

# AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## Jews in the First World War

This month marks the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, arguably the most important turning point in modern European history. The Great War destroyed the old European order that had lasted since the settlement reached at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. The war also ushered in a new and dangerously volatile era of insecurity and conflict, creating the conditions for regimes that were bent on violence and conquest and were prepared to practise mass killing on an unprecedented scale. The First World War was the *Urkatastrophe*, the original catastrophe without which the great dictators and mass murderers of the mid-twentieth century – Hitler, Stalin and their imitators – would not have been possible.

Whereas the fate of the Jews of Europe became a central issue during the Second World War, given that Nazi Germany, the power principally responsible for launching that war, wished to destroy them in their entirety, the role of Jews in the First World War is at first sight harder to pinpoint. Nevertheless, the Jews who fought in the armies of the chief European belligerent powers numbered around one million, to which must be added some 200,000 who served in the American forces from 1917. The attitudes of these combatant Jews varied from country to country. In Tsarist Russia, which contained the largest concentration of Jews in the world, Jews were subject to severe discrimination and persecution. Jews had long sought to escape conscription into the Russian army and, though many fought loyally even in the face of the ingrained anti-Semitism of the Tsarist officer corps, others were disaffected; after the enormous casualties suffered by the Russian armies in their unsuccessful campaigns of 1914-15, Jews were among those who turned towards the parties hostile to the war and the Tsarist autocracy.

Russia's enemies benefitted from that country's record of reactionary excesses.

In Germany, the Kaiser's government portrayed its decision to go to war in August 1914 in part as a defensive measure justified by the expected onslaught of the 'Russian steamroller' from the east. Russia

who was studying at the University of Grenoble in France when war broke out and only got back to Germany with difficulty, proved their patriotism by joining up, inspired by the mood of national euphoria in August 1914. About 100,000 Jews served in the German forces during the First World War, and some 12,000 died. The writer Thomas Mann, whose attitude to Jews had previously been somewhat ambivalent, movingly recorded in his diary the shock he felt when, after the war's end, he saw how many men with the name Cohen were listed among the fallen. In recognising the patriotism displayed by Germany's Jews, Mann was, however, an exception among non-Jewish German patriots and nationalists. As early as 1916, the belief that Jews were failing to support the German war effort was so widespread in right-wing quarters that the Prussian Ministry of War undertook its notorious *Judenählung* (census of Jews in the German forces), pandering to the swelling tide of war-fuelled anti-Semitism; when the census showed that Jews were serving in proportion to their numbers in the population, its findings were suppressed.

Many AJR members will have had fathers, uncles, grandfathers and other relatives who fought in the First World War and kept their decorations and certificates as proud mementoes of their service to the country of their birth, even though no amount of Iron Crosses could save a Jew from discrimination and persecution after 1933. Before 1914, Jews had not been admitted to the German officer corps; but by 1918, some 2,000 Jews had been commissioned as officers, and a further 1,200 served as medical officers. This was a source of great pride to the individuals themselves, to their families and to their entire community. Herbert Sulzbach, a German-Jewish refugee who served with distinction in the British army in the Second World War, reaching the rank of captain, remained equally proud of

### PALESTINE FOR THE JEWS.

#### OFFICIAL SYMPATHY.

Mr. Balfour has sent the following letter to Lord Rothschild in regard to the establishment of a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people :—

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of his Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet :—

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

#### The Balfour Declaration, from *The Times*, 9 November 1917

was the natural enemy of the Jews and of the liberal, democratic institutions on which their gradual integration into the more advanced societies of Western Europe was predicated. Many German Jews allowed themselves to be persuaded that the preservation of the civil and political rights they had been granted over the decades was bound up with the struggle against Russia. It is, however, undeniable that Germany's Jews were mostly motivated to flock to the colours by pure patriotism. It has long been known that German Jews equalled, or even excelled, their gentile compatriots in their eagerness to fight for their country in time of war.

While their parents sank their savings into German government war bonds, young Jews like the writer Ernst Toller,

## Jews in the First World War *continued*

having attained the rank of lieutenant in the Kaiser's army in the First World War. Geoffrey Perry, born Horst Pinschewer in Berlin, who also distinguished himself in the British forces in the Second World War – he captured the traitor William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw) – had as a child had to listen so often to his father's patriotic stories of his First World War exploits in the Kaiser's army that he refused to talk about his own wartime experiences until well into the 1970s.

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg has recently written movingly about the deep-felt patriotism of his grandfather, Rabbi Dr Georg Salzberger, who served as a Jewish chaplain in the German army in the First World War and, after emigrating to Britain in 1939, was for many years the minister at Belsize Square. Salzberger, argues his grandson, saw wartime service as the ultimate proof that German Jews had, through their patriotic contribution to the national cause, achieved equality of status with their gentile compatriots. This Jewish patriotism reflected a belief that, as Germans, Jews and Christians shared a set of moral, social and civic values that bound them together in the name of distinctively German ideals. That form of patriotism could also descend into virulent nationalism: it was a German Jew, Ernst Lissauer, who penned the notorious *Hassgesang gegen England* (Hymn of Hate against England) in 1914.

The situation in Austria-Hungary, with its many competing national groups – almost all of them hostile to Jews – was different. Here Jews felt loyalty to the Empire and the Emperor, Kaiser Franz Joseph, who had come to symbolise the supranational character of the Habsburg Monarchy, standing above the ethnic strife that threatened to engulf the Jews and acting as guarantor of the civic rights that they had been granted under the

constitution. In Austria-Hungary, the army, like the monarchy, transcended ethnic divisions, at least to the extent that some Jews were admitted to the officer corps. Jews had little problem in fighting as loyal citizens of the Empire for they feared, all too presciently, that the defeat and disintegration of the Habsburg Empire would endanger their position across Central and Eastern Europe.

In 1914, Russian armies advanced into Austrian Poland, taking cities like Lviv (Lemberg) and Przemyśl and causing a mass flight of Jews. While the Germans concentrated on the western front, Austria-Hungary bore the brunt of the fighting against Russia in the east, a cause with which its Jewish population could readily identify. However, partly thanks to the incompetence of Habsburg strategists, the Empire also found itself fighting on two other fronts. Unable to overcome the stubborn resistance of the Serbs, Austrian forces became bogged down in a campaign that ended only in autumn 1915, when Bulgaria invaded Serbia. In May 1915, Italy came into the war on the opposite side, involving Austria-Hungary in a long and costly campaign conducted on the mountainous terrain of the Alps on the frontier between the two warring states. The huge losses suffered by the Austrians on this largely forgotten front, principally in the 11 battles fought on the river Isonzo, were in large measure responsible for the war-weariness that eventually swept the Empire away.

Probably the most significant development affecting Jews during the First World War occurred in the Middle East, where British forces faced the Ottoman Empire, Germany's ally. As General Allenby advanced from Egypt into Turkish-held territory to capture Jerusalem, the British government issued in November 1917 the Balfour Declaration, in which it made its celebrated promise of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, previously under Ottoman rule. The First World War thus created the conditions under which the foundations of the future state of Israel were laid. But it also created the conditions for the Holocaust, and not only through the fateful rise of anti-Semitism in Germany, a society radicalised and traumatised by its defeat in 1918 and by subsequent political and economic instability. The Turks had already practised genocide against the Armenians in 1915. In the wake of the collapse of Tsarist Russia in 1917, large-scale killings, notably of Jews, occurred across Eastern Europe as rival national and political factions, Poles and Ukrainians,

..... DIARY DATE .....

**AJR Lunch**  
Sunday 21 September 2014  
12.30 pm at the Hilton Hotel, Watford

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

### SPECIAL EVENT

## *The Last Train to Tomorrow*

Sunday 9 November 2014, 3 pm  
at The Roundhouse, London NW1

The AJR is proud to present the London premiere of *The Last Train to Tomorrow*, a song-cycle tribute to the Kindertransport composed and conducted by the internationally acclaimed artist **Carl Davis CBE**. This is a special one-off event.

As the date marks the anniversary of Kristallnacht, the proceedings will include a commemoration of the Reichspogrom of 9-10 November 1938.

The event will also feature *The Marriage of Figaro Overture* by Mozart and Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto* performed by the City of London Sinfonia and the Finchley Children's Music Group, together with an outstanding young violin soloist from the Yehudi Menuhin School.

As the event will take place on a Sunday afternoon, we particularly encourage members to bring along their children and grandchildren.

Further information is in the flyer enclosed with this month's Journal. Tickets can be purchased strictly through The Roundhouse Box Office – visit [www.roundhouse.org.uk](http://www.roundhouse.org.uk) or telephone 0300 6789 222.



## Visit to Chelsea Physic Garden TUESDAY 26 AUGUST 2014

Founded in 1673 by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, Chelsea Physic Garden has become one of the most important centres of botany and plant exchange in the world.

Visit includes a guided tour followed by a delicious lunch in the café.

Cost to include transport,  
lunch and tour – £20.00 pp

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

Reds (Bolsheviks) and Whites (anti-Bolsheviks), sought to assert themselves, often by the radical means of eliminating en masse the groups they perceived as supporters of their rivals.

**Anthony Grenville**

AJR Chief Executive  
Michael Newman

Directors  
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David Kaye

Heads of Department  
Sue Kurlander *Social Services*  
Carol Hart *Community and Volunteer Services*

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Andrea Goodmaker *Secretarial / Advertisements*

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## House of a Thousand Destinies\*: The Jews' Temporary Shelter

In his June 2014 article in the *AJR Journal*, Anthony Grenville mentioned that Otto Schiff was from 1922 onwards President of the Jews' Temporary Shelter (JTS) at 63 Mansell Street, in London's East End. After 129 years since its foundation, that Shelter still exists, albeit in a form different from that of its origins.

The last decades of the 19th century saw the immigration of Jews to the UK from Eastern Europe. In London, Simchah Cohen (aka Becker) sheltered a few of the arrivals. The premises were closed down following an inspection by two leading members of the Jewish community who found them inadequate. In 1885 Hermann Landau, his cousin Ellis Franklin and Samuel Montague (Lord Swaithling) took over premises in Leman Street, London E1, and opened the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter. They faced opposition from some quarters, who were unwelcoming to the new immigrants. But the Shelter began to operate and eventually moved to Mansell Street, also in E1. Arrivals were registered.

As in other parts of the UK, when the new arrivals disembarked they unwittingly faced problems at the dockside, where they were approached by people promising them all sorts of better conditions but with the intention of converting them to Christianity. Other immigrants were robbed, especially by porters. Girls could be lured into the white-slave traffic. The Shelter sent officials to meet arrivals both to assist them and bring them to the safety of the Shelter. There they could stay for a short time but then they had to move on, either to find their feet in the UK or to migrate further, mainly to the USA or South Africa.

In accordance with the Shelter's new constitution of 1914, the word 'Poor' was dropped from the organisation's title and each 'inmate' was to be allowed a maximum stay of 14 days and given three 'substantial' meals per day and lodgings for the night. A charge was made if people could pay.

The JTS continued to provide its services throughout the following years. Appeals were made for funding. In 1930, under the presidency of Otto Schiff OBE (successor to Hermann Landau), the sum sought, as recorded in the appeal literature written by Stefan Zweig, was £50,000.

As the 1930s progressed, the JTS took in refugees from Germany and elsewhere, including eventually *Kinder*. Sadly, one group of *Kinder* had to be housed elsewhere as the Shelter was full. During the war, the building was,

I understand, used by the US Air Force.

The Shelter continued to operate after the war until it was decided to close Mansell Street and move to smaller premises. Around 1970, the JTS acquired a smaller building in Mapesbury Road, north-west London. The early 1990s saw a decline in its use. Two decisions were made. The first was to use existing funds for grants to individuals in matters relating to accommodation, e.g. refurbishing. The second decision was major: what to do with the premises. Eventually the property was used as a Hillel House and, when that lease ended, the building was sold.

With invested income, the only function remaining was the giving of grants. No appeals for funds have been made since the mid-1980s.

We now operate with one part-time administrator and a grants committee, all supervised by the JTS Council, which meets several times a year.

Grants are given only via an organisation, e.g. the AJR or Manchester's Federation of Jewish Services (the FED), on the appropriate forms: applicants are not dealt with in person. The grants committee meets every Sunday via a conference call, when decisions are made and conveyed to the administrator.

**Bernd Koschland**  
Council Member and Trustee, Jews' Temporary Shelter

\**House of a Thousand Destinies*\*, by Stefan Zweig, an 18-page booklet appealing for funds for the Jews' Temporary Shelter, published in the late 1930s

## Judith Kerr event a sellout

The AJR was delighted to welcome the celebrated author Judith Kerr to a special intergenerational event it organised at the London Jewish Cultural Centre towards the end of June. The event was sold out.

Judith read from her much-loved classics *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* and *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*. From its humble beginnings as a bedtime story for Judith's children, *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* has gone on to become one of the best-known children's stories in the world, having been translated into 11 languages and sold over 5 million copies since it was first published in 1968.

Judith also spoke about her experiences as a former refugee, providing insight into her life before, during and after the Second World War, as part of the interview she gave to Julia Eccleshare. She also took questions from the audience.

We were also delighted that Martha Richler, the well-known cartoonist, could be with us to give the younger generation some tips on improving their art skills, as well as providing a demonstration of her own drawing talents. Martha, or Marf as she is known, is the daughter of Mordechai Richler, the acclaimed Canadian author and screenwriter.



## 20th Anniversary event of Child Survivors' Association a great success

The event, organised by the Child Survivors' Association of Great Britain (CSAGB), a special interest group of the AJR, at Speaker's House, was a great success, with over 120 members and guests attending the reception to celebrate our 20th anniversary.

Following a speech by CSAGB Chairman Joan Salter outlining the history of the organisation and its activities today, we had the chance to socialise and enjoy the refreshments in the magnificent State Rooms designed by A. W. N. Pugin.

As well as a commemoration of the founding of the CSAGB, it was an opportunity to raise the profile of Child Survivors. To this end, it was gratifying that so many of the organisations involved in

memorialising the Holocaust took up our invitation to join us.

Guests included members of The Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission: Lord (Danny) Finkelstein, Henry Grunwald OBE QC, and Dame Helen Hyde DBE. Representatives of organisations included those from the AJR, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, the Imperial War Museum, the Holocaust Education Trust, the National Holocaust Centre and Museum (Laxton), the London Jewish Museum, and the Wiener Library. We were also joined by several members of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees, including Lord Dubs, Louise Ellman MP and Sir Peter Bottomley.



Shary and  
Manfred Goldberg

Joan Salter

# The remarkable story of THE JEWISH FILM-MAKERS IN GERMANY during the early sound years, 1929-33

Jewish film-makers in Germany, especially writers, directors and producers, had been prominent throughout the silent era – during the 1920s in particular, when Germany stood out as the leading film-producing country in Europe. And although major figures such as the directors Ernst Lubitsch and Paul Leni, and the producer Erich Pommer, had left for the USA in the mid-1920s, the beginning of the sound era in 1929 provided new opportunities for a new generation of young Jewish talents. During the relatively short period between 1929 and 1933, when Jews were blacklisted, shortly after the Nazis came to power, the Jewish contribution to the German cinema was exceptional. This is despite the fact that UFA (Universum Film Aktien Gesellschaft), the largest film studio in those years, was headed by the right-wing media baron Alfred Hugenberg and this collided with the rise to power of the Nazi Party.

In *Between Two Worlds: The Jewish Presence in German and Austrian Film, 1910-1933* (Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2005), Professor S. S. Prawer draws attention to the fact that 'by 1929 there was a noticeable increase in anti-Semitic comment on films and their Jewish personnel in right wing and (of course) in Nazi controlled journals.' And the deepening of the Depression from 1930 onwards hit the film industry hard. Despite this, the coming of sound opened the way for many Jewish actors, song-writers, composers and writers of dialogue, along with assorted directors

by Joel Finler

and producers.

In fact, the leading Jewish producer, Erich Pommer, had returned to Germany in 1928. And, although he was no longer the production chief, he was put in charge of his own production unit at UFA and given a free hand to carry on with his mainly Jewish production team up to 1933. In addition, he was very much at the forefront of the early German move into sound filming in 1929.

Pommer's first sound film was a popular movie 'operetta': *Melodie des Herzens* (Melody of the Heart), directed by Hanns Schwarz, scripted by Hans Szekeley, with music by two Jewish composers, Werner Richard Heymann and Paul Abraham; it even boasted a new Jewish star in Dita Parlo.

*Melodie des Herzens* was followed immediately by *Liebeswalzer* (Love Waltz), released early in 1930, from a second Jewish team of director Wilhelm Thiele (born Iserohn), scriptwriter Robert Liebmann, Werner Brandes behind the camera, and the music again supplied by Heymann.

At the same time, Pommer made a major breakthrough with his other early talkie: simultaneously in production late in 1929 was the most famous early German sound film, *Der blaue Engel* (The Blue Angel), which told the familiar story of a middle-aged professor infatuated with, and eventually destroyed by, his love for a cabaret singer. The Austrian-born Jewish director Josef von Sternberg

had been especially brought over from Hollywood, the script was loosely adapted from the Heinrich Mann novel by Liebmann, and the brilliant Jewish composer Friedrich Holländer provided the music and songs (with lyrics by Liebmann), and arrangements by Franz Wachsmann. According to Sternberg biographer Joan Baxter, 'Although Lola-Lola's songs became one of the film's most memorable features, they were almost an afterthought, dashed off in a few days by Holländer, who skilfully exploited the deficiencies of Dietrich's voice.'

Another big musical hit at the time, *Der Kongress tanzt* (1931), was directed by Erik Charell, scripted by Norbert Falk and Liebmann, and photographed by the Czech-born Franz Planer. Here the music of Holländer was blended with songs by the prolific Heymann, lyrics by Robert Gilbert, who also supplied the songs for other Pommer productions: *Liebeswalzer* and *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* (The Three from the Petrol Station) were both directed by Thiele in 1930, while *Ich bei Tag und Du bei Nacht* (I by Day and You by Night) was directed by Ludwig Berger and scripted by Szekeley and Liebmann in 1932. Even a low-key thriller such as *Der Mann, der seinen Mörder sucht* (The Man Who Seeks His Own Murder) included a couple of songs by Holländer, with lyrics by Billie (later Billy) Wilder. The film itself was a useful follow-up by three leading members of the *Menschen am Sonntag* team of 1929 – director Robert Siodmak, script by Wilder and Curt Siodmak. As Prawer notes, 'Jewish directors and



Clockwise: *Die Dreigroschenoper* (The Threepenny Opera) starred (from left) Rudolf Forster as Mackie Messer, Reinhold Schünzel as Tiger Brown and Carola Neher as Polly; Peter Lorre gave a remarkable performance as the child murderer in Fritz Lang's *M* in 1931; *Mädchen in Uniform* (Girls in Uniform), set in a strict Prussian girls' school, boasted an all-female cast

Photos from the Joel Finler Collection

scriptwriters showed themselves adept at combining thriller elements with comedy.'

In addition to the new composers and song-writers, the large number of talented Jewish newcomers who first made their mark during the early sound years ranged across the entire spectrum of movie-making. This included some who had been attracted to the cinema during the late silent years but whose careers received a large boost in the talkie era – for example, the directors Siodmak and the Russian-born Anatole Litvak, who had previously worked as editors, while Hermann Kosterlitz (Henry Koster) had started out as a scriptwriter.

From the theatre came two experienced stage directors. First, Max Ophüls had been employed as a dialogue director by Litvak in 1930 before he launched into a long and distinguished directing career which would take him to Austria, France, Italy and the USA, then back to France after the war. Second, in 1931 Leontine Sagan (née Schlesinger) directed the one film for which she will always be remembered: *Mädchen in Uniform* (Girls in Uniform) was a brilliant and original critique of German authoritarianism and sexual attitudes. Well acted and effectively filmed, this 'study of emotional pressures in an authoritarian girls' school created an uproar because of its frank handling of a lesbian theme', according to the *Film Encyclopedia*, while *Time Out* referred to it as 'the first truly radical lesbian film in the history of the cinema'. Among the scriptwriters, Robert Liebmann and the Austrians Billie Wilder and Walter Reisch soon demonstrated that they could handle the new type of movie dialogue. They were joined by the Hungarian Emeric Pressburger, who contributed to the early talkies of Siodmak (*Abschied* (Farewell, 1930)), and Ophüls – his first short feature – but would later form a memorable partnership with Michael Powell in England in the 1940s-50s.

Experienced actors such as Peter Lorre, Elizabeth Bergner, Fritz Kortner, Franz Lederer, Curt Bois, Max Pallenberg, Anton Walbrook and S. K. Sakall clearly enjoyed a new lease of life on screen in the talkies. Among the cameramen, Max Greene (Mutz Greenbaum) and the Czech-born Otto Heller would, like Pressburger, become fixtures in the British cinema after they left Germany in 1933.

In a short piece like this it is possible to draw attention to only a few of the many and varied films which included a notable Jewish involvement. Thus, the superb Jewish actor Fritz Kortner starred

in a dramatised treatment of the notorious Dreyfus case, directed by Richard Oswald and co-scripted by Heinz Goldberg in 1930. And Kortner went on to direct *Der brave Sünder* (The Virtuous Sinner) the following year, produced by Arnold Pressburger, co-scripted by Alfred Polgar and the cabaret artist Fritz Grünbaum, who also played a useful supporting role in the film. But the real star was the legendary, Austrian-born stage actor Max Pallenberg. Here he was given his one and only opportunity to demonstrate his special quality as a movie actor, referred to by S. S. Praver as a 'virtuoso performance by one of the great Jewish stage-personalities of the era'. (Sadly, he died soon afterwards, in 1934.) Also in 1931 Curt Bois made a welcome appearance in his first talkie, a Jewish comedy appropriately entitled *Der Schlemiel* (The Loser), directed by the Polish-born Max Nosseck. In marked contrast was director Hans Behrendt's historical drama *Danton* (1931), notable for its Büchnerian take on the French Revolution. Scripted by Heinz Goldberg and Hans Rehfisch, it featured Kortner as Danton, Lucie Mannheim as his lover and Alexander Granach as Marat, while Robespierre was stiffly played by the (non-Jewish) Gustaf Gründgens. Of special interest also were two 1931 films set in contemporary Berlin, both with background scores by Allan Gray and based on well-known novels by Jewish writers: Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, which he co-scripted, and Eric Kästner's *Emil und die Detektive* (Emil and the Detectives), scripted by Billie Wilder with contributions from Kästner and Emeric Pressburger.

Among the new group of Jewish producers were Arnold Pressburger and Joe Pasternak, both Hungarian-born. Pasternak teamed up with writer-turned-director Henry Koster in 1932 and they continued to turn out entertaining but lightweight comedies and musicals in Hollywood, where so many of the German film-makers ended up in the late 1930s. Most important of all, however, was producer Seymour Nebenzahl with his Nero-Film AG film production company. He had first made his mark with two memorable films released in 1929: *Die Büchse der Pandora* (Pandora's Box) from the (non-Jewish) director G. W. Pabst and *Menschen am Sonntag* (People on Sunday), notable for its young Jewish production team. He went on to produce a remarkable group of early sound pictures



Marlene Dietrich starred as the cabaret singer Lola-Lola in *Der blaue Engel* (The Blue Angel)

in 1930-31. *Die Dreigroschenoper* (The Threepenny Opera) had a brilliant score and songs by Kurt Weill, lyrics by Brecht, whose original play, based on John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, was adapted for the screen by three Jewish writers, while the supporting cast included Valeska Gert, Vladimir Sokoloff and the half-Jewish Reinhold Schünzel as police chief Tiger Brown.

*Ariane* was the first talkie to star the brilliant, Polish-born actress Elizabeth Bergner – a sound revelation, her voice heard on screen for the first time, co-scripted by Carl Mayer, production design by Alfred Junge and directed by Paul Czinner.

But most memorable of all was *M*, the first talkie directed by the leading German (though Viennese-born) director of the era, Fritz Lang. It starred the Hungarian-born Peter Lorre (Laszlo Löwenstein), who gave a quite extraordinary performance as the tormented child murderer of Düsseldorf, hunted by the police and members of the underworld, who finally capture him and put him on trial. And this was followed by *Das Testament des Dr Mabuse* in 1932, also produced by Nebenzahl and directed by Lang in 1932. A fast-paced and original thriller, it follows the efforts of the police to hunt down a sophisticated underworld gang engaged in wide-ranging criminal activities. The film was banned by the Nazis, while the half-Jewish Lang quickly departed for France before moving on to the USA. (Producer Pommer, writer Liebmann, composer Wachsmann and

*continued on page 11* ➔



# Letters to the Editor

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

## 'THAT IS WHERE OUR GREAT-GRANDFATHER USED TO LIVE!'

Sir – I wonder if I could share a quick thought with your readers.

I am 17 years old and attend Hasmonian High School. Earlier this week (at the time of writing), I travelled to Berlin with my uncle, aunt, brothers, and cousins to visit the homes, schools and synagogues of the childhood of my Oma and Opa, both of whom were natives of Berlin-Grunewald.

What made the trip even more significant was that my Opa, who came to these shores with his family one week before the outbreak of the war, and was himself a member of the AJR, passed away around three weeks ago.

When the trip was still being planned I was never quite sure I wanted to go, for one main reason: in boycotting Germany I hoped I would be transmitting something tangible in connection with the Holocaust to future generations. If, in future times, people who had never known survivors were to see that there were some Jews who never travelled to Germany – like the 500-year *cherem* imposed on Spain after the Inquisition – then I hoped the memory



**Gavriel Cohn and his uncle Jeremy outside the former home of Gavriel's grandmother on Koenigsallee 34a, Berlin-Grunewald**

of my Opa, and the other countless victims of the butchery of Europe, would be safeguarded from the passage of time.

Yet, coming back from the trip to Berlin, I realise that in boycotting Germany I was missing the point. There were nine of us in the group and, whenever we stopped outside a house that once

belonged to our ancestors, people in the actual building, and many in adjacent buildings as well, pulled back their curtains slightly to watch and stare at us, hoping we wouldn't notice them and how amazed they were at seeing us.

By taking young people like myself to Germany and showing where their relatives used to live and pray, you are paving the way for them to return with their children, and even their grandchildren, so that they too can point and say 'That is where our great-grandfather used to live!' This ensures that they, and the residents that stare with curious eyes, will never forget the world that once was, and what the buildings and sites once were.

*Gavriel Cohn, London NW4*

## AN EXCITING AND EMOTIONAL JOURNEY

Sir – Since the publication of my article 'Memories from childhood' in your June issue, I have been on an exciting and emotional journey. I have enjoyed hours of telephone conversation with Susi Hauser, whom I had thought about for many years and who did indeed read the article. The *Journal* has brought us together after 67 years apart. She had not forgotten me, as I had never forgotten her, and had just thought that I had disappeared from her life when I was nine years old. I have also heard from two other 'children' from the Beacon hostel: Frank Franklyn (Feuerstein) and Erica Pream. Erica has kindly sent me a copy of her history of the Beacon, which invokes such memories of life there in the

1940s. She even has a list of staff and girls and boys there which includes my own name!

It has been wonderful to discover that my memories of childhood have been accurate over all those years; life was hard but very happy for us refugee children. At the time of writing, Susi, Frank and I do intend to meet up in July. I hope one day we might also visit the hotel which once long ago was the Beacon hostel for refugee children, though it has been sad to learn that the monkey puzzle tree I remember so well has not survived.

To meet Susi, the great friend of my early childhood, is a dream come true – thanks to the *Journal*.

*Susie Barnett (née Frankenberg), Billericay, Essex*

## DISTURBING MEMORIES

Sir – I, together with my sister, who was three years older, spent time at the 'Chestnuts' Jewish Children's Home in Alexandra Road, Hemel Hempstead, in around 1941-43. We went back there some ten years ago and it is now an old people's home, mainly for mentally disturbed patients. This is highly appropriate as I was highly disturbed by my stay there, which is seared into my memory over 70 years later. Apart from installing a lift in the central hall, the building is largely unchanged.

I would be fascinated to know what other readers' memories are.

*Bernice Cohen (née Deitsch), Northwood*

## A VERITABLE SCANDAL

Sir – Anthony Grenville's article 'Us and the Spooks' in last month's issue of the *Journal* was, as usual, of great interest.

The British security services were incredibly paranoid during the period described. The sister of a great-aunt of mine, Hedwig Fliess, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who had arrived in this country not long before the war – a harmless elderly woman suffering from gum cancer – was incarcerated in Holloway Prison because her son was known as a communist.

Hedwig told us of the appalling conditions in the prison and how she was given stale bread too hard for her to chew with her diseased gum but how – before an expected visit from the prison inspectors – everything suddenly changed for the better, only to go back to 'normal' once they were gone – a veritable scandal!

Incidentally, some of your readers may remember the vegan restaurant Vega in London's West End, which was extremely popular even among some orthodox Jews and which was established and owned by Hedwig's son (and maybe some others), after his release of course.

*Margarete Stern, London NW3*

## IN MEMORY OF GHETTO MUSICIANS

Sir – The obituary of Alice Herz-Sommer (June 2014) reminded me of another ghetto pianist, Juliette Aranyi, now forgotten. Juliette was born in December 1911 in Slovakia and was a child prodigy who gave public performances to great acclaim from the age of six.

For a few months I shared a room in the ghetto with Paul Kling from Brno, Moravia, a violin prodigy who had to wait until he was seven before he made his debut with the Vienna Symphony performing Mozart's Violin Concerto in A major. Both Paul and Juliette played in the ghetto in piano quartets. Both were sent to Auschwitz. He survived, she did not.

A New York Jewish leader of a string quartet, Aleeza Wadler, obtained a PhD with her dissertation 'Strings in the Shadows', in which she examined the artistic life in the ghetto of three violinists, one of whom was

Paul Kling. Paul's widow sent me a copy of the dissertation and I tried to trace all the artists mentioned in it. I came unstuck with Juliette, who was not mentioned in the ghetto memorial book. It was the archive section of Beit Terezin in Israel which solved her absence. Aranyi was her family name, which she continued to use as a pianist. By the time she was sent to the ghetto, she had married Alex Selig and a daughter, Niccola, was born in December 1940. Their entry is under Julia and Niccola Selig, who were deported to Auschwitz on 6 October 1944 and gassed on arrival, as were all mothers with small children. The father had been sent on 28 September 1944 and he too was gassed.

Niccola was 19 months old when she entered the ghetto and not quite four years old when she was murdered.

We are glad that Alice Herz-Sommer remained in the ghetto and was able to continue to teach, perform and live to an extraordinary age. We should also remember sometimes the many musicians who, once they had served the Germans' nefarious purpose, were sent to Auschwitz, death and oblivion.

*Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk*

#### 'I ONLY TOLD A LOT OF LIES!'

Sir – Giorgio Perlasca (1910-92) was an Italian businessman who bought meat for the Italian army in Budapest. He was tall and blond with Italian charm and he enjoyed life in the relatively carefree times of 1942-43. He had fought on Franco's side in the Spanish Civil War and for this had received a letter addressed to Spanish embassies requesting them to help him in any way they could.

On witnessing Jews being marched to the ghetto and the cruelties they were subjected to, Perlasca befriended the Spanish consul-general in Budapest, who awarded him Spanish citizenship. His Spanish was perfect and he changed his name so as to appear more authentically Spanish. When the consul-general disappeared he used his office and staff pretending to be the new consul-general. He threatened the authorities that if Jews – who were of Sephardic origin and consequently considered Spanish subjects – were harmed, Hungarians in Spain would be arrested and their possessions confiscated. That he got away with this shows the intelligence of the Hungarians in power at the time.

One day Perlasca went to one of the railway stations from which Jews were shipped to Auschwitz. He pushed two children waiting to be put on the train into his car. The guard protested and a fight ensued. The fight was broken up by a German officer, who told the guard to let go as 'Their time will come'. Evidently Raoul Wallenberg later told Perlasca that the German officer who had saved his life was Adolf Eichmann ....

Perlasca's help in maintaining the seven

houses protected by Spain by obtaining food and medicines was invaluable.

Perlasca's story was difficult to believe so he rarely talked about it. It became known only in 1986, following which he was honoured in Israel, Hungary, America and Italy. When asked why he did what he did, he answered 'I only told a lot of lies!'

Perlasca saved over 5,000 Jews from transportation to Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. An Italian film, with English subtitles and filmed in Budapest, is entitled: *Perlasca: Courage of a Just Man*. It is available on DVD from Amazon.

*Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath, Herts*

#### DAY TRIP TO WESTCLIFF

Sir – We went on the day trip to Westcliff on 10 June. It was a most enjoyable and well organised day, with lovely weather, and tea on the Pier made it a very special outing. Unfortunately, on the coach coming home, Kurt fell and it was necessary to call an ambulance to attend to him.

We want to thank all the staff for their kindness and help in dealing with his injury. We also want to apologise to the other passengers for delaying their journey home and hope it didn't spoil their day out. Many thanks.

*Kurt and Renee Treitel, London NW11*

#### BRINGING BACK MEMORIES

Sir – I love your magazine – long may it go on! It brings back many memories and familiar names.

*Brita Wolf, London NW3*

#### VIENNA PROJECT

Sir – I am an intern at Brandeis University and a colleague of Dr Karen Frostig, who is a resident scholar here. We are working on a memorial project, situated in Vienna, which marks the 75th anniversary of the Anschluss. The Vienna Project opened on 23 October 2013 and will close at the National Library in the Hofburg Palace on 18 October 2014.

The Vienna Project embodies art, technology, history and education. Its honorary board includes Nobel Laureates Elie Wiesel and Walter Kohn and many other leaders in the field of Holocaust history. Project partners include the University of Applied Arts, the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, and the Jewish Museum of Vienna.

We are currently preparing the Project's closing ceremony and are soliciting archival letters written by victims or survivors that are representative of Austria's persecuted victim groups. We would like to hear from you. You can visit the project website at [www.theviennaproject.org](http://www.theviennaproject.org) If you would like further information, please contact Dr Karen Frostig at [karen@theviennaproject.org](mailto:karen@theviennaproject.org)

*Tamar Segev, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA*

#### AUSTRIAN-JEWISH 'PRIVILEGES'

Sir – I wonder whether other AJR members who, like myself, came from Austria were presented some years ago with an *Ehrenmitgliedschaftsurkunde* (Honorary Membership Certificate)?

Basically, this was a written acknowledgement of the suffering of the Austrian-Jewish community. It contained further pages of privileges to be enjoyed by the recipients and was issued by the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde in Vienna.

I was recently in Vienna but, for some reason, the privileges – free entry (or at reduced cost) to functions plus regular newsletters to be provided – didn't materialise. I wonder whether any AJR members have had a similar experience.

*Robert Acker-Holt, London NW3*

#### A TERRIBLE SCHISM IN THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Sir – I must object to the points outlined in your April 'Letter from Israel'. It pained me greatly to see opinions presented as truth when in actuality the facts are totally different.

I will quote several points mentioned:

*'Back then, however, [when the State of Israel was established] the religious parties were very different in their mien and outlook from the ultra-orthodox version that now prevails.'*

The ultra-orthodox rabbis today follow the exact same Torah as Rabbis Herzog and Maimon did in those days. This point was referred to, although in a negative light. I quote: *'... the laws regarding marriage and divorce are subject to the restrictions, regulations and constraints of its ancient, patriarchal religion.'* Yes, our Jewish religion is ancient. However, it has sustained and ennobled us for over 5,000 years. The laws haven't changed and will never change and that shows it is not subject to the whims of a generation's leaders.

*'If a woman's husband dies without there having been any children – sons, that is – his brothers must either marry or release her.'*

In fact, the law is not so. If the woman has any offspring – daughters, grandchildren – she is as free as any widow.

*'This harks back to the time when the wife was regarded as the property of her husband ....'*

This never occurred. The Talmud has hundreds of pages devoted to what rights a husband has *vis-à-vis* his wife. There is no opinion at all that a woman is her husband's property.

Nor is there *'a tendency ... to favour men'*. In fact, the Chida – Chaim Joseph David Azulai, a great rabbi in the eighteenth century – wrote the following regarding women waiting for their husbands to grant a divorce: *'Since this issue brings pain to a Jewish woman and the Zohar [foundational text of Jewish mysticism] states that G-d*

*continued on page 16* ➔

# ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

The late-life blossoming of an artist can be full of surprises, as demonstrated by **Henri Matisse**, who, following a colon operation in 1941 at the age of 71, spent the last 13 years of his life wheelchair-bound and doomed to abandon the easel.

But the fighting spirit of one of the most imaginative artists of the 20th century turned disability to creativity. As we see from **Tate Modern's Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs** (until 7 September 2014), a new *oeuvre* began to take shape with the help of assistants prepared to do the heavy work.



Henri Matisse 'The Horse, the Rider and the Clown' (1943-4)  
© Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/  
Jean-Claude Planchet © Succession Henri Matisse/DACS 2013

Dance, colour and movement had always fascinated Matisse. In 1937, he designed the scenery and costumes for a ballet by Shostakovich; now, he used scissors instead of brush to cut into coloured paper. He admitted that the conditions of the journey were 100 per cent different, causing the artist to use different criteria for observation.

And the figures he created from this medium flow with an unending fluidity. His gorgeous blue nudes, 1 – 1V, are divided and yet synchronised by space and jagged line. He called this 'cutting directly into colour'. Contours are carved into the outline of the figure. The limbs intertwine as his technique seems to blend drawing and sculpture, celebrating the nude sculptures he created in earlier times. These too are on display, a reference

to his genius with shape, movement and space. His assistant, Lydia Delectorskya, describes his cut-out figures as 'modelling it like a clay sculpture, sometimes adding, sometimes removing'.

There are birds, fishes, flowers bursting out or floating into kaleidoscopic colour and even humour, and the cylindrical shapes of the limbs have a pleasing co-ordination, even where details of hands and feet blur into nothingness. And what is interesting is that the colour is always primary: few muted tones find their place on the wall.

There are other discoveries. In designing the décor for the Vence chapel in 1941, Matisse created one of the most vivid and deceptively simple versions of the Madonna and Child I have ever seen. The charcoal drawing is almost womb-like, with the infant Christ's hands suggesting the cross.

In Matisse's late flowering, there is a sense of the sheer pleasure he takes in endless colour and harmony, whether flowers, nudes or blocks and strands of colour. Everything moves with the relentless and innocent majesty of a child. The simplicity is disturbing, suggesting that after 60 years as an artist, this has become the Matisse line: a return to first principles, to the basics of what art is really all about. In rediscovering that first joyous thrust of youth which marked his ascent as an artist, he has gifted us his vision of eternity.

At the **Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition** (until 17 August 2014), I was impressed by **Frank Bowling RA**, who moved to London from Guyana in 1950. His colourful abstracts achieve vibrancy through complex layering, taking the works to the very edge of the canvas, one colour leaving the next exposed. Two acrylics, *About Recent Weather* and *Fire Below*, give you the idea. **Anselm Kiefer's Kranke Kunst**, with its historical references, demonstrated his usual energy and dynamism.

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PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

## REVIEWS

### Memoir of a 'hidden child'

#### BORN IN THE GHETTO: MY TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY

by Ariela Abramovich Sef  
*Gainsborough House Press*  
(tel 020 8952 9526), 2014,  
272 pp. paperback, and Amazon,  
ISBN 978-1-909719-01-9, £11.95

It was fascinating to read about Ariela Abramovich Sef's incredibly difficult but extremely colourful life in this memoir.

Ariela was a 'hidden child'. She was born in the Kaunas ghetto in Lithuania in 1941 and her parents smuggled her out in a potato sack which they left on an orphanage doorstep.

She was later taken at death's door to a fisherman's family who, at great risk to themselves, brought her up as their own daughter. After the war she was reunited with her own parents, who had miraculously survived in hiding beneath the floor of a livestock shed. Her grandparents and many other family members perished.

The family remained in Kaunas and struggled to keep afloat during the Soviet regime with food, clothing and consumable shortages as well as housing difficulties. Her father, Jacob, a gifted doctor, was involved in hazardous activities rescuing, and finding homes for, orphaned children at the end of the war.

The family adopted their niece, whose own parents were exiled and imprisoned during Stalin's repressions. Despite bringing up four children, her mother Bracha worked long hours six days a week, making macaroni on Sundays.

Ariela's life was blighted by congenital heart disease; she would tire easily and turn blue, requiring emergency treatment. Nevertheless, she made as light of her illness as she did of the family suffering. Surrounded by loving relatives and stimulating people, she enjoyed a full childhood, including happy holidays spent at Palanga on the Baltic coast.

In 1960 Ariela went to the University of Foreign Languages in Moscow, where she married a post-graduate French student. She moved to Paris and studied at the Sorbonne, while teaching and singing in cabaret. Her husband Pierre left her and life was far from easy.

She remarried, this time to the children's poet Roman Sef, whom she met in 1971, spending her time between Paris, Moscow and London.

Ariela had a wide variety of interesting and talented friends, including celebrities, artists and sculptors. Particularly compelling is the section on Andre Schimkewitsch (stepson of the sculptor Lipchitz), who lived in Paris in a home designed by family friend Le Corbusier. Schimkewitsch had spent 25 years in labour camps in Russia.

Ariela had a great resolve to help those around her. She cut a glamorous and beautiful figure, loving restaurants and the latest fashions, and would never miss an exhibition. Accompanied by her oxygen cylinders, she visited the opera frequently. How she managed to accomplish this lifestyle is unclear.

Having read her recollections to friends and family, she was encouraged by her brother Solomon to put down her odyssey for future generations. This is her only book and some of the chapters are somewhat uneven and vague in places as she fights her illness uncomplainingly.

She records her story in a series of reminiscences at a slightly breathless speed but in fairly low key. Although originally I had slightly dreaded reading the book, in the end it was impossible to put it down!

Sadly Ariela died in 2008 before completing the work, but in Part II her friends and relatives take up the tale. They provide delightful vignettes of this brave woman, who inspired fierce loyalty and whose struggle against adversity is a lesson to us all.

Janet Weston

## A lasting memorial

**UNDER THE HEEL OF BUSHIDO:  
LAST VOICES OF THE JEWISH POWS  
OF THE JAPANESE IN THE SECOND  
WORLD WAR**

by Martin Sugerman

*Vallentine Mitchell 2014, 700 pp.  
cloth, ISBN 978 0 85303 877 1,  
£50.00*

*The paperback edition is now  
available for AJR readers to purchase  
at £20 + £2.95 P&P. Please contact  
Vallentine Mitchell on 020 8952 9526  
or at [info@vmbooks.com](mailto:info@vmbooks.com) quoting  
AJRCB14.*

Jews were a tiny minority of POWs and civilian internees held by the Japanese during the last war but this book seems to be the first attempt to present a lasting memorial to them.

The book also demonstrates that it was perhaps their Jewishness that helped them to deal with the incredible cruelties inflicted on them by their captors and to survive them. As Colin Shindler, Emeritus Professor, School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, writes in his Foreword: 'Who knows about the Jews who bore witness to the extreme brutality which was meted out to many a hapless prisoner in Japanese camps? Forced labour, decapitations, torture, massacres, medical experimentation, starvation rations, death marches, comfort women – all this was part and parcel of the military tradition of the Japanese Imperial forces which looked up to Emperor Hirohito.' And the author writes in his Acknowledgments: 'Those who served in the Far East theatre of war endured the worst: the extremes of geography, distance, climate, disease and hunger, and the brutality of a fanatical enemy, combined to make the fighting and captivity especially horrendous.'

While the reviewed volume will probably be of particular interest to those whose family members or friends were prisoners or internees of the Japanese, anybody not put off by reading details of cruel behaviour, and curious about the way Jews of widely different origins managed to co-operate in order to overcome the problems they were facing, may want to delve into its pages. I doubt whether anybody would wish to read it from cover to cover.

Most of the book's 700 pages are taken up by biographies (here called Testimonies) of the prisoners and internees and the remaining pages consist of Short Stories, Record and Roll of Honour, and Introduction, Appendix and Index.

The Testimonies have been taken from a variety of sources: interviews with the affected people, or their relatives if they were no longer alive; diaries kept during captivity (some managed to keep diaries although this was punishable by death if discovered); reports written after the war; and various archives. The length of the Testimonies varies enormously: some cover just a page or two while others may run to 27 pages (Sgmn William Allister) or even – this is an extreme case – 137 pages (Capt. Dr Harry Silman). Members of the Dutch forces and those of Commonwealth countries such as Australia and Canada are also covered, as are civilian internees. In most cases,

a photograph of the person testifying is shown and, where possible, also a photo of them in later life. There are altogether 81 illustrations. Usually the articles describe not only the prisoners' experiences during their captivity but also what they did following their return to normal life.

Fritz Lustig

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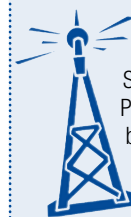
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## LATIMER PLACE

**Tuesday 7 October 2014**

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

On 5 June 2014 the German Bundestag unanimously

adopted legislation approving back payments of social security pensions for people – including many Holocaust survivors – who worked in ghettos under Nazi-German control during the Second World War.

All Holocaust survivors who currently receive a Ghetto pension will now have the option of having the pension re-assessed with a new 'start date' of 1 July 1997, regardless of when the original application was first made. This will result in an additional lump-sum payment to any survivor whose current pension start date is later than July 1997. Prior to the passage of this amendment, most pensioners have been able only to receive payments dating back four years prior to the approval of their claims.

In 1997 survivors of the Lodz ghetto were granted pensions in recognition of the 'work' they performed there. Under the 2002 German ghetto pension law (known by the acronym ZRBG), entitlement to a pension was widened to people who had performed work in any ghetto under Nazi control.

However, applicants to the ZRBG were frustrated by an overly strict interpretation of the criteria by local German authorities, resulting in the denial of 61,000 out of 70,000 claims. It is estimated that some 40,000 survivors worldwide, with an average age of 85, will now be entitled to an additional lump-sum award. The respective authorities that pay the pensions will contact pensioners directly to inform them of the decision and to advise how much in back pay

## GHETTO PENSION LAW EXTENDED

they will receive. The additional lump sum is separate from any payment

received from the Ghetto Fund, which provides a one-time payment of €2,000. Originally, payments under the Fund were to be deducted from the pension, but this rule has now been abolished. There is no filing deadline for the Ghetto Fund.

The new law also provides for any future applicant for a Ghetto pension to have a 'start date' back to July 1997. These pension reassessments will also apply to widows/widowers who receive the Ghetto pension in respect of their late spouse.

It should be noted that the complication of this revision to the law is that depending on the recipient's age, a pension backdated to 1997 might result in lower monthly amounts, the difference of which must be deducted from the original lump sum they received when the pension was made. Therefore, it may be advantageous for some people to decline the earlier start date. Each survivor will be given the option.

With this Bundestag vote granting back payments to 1997, entitled persons can now opt either for (i) a back payment retroactive to 1997, combined with potentially smaller future monthly payments (current pensions have a supplement for each year in which no pension was drawn from age 65 upwards); or (ii) the continued payment of the present higher monthly amount, but without back payment.

Beginning in July 2014, letters from the German social security authorities will be sent to each of the 40,000 pensioners in local residence language affected by this change.

## Search...NOTICES

Otto Hirsch and Martha Hirsch-Loeb did not survive the Holocaust but they had two daughters, **Grete and Ursula Hirsch**, who apparently emigrated to England in 1939 and have passed away. Does anyone know if Grete and Ursula had any children and grandchildren? Harry Breman at [harmkarstjohannesbreman@live.nl](mailto:harmkarstjohannesbreman@live.nl)

**Paula Kormany** (1880-1950) and **Fritz Kormany** alias **Frederick Kerr** (1913-2003) lived in London. If you have any info about this family from Austria pls contact Corinne Benestroff at [benestroff.c@orange.fr](mailto:benestroff.c@orange.fr)

**Ursula Mayer**, born 19 November 1928, came to England on the Kindertransport in 1939. She lived with her guarantor in Bournemouth and in 1947 moved with her parents to 3 Wellfield Avenue, Muswell Hill, London N10. We were close friends when we lived in Stuttgart. Any info pls to Erica (Hecht) Kanter at [charhos84@gmail.com](mailto:charhos84@gmail.com)

I am seeking to contact any descendants of recipients of visas given by **Aristides de Sousa Mendes**, the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux in 1939-40. Pls contact me at [diane.barnett@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:diane.barnett@blueyonder.co.uk)

The N.Y. Picture Company Inc. seeks surviving European Jews interned in WWII concentration camps in **Morocco**. Pls contact us at [info@tnyp.com](mailto:info@tnyp.com)

My grandfather, **Rosenhauch, Manek (Mauricy)**, who was interned on the Isle of Man, was born in Lvov and listed as Polish but came to the UK from Vienna in 1939 as a refugee with his wife and child. Any info pls to Elizabeth Gamlin at [lizgamlin@btinternet.com](mailto:lizgamlin@btinternet.com)

**Jack Sampson**, who owned Lulham Shoe Factory in Shoreditch, had a foster child and two German girls at his home in Bromley in 1940. Has anyone info about them? If so, pls contact Claire Perskie at [ckp12@yahoo.net](mailto:ckp12@yahoo.net)

For a book on Jews in the German army in WWI, has anyone info on any descendants of these German-Jewish officers who became refugees in England: **Sulzbach, Herbert and Weiss, Bernhard**? Harold Pollins at [snillop47@aol.com](mailto:snillop47@aol.com)

I am looking for info on **Hugo Suskind-Sheridan**, a partner for many years of my late grandfather Benno Franken in Berlin until about 1936, when both emigrated to the UK. He changed his name to the above from Hugo Suskind in 1948 when he was living at 135 Gloucester Place, London W1. He died on 24 April 1973 when he was living at 19 Park Road, Regent's Park, London NW1. Any info pls to [jean.sussman@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jean.sussman@blueyonder.co.uk)

Pls contact me if you have info on any of the surviving family members of Austrian Supreme Court Justice **Hermann Thorn**. Mario Zuniga at [mzuniga4209@yahoo.com](mailto:mzuniga4209@yahoo.com)

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## London's 'Borscht Belt' – Jewish hotels in Bournemouth

In 1956 I met my wife-to-be in the Ambassador Hotel in Bournemouth, one of the eight Jewish hotels there at the time. There was the Cumberland, Majestic, Langham, Normandie, East Cliff Court and East Cliff Manor. There was also, if you were very rich, the Green Park, the first Jewish hotel that had en-suite bathrooms.

These hotels were not just Jewish, they were *kosher* and under *Kashrut* supervision, serving good *heimishe* food: chicken soup, chopped liver, gefilte fish, salt beef, latkes, and loads and loads of chicken! Each had its own 'synagogue', with services on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, usually conducted by a rabbi.

The *Kiddush* was magnificent; the tables overflowed with the amount of food offered. In fact, food was overflowing everywhere. Breakfast, elevenses, lunch, tea, dinner – and not forgetting the midnight repast! We Jews can eat but we don't drink. At the Normandie, the bar takings were £2,000 per annum. At the Spider's Web, a hotel near Bushey Heath often frequented by us younger Jews, the takings were £1,500 per weekend!

Most Bournemouth hotels had swimming pools and gardens; some even had putting greens. Entertainment was put on most evenings. The Ambassador was probably the favourite hotel among Continental Jews because of its ebullient German manager/MC, Mr Rubinstein. (I don't know Mr Rubinstein's first name. It was very formal in those days – first names were used only for family members and your

very closest friends. I called him Mr Rubinstein; my parents, who also went to the Ambassador, called him Herr Rubinstein!) Famous stars appearing in London's theatre-land like Howard Keel from *Oklahoma* and Dolores Gray from *Annie Get Your Gun* were driven down to the Ambassador to entertain us.

But the real attraction was for the older visitors to make new friends, or meet up with old ones, and for the younger ones to meet members of the opposite sex. There was a dance or a quiz in one of the hotels every evening. I remember the first time I danced with my future wife was not at the Ambassador but across the road, at the Langham. The Cumberland was, I suppose, the most fashionable of the hotels for us youngsters. It was really difficult to get in to one of their dances, they were so crowded. Not much drinking went on. A beer for us chaps and, perhaps, a naughty Baby Cham for the girls!

The poshest hotel, as I mentioned, was the Green Park. The Bentleys and Jaguars outside were mind-blowing. I had just graduated from Oxford. I didn't know there was so much money around so soon after the war. Not being religious, I was also amused by the number of men who slid out of their hotels after their Friday-night meal to stroll up and down the East Cliff, on which all these hotels stood, smoking their cigarettes furtively and walking, in typical Jewish fashion, with their hands on their bottoms! I feel great nostalgia about Bournemouth's East Cliff. I stole my first kiss there and also,

being Austrian-born, yodelled to my new girlfriend. She must have thought me mad but, realising there were far more girls there than boys, she stuck with me – for 55 years now!

As with the 'Borscht Belt', the Catskill Mountains just outside New York, all good things had to come to an end. Jewish families were discovering foreign air travel. Here in the UK, the younger ones tended to go to Majorca or the Costa Brava while the older ones were flying to the South of France, the Italian Riviera and, of course, to the countries from which they'd fled.

The heyday of the hotels was the 40s through to the 70s, though some lingered longer. The Green Park closed in 1986; the Ambassador (later the New Ambassador) lasted till 2005. The only hotel that remains – but only just! – is the Normandie, which is currently closed but will open for High Days and Holy Days. (I noticed that the Langham, now called the Queens, did offer *kosher* deals for the Jewish holidays too.)

The 'Borscht Belt' has gone; so have the Bournemouth Jewish hotels. My wife and I visited Bournemouth a few weeks ago. It was upsetting. The Ambassador is now the Britannia – horrible! Except for the Langham, the others have all kept their names but they're nothing like they were. However, we can take comfort that the East Cliff is still there – as are our memories of that kiss and my yodelling!

Peter Phillips

### Jewish Film-makers in Germany *continued from page 5*

cameraman Rudolf Maté all joined Lang in Paris in filming his French production of *Liliom* early in 1934.)

This familiar trajectory was also followed by Nebenzahl, Wilder, Siodmark, Litvak, Emeric Pressburger, Richard Oswald, Kurt Bernhardt – the list goes on and on as the remarkable Jewish contribution to the early German sound cinema came to an abrupt end in 1933. Others, of course, went to England, including the directors Leontine Sagan and Paul Czinner with his actress wife Elizabeth Bergner, cameramen Otto Heller and Mutz Greenbaum (Max Greene), production designer Alfred Junge, and composer Josef Zmigrod (Allan Gray). The writer Emeric Pressburger and actor

Anton Walbrook arrived in England a few years later. Whereas the French cinema only benefitted briefly from these talented newcomers, who virtually all soon moved to the USA, those who arrived in Britain generally settled here and made a major contribution to film-making in this country. (Pressburger, Junge, Gray and Walbrook, for example, were all part of the Michael Powell production team in the 1940s.)

Lastly, sadly, Praver mentions a few of the Jewish film artists who failed to escape the Nazi 'killing machine': Kurt Geron, Paul Morgan, Fritz Grünbaum, John Gottowt and director Hans Behrendt, also producer Moritz Seeler and actors Otto Wallburg and Georg John.

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**Thank you, Susanne!**



Susanne Green receives an engraved photograph frame from Ruth and Werner Lachs and the Manchester Group

Susanne Green, retiring as our area co-ordinator, will leave a great void for our group. She has for the last 13 years been a wonderful organiser and friend. At our June meeting, she was our celebrity speaker and we were enthralled to hear about her untiring efforts for what she called the 'AJR Family'. So many have returned to the fold thanks to Susanne's endeavours. Her energy and enthusiasm left us spellbound. We wish her a long, happy and healthy retirement. We now look forward to working harmoniously and fruitfully with Susanne's successor, Wendy Bott.

*Werner Lachs, Manchester*

Our June meeting saw one of the largest attendances of members to bid farewell to our very good friend and co-ordinator Susanne Green, who is retiring next month, and to welcome our new 'leader', Wendy Bott. Susanne has worked tirelessly for the group and nothing was ever too much for her. We shall all miss her.

*Guido Alis, Liverpool*

**HGS Book Art Exhibition**

The Wiener Library's Kat Hübschmann gave us insight into the Book Art Exhibition currently on display at the Library. We were also informed about WWII memorabilia, including the loo paper used as propaganda and journals!

*Hazel Beiny*

**Day Trip to Westcliff**

On our arrival we were welcomed by Westcliff members with coffee and cake. Westcliff Chairman Otto Deutsch then gave us a talk about the area and the local Jewish community as well as showing us the beautiful synagogue. After a delicious lunch we went on a sightseeing coach tour of Southend and Shoeburyness, followed by a train ride to the end of Southend Pier, where we enjoyed refreshments in the restaurant.

*Bernhard Steinberg*

**Manchester 'Fit for the West End Stage'**



At musical *Yours, Anne*: Werner Lachs with Dutch survivors (from left) Ruth Lachs, Eva Schloss, Suzi Salamon

'A drama fit for the West End stage' is the verdict of the local Jewish press on the presentation by the Jewish Theatre Group of *Yours, Anne*, based on the life of Anne Frank. After this outstanding show, we were privileged to meet Eva Schloss, Anne's stepsister.

*Werner Lachs*

**Scotland Regional: A Successful and Interesting Event**

Forty Glasgow and Edinburgh AJR members meeting in Edinburgh Synagogue hall were welcomed by AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman, who told us about the range of social and educational activities undertaken by the AJR. Sue Kurlander, Head of AJR Social Services, spoke about the organisation's wide-ranging help – from domestic appliances to financial assistance with travel. We then separated into groups for discussion and debate. Following an excellent lunch, Jane Merkin, producer of *Suitcase*, an interactive play based on the Kindertransport, gave us a fascinating talk. The day ended with Lynne Lewis singing, in her wonderful soprano voice, songs in Yiddish, Hebrew, Italian and English, accompanied by the internationally acclaimed pianist Michael Barnett. Thanks to the organisers for such a successful and interesting event.

*Zara Cent*

**St John's Wood An Unusual Childhood**

Jane Greenfield, wife of Gordon Greenfield, the AJR's former Finance Director, talked about her most unusual childhood – on a farm. She drove a tractor from the age of four, milked cows and rode horses. This was due to her father's having been a POW near Treblinka, where his love of animals and desire to be a farmer originated. An uplifting story.

*Hazel Beiny*

**York and Harrogate CF Report on Holocaust Commission**

Meeting at the Schatzbergers' home, we were told by Inge Little of her attendance at the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission in Wembley. We were joined by University of York postgraduates Sebastian and Hugh, who are making an educational video based on survivors' experiences. Some of our members agreed to be interviewed.

*Marc Schatzberger*

**Pinner A Small Town near Auschwitz**

Intrigued by the relationship between her mother and a non-Jewish friend in 1930s Berlin and after the war, History Professor Mary Fulbrook uncovered the horrific elimination of Jews in a small Polish town while the friend's Nazi husband was posted as a civil servant in charge.

*Walter Weg*

**Hull CF Ensuring that Future Generations Never Forget**

At this meeting, kindly hosted by Rose Abrahamson, members discussed the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission. The overall opinion was that Holocaust education is the most important factor in ensuring that future generations never forget.

*Wendy Bott*

**Wessex A Very Special Day**

We were very lucky to have the most beautiful sunny day for our outing to Rheinfield Country House Hotel in the New Forest. The outing was meticulously organised by Herta and Walter Kammerling. The driver took us along the scenic route to the hotel and we saw both the coast and the New Forest. We had a delicious tea with homemade scones and a walk around the house with its fabulous Alhambra Room and Great Hall. We strolled around the beautiful hotel grounds before returning to Bournemouth. A very special day.

*Kathryn Prevezer*

**Leeds CF Annual Garden Party**

We were serenaded by violinist Elaine Green in the magnificent gardens belonging to Pippa and Norman Landey,

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

who so generously offer their home each summer for our Annual Garden Party. A sumptuous afternoon tea of home baking followed, all catered by Pippa. Everyone went home with a big smile on their face. *Wendy Bott*

### **Brighton-Sarid (Sussex) 'The Public Sector on the Brink'**

Jenny Manson spoke about her life and career. Having graduated from Oxford, she joined the Civil Service and has written books on her career there. *Ceska Abrahams*

### **An Opportunity to Meet Other Members**

Over 40 members enjoyed a trip to the Grims Dyke Hotel, where we were shown round the beautiful gardens and learned the history of W. S. Gilbert's erstwhile home. Later it became a sanatorium, and during WWII it became a 'hush-hush' place, before eventually being turned into a hotel. Following a delicious cream tea, we were entertained by some wonderful singers with extracts from Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Not least, we had the opportunity to meet other members – always a great pleasure. *Meta Roseneil*

### **Leeds CF A Lovely Day Out**

We had a lovely day out away from north Leeds, starting with the Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery at Leeds University. Lunch followed at a garden centre, a taxi

## AUGUST GROUP EVENTS

Marlow CF	5 Aug	Social Get-together
Ilford	6 Aug	Alf Keiles: 'The Jewish Influence on Jazz'
Pinner	7 Aug	Garden Party
HGS	11 Aug	Renata McDonnell: 'Six Point Foundation'
Essex (Westcliff)	12 Aug	Visit to Porters, Home of Mayor of Essex
St John's Wood	13 Aug	Leslie Sommer: 'My Interesting Life at the Home Office'
Cambridge	14 Aug	Mike Levy: "'We Must Save the Children' – Our Research on the Cambridge Children's Refugee Committee, 1938-47'
Brighton-Sarid (Sussex)	18 Aug	Godfrey Gould: 'Brighton and the Hanoverians'
Edinburgh	18 Aug	Chopin Concert and Lunch at Royal Overseas League
York	18 Aug	Social Get-together
Edgware	19 Aug	David Barnett: 'All-England Champion Daniel Mendoza'
Kent	19 Aug	Jenny Salaman: 'The Public Sector on the Brink'
Oxford	19 Aug	Summer Garden Party
Radlett	20 Aug	Alf Keiles: 'The Jewish Influence on Jazz'
Welwyn GC	21 Aug	Lunch and Social Get-together
Glasgow	24 Aug	Intergenerational Question Time: 'New Home, New Country – Scottish Independence'
Bradford	26 Aug	Social Get-together
Book Club	27 Aug	Social Get-together
Didsbury	27 Aug	Social Get-together
Wembley	27 Aug	David Barnett: 'All-England Champion Daniel Mendoza'
North London	28 Aug	The Clingmans: 'The Great American Song Book, 1920-1950' (lunchtime meeting)
Leeds HSFA	31 Aug	Lynda Groiser: 'Other People's Children'
Manchester	31 Aug	Tbc

ride out of Leeds, in the nearby market town of Otley on the edge of the beautiful Yorkshire Dales. *Barbara Cammerman*

### **Radlett Gilbert and Sullivan – the Beginnings**

Robert Lowe told how in 1875 the impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte commissioned the lyricist Gilbert and the composer Sullivan to write a one-act comic opera. *Trial by Jury*, staged at the Royal Theatre, was a huge success. This was the start of 20 years' co-operation, producing 13 G&S operas. It also led to the building of the Savoy Theatre and Savoy Hotel. *Bruno Muller*

### **Cambridge Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic**

Mary-Ann Middelkoop, from the University of Cambridge, gave us fascinating insight into German

visual art in the inter-war period. She included examples of Max Liebermann's Impressionism, anti-war photo-montages by John Heartfield (Helmut Herzfeld) and satirical drawings of Berlin life by Georg (Ehrenfried) Grosz, the latter both members of Berlin Dada. *Sara Kirby-Nieweg*

### **North West London Poetry Reading**

At our Summer Social Get-together we were entertained by Michele Wolf, who read for us some of her original poems, including 'Paved with Gold' (about Golders Green). Also, Paula, the AJR's intern from Germany, told us something about herself. *David Lang*

### **Kent A Gifted but Eccentric Soldier**

Godfrey Gould gave the most fascinating talk on Orde Wingate. He described the

*Continued on p14* ➔

Inside the AJR continued from page 13

gifted but eccentric soldier who did so much to help the Jewish cause in Palestine, enjoying a meteoric career after an unpromising start. *Janet Weston*

**Welwyn GC Care Considerations**

Hammerson House's Andrew Leigh gave us a very good idea of the levels of care offered. Then the tricky issue of costs was discussed. Andrew felt one of the most important issues was sorting things out while able to do so. *Lee Beckett*

**Cafe Imperial Meeting of 'Elder Statesmen'**

The usual convivial group of 'elder statesmen', eight in all, met for their monthly coffee morning, presided over by the ever-caring Esther. Discussions ranged from everyday problems to concern about the state of the world: the consensus was that our children and grandchildren would inherit an even more difficult and complex world. *Maureen Rossney*

**Bradford CF From Bradford to Cracow**

We were invited to the lovely home of Lily and Albert Waxman, where we heard all about their recent trip to Poland to follow the progress of the Sefer Torah which was donated by their synagogue in Bradford and now resides in the synagogue in Cracow. *Wendy Bott*

**North London Further Information on the 'Dreyfus Affair'**

We learned so much more about the 'Dreyfus affair' from our brilliant speaker, Raymond Sturgess – e.g. the withholding of vital information and the incompetence of the French military. Fortunately, the handwriting in a published copy of a crucial letter was recognised by a reader in South America and this led to the apprehension of the real traitor – Major Esterhazy. *Hanne R. Freedman*

**Wembley Successful Meeting and Fantastic Lunch**

A very successful meeting and a fantastic lunch at the beautiful home of Lilly Lampert, followed by a choice of members' music. A good time was had by all, including the oldest of us, who is now 104. *Avram Schaufeld*

**Bromley Members Give Personal Accounts of Their Backgrounds**

We enjoyed a delicious lunch provided by Hazel and the warm hospitality of Liane's home. Members, including four Second-Generation ones, were enlightened by personal accounts by those present of their backgrounds and journeys to this country, where they made their new homes. *Dorothea Lipton*

*'The beautifullest place on earth'*

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**FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mazel tov to Jonathan and Ursula Rose on the birth of their daughter Tabitha (Tabi) Renay.

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To receive your copy, please send a cheque for £5 made payable to the AJR to: AJR, Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL.

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## OBITUARIES

### Scarlett Epstein, born Vienna 13 July 1922, died Brighton 27 April 2014

Scarlett, our mother, was born Trude Grunwald in 1922 in Vienna. She was the youngest child in an assimilated Jewish family. In 1938, when Hitler marched into Vienna, Trude travelled across the city to obtain visas for the family from the Yugoslav embassy. On her way she was swept into the square where Hitler was addressing the crowds and experienced his magnetism as everyone roared 'Heil Hitler'.

Trude's family fled to Yugoslavia and then were given refuge by Albania. In her later years, Trude ceaselessly championed Albania. Trude and her mother then found a flight to England on a plane that stopped in Germany. In Frankfurt they were detained but saved by a KLM pilot who refused to take off without them.

In England Trude worked as a machinist, initially making ladies' underwear. She became active in the Communist-dominated Young Austria, the only organisation which really welcomed her, she said. When her father and brother were interned as 'enemy aliens' Trude changed her name to Scarlett to avoid being detained as well.

Having studied at evening class, Scarlett won a place at Ruskin College in Oxford, completing a two-year diploma in one year. She obtained high marks in the Oxford University entrance exams but was rejected

for not being 'the sort of girl' that went to St Hilda's College. Instead, she studied economics at Manchester University, planning to go into business but was severely burned by an unguarded electric heater whilst studying for her finals. She did her exams in hospital in immense pain and studied for a PhD instead.

So began a career in academia, with Scarlett pioneering economic anthropology with research in southern India. Back in England and in her mid-30s, Scarlett married fellow anthropologist Bill Epstein and they studied together in Papua New Guinea. They returned to England. As a family we lived for some years in Australia, as well as stints travelling around the world, before settling in Sussex. At the Institute for Development Studies, Scarlett pioneered studies with students from developing countries, first in population and then a women's project. This led to consultancies for the UN, the World Bank and many non-governmental organisations.

Later projects included a comparative study of 'Women, Work and Family' in this country and Germany, while the "Humph" the Desert Dairy' used Israeli research to develop high-yield milk-producing camels to feed people in desert regions. Her 'culturally adapted social marketing' applied anthropological skills to development projects to ensure that

aid was appropriately targeted.

Following Bill's death in 1999, Scarlett continued to throw herself into new projects, particularly in India and Papua New Guinea. She was awarded an OBE for services to Papua New Guinea.

In the last few years Scarlett concentrated more on her refugee background, visiting schools to tell young people of her experiences. This was the message in the DVD *Back from the Brink*, where she and two other survivors told how they had escaped thanks to the assistance they had received. Scarlett also continued to promote Albania with its concept of *besa* – a code of honour concerned with helping others – which she had good reason to thank for her life.

Scarlett's autobiography, published in English, German and the Indian dialect of Kannada, is called *Swimming Upstream* – she felt nothing in her life was straightforward. She was a remarkable lady and a loving mother and will be very much missed.

**Debbie and Michelle Epstein**



### Henry Kuttner, born Berlin 5 December 1929, died London 14 March 2014

Born Heinz Kuttner in Berlin in 1929, Henry initially had a happy childhood. Nazism ended that and, along with his parents Hanni and Hans, his uncle Martin and sister Leila, he became a refugee at the age of nine. Tragically, his grandparents and his uncle Richard perished at Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. Later, Henry was to tell his story as a witness, visiting schools in Germany and the UK. He wasn't bitter but he refused to be silent.

Henry was grateful to this country for offering him sanctuary and proud to be British. He loved the English language and the British sense of fair play. He was particularly grateful to the family who gave him a home when he was evacuated from London in 1940.

At school he excelled in maths and English and in 1953, after National Service and



having obtained an engineering diploma, he joined the BBC as an engineer at the Alexandra Palace transmitter. He spent most of his career as a Radio Studio Manager, a job he loved. Peo-

ple liked working with him and trusted him with their programmes. He was known for his expertise, preparedness, humour and for helping newcomers.

Henry married Molly in Norwich in 1956. They came from different backgrounds but each fitted into the other's family through a combination of charm and effort. They made lasting friendships together and loved to travel, visiting friends and relatives in the UK and beyond. They raised two daughters, Sue and Helen, and were blessed with grandchildren Ben and Hannah.

Henry's parents were founder members of Belsize Square Synagogue. He himself had a lifelong commitment to the congregation, in particular the choir, as tenor, bass and choirmaster, and later as sound engineer for the High Holidays, librarian and archivist. The synagogue liturgy was in Henry's DNA. He conceived an ambitious plan to preserve, update and print the synagogue's music and pursued this project over 15 years, with talented colleagues and the Sibelius computer programme. He was overjoyed to have lived to oversee its completion.

Henry had a deep love of classical music and had recently gone with his daughters to one of his beloved chamber concerts at the Wigmore Hall. He loved Haydn more than any other composer 'because he brought

humour into music.' He was also a fine exponent of bridge and an avid solver of the *Daily Telegraph's* 'Cryptic Crossword'.

He was passionate about sport and played table tennis to a good club standard. He adored cricket and athletics and recently went with his grandson to watch Arsenal. How he would have enjoyed their FA Cup triumph! Henry had a lifelong interest in the Olympics and was present at two London Games: in 1948, when he attended daily with his father, and in 2012, when he went with his family to football, table tennis and wheelchair basketball events.

Henry had a flair for mathematics, which he passed on to his daughters and granddaughter. Years before grandchildren had been thought of, he bought one of the early BBC Micro computers. When asked why he'd bothered, he replied 'Because I want to be able to talk to my grandchildren!'

That was typical of Henry – always looking ahead and connecting with people. He was fiercely loyal to his family and friends and loved nothing more than a good 'catch-up' over lunch or a cup of coffee. Henry's wife Molly cared for him in his final months, for which he was so grateful. We all miss him.

**Molly Kuttner, Sue Rozario,  
Helen Kuttner**



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

### Fifty years of living in Israel

It is now almost exactly 50 years since I came to Israel to live. So I suppose you could say that I came on *aliya* in September 1964, though I didn't get my official status as a new immigrant until June 1967 – but that's another story.

When people ask me why I left England's green and pleasant land to come and live in what they imagine to be an arid desert in one of the most dangerous parts of the world, my answer consists of two words: 'climate' and 'men'.

But of course I must have had weightier reasons than those. The fact that I grew up in a home where Zionism was a fact of life, attended a Zionist youth movement, and had relatives in Israel played an undeniable role in my decision. My first visit to Israel, in 1959, within the framework of a youth tour organised by the Jewish Agency, was an eye-opener for me, an impressionable teenager. I had never experienced anything like it before. Six weeks of touring sunny Israel, visiting sites, cities and *kibbutzim*, finding smiling bronzed faces wherever we turned, and being welcomed into people's homes made a deep and lasting impression

on me. In addition, the climate really did serve to lift my spirits, which seemed to have been perpetually dormant in the grey and rainy London streets in which I'd grown up.

I visited Israel twice in my vacations from university and managed to make contact with people in the Sociology Department of the Hebrew University, so that when I came for my second visit I was given a holiday job and even earned some money (which I found to my chagrin that I was unable to take home). As a result of those visits, I was offered a position as a research assistant in that department when I decided to continue for an MA after graduating in London. So I suppose I can be said to have had one of the easiest transitions imaginable in moving to a different country. I had employment, albeit with minimal income, I could stay with relatives until I found a place to rent, and I was meeting intelligent and pleasant people. I didn't know much Hebrew and was too busy working and studying to go to an *ulpan*, but I managed to get by with the little I

knew. There were organisations catering for English-speaking people and there were student parties, so my social life was not totally uninteresting.

Israel was a very different place 50 years ago, and this was especially the case with Jerusalem. Before the Six-Day War it was a small, intimate place where everyone knew everyone else and the central 'triangle' formed by the three main streets was where one went to eat falafel, meet friends or just enjoy the cool evening air: 'The third time we meet on the same day we'll go and get ice cream,' was the slogan of the day. Religion played a part in some people's lives, but nothing was extreme and everyone appeared tolerant of everyone else.

The political atmosphere was one of socialism, idealism and mutual support. Today it is capitalist, entrepreneurial and right-wing. Those early days of naiveté and perhaps even innocence are long gone, due to both internal and external processes. Personally, I find that regrettable, but it is foolish to try to stem the tide of change.

What about men, I hear you cry. I found the love of my life at a student party in Jerusalem, got married and produced three children. We lived through times of peace and war, sickness and health, poverty and relative prosperity and now also have seven grandchildren, all living in Israel.

All in all, Israel has been good for me, and I hope I've been good for it.

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

empathises with the pain of a Jewish woman more than any other pain, I have put aside all my other responsibilities in order to release any woman from the chains of her marriage.'

*'The ultimate solution ... is the separation of religion and state in Israel ...'*

This would cause a terrible schism in the Jewish people and could lead to dreadful repercussions for future generations.

Harvey Gross, London N16

### CLOSING THE GAP

Sir – It is possible that Janos Fisher (July, Letters) and I are not as far apart in our opinions as it seemed at first. Part of the difference lies perhaps in the meaning of the words we use.

Rightly or wrongly, I use the left-to-right political shading only in respect of democratic parties. My 'far right' does not refer to fascism, as Mr Fisher implies, but

to shades within the Conservative Party.

By supporting Israel, Mr Fisher seems to mean the Israeli government. Surely he will agree that a government's policies and actions are not beyond criticism. Building Jewish homes on Arab land is morally wrong, in my opinion, and not in the long-term interest of the Israeli people.

Have I noticed that Israel is a democracy? Well, Israel is certainly more of a democracy than most of the Arab states but its level of democracy is not very high. It has over 30 political parties. At the last election, the Likud, Netanyahu's party, obtained 23.34 per cent of the votes, which gave it 31 out of the 120 seats. Yesh Atid, led by Yair Lapid, Likud's election partner, got 14.33 per cent and 19 seats. In order to form a government, Netanyahu cobbled together a coalition, which includes a number of extreme-right religious parties. They prevented him only recently from taking a pro-peace measure.

Democracy is a grand word but its use often covers a multitude of sins. Great Britain is also a democracy but our election system is undemocratic and our government does not represent the majority of the electorate.

As for Conrad Black, there is not much worth saying. He has been convicted of fraud and that, in my eyes, reduces his being a friend of Israel to a minus. But Mr Fisher is obviously right to state that my opinion is no loss to Conrad Black.

Is it not a satisfactory result of our discussion that it is ending with a point on which we both agree?

I am sure we also agree in being much more concerned about the present dangerous situation and in hoping that both Israel and Hamas will succeed in preventing an explosion of more violence. Yesh Atid means 'There is a future.' Only if they find a way of living together.

Eric Sanders, London W12

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