

AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Us and the spooks

Given the wealth of literature that has appeared in recent decades on the victims of Nazism, it is now rare indeed for a book on the refugees from Hitler in Britain to open up to its readers an almost completely unexplored area of that history. Yet this is the case with Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove's study *A Matter of Intelligence: MI5 and the Surveillance of Anti-Nazi Refugees, 1933-1950* (Manchester University Press, 2014, £70.00). This takes as its subject the British Security Service, commonly known as MI5, and its attempts to keep under surveillance any potentially hostile elements among the many thousands of refugees who fled to Britain after 1933 from Nazi-held territories.

MI5's prime targets were political refugees – the Communists, socialists, trade unionists, pacifists and liberal progressives – rather than the mostly apolitical Jewish refugees who formed the great majority of those who escaped to Britain, though sometimes the boundaries between the two groups were blurred. The book is based on detailed and meticulous research, principally on the MI5 files on refugees held at the National Archives in Kew, many of which have, however, been destroyed or remain, even at this late date, closed to the public. Despite this, the authors have succeeded in building up a compelling picture of the way in which MI5 proceeded towards the unexpected influx of refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia into Britain. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that almost every page of the book contains some fascinating nugget of information about the interplay between the Security Service and its largely unsuspecting refugee targets.

In the 1930s, MI5 directed most of its activities against Germany and the Soviet Union – against Nazism and

Communism. The Secret Service had been formed in 1909 in response to the threat from Germany, and Germany and Germans remained the object of its intense suspicion. MI5 was largely successful in neutralising the threat posed



Thames House, MI5 headquarters

by the Nazi *Auslandsorganisation* (foreign organisation) in Britain – whose efficacy can be measured by the fact that its leader was a hair tonic salesman and a chum of Rudolf Hess – and in keeping tabs on native British Fascists and Mosleyites. But MI5's suspicion of the refugees as *Germans* led it to carry out the intensive and largely pointless monitoring of many completely harmless refugees and, worse still, led to its culpable role as a leading instigator of the mass internment of 'enemy aliens', Jewish as well as 'political', in summer 1940. Although Brinson and Dove discovered much evidence of casual anti-Semitism in MI5 files and documents, they remain unconvinced that MI5's advocacy of internment was primarily motivated by anti-Semitism.

The extent of MI5's misjudgement of the threat posed by the refugees from Hitler in the pre-war years leaps out from the pages of the book. For example, when the elderly pacifist Otto Lehmann-Russbuedt arrived in Britain in 1933 he

would hardly have expected to find himself placed under covert surveillance, especially as it was his intention to warn Britain of the danger represented by Nazi Germany's programme of rearmament. Another improbable target of MI5 scrutiny was the

writer and anti-Nazi activist Karl Otten, in whose membership of a tiny and insignificant refugee grouping known as the Primrose League – which met at a refugee's flat near London's Primrose Hill – MI5 took a close, if unwarranted, interest; it even detailed an agent, Claud W. Sykes, a translator and author of popular books on aerial combat in the First World War, to befriend Otten and infiltrate the group. MI5 was also given information about alleged security risks among the refugees by informants from within the refugee community; ironically

these included Otten, as well as the activist Kurt Hiller, an indefatigable participant in the bitter political infighting that distinguished the warring factions of the German Left even before 1933.

Ever since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, MI5 had been acutely conscious of the need to counter the threat of Communist subversion. This obsession with the 'Red Menace' caused MI5 to be slow in its initial reaction to the aggressive potential of Nazi Germany. It continued to devote considerable resources to monitoring left-wing targets throughout the 1930s and especially during the period of the Nazi-Soviet Pact (August 1939 – June 1941). Even after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, MI5 continued to take an active interest in left-wing refugees. It was especially suspicious of left-leaning refugee organisations like the Free German League of Culture and the Austrian Centre, as well as the Czech Refugee Trust Fund, despite the fact that

Us and the spooks *continued*

the latter had been set up by the British government to bring endangered refugees from Czechoslovakia to Britain. As Brinson and Dove show, it was thanks to the Home Office that known Communists like Eva Kolmer of the Austrian Centre and Jürgen Kuczynski of the Free German League of Culture, whose internment was repeatedly demanded by MI5, remained at liberty.

Despite the resources that MI5 devoted to monitoring security risks among the refugees from Hitler, it failed conspicuously in its task of detecting those who posed a genuine and serious threat to British national interests. In particular, it judged that the 'atom spy' Klaus Fuchs, who had worked on the construction of the atomic bomb in the United States and had returned to the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell in 1946, posed no significant security risk. The British arrested Fuchs only in 1950, after the Americans discovered that he had been passing highly secret material to the Soviets for years. MI5 was even less successful in uncovering the activities of another known Communist among the refugees from Nazism, Engelbert Broda, who engaged in scientific espionage at the highest level in Britain but was allowed to return with impunity to his native Vienna, where he died in 1983.

Last but by no means least, MI5 was unsuccessful in countering the activities of Arnold Deutsch, who had arrived in Britain in 1934 with instructions to set up a Soviet spy network. Deutsch, the most successful Soviet spymaster in Britain in that period, was principally responsible for recruiting the notorious 'Cambridge Five' agents – Kim Philby, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Anthony Blunt and John Cairncross – who together wrought untold damage on British interests and the British security services. Deutsch employed

a number of refugee agents, including Viennese-born Edith Tudor-Hart, a friend of Philby's first wife, Litzi Friedmann; it was Tudor-Hart who introduced Philby to Deutsch, thus setting in motion a catastrophe for British intelligence.

As befits impartial academics, Brinson and Dove maintain a stance of strict moral and political neutrality in their depiction of those who spied for the Soviet Union. But such a position of neutrality itself arguably implies a political judgment, the assumption of an approximate moral equivalence between the British and Soviet systems. This assumption is widespread in fictional reconstructions of the 'Cambridge Five', such as Alan Bennett's depiction of Guy Burgess and Anthony Blunt in the films/stage plays *An Englishman Abroad* (1983) and *A Question of Attribution* (1988), and in Julian Mitchell's fictionalised reworking of Guy Burgess's schooldays at Eton in *Another Country* (1981). The novels of John le Carré have immortalised the image of the British and Soviet security services as competing institutions inevitably involved in the moral compromises of their trade and degenerating through the exigencies of espionage and counter-espionage into a world of barely distinguishable shades of ethically ambiguous grey.

To justify the behaviour of the Soviet Union's British spies, proponents of this view habitually invoke E. M. Forster's dictum that if he had to choose between betraying his country and betraying his friend, he hoped he would have the guts to betray his country. That Philby and company betrayed their country is beyond dispute: they disclosed its most valuable secrets to its mortal enemies, undermined the institutions devoted to its defence, and did not hesitate to sacrifice the lives of the operatives of its security services. Furthermore, they did not do this in order to remain true to their friends. On the contrary, Philby routinely betrayed his friends – those with whom he worked in the British intelligence service and with whom he broke bread on a daily basis.

In her book of memoirs, *Die hellen und die finsternen Zeiten* (*Light and Dark Times*) (1989), Hilde Spiel relates how in 1946 her husband, the writer Peter de Mendelssohn, then working for the Allied occupation forces in Germany, secured a position with the British military authorities for his friend and fellow refugee Georg Honigmann, now married to Litzi Friedmann, Philby's ex-wife. But instead of travelling to Hamburg, Honigmann made his way to Berlin

..... DIARY DATE

AJR Lunch
Sunday 21 September 2014
Details to follow

SPECIAL EVENT

The Last Train to Tomorrow

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

The world-famous composer and conductor Carl Davis will perform the London premiere of his tribute to the Kindertransport, *The Last Train to Tomorrow*, on Sunday 9 November at The Roundhouse, London NW1.

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.

Details of how to purchase tickets will be announced in due course, but to register your interest in attending please email enquiries@ajr.org.uk

'HANDBAGGED'

Thursday 24 July 2014, 2.30 pm
Vaudeville Theatre,
404 The Strand,
London, WC2R 0NH



The monarch: Liz
Her most powerful subject: Maggie

'Handbagged' is a 'wickedly funny' (*Evening Standard*) new play on the relationship between two giants of the 20th century.

Tickets £35.00 each,
front four rows of stalls (limited numbers)

For further details, please contact
Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070
or at susan@ajr.org.uk

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and defected to the Russians, leaving his friend de Mendelssohn, who had vouched for his reliability, distraught and heavily compromised in the eyes of the military authorities. This was but one small act of betrayal carried out in the service of Stalin's Soviet Union, a regime that extinguished the lives of millions of its own people and blighted those of millions more who fell under its sway.

Anthony Grenville

A comprehensive and beautiful work

POGROM NIGHT 1938: A MEMORIAL TO THE DESTROYED SYNAGOGUES OF GERMANY

Published by the Synagogue Memorial Beit Ashkenaz, Jerusalem, 2014

I literally trembled with emotion when I held the two volumes of this monumental work in my hands. Together the volumes comprise over 700 pages, which are packed with information about the more than 1,000 synagogues and prayer rooms that existed in pre-Second World War Germany and were burned, destroyed, pillaged or plundered on the night of 9 November 1938, which was given the derisive designation of *Kristallnacht*, the Night of Broken Glass, by its Nazi perpetrators.

The book contains concise texts giving the history, dates and vital statistics of each synagogue and community and, in many cases, these are accompanied by photographs of how the place looked before, and sometimes after, 9 November 1938. The work is, in fact, an encyclopaedic account of the life and times of the many Jewish communities that once existed in Germany, as it was defined by its 1937 borders. On a personal note, my heart lifted when I saw that what was once the small town of Sprottau in Silesia, the birthplace of my mother and today known as Szprotawa in Poland, is included.

The inside cover of the book shows a map of Germany on that fateful day. The map is in grey and is studded with tiny dots of white, giving the impression of innumerable spots of light. These denote the places where synagogues or prayer rooms existed and were destroyed or attacked that night. In one startling and concise graphic image, the reader grasps the full extent of the tragedy of the Jews of Germany.

Forewords have been written by Wolfgang Ischinger, the former German Ambassador to the USA and the UK and now Global Head of Germany's Allianz Group, and Malcolm Hoenlein, Vice-President of the Conference of Presidents of American Jewish Organizations, both of which contributed funds to support the project. But the main contribution and acknowledgement

belong to Professor Meir Schwartz, who instigated the project and brought it to its final realisation over the course of the last 20 years.

Professor Schwarz, who was born in Nuremberg in 1926, was sent on his

These two volumes constitute a treasure trove of information and will undoubtedly stand as a resounding achievement, as well as a lasting memorial, to the once-glorious Jewish communities of Germany.

own to what was then Palestine at the age of nine. In his professional career, becoming a world-renowned expert on hydroponics, he helped to make the desert bloom, both in Israel and elsewhere, thus providing sustenance to many millions.

In his foreword to the book, Professor Schwarz relates that when he visited the town of his birth he found that the memory of the former Jewish community had been all but erased. This was in 1988, when he happened to be in Germany attending an international biology conference. The local officials he spoke to had no knowledge of the synagogue that had once existed there, although Professor Schwarz remembered being present as a child and seeing it with his own

eyes as it burned.

Thus it was that in 1988 he determined to set the record straight and create a memorial for all the synagogues that had once existed, forming the focal point of the Jewish communities that had once flourished throughout Germany. In the larger towns there was generally more than one synagogue, and these are all commemorated, as are even the tiny *stieblach* and prayer rooms that existed in the smaller, rural communities. Contrary to general belief, there were many Jews who lived in far-flung towns and villages in Germany, in Jewish communities that often consisted of just a handful of families.

Volume 1 also contains an extensive illustrated introduction relating the history of the Jewish community of Germany in considerable detail, with particular emphasis on that of Cologne.

Many people helped to bring this immense project to fruition, and the undersigned is proud to note her own small contribution as author of some of the texts. However, without Professor Schwarz's guiding hand and powerful vision, the book would never have come into existence. Having worked in the past as the editor and translator of publications put out by Israel's central bank, I can appreciate how much care, time and effort have been put into the production of this complex, comprehensive – and, above all, beautiful – work.

These two volumes constitute a treasure trove of information and will undoubtedly stand as a resounding achievement, as well as a lasting memorial, to the once-glorious Jewish communities of Germany.

The book will have limited distribution but much of the work is also presented online at the website germansynagogues.com which has a searchable database of towns and cities where synagogues were destroyed.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

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The downfall of Herr Schmutzer

They didn't really know Herr Schmutzer by name. Wouldn't have recognised him among the hundreds of customers at their grocery store if he hadn't once defaulted on his weekly grocery bill. Instead of settling his account, Herr Schmutzer gave my grandpa an IOU signed with his rather unusual name which of course he never redeemed. My grandfather, a religious man, would never have dreamt of insisting on payment for foodstuffs in those difficult times: like all religious people, he considered charity a necessary fact of life. But he did remember the name.

After that, Herr Schmutzer, like most of my grandfather's other clients, was a regular client and never defaulted again.

Until the Anschluss. On 13 March 1938, Austria became part of the greater German Empire. The change was welcomed by large throngs who greeted their German neighbours enthusiastically: Herr Hitler would right the wrongs inflicted on them and make their lives worth living again. Herr Schmutzer, who hitherto had sported lederhosen, a sports jacket with horn buttons and a hat with a feather, appeared in a new outfit. He visited my grandparents' shop in a brown battledress decorated with a brightly coloured swastika armband.

'Good day, Herr Schlesinger. Heil Hitler! I don't know whether you are aware of the new regulations but as of this week you have, as Jews, no right to the ownership of this shop, its contents, or the flat you owned upstairs in the building. To save the state the trouble of dealing with the matter, I am taking possession of the properties myself. You have a week to vacate the premises.'

'I'm a generous man,' he continued, 'and I know this will cause some hardship, especially as my party colleagues have already frozen your bank account. Remembering your kindness with the IOU I once gave you, and the fact that you are a veteran of the Great War, I will allow you to come in every Friday and help yourselves to a week's food supply. Farewell. Heil Hitler!' And, with a smart salute, he walked off, leaving my shocked and bewildered grandparents to deal with the sudden loss of everything they had taken a lifetime to build.

They moved into a small room with a kitchen in the Jewish quarter of the town, taking the most essential furniture with them. They put some of

their valuables into an auction so as to be able to pay the rent and save enough to get away from the new Germany if that were possible. But where?

Herr Schmutzer was as good as his word. When they arrived with their basket the following Friday he allowed them to fill it with groceries from what had recently been their stock. They were not so lucky a week later.

It transpired that Herr Schmutzer had wronged not only my grandparents but a lot of other innocent people. On the grounds of some of these other crimes he had been condemned by a war crimes tribunal and had emerged only recently from a three-year stint in jail. He now wanted the return of the proceeds of his plunder.

'Again? I thought I had paid for the shop last week!' he said with a smirk. And that was the last time they saw Herr Schmutzer. After a few months of living in poverty in their new slum home, they were fortunate enough to be able to get the necessary guarantees and permits to escape to England. Their silverware and fur coats and a carpet or two paid for the emigration ransom and the fare.

My grandparents arrived in England just before the door was closed by the declaration of war. This, we now know, saved them from a horrible death. They simply knew themselves to be lucky enough to survive poverty and the contempt of their neighbours in what they had imagined to be their homeland. They spent the war in a room in my uncle and aunt's flat, their only outings being downstairs to a bench in the road, where on fine days they were able to share memories of better days with other old refugees. My grandfather gained further solace and occupation from visiting the synagogue down the road and reciting his prayers in Hebrew, which was used for this purpose by English Jews just as it had been at home. The synagogue also held English classes for refugees, which he attended, bringing back homework to study. My grandma was past this sort of thing. She never learned a word of English, which in retrospect kept my fading knowledge of German alive, as I would have been far too lazy to speak anything other

than English with her had there been an alternative.

We survived the war. My grandparents saw the concentration camp pictures, which reminded them, if they needed reminding, of the fate they were lucky enough to escape. I grew up happy to have a pair of living, loving, maternal grandparents in the background.

It was about five years later that a letter arrived out of the blue. A letter addressed to Herr and Frau Schlesinger in Compayne Gardens, London NW6, and it was from a Frau Ilse Süßmeyer in Vienna. Her address was in Mexikoplatz, at the exact location where my grandparents' shop and flat had been. It caused much commotion and discussion in our family during the following days.

Mrs Süßmeyer introduced herself. She had been running a general store, a couple of roads away from that of my grandparents, for some years. She had a husband and a daughter. During the war her husband was conscripted and had been sent to fight in the east, where he was killed, leaving her with a daughter to bring up on her own. This was conveniently easy as she had her general store and an affordable flat above it. Then the bombs fell. She and her daughter were saved by being in an air raid shelter when the house and shop were destroyed by a bomb. Weeks later the war was over and she and her daughter had survived.

Never mind. A thoughtful local administration knew of an abandoned flat and shop in the Mexikoplatz nearby and allocated them to Frau Süßmeyer as a replacement for her lost flat and business. She had been using these facilities ever since, living in the flat with her daughter and running the shop downstairs.

Then something extraordinary occurred. She received a visit from a Herr Schmutzer, who claimed she had no right to the premises. He described himself as the true owner of both and wanted them back.

Enquiries with neighbours elicited the true facts. The flat and shop had belonged to Herr and Frau Schlesinger, who were Jews, and Herr Schmutzer had used his position in the party to take them over. They discovered from the same neighbours that the Schlesingers had escaped to London and – more remarkable still – they had traced the address in London where they could be contacted.

It transpired that Herr Schmutzer had

'Your life is an example of humanity and modesty'

Sir Nicholas Winton celebrates 105th birthday

Sir Nicholas Winton has celebrated his 105th birthday at the Czech Embassy in London with his family, friends and some of his 'children' and their families.

Czech Ambassador Michael Žantovský led the tributes to Sir Nicholas at a special event on 19 May. In addition to honouring the man who has become known as the 'British Schindler', Ambassador Žantovský conveyed greetings from, among others, the Czech President, Prime Minister and Speaker of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. He also presented Sir Nicholas with a home-made birthday cake with 105 candles and a bouquet of flowers.

In a letter to Sir Nicky, President Zeman said: 'You gave these children the greatest possible gift – the chance to live and be free. But you did not think of yourself as a hero because you were led by a desire to help those who could not defend themselves, those who were vulnerable. Your life is an example of humanity, selflessness, personal courage and modesty.' The Czech President also invited

Sir Nicky to a ceremony in Prague in November when he will bestow on him the Order of the White Lion.

The event at the Czech Embassy was also organised to launch Barbara Winton's biography of her father: *If It's Not Impossible ... The Life of Sir Nicholas Winton**, in which she chronicles Nicky's life from his privileged upbringing to his army days through to his remarkable reunion on Esther Rantzen's 1988 TV show *That's Life* with some of the 669 *Kinder* he rescued from Czechoslovakia.

**Barbara Winton: If It's Not Impossible ... The Life of Sir Nicholas Winton* (Matador, tel 0116 279 2299 email books@troubador.co.uk and amazon.co.uk), 278 pp. paperback, £12.99 ISBN 978 1783065 202



Photo by Dana Pšenícová, Czech Embassy

Downfall of Herr Schmutz *continued*

wronged not only my grandparents but a lot of other innocent people. On the grounds of some of these other crimes he had been condemned by a war crimes tribunal and had emerged only recently from a three-year stint in jail. He now wanted the return of the proceeds of his plunder.

Could Mr and Mrs Schlesinger furnish her with a document affirming these facts so that she could refute Herr Schmutz's claim? She was not a rich woman but she would be happy to pay a sum of money for the stock and goodwill of the shop, as what she admitted would be a small fraction of the compensation due. She was at pains to point out that she had never in any way been associated with the Nazis

and that she and her family had been innocent bystanders.

The money was risibly little but was probably a large sum for the widow in question. It would be in Austrian Schillings, which at that time were unconvertible. The money could be spent only in Austria and the fact that there wasn't a lot of it would therefore matter less to my grandparents. A family conference resulted in the conclusion that Mrs Süßmeyer probably wasn't lying when she said she hadn't been a Nazi and that we had little alternative to accepting her offer.

Some months later, the money came through and was deposited in an Austrian bank account. By this time, my grandmother had died, peacefully in her bed of a heart attack, and after a suitable period my mother was able to take her father on a holiday to Austria,

KINDERTRANSPORT HISTORIC JOURNEY

Berlin filmmaker Jürgen Ast, who is making a documentary about Berlin's Friedrichstrasse Railway Station, would like to interview *Kinder* who left the Station for the UK via the Netherlands on 30 November 1938.

If you would like to take part in the documentary, please contact
Lisa Bechner on
0049 30 60401021
or at lisa.bechner@berlin.de

Kindertransport Reunion DVD

We are delighted to announce that a special commemorative DVD with footage of the Kindertransport Reunion at JFS and the reception with His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales at St James's Palace is now available for purchase.

Filed and produced by Alan Reich, the DVD will serve as a poignant memorial to the two historic gatherings of *Kinder* and their families that took place in June 2013 as part of the events the AJR organised to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport.

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.

using the money that awaited them there. They spent most of the time in the mountains, but stayed a couple of nights in Vienna at the beginning and end of their trip. They actually visited Frau Süßmeyer at her flat and had the opportunity to meet up with neighbours after the eventful and unhappy 12-year gap. They questioned Frau Süßmeyer closely and reported to us in London that she gave the impression of being an honest, innocent woman.

Herr Schmutz was never seen again. When he heard that Herr and Frau Schlesinger were still alive in London he made a quick getaway. The crime of stealing my grandparents' property had not been on the list of indictments for which he had been imprisoned and he wasn't going to risk a further trial. He had decided to disappear from the scene.

Frank Beck



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

UNSUNG HERO: THE STORY OF ALFRED BENJAMIN GOLDMAN, 1911-1986

Sir – The son of German-Jewish Holocaust survivors, I was born in Sydney in 1944. In 1973-76 I worked as an accountant for a predominantly Jewish Sydney travel agent by the name of Astronaut Travel.

Astronaut Travel's general manager was Alf Goldman, with whom I shared an office. In those three years Alf never mentioned the war.

It wasn't until Alf's funeral in 1986 that I discovered his amazing story. The Chevra Kadisha was overflowing with loudspeakers in the street. Who were these mourners? They were Italian Jews – the children and grandchildren of Italian Jews who owed their lives to Alf Goldman.

The story that came out in the eulogy was as follows.

Alf was a Viennese Jew who had worked for the Italian tourist company CIT (Compagnia Italiano Turismo) in Vienna. Because he was proficient in Italian they posted him to their Venice office. Alf was blond with blue eyes.

Then Hitler made a state visit to Italy in May 1938. His train was to stop in Venice and CIT was to provide an interpreter for two days. Venice's top fascist official came into the office looking for a suitable applicant fluent in German and Italian. He looked all around then, pointing to Alf, said 'None of you dark-haired Semitic types will do but you, my friend Alf, with your blond hair and blue eyes, are the perfect choice!'

Alf said: 'How can I? I am Jewish! My name is Goldman!' The official replied 'In Italian your name is Alfonso L'uomo d'Oro and you will join the state train when it crosses the border, remaining by Hitler's side interpreting for two days.'

So Alf was in the same room as Mussolini and Hitler and learned their plans for the anti-Jewish laws that were published in July 1938 and enacted later that year. In 1938 there were in Italy some 46,500 Jews, of whom 20 per cent did not survive.



The story that came out at the funeral was that Alf went back to the office and placed advertisements in all the Italian-Jewish papers stating that CIT was organising hiking tours into Switzerland. When people enquired he told them to send their valuables ahead, 'pack small' and join the tours and they would be safely guided into Switzerland by CIT guides. We don't know how many were saved this way or where they eventually finished up but those who made it to Sydney became his clients.

In September 1938, in another CIT posting, Alf himself went to Switzerland and became involved in Jewish Agency efforts to buy Jews out of Germany. Funds were raised by the Swiss-Jewish community and a Swiss consular official provided papers. Sufficient money was raised to transport 400 German Jews to Palestine. With CIT's help, Alf chartered a train across Italy to Trieste, where he organised a boat for the perilous journey to Palestine. The British fired on the boat near Haifa but the bulk of the passengers made it.

Alf never met any of these German Jews in Australia, but did so in Israel many years later.

Harold Ball, Sydney, Australia

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Sir – Something different!! I was born in Vienna and grew up on football – instead of my mother's milk – thanks to my seven-years-older brother, who took me to a match at a very early age. Followed Hakoah regularly.

Came to London in June 1939, started to watch Arsenal and 'advanced' from *Stehplatz* (standing room) to season-ticket holders after the war. Followed Arsenal everywhere (fortunately my husband also enjoys football) as we were founder members of their supporters' club – until we emigrated to Toronto to be with our wonderful daughter and her family.

Here, we sit glued to the TV every

Saturday and Sunday to watch the English League games. Now, of course, we are very much looking forward to the World Cup from Brazil and hope to see as many matches as possible – which will also be good for me as I am supposed to have my one leg elevated as often and as long as possible!

I have now reached the great age of 93 years and my husband will be 99 years later this month. We love life and enjoy it to the full and hope it will last a little while longer.

Thought it would be nice to write a positive letter for a change

Kitty Schafer, Toronto, Canada

THE WORST TRADITIONS OF AUSTRIAN BUREAUCRACY

Sir – The recent Austrian compensation scheme directed by Hannah Lessing has been much praised in your journal. I am glad if the experience has been wholly positive for AJR members. But has this scheme not been slow to deliver on highly scaled-down amounts which have been obscurely calculated and yet it demands a full waiver, so legitimating loss and expropriation?

I wonder whether the Fund has now made due efforts to actually pay out the compensation it has calculated is due? In the case of my family, despite my best efforts, the Austrian National Fund has paid less than half of the amount awarded. The Fund cites obscure rules that make no sense. It was not pro-active in contacting claimants. It placed the burden of extracting a waiver from relatives on the claimants. This is unfair. I am afraid that, as a historian, the spectre of Eichmann forcing Jewish communal representatives in 1938 to administer persecutory systems made me reluctant to extract waivers and do further administrative work for the Fund. It was hardly a joy filling out multiple copies of documents outlining the persecution and expropriation of my grandparents and parents in the first place.

I have never fully understood the Fund's reasoning, which is couched in obscure administrative legalese. Its letters put the burden of not knowing about its rules on me. At one stage, an official told me that for reasons of data protection I could not ask about the processing of a form filled out in my handwriting about my mother! In the end, I have to conclude that here is an organisation that represents the worst traditions of Austrian bureaucracy in its sheer slowness and absurdity. It now pretends it has fairly paid out but, in the case of my family, its paying out to one brother but not to another proves that it has far from done so.

The National Fund of the Austrian Republic has certainly communicated to two successive generations of my family a sense of having been expropriated on

what should have been paid out in a constructive spirit to heal the wounds of injustice. The amounts are relatively small – but that makes being just and fair all the more significant. I wonder if my family is unique in having received only a small proportion of its incredibly scaled-down award and whether other AJR members have had similarly negative experiences?

Professor Paul Weindling, Oxford

'WE MUST SAVE THE CHILDREN'

Sir – The 'We Must Save the Children' project in Cambridge described in your June issue brought back a very emotional moment in my life. My father was deported to Poland in October 1938. In 1939 my mother managed to get visas for Cuba for the whole family as my father would have been allowed back into Germany in transit. However, the Polish government sent the wrong brother back! My father phoned us in Berlin begging my mother not to go without him, not to leave him. My mother, a very brave woman, told him 'I must save the children.' How hard that must have been after listening to a sobbing husband and father!

My father did manage to get on the next boat but, when the captain heard we on the *SS St Louis* had been refused entry into Cuba, he returned to Germany and we never saw him again.

Gisela Feldman, Manchester

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE

Sir – Much of what is published on Kindertransport history continues to mention Sir Nicholas Winton – with full justification. On the other hand, I have not come across any references to the wonderful people who, in parallel, organised the Kindertransports from, for example, Berlin, for individuals like myself.

I have written to and e-mailed the *AJR Journal* and *Kindertransport Newsletter* several times in the past hoping for such information – there must surely be references somewhere – but there has never been any response from anybody ... until now I see Werner Rosenstock given this credit in Anthony Grenville's front-page article 'A centenary' in the *April Journal*.

Hurrah at last!! The first-ever such accolade I have come across – there must be more! I have to assume that the search cannot be so very difficult. Is it that nobody is particularly interested? The full credit deserves to be given!!

Werner Conn, Lytham St Annes

Sir – In the debate between Bill Williams and Dr Grenville about the alleged inadequacy of the UK government's actions in 1938, Grenville is right. The Kindertransport appears to be the only action to admit refugees in any numbers by any government at the time, and the

Conservative government of the day has not had the credit for it that it deserves. I wonder whether this was in any way influenced by the fact that the then home secretary was a Quaker?

*F. M. M. Steiner,
Deddington, Oxfordshire*

UNIQUE MONUMENT

Sir – Further to the announcement in your May issue, 'Monument to bear names of all Dutch Holocaust victims', your readers might like to know that they can contribute to the erection of this unique monument by going to www.holocaustnamenmonument.nl/en/ which is the English version of the website. You can then search for a (familiar) name and 'adopt' that name.

Henri Obstfeld, Stanmore, Middx

A MARVELLOUS DAY OUT

Sir – Yesterday (at the time of writing) an AJR group of 30 were given the opportunity to visit the Hindu Temple in Neasden. It was a wonderful morning for all of us. Here is a masterpiece of exquisite Indian design with intricate marble and wooden carvings. We were privileged to hear an eight-minute Hindu service, which was impressive, and then we viewed a film on the building of this outstanding edifice, which took only two-and-a-half years to complete. The craftsmanship was carried out in India and transported to London for erection. We were warmly welcomed and a superb vegetarian meal completed a marvellous day out for us.

*(Mrs) Meta Roseneil,
Buckhurst Hill, Essex*

AN IMPORTANT MEETING PLACE

Sir – In your May issue, Dr Arno Graef asked for information about the activities of the Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend – FDJ) in Scotland and the effect it had on us. I can only give my opinion and hope it is of some help.

I arrived in Edinburgh in December 1938 when I was 13 years old. At that time, there was no FDJ group. However, there was a Refugee Club in Nicholson Street. It was primarily for adult refugees and I attended only once.

In 1939 there was an air raid aimed at shipping and possibly at the Forth Bridge. Edinburgh became a protected area and most refugee adults over the age of 16 had to leave the area. I left Edinburgh in March 1941 and went to Glasgow.

There was already an established Refugee Centre in Pitt Street. This also housed the FDJ, which moved to Sauchiehall Street.

The FDJ was very active and many young refugees attended its functions and activities. It also attracted quite a number of Scottish people, most of whom were very left-wing.

For us young ones, it became an important meeting place, where we

had lectures and some social activities. They also provided sports activities and short outings. We took part in the May parades and they also had a very successful performance called the 'Fetes of Nations', when refugees entertained a large audience with musical recitals. Both old and young took part. Once I began nursing in 1943 I didn't have the opportunity to attend or be part of the group. I often wondered where the funding came from.

I hope this helps. There are also photographs and articles available from that period.

Rosa M. Sacharin, Glasgow

DOOMED BOAT ESCAPE

Sir – Rabbi Walter Rothschild refers to the Kladovo Transport (April, Letters). This failed boat escape along the Danube was arranged by Ehud Avriel (born Vienna 1917 as Georg Überall, later politician and diplomat), who describes the difficulties in his *Open the Gates* (New York, 1975). The Danube was an international waterway and the war had not reached the countries it flowed through. Without visas it was only from the unpoliced and spreading Danube delta that rescue was possible.

The boats set off from Bratislava in late December 1939, transferring to three Yugoslav boats, which, it seems, were not allowed to go beyond the Iron Gates as no ship had been arranged to take the party from the last Romanian port to Haifa. They stayed in the winter harbour at Kladovo, the last harbour in Serbia until August 1940, arranging classes and entertainment while trying to get visas for Palestine from relatives who had gone earlier. They weren't to know that at the outbreak of war the British government had put a stop to visas for enemy nationals, which these would-be refugees counted as. With the assistance of the Yugoslav-Jewish organisations, the party went back to Šabac on the Sava river some 70 km west of Belgrade.

Visas were promised for about 200 young people, who went to Palestine in March 1941, taking with them photo albums and memories that we can experience. The remaining 1,000 or so were still in Yugoslavia when the German army invaded in April 1941 and all were murdered.

In 2001 a major exhibition took place at the Jewish Museum in Vienna; an excellent catalogue, *Kladovo – Escape to Palestine*, contains photographs and lists of names. *Dead-end Journey: The Tragic Story of the Kladovo-Šabac Group* by Dalia Ofer and Hannah Weiner (*Studies in the Shoah*, vol. XIV, 1996) gives a full account.

As most of the party were Austrians it would seem fitting for more than a mention around the Judenplatz Rachel Whiteread memorial on which Šabac is

ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

A Spanish journalist photographing **Henry Moore's** *Recumbent Figure* at **Tate Britain's Kenneth Clark: Looking for Civilisation** exhibition (to 10 August 2014) seemed disappointed: 'He was so privileged,' she sighed. And she disappeared before I could ask her why that mattered so much!

I sort of understood. This show wasn't an artist's show: the protagonist wasn't a painter or a sculptor but a man who could indulge his tastes and who, as a former director of the National Gallery, could make or break other artists – and did so.



John Constable *Sketch for 'Hadleigh Castle'* circa 1828-9
Oil on canvas

Clark's 1969 TV series *Civilisation* marked his reputation as an art historian, impresario and patron in the old-fashioned style of aristocrats and the Church. None of that exists today, unless you count Charles Saatchi, whose patronage leans towards the sensational.

In an exhibition of over 270 objects from either Clark's own collection or from his favoured artists, the Tate wants to prove how he helped change the course of British art. But it was as a broadcaster that Clark clearly made his greatest impact.

An only child born to parents who had inherited a fortune in the Scottish textile industry, Clark was given an album of Japanese prints for his twelfth birthday and a love of art was born. While some of these prints, for instance **Kitagawa Utamaro's** *Hour of the Cock*, are

presented, they do not recur, suggesting that this early flirtation developed into a greater love for European art.

The show at the Tate is surprisingly low-key. Clark's choice is deceptively bland, but also eclectic. From **Joshua Reynolds** to **Man Ray**, from **Sutherland** to **Seurat**, Clark was seen as a great populariser. As the National Gallery's youngest director in 1934 at the age of 30, he wanted to modernise and democratise the Gallery and to make it available to everyone. He criticised both abstract and surrealist art for claiming the future because he felt that any art movement which failed to embrace nature was alienated from its destiny. It indicated his view that art was essentially poetic and sensual, rather than cerebral and external.

So – among his favourites – the Bloomsbury set, including **Duncan Grant** and **Vanessa Bell**, and leading contemporary artists such as **John Piper** and **Victor Pasmore**. In the late 1930s Clark turned to **Henry Moore** for his blend of solidity and delicacy; **Graham Sutherland's** majestic landscapes and John Piper's luminous collages and painting of Coventry Cathedral reflect this.

Constable's *Sketch for 'Hadleigh Castle'*, where rough seas, clouds and ruins come together as though they are all made of the same stuff, has almost as biblical an impact as *Moses Brings*

Forth Water out of the Rock (School of Filippino Lippi).

During the Second World War Clark commissioned Moore's drawings of sleepers in the London Underground, with their sculptural muscularity, and an almost surreal *Battle of Britain* by **Paul Nash**.

Mary Kessell was one of three women officially assigned to cover the war: her fine drawings of displaced inmates, *Notes from Belsen Camp*, are included alongside her work *The Exodus*.

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CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

EXHIBITION

Unmissable exhibition

'WITH ME HERE ARE SIX MILLION ACCUSERS': THE EICHMANN TRIAL AND ITS IMPACT

In partnership with Yad Vashem – UK Foundation at the London Jewish Cultural Centre

A remarkable travelling exhibition of the trial of Adolf Eichmann prepared by Yad Vashem has been on display at the London Jewish Cultural Centre with a supporting programme of panel discussions, seminars and films. The words 'With me here are six million accusers' are taken from Chief Prosecutor Gideon Hausner's opening statement at the trial.

A panel with David Cesarani and David Silberklang, chaired by Trudy Gold, opened the exhibition with a fascinating discussion of the history and implications of the trial for today.

Without question, the Eichmann trial was a pivotal moment in the struggle of humanity to face and come to terms with the Holocaust, a struggle that continues today and is far from over. In fact, facing the Holocaust in all its psychological as well as historical implications can be seen as the prelude to facing the slippery and unwelcome issue of genocide. April 2015 will be the centenary of the Ottoman genocide against its Christian citizens, still toxic in its effects and implications given that it is still denied by modern Turkey.

The Eichmann trial was instrumental in giving Holocaust survivors a voice. One hundred and eight witnesses gave evidence. But the six million murdered had no voice – hence the title of the exhibition. No Sinti and Roma survivors were invited either to the Nuremberg trials in 1945-46 or to the Eichmann trial in 1961. Only this year, with the conference organised by the International Holocaust and Remembrance Alliance and the Holocaust Education Trust on education about the Roma, is their part as victims in the Holocaust becoming acknowledged. While the Eichmann exhibition focuses on the 'six million accusers', Gypsies, disabled people in the 'euthanasia programme', homosexuals and political prisoners are mentioned in some of the testimonies.

The exhibition begins with the

story of Eichmann's career in the Nazi system, which he joined as a member of the Party and the SS in 1932. Although he gained immense power of life and death over Europe's Jews, he retained the position of SS Obersturmbannführer in the Nazi hierarchy to the end, enabling him to disclaim responsibility. The responsibility, however, comes gradually into focus through the testimonies in the trial as shown in a two-hour film loop of clips from the 71 hearings between 11 April 1961 and the verdict on 15 December of the same year. This film loop conveys what no written account can – the gradual metamorphosis of a very calm, arrogant man, confident he can demonstrate his innocence and superiority (with a pile of books and files on his desk in his glass box), through gradual loss of confidence that he can manipulate his accusers like so many of his colleagues had done, to fits of temper and growing despair as his personal responsibility becomes ever clearer.

The exhibition continues the story, with documents and photos, of Eichmann's escape from captivity at the end of the war and his various aliases in Germany until he was able to leave for Argentina via the Vatican 'ratline' in 1950 as Ricardo Klement. His wife and children joined him there for a peaceful life until his capture by the Mossad in May 1960. His location was first given to Fritz Bauer, Attorney General of the German state of Hesse. Bauer feared that former Nazi colleagues in the legal profession would give Eichmann the opportunity to 'disappear' and therefore passed the information to the Israeli government. In accordance with his wishes, Bauer's involvement was kept secret for the rest of his life.

A total of 1,600 documents, along with 108 survivor witnesses, were assembled and prepared in the months before the trial began. Forty staff began this work as soon as the plane bearing Eichmann touched down in Israel. Hundreds of reporters clattered on typewriters throughout the trial until the final verdict of guilty on 15 indictments, including 'crimes against humanity' and 'crimes against the Jewish people'. Three judges sentenced Eichmann to death and an appeal to a higher court in May 1962 confirmed the verdict. And yet Eichmann, who had condemned so many innocent people to death, expected President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi to save his life. Eichmann was finally hanged at a prison in Ramla on 31 May 1962.

The exhibition winds up with collages of documents used in the trial

and newspapers in many languages reporting the trial. This is an exhibition that is much more than informative and is unmissable for anyone with the opportunity to visit it.

Ruth Barnett

Triumphing over tragedy and adversity

MEMORIES AND REFLECTIONS: A REFUGEE'S STORY

by Edith Bown-Jacobowitz

CreateSpace, 2014, 150 pp., £9.99

(edith@jerrywhitmarsh.com),

ISBN 9781495336621

When she was a young teenager Edith Jacobowitz's life changed abruptly from a happy childhood in Germany to growing up virtually alone on a refugee farm in Northern Ireland.

Edith tells her moving history in this book, written for her son Stefan. She draws on memories, letters and entries in a 'proper leather' diary given to her for her 14th birthday by her beloved cousin Hugo, who, with many of her close family, perished in the Holocaust.

Edith was born in 1924 in Berlin, where her parents were flourishing shopkeepers. An elder brother, Ernst, died just before her arrival but, when she was four, her precious brother Gert was born. The pair were to stick together through thick and thin.

But clouds soon gathered around their secure home life. With Hitler's rise to power, life became increasingly difficult. Edith was hounded at school and her parents' business was crippled.

Following Kristallnacht the family tried to leave the country. But her parents were arrested and imprisoned and Edith never saw them again.

Six weeks later Edith and Gert left on one of the last Kindertransports. They eventually arrived in London bound for Northern Ireland, vouched for by connections of the Turkish lady who had sold their father nightdresses for his shop.

Looked after by the Belfast Jewish community, the children were sent to a coastal refugee settlement farm near Millisle in County Down. The farm had been set up to train young European Jews going to Palestine in agricultural skills.

They learned about crops, particularly potatoes, and work was back-breaking. Edith learned domestic skills and helped in the dairy. She also worked sewing on buttons in a factory and, as a nanny, living in a cramped hostel after having lost her luggage.

Pocket money was very limited, stamps precious and news from Germany sketchy and worrying. One feels fear and sadness over her parents' fate constantly hovering over her.

At the age of 18 Edith began training as a nurse at the local hospital. In this connection, the book has humorous touches and one can catch glimpses of what an unblighted childhood would have meant. At first, the hospital seems 'designed with booby traps' as bowls and porridge go flying. To speed things up, Edith ties untrained toddlers to pots with soft bandages, only for them to be found running around with appendages stuck to their bottoms by matron! Edith later trained in English hospitals in tropical diseases and midwifery before marrying Len in 1950.

The author's vivid writing ensures one really gets under the skin of her childhood, both in Germany with a close and loving family and then practically alone. Her diary extracts and anguished reflections are compelling and it is really interesting to read of her return to Berlin under Soviet control. An introductory summary might help non-specialist readers, and the family tree at the back of the book is useful to reinforce who is who, although more dates might have been helpful.

But it is a wonderful achievement that this stoical and remarkable lady – now nearly 90 – has detailed these painfully troubled times so well and with such skill, vigour and clarity.

Janet Weston

KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH

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Moriz Fleischmann, a 'natural Zionist'

On 3 January 1973 my grandfather, Moriz Fleischmann, passed away. I was seven years old when he died but his legacy lives on in me.

Moriz may almost be described as a 'natural Zionist'. His family were friends of the Herzl family and he had vivid memories of Herzl, the tall, dark, handsome leader in his broad artist's hat and cloak. A teenager at Herzl's funeral, Moriz stood beside Hans, Herzl's son, and pledged he would work for the Zionist cause.

Born in Vienna in 1889, my grandfather was to become one of the most influential leaders of the Viennese Jewish community and local government, holding, among others, such positions as Vienna City Councillor and Vice-President of the Keren Kayemeth L'Yisrael/Jewish National Fund. Having immigrated to England, he served as a member of the Board of Deputies and Honorary President of the World Association of Jewish Nazi Victims from Austria.

Following the Anschluss, there was no longer a feeling of security for those living in Vienna's predominantly Jewish 2nd District. One of the largest fur merchants on the Graben, Moriz worked on a voluntary basis in the Palestine Office, which dealt with the emigration of Jews in concentration camps or under threat of being sent to one. Close by these offices were the headquarters of the Gestapo, the seat of Adolf Eichmann.

On one occasion, while on his way to the Jewish Community Office in the Seitenstetengasse, above the synagogue, my grandfather was confronted by several Storm Troopers wielding sub-machine guns. He kept

his head and produced a pass issued by the Gestapo, designed for him to carry out this job. That piece of paper saved his life.

On another occasion, Moriz and a number of other Jewish men were stopped in the street and made to scrub the cobblestones with acid, an act meant as entertainment for the public.

Having heard through the grapevine that there was going to be trouble on Kristallnacht, Moriz and his family left their home at 52a Taborstrasse and spent the night at the home of their friends, the Tichos, in the 3rd District. But it didn't seem to matter where you lived. Lorries picked up most of the Jewish men, including Moriz and Max Ticho, and took them to barracks made into prisons.

That night, many men simply vanished and have never been heard of since. Max Ticho was taken to a concentration camp but later released; he and his wife subsequently emigrated to Israel. Having worked in the emigration office, Moriz produced his pass and was released that morning.

Later that same month, in the course of his work at the emigration office, Moriz received an Honorary Certificate for emigration to Palestine. A woman and her 15-year-old son came to the office to be interviewed: her husband, in Dachau, had been promised he would be released within two weeks. Moriz assured her that if this were the case she should bring her son back to the office so that a Kindertransport certificate could be issued. Moriz then asked Harry, his own 15-year-old son, the unthinkable – to give up his pass to the other young



Moritz Fleischman מוריץ פליישמן

Photo from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office

man so that the family could remain together. Harry agreed but later received his own Kindertransport ticket.

In January 1939 Harry went to live in Wallasey, Merseyside, with his sponsors, a missionary family who were to receive £80 for every child or person they converted. They didn't stand a chance with my father!

On 1 September 1939 Harry received the telephone call he had been waiting for: his parents were in London. Moriz had obtained two tickets, with which he and Stella had left on the last train out of Vienna. With no papers whatsoever, Moriz had talked his way into England!

The Fleischmann family settled in London, where Harry, now in his nineties, continues to live with his wife, Naomi, and their family.

On 16 March 1961 Moriz was summoned to Israel to give evidence at Eichmann's trial. He was the only one of the delegation of six Jewish leaders from Vienna still alive. Excerpts from his testimony at the trial are reproduced below.

Elise Cirsch

Testimony of Moriz Fleischmann at the Eichmann trial

(from The Nizkor Project: The Trial of Adolf Eichmann, Session 16, questioning by State Attorney Bar-Or)

[...] Mr. Fleischmann, when did you leave Vienna?

On Sunday, 28 August 1939.

Where were you bound for?

Without a permit, without a visa, without a transit visa – for England.

And you have remained there until this day?

Yes, until this day.

Thank you. Please tell the Court what you remember and what you know since the day the Nazis entered Austria.

Upon the entry of the Nazis into Austria, which was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm by the Austrians, and

specially by the Viennese population, the Jewish institutions were closed immediately and transferred to the control of the Gestapo and the SS. The Jewish leaders were arrested, at once. These were the President of the Community, Dr. Desider Friedmann, and Engineer Robert Stricker, Vice-President of the Jewish Community, publisher of the only Zionist Jewish daily newspaper *Die Morgenzeitung* and the only Jewish member of the Austrian Parliament.

Who else?

Dr. Yaakov Ehrlich, the only Jewish representative on the City Council of

Vienna and a member of the Executive of the Jewish Community of Vienna, Dr. Joseph Loewenherz, Director of the Jewish Community office in Vienna, and Dr. Oskar Gruenbaum, who was then President of the Zionist Organization of Austria.

What happened to the Jewish Community services immediately after these offices were closed?

They were closed down and they had no possibility of meeting except in secret. Even the welfare office of the Community was prevented from taking any action. They couldn't give the poorest people any basic financial aid so as to keep their heads above water.

Mr. Fleischmann, you and the few others who were not arrested – did you meet in those days, and how?

We met, my friend Dr. J. H. Koerner, who was the President of the Sports Club Hakoah, and Mr. Leopold Foerster, and Emil Engel, Director of the Welfare Office of the Community, and I.

Do you remember where and how you met?

We met a few houses away from the Metropol Hotel, where the headquarters of the Gestapo were located. This was a place where, a few weeks previously, the emissaries from Israel and the Jewish Agency, Mr. Kurt Blumenfeld of the Keren Hayesod and Mr. Natan Bistrizky of the Jewish National Fund, had stayed. We met in the Cafe Rappaport and there secretly distributed welfare funds for the poorest people, who weren't able to receive anything from the Community. We did so with the aid funds that were available to us from private sources.

Mr. Fleischmann, were you at the headquarters of the Gestapo at the end of March 1938?

[...] Towards the end of March we received a notice that the representatives of the Jews of Vienna should appear at the Hotel Metropol in the principal offices of the Gestapo.

Did you hear at that time about the object of the invitation?

No.

Were particular people invited?

Six of us were invited.

Who were they?

They were: Adolf Boehm, President of the Jewish National Fund, Dr. Leopold Plaschkes, who had been a member of the City Council on behalf of the Jewish National Party and a member of the Council of the Jewish Community, Dr. Leo Goldhammer, who had been the President of the Zionist Organization in Austria, Dr. Y. H. Kroerner, a member of the Council of the Community and President of the Hakoah Sports Club, Dr. Alois Rothenberg of the staff of the Palestine Office in Vienna, and myself.

[...] At the end of March you appeared at the Hotel Metropol?

Yes.

Whom did you meet there?

We were led by an SS man who told us he was taking us to Adolf Eichmann. We entered. It seemed that he addressed him as 'Sturmbannfuehrer'. The man wore a uniform and sat behind a large desk.

Do you remember what was the nature of Eichmann's uniform?

A black SS uniform, which later became so well known to us. We had previously discussed among ourselves, for we knew that something had to happen, that someone had to take over the direction of Jewish affairs. Eichmann sat behind a large desk. We had to stand. He asked our names and for a description of the sphere of our activities in Jewish life. Adolf Boehm and the others introduced themselves. When Eichmann heard the name Adolf Boehm, he asked: 'Are you the Adolf Boehm who published the History of Zionism'? When Adolf Boehm answered affirmatively, the Accused replied: 'Very interesting. I studied this work in detail. In particular, I was interested in that passage on a certain page', and he began to recite by heart the full contents of this page. We exchanged amazed glances. Thereupon Eichmann made some remarks in Hebrew and said: 'You should not be surprised. I speak Hebrew and Yiddish fluently as I was born in Sarona' [a German Templar colony in Palestine].

[...] Did the conversation, or whatever it was that passed between you and Eichmann, begin with Eichmann's performance in connection with the reading of the page from the book or did something take place previously?

First of all, he brought to our notice the nature of his position. He was to administer and direct all Jewish affairs in Austria. He was charged with solving the 'Jewish Question' in Austria completely. And he demanded unwavering obedience and unflinching co-operation and compliance with all his instructions and directives. He said he was warning us not to do anything against this and not to sabotage, for his unalterable intention was to perform what had been assigned to him in the shortest and most efficient manner. He would know how to deal with and overcome any resistance and he would react sharply to any pretence at concealment or evasion.

Did he speak of Vienna in a special way?

He spoke of solving the 'Jewish Question' in Austria and in Vienna.

Did he talk of the nature of the solution?

No, not then. Only as we were leaving, he again warned us and told us he would do everything in order to solve the 'Question' in the speediest manner, by any means he considered appropriate.

After quoting the extracts from Adolf Boehm's book, what happened?

He made the observation that several

weeks previously, the second volume of that book had appeared and he regretted that he had not yet had the time to read it, that he had been very busy. But he would hasten to correct that in a very short time.

And what happened after that?

The influence of Eichmann's activities soon made itself felt and led to alarm and a feeling of fear on the part of Viennese Jewry. We sensed it at once.

Was anyone from the delegation or someone else appointed to direct Jewish affairs after the meeting?

Eichmann wanted Adolf Boehm to be responsible, on behalf of the Jewish Community, for implementing his instructions. Boehm was at that time more than 60 years of age and a sick man. And, seeing that we had already discussed this matter previously, he asked to be released from this duty. So we had agreed between ourselves on Dr. Alois Rothenberg, who was the youngest among us, and he took it upon himself to be responsible for the affairs of the Palestine Office before Eichmann.

Were these matters concluded at the meeting with Eichmann?

At the same meeting with Eichmann.

And since then Dr. Rothenberg was in charge of affairs?

In the Palestine Office.

And in the Jewish Community?

Dr. Joseph Lowenherz – after he had been released from arrest.

Did the meeting conclude with this?

The meeting concluded with this but some days later ...

Did you see Eichmann at any other time after that?

I saw him, yes, but not directly in a personal conversation.

[...] Mr. Fleischmann, I want to return once again to this first meeting, at the end of March 1938, with Eichmann.

Do you recall, in connection with the matters that were mentioned then, the word 'judenrein'?

Definitely. His assignment was to make Vienna and the whole of Austria in the shortest possible way 'judenrein' (clean of Jews).

When you say 'his assignment', whose assignment was this, who said it?

He, Eichmann.

[...] Do you see him today?

I believe he is here before me, and I also identify him. [...]



North London Eight Tips for Healthy Eating

Popular speaker Lucy Daniels, past Chair of the British Dietetic Association, gave eight tips for healthy eating: base all meals on starchy foods; eat plenty of fruit and veg; eat more fish; cut down on saturated fat and sugar; eat less salt; be a healthy weight and stay active; drink plenty of water; don't skip breakfast.

David Lang

Cambridge Life in the Council

Ex-Mayor of Cambridge Sheila Stewart, a young American and the only woman to serve as Mayor twice, delighted us with tales, including anecdotes on meeting the Royal Family.

Hazel Beiny

Pinner Jewish Artefacts in the V&A

In an enthralling screen presentation, Marilyn Greene described a wealth of Judaica, including a 17th-century Dutch Torah mantle and *rimonim*, 18th-century German Purim and Passover plates, and a Moroccan Torah scroll.

Walter Weg

Glasgow CF Outing to Pollok House

We had a delightful outing to Pollok House, enjoying afternoon tea at the 18th-century manor of the Stirling-Maxwell family, which now belongs to the Scottish National Trust. Thanks as usual to Agnes and Anthea.

Halina Moss

Thank you, AJR! Three-day London visit

On the first day of the AJR's three-day annual visit to London, we were delighted to visit the beautifully restored Kenwood House and fortunate to be guided round it by AJR Second-Generation member and London guide Mark King. From Kenwood House we went on to the London Jewish Cultural Centre (LJCC) for dinner and addresses by guest speakers Ian Austin MP and Karen Pollock MBE, Chief Executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust, on the importance of keeping the story of the Holocaust alive for future generations.

On our second day, we were given a tour of the Olivier Theatre at the South Bank, followed by lunch before seeing a lively production of *A Taste of Honey* at the Lyttelton Theatre. We followed

Ealing Life at the Bar

Raymond Sturgess gave a most interesting talk about his life as a barrister and judge. His talk was full of amusing anecdotes, many of them with a Jewish aspect.

Leslie Sommer

Iford 'Let's All Go Down the Strand'

City and Westminster Guide Elaine Wein took us on an armchair walk down the Strand with its many famous landmarks. We learned a great deal of facts and figures. An engrossing morning.

Meta Roseneil

HGS A Great Supporter of Refugees

Dr Susan Cohen spoke to us about Eleanor Rathbone, whose biography she has written. Eleanor Rathbone, born in Liverpool, was a great supporter of refugees from Nazi Germany. There is a plaque in her memory at Hoop Lane in London and a building in Israel has been named after her.

Hazel Beiny

Essex (Westcliff) A Warm Friendly Meeting

Once again our Chairman Otto Deutsch entertained us with a really enjoyable morning of music, with songs by such as Judy Garland, Edith Piaf and Sophie Tucker. A warm friendly meeting.

Susie Barnett

York, Harrogate, Hull 'Grand Day Out'

We enjoyed a 'Grand Day Out' at beautiful Burnby Hall Gardens and Museum, followed by a scrumptious lunch of home-made fare.

Wendy Bott

Marlow What Constitutes an Ideal World?

We discussed what constitutes an ideal world. One member felt the only way this could be achieved was if all people had equal opportunities in everything – most unlikely! Boring this meeting certainly was not. Once

again, our thanks to Alan Kaye for putting his home at our disposal.

Arthur Mayer

Manchester Remembering the Holocaust

We welcomed two of the region's most active Second Generation members: Tania Nelson and Sarah Moise spoke to us about the Holocaust Commission and the Lottery-funded DVD project *All Our Stories*. Those present were asked to complete a questionnaire issued by the Holocaust Commission.

Werner Lachs

St John's Wood Ways of Commemorating the Holocaust

Laura Marks, Senior Vice-President of the Board of Deputies, gave a most interesting talk about the Board's proposed response to the Holocaust Commission survey on ways of commemorating the Holocaust. A lively discussion followed.

Kitty Balint-Kurti

Edinburgh CF 'Your Most Desirable Dinner Guest'

The theme 'Your most desirable dinner guest' drew a variety of responses. 'Desirable guests' included Moses, the Queen, 'someone from the future', and Rembrandt. Yet another sociable afternoon in Edinburgh.

Agnes Isaacs

Brighton-Sarid (Sussex) Famous Jewish Boxer

David Barnett talked about the All-England Jewish boxing champion Daniel Mendoza, who was born in 1764 in London's East End but whose family fled Spain during the Inquisition. In 1954 his name was placed in the Boxing Hall of Fame.

Ceska Abrahams

Liverpool Annual Day Out

Second-Generation member Eric Cohen arranged and drove the 15-seater minibus for our annual day out. In St Annes we met up with local AJR members and we all went on to Lytham for a delicious lunch. The day was rounded off beautifully with a spontaneous afternoon tea at the home of AJR member Werner Conn.

Susanne Green

Edgware A Variety of Honeys

Camilla Goddard's talk about bee-keeping was followed by tasting a variety of honeys, which had distinctive flavours in accordance with the flowers the bees had visited. Interesting!

Eve Glicksman

Radlett Economic Crisis

Most of Tim Pike's talk was devoted to the fundamental causes of the current economic crisis, which he put down to excessive governmental interference. Some of his views proved quite controversial.

Fritz Starer

Welwyn GC Claims Conference

Sara Hahn spoke with passion about



At LJCC dinner: (from left) Karen Pollock, Hana Kleiner, Hazel Beiny, Ruth Barnett, Ian Austin, Esther Rinkoff

this up with a delicious banquet at the kosher Chinese restaurant Met Su Yan.

On our final day, we paid a visit to the Camden Arts Centre, then enjoyed a lunch river boat tour on the Thames – a memorable experience, which even the poor weather on the day did nothing to spoil. Thank you, AJR, for your initiative and organisation!

Contributors: Philip Lesser, Bob Norton, Edgar Ring, Ernest Simon

ARTS AND EVENTS JULY DIARY

Mon 7 Dr Gábor Kádár: 'Hero or War Criminal? Regent Horthy and the Destruction of Hungarian Jews'
At Wiener Library, 6.30-8.00 pm.
Admission free but booking essential.
Tel 020 7636 7247

Wed 16 Tango Tea Dance An afternoon of Tango rhythms with a live band. At JW3, 3.00 pm. Tel 020 7433 8989, box office 020 7433 8988; info@jw3.org.uk

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

her work in New York with the Claims Conference. A most illuminating afternoon.
Lee Beckett

North West London A Legend in Her Own Lifetime

While enjoying the lovely lunch provided by Hazel and Esther, we watched a very interesting film about the pianist Alice Herz-Sommer, made when she was 98. Truly a legend in her own long lifetime.
David Lang

Book Club One of the Best Books in a Long Time

A most enjoyable meeting in Temple Fortune with a record number of attendees. All felt that JoJo Moyes's *Me Before You* was one of the best books we had read in a long time.
Irene Goodman

Wembley Learning about the Law

A very interesting talk by retired barrister and circuit judge Raymond Sturgess, interspersed with amusing stories. We learned a lot about the law.
Avram Schaufeld

AJR Director Carol Rossen to retire

AJR Executive Director Carol Rossen is to retire this September.

Carol has been with the AJR for 33 years, helping to steer the organisation through almost half of its life. She started out as a secretary administering Self-Aid and assisted with the production of *AJR Information*, now the *AJR Journal*. She also worked in the membership department and it is thanks to her that we now have computerised membership records!

In earlier years, Carol accompanied social workers on visits and was involved in establishing the AJR Centre, while helping to ensure that the residents at Cleve Road were looked after. More recently, she has served as Co-Director and Head of Personnel, in which capacity she oversaw the relocation of the AJR Centre to Belsize Square Synagogue and its closure

at the end of last year.

Throughout her years of dedicated service, Carol has won a special place in the hearts of many of our members. This is reflected in the continued success of the popular holidays she has run and the annual lunch and concert she has organised. Fittingly, one of her last days of full-time work will be devoted to this year's lunch and concert in September.

We hope Carol will continue to organise members' holidays and the annual lunch and concert.

There will be further coverage of Carol's retirement in the Journal later in the year.



Michael Newman

JULY GROUP EVENTS

Ealing	1 July	Richard Bird: 'Jewish Songs with Comedy Clips'
East Midlands (Nottingham)	2 July	Lunch at the Schwiening's
Ilford	2 July	Raymond Sturgess: 'Life at the English Criminal Bar'
Norfolk	3 July	Chris Montcrieff, Parliamentary Press Association
Pinner	3 July	Rabbi Rachel Benjamin: 'A History of Jewish Music'
West Midlands (Birmingham)	6 July	Annual Garden Party
Bath/Bristol	7 July	Chris Montcrieff, Parliamentary Press Association
Prestwich	7 July	At home of Lachs
Essex (Westcliff)	8 July	Jean Howe: 'Southend Pensioners' Campaign'
Kingston upon Thames CF Book Club	8 July	Social Get-together
St John's Wood	9 July	Lunchtime Meeting and Discussion
Liverpool	9 July	Prof Michael Spiro: 'The Story of Chocolate'
HGS	13 July	Annual Lunch
Glasgow CF	14 July	Rob Lowe: 'The Story of the Savoy'
Radlett	16 July	Commonwealth Games BBQ
Brighton-Sarid (Sussex)	16 July	Rabbi Pete Tobias: 'Who Killed the Rabbi?'
Northern Groups Regional	21 July	Bring a poem or book that means a lot to you
Wembley	22 July	At Stene Court, Manchester
Welwyn GC	23 July	Paul Lang, British Aviation Tours: 'Women in Aviation'
North West London (at Alyth)	24 July	Mike Levy, Keystone Arts and Heritage: 'We Must Save the Children'
Glasgow	29 July	Raymond Sturgess: 'The Alfred Dreyfus Affair'
North London	30 July	Maclaurin Art Gallery, Ayr, Jewish Artists' Exhibition
	31 July	David Barnett: 'Champion of All-England Daniel Mendoza'

My thirteen years at the AJR

It is with a feeling of sadness that I am writing these reflections on my 13 years with the AJR.

My original brief was to bring together in a social setting former refugees and survivors living in the North of England and Scotland. This brief developed over the years into organising outings, inter-functions, holidays in St Annes (thanks to Ruth Finestone), regional visits to London, the *Holocaust Memorial Books and Recipes Remembered* (thanks to Leeds volunteer Pippa Landey), and Holocaust memorial commemorations, including those at Imperial War Museum North and the Museum of Liverpool.

In Liverpool in June 2001, Marcia Goodman, then Head of AJR Social Work, showed me how to run my first meeting. I was overwhelmed by everyone's story of survival – each story unique and very special. Over the next two–three years we continued with speakers, films, outings, etc. Lasting friendships were made and I learned to run meetings at which members felt able to share as well as enjoy activities.

I started the first Continental Friends meeting in Harrogate. I realised then that, despite their varied backgrounds, members



enjoyed holding discussions on topics of mutual interest. I developed small local meetings throughout Yorkshire for members in the Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and Hull areas – and so AJR Continental Friends grew!

A special thank you goes to Leeds HSFA for all their support, especially in planning the first Northern Get-together, the successful format which continues today.

As AJR member Werner Lachs was already arranging successful meetings in Manchester, I started Continental Friends meetings in north and south Manchester and Cheshire. These developed into vibrant discussion groups and we now work with Werner and Ruth in organising the main AJR meetings.

In Newcastle, the first AJR meeting was held on 11 September 2001 (of all days!). Susie Kaufman, whose parents live in Newcastle, gave me support at the meeting, a First and Second Generation gathering. The Newcastle group went from strength to strength.

In Scotland, my first visit was to Glasgow, where I enlisted Second Generation members, who were very helpful in enabling the AJR to hold meetings. Later came the development of Glasgow Continental Friends.

Next was Edinburgh and another memorable first meeting – this quickly developed into a vibrant First and Second Generation Continental Friends group. Meetings were held in Dundee and Broughty Ferry and I visited members in Stonehaven and Aberdeen.

Later, Agnes Isaacs, a Glasgow Second Generation member, took over the organisation of the Scotland and Newcastle groups and Wendy Bott took over that of the Yorkshire groups. These groups will undoubtedly go from strength to strength in Agnes and Wendy's capable hands.

I have been extremely fortunate in doing a job I love with such amazing and helpful people – and with the wonderfully supportive AJR Social Work team and the co-ordination of colleagues at Head Office, especially Michael Newman.

I can't end without thanking my dear husband Julian, who has supported me throughout.

Susanne Green



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.

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For further details, please contact Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or at susan@ajr.org.uk

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OBITUARY

Stefanie Zweig, born Leobschütz 19 September 1932, died Frankfurt 25 April 2014

Stefanie Zweig was born in Leobschütz, Upper Silesia. In 1938 Steffi's father Walter, a lawyer by profession, fled with his wife and daughter to Kenya, where he made a precarious living as a farm manager. In 1947 the family returned to Germany and moved into a house in Rothschildallee, Frankfurt. Steffi remained there all her life.

Steffi started out as a journalist and, for 30 years, edited the culture pages of a Frankfurt daily paper. Her childhood in Africa was a significant influence in her life. In the 1970s she began to write children's books, which



won her recognition and prizes. In 1995 she wrote the largely autobiographical novel *Nowhere in Africa*, which was turned into an Oscar-winning film. After that, she completed a new novel every year. Some of these novels became bestsellers, were translated into 16 languages and sold seven million copies.

Her novels describe with humour and great empathy the experiences of Jewish refugees and their efforts to adjust to changing circumstances. Steffi Zweig was honoured with the Medal of the Order of Merit. She never married and is survived by a nephew.

Shoshanah Hoffman

THE SHOAH REMEMBERED

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 'ESCAPE FROM AUSCHWITZ'

On Sunday 27 April, Pinner Synagogue was filled for the annual Holocaust Remembrance. Guest speaker Professor Gerta Vrbová, the former wife of Rudolph Vrba, recounted the incredible story of how Rudolph and his friend Alfred ('Freddie') Wetzler had escaped from Auschwitz and travelled for 11 days to Zilina in Slovakia to alert the Allies of the horrors in the camp.

Professor Vrbová related how the escapees avoided detection in the early days by soaking their clothes in petrol and hiding close to the camp and their subsequent desperate hike through enemy territory, where they could travel only under cover of darkness.

Gerta spoke of the challenges of getting the information to the authorities, their reaction, and – most disappointingly – the failure of the Jewish Council in Hungary to act on the information and possibly avoid further deportations. The 'Vrba-Wetzler Report' did finally make its way to Allied governments, which subsequently put pressure on Hungarian Regent Miklós Horthy to bring the activity to an end and some 200,000 Jews were thus spared deportation to Auschwitz.

The Mayor of Harrow, as well as



Gerta Vrbová with grandchildren Hannah and Jan at Memorial Stone, Pinner Synagogue

a number of dignitaries representing many European countries, including the Ambassadors of Albania and Hungary and representatives from the Embassies of Austria, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, were present at the ceremony.

The Hungarian Ambassador to the UK, HE Péter Szabadhegy, gave a short address stating how deeply he had been moved by the lighting of the six memorial candles and the readings which had preceded his talk and stressing that he would not seek to explain the terrible events which had occurred in his country 70 years ago. He said that 2014 had been declared Holocaust Memorial Year in Hungary and acknowledged that some 565,000 Hungarian Jews had been sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau in less than one year – a tragedy beyond comprehension and a 'scandal' in that this had taken place within a Christian cultural environment.

The Ambassador emphasised that Holocaust Memorial Year was focusing on *education* since one of the most important duties of schools in each post-Holocaust European nation was to ensure that what had happened 70 years ago should never happen again.

Gerta and Rudi's grandchildren, Hannah and Jan Janulewicz, also addressed the audience and spoke of the tribulations of their grandfather in combating Holocaust deniers as well as the significant role he had played as a witness.

On reading the 'Vrba-Wetzler Report', Winston Churchill is reported to have remarked 'There is no doubt that this is probably the greatest and most horrible crime ever committed in the whole history of the world.'

Brian Eisenberg

Search...NOTICES

My mother, Elsa Nichtern, was a domestic for a Mrs Turler. I am seeking information on the relatives of other survivors: **Atlas, Bader, Nichtern, Singer, Spielmann, Spitz**. All left Vienna in 1938-40. Some worked as domestics, then left for America. Some stayed with relatives named Lezer, Loewy, Goldberg, Rosswick. Pls contact Irving Adler at irvadler@frontier.com

I am researching the former Jewish community in Mensfelden in Frankfurt/Main area. Any info pls on **Besmann, Margot**, b. 13/10/1923, daughter of Albert and Johanna, came to England in 1939, married man named Mountford (?), changed name to Ilsa (?), daughter Paula. Also **Besmann, Liesel (Lina)**, b. 15/7/1908, daughter of Albert and Joanna, went to England March 1939, may have died in 1994 in Lancashire. Pls contact Markus Streb at markus.streb@gmx.net

Bodek, Dr Cornelia, b. 1895 in Przymysl, emigrated from Vienna to England in 1938, lived in 1967-68 at 352 City Road, London. Any info pls to Angelika Gausmann at a.gausmann@chmoellmann.de

Has anyone info on **Braun, Felix**, who lodged with the Craxton family in Grove End Road, St John's Wood, London, in 1941? Pls contact Ian Collins at ian.collins@archant.co.uk

Distant cousin seeks info on **Burgova, Sonja Eva** (b. 1928), daughter of Frantisek and Jarmila Burg, last known address La Retraite School, Burnham-on-Sea, June 1939. Pls contact Dr Richard Pinard at pinardpr@yahoo.com

I am seeking info on my relatives **Eisenberger, Raoul Armin**, b. 17/4/1924, who fled Vienna with his father, **Eisenberger, Leopold**, b. 6/7/1888, to England in late Dec 1938. Pls contact Erika Wantoch at erika.wantoch@tele2.at

I am looking for material on the exhibition '**Figurines Fantastiques**', which took place in the George Street flat of Ernest Friedman in October 1950. The exhibition included figurines by Lotte Pritzel. Pls contact Dr Sara Ayres at ayressara@hotmail.com or on 07988 692538

My cousin, **Lederer, Eric (Erik)**, b. 3/9/1911 in Mohelnice, Czechoslovakia, parents Maximilian (Max) and Hedvika (Hedwig), both apparently Holocaust victims, had a sister, Elsa. In Palestine Eric joined Czech battalion that was part of British army, later joined British army, probably Jewish Brigade. Any info pls to Eytan Lederer at eytan.lederer@gmail.com

My mother, **Littman, Margit**, came to England from Vienna in early-mid-1938, worked as maid/nanny/governess, left England on 19/11/38 for New York on the *Normandie*, died in Los Angeles in 1987. She was born in Guswerk, Vienna, in Feb 1919, parents Oskar and Adele (née Anschul). Any info pls to Joyce Craig at joyce.i.craig@gmail.com or on 1-818-207-5737

For memorial stones in Vienna, has anyone info on **Roper, Ernestine (Erna) and her son Oswald (Ossie)**, who both left on Kladovo transport? Ernestine died in Sabac camp in Yugoslavia in Oct 1941, Ossie possibly made it to Shanghai. Also **Roper, Aron**, died Theresienstadt in Oct 1942. Pls contact Ariel Roper on 020 3115 00 38 or at arieleroper@ntlworld.com



LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Blot on the landscape

Over and above the scandal and shenanigans surrounding the prosecution, trial and eventual conviction for accepting bribes and betraying the voters' trust of the erstwhile Mayor of Jerusalem and former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his associates is the very material existence of the building that lies at the heart of the whole saga.

Almost since time immemorial, Jerusalem has been dear to the heart of mankind. The ancient Hebrews conquered the land of Canaan, led by King David, defeated the Jebusites, and made the city their capital. Although it did not stand at the mouth of a river or command sea routes, its situation atop a promontory that is part of the Judean Hills commands the fertile plain to the north and overlooks the desert to the south, and was therefore considered virtually unassailable.

The Crusaders, who controlled the city for 100 years in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, built churches and sites of worship, using the local stone, of course, as did their successors, the Muslims. The memory of the brief Christian hegemony of Jerusalem lingers on in the hymns, poems, prayers

and yearnings that prevail throughout the Christian world.

In 1921 Sir Ronald Storrs, the man appointed by the British Mandatory authorities as (to quote his words) 'the first military governor of Jerusalem since Pontius Pilate', ordered that all buildings erected in the city be built of Jerusalem stone. Known for his love of art, literature and music, Storrs was determined to establish firm architectural and town-planning principles for the city, and it is largely thanks to his foresight and vision that these have more or less been maintained ever since. These principles were maintained as the city expanded beyond the crenellated walls surrounding the Old City that were built by Sultan Suleiman the Great in the sixteenth century.

And always, no matter what the pressures and exigencies may have been, the hilly skyline surrounding Jerusalem was preserved, providing aesthetic and architectural pleasure for its denizens, rich and poor alike.

Until the Holyland project came along, that is.

One wonders: where were the architects, the town planners, the civil engineers who

allowed this travesty to come into existence? Possibly some of them lined their pockets in order to enable the plans to pass the various approval stages, while others simply turned a blind eye. But when one thinks about it, how is it that no one stopped to consider what this would do to Jerusalem's skyline and the mental state of the people who live there?

Now, every time one looks out over the Jerusalem skyline, from pretty much anywhere in Jerusalem, one sees the inelegant blocks of the Holyland project with the tower that dominates them and the surrounding area, like a huge wart on the face of a lovely woman. Instead of feeling uplifted by the beauty of the environment, one's heart sinks at the way it has been so blatantly defaced.

Perhaps it's as well that Ehud Olmert and the others are going to spend some time in jail – otherwise the inhabitants of Jerusalem might have taken the law into their own hands and torn them limb from limb. Presumably their fellow-inmates won't care much about aesthetic damage: jail might even serve as a place of refuge from the wrath of people who are now forced to suffer this eyesore on a daily basis.

The blot on the landscape is both physical and metaphorical, the tangible evidence of the corruption and moral depravity that seem to characterise too many of our political leaders these days. Olmert and co will serve just a few years in prison but those of us who live in Jerusalem are condemned to a life sentence of viewing the result of their wanton greed whenever we lift up our eyes unto the hills.

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

listed among the many places where the 65,000 Austrian Jews were murdered.

A small party of refugees from Danzig joined the doomed group in Bratislava – including my mother's parents, who shared the fate of the others.

Robert Avery, London SE21

A BATON OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Sir – I read on your website Anthony Grenville's recent article on Lotte Kramer after having been much moved by her collection *The Desecration of Trees* (Hippopotamus Press, Frome, Somerset, 1994). I admire her work very much.

I am not a Jewish refugee and my family is English, although my mother still remembers the horrors of the war years. We cannot share in Lotte Kramer's grief or terrible experiences – let alone those of her family – but her words serve as a baton of enlightenment in a difficult world and speak harrowingly of the time of her youth.

I cannot but feel transported by her words.

Rebecca Finch, Frome, Somerset

IN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL

Sir – Judging by his letter in your last issue, Eric Sanders has not noticed that Israel is a democracy and that the Israeli people have voted in Netanyahu.

Calling the *Daily Telegraph* a far-right paper is laughable! If that were correct, England would be virtually a fascist country – the *Telegraph* has the largest readership of the broadsheets.

Mr Sanders states that Max Hastings writes articles for the *Sunday Times*, *the Daily Mail* and other publications, but this does not change the fact that he was supportive of Israel and there is a good chance he still is. That he voted Labour (I wonder how Mr Sanders got this information!) is fine as there are many supporters of Israel in the Labour Party, its leader among them. The same applies to Conrad Black. He supported Israel when he owned the *Telegraph* and, as he is still married to Barbara Amiel, I presume he hasn't changed his views. That Mr Sanders wouldn't have him as a friend is no loss to Conrad Black, I'm sure.

Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath

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