventeenth century saw the building of synagogues, the oldest ones often featuring in engravings of medieval Jewish life. The Jewish community, especially its religious element, prospered to such a degree that Fuerth began to be called 'Little Jerusalem', a title it was accorded on account of its *yeshiva* and the famous rabbis who were in office. In 1719 the rights of the Jewish community were established and in 1806 these were abrogated by the King of Bavaria, which led to the authority being given to the Reform. One consequence of this was that the *yeshiva* closed its doors, though Orthodox Torah learning continued. The two communities worked together in matters of communal concern, such as charitable ones.

In 1698 the Jewish community established a Jewish hospital. It was originally adjacent to the cemetery (there is also a newer cemetery), but was rebuilt elsewhere. In 1691 a Jewish press was established which produced many Hebrew books in the next 150 years or so. In the eighteenth century Fuerth set up the first Jewish orphanage in Germany and, in the nineteenth century,



The Rev Bernd Koschland

a Jewish school, which I attended (as did Henry Kissinger!).

Jewish life was regulated by the community, as can be seen from the town's 'Minhag Book', which dealt with ritual, especially in the synagogue services (1767), regulations regarding dress (see Alfred Rubens, *A History of Jewish Costume*, pp.194ff. – the picture on the dust cover features medieval Fuerth's synagogues); and regulations regarding the 'Care of the Sick' (1786) (quoted in *Judaeo-German in Jacob Rader Marcus, Communal Sick-Care in the German Ghetto* (Cincinnati 1947).)

Over the years Jews contributed in numerous ways to the general welfare of the town, for instance in industry and public buildings.

After 1933, as elsewhere in Germany, Jewish life changed. The events of Kristallnacht left no synagogue standing but the vandalised one in the orphanage. Jewish men were taken to a local cultural building (donated by a Jew) and from there to Dachau. Families had emigrated earlier and did so as long as it was possible; a few of us children came to the UK on the Kindertransport.

My memories of life in Germany and of that terrible night are fragmentary. Those who remained after the outbreak of war were deported; few returned after the war. Of those who did return, one, Jean Mandel, was elected to the Bavarian Senate and became the leader of the Jewish community. The first post-war rabbi was the famous and widely respected David Shapira, the last rabbi

of the Warsaw Ghetto.

In 2000 I returned to Fuerth with my son as guests of the town. Our hotel room overlooked the open space where, as far as I can remember, we were assembled on Kristallnacht: the site of the former first railway in Germany, the Ludwigseisenbahn. I took great pleasure in walking over it to demonstrate that I had survived.

There are remnants of the former Jewish life. The synagogues, several of which were in one spot, are marked by a small monument; the Synagogenplatz was built over; the Jewish hospital building remains; the school has become offices; and the orphanage houses the restored and only synagogue in the town. While we were there, the then rabbi asked me to take the services on Shabbat, which I did and I was overcome emotionally. Was this the spot on which my father had prayed till the end? Once again there is a small community in the town, mainly Russian in origin (at least when we were there).

Volume 3 of the Guide Book to Fuerth takes one through the traces of the town's former Jewish life. Walking through the streets, I could see the remnants of the *mezuzot* in the stone pillars, whether as gaps or plastered over. We had lunch in the building from which men were taken to Dachau. My mind flashed back to 1938, to what was taking place in that building and to what would have been the sounds as my father and others were taken from there. Elements of the former Jewish life are also to be seen in the local Jewish Museum and its branches.

Frank and Beri Harris of New York State have organised reunions and edit an annual newsletter with a view to maintaining contact between former residents of Fuerth and the adjacent Nuremberg. The Second and Third Generations are an essential part of their programmes.

Bernd Koschland

A family story continued from page 4

family photos, were published last year.

**From local newspaper,
23 October 2007:**

As the result of an ecumenical youth project of the Catholic and Protestant parishes in Friesenheim, a remembrance stone has been erected for Jews deported from Friesenheim to Gurs. The project was supported by the Historical Association of Middle Baden and the community of Friesenheim. The remembrance stone

was put in place by the town hall in Friesenheim next to the Protestant community hall.

On the initiative of the Middle Baden Historical Association, the remembrance stone is intended as a reminder of the deportation of Jewish fellow citizens on 22 October 1940.

The plaque has the following wording: 'This remembrance stone is a reminder of nine Jewish citizens from Friesenheim who were deported to Gurs internment camp on 22 October 1940.'

The names on it are:

Brunhilde Greilsheimer
Flora Greilsheimer
Hermann Greilsheimer
Ludwig Greilsheimer
Sara Greilsheimer
Josef Greilsheimer
Delphine Haberer
Brunhilde Levi*
Alfred Levi*

*The author's parents

Richard Levi

We are very sad to learn that Richard Levi passed away last month (Ed.).



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

THE PRICE OF SECURITY

Sir – I refer to the article 'In defence of doves' by Anthony Grenville, in your December 2010 issue.

It was most refreshing to read an article on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which does not aim just to give Jews in the Diaspora a good feeling – unlike the 'Letter from Israel' about Jewish youngsters becoming officers in the (doubtfully named) Israel Defence Forces. It is, of course, vitally important for Israel to be able to defend itself and it has not only shown repeatedly that it can do that but, over and above, it is reputed to have the fifth strongest army in the world. Yet we live in fear despite all we have done with our power. Is there no other way?

Israeli governments continue to declaim that 'We want nothing more than peace but there is nobody to talk to.' Yet Israel has continued to build settlements at a greatly increased rate, in direct breach of international law, even after the Oslo accords in 1993 for which Rabin and Peres together with Arafat got the Nobel Peace Prize and, with optimism in the air, the economy soared. Of course, Arafat also broke the agreement by not curbing acts of terror – but which is cause, which effect? In 1993, after 26 years, there were about 25,000 Jewish settlers on the West Bank; today the number is about 350,000. All this time Israel demands 'negotiations without pre-conditions', when every brick that is laid changes the conditions and, incidentally, also breaks repeated undertakings to our staunch friend the US.

The Arabs have dramatically changed their tune. Jewish extremists, linking hands with their Palestinian counterparts, still say that the Palestinian strategy is to eliminate Israel, though there is no Palestinian leader who thinks that possible. They have come a long way from the Khartoum declaration 'No recognition, no negotiations, no peace'. In 2002 the Arab League put forward proposals for a final settlement, with normalisation, but, as yet, no Israeli government has responded in any way. This Arab plan is arguably more favourable to Israel than the Geneva accords or President Clinton's proposals.

As an Israeli patriot, my over-riding concern is for my country, but a solution to the conflict must be equally good for both sides. There must be an end to the

occupation, with disbandment of the smaller, isolated settlements and exchange of land for the big settlement blocs, as part of an agreement with a recognised, secure border for Israel. It is a 'win-win' game: I can only win if you also win. Continuation of the present situation holds various dangers apart from security and Israel's standing among the nations. Not least, it saps the moral fibre of our young soldiers, lording it over another people with tanks and planes – evils come home to roost and violence and racism inside Israel are rising alarmingly.

Time is running out. Today, between the Jordan and the sea there is a majority of Jews. In 10-15 years the majority will be Palestinian. Where will the democratic-Jewish state, for which we came on *aliya*, sweated and fought, be then? The Palestinians are struggling today for less than a half of what was awarded them by the United Nations in 1947 in the decision to which we owe the State of Israel. There is no question if – but only when – the Palestinians will get their sovereign state. Self-interest should now at last guide Israel to a peace settlement. Not more land, arms and bombs – only peace can give us security.

Avraham Shomroni, Tel Aviv

Sir – Thank you for your article 'In defence of doves', with which I wholeheartedly agree. In my opinion, the *AJR Journal* tends to be one-sided in defence of the Israelis and their attitude towards the Palestinians, including their continued building of settlements. I am very much aware of the danger the Palestinians pose, and the necessity for strength and defence, but I feel that we Jews, of all people – refugees from oppression – should do all we can in our power not to oppress our 'enemies'. It may be too late but I feel it is our duty to behave differently from those who oppressed us and to try with all possible urgency to bring about some sort of peaceful co-existence.

I have often thought of stopping my subscription to the *Journal* because of its stance on this matter and may still do so. I often wonder what Werner and Susie Rosenstock (friends and colleagues of my father) would have thought of the *Journal* these days.

Delia E. Walker (née Ruhm), Birmingham

Sir – May I advise your correspondent Heinz Grünewald (January) to remove his blinkers so he can see the other side too. He seems to put all the blame for the lack of peace between Israel and the Palestinians squarely on Israel's shoulders. He should acquaint himself with the actions and pronouncements of Fatah – not to mention the 'peace-loving' Hamas.

Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath

Sir – Congratulations to Heinz Grünewald! He puts succinctly the unassailable case for peace: the benefits to the Palestinians – victims of other Arabs rather than Israel – and Israel's responsibility to facilitate it happening. The biggest obstacle to peace is the illusion of knowledge that so many ignorant people flaunt.

I have just returned from two weeks in Israel and Jordan with my daughter. At no time did we feel unsafe or intimidated, even in Ramalla. Ordinary people everywhere, both Arabs and Jews, were extremely friendly and welcoming and eager to engage with us. Yes, there were some people with rigid views based largely on ignorance, but even those people longed for peace. I went to Israel (as well as for a fabulous holiday in Jordan) to promote my book *Person of No Nationality*, which I hope Yad Vashem will translate and publish in Hebrew. I spoke with 17-18-year-olds in three schools, the head and her administrator in the Quaker school in Ramalla, and three adult groups. I learned a lot about the complexities of people's experience and views and the importance of sharing personal narratives. I am convinced that the 'real' enemy of both Jews and Arabs is *despair*. Those who lose hope succumb to fear and frustrated anger and, finally, violence. Violence breeds more violence. Open-minded dialogue is the only possible path to peace.

Ruth Barnett, London NW6

Sir – I enjoy Dorothea Shefer-Vanson's 'Letters from Israel'. However, in her latest one, she seems to have missed the point of criticism of Israel. It is not about whether the state is capitalist or socialist. Her message seems to be that if you don't live in a country you have no right to criticise it. Does that mean we can't criticise Iran if we don't live there?

It is true that we have chosen to live in Britain, but many of us have relatives in Israel and strong emotional bonds with the country. We are well aware of some of the unfair and hostile reporting of events in Israel by the British press. Equally, we cringe when we read of humiliating and insensitive treatment of Palestinians. Once Israel enjoyed good relations with many Western countries. It is a pity that this is being eroded by the actions of the Israeli government.

Martha Blend, London N10

Sir – I'm amazed by the naivety expressed in these columns, which sometimes borders on the irrational. Martha Blend (January) means well, but queries Zionist thinking about going back to a country after 2,000 years. Where else could they have gone? It was never the intention of those early Zionist idealists to displace anyone but events took a different turn due to Arab intransigence and their all-or-nothing mentality. Furthermore, there were always Jews there, even if they went to end their days there and bewail the loss. The dream of return could not have been realised in a land with which they had no connection, like Uganda, which Herzl was prepared to accept as a national home. Madagascar, where the Poles and, later, Hitler planned to ship them to, would have gone the way of Stalin's Birobidzhan venture.

But Heinz Grünewald takes the biscuit: to say Palestinians have no allies is surely the understatement of the year. He spells out what Israel needs to do for barbarism to become history. Perhaps were it not for the pesky Israelis, *jihad* too would go into the dustbin of history! He expects nothing of the Palestinians – never mind the Khartoum 'three no's' and the Palestinian Authority and Hamas charters sworn to Israel's destruction! Abbas insists he will never recognise a Jewish state and that no Jews will be allowed in a future Palestine – this is true apartheid, which is often levelled at Israel. Abbas's idea of a two-state solution is based on pre-67 borders and East Jerusalem, as well as the return of seven million refugees that would amount to national suicide. Mr Grünewald would be happy for Israelis to live under a *Pax Arabica*, but this post-*Shoah* generation are of a different mould and unlikely to take risks with their security.

Jews of all people should take note of tyrants' threats. Given the means, Ahmadi-nejad, Nasrallah and Assad are not much different from Hitler. And those who only claim to be anti-Zionist are in reality Jew-haters, who would deny them their natural right to self-determination, a right they would never deny any other people. These are not my words but those of Martin Luther King. Those doomed to destruction in Europe complained bitterly of being abandoned by an uncaring world and by Western Jewish leaders fully aware of their plight. History seems to be repeating itself. Where is Jewish solidarity?

Rubin Katz, London NW11

Sir – It is difficult to achieve peace in the Middle East because we have to deal with the most right-wing government Israel has had since its establishment. At the moment, there are 19 legislative measures which have either been passed by the Knesset or are about to be passed. They are all targeted towards Palestinians who

are Israeli citizens or live in the Occupied Territories. These acts all try to take away the Palestinians' civil liberties and make them into second-class citizens.

Israel has again and again declared that it fights not only for Israelis but for all Jews throughout the world. We should state publicly that the State of Israel is not speaking for us. Once it is accepted that world Jewry opposes Israel's policy, they will lose support from other countries and, hopefully, this will make the Israeli public vote for a government more amenable to peace. Peace with its neighbours will give Israel greater security and stop the continued criticism which harms her reputation.

Peter Prager, London N12

Sir – There are well-meaning, naïve Jews who do not see that the Palestinian flag has no Israel on it. The peace negotiations include a demand for the Palestinians to return. The number of those who left in 1948 is now in the millions.

There was no Palestinian government at any time in history. We are not occupying land. The West Bank is Judea.

Clare Parker, London NW11

MEMORABLE OCCASIONS

Sir – Having enjoyed the recent Chanukah Party at the Southgate and District Reform Synagogue, I reflected on other AJR meetings and outings that I attended throughout the year. All memorable occasions – and my appreciation and thanks go to Myrna Glass, Hazel Beiny and Esther Rinkoff for their hard work and devoted efforts in making them successful and enjoyable.

With all good wishes to the AJR for the New Year.

(Mrs) Pat Sinclair, London N21

RESCUE OF BULGARIAN JEWRY

Sir – There seems to be a general impression that the Jews of Denmark were the only ones who were saved from the Holocaust. This is not so.

In Bulgaria, where King Boris (under pressure from the Germans) had already signed a deportation order, he was forced by a general outcry to cancel it. This outcry was started by the Orthodox Church and a number of members of parliament, but involved people of all classes throughout the country.

Unfortunately it was impossible to stop deportations from the two areas that had been 'awarded' to Bulgaria following the German occupation of Greece. But no Jews were deported from Bulgaria proper.

There is a memorial in the centre of Sofia which was erected by the Bulgarian Jews now in Israel as a tribute to their old country for its action in 1943.

Peter Block, London SE24

'DANCING UNDER THE GALLOWS'

Sir – In connection with the recent discussion on this issue, may I explain how the Theresienstadt musicians got their instruments.

In the Protectorate, Jews had to hand in their musical instruments on 26 December 1941. Records show that 20,300 instruments were looted, among them 1,220 pianos, mostly grand, from that small area alone. The same happened within the Reich and all over occupied Europe.

When, in early 1943, Himmler conceived of a visit by the Swiss Red Cross to the ghetto, which had to appear 'normal' on that occasion, the Germans handed out some of the stolen instruments from their vast store. I shared a room there with a prodigy who thus got hold of a good violin and a good bow.

Before inmates arriving in the ghetto had their one piece of luggage returned to them, it had passed through the 'Schleuse' (Sluice), where it had been thoroughly searched for prohibited items, e.g. cigarettes. The story of the smuggled instruments is therefore improbable.

None of the tens of thousands of Jewish-owned instruments taken to Germany and representing a fortune in money terms were ever returned. Thus, the present users are playing on stolen goods without enquiring into their provenance – on the principle that if you start asking questions you get too many (uncomfortable) answers.

*Frank Bright
Martlesham Heath, Suffolk*

GREAT ESCAPISTS

Sir – Victor Ross (October 2010) describes Arthur Koestler as '[t]he greatest escape artist of all'. But Koestler was not the only Hungarian escapist!

Kati Marton's fascinating book *The Great Escape: Nine Jews Who Fled Hitler and Changed the World* appeared in 2006. These nine Jews were the scientists Leo Szilard, Edward Teller, Eugene Wigner and John von Neumann; Arthur Koestler, author of *Darkness at Noon*; Robert Capa, the first photographer ashore on D-Day; Andre Kertesz, pioneer of modern photojournalism; and the iconic filmmakers Alexander Korda and Michael Curtiz, maker of *Casablanca*.

These individuals really did 'change the world'. They marked indelibly the world of physics, cinema, literature, mathematics and computers. The scientists were involved in the invention of the atomic bomb.

Edith Steiner, London NW11

STONES OF REMEMBRANCE

Sir – I read with great interest Hetty Jacoby's article 'Stones of Remembrance'

continued on page 16

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

The **Ben Uri** has announced new acquisitions with the help of private and public funds. They include **Hans Feibusch's** dramatic gouache *The Almighty* and **George Grosz's** highly graphic *Interrogation*, which depicts a man being tortured by Nazis. Both share a fearsome authenticity.

Through audio-visual material, the gallery also took its largely hidden collection to three London schools in a pilot Holocaust Education project, **Looking Forward, Looking Back**, supported by the London Museums Hub and the Museum of London. Artist Heather Libson helped the students connect with the Holocaust through their own self-portraits



Scene from the *Book of the Dead of Hunefer* Egypt c. 1280 BC

in chalk pastels to convey moments of terror and disbelief. The response to the project is described by both pupils and teachers as overwhelmingly positive. One painted ribbons in the sky and says – '[I]t's there stained in the sky for everyone to see.' Another illustrates shards of glass 'representing the cracks in humanity I feel the Holocaust has created.'

Many ancient cultures are defined by their death cults. The Egyptians believed that life and death were part of the same cycle, created by the sun god Ra's travels across the sky by day and night. **The British Museum's** current exhibition, **Journey through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead**, shows mummies, painted coffins, gilded masks, amulets, jewellery, small sculptures and the familiar illustrations of handsome black-haired men and women in their

static poses. These belie the vitality of the tomb paintings, which suggest more life than death.

In ancient Egypt members of the upper classes would commission a book of the dead on papyri in which the various gods were asked to intercede on their behalf. These papyri, perfectly preserved in the desert sands, glow literally with eternal life. In fact, many artefacts on show first appeared over 7,000 years ago. They show the dead rowing through a field of reeds. But the Elysian fields and rivers of the netherworld were not plain sailing. Wild beasts, demigods and demons were destined to waylay the time traveller: falcons, snakes, baboons, hippos and other creatures were invested with mythic powers. And in the hall of judgement known as the hall of the two truths, they had to face a terrifying ritual: the weighing of the heart, which determined the soul's future – condemned to destruction by the terrifying Devourer, a hybrid

of crocodile, lion and hippo, or safe passage to the realm of the sun god Ra or Osiris, ruler of the netherworld.

Pyramid texts are one of the earliest collections of religious writings provided

for the dead kings and they eventually became available to other royal members, noblemen and people of high status. They were inscribed on the tomb walls as spells or incantations. The paintings which show the passage to Nirvana or damnation are gorgeous; they reflect what was familiar to the Egyptians – the lush and fertile Nile valley – and this romantic view probably influenced the Elysian fields of Greek myth. But such necromancy was the preserve only of the wealthy – how poorer people negotiated their pathways to life eternal, heaven only knows!

Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street (off New Bond Street)
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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

Hidden lives

THE LANGUAGE OF SILENCE

by Meryllyn Moos

Cressida Press in conjunction with Writers' World Ltd, 2010, 288 pp. paperback

This is a highly unusual work of fiction which is at the same time a thinly disguised and compelling autobiographical novel.

The novel is set at the beginning of the present century. The narrator, Anna, sets out to uncover the hidden lives of her German refugee parents, the essentials of which had remained entirely closed to her throughout her late father's lifetime and most of that of her surviving elderly mother. Events that took place some 60 years before only begin to reveal themselves to her through the letters and other items she discovers when her mother leaves the family home. Anna's researches, supplemented by coincidental enquiries from an American researcher and, crucially, the released MI5 file on her mother, lead her into deeply shocking territory. Among other things, they uncover the fates of previously unheard of family members caught up in the Holocaust, as well as the past involvement of her political parents, previously unsuspected, in some of the greatest ideologies and upheavals of the twentieth century.

Meryllyn Moos, whose first novel this is, is the only daughter of the late economist Siegfried Moos and the poet and playwright Lotte Moos. Both parents, committed anti-fascists, were former Communists, Marxists who became disillusioned with Stalinism but remained dedicated to left-wing causes and activities. Siegfried and Lotte Moos were compelled to leave Germany as early as 1933, seeking refuge in Britain as political exiles. In 1936, however, Lotte left Britain for the Soviet Union to join the Irish Communist and NKVD courier Brian Goold-Verschöyle, contravening Party orders in so doing. Consequently, although Lotte Moos herself was eventually permitted to leave the Soviet Union, Goold-Verschöyle was condemned as a Trotskyite and died in the *Gulag*.

The fact that Moos's parents never spoke to their daughter, who was meanwhile growing up in post-war Durham, of these terrible events is probably not surprising. Their decision to keep silent is, of course, directly reflected in the decision of their fictional counterparts, the Weilheimers, who do likewise. But the

Mooses/Weilheimers go further than this in the totality of their silence: Anna's Jewish roots are concealed from her, as are the very names of her dead grandparents and aunt. Everything that might have linked her to her German-Jewish family and identity is kept secret, even the existence of some surviving cousins. The past is so painful that it must be completely suppressed. And the silence, once it has become the family's habitual *modus operandi*, encompasses other potentially less threatening areas too, such as Louise Weilheimer's creative writings: when Anna finally penetrates her mother's bedroom, previously off-limits to her, she finds, in her words, 'a lifetime's work' that she 'knew nothing of'.

As Anna, throughout the course of the novel, painfully seeks to make sense of her family's past, the interrelationships between the individual family members – both alive and dead – become redrawn and redefined. Even her relationship with her difficult mother, the latter demented and near the end of life, can be revisited. 'We have never had a conversation like this before,' says Anna when, almost at the end of the novel, she finds herself able to discuss, or at least refer to, the most taboo subject of all: her mother's sojourn in the Soviet Union with Dennis Fitzgerald, the fictional equivalent of Brian Goold-Verschyle. In addition, through the series of moving family letters and photographs that her father had kept concealed over the years in a large brown envelope, Anna develops a close if imaginary relationship with those dead grandparents of whom she had previously never heard. And finally there is Anna's relationship with her beloved son Sam, not an untroubled relationship, certainly, but a hopeful one, there being no place here for the silence that stifled the family relationships of previous generations.

This is, in short, an extraordinary book that traces the interrelationships between four generations of a refugee family in Britain, merging both fictional and non-fictional perspectives. It is an important book that deserves to be read.

Charmian Brinson

A tale for young and old

LUEGEN TOR: A GATEWAY TO ETERNITY
by Ron Wertheim

London: Olympia
(www.olympiapublishers.com),
2010, 190 pp. paperback, £5.99

The Luegen Tor is an ancient stone arch which is said to possess supernatural qualities: 'Anyone passing through to enter or leave the town with

intent to lie, deceive or oppress would cause the lump of rock on top of the arch to be spontaneously dislodged. Its fall onto the guilty would be sure to severely injure if not kill with one mighty blow on the head.' By the late 1920s-early 1930s, when the events depicted in this novel begin to unfold, the Tor is no more than a popular recreation area for families. But with the onset of the Nazi regime, local thugs seize the opportunity to make use of its mythic qualities to convert it into a summary execution site.

The structure of the novel is an exchange of correspondence in the mid-1950s between two members of the 'second generation' – the narrator (unnamed), who lives in England, and Jeanette, who lives in France. Their parents, close friends in Germany, had fled to England 20 years earlier. The narrator's parents (surname not given) had remained in England and prospered. Jeanette's parents, Inge and Paul Ferro, had moved on to France and were to feel the full force of Nazi brutality.

In 1929 Inge opens a milliner's shop in the (unnamed) German town. When she strikes up a friendship with a prominent member of the townfolk, the business begins to prosper. But with the political climate changing, it's not long before Inge and Paul's comfortable existence is threatened. (Oddly perhaps, it's a third of the way into the novel before the fact that both families are Jewish is mentioned.) Nazi thugs ransack the shop and drag Paul, a known anti-Nazi activist, away. In a particularly chilling episode, Paul, using presence of mind, manages (somewhat unconvincingly perhaps) to disrupt his execution at the Luegen Tor. Inge's influential friend dies in mysterious circumstances, reportedly at the Luegen Tor. Incidents of violence mount.

In 1933 the families emigrate to England. Jeanette is born. Three years after their arrival in England, the Ferros make a fateful decision to move to Paris for business reasons. In 1943 the family flee Paris, finally settling in Lyon, where they find refuge in the home of a compassionate family. Jeanette begins an Anne Frank-like romantic attachment with their hosts' son. As in Germany, non-Jewish neighbours are described as largely sympathetic to their plight.

But the Ferros' torment is by no means at an end. Once again Paul is picked up by the Germans. This time he doesn't come home: there are reports that he has been deported to the east. Years after the war, Inge still hopes he will return.

Now, in the mid-1950s, Inge and

Jeanette are living once again in Paris. They make a return trip to the German town, visiting both the grave of Kate, the sister who died tragically and whom Jeanette never knew, and the Luegen Tor, a sort of act of 'closure'.

The writing flows elegantly and the novel is easy to read. But there are a number of weaknesses.

First and foremost, the story is told in flashbacks which are by no means always easy to follow. Furthermore, some characters appear and then disappear too early. One would have liked to hear more, for example, about the old man who in dramatic circumstances tells Jeanette about his own son's murder at the Luegen Tor and then disappears almost literally into thin air. Finally, the significance of the subtitle, *A Gateway to Eternity*, is rather elusive.

A persistent irritation is the putting of clichés in quotation marks, for instance 'all doom and gloom', 'ride on the crest of a wave'. Moreover, there is a substantial amount of what might be termed 'Deutschglisch' – incorrect English grammar, often with regard to tenses. And why do we need redundant comma after comma?

Despite these weaknesses – many of which could have been dealt with by tighter proof-reading – Ron Wertheim has created an effective literary work, one suitable for generations young and old. A retired physicist and an AJR member, he has recently begun writing novels, 'a field of activity that has been his lifelong ambition', we are told. This tale is an auspicious beginning.

Hazel Beiny and Howard Spier

Theatre

A tale of two lawyers

JUDENFREI: LOVE AND DEATH IN HITLER'S GERMANY

by Kate Glover, directed by Tom Scott
New End Theatre, London

Bringing home the plight of Jews who suffered in the Holocaust, and thereby preserving the truth for future generations, is a valid and important aim. It is important for the sake of the victims and has the additional purpose, with the passing of time, of keeping Holocaust deniers at bay. The problem in drama, though, is to make the subject appealing enough to evoke empathy in a war-hardened generation. *Judenfrei* is loosely based on case studies shown in the exhibition Lawyers Without Rights, organised under the auspices of the Jewish Museum, the

continued overleaf

REVIEWS *continued from page 9*

German Federal Bar and Temple Church, where I saw it in June 2009.

Here, Kate Glover bases her characters on two of the lawyers: Wilhelm Dickmann, who fought for Germany in the First World War, and Dr Elisabeth Kohn, who was considered one of the most brilliant young women lawyers of her generation. But under Nazi anti-Jewish laws, they were both banned from practising their professions.

In the play, Wilhelm becomes Philipp Meir (Anthony Wolfe), complacent in his own career but concerned about the safety of his girlfriend, Hanna Lowenfeld, based on Elisabeth and played by Noa Bodner. There is no evidence that their original characters ever met.

The play opens in a Berlin café in 1938 as Philipp tries to persuade Hanna to leave Germany for Cuba. A human rights activist banned from practising law, she now works for the Jewish community and has a very public profile. She has been followed and clearly the Gestapo are on her case. As the family's sole breadwinner – she has an ageing mother and a dreamy artist sister – the intrepid Hanna is shocked at the suggestion that she should leave. But Philipp's self-importance is also misplaced. His father is dying of cancer; his sister devotes her life to caring for him and, despite his war record, he is soon barred from legal practice too. But his love for Hanna leads

him to pursue every avenue in his quest to save her.

Real or fictitious, we all know how these stories end. More than evoking the horror of the Nazi era, this play poses a simple moral dilemma: if you have a chance to escape, should you take it or should you stay for the sake of your loved ones? It was the question faced by many refugees and, in reverse, by every parent who sent their child to safety by way of the Kindertransport.

But well-intentioned though it is, the play feels rather static. Characters offstage simply sit around the side, a technique that can sometimes work but here it lacks dramatic edge and borders on the amateur. Nothing of the atmosphere of 1930s Berlin – the culture, the sense of what has been and is soon to be eradicated – is evoked. Apart from the sound effects of shattering glass signifying Kristallnacht, little moves. Noa Bodner is effective as the staunch and dignified Hanna and Tim Thomas gives perhaps the best performance of all as the courageous Dr Aladar Meier, Philipp's dying father fighting his emotions at the prospect of saying goodbye to his son. Philipp's final vow to rebuild Germany's judicial system evokes Dickmann's post-war role in re-establishing Bavaria's administrative court and setting up the Nuremberg military tribunal. His bleak optimism joins us to the future and offers a bitter tremor of the tragedy.

Gloria Tessler

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY
FEBRUARY

Wed 2 Judith Butler (University of California, Berkeley), **'Arendt, Cohabitation and the Dispersion of Sovereignty'** Second Hannah Arendt Lecture in Modern Jewish Thought, University of Sussex Arts A (Asa Briggs Lecture Theatre – to be confirmed), 5.00 pm. Booking not required. Tel 01273 678771

Thurs 10 Dr Nathan Abrams (University of Wales, Bangor) **FilmTalk** (organised by the Leo Baeck Institute London and the Wiener Library) **'(Jewish) men and (gentile) women can't be friends because the sex part always gets in the way'** At Wiener Library, 7.00 pm. Tel 020 7580 3493. Admission free but places are limited

Mon 14 Dr E. M. Batley, **'A Prophetic Vision of Cameron's "Big Society"?' Lessing and Schroeder's Responses to English Freemasonry'** Club 43

Wed 16 Willibald Steimetz (Bielefeld), **'Thoughts on a History of Political and Social Key Concepts in Twentieth-Century Germany'** German Historical Institute London (GHIL) in co-operation with St Antony's College, Oxford. At GHIL, 17 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1, Seminar Room, 5.00 pm (tea 4.30). Tel 020 7309 2050

Mon 21 Dr Gerben Zaagsma (Berlin), **'Migration and Politics in Jewish History: A Comparison of Jewish Migrant Responses to Anti-Semitism in Paris and London in the Late 1930s'** Centre for German-Jewish Studies, Meeting Room Arts B127, 4.30 pm (tea 4.00 pm). Tel 01273 678771

Mon 21 Irene Lawford-Hinrichsen, **'Robert Stolz'** Club 43

Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Ernst Fleisch on 020 7624 7740 or Leni Ehrenberg on 020 7286 9698

Kindertransport from Vienna to Sweden

Though an avid reader of the *AJR Journal*, I have never come across any mention of transports from Vienna to Sweden in June 1939.

I left my mother in Vienna by herself as, following his release from Dachau, where he spent the winter of 1938-39, my father was able to go to England in March 1939.

My mother and I spent the intervening months going from one embassy to another in search of entry visas. Eventually my mother obtained a domestic permit for England, but one that excluded a child. So, when the opportunity arose for me to go to Sweden, she was brave enough to accept it and send me. She herself arrived in England only two weeks before the war started.

In Öregrund, a coastal city north of Stockholm, I was taken in by a deeply religious Christian family. They had no



Companions in Sweden, 1941-42: (from left) Hansi, Ruth, Heini, Helga, Else

children of their own and the husband was blind, so to take me in was a very Samaritan act – especially as they spoke no German and I, of course, no Swedish. They lived in a simple little wooden house with the latrine at the bottom of the garden. The husband earned a living weaving baskets. Quite a culture shock for a nine-year-old from a middle class family with a Kinderfräulein and Köchin at home (my mother and father had been in business together)!

I stayed with this family for a year, following which I was transferred to the coastal city of Gävle and to another family not as religious or Samaritan-minded.

The 18 months I spent in Gävle were the unhappiest of my life. When my parents managed to send me some money to have my photo taken after nearly two years' separation, my hostess said to me 'Don't waste your money on a photo – your parents are no longer alive as London is being bombed daily.'

After 18 months the family applied to host more children. They were being paid for us by the Jewish organisation in Sweden.

After a while, two sisters, Hansi and Else, arrived. They were 14 and 12 respectively and were from Germany. The three of us slept in one bed.

When Hansi saw what was going

continued opposite

Land for peace not the real issue

The leading article in last December's issue of the Journal, 'In defence of doves', urges Israel to adopt a policy of land for peace. It is not clear why this should be necessary as Israel has always been willing to exchange land for peace. Indeed, Israel made precisely such an offer at Camp David, which was considered to meet most of the Palestinians' requirements, but this offer was rejected. Also, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and dismantled Jewish settlements there, but its reward was to be bombarded by rockets.

In any case, it is not a question of Israelis, or Jews, coming to an agreement among themselves – the agreement has to be reached with the other side. The arguments among Jews are largely irrelevant. What *is* relevant is what the Arabs, or Palestinians, require or want and what their demands are. In this connection, it is interesting that at the same time as the above-mentioned article was published, there was a report in the *Jewish Chronicle* under the heading 'Palestinians are rejecting peace'.

This report quotes the findings of a survey of Palestinian public opinion in which a majority supported the proposition that the goal should be to start with two states, but then to move on to one Palestinian state. A greater majority believed that over time Palestinians should work to get back all the land for a Palestinian state, and an

even greater majority said it was right to reject the peace deal at Camp David which would have resulted in a two-state solution.

This concentration on what Israel should do misses the point – which is what do the Palestinians want and what is their objective? It is not difficult to find what many Palestinians think and believe as this is contained in the PLO Charter and in Hamas's manifesto. The PLO Charter states that Jews are citizens of the states to which they belong and to which, presumably, they should return, and goes on to make the definitive statement that claims of historical or religious ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with the facts of history. Hamas's manifesto makes even more outrageous statements and quotes the sayings of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion as if they were established facts.

What should concern us far more than futile arguments among Jews is the campaign being waged by certain left-wing and 'liberal' factions to vilify Israel and to incite hatred. This campaign is essentially anti-Jewish, despite all attempts to deny this. People are almost being brainwashed into being anti-Israeli and it is disturbing to find that some of the most strident critics are Jews themselves, whose motivation is unclear but who seem to be opposed to the existence of a Jewish state.

These critics indulge in false com-

parisons, such as referring to Israel as an apartheid state when the situation in Israel/Palestine has nothing to do with apartheid. A far truer comparison would be to compare the calls for a trade or cultural boycott against Israel with the boycotts which took place in Germany before the war, and the trade boycotts against Jews in Poland in the 1930s.

It is very instructive to find at a time when so much anti-Israel sentiment is being stirred up that recently revealed secret documents show that Arab countries have been urging the USA to take action against Iran, which indicates what they consider to be the real danger in the Middle East. Those who are campaigning against Israel are doing Iran's work for it, whether deliberately or unconsciously.

It is hardly necessary to urge Israel to give up land for peace, as it would almost certainly do so anyway. But would Hamas, and many Palestinians, accept land for peace, would it be real and genuine peace, and would Iran agree? The real question is what do the Palestinians want and what are they after, and the problem is to stop the continual hate campaign against Israel, and to show that it takes two sides to make peace, and not one. For the real issue is probably not the exchange of land for peace, but for the Arabs to accept the existence of the State of Israel.

Mendel Storz

continued from opposite page

on in this family (I will spare you the details!) she said she would apply to the Jewish organisation to have us moved, which we were soon afterwards.

A lady came from Stockholm, waited for us outside school, took us to the host family and told us to pack our belongings. We left on the same day.

Events moved fast. I was so relieved to be leaving this family. Without Hansi I wouldn't have known what to do or have had the courage to do anything about my misery.

We were taken to a children's home in Ebbarp, where I settled in with all the other Jewish children from Austria and Germany.

I stayed there for about a year. One day, in November 1942, the matron told me I was going to England to my parents. Taken completely by surprise, I had again to pack my belongings, was collected by someone and taken to Stockholm, where I waited for further

instructions. All these events left me reeling with emotions I couldn't really express.

The journey was to be by a small plane, which had to fly over Norway. Norway was occupied by the Germans and planes were frequently being shot down, but at the time I was totally unaware of this.

There were only about nine passengers on board, among them an English lady who had been visiting relatives in Sweden and had been caught out by the war. This lady looked after me and, when we landed in Aberdeen, helped me to phone my parents in London.

While my parents were aware the Red Cross was trying to arrange my journey to England, because of the sensitivity of flight information they had no idea when this was going to happen. After my phone call telling them I would be on the overnight

train from Aberdeen to Kings Cross, my mother fainted!

I found the reunion with my parents very odd. I had become quite estranged from them and my poor mother thought she could pick up from when she had last seen me as a nine-year-old four years earlier.

I should mention that I didn't feel up to getting in touch with any of the children I left behind. I regret this and would love to know what happened to the sisters Hansi and Else, who were in Gävle with me and then came to the children's home in Ebbarp. Their surname might have been Rippner, from Berlin.

If anyone who was on the Kindertransport from Vienna to Sweden reads this, I would love to hear from you. Also, if anyone knows the whereabouts of Hansi and Else, please get in touch.

Helga Zitcer (née Eichner)
helgazitcer@btinternet.com

INSIDE the AJR

'Songs from around the World'



(from left) Kay Fyne, Werner Lachs, entertainers Tamar (Kay's daughter) and Frankie, Ruth Lachs

Manchester's Chanukah Social was once again a great success. Nearly 50 members and friends attended a delightful concert given by Liverpool songstress Tamar, the daughter of one of the stalwarts of the Liverpool AJR group. Tamar's performance, which she entitled 'Songs from around the World', had something for everybody. As usual, there was plenty of tasty food. We again thank Susanne Green for all the help she gave us to ensure the success of the occasion. *Werner Lachs*

Ealing round table

We had a lovely afternoon seated at a round table with a *menorah* in the middle. After a challenging general knowledge quiz, we lit the candles and discussed Chanukah customs in different countries and communities. Finally, we enjoyed tea and doughnuts and a chat in the gaze of the candles. *Leslie Sommer*

Next meeting: 1 Feb. Alf Keiles, 'Jews and Jazz'

Oxford Chanukah feast

We lit the candles and enjoyed a quiz, latkes and each other's company. Thank you, all who organised the feast!

Anne Selinger

Next meeting: 15 Feb. Prof Gerald Curzon, 'Jewish Mutual Achievement: Its Origins'

Wembley CF Celebrating the last day of Chanukah

It was supposed to be a special meeting to celebrate the last day of Chanukah as well

Chanukah lunch, Newcastle 2010



as the birthday of the only centenarian in our group, but she had committed herself to another event. Conversation flowed freely. Myrna did an excellent job of lighting the Chanukah candles and, as usual, the tea and cake were delicious, as were the Chanukah goodies. *Irene Stanton*

Next meeting: 16 Feb. Social Get-together

Glasgow Chanukah Party



(from left) Angela and David Shapiro, Howard and Claire Singerman, guest speaker Dr Howard Cohen – 'The History of Cantorial Music' – Agnes Isaacs, Steven and Hilary Anson

Joint Chanukah Party 'a really fantastic morning'

North London had a joint Chanukah Party with Edgware, Hendon and Radlett groups. Over 30 members attended and a really great time was had by all. Not only were the refreshments tops but Lynne Bradley, jumping into the breach when entertainer Naomi Hyamson had to cancel due to illness, gave a wonderfully amusing performance depicted as a biographical resume. A really fantastic morning! Thank you, Myrna, Hazel and Esther, for your hard work – we really appreciated it.

Herbert Haberberg

North London next meeting: 24 Feb. Jane Rosenberg, 'Jewish Musical Journeys'

Book Club stimulation

Meeting at Costa in Temple Fortune, we discussed Jenny Salaman Manson's *What It Feels Like To Be Me*. Jenny is a delightful lady and a most interesting speaker. The conversation was extremely lively and it didn't matter whether we had read the book or not. I always look forward to these afternoons and come away stimulated. We meet every two months – do come, you'll enjoy it!

Margarette Weiss

Next meeting: 23 Feb. Discussion and refreshments

Temple Fortune A Chanukah miracle

We had a memorable Chanukah meeting, beginning with Esther's quiz, followed by lighting eight candles and then a delicious tea with doughnuts. After tea we spoke

Yorkshire Chanukah Party: 'An uplifting afternoon'



(from left) Suzanne Rappaport Ripton (Leeds), Lisle Carter (Leeds), Gilli Rawson (Leeds), Erika Turr (Leeds), Lola Michaelis (Bradford), Jeanette Rubenstein (Sheffield)

Members travelled from Bradford and Sheffield to join Leeds for a wonderful performance of jazz and klezmer music, which was followed by a scrumptious tea with the inevitable doughnuts and, of course, lighting of candles. The afternoon was uplifting and everyone left with a smile on their face.

Barbara Cammerman

Next Leeds CF meeting: 14 February

The Four Seasons

My glass-work was commissioned by the Progressive Synagogue in Hamelin, on the site of the old synagogue, which was burnt down on Kristallnacht. I chose as my theme 'The Four Seasons',



Photo: Owen Studwick, *Hinckley Times*

with trees as the centrepiece. Trees are not only powerful but also changeable, like life itself. They have strong roots, with which many Jews can identify. Wherever we are, we are mindful of our roots, which bind us together. The seasons are synonymous with our lives: 'Spring' – a new beginning (which so many of us have had to experience); 'Summer' – the fruition of all our toil; 'Autumn' – the harvesting of our endeavours; and 'Winter' – the need to rest, take stock and look forward to the future. *Ruth Schwiening*

about our earliest Chanukah memories. The most remarkable of these was Rosette Wolf's story of how, as a seven-year-old in December 1944, while fleeing the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium, she and her family were saved by a Chanukah miracle.

David Lang

Next meeting: 17 Feb. 'Children of the Third Reich'

HGS Down memory lane

Myra Sampson took us on a trip down memory lane with a talk so well researched

OUTING TO KEW GARDENS Wednesday 30 March 2011

The AJR Outreach Groups' Department is arranging an outing to Kew Gardens on Wednesday 30 March 2011. This will be a whole day with lunch in the restaurant.

Explore glasshouses, landscapes and 250 years of history at the world's most famous garden! Climb to the tree tops, delve into rainforest, or discover more on a guided tour which will form part of our visit!

The land train is available for those who have difficulty walking long distances.

**For further details, please call
Susan Harrod, Regional Groups
Administrator, on 020 8385 3070**

that no stone was left unturned. We were reminded about teddy boys, shared party lines on the telephone, and the National Anthem being played at the end of the day's television. Myra also covered the 1950s' slant on fashion days in England, art, music, theatre and films. A thoroughly enjoyable morning. *Hazel Beiny*

Next meeting: 14 Feb. Natasha Solomons, author of 'Mr Rosenblum's List'

Essex First AJR members' wedding

Miriam Stein, 71, fiancée of Leslie Kleinman, 81, read some beautiful poetry she had written and told how she had met Leslie after he arrived from Canada in 2008. They are getting married in Israel this

continued on page 15

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

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Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle
Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

LONDON TRIP TUESDAY 22 MARCH TO THURSDAY 24 MARCH 2011

The trip will include a visit to the Jewish Museum; a theatre outing to 'War Horse'; a visit to the House of Commons with a talk by the Speaker, the Rt Hon John Bercow; a Guided Tour of London Attractions; a visit to the Olympic site; a visit to Foreman's Smoked Salmon factory with lunch included; a dinner with London AJR members (see below); accommodation at a London hotel.

**Open to all members
For further details, please call
Susan Harrod at Head Office
on 020 8385 3070**

LONDON DINNER WEDNESDAY 23 MARCH 2011

On Wednesday 23 March there will be a dinner at Belsize Square Synagogue to coincide with the London trip. The speaker will be Sir Sydney Samuelson CBE, who in 1991 was appointed the first British Film Commissioner. He has been an Officer of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts for over 20 years. He became Chairman of the Management Board in 1976 and is a Permanent Trustee. In 1985 he received The Michael Balcon Award and, in 1993, a Fellowship, the Academy's highest honour. In 1995 he was awarded a Knighthood for services to the British Film Commission.

**If you live in the London area
and wish to attend, please call
Susan Harrod at Head Office
on 020 8385 3070**

Norfolk (Norwich)
Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

North London
Ruth Jacobs 020 8445 3366

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Susie Bates 01235 526 702

Pinner (HA Postal District)
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Weald of Kent
Janet Weston 01959 564 520

Wembley
Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

Wessex (Bournemouth)
Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

West Midlands (Birmingham)
Fred Austin 01384 252310

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

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB Wednesday 16 February 2011

Robert Rietty
'Radiations from a
Golden City'

**PLEASE NOTE THAT SPEAKERS
START AT 12 NOON**

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

KT-AJR

Kindertransport special
interest group

Monday 7 February 2011

Deena Kestenbaum
'History and Identity'

**KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH
WILL BE SERVED AT 12.30 PM ON MONDAYS**

Reservations required

Please telephone 020 7328 0208

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday
9.30 am – 3.30 pm

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS
CLOSED ON TUESDAYS**

February Afternoon Entertainment

Tue	1	CLOSED
Wed	2	Pinchas Toshner
Thur	3	Ronnie Goldberg
Mon	7	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	8	CLOSED
Wed	9	Jen Gould
Thur	10	Michelle Wolf
Mon	14	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	15	CLOSED
Wed	16	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	17	William Smith
Mon	21	Kards & Games Klub – Monday Movie Matinee
Tue	22	CLOSED
Wed	23	Michael Heaton & Lynn Radnedge
Thur	24	BINGO
Mon	28	Kards & Games Klub

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

**Agnes Isaacs, Scotland and Newcastle
Co-ordinator**
0755 1968 593

Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator
020 8385 3077

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Child Survivors Association-AJR
Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Eisenklam, Hilda Our dear mother passed away on 12 December. A true Viennese lady. Much loved and will be sorely missed by her daughters Barbara and Catherine and sons-in-law Richard and Danny.

Herz, Lotte (née Charlotte Fackenheim) Born 14 December 1909 in Kassel, Germany, died peacefully 13 December 2010 in Muswell Hill, London. Mourned by family and friends.

Hoselitz, Kurt My father, a member of the AJR for most of his adult life, arrived in England as a refugee from Austria in 1938, married and had a family here. Although not a religious man or a practising Jew, his early experiences as a boy and student in Vienna shaped his values. He had a very successful career as a research scientist but, from the point of view of his family, our overwhelming memory will be of his beaming smile, his enthusiasm for life and his welcoming manner. Following the death of his wife, Annemarie Hoselitz (née Meyer), after a marriage of 67 years, he felt he had nothing left to live for. We will miss him enormously but are glad he is now at peace.

Marflow, Margaret Passed away 17 December. Sadly missed by relatives and friends.

Stechler, Lotte Wife of Nachum, passed away peacefully at age of 94 on Sunday 5 December 2010. Remembered with much love by family and many friends.

CLASSIFIED

Quingo Air Scooter for sale. Almost new, hardly used, £1,500. Please call **Ruth Harris** on **020 8346 3597**.

Searching for Kinder

who were pupils at the Stotley Rough School in Haslemere, Surrey 1938-1939 and knew Maria Mercedes.

Please contact
erich@classictours.co.uk.

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Sunday 15 May 2011

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Price includes transport to and from Bournemouth from Cleve Road, a sandwich lunch on journey to Bournemouth, dinner, bed and breakfast, outing, cards and entertainment.

As always, places are limited so please book early.

Please contact **Carol Rossen** or **Lorna Moss** on **0208 385 3080** for a booking form.

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OBITUARY

Edwin Roth, 1924-2010: A journalist's tribute

Edwin Roth, who has died in Vienna aged 86, was one of Fleet Street's most colourful foreign correspondents. After fleeing from the Third Reich, he became a journalist at the age of 18 and over the next 60 years witnessed many of the crises of the second half of the twentieth century.

His trenchant reports appeared in English, German, Hebrew and other newspapers. Among fellow journalists he was regarded as opinionated, irrepresible and sometimes infuriating. But behind his prickly facade, he was a sensitive, troubled man, outraged by Nazism and immensely proud of his Jewish heritage and his people's post-war resurrection.

Edwin was born in Vienna on 24 March 1924 into a comfortable family. He had a younger brother, Georg, born four years later.

Edwin's father, Norbert, had a silk cloth business in Vienna's Second District; his mother, Sophie, was descended from the eighteenth-century chief rabbi of Prague, Ezekiel Landau. Her brother, Leopold Landau, was president of the Polish Temple in the Leopoldsgasse, where Edwin celebrated his barmitzva in 1937.

By then, the family business had been ruined by the economic troubles of the 1930s. With Europe sliding towards war, the Roths feared for their lives even more than their livelihoods. Edwin was sent to England, where he enrolled at Beaconsfield College, in Hove. Months later, his parents and brother reached Manchester, where he joined them after the closure of his college.

In October 1940, Edwin's brother died of the cancer which had weakened him in Vienna. Meanwhile, Edwin and his father were interned as enemy aliens at Huyton and the Isle of Man. Released a year later, Edwin resumed his schooling



Edwin Roth (left) with Herbert Morrison

in Manchester and attended the city's college of technology.

In late 1944, the family moved to London, where Norbert found work at the Zionist Federation of Great Britain. Sophie worked at Selfridge's store and for the kosher meals service.

As war ended, Edwin decided to become a journalist. He began as a reporter for UPI, sometimes using the name Eric Roland. Many of his first signed articles appeared in Scandinavia. He then joined the staff of the London *Evening Standard*.

In the following decades he established himself as a freelance foreign correspondent. He wrote for mass-circulation magazines such as *Everybody's* and *Parade* and broadcast for American, German and Austrian radio stations. Following a trip to the US, he established links with several North American papers as well as the Argentine German-language *Tageblatt* and Hebrew and German-language papers in Israel. From the late 1950s, his reports also appeared in regional and city newspapers throughout Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

He reported the troubles in Cyprus and Algeria and covered the Israeli-Arab wars of 1956, 1967 and 1973 as well as the Eichmann trial in 1961. He also reported the overseas tours of John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev and the 1968 students'

revolt in Paris. In the same year, he won a coveted award of the US Overseas Press Club for his coverage of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. He also wrote two books, not yet published, on British politics and a novel about Israel.

When I first met him in the mid-1960s, he was a familiar figure at international press conferences, where politicians and others flinched before his lacerating tongue. He once provoked UN Secretary General U Thant to fury by accusing him of triggering the Six-Day War by withdrawing the UN peace-keeping forces from Gaza and Sinai.

At such press conferences Edwin Roth was not only heard but frequently seen in press photographs. In a home-made collage of these pictures, he is consorting with such figures as Churchill, Attlee, Eisenhower, Adenauer, India's Nehru and Jordan's King Abdullah.

After retirement Edwin continued to maintain a home in London. But towards the end of his life he spent an increasing amount of time in Vienna, where he lived happily with his devoted partner, the historian Dr Evelyn Adunka, an expert on twentieth-century Austrian Jewry.

Towards the end of his life Edwin discovered a photograph which gave him a different kind of satisfaction. It was one of a series showing the transfer of the coffin of Theodor Herzl from Vienna to Jerusalem after the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948. On seeing the photograph, Edwin recalled that his mother was among the group of Vienna Zionist ladies who had made it for Herzl's final journey to the re-born Jewish state.

Maurice Samuelson

Maurice Samuelson, formerly of the Financial Times, was editor of the Jewish Observer and Middle East Review in 1967-74.

INSIDE THE AJR *continued from page 13*

April. Esther said this was the first wedding between AJR members. *Larry Lisner*
Next meeting: 8 Feb. Jim Warsdell, former editor of Southend Echo

A jolly get-together at Café Imperial
 Accents were discussed – those that have them and those that don't. Some remarked on how, even after over 70 years in this country, they were still being asked 'Where are you from?' A jolly get-together as usual!
Hazel Beiny

Radlett Jews and Jazz
 Throughout the 20th century Jewish

composers provided a high proportion of popular music in the USA. Alf Keiles has an encyclopaedic knowledge of this music and a repertoire of recordings. He played us a selection and gave us a morning of excellent entertainment. *Fritz Starer*
Next meeting: 16 Feb. Bridge McGing, 'My Father's Roses'

Wessex Chanukah Party
 We held our 5771 Chanukah party at the Bournemouth Reform Synagogue. After an excellent tea, we took part in an enjoyable general quiz, compiled by Myrna.
George Ettinger

Cambridge The Bronze Age project
 One of our members, Fred Kramer, gave a most interesting account of his wide-ranging voluntary work for over 20 years at the Flag Fen Bronze Age project near Peterborough, an archaeological site of great historical importance.

Keith Lawson
Next meeting: 17 Feb. Natalie Benhamin, 'Story of the Basque Children'

ALSO MEETING IN FEBRUARY
Edgware 15 Feb. Alfred Simms, 'The History of Berlin'



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



The national DNA

Despite claims to the contrary, Israel is a secular country. There is, however, a modicum of truth in the assertion that the stream of Judaism defined as Orthodox exerts undue influence, both political and social, over various aspects of life in Israel. Notwithstanding, the majority of Israelis remain doggedly secular, preferring to go to the beach, visit scenic beauty spots or frequent shopping centres on the Sabbath rather than attend synagogue.

Anyone landing at Ben-Gurion airport can see this for themselves. The airport functions on Saturdays and Jewish holidays (except Yom Kippur), airport staff are neither arrayed in *kapotas* and *streimels*, nor do they sport long side-locks. Some of the men fulfilling these functions may be wearing skullcaps, or *kippot*, but those appurtenances represent a wide range of religious belief and political allegiance.

Venture onto the streets or beaches of Tel Aviv and you will be hard put to find Orthodox Jews there, these being more visible on the streets of Jerusalem. Nonetheless, Tel Aviv is far from being a completely secular city and Jerusalem is by no means a completely religious one. Neighbourhoods that were once

considered wholly secular in both cities now harbour residents who observe some religious requirements. On the whole, however, most segments of the two groups are able to live side by side in relative harmony.

The majority of Israelis do not identify themselves formally with any religious movement. Since the rhythm of life in Israel is in step with the Jewish yearly cycle, acknowledging one's Jewish identity does not necessarily involve belonging to an organised group or attending synagogue. It is part of the national DNA, as it were.

The Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements, which straddle the region between Orthodoxy and secularism, have gradually been growing in strength in the 62 years since Israel's establishment. Currently there are 24 Reform congregations in Israel and over 50 Conservative ones, as well as a handful of Reconstructionist synagogues.

In addition, there are organisations such as B'nai B'rith, Rotary and Lions which can be defined as areligious and are dedicated to doing benevolent work, advocating good citizenship and promoting tolerance. The organisations as a whole take on challenges in the

fields of welfare and education in order to benefit future generations. B'nai B'rith also encourages the immigration to Israel of world Jewry.

Because Israel's electoral system is based on proportional representation this means that special interest groups, including those based on religious affiliation, can gain representation in the Knesset more easily than would be the case if we had a system based on regional representation. As the readers of this journal are doubtless aware, that has its good and bad points too.

Thus it has come about that procedures governing events such as marriage, conversion and divorce are controlled by the Orthodox rabbinate. Some people claim that this is because undue political influence is wielded by Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox groups. However, whereas until recently there was no such thing as civil marriage in Israel, and this is still the case as far as Jews are concerned, for non-Jews this is now an option. There is undoubtedly a movement away from the traditional Jewish form of marriage among secular young Israelis, some of whom opt to go abroad – preferably to the neighbouring island of Cyprus – to perform a civil marriage ceremony, which is recognised in Israel, rather than being obliged to comply with the requirements of the rabbinate.

While for the moment secular Jews continue to constitute the majority in Israel, demographic projections do not augur well for the future.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *continued from page 7*

in the January issue. However, I feel that she has misquoted the Jewish proverb at the end of her article. Surely the correct quotation is 'It is only those that nobody remembers who are really dead.'

This is the true meaning of the *Yizkor* prayer and it is therefore incumbent on future generations to remember the six million victims of the Holocaust when we, the first and second generation survivors, are no longer alive to do so.

Betty Bloom
London NW3

'BENEFITS CULTURE'

Sir – Excuse me, Leslie Brent (January, Letters)! There is nothing wrong with the National Health Service. It is the 'benefits culture' that is the problem. 'National Assistance', as it was first known, was *temporary* relief for people who had fallen on hard times *through no fault of their own*. Now, it has developed into a way of life for the work-shy (third generation), who have never done a stroke of work.

What is so irritating is that the working and thrifty people have to support the

scroungers with their taxes. As a result, it is said that it is useless to save money as those not on 'benefits' have to pay for everything.

Every time a government tries to do something about this abuse of the 'welfare state', a howl of protest goes up: 'What about the poor children from deprived families?' So nothing can be done. Not even Maggie Thatcher could do anything about it!

(Mrs) Annette Saville
(as from Finchley Memorial Hospital)