

# AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## Across the divide to Eastern Europe (Part 2)

Before 1918, the eastern territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – those that were after 1945 to be situated behind the Iron Curtain – contained some of the largest concentrations of Jews in the world outside the Pale of Settlement in Russia. The Jewish communities of the Dual Monarchy, spread across the present-day states of Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania, were far more diverse than those of the German Empire discussed in last month's issue of the Journal.

No area of what was once Austria-Hungary is more redolent of Eastern Europe's vanished Jewish past than Galicia (Austrian Poland). Part of the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy, Galicia came under Habsburg rule in 1772 and took its nineteenth-century form under the settlement reached at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. It was a crescent-shaped territory stretching from Cracow in the west to the Romanian border in the south-east; the western part, around Cracow, now forms part of Poland, while the eastern part, around Lviv (Lemberg), is in Ukraine. At its western extremity was the small town of Auschwitz (Oświęcim), which became part of Poland in 1918 and was annexed to the Third Reich in 1939. In its far south-east were towns like Tarnopol, Buczacz, Kolomea and Stryj, with a mixed population of Poles, Ukrainians and Jews.

Lemberg, perhaps more than any other Habsburg city, was associated with the rapidly expanding urban communities of eastern Jews, hard-working and aspirational, eager for cultural and educational self-improvement, but also conscious of the values, traditions and religious practices of their birthplaces. The arrival of the German-speaking bureaucracy of the Habsburg state gave the city a German-Austrian character and appearance in its orderliness and in the popularity of its coffee-houses. By 1910, 28 per cent of the city's population was Jewish. Among its celebrated residents

was Martin Buber, born in Vienna in 1878 but raised from the age of three by his grandfather in Lemberg. The second largest city in eastern Galicia was Brody, a major commercial centre that became known as 'Trieste on the continent', offering an opening to Russia



The Dohány Synagogue in Budapest

just as Trieste gave Austria-Hungary an outlet to the Mediterranean. Brody was also known as the 'Galician Jerusalem' since Jews formed over 80 per cent of its population and it was an important centre of enlightened culture and of Judaism; for a time the founder of Hasidism, the Baal Shem Tov, had lived there.

The principal city of Polish-dominated western Galicia was Cracow, capital of Poland until the early seventeenth century. Following the foundation of Kazimierz in 1335 by King Casimir the Great as an outlying settlement for Jews, Cracow became a major centre of Jewish life and culture though its Jewish residents also suffered periodic bouts of persecution. Much of the cultural and intellectual elite of other towns in western Galicia, such as Tarnow or Rzeszów, was Jewish. Around Przemyśl the Austrians constructed one of the largest defensive fortresses in Europe but in 1914 it failed to stem the advancing Russian armies. The atrocities of the Holocaust have, perhaps understandably, obscured historical memories of the brutal treatment meted out by the Russian armies to the Jewish communities in the Austrian territories occupied in 1914-15.

The Austrian crown lands of Bohemia and Moravia were under Habsburg rule

for considerably longer than Galicia and were correspondingly closer culturally to Austria. This was reflected in the fact that their Jewish population was largely German-speaking. The jewel in the crown of Bohemian Jewry was Prague, whose Jewish community has acquired almost mythical status. Prague was home to Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, creator of the legendary figure of the Golem, to the thirteenth-century Old New Synagogue and to the celebrated Old Jewish Cemetery. Franz Kafka, probably the most influential Jewish writer of modern times, was born in Prague in 1883; the city can be sensed in seminal works like *The Trial* and *Metamorphosis*.

Brno (Brünn), the capital of Moravia, also has a long association with the Jews. The city's most famous sight is the Villa Tugendhat, constructed in 1929-30 for a Jewish couple of that name by the modernist architect Mies van der Rohe. Moravia contributed notably to the high culture of the Habsburg Empire: Sigmund Freud was born in Příbor (Freiberg) and Gustav Mahler was brought up in Jihlava (Iglau) on the border between Moravia and Bohemia. A Torah scroll from Moravská Ostrava (Mährisch-Ostrau) is on permanent loan to Kingston upon Thames synagogue, a memorial to the region's lost Jewish past.

At the eastern end of the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy lay Bukovina, where the original Romanian majority was increasingly diluted by Ukrainians, Poles, Hungarians, Germans and Jews. Under Habsburg rule from 1775, Bukovina passed to Romania in 1918. Its northern part, annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 and re-occupied by Romania between 1941 and 1944, now forms part of Ukraine. Though it was the capital of a small, remote province, Czernowitz (now Chernivtsi) occupied a special position in the artistic and intellectual world of the Habsburg Empire, a 'little Vienna' on the River Prut where a prodigious appetite for culture led to a remarkable flourishing of

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## ↪ Across the divide to Eastern Europe (Part 2) *continued*

German-language literary and intellectual life. The Jews, who came to form one third of the city's population and spoke a Viennese German spiced with Yiddish and Ukrainian words, dominated the city's cultural institutions. Czernowitz was the birthplace of the celebrated poets Paul Celan and Rose Ausländer and the novelist Aharon Appelfeld, Holocaust survivors who continued the city's tradition of Jewish high culture into the post-war era.

The Jews in the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy were a case apart, insofar as they tended to speak Hungarian in preference to German. In those parts of the pre-1918 Kingdom of Hungary where Hungarian was spoken, the Jewish population tended to assimilate into Hungarian society, since the Magyars were the ruling ethnic group. Despite a long history of discrimination and persecution, the Jews of Hungary repeatedly displayed their patriotic allegiance to the country in which they lived. In the revolution of 1848-49, Jews joined with the insurgent Hungarian forces fighting for liberation from the Habsburg yoke. The revolutionaries promised equal rights and freedom from discrimination for all; Jews were granted full civic rights by the National Assembly in July 1849. But the revolution was also a national uprising; the upsurge of inflamed nationalism that it provoked led to an outburst of anti-Semitic feeling and to ugly atrocities against Jews. The crushing of the revolution in 1849 (two weeks after the legislation granting citizenship to Jews) halted the democratic movement for a decade, but the reforms of the 1860s culminated in the lasting emancipation of Hungary's Jews. They proceeded to establish a prominent, sometimes a dominating, position in commerce, the professions and the country's cultural and intellectual life.

Though Hungary was largely ruled by its landowning elites, Jews were mostly protected, at least until 1918. This allowed the Jews of Budapest, the largest by far of Hungary's Jewish communities, to flourish. The city was the birthplace of many eminent Jews, including Theodor Herzl, founder of Zionism, and it boasted the monumental Dohány Street Synagogue. Other cities such as Miskolc, Debrecen, Győr and Szombathely also contained sizable Jewish communities. Seven of the ten Nobel Prize winners born in Hungary were Jewish. The Jewish proportion of the capital's population reached 23 per cent, earning it the back-handed compliment of being renamed 'Judapest' by Karl Lueger, the anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna. Before the First World War, Hungary had no

anti-Semitic political party to compare with Lueger's Christian Socials in Austria; only after the defeat of Austria-Hungary in 1918, and Hungary's loss of some two thirds of its territory under the Treaty of Trianon, did anti-Semitic resentments come to the fore.

The Jewish communities in the other regions of pre-1918 Hungary fared poorly, as minorities amidst ethnic groups that were themselves subject nationalities under Magyar domination. The large Jewish community in Slovakia, Hungarian until 1918, included a cultured, German-speaking middle class in western cities like Bratislava (Pozsony in Hungarian, Pressburg in German), but tended to be poorer, more traditional and Yiddish-speaking in eastern cities like Košice (Kassa, Kaschau), with Nitra and Banská Bystrica in between.

In distant, impoverished Transylvania, which passed to and fro between Hungary and Romania in the period of the World Wars, the presence of a German community, the Siebenbürger Sachsen, complicated the ethnic situation further. Most of the region's principal centres of population, such as Brasov (Brasso in Hungarian, Kronstadt in German), Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg), Sibiu (Nagyszeben, Hermannstadt) and Oradea (Nagyvárad, Großwardein), had substantial Jewish communities, which suffered from the ethnic rivalry between Romanians, Hungarians and Germans, as did that in Timișoara (Temesvár) in the neighbouring Banat region. In Ruthenia (also known as Subcarpathia), one of the Empire's most remote and backward areas, Jews were largely concentrated in the main towns, Mukachevo (Munkács) and Uzhhorod, centres of Hungarian-speaking culture surrounded by a rural population of Ruthenians (Ukrainians). The region became part of Czechoslovakia in 1918 and is now part of Ukraine.

**Anthony Grenville**

## 'German and Austrian Refugees: Their Impact and Personal Legacy'

Tuesday 10 - Wednesday 11  
September 2013

The AJR is once again joining forces with the London Jewish Cultural Centre (LJCC) and Sussex University's Centre for German-Jewish Studies (CGJS) to convene a seminar, which will take place at the LJCC, Ivy House, on Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 September 2013.

Building on presentations, discussions and lectures in the past two years, the three organisations have come together to reflect on the lives and culture of the Jewish German and Austrian refugees who fled Nazism.

As well as hearing from eminent historians and the reflections of some of the refugees, this year's seminar will focus in particular on the refugees' personal legacy and the effect on subsequent generations. We are also delighted to include a greater contribution from the second and third generations and feature the thoughts and perspectives of three generations from one family.

**As ever, we encourage you and your families to participate. Full details of the event are on the AJR's website at [www.ajr.org.uk](http://www.ajr.org.uk) with information on how to book on the LJCC's website at [www.ljcc.org.uk](http://www.ljcc.org.uk)**

## AJR LUNCH

Sunday 20 October 2013

12 noon to 4.30 pm  
at the Hilton Hotel,  
Watford

**If you wish to attend, please complete the enclosed form and return it to us ASAP**



# Reflections on the Kindertransport Reunion

## An occasion to remember

by Ruth David

Car to Nuneaton, train to Euston and, after some confusion, Metropolitan Line to Wembley Park, then one slight hop to Kingsbury on the Jubilee Line. A route I should have known from my student days when I lived behind Finchley Road Tube Station and played hockey for Bedford College at Stanmore, the terminus then of the old Bakerloo Line and, half a century later, of the Jubilee.

We walked as directed to the school through what seemed suddenly to be called 'Kenton' and I realised I had been there before, when the refugee hostel girls had their 50th anniversary and our first reunion at Margot's (Dykierman) pretty but modest house (1989). It was generous of her to provide hospitality for 11 of us who had gathered to celebrate. Margot must have lived minutes away from where we were now meeting.

There seemed to be masses of us 1st-generation people, though there were some 2nd and 3rd generations too who appeared quite active in the organisation. My companions from Market Bosworth, Ruth and Jürgen Schwiening, were accompanied by their granddaughter known as George, though in fact Georgina. A delightful girl, well aware of what was going on. Her parents, Christoph and Anthea, had brought her cross-country from Cambridge to join us.

*One of the remarks that was let fall casually was that we Kindertransportees were the group of immigrants that had done more for Britain than any other immigrant group ever in the UK. Our skills apparently were 'caring' skills such as medicine, education, social work.*

We sat waiting quite patiently for the conference to commence. The school is a fine modern building but the hall was like most other school halls, built for the purpose of assembly with a podium and large windows down one side, which enabled good light to flood in. Andrew Kaufman, Chair of the AJR, introduced everything that was going to happen – a lot. Sir Erich Reich, Chair of the KT, also addressed us. The topic being what it was, the ambiance was emotionally highly charged.

Candles were lit – as so often six to represent the six million dead. At that point, we had a short service, part Hebrew and part English. I understood little but recognised the *Kaddish*, the prayer for the dead. The only time we all stood. A girl student sang 'Eli, Eli', which I find inevitably

haunting and moving.

Baroness Hanham (Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Communities and Local Government) gave a moving address too. James Libson of World Jewish Relief also, but less moving. What could they all say on the same topic? Not surprisingly, we heard, of course, that there had been a considerable input by the Quakers of the time.

We continued with a re-enactment of the House of Commons debate of 23 November 1938, the night it was decided to let child refugees enter Britain. Philip Noel-Baker and Samuel Hoare were the heroes of the day/night.

A welcome break followed. I escaped to find a bathroom but on my way a woman, clearly waiting, accosted me saying 'I know you!' I was blank – must have looked aghast as I don't like to admit ignorance. I admitted I couldn't remember her but looked at her name tag and found the label 'Boomgaarden'. The wife of the German Ambassador, who with her husband had been so very kind to me at the German Embassy last September when I was awarded the *Verdienstkreuz*, the Order of Merit. Her husband appeared beside her and also recognised me. It cheered me a lot as I was finding the proceedings

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## A tale of two Reunions

by Gina Burgess Winning

Five years ago I attended the AJR's 70th Anniversary Kindertransport Reunion – my first Reunion and, as I have since discovered, one of the first steps on a harrowing, intense, almost all-consuming but immensely rewarding journey.

The Reunion experience began on the Jubilee Line: an elderly couple got on soon after Green Park and I immediately sensed they were going to Kingsbury. When they started to look at papers identical to those I had received, I knew and we were soon in conversation. Thus I met my first 'Kind'. (Of course my mother had been one but the term was then unknown to me.) I soon realised this gentleman was the age my uncle would have been had he survived beyond 19. Thinking 'this is what you might have looked like if you had lived', I was soon in tears and spent much of the rest of the day weeping.

As Shir began to play and I heard klezmer for the first time, I felt a deep sense of connection and more tears flowed. I sobbed throughout much of Richard Attenborough's moving speech. I queued in the 'Ladies' alongside Berta Leverton, only learning later who she was. It was overwhelming to be surrounded by people who had shared a part of my mother's experience, one she had never felt able to discuss openly.

Five years later, returning to the JFS, I realised how much had changed since my last visit: attending synagogue for the first time; learning German and Hebrew; four trips to my mother's home village, where I met three of her school fellows



The author at Second Generation Special Reception, held at the Wiener Library. In the background is the panel relating to her mother, Lore Freudenthal, at the Kindertransport exhibition

and three people who had been at school with her brother; two trips to Berlin; 13 *Stolpersteine*, a new gravestone for my great-grandfather and his son to replace the graves destroyed on Kristallnacht; two exhibitions in Germany relating to my family; telling their story in two schools;

a trip to Uruguay to visit my mother's only surviving cousin; two visits to newly discovered relatives in Israel; and, hardest and most important of all, saying *Kaddish* in Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.

At the 70th Anniversary Reunion I had been desperate to learn my family's story. This time, to my delight, I was able to share part of the story I had uncovered thanks to the Wiener Library's exhibition *Child Refugees: Five Portraits from the Kindertransport* and to Michael Newman for the inspired idea to arrange such an exhibition. It included a panel devoted to my mother and her family and the brochure contained a reference to the tragic story of her brother, my poor dear uncle. I still don't know why he of the nine of my great-grandparents' grandchildren was the only one not to escape from Germany but at least he is no longer forgotten – the story of his pencil case that my mother had kept has now been told.

As David Miliband so tellingly observed, 'memory is about my story and it is about identity'. Having unearthed my own family's story, I now have a clearer, deeper sense of what being the child of a Kind means. There were fewer tears this time: much of my repressed grief has been released. And, although I was there alone, my mother and uncle were participants nevertheless.

*The following is a reproduction in full of an article by Anshel Pfeffer which appeared in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz on 4 July 2013, shortly after the events marking the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport. The AJR does not take any particular view on the issues the article raises, which have previously been discussed to varying degrees in the Journal, and invites readers to contribute to the ongoing discussion (Ed.).*

## On 75th Anniversary of the Kindertransport, British Jews finding it hard to ask questions

The narrative of Britain selflessly opening its doors to the Jewish refugees is compelling but "It takes more self-confidence to say that British Jews weren't always so wonderful."

Last [Monday] a moving event was held at St James's Palace in London. Prince Charles held a reception for a large group of elderly Jewish men and women in their 80s and 90s born in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia who had been allowed into Britain as refugees in late 1938 and 1939 right up until the outbreak of World War II.

The atmosphere at the reception was solemn but also festive, as the children of the Kindertransport lined up to greet the prince and thank the United Kingdom for giving them a haven, saving their lives just before the Nazi empire closed its gates and began enacting the Final Solution for the extermination of Europe's Jews.

That is the accepted narrative of the Kindertransport. On its 75th anniversary, the nine-month operation that saved the lives of nearly 10,000 Jewish children was celebrated last week with a series of events; a shining example of British kindness to poor refugees and the local Jewish community's mobilization on behalf of its brethren.

The Kindertransport is taught about in schools, noted routinely at Jewish events and immortalized by a poignant memorial outside London's Liverpool Street train station: the statues of five wistful children with their meager belongings.

In the elegant Jewish Museum in Camden there is a small exhibition devoted to the Kindertransport, which contains a few clues to uncomfortable questions not usually asked. The caption on an information board says that "After Kristallnacht, the British government agreed to relax immigration laws for Jewish and other non-Aryan children," and that "adapting to life in Britain without their parents was difficult... Most of the children never saw their families again."

Letters of guarantee for 50 pounds that were necessary so the children could receive a visa are also on display, as is the small suitcase carried from Berlin by 15-year-old Martin Thau. We are told that his stepmother, who packed his case, and his sister also applied for visas but could not leave Germany, and Martin never saw them again.

These short captions hint at some thorny issues that are not mentioned in polite British-Jewish society. Why did it

take a particularly violent outbreak of state-sanctioned anti-Semitism to get the British government to change its policies and allow the victims of Nazism into Britain? Why were the children of the Kindertransport allowed in but their parents consigned to extermination? The Germans would have allowed the adults out, it was Britain's refusal to give them visas that damned them. What was the influential British Jewish community doing about this in the 1930s?

Other major Jewish communities have been debating these questions for decades. American Jews have been asking themselves for many years why they didn't do more to raise awareness and lobby the Administration in the 1930s and even during the Holocaust. The accusation that the Zionist leadership and Jewish yishuv in Palestine did not do enough for European Jews was a burning political issue in Israel, even before the state was established and certainly in the years after. In Britain though, outside a small academic circle this issue has barely been heard.

Last month, veteran journalist Michael Freedland wrote what can be certainly described as a rare column in the Jewish Chronicle headlined "When we did not do enough." Freedland highlights the stories of non-Jewish families who opened their homes to lonely Jewish refugees while at the same time lamenting "for every non-Jew who said yes, there were Jews who said no," and "that Jews in the street here were worried about having these strangers among us."

He tells the story of the Jewish community in the coastal town of Bournemouth, who when asked to provide homes for Kindertransport refugees decided that rather than risk the good relations they had with local residents by harboring alien citizens, to give each of the children 10 shillings and send them away. "It is a disgrace that needs thinking about" he writes, but few British Jews seem capable of doing so.

The narrative of Britain selflessly opening its doors to the Jewish refugees is too powerful for these question marks, and recently it has been boosted afresh by the most senior Jewish politician in the land, leader of the Labour Party Ed Miliband, who often speaks of being the son of Holocaust refugees who

found sanctuary in Britain, holding their experience up as an example of what British society is all about.

Professor Geoffrey Alderman, the leading chronicler of the history of Britain's Jews, says that it is no coincidence that in the official events for the Kindertransport's anniversary "several facts were conveniently omitted. The first of these facts was that the initiative of bringing unaccompanied child refugees was undertaken despite the established organs of British Jewry and not because of them."

According to Alderman, the leaders of British Jewry in the mid-1930s were not in favor of allowing large numbers of Jewish refugees into the country and did little if anything to lobby the government to change its immigration policies. The man who organized efforts by the Jewish community on behalf of European Jews in the 1930s was the banker Otto Schiff, who had been decorated by the government for his work with Belgian refugees during World War I. Schiff was trusted by the government, says Alderman, "because he brought to bear their prejudices that only a certain type of Jew should be admitted to England."

Thousands of Jews were allowed in, but only those who were guaranteed not to be a "financial burden," and in many cases the arrival of German Jewish refugees in the mid-1930s was stymied by organizations such as the British Medical Association and the Association of University Teachers, who were anxious not to allow Jewish doctors and academics, who had all been forced out of their jobs by the 1934 Nuremberg anti-Jewish laws, to enter Britain.

Schiff and his Jewish colleagues including Neville Laski, a judge and at the time the president of the Board of Deputies, the main representative body of British Jews, supported the government's policies. "Laski accepted the view that Jews by their very presence in Britain caused anti-Semitism," says Alderman, "and having accepted that, he was fearful that the more foreign-speaking Jews you allowed in this country, the greater anti-Semitism there would be."

The prevailing view within the Jewish establishment only changed following the annexation of Austria in March

1938, following which thousands of Jews were humiliated in the streets of Vienna, and the widespread pogroms of Kristallnacht in November 1938. Following Kristallnacht a high-level delegation of Jewish leaders met with Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, urging him to change the refugee policy. The delegation, headed by former minister and first British Commissioner to Palestine Herbert Samuel, who according to Alderman should be seen as "the great hero of the Kindertransport," tellingly did not include Schiff, who it was feared would not argue in favor of accepting more refugees.

In a matter of days, the government agreed and parliament voted in favor of allowing unaccompanied children to enter Britain as refugees. In the 1930s, fear of a wave of anti-Semitism in Britain was not unfounded, but that hardly explains the reluctance today of British Jewry - without a doubt one of the most well-integrated and successful Jewish communities in history - to ask itself some tough questions.

Professor Alderman has a lecture he sometimes gives on "Why British Jewry stood aside during the Holocaust," but says that "it has caused an uproar in the past when I gave it to Jewish groups - they found it too uncomfortable, upsetting and incredible," and once he was even disinvited from an event when he proposed the subject to the organizers.

Another issue conveniently brushed over is the reason the children had to come over on their own, leaving behind their parents and elder siblings (16 was the age limit) and the resulting trauma, guilt and often ill-treatment of the surviving children. Not all the children who arrived were lucky enough to be sheltered by warm families - some were exploited as child labor by their foster families, there were cases of sexual exploitation and in many cases the children were sent to families clearly unsuitable for them (in some cases after the war there were ugly fights over children who had converted to Christianity under the influence of their foster parents).

But by and large, the children's stories that have been widely published as part of the official commemoration process have been positive and grateful. It is natural for those whose lives were saved to be grateful, as it is for many, if not most British Jews, who are the descendants of refugees who arrived in Britain throughout the previous centuries, to focus on the positive aspects of their immigration and integration.

And of course, there are a lot of positives in the Kindertransport story: British people from all walks of life, Jewish and non-Jewish, who opened their homes and helped lonely children, aside from the basic fact that nearly

10,000 souls were saved from almost certain death.

And it is easy to excuse many of the failings in a program that was launched in a matter of days, was run by different and often competing organizations and had little if any time to locate suitable accommodation and families for all the children. And yet, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Kindertransport narrative has paid little attention to these failings, and glossed over the children's hardships and trauma, partly because of the uncomfortable fact that the only reason their parents were left behind was that the British government refused them visas.

#### Collective amnesia

The lack of attention to these issues is not due to a lack of information. In addition to Professor Alderman's research, other historians have written critically about the Kindertransport and other aspects of Britain's pre-war immigration policy for years now. One of them, Professor Tony Kushner, believes that they are beginning to be heard within the wider Jewish community.

Kushner, who has written extensively on the way the Kindertransport narrative highlighted the "escape" from Germany (though they were all allowed out legally) and the gratitude toward the British government while glossing over the negative aspects, says that "immediately after World War II British Jewry was struck by collective amnesia, probably caused by the guilt of those who had survived. The official line was that 'we did everything we could have done,' but that was simply untrue. They tried to convince themselves that 'wasn't it wonderful' and it was wonderful, up to a point. Legally they needn't have to admit a single child and they admitted 10,000. But except for a handful of individuals, no one lobbied the government to admit large numbers of refugees from Nazism."

And while the main events commemorating the Kindertransport anniversary last week were celebratory, Kushner gave talks along more critical lines at two smaller events. "I raised there the fundamental question of was it the right thing to separate them from their parents and why were they alone, and since much of the audience were members of the second and third generations, they were more probing and willing to criticize, whereas the older generation feel a bond of gratitude. Slowly, there is a more open view of the Kindertransport and what was an alternative narrative is starting to become more mainstream."

Kushner acknowledges that this is still happening mainly outside the central forums of the Jewish community, and that for the discussion to be more widespread "takes a greater degree of

self-confidence and maturity because the current narrative is an overwhelmingly more assuring one, that Britain did everything it could. It takes more self-confidence to say that British Jews weren't always so wonderful."

### 75th Anniversary of Kristallnacht November 2013 Commemorative Events

AJR

**Wednesday 6 November**

at Imperial War Museum North, Manchester

**Thursday 7 November**

at Belsize Square Synagogue, London

**Liberal Jewish Synagogue**

**Saturday 9 November**

*Further details will appear  
in next month's issue of the Journal*

#### Befriending Service for Members with Dementia

The AJR, together with The Six Point Foundation, has a new Department to meet the needs of members with dementia/memory loss who would benefit from a specialised volunteer befriender.

If this is of interest to you or to a family member, please contact Lesley on 020 8385 3070 or 07985 422 372 or at [lesley@ajr.org.uk](mailto:lesley@ajr.org.uk)

#### 'SUITCASE'

**Did you or your parent come to  
Britain on the Kindertransport?**

'Suitcase', a theatre project marking the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport, to be performed at train stations, would love to hear from you.

If you're willing to share your memories, please contact

Ros Merkin on 07779 583 185 or at [suitcase1938@live.co.uk](mailto:suitcase1938@live.co.uk)

#### 'HYSTERIA' by Terry Johnson



**Wednesday 2 October 2013  
at 2.30 pm**

**at HAMPSTEAD THEATRE  
Eton Avenue, Swiss Cottage,  
London NW3 3EU**

**Seats are premium seating at the greatly reduced price of £16.50 per seat. There is an additional charge of £6.00 per person for refreshments.**

Please note that this play contains scenes of an adult nature.

**For further details please contact  
Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070  
or at [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk)**



# Letters to the Editor

*The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication*

## KINDERTRANSPORT REUNION 'A GREAT EXPERIENCE'

Sir – I fell ill on my return from the Reunion and had no chance of writing or thanking anybody for the magnificent organisation.

I am writing to you now to thank you, also in the name of my daughter Franziska, for the great, great deal of work you and your colleagues put in to make the Reunion such a success: the organising of finding a venue and seats for us all; the lunch and later the dinner; the excellent speakers; the brochure (what a document!); and, later, the reception at St James's Palace. It all went so smoothly. I am most impressed and I want to thank all those involved. It was a great experience and I am most grateful. With many good wishes for your further work.

*Elisabeth Reinhuber-Adorno,  
Oberursel, near Frankfurt/Main, Germany*

Sir – May I, through your pages, thank HRH Prince Charles for his most kind hospitality to the former Kindertransportees on 24 June. A great experience!

*Gerda Mayer, Chingford*

## SAYINGS FOR OCCASIONS

Sir – My mother too had many pithy sayings, including the three in Meta Roseneil's letter (July). Many were parodies of quotations from Schiller, e.g. 'Oh dass sie ewig grün bliebe, die Wurzel mit der gelben Rübe.' This should be 'die schöne Zeit der jungen Liebe' – 'Would that it could remain green forever, the root with the yellow carrot' – instead of 'the beautiful time of young love'.

One of my prized possessions is a book called *Worte von Juden, Worte für Juden* by Eugen Tannenbaum, who collected and classified many sayings that used to belong to the everyday conversation of German Jews. If Mrs Roseneil and I ever get a chance to meet up I will show it to her.

*Rachel Mendel, Leeds*

Sir – My sister and I have been remembering and writing down our mother's sayings – I have to confess, in my not very correct written German! For instance 'Wenn schon, denn schon'; 'Wie schön muss das Arbeiten sein wenn das Zuschauen so schön ist.' It would be great to edit a collection so that 'second' and 'third' generation members don't completely lose their German knowledge!

*Cordelia Grimwood, London N19*

Sir – My mother, daughter of a cattle dealer in Oberhausen (Ruhr district of Germany), overheard a customer complaining to her dad: 'Ich hab jetzt die Nase voll' (I'm fed up). Fascinated, she asked the customer: 'Kann ich mal sehen ob Ihre Nase voll ist?' (Can I see if your nose is full?) We both laughed at this reminiscence from an innocent little girl.

I was an anxious child, sensing the problems of the world tumbling around me. Maybe I was seven years old when our good old cook Ida noticed my worried countenance. She tried to reassure me, saying 'Nichts wird so heiss gegessen als es gekocht wird' (No need to eat your meal till it's cooled down).

I also remember hearing the expression 'Papier ist geduldig' – i.e. on paper you can say what you like. The English saying 'Actions speak louder than words' is longer but apt.

*Laura Selo, London NW11*

Sir – Theobald Speyer (1872-1956) was a wise and successful German-Jewish lawyer. On Kristallnacht the front door of his private home was forced open by a gang of uniformed SA and he was taken to Buchenwald. He managed to escape to England almost penniless in May 1939 and was able to return to his wife and home only in 1948, having been blitzed twice in London. He led a charmed life – not so his sisters, Clara Speyer and Lina Schwabe, the last of his six siblings, who were deported in 1942 to Theresienstadt and effectively murdered.

It is apt to remember Theobald's sometimes philosophical sayings such as 'Erstens kommt es anders – Zweitens als man denkt!' (First, things turn out differently – second, than you think they will!).

*George Speyer, Barnet, Herts*

Sir – My mother, whenever asked to do someone a favour she considered unwarranted, would say 'Hätt'st mi' vorig's Jahr dunga, wär' i' heuer dei' Maad' (standard German: Hättest du mich voriges Jahr gedungen, wäre ich heuer deine Magd; English: Had you hired me last year, this year I would be your maid).

The list of sayings I can think of is endless but I'll close with an example of what can happen when proverbs are translated incorrectly. 'I am walking on my

hind legs' is what my mother once said in Slovene to a friend of my sister, meaning 'on my last legs' (auf meinen letzten Beinen). She was surprised by the puzzled look she was met with.

*Margarete Stern, London NW3*

## 'DEGENERATE ART' EXHIBITION

Sir – I work for the radio programme *Witness* at the BBC World Service, telling the stories of historical events through interviews with the people who were there. Recently I've been looking into a programme about the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition staged by the Nazis in 1937.

Is there anyone connected with the AJR who might have seen the exhibition or be in some way connected with it? Maybe their parents were artists whose art was confiscated, maybe they or their parents bought something from the auction which followed, or maybe they're not connected to it themselves but they know someone who was.

If anyone can suggest any leads I'd be very grateful – they can reach me on tel 020 3614 1900 or at [lucy.burns@bbc.co.uk](mailto:lucy.burns@bbc.co.uk)

*Lucy Burns*

*BBC World Service News, London W1  
Witness – Winner of Sony Radio Academy  
Award for Best Speech Programme 2013*

## NO JOKE

Sir – Anthony Grenville's article 'Across the divide to Eastern Europe' was, as usual, well researched, informative and enjoyable. I wonder if he has ever heard of Berlinchen/Neumark, now known as Balinek? When I lived there in the 1930s it boasted 8,000 inhabitants, including five or six Jewish families. It wasn't a particularly pretty place but it was situated by a magnificent lake and a beautiful forest of spruce and oak. It also had a famous Jewish resident named Emanuel Lasker, who, at the time, was the world chess champion. My friends always think the name Berlinchen is a joke – well, now they know!

*Marianne Hasseck, London NW4*

## EASTBOURNE 'A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY'

Sir – Due to my protracted medical condition, my wife and I were unable to have a holiday for four years until Carol, Andrea and Annie organised a most memorable holiday in Eastbourne. The weather was good and the company outstanding. Nothing was too much for these three wonderful ladies to do for us to make it a wonderful holiday. On Friday night candles were lit by the ladies, appropriate songs were sung, and *Kiddush* was recited by myself.

My wife and I are looking forward to a similar holiday next year and to meeting again the friends we made on this holiday.

*Alec Ward, Elstree, Herts*

Sir – We just thought we'd drop you a line to tell you how much we enjoyed the holiday in Eastbourne. It was all beautifully organised and Carol, Andrea and Annie did a terrific job with everything – including the weather. We also had a lovely room.

It was the first time we had come with the AJR to Eastbourne. We hope to come again next year. Again, many thanks.

*Anne and Gerald Goodwin,  
London NW2*

Sir – I feel I must write to thank AJR staff for the wonderful way you organised our week's holiday in Eastbourne. I really enjoyed the time spent there and the company and fully appreciate the work and nervous energy you put in to make it such a success.

Having organised communal functions and arrangements all my professional life, I know what is involved and I quite like being organised for a change!

*Heinz Skyte, Leeds*

Sir – We would like to say a very big THANK YOU to Carol, Andrea and Annie, who did a fantastic job of caring and looking after our group of over 30 'oldies'. Not always an easy task! We had good company, a lovely location and glorious weather. What more could one ask! Thank you again.

*Ursula and John Trafford,  
Wembley Park, Middx*

#### LAYING STOLPERSTEINE

Sir – More German towns appear to be showing interest in laying *Stolpersteine* in memory of their deported citizens, but they are not always making contact with descendants, particularly if they have changed their names as we discovered recently.

May I suggest that you google the name of your town to check if stones have already been laid or if there is a programme for the future. Ceremonies can be found when you google 'Stolpersteine-ceremonies', where there are a number of YouTube videos to watch.

The countries and their towns with *Stolpersteine* are listed on <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stolperstein> or google 'stolpersteine in (your town)'.

The names frequently have very well researched personal histories, which could be very interesting for emigrants who may have been too young to learn family histories. Some of my family will soon be taking part in the ceremonial laying of four stones for my immediate family and several more for deported cousins.

*Peter Hallgarten, London NW3*

#### DOES ANYONE REMEMBER?

Sir – I read the review of *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg* (July) with great interest.

My grandmother, Hedwig Weiss, was

sent to Riga in December 1941. Frau Johanssen, our middle-aged 'sewing' lady, accompanied her as far as possible in Hamburg; for her trouble she was incarcerated for two days.

On 16 January 1939 my brother Hans and I left for England on the Kindertransport and landed at Southampton after travelling on the *Normandie*. I have never seen any reference to this voyage although I believe there were 186 'Kinder' on the ship. Does anyone remember the Kindertransport on the *Normandie* which arrived in Southampton on 17 January 1939?

We were sent to the small, lovely Carmel Court school in Birchington. I was very happy there. Sadly our 'posh' guarantors moved us to a very oppressive school nearby. Does anyone remember those days?

*Susanne Graham (née Susi Burghardt),  
Welwyn Garden City*

#### 'CRUEL CROSSING'

Sir – In connection with my forthcoming book *Jewish Nonagenarians*, I wonder if any AJR members survived the war by escaping over the Pyrenees? I read Edward Stourton's recently published book *Cruel Crossing* (reviewed in your July issue), but its two main Jewish characters, Joan Salter and Lady Swaythling, are not yet over 90! Edward couldn't think of any other Jewish people who would 'qualify' as yet in that respect.

*Lawrence Collin (address not supplied)*

#### GERMAN BOOKS – A GOOD HOME NEEDED

Sir – George Vulkan (August, Letters) won't find it easy to dispose of his German books. When I tried to downsize my library by 2,000 volumes, from standard 19th-century fare in collected editions to 20th-century non-fiction, many of them inscribed to me, I drew blanks – both stares and potential takers. The experience with Sussex University's German Department, one of the biggest in the country, was painful. The first person I talked to hadn't heard of Thomas Mann; moving up the ladder, I discovered that the library was short of space and, anyway, few students (and not all teachers) were able to read old-style gothic type.

I fared little better in the trade. Dealers were willing to pick out the raisins – signed Mann, Hauptmann, Hofmannsthal, Freud, etc – but for the rest, the skip loomed. Mr Vulkan could try the Wiener Library with Judaica or the Freud Museum with relevant works. If all else fails, I am still in the market for the occasional pearl: 20th-century showbiz, politics, biography, if signed by author or subject.

*Victor Ross, London NW8*

#### KEMPINSKI RESTAURANT PLAQUE

Sir – On a recent visit to Berlin, I saw (again) the large brass plaque outside

the Kempinski Hotel on the corner of Kurfürstendamm and Fasanenstrasse which reads 'On this spot a Kempinski Restaurant stood from 1928. It was a symbol of the world renowned Berlin hospitality. Because the owners were Jewish this famous establishment was 'arianised' in 1937 and sold under duress. Members of the Kempinski family were murdered; others were able to escape. The Bristol Hotel Kempinski, which opened in 1952, desires that the fate of the original family should not be forgotten.'

My visit was in conjunction with the 20th anniversary of the re-opening of the Jewish secondary school in the Grosse Hamburger Strasse – it was closed in 1942 and reopened after the *Wende* in 1993. It was recently renamed the Moses Mendelssohn Gymnasium. Moses's grave is adjacent to the school in a small cemetery devastated by the Germans but now beautifully restored. I also gave a workshop in the Jewish Museum, which has two artefacts of mine on permanent display and many on occasional exhibition, as well as many papers.

*Rudi Leavor, Bradford*

#### BERLIN SCHOOL REUNION

Sir – I recently attended a reunion of my Jewish school in Berlin's Grosse Hamburger Strasse. It was founded by Moses Mendelssohn in 1778 and closed in 1942, when students and teachers were sent to Auschwitz.

It was reopened 20 years ago as the first Jewish grammar school in Germany since the war and renamed Jüdisches Gymnasium Moses Mendelssohn. I was informed that a *Stolperstein* was to be erected to commemorate the last headmaster in 1942. Seeing his name, I realised he had signed my leaving report.

I left the school in 1938. The Jewish Museum in Berlin was delighted to add my leaving report to its archives. I am still in touch with one school friend in Israel who survived Auschwitz. Why? Due to the music teacher making her practise the piano, in Auschwitz she found pieces of paper, wrote music and formed an orchestra.

*Gisela Feldman, Manchester*

#### BRINGING BACK MEMORIES

Sir – Margarete Stern's letter 'The Spirit of Swiss Cottage' (June) brought back memories. I lived at 120 Goldhurst Terrace and Broadhurst Gardens from 1938 to 1940. I wonder whether anybody remembers Sewek Tykocinski, Pinkusiewicz, the late Matti Spiegelman, Larry Licht Koppelmanas – all refugees.

*Alex Lawrence (né Lewnsztajn), Marlow*

#### HORTHY AND THE HOLOCAUST

Sir – Contrary to an assertion by your correspondent Francis Steiner (February

*continued on page 16* ➔

# ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

Years before Photo-Realism, the rapt intensity in **Dame Laura Knight's** portraits of war-workers and military personnel has a rare immediacy. Her group portraits of women members of the auxiliary air force are part of the **National Portrait Gallery's** first major exhibition of Knight's work (until 13 October). Some subjects, like the portrait of Ruby Loftus in green hairnet and blue overalls screwing a breech ring, have gained immortality through her art. There are airmen preparing for a sortie, their faces a study in concentration. Undoubtedly



Dame Laura Knight *Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech-Ring* (1943) Imperial War Museum, London © IWM (LD 5928)

these unusually honest portrayals are a social documentary of the British at war.

But Knight, one of the leading artists of the 20th century, departs slightly from Realism in her large courtroom painting of *The Nuremberg Trial*, which she covered in her late sixties as a war correspondent. While the defendants, including Hermann Göring, Rudolf Hess, Albert Speer and their lawyers, are all clearly depicted, there is a surreal war image of a city burning in the background, a reminder that this is no ordinary trial.

Aged 13, Knight was the youngest student at the Nottingham School of Art. With her artist husband Harold Knight, she moved in the early part of the 20th century to an art colony in Cornwall, where she painted landscapes in an Impressionist style. Her most famous painting from this period is a self-portrait, in which Knight, in red coat and black hat, appears with her artist model Ella Naper. It is a landmark of the exhibition in that both she and her model (also mirrored) are shown only in back

view, the artist appearing as a *voyeur*.

In the 1920s Knight famously painted actors and dancers backstage at the Ballets Russes, gypsies and circus performers. Her dancers contrast strongly with Degas's Impressionist vision, though one, with long red hair, recalls Vermeer. A rugged-faced gypsy who appears to be wearing everything she possesses stares out at us as if there's nothing in life she hasn't lived.

Although very much in the tradition of Realist painting, Knight ventures further, catching a sudden change of mood or expression in her sitter. Typical is her 1926 profile of the pianist Ethel Barlett, caught in mid-conversation, lips pursed, one hand grasping the other.

I was particularly struck by her 1914 portrait *Rose and Gold*, a strikingly pretty girl with a halo of shimmering red gold hair. Tragically the beautiful model was murdered by her jealous lover soon after.

And now for something really different. **Looking In: Photographic Portraits by Maud Sulter and Chan-**

**Hyo Bae** at the **Ben Uri** is the Gallery's take on migrant artists from other communities. Ben Uri Chairman David Glasser refutes the concept of Jewish art and this show examines other immigrants equally seeking identity in an adopted homeland. The young, sadly late artist

**Maud Sulter** examines her Ghanaian-Scottish roots in historical costume portraits on the theme of the Greek Muses. But, rejecting the female passivity which she finds implicit in classic Western imagery, her Muses are powerful and assertive. **Chan-Hyo Bae's** work is entirely self-portraiture. His severe, whitened face under huge wigs or hats is a lavish, though ultimately self-indulgent, blend of Tudor courtliness and Japanese ritual.

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## REVIEWS

### A disputed legacy

**A JEWISH ORCHESTRA IN NAZI GERMANY: MUSICAL POLITICS AND THE BERLIN JEWISH CULTURE LEAGUE**  
by Lily E. Hirsch

*University of Michigan Press, 2012, 258 pp. paperback, available from [www.eurospanbookstore.com](http://www.eurospanbookstore.com)*

The author, an American musicologist, deals mainly with the music departments of the Jewish League of Culture in Berlin, leaving the theatrical performances and lectures virtually untouched. She discusses in depth several composers whose works were performed by the League's orchestra: Weill, Schoenberg, Bloch, Schubert, Handel and Verdi.

The League was founded in 1933 on the instigation of Kurt Baumann (1907-83), a former director's assistant at the Berlin Staatsoper, Volksbühne and Municipal Opera, and Kurt Singer (1885-1944). The latter, having studied medicine and musicology, became a neurologist; his musical accomplishments later earned him the post of Assistant Intendant of the Municipal Opera in Berlin and, in 1930-31, Intendant. The first historian of the League, Herbert Freeden, described him as 'a man who could lead people, and a born orator who could enthuse an audience'.

Seeking to interest the Nazi authorities in their plan, Singer eventually met Hans Hinkel, who worked in the Prussian Cultural Ministry. They negotiated terms for the creation of the League, including the requirement that all artists in its employ must be Jews; that it must be financed by its all-Jewish audiences; and that its programmes must be submitted to Hinkel for approval before performance. This meant that the composers whose works were to be played had to be Jewish or the composition had to have a Jewish/Old Testament theme.

In May 1933, the terms having been agreed, the League began to operate. The idea was to provide employment for the many Jewish artists dismissed from their jobs in April 1933, when the Law for the Reconstitution of the Civil Service was enacted – members of municipal orchestras and opera houses were considered civil servants – and to provide a means for other Jews to support them (the prohibition on Jews attending non-Jewish places of entertainment came into force only after Kristallnacht). The League's official opening was a performance of Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise* in October 1933 (the last time

*continued opposite* ➔

this play, exemplifying religious tolerance, was performed in Germany during the Third Reich).

Soon other local branches of the League were formed in towns and cities with substantial Jewish populations – by 1935 there were 46 branches, which the Nazi authorities put under the umbrella of the Reich Association of Jewish Culture Leagues. The Berlin League was the most active, with more departments than any other, which was not surprising as approximately one-third of Germany's Jews were living in Berlin.

Nazi restrictions on programming were progressive: Wagner, Bruckner and Richard Strauss were banned from the start in 1933; Beethoven in 1936; Bach, Brahms and Schumann in 1937 (leaving Handel as the only 'permitted' German composer – probably because he had lived in England for much of his life and had based many of his oratorios on Old Testament characters); and the Austrians Mozart and Schubert – along with Handel – after Austria had been annexed, in 1938. Despite this late prohibition of Mozart, the Reich Chamber of Culture forbade the performance of *Così fan Tutte* in 1935 as 'the work of an Aryan composer must not be performed by Jews'.

The Nazis wanted the League to perform 'Jewish music' and the author devotes an entire chapter to the question of how this should be defined – and whether it exists at all. The League's leaders repeatedly stressed their desire to adhere to 'German culture' and avoid 'ghettoisation'. The German Zionists criticised the League for this very reason and the Nazis agreed with them! However, in 1936 the former changed their minds and exhorted their members to support the League – a Conference of Leagues had decided that more 'Jewish music' should be performed. Again the Zionists and Nazis agreed.

In 1935 the League had to change its name from 'Culture League of German Jews' to 'Jewish Culture League'. In Nazi eyes, if you were a Jew you couldn't be German – the two were mutually exclusive.

Despite his Jewish background, Weill was never performed, possibly because his compositions included jazz, which the Nazis considered 'polluting' because of its connection with 'negroid' music. But probably a more important reason was his frequent collaboration with the left-wing author Bertolt Brecht – after all, the Gestapo had issued rules for the leaders of the Jewish Culture Leagues, making them 'responsible for ensuring that the performances are not directed against the National Socialist state and its laws and basic demands'.

Mahler, whom the Nazis of course

regarded as 'Jewish' due to his background, although he was baptised, was never performed until late in the League's existence. The first occasion on which one of his symphonies was played was in April 1939. *Das Lied von der Erde* was never performed, probably because Mahler requires a very large orchestra (which is expensive) and, besides, the League was chronically short of wind players.

The best-known of the orchestra's conductors was Rudolf Schwarz, who before 1933 had been conducting symphony concerts and operas in Karlsruhe. He did not manage to emigrate from Germany before the war began but survived Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen and Belsen, eventually arriving in the UK, where he became a highly valued orchestral conductor. He died in 1994.

Following Kristallnacht, all provincial Jewish Culture Leagues were closed down by the Nazi authorities in December that year, leaving only the League in Berlin, but this too was dissolved by the Gestapo in September 1941.

Singer himself, in the USA in November 1938, was strongly advised not to return to Germany, as he had intended, and was even offered a university post in the USA. But he felt so strongly about the League and his connection with it that he returned to Europe – 'to rescue what could be rescued'. In transit in Rotterdam, he agreed it would be futile to continue to Berlin and he remained in Holland until he was deported in 1942-43 to Terezin (Theresienstadt), where he died in February 1944.

In the book's last chapter the author discusses the legacy of the Jewish Culture League. Many people accused its leaders of 'co-operation' with the Nazis, whilst others claimed that its importance in giving employment to Jewish artists and providing cultural entertainment for its audiences (particularly after November 1938, when they were no longer allowed to attend other concerts, operas and theatres) absolved them of that 'guilt'. The debate continues. I, for my part, well remember how grateful I was that after November 1938 the Jewish Culture League enabled me to continue going to concerts and operas, and even hear my cello teacher Leo Rostal (brother of the well-known violinist and teacher Max Rostal and leader of the orchestra's cello section) play the Dvorak *Cello Concerto*.

Probably the book will attract mainly potential readers who are interested in music. For them, it provides details not readily available elsewhere. It also highlights the many contradictions in Nazi policy. It is well written and has an extensive bibliography and index.

Fritz Lustig

## A memoir not a novel

### THE BOY WHO WORE WHITE STOCKINGS: FROM HITLER'S AUSTRIA TO PATTON'S THIRD ARMY

by David Hutt

*Matador*, 2013, 208 pp. paperback, available from [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

The story of the early life of Peter Skala – the eponymous 'boy who wore white stockings' – opens with a prologue in which David Hutt muses on the importance of voice: 'The more I think about it, the more I think it is a key to who he [Peter] really is – this Viennese boy of fourteen who came alone to England and then on to New York.' And it is the layering of voice which fascinates in this coming-of-age story, the traces left behind by formative years spent amid changing geographies and in difficult circumstances.

The story begins in 1836 with the first records of the family in a small village in Bohemia. It moves on swiftly to the family's arrival in Vienna in 1880 with Peter's grandmother Käthe and her sister, Tante Jenney, providing much of the entertainment with their affairs and 'ennobilitation' of the family name from Skala to von Skalla. The line of interesting women continues with Peter's mother Lilia, who was not only the first Austrian woman to graduate from a faculty of architecture at any university (she studied in Dresden) but also a well-known stage actress, going under the name of Lilia Skala (the von having been dropped again).

Peter himself was born in 1924 to a Catholic mother and a Jewish father, Erich, who owned a hat factory. It was a middle-class, respectable family but anti-Semitism was to affect them all: grandmother Käthe refused to marry grandfather Julius for years because he was Jewish; Peter didn't know which side to be on in fights at school; and – more seriously – Erich was arrested following Kristallnacht. After three weeks in Dachau Erich was released on the understanding that he would leave the country. He went first to Belgium and then to New York. Peter himself was able to leave for England, where he spent about a year at a Birmingham prep school before being reunited with his mother and younger brother in Liverpool for the journey to New York.

The final third of the book deals with Peter's time in the US army. As a native German speaker, he was recruited for military intelligence training and sent to France as an Interrogation Prisoner of War. His exploits in the Third Army are undeniably exciting stuff: his role in the capture of General Kittel in Metz, his affair with the beautiful Herta in Wölflingen, his part in the assault on the West Wall at Fraulautern on the Saar River. The tales of the young man advancing across Europe often make one wish this were a novel,

Reviews continued overleaf ➔

 **REVIEWS** *cont. from page 9*

allowing the author the scope to expand the anecdotes into more than a string of events which pass our hero by in a flash.

But this is a memoir. David Hutt, Peter's long-time friend and business partner, has been given full access to the family archives and he also provides a historical context. He is sensitive to the limitations of the memoirist – what do the characters really know of each other, he asks, and what can we know of their motives? – and he is honest enough to admit when something is 'speculative'. But he keeps the focus very much on Peter and doesn't try to make his story stand for that of a generation. Rather, he seeks to tell the unique story of one life, bringing out Peter's own voice. And it is a voice, one suspects, that continued to develop in interesting ways beyond where the book ends in 1945.

**Joanna White**

**Bearing witness**

**THE MAN WHO BROKE INTO AUSCHWITZ**

by **Denis Avey with Rob Broomby**

*Hodder & Stoughton, 2011, 304 pp. paperback, available from amazon.co.uk*

The title of this memoir is somewhat misleading. Denis Avey spent the night in a concentration camp on only two occasions, having swapped places with one of the inmates. He was able to do so because in 1944 he was in a POW labour camp near Auschwitz. By doing so, he risked his life: he would have been shot had the swap been discovered. One of the factors that prevented him from remaining longer with the inmates was his inability to eat their 'food'.

But Avey didn't need to enter the concentration camp to realise that its

purpose was to exterminate Jews – to work them to death, starve them to death, beat or shoot them to death. Later, when for years he had nightmares concerning his Auschwitz days, he relived the beating to death of an 18-year-old Jewish youth and the smashing of an infant in his mother's arms. He had been so moved by the beating of the youth that he had shouted to the SS officer 'Du verfluchter Untermensch!' The officer retaliated by giving him a crushing blow to the face which resulted in his ultimately losing the sight in his right eye.

Cigarettes were the only universal currency in Auschwitz. Avey was instrumental in enabling one of the inmates, Ernst Lobet, to receive packs of English Player's cigarettes which, in effect, saved his life. During the evacuation of Auschwitz and the subsequent death march, the difference between life and death was strong boots and Ernst was able to have his boots re-soled for two packs of Player's.

The first half of this memoir narrates Avey's battle experiences and his subsequently becoming a POW. Then we have the Auschwitz episodes and the death march. Most of the second half of the book deals with the author's life following demobilisation. During this period he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and was alienated from his native locality as he couldn't communicate his experiences to the locals.

In 2003, interviewed on local radio in northern England, he was able to bear witness to what he had seen in Auschwitz. In 2009 he was approached by the BBC to tell his story. Subsequently he wrote this book, which, to repeat, is an account of his battle experiences in the Western desert: his being a POW, his witnessing in Auschwitz, his return to civilian life and painful readjustment to it, and his discovery by the media.

**Bernard Knieger**

**Correction**

The price of the book *Unvergessene Lebensgeschichten. Ein Gedenkbuch für die nach Minsk deportierten Berliner Jüdinnen und Juden* discussed in last month's article by Leslie Baruch Brent (pages 4-5) is €24.

**Visit to Oshwal Centre**  
**Wednesday 11 September 2013**

The Oshwal Centre, in Potters Bar, is a major attraction for Jains and non-Jains worldwide.

We will arrive at the Oshwal Centre for 11.00 am, where we will have refreshments before having a guided tour of the Centre, the Temple itself and its beautiful gardens.

Later we will go by coach to the Dutch Nursery in Potters Bar. Lunch will be served and you will have the opportunity to look around the Garden Centre at your leisure.

**Please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk)**

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**Hooray for Hollywood!**

**The History of the Hollywood Musical – Tuesday 1 October 2013**

Award-winning singer and entertainer **Robert Habermann** performs a selection of great songs from Hollywood with celebrated pianist **Trevor Brown**

Come and enjoy a selection of hit numbers including: "Secret Love", "Road to Morocco", "The Tender Trap", "Moon River", "An Affair to Remember" and many, many more.

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**Venue:** The AJR Centre at Belsize Square Synagogue, 51 Belsize Sq. NW3 4HX  
**Cost per person** (payable in advance): £10.00 lunch and Show £3.00 Show only  
VISITORS WELCOME – why not bring a friend?

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## An occasion to remember cont. from page 3

slow and painful. It was characteristic of the couple to take part. I knew they were about to retire and wished them well. It really made my day.

We had more readings of letters from those unable to attend. Judi Dench, my very favourite actress. I was glad she had been involved but not surprised. My Aunt Liese (a refugee from Frankfurt) and I had seen her in one of the York 'Mystery' plays when she was still a schoolgirl at The Mount in York. She hadn't even spoken, just sat on an elevated seat (a throne?) in a blue dress, holding the baby Jesus (a large doll) in her arms. Her face, though not particularly beautiful (she does look good in old age!), had a radiance, perhaps part natural talent but also true inspiration. I have never had much interest in remembering actors' names and often find it difficult to recall who played what where, but I have never forgotten Judi Dench. The guest speaker was David Miliband, who spoke well and very clearly.

There was more music, including too many songs I either didn't care for or didn't know. (I knew bits from the inevitable *Fiddler on the Roof* but my ignorance isn't in my favour.) We had reports from the KT overseas, including one from Alisa Tennenbaum, better known to me as Lisl Scherzer/Shearer from my first years in England. I saw something of Alisa, but she was very busy-busy with her Israeli contingent. Melissa Hacker represented the USA, where I had originally come across her. Lisl did remind me that on 3 September 1939 (both her birthday and the day war was declared by Neville Chamberlain) we were standing with other children in the Tynemouth Refugee Hostel when she said to me, in German of course, as we listened to the sirens howling: 'Do you think this music is for my birthday?' And I, six months older, had replied: 'Du bist blöd, Lisl, jetzt gibt es Krieg!' I believed her. I was indeed capable of such a remark.

We were released to a speedy dinner and stayed *sur place* for the rest of the evening, which included a performance by Maureen Lipman – a clever, funny actress who made lots of jokes about her Hull provenance. I had read her autobiography and recognised her witty, abrupt style. It was probably unnecessary at such an event, though she certainly meant well. We were now able to walk back in the rain to our hotel in Kingsbury/Kenton. There was a lot to digest.

The next day back for the final celebration, a reception hosted by Prince Charles at his St James's Palace address. The party spread out over two rooms. The one I was in was an antechamber, I guess, but large with wonderful views in the middle of central, busy, political London (we were very near Whitehall and Downing Street as well as Horse Guards Parade). Our view was rural or, at least, French park- and garden-like, formal beds and well cared for shrubs and trees. Prince Charles came promptly at two and made a wonderful effort to socialise and talk non-stop. I noticed that whenever he saw a wheelchair (and there were several – we were, after all, in our

## Intern Rim sad to leave AJR



Rim and 'befriender' Susanne Medas

Rim Irscheid, an intern from the German-based Action Reconciliation Service for Peace, has come to the end of her year at the AJR.

Based in the Volunteers' Department, Rim has been involved in virtually every aspect of the AJR's work, from promoting the AJR at fairs in schools and universities to editing the quarterly volunteers' newsletter, running computer workshops at the AJR Centre and in schools, and backing up staff at meetings of group members.

One of the most interesting parts of her work have been befriender visits. Rim says she was 'delighted to gain so much experience by talking to people who tell me their personal attitude to life and their philosophy – sometimes it's just funny to talk about British culture or German recipes for Torten and cakes!'

Rim is planning to study languages and musicology in Berlin or Munich and to become a journalist or work in the music business.

Rim never realised the depth of knowledge she would gain through working at the AJR and is very sad to leave. She is grateful to all members and colleagues, in particular Carol Hart, Head of the Volunteers' Department, 'who has made my year so pleasant.'

Carol Hart adds: 'Rim has been a tremendous asset to the Volunteers' Department and will be missed by everyone she has come into contact with.'

mid- and late-80s), he went straight to its occupant.

My son Simon had come with me; he was a help and support and showed understanding for what was taking place, despite most of us not having talked much about our background to our children. That had become obvious at the meeting on the previous day. One of the remarks that was let fall casually that had impressed me and made me glad to have heard it was that we Kindertransportees – usually referred to as 'Kinder' in English – were the group of immigrants that had done more for Britain than any other immigrant group ever in the UK. The next nearest apparently were the Huguenots, whom I have always admired for the skills they brought. Ours apparently were 'caring' skills such as medicine, education, social

## AJR member awarded Arctic Star medal

AJR London member William (Bill) Howard has been awarded the Arctic Star, a campaign medal of the United Kingdom awarded retrospectively for operational service in the Second World War north of the Arctic Circle.

'Towards the end of 1944 and during 1945,' writes the historian Dr Helen Fry, 'Bill Howard was on board *HMS Bellona*, which was part of the escort of convoys to Russia, destination Kola Bay. The crossings were dangerous and they frequently had to evade German U-boats. Bill was one of only around 25 "enemy aliens" drafted into the Royal Navy to intercept enemy transmissions at sea. As such, his work was top secret and involved using codes sent to the ship every week from Bletchley Park.'



## ARTS AND EVENTS SEPTEMBER DIARY

Until 2 October 2013 'Child Refugees: Five Portraits from the Kindertransport' Exhibition at the Wiener Library, tel 020 7636 7247. Free admission

Wed 18 September Screening of 'The Children Who Cheated the Nazis' – the story of the Kindertransport. Followed by Q&A session with the film's director Sue Read, producer Jim Goulding and one of the film's interviewees, Bea Green. At Wiener Library, tel 020 7636 7247. Free admission, booking essential



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work. Charles never sat down; he continued trying to talk to as many people as possible as they formed long lines to greet him too. He said different things to different folk, asked relevant questions. I had tried to hide behind Simon. Prince Charles came towards me and seized my hand and said in some surprise 'Were you a Kind?' I explained that I was and thanked him for inviting us and for working so hard to make a successful occasion. Simon too had a word with him and seemed impressed.

I meant it when I said at the time that I was very moved by the whole occasion. A lot of thought and many hours of work must have gone into the preparations for such a mammoth event.

# INSIDE the AJR

## Liverpool Annual Lunch and Visit to Chagall Exhibition

At our Annual Lunch we were joined by North and South Manchester group members. After lunch over 30 of us visited the Liverpool Tate Gallery to view the Chagall Modern Master Exhibition. Our thanks to Susanne for organising a splendid lunch and outing.

Guido Alis

## Kingston upon Thames CF Gastronomic Requirements Fulfilled

Susan Zisman fulfilled more than adequately the gastronomic requirements of the 14 people for whom she made the annual lunch. We welcomed 3 people from Nightingale House. As always on this occasion, the weather was kind to us.

Jackie Cronheim

## Manchester 'Less Emphasis on Gloom and Doom'

Our guest speaker, Chava Rosenzweig, told us how she instilled an understanding of our recent history through her artistic skills, mainly sculpture, and her family experiences. There was an urgent need to keep future generations aware of the past and this could be achieved with less emphasis on doom and gloom.

Werner Lachs

## Northern Regional Get-together 'A Full and Enjoyable Day'



(from left) Michael Newman, Trude Silman, Leisel Carter, David Lawson, Wendy Bott

Over 50 members from across the North of England met at the Sinai Synagogue in Leeds. Following a welcome from Michael Newman, people dispersed into discussion groups and re-assembled for a delicious salmon lunch, after which David Lawson gave a most interesting talk on the Jews of Ostrava. After further discussion groups the afternoon culminated in cake and coffee before everyone headed home after a full and enjoyable day.

Wendy Bott

## Iford Enthralling Life Story

Eli Benson kept us enthralled with his life story. Born in Bombay into an Adeni Sephardi family, he came to the UK as a teenager. Here he held senior posts in Young Poale Zion, WJR and CBF and was CEO of Magen David Adom UK for 14 years, recently retiring at the age of 71.

Mark Finkeltaub

## Pinner Is the Royal Family of Jewish Heritage?

Based on research for his book *The Coburg Conspiracy*, Richard Sotnick suggested intriguingly that a Jewish element may have entered the Royal Family at the time of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, when his nephew Albert became the Prince Consort to Queen Victoria. *Walter Weg*

## HGS From New York to Hampstead Garden Suburb

A most interesting talk by Francesca Segal about her novel *The Innocents*. Based on Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*, the story takes a gentle look at contemporary Hampstead Garden Suburb Jewish society.

Kitty Balint-Kurti

## West Midlands (Birmingham)

### Presentations Made at Garden Party

Fine weather for our Annual Garden Party, generously hosted once again by Loretta and Henry Cohn. We were happy to welcome back Myrna Glass, who is retiring in the autumn. Presentations were made both to Myrna and our hosts.

Philip Lesser

## Sheffield CF Visit to Beth Shalom

On a trip to Beth Shalom we listened to guest speaker Gina Schwarzmans personal story as told in her book *The Disappearance of Goldie Rapaport*. Afterwards there was time to look round the exhibition.

Wendy Bott

## Bromley CF Reports on KT Reunion

We met at the home of Liane Segal, who reported on her interview with the BBC Today programme about her KT journey and, with others, on the KT Reunion and wonderful reception at St James's Palace. Later each of us gave an account of our early lives and experiences on arrival in this country.

Dorothea Lipton

## Edinburgh CF 'Who Has influenced You Most?'

The topic 'Who has influenced you most?' ensured a lively discussion. The meeting, at Francoise Robertson's home, was made up of 1st and 2nd generation members and was concluded by a wonderful tea and further debates.

Agnes Isaacs

## Essex (Westcliff) An Interesting Trip to Poland

Leslie and Miriam Kleinman told us about their trip to Auschwitz and Cracow, which was very interesting. This led to a person in our group telling us about her conversion to Orthodox Judaism, which took 7 years. We also had 2 birthdays: a lady who was 93 and a gentleman who was 85.

Herta Vari

## St John's Wood 'Jewish Jazz'

Peter Sampson covered mainly the period 1935-65, telling us about US and British Jewish jazz musicians, including Artie Shaw – born Arthur Jacob Arshawsky – and Ronnie Scott – born Ronald Schatt. Peter agreed it was very hard to define jazz.

David Lang

## Glasgow CF Tour of BBC Scotland

We visited BBC Scotland for a tour of the building. We saw spectacular views of Glasgow from the canteen and roof terrace and noted the camera that can transmit live backdrop to broadcasts. A good evening out.

Anthea Berg

## Pride and Prejudice Outing 'A Great Success'

Our outing to Regent's Park Open Air Theatre was a great success. On a gloriously hot mid-summer afternoon we watched a splendidly acted and presented performance of Jane Austen's classic novel. Rarely can the timeless twists and turns of Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy's relationship have seemed so romantic!

Susie Barnett

## Brighton-Sarid (Sussex) The Origins of GlaxoSmithKline

David Barnett told us how London-born Joseph Nathan went to Australia and New Zealand, setting up an import/export business. Producing milk powder from surplus milk, he registered his company Glaxo, which later developed into the giant GlaxoSmithKline.

Ceska Abrahams

## Bradford CF Life as a Calligrapher

Sara Mack gave a fascinating talk on her life and work as a calligrapher. We then enjoyed a delicious afternoon tea and continued chatting to Sara until late in the afternoon.

Wendy Bott

## Café Imperial Recollections of a Momentous Time

Former BBC journalist Alex Gerlis spoke about his book *The Best of Our Spies*, based on the D-Day landings. His audience was captivated, as was he by their own recollections of this momentous time.

Esther Rinkoff

## Radlett A Thousand Years of Documents

We met in Alf Keiles's flat in Borehamwood, where Daphne Knott spoke about Herts County Council's archives. We were amazed to learn that there are 5 miles of shelving holding documents predating the Norman Conquest and continuing up to modern times.

Fritz Starer

## Edgware Problems of Underprivileged Children

Professor Tanya Byron spoke about underprivileged children, explaining how everyday pressures result in, e.g., mental health conditions ranging from anxiety, eating disorders to self-harming. All of

this presents not only a handicap for the child but can also affect the entire family relationship. Life and schooling today are very different from in the 1950s-60s.

*Susan Jacobs*

### **Chorus Line 'A Feel Good Day'**

*Chorus Line*, at the London Palladium, was a magnificent show, the dancing superb. They make it look so easy but we know hard work goes on behind the scenes to get to that level of perfection. It was a 'feel good' day thanks to the AJR. And of course Esther Rinkoff was there to render assistance if needed.

*Meta Roseneil*

### **Leeds CF A Wonderful Garden Party**

We enjoyed a wonderful garden party at Pippa Landy's home, with Wendy organising a quiz to get our 'grey matter' working. Everyone was given a prize so we were all winners. A truly splendid afternoon out.

*Liesel Carter*

### **Wembley Thank You, Myrna!**

In anticipation of her forthcoming retirement, Myrna Glass introduced her replacement, Kathryn Prevezer. The rest of the meeting was getting to know Kathryn while enjoying a delicious tea! Thank you, Myrna!

*Ruth Pearson*

### **North London Legacy of Ludwig Guttman**

Wheelpower's Joyce Sheard, ably assisted by her husband, spoke of the sterling work done at Stoke Mandeville Hospital based on the theories and ideas of Ludwig Guttman. A really wonderful morning.

*Herbert Haberberg*

### **Computer Lessons for AJR Members**

Following meetings at Ealing and JFS, a third session was held, at JFS. The sessions were organised by the AJR's Jonathan Rose. Vera, a Kindertransportee from Prague, and Avram Schaufeld, born in Poland and a camp survivor, told their amazing stories to the pupils who have been part of the programme. The pupils were given the task of using social media as a way of preserving these stories for future generations.

*Myrna Glass*

### **Nightingale Small World**

Two members of our group who had been living on the same floor at Nightingale hadn't previously realised that they both came to this country at the age of 15 and are both of the same age. Small world. Also, we talked about careers we have had.

*Hazel Beiny*

### **North West London Impromptu Yiddish Concert**

Meeting at Alyth Gardens Synagogue, we were entertained by surprise guest Rabbi Mark Goldsmith, who sang

## SEPTEMBER GROUP EVENTS

<b>Dundee</b>	1 September	Inaugural Meeting – call Agnes for details
<b>Leeds HSFA</b>	1 September	Etta Cohen: 'The Life of a Woman in Business'
<b>Bromley CF</b>	2 September	Social Get-together at home of Liane, 2.00 pm
<b>Glasgow Book Club</b>	2 September	Social Meeting
<b>Ealing</b>	3 September	Peter Sampson: 'Jewish Jazz'
<b>Didsbury</b>	11 September	Meeting at Bridge Club
<b>Glasgow CF</b>	11 September	Yom Tov Lunch
<b>West Midlands (Birmingham)</b>	11 September	Lunchtime Get-together
<b>Pinner</b>	12 September	'That Was Carnaby Street That Was!' – at Liberal Synagogue
<b>Brighton-Sarid (Sussex)</b>	16 September	Janice Greenwood: 'The Music of Irving Berlin'
<b>Café Imperial</b>	17 September	Special Lunch Meeting
<b>Edgware</b>	17 September	Stewart Mackintosh: 'Talking to a Mop'
<b>Kingston</b>	24 September	Social Get-together
<b>North West London</b>	30 September	Robert Lowe: 'The Music of Gilbert and Sullivan'

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**Child Survivors Association-AJR**  
Henri Obstfeld  
020 8954 5298  
H.obstfeld@talk21.com

some wonderful Yiddish songs while accompanying himself on the guitar. In addition, Hazel told us about her recent holiday in Canada.

*David Lang*

### **Didsbury CF Reports on KT Reunion**

Margot and Janina told us about the KT Reunion and meeting Prince Charles and Gisela told us about her recent school reunion in Berlin.

*Susanne Green*

### **Thames Cruise 'A Wonderful Outing'**

Many thanks to Carol Rossen and Ros Collin, who efficiently guided us through the wonderful outing by coach to Windsor and onto the perfect boat trip with a commentary for 2 hours. Lunch was so well thought out by the AJR and the cream tea/coffee was well served too. Great to meet old friends among the 48 people on the coach with time to chat on the boat.

*Helen Grunberg and Sue Arnold*

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## Activities September 2013

Lunch is served at 12.30 unless otherwise stated

### Tuesday 3 September

- 10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
- 11-12 Seated Exercises
- 12.30 **KT LUNCH Speaker: Pamela Andurer, 'From Past to Present: Celebrating 80 Years of World Jewish Relief Assisting Those in Need'**

### Thursday 5 September

**CLOSED FOR ROSH HASHANAH**

### Tuesday 10 September

- 10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
- 10.30 Current Affairs Discussion Group with John Kay
- 11.30 Seated Exercises
- 13.45 Entertainment - Israeli Dance Institute

### Thursday 12 September

- 10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
- 10.00 French Conversation with Ruth
- 10.30 Book Club
- 11.15 Seated Exercises
- 13.45 Entertainer – Geoff Strum (light opera)

### Tuesday 17 September

- 10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
- 10-12 One-to-One Computer Lessons with Dora
- 11.00 Seated Exercises
- 13.45 Entertainer – Ronnie Goldberg

### Thursday 19 September

**CLOSED FOR SUCCOT**

### Tuesday 24 September

- 10-12 Coffee/Chat/Knit/Cards/Board Games
- 10-12 One-to-One Computer Lessons with Dora
- 11.00 Seated Exercises
- 13.45 Entertainer – Will Smith

### Thursday 26 September

**CLOSED FOR SHEMINI ATZERET**

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## OBITUARIES

### Katia Gould, born Frýdek-Mistek 1919, died London 2013

My mother, Katia Gould, was born Katia Löwova in January 1919 in the small north-eastern Moravian town of Frýdek-Mistek, now in the Czech Republic. She attended the local Jewish primary school, the Czech-language Mistek grammar school and the German-language high school in the nearby city of Moravská Ostrava. She came to London in 1937, initially for six months, to attend a language and secretarial college.

Following Hitler's occupation of Austria she decided to try to stay on in England and was offered a secretarial post at WIZO's (Women's International Zionist Organisation) world headquarters in London. However, she had to return to Czechoslovakia and apply for the necessary work permit from there. Thus she was in Czechoslovakia from August to October 1938, the period exactly coinciding with the Munich crisis.

After her death, we discovered a series of letters, mostly in German, that she wrote to my father, her future husband, in London. In addition to personal news, the letters comment on the political situation and, properly translated and analysed, they could perhaps prove to be of some

historical interest. Other letters we discovered reveal Katia's very active and successful campaign in January-August 1939 to arrange entry to Britain for her two brothers. She also obtained British entry permits for her parents, but tragically the war started before they could come here.

In January 1950 she began working as a secretary at Dr Jan van Loewen's literary agency. She stayed with the firm for over 30 years and became the director with special responsibility for translation rights, dealing with Noel Coward, Jean Anouilh, Somerset Maugham and the estate of Karl Kraus among others. She retired in 1983 and, in lieu of a pension, was given a number of the agency's smaller clients. She was still servicing three of these clients at the time of her death.

In 1983 Katia became a volunteer at the AJR, initially lending a hand wherever needed. But she quickly assumed extra responsibility, taking over the management of the three AJR bedsitter houses and handling all tenancy applications for Eleanor Rathbone House. She became a member of the AJR's Executive Committee and of the Management Committee of the CBF (later Otto Schiff) Housing Association, handling tenancy

applications for the 23 sheltered flats at Otto Schiff House.

For over 25 years Katia was chief proof reader for the *AJR Journal*, retiring from this position

at the age of 90 in 2009. Typical of the letters the *Journal* received from ex-colleagues at the time was a letter of appreciation from an ex-AJR journalist, now the editor of a newspaper in Dublin. He said that though he had joined the *Journal* after a journalism degree, he had only really learned his trade by working with Katia.

In the years of her physical decline, Katia remained remarkably cheerful and I never once heard her complain. Many people enjoyed her company and conversation; visiting her was always a pleasure and never a chore. She is greatly missed by, among others, her two sons and daughters-in-law, five grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and an elder sister in Slovakia.

John Gould



### David Ludwig Maier, born Freiburg-im-Breisgau 1921, died London 2013

David Maier was born on 19 December 1921 in Freiburg im Breisgau. His father, Loeb, was president of the Freiburg synagogue and a mathematics teacher at one of the city's main schools.

In 1937 David was sent to England. The following year Kristallnacht saw the burning of the Freiburg synagogue, which his father was obliged to watch before being taken to Dachau. David, from England and aged only 16, and his mother, still in Germany, managed to get Loeb out of Dachau. David also arranged for a teaching job in London for his father so that his parents could leave Germany for the UK. Here his father was interned on the Isle of Man; David volunteered to join him.

Following internment, David attended Jews College intent on becoming a rabbi. However, war was raging and he felt he should do something to help and, with no small difficulty, he joined the Home Guard and found a job as a tool operator near Harrogate in Yorkshire.

David contributed to the *AJR Journal* on many occasions, mainly as a reviewer of books and arts events. He was a consummate polymath and delighted in

using the English language in a spirited, colourful and precise way. Not only was he a reviewer for many magazines and papers but he edited Belsize Square Synagogue's journal for many years.

He had a roller-coaster career. He was a test driver for Massey Ferguson tractors, a draughtsman (during the Second World War designing parts of Spitfires) and, in later years, was elected a lifetime Fellow of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers. He marketed Standard Triumph cars behind the then Iron Curtain and had many a tale to tell of his extraordinary experiences – including selling a TR4 sports car to Khrushchev. He was a lecturer, a poet, a manager, a director and a managing director of a number of engineering firms, including Newage Transmissions. At the age of 56 he took a law degree and was simultaneously appointed Director General of Young Enterprise, a charity he developed into a powerful force in the business education of young people. Margaret Thatcher personally ensured that government and industry supported the initiative.

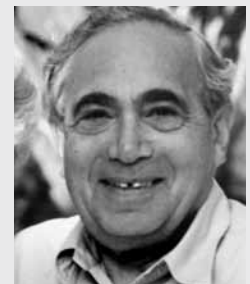
A visiting Israeli businessman once said of David that he had a *binat halev* –

an understanding of the heart. He did. He also had an infectious and dry sense of humour. A visiting German business colleague once said to him at breakfast 'My goodness, David – we don't have bagels like this in Berlin!' To which he quietly replied 'And whose fault is that?'

In 2001 David was given the equivalent of the keys to the city of Freiburg and this moved him greatly. He was a believer in the phrase *rachmanim b'nei rachmanim* – the compassionate children of compassionate ancestors. While he wasn't just referring to his love of Israel, he considered making *aliyah* several times but, as an only child, felt that being apart from his parents would be too much for them (and maybe for him).

This diffident, gentle gentleman leaves behind his wife, Estelle, two sons, Simon and Michael, and a host of family and friends who, hand on heart, will say 'I am proud to have known David Maier.'

Simon Maier





## LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

### The campaign against Israel in Britain

A white card with black lettering fell out of a book as I took it down from its shelf. It turned out to be an invitation sent in 1963 to members of the Society for Jewish Study and the B'nai B'rith Leo Baeck (London) Lodges to attend a lecture by Dr David Patterson on 'Conflict and Crisis in Modern Hebrew Literature'.

Immediately, I was taken back to those far-off times when I was still living in London under my parents' roof and one of my late father's 'evening jobs' was to serve as the secretary of the Society for Jewish Study. From where I'm sitting today, the topic of the lecture sounds fascinating but I'm afraid that at the time I wasn't particularly interested in those esoteric subjects. I do recollect, though, that my father enjoyed fulfilling his duty of attending those lectures, whereby he managed to broaden his education, which had been curtailed in Nazi Germany. He organised the monthly lectures, booked the hall and had the invitations printed. He even enlisted my sisters, our mother and myself to help him when it came to putting the cards into the envelopes on which he had typed the addresses.

Curiosity led me to turn to the internet

to see whether the Society for Jewish Study still existed. To my delight it's still going strong, with a varied programme of lectures, many of them of quite some relevance to people like myself – British expatriates living in Israel. As its website, <http://www.sjslondon.org.uk>, proclaims, 'The Society for Jewish Study brings before the public the results and insights of academic research into Jewish religion, literature, history and the arts.'

Amidst the learned lectures about such subjects as 'Musical Instruments in the Bible', 'Secret Jews and the Inquisition' and 'Academic Study of Jewish Law with Reference to the Agunah Problem', my curiosity was aroused by the subject of Dr Alan Mendoza's lecture (given in December 2012) entitled 'Understanding Delegitimation: The War Against Israel in Contemporary Britain'.

In the summary of his lecture, Dr Mendoza wrote: 'Israel is a liberal, democratic and economically productive country, with award-winning high-tech and technological innovation the effects of which are seen around the world. Yet in 2012 Britain, calls for its boycott and international isolation have never been stronger, with Israel's standing under

assault in academic, trade union, political, cultural and media circles. This has not occurred by accident – a long-term campaign has been waged against Israel by political activists, with dangerous consequences for both Britain and Israel.'

I couldn't have put it better myself!

The summary ended with the lecturer's promise to explain the context of the delegitimation movement and how it could be turned back. I wish I could have been there and I hope that large numbers of people turned out to attend. It seems to me that the Jewish community in England would do well to invite Dr Mendoza to repeat that lecture at venues throughout England and even abroad.

The version of Israel that is portrayed by the media in England tends to be skewed, probably because of the British predilection for supporting the 'underdog', in this case the Palestinians. Irrespective of whatever solution is eventually reached, the situation is not a straightforward black-and-white one, with the good guys on one side and the bad guys on the other, as the over-simplified version that is fed to the British public would seem to suggest.

In view of recent events in the neighbouring countries of the region in which Israel is located, not to mention the history of the Jewish people, I think it advisable that a combination of pragmatic and existential considerations be allowed to be paramount when it comes to formulating and implementing policies. I just wish the British public and media could see it that way.

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

2013, Letters), my article on anti-Semitism in Hungary does not contain 'a statement that appears to make Admiral Horthy solely responsible for wiping out Hungary's Jews.' What I say is that Horthy was more responsible for mass murder than most other Hungarian politicians.

Steiner is right that there were many perpetrators. Most of them were acting under the authority of the state. The head of state was Horthy. Steiner is wrong to claim that the Admiral intervened too late – in fact, he actively facilitated the delivery of Hungarian Jews in the countryside to the gas chambers. He did eventually stop the deportations from Budapest in response to Western diplomatic pressure that included a personal threat from Roosevelt. That is how he just managed to escape the gallows after the war. But his belated gesture to halt

the deportation trains demonstrates that he had had sufficient freedom of action under the German occupation to save the hundreds of thousands of provincial Jews murdered in Auschwitz.

Further, Hungary under Horthy was the only power in the Second World War to deploy its own citizens – Jewish men – as slave labourers on the battlefield, tens of thousands of whom perished. Horthy's Hungary leased thousands of others to Germany to work the copper mines of neighbouring occupied Serbia under Hungarian guard, many of whom ended up on a 'death march' (a form of mass murder).

But all this is old hat. Seven decades after the Holocaust, the issue is not what actually happened but the inability of the abused Hungarian public now to

acknowledge the truth.

*Thomas Ország-Land, Budapest*

#### 'BRINGING ORDER'

Sir – Regarding Peter Seglow's amusing letter in your July issue, years ago we were on holiday, in Austria I think. In a restaurant there were two doors to toilets: 'Damen' and 'Herren'. When one walked through, there was only *one* toilet!

As a Kindertransportee I was in 1942-45 in a very nice boys' hostel in Northampton run by the admirable Mr Marx. However, I and another of the boys elected to do 'firewatching' in a house further along the road requisitioned by the Food Office. We slept on the floor alongside trestle tables loaded with ration books – primarily so as to shirk Morning and Evening Service!

*Werner Conn (formerly Cohn),  
Lytham St Annes*

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