

AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

The drama of German Expressionism

The National Theatre recently staged an important, but rarely seen, play by the best-known of the German Expressionist dramatists, Georg Kaiser (1878-1945). *From Morning to Midnight* (*Von morgens bis mitternachts*) was written in 1912 and first performed in April 1917 at the Munich Kammerspiele. It is a classic piece of Expressionist theatre, with its clipped, staccato dialogue, its abandonment of a conventionally structured plot and realistic, individualised characters, and its attempt to pierce through the surface detail of everyday bourgeois life to convey the deeper reality of human existence in an industrialised, mechanised society devoid of values beyond soulless materialism.

Although this play was performed at the Garrick Theatre in London in 1922, in a translation by Ashley Dukes, German Expressionism never established itself on the British stage. For all that, it remains one of the most important theatrical movements of the twentieth century. Like the avant-garde, modernist movements that erupted into the visual arts in the first years of the twentieth century, when figurative paintings representing external reality were replaced by extreme distortions of that reality or by abstract, non-figurative compositions, Expressionist theatre aimed to break decisively with the tradition of realism that had dominated the nineteenth century.

Expressionism, which began around 1910 and petered out in the mid-1920s, sought to create a wholly new artistic means of conveying the human experience. In place of the representation of surface reality, it aspired to express the essence of a situation or scene and, in place of the investigation of the psychology of individuals, it presented types, whose experience stood for that of whole categories of people. In *From Morning to Midnight*, the main character is simply called the Bank Clerk, while the other characters are also named functionally, according to their roles in the drama. They include the Lady, whose arrival in the bank at the play's beginning causes the Clerk to throw over years of arid working routine and abscond with

a pile of the bank's money; his Wife and Daughters, representing the conventional family life that he abandons; and the various figures that he subsequently encounters in his whirlwind, one-day trajectory through



Georg Kaiser, 1878-1945

the pleasures of Berlin, culminating in the Salvation Army Girl, who seems to offer him redemption but ultimately betrays him to the police.

The provincial bank where the Clerk works is depicted as the archetypal setting for the dehumanised, alienating routines of modern working life, dominated by the power of money. Expressionist stage sets concentrated on the essential features of a scene, often using lighting to focus on the central character, while other figures exist in a secondary, half-lit world, emphasising their status as mere players in the protagonist's drama. This was the case with plays like Walter Hasenclever's *Der Sohn* (*The Son*) (1916), the first Expressionist drama to reach the stage, where secondary characters embody aspects of the Son's inner life. In its structure, *From Morning to Midnight* is also an example of the Expressionist *Stationendrama* (the term is taken from the Stations of the Cross), a loosely knit succession of more or less autonomous scenes, almost cinematic in effect, charting

the fate of the main character.

The play's language is stripped down to its basics for maximum expressive effect, in line with the Expressionists' desire to rediscover the essential humanity of mankind beneath the deadening layers of modern life. This striking, declamatory style was known as the 'Telegrammstil', attributed first to the poet August Stramm: 'Mensch, werde wesentlich!' ('Man, become essential!') was the final line of the poem 'Der Spruch' ('The Saying') by the Expressionist poet Ernst Stadler. The characteristic mode of expression for these writers was a rhetorical outcry of extreme intensity, which became known as 'der Schrei' ('the scream'), with obvious reference to the celebrated painting by Edvard Munch. Stadler began his poem 'Anrede' ('Address') at a white-hot pitch with the line 'Ich bin nur Flamme, Durst und Schrei und Brand' ('I am but flame, thirst and scream and fire').

These dramatic and stylistic devices served the purpose of conveying a new and more truly humane vision of life. Expressionist plays tended to begin with the main character's abrupt break with his existing life – in *From Morning to Midnight* the Clerk's theft of money from the bank. The protagonist then sets out on a series of experiences (the 'Stationen') in which he – or, as in Ernst Toller's *Masse Mensch* (*Masses and Man*), she – discovers a new set of values – moral, social, political and aesthetic – to replace the corrosive materialism, militarism and authoritarianism of existing society. Through that discovery, the main character undergoes a transformation ('Wandlung' – the title of Toller's first drama), becoming a 'New Man'. This 'neuer Mensch' was the ideal of playwrights like Toller, Hasenclever and Reinhard Johannes Sorge, whose play *Der Bettler* (*The Beggar*) (1912), is often seen as the first Expressionist drama to be written. This process of the spiritual regeneration ('Erneuerung') of the hero was intended to foreshadow the regeneration of the whole of society. Expressionism was thus a utopian, idealist movement that strove for nothing less than a spiritual renewal of society, a

The drama of German Expressionism *continued*

renewal whose necessity was drastically reinforced by the mass slaughter of the First World War.

Kaiser's plays are ambivalent about the possibility of such a renewal. In *From Morning to Midnight*, the Clerk, having been disappointed with the pleasures of the metropolis, glimpses a new world of spiritual values in the figure of the Salvation Army Girl; but, when he throws away his money at a Salvation Army meeting, the supposedly otherworldly penitents hurl themselves on the banknotes and the Girl denounces him to the police. Utterly disillusioned, he shoots himself. However, in *Die Bürger von Calais (The Burghers of Calais)*, written at almost the same time as *From Morning to Midnight*, Kaiser depicted the triumph of regeneration through a historical case – that of the six citizens of Calais whose willingness to sacrifice their own lives to save their town from the besieging English in 1347, immortalised in Rodin's sculpture, secured the lives of all. In his essay *Vision und Figur (Vision and Figure)*, Kaiser stated that all true drama was underpinned by a vision. 'Von welcher Art ist die Vision?' ('What is the nature of the vision?'), he asked, and replied emphatically: 'Es gibt nur eine: die von der Erneuerung des Menschen' ('There is only one: that of the regeneration of mankind').

Expressionism marked the revolt of the young generation of the 1880s and early 1890s against the materialism and commercialism, the complacent philistinism of pre-1914 Germany, where man's spiritual side seemed to have been stifled in the dehumanised world of the modern industrial metropolis. It was that spiritual side of human existence, 'Seele' ('soul'), that the Expressionists sought to rediscover, as their dramatic techniques sought to reveal truths that lay beneath the surface detail of modern life. Paul

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

SPECIAL EVENT

Judith Kerr

Sunday 29 June 2014, 3 pm

at the
London Jewish Cultural Centre (LJCC)

We are delighted that the celebrated author Judith Kerr will be our guest of honour at a special event we are organising with the London Jewish Cultural Centre.

Judith has become part of the fabric of British life and her books have enthralled and inspired children for many decades.

We especially encourage the families of our members – Second and Third (and possibly even Fourth) generations – to come along. We are thrilled that Judith has agreed to read from her books *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* and *When the Tiger Came to Tea* to younger members of the audience. She will also reflect on her own experiences and take questions from guests.

Please book early to avoid disappointment and join us for what we are sure will be a memorable gathering by purchasing your tickets through the LJCC website www.ljcc.org.uk or by calling AJR Head Office on 020 8385 3070.

Kornfeld's important essay *Der beseelte und der psychologische Mensch (The Spiritual and the Psychological Person)* (1913) develops the distinction between the 'old' alienated, soulless man and the New Man of the future. That caused a generation conflict, as the sons, for example in Hasenclever's *Der Sohn* or Arnolt Bronnen's *Vatermord (Parricide)* (1920), rejected the alienated, materialistic world of their fathers and sought new values.

The Expressionists' sense of the imperative necessity of creating a new and better world was greatly accentuated by the toll the First World War took on the young writers: Sorge was killed on the Somme in 1916, August Stramm on the Eastern Front in 1915, and Ernst Stadler, the intermediary between three cultures who had studied French and German literature at the (then German) University of Strasbourg before being awarded a Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford, near Ypres in October 1914. Only a complete transformation of existing society, it seemed to the Expressionists, could avert such catastrophes in the future. Their works frequently have an apocalyptic note, predicting both the end of existing society and the birth of a new, spiritually

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

regenerate community. Kurt Pinthus gave his famous anthology of Expressionist verse the title *Menschheitsdämmerung* (1920), meaning either the dawn or the twilight of humanity, thus implying both the demise of the old world and the birth of the new.

But these hopes for a radically better world faded rapidly after 1918. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they resolved to destroy the entire legacy of Expressionism, along with its exponents, many of whom were Jewish. Toller committed suicide in New York in 1939, and Hasenclever took his life in a French internment camp in 1940, to avoid falling into the hands of the advancing Germans. Paul Kornfeld, who had enjoyed success with his drama *Die Verführung (The Seduction)* (1917), was deported to Poland, where he died in 1942. Hans Davidsohn, who under the pseudonym Jakob van Hoddis had written the classic Expressionist poem *Weltende (End of the World)*, was deported from a mental institution to Sobibor in 1942. Georg Kaiser, non-Jewish, fled Germany in 1938; he died in Switzerland in June 1945.

Anthony Grenville

ਯਹੋੜੇ ਰਫਿਯੁਗਏ ਫਿਲਮੀਏਏ in punjab

My grandfather, Kundan Lal Gupta, visited Vienna around 1938 for a medical operation. While recuperating at the hospital there, he met a Mr Wochsler, an expert in the manufacture of plywood. My grandfather purchased from him some plywood manufacturing machinery, which he shipped to India, and suggested that Mr Wochsler and his

family stay with him in his hometown of Ludhiana in the state of Punjab.

It appears that Mr Wochsler and his family, together with the Schafranek family (see below), stayed with my grandfather for over a year. In early 1940 the Wochslers left for Bombay, at which point my family lost contact.

According to *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 10.9.1948, four members of

the Schafranek family, 'born at Vienna, and resident 9 years in British-India and 1 year in Australia, now residing at 'Birdwood', Bellamy St, St. Pennant Hills, intend to apply for Naturalisation under the Nationality Act, 1920-1946'. The names of the Schafranek family members are given as Alfred, Siegfried, Bruno and Lizzy; there is no reference to Mrs Schafranek.

If readers have any further information on these refugee families, could they please contact me via the *Journal*.

Vinay Gupta



Photo taken outside factory: (from left) *Top* Mr Wochsler; Bruno Schafranek; Siegfried Schafranek; Alfred Schafranek; Prem Narain, my uncle *Seated* Kundal Lal, my grandfather; government functionary, name unknown; Sir Douglas Young, Chief Justice of Punjab; government functionaries, names unknown



Photo taken outside our home: (from left) *Top* Alfred Schafranek; Bruno Schafranek; Siegfried Schafranek *Middle* Prem Lata, my aunt; Mrs Schafranek; Kamla, my aunt *Seated* Mrs Wochsler; Lizzy Schafranek; Vijya, my mother; Deva Lata, my aunt

Kindertransport Chairman Sir Erich Reich wins prestigious fundraising award

Sir Erich Reich, Chairman of the AJR's Kindertransport Group, has won the Institute of Fundraising's award 'Most Committed Individual to the Sector'. This prestigious award is for originating the concept of worldwide charity challenges through his company Classic Tours, which has helped to raise over £85 million net for hundreds of UK charities since 1992.

Sir Erich, who was awarded a Knighthood for charitable services in 2010, is also Chairman of Meir Panim



UK, a charity which assists Holocaust survivors, children and poor families of all denominations living in Israel.

OUTING TO FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE MUSEUM

Tuesday 25 March 2014



Florence Nightingale's far-sighted ideas and reforms have influenced the very nature of modern healthcare.

Transport will be available to visit the Museum, which is based in the grounds of St Thomas's Hospital, London.

We will have lunch nearby before beginning our visit at 2 pm. Then, we will have a talk by a member of the Museum, followed by the opportunity to look around the Museum at our leisure.

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



AJR member at 10 Downing Street reception

AJR member and Auschwitz survivor Freddie Knoller discusses his book *Living with the Enemy* with Prime Minister David Cameron at a reception at 10 Downing Street. The reception took place in commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day.

JUSTICE IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

It took half a century after the Second World War to begin to face the enormity of what had been allowed to happen. By this time, many of those who had survived had died without the injustice of their suffering being realised.

But it's never too late. Generation after generation of scholars are increasingly taking up the task of unearthing yet untold stories and thereby giving literary justice to those who received only injustice in their lives and in their deaths.

Two books recently reviewed in the *AJR Journal* have contributed much to this welcome research, in particular exposing the myth that the suffering of survivors ended with the end of the Second World War: *Landgericht* by Ursula Krechel and *Exodus to Shanghai: Stories of Escape from the Third Reich* by Steve Hochstadt (reviewed by Peter Fraenkel and George Vulcan respectively).

These two books are linked in that my father, Judge Dr Robert Michaelis, was one of the 18,000-20,000 Jews who found refuge in Shanghai during the Second World War and is the main character in *Landgericht*, which Ursula Krechel calls a novel. In fact, *Landgericht* is a biography of my father with the gaps in the author's research filled in from her imagination. I first became aware of this book when a member of the Mainz Local History Society emailed me in October 2012. He had invited me to address the Society in November 2012 but we had not met. So a total stranger was informing me that the 2012 Frankfurt Book Prize had been won by a book about my family that I knew nothing about! It was even more of a shock when I saw interviews with Krechel on YouTube and read the book. I was plunged into a weird state of identity confusion – what was fact and what was fiction?

It wasn't long before the local Mainz paper printed a full page about the book together with photos of my parents. Friends in Germany sent me more news cuttings and internet interviews with Krechel. When I got to read the book I found it was indeed a biography of my father, carefully researched from archives in Shanghai, Berlin, Lindau and Mainz, where he finally settled after the war. She called him Richard Kornirzer. So I was Selma Kornirzer??? Really? Krechel had appropriated a part of my family history I didn't even know about! Why had she not at least contacted me before her book was published? She named my book, *Person of No Nationality: A Story of Childhood Loss and Recovery* (2010), in her acknowledgements and used it for a chapter about the Kindertransport and my brother and me coming to England.

So she could have contacted me through my publisher. Why didn't she?

Krechel had my father escaping to Cuba instead of Shanghai and having an affair in Cuba that produced a baby girl. Did I really have a half-sister whom I never knew anything about? My niece in Germany was convinced that Krechel must be that daughter – and, date-wise, he worked out that it was just possible. But what confused me most was why I hadn't been contacted before the book was published. I was determined to find out.

My publisher wanted to sue Krechel



Robert Michaelis ('Richard Kornirzer')

but I didn't want that. He put me in contact with Krechel through her publisher and I eventually got to meet her just before my talk to the Mainz Local History Society. She seemed a very friendly, but rather frail, highly-strung and anxious person, which surprised me. She told me she had contacted my brother in 2008 and that he had ignored her two letters and hung up on her when she had telephoned; she had been extremely hurt by his rejection. My brother had never mentioned this to me, perhaps because he knew I would talk him round but, more likely, because his wife was by then in the later stages of Alzheimer's and he was very stressed. He also suffered from the same lack of welcome as my father: as described in Krechel's book, refugees returning to Germany were treated with suspicion and even contempt – they were seen as having had a good time abroad and not having suffered what the Germans had suffered at the hands of the Allies. Krechel claimed she hadn't contacted me because, with her poor health, she

couldn't risk being hurt again. I couldn't quite accept this. She must have read my book as she had used it for an entire chapter of her own book and must have realised I was very different from my brother. She had no answer to this.

I nonetheless told Krechel that I was grateful to her for giving my father literary justice, 40 years after his death, as he had failed to receive justice or even acknowledgement of the injustices he had suffered in his lifetime. Moreover, Krechel's book has given me renewed impetus to seek answers to the many questions I didn't ask my parents – because I couldn't – while they were alive. One outcome is that I wrote to the Berlin *Rechtsanwaltskammer* (Bar Association) and asked to meet them to talk about my father. By the time I met with six senior jurists there, they had all read *Landgericht* and were deeply interested. My father's file had been taken from Berlin, probably to Mainz, but they offered to look for a law student who would do further research on my father. (They also took me round the awe-inspiring Palace of Justice, built in *art nouveau* style in 1900, where my father had worked as a judge until he was sacked in 1933. It has been carefully renovated after the DDR misused it, in particular by using its majestic foyer with a cascading double staircase as a dance hall!)

I was especially impressed that the street, formerly *Friedenstrasse*, had been renamed *Littenstrasse*. This was in honour of Hans Litten, the defence lawyer who had the courage to subpoena Hitler in the early 1930s in the case against the SA thugs who smashed up the Workers' Club (see Anthony Grenville, 'Opponents of Hitler', *AJR Journal*, November 2011). He had shown Hitler to be a liar in court. But Hitler's support was already too strong and Litten lost the case. In 1933 Litten was arrested and suffered five years' unrelenting torture until he committed suicide – but not before he had been ordered to recite a poem for Hitler's birthday. He chose to read *Die Gedanken sind frei* (Thoughts are Free – full version available on *Wikipedia*). If only all the German jurists had had Litten's courage!

Landgericht describes in detail how my father too, with courage and tenacity, stood up to the former Nazis running the legal system after the war. The large plaque on the outside of the court buildings and *Littenstrasse* gave belated justice to Hans Litten; *Landgericht* gives belated literary justice to Judge Robert Michaelis – 'Richard Kornirzer'. It's never too late.

Ruth Barnett

My role as a solicitor requires me to be particularly mindful of human rights in the legal context. Needless to say, this area attracts strong views. Recent criticism of the influence of the European Convention on Human Rights and the jurisprudence of the Strasbourg Court on UK law has come from high-profile politicians, senior judges and sections of the press.

At times, the human context behind the abstract legal concepts has been misrepresented, or even neglected, in the ongoing debate. This is why I think projects such as Gathering the Voices – a project collecting, contextualising and digitising oral testimony from men and women who sought sanctuary in Scotland to escape Nazi-dominated Europe – are so valuable.

For over three years, the Gathering the Voices Association has been collecting the stories of survivors based throughout Scotland. There are now about 20 testimonies available to access for free at www.gatheringthevoices.com More interviews will be placed on the website shortly as the interview team has carried out more than 30 interviews.

The website is intended to provide an educational resource for schools and individuals. The Gathering the Voices Association is proceeding with a number of other projects. In particular, they are working with teachers to prepare two teaching packs, for primary and secondary schools, based on the testimonies. These will go to every school in Scotland. Another project, the creation of a travelling exhibition based on the testimonies, should be completed by autumn 2014. It will then be a permanent resource which can be displayed in museums or libraries or other venues throughout Scotland.

One of the most striking things demonstrated by the testimonies collected by Gathering the Voices is that for survivors there could be life beyond the Holocaust. The project focuses not on the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis but on the strength and enduring spirit of the survivors. It has been said that to write poetry after Auschwitz is 'barbaric' – that there can be no art after Auschwitz. While I understand this attitude, I don't think it's true and, most disturbingly, I think it does survivors yet another injustice by interring them in a state of perpetual victimhood. On the contrary, the testimonies gathered by this project show the valuable contribution Holocaust survivors have made to the Scottish communities in which they found sanctuary after the war.

The project is particularly important

Gathering the Voices

Having been given the chance to live, my grandmother lived - fully, ferociously, indomitably. She devoted herself to doing all she could for her family and the wider Scottish community. My own view is that it would be irresponsible and dangerous to forget her story or to lose any of the stories gathered by this project.

to me personally as my grandmother, Susan Singerman, is one of the survivors whose testimony is featured on the website. She was born Susan Gerofi in Székesfehérvár, Hungary, a small town about 40 miles south-west of Budapest. She had a happy upbringing in an orthodox Jewish family and performed outstandingly at her local school, graduating as *dux* in 1943. She hoped to go to university to study medicine. However, on 19 March 1944 the Germans occupied Hungary and just weeks later 19-year-old Susan was sent to Auschwitz, along with her mother, father, nine-year-old sister Marta, grandmothers and many aunts, uncles and cousins. She endured a five-day journey in a cattle truck with 100 other people and only one bucket of drinking water and one bucket for sanitation between them. A sign on the truck said: '20 horses or 25 cows'. On arrival at Auschwitz, Dr Joseph Mengele, known as the 'Angel of Death', told her to go to the left but sent her little sister, mother, aunt, cousin and grandmothers to the right. It was not until after the liberation that she found out they had all been gassed half an hour later. In that same week, she learned that her father had died of pneumonia in Dachau two weeks before it was liberated. Susan always attributed her determination to 'grit her teeth and keep going' to her belief, up to that point, that somewhere out there her family were doing the same and one day they would all meet again.

Susan said that the cruellest psychological torture devised in the concentration camps was being treated as less than human. She was determined not to let the Nazis destroy her humanity and devised strategies to try to preserve her sense of self and basic human dignity. For example, she was fluent in five languages so she made herself think in a different language every day. Prisoners were given a small piece of bread each evening and most devoured it immediately, but Susan divided hers into three tiny pieces, eating one at breakfast, one at lunch and one at dinner. These stories impressed on me from a very early age just how precious, and fragile, basic human rights can be.

By the time my grandmother was deported, more than 10,000 people a day were being gassed at Auschwitz. Even she, witness to this, recognised how impossible it is to comprehend the meaning of numbers of that magnitude. On hearing of the murder of a child, for example, a person might feel sadness or shock – but the murder of over one million children by the Nazis? Such loss goes beyond any kind of imagining and is why it is so important instead to listen to the testimonies of people who lived through those unimaginable times.

Susan was acutely aware of this. She spoke of surviving the camps in order to 'tell the tale', feeling a duty to the six million dead who could never tell theirs. She believed that any hope for a better future lay in education. After retiring as a teacher in Glasgow, she began speaking to young people in schools about her experiences. She received hundreds of letters from schoolchildren saying how moved they had been by hearing her story. In 1996 she was made an MBE for services to the understanding of the Holocaust.

Having been given the chance to live, my grandmother *lived* – fully, ferociously, indomitably. She devoted herself to doing all she could for her family and the wider Scottish community. My own view is that it would be irresponsible and dangerous to forget her story or to lose any of the stories gathered by this project. They force us to recognise and remember the wickedness of which mankind is ever capable. They also show us that, even after such incomprehensible horror as the Holocaust, there is still the possibility of hope.

Jen Singerman

*Third Generation survivor
(grandmother, Auschwitz survivor;
grandfather, Kindertransport
survivor)*



Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

The Wrong Climate?

Sir – ‘Zum Kotzen!’ Sickening! My dear mother, an ardent AJR member, would have used that Viennese expression to describe Victor Ross’s ‘The Right Climate’ in your February issue.

You were brave to publish this provocative article. Having long ago escaped from Victor Ross’s ‘almost exclusively German-Jewish refugee milieu, cosy and shrinking’, am I alone in finding his self-proclaimed snobbery offensive? Whatchutzpah to suggest, for example, that the communities in Britain that produced Simon Sebag Montefiore or Simon Schama are less educated, less refined than Victor’s ‘Germanophone’ cohort! I refute his proposition. I share his elation about New York – the unique ‘buzz’ and energy are heightened by both Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants of all periods, races and cultures. And yes, Jews enhanced and dominated Broadway and Hollywood: a potent, flourishing mixture of Russian, Polish, Austrian, German, Czech and Hungarian refugees who arrived in America before and after the rise of the Nazis – not just those from Germany and Austria.

But a long list of Jews have also made a huge impact on British culture. From Jacob Epstein and Lucian Freud to Alexander Korda, from Lionel Bart to Amy Winehouse, Jews born here and those who came here at different periods have distinguished themselves in music, films, television, theatre, publishing and art – to say nothing of their contribution to science, medicine, commerce and industry. To claim they did little to change Britain is beyond comprehension!

My life experience and attitude are very different. Openly proud to have been born a Jew in Vienna and grateful to have come to England indirectly through the Kindertransport, I now rarely call myself a ‘refugee’. I am proud to be a British citizen and a citizen of the European Union. I participate actively in my local non-Jewish community far from the self-imposed ghetto of north-west London – or ‘Breetish Vest Hampstead’ as it was known when I lived there 60 years ago.

John Farago, Deal, Kent

Sir – Victor Ross states ‘I have never felt that I belonged here, that I was other than a guest, respectful of my hosts and generously tolerated by most of them.’

I would like to challenge this. If my experience is anything to go by, it is entirely due to the mode of living he chose and the friends he made. I never lived in Hampstead or other mainly Jewish districts of London and never restricted my choice of friends to fellow-Jews. I have many non-Jewish British-born friends, none of whom has ever made me feel ‘just a guest’, and I have never experienced openly expressed anti-Semitism or xenophobia. Both my sons have been successful in their chosen professions in spite of a German surname, which they have never it found necessary to ‘anglicise’, and they certainly feel completely ‘integrated’.

Fritz Lustig, London N10

Sir – I too, like Victor Ross after watching the TV programme on the American musical theatre, received a message loud and clear. In America the immigrant Jews felt they could at last portray themselves as they are and feel. And what better medium than the creative and sentimental one of entertainment – whether in movies, music, comedy and entrepreneurship – which is part of the American cultural output loved and admired globally!

This could not be emulated in England: the immigrant Jew when touching these shores aspired to mingle and be like the upper class. Those who could afford it bought country estates and sent their children to private schools – but couldn’t really be themselves.

As for the new Jewish immigrants to Germany who escaped the pogroms, they were fiercely impressed by the academic culture of the new land and soon not only blended in but surpassed all fields of learning and greatly contributed to their new country. Needless to add – look where it led to!!!

But in America, the Jew is his own man: *he is true to himself* – and that’s what Victor Ross found out. Whenever he arrived at JFK he got his adrenaline rush. Indeed, others have reported similar experiences.

Bettine Le Beau, London N3

PLUS ÇA CHANGE ...

Sir – Anthony Grenville’s response to my February letter vindicates the point I made entirely. He says hardly anyone could have predicted that the Second World War would break out as early as September 1939. Exactly, because too many people allowed themselves to become intoxicated with what they wanted to hear – ‘peace in our time!’

The same can be said today with Europe intoxicated at the thought of trade with Iran just as a result of signing a grubby, worthless piece of paper which is called an interim agreement supposedly to prevent Iran gaining nuclear weapons!

In a few years’ time, Grenville will no doubt say that hardly anyone in Europe could have predicted Iran would become nuclear whilst these pathetic negotiations, fronted by the gullible Ashton, go on. In the case of Hitler, and now in the case of Iran, this is because the opponent has lulled – or is lulling – the other side into entirely false hopes, which the latter, driven by self-delusion at the thought of instant peace, allows himself to grab without any thought of the possible consequences. *Plus ça change ...*

Peter Simpson, Jerusalem

Sir – Anthony Grenville’s reply to Peter Simpson’s letter seems to imply that if war had not broken out in September 1939, much more would have been done to rescue the families of the Kindertransport children.

What then is his interpretation of the decision of the War Cabinet (September 1942) not to grant visas to the thousands of children to whom the Vichy government offered free passage but to grant visas only to the handful of children who already had part of their nuclear family here in the UK?

What of the offer of free passage made by the Hungarian government in 1944 for women and children to countries which would take them in which the War Cabinet kicked into the long grass because of its concerns about where to relocate them? At the same time, the UK had allowed thousands of (non-Jewish) nationals such as Poles and Greeks – whose lives were in danger because of their opposition to the Nazi invaders – residence in Palestine.

Understanding the causes of the Holocaust requires a broader prism than focusing on what happened in Germany.

Joan Salter, London N10

MEMORY, MONUMENT OR MEMORIAL?

On 27 January this year the Prime Minister appointed a commission ‘which will work to ensure Britain has a permanent memorial to the Holocaust and educational resources for future generations’.

Members of the commission and its

expert groups include the Chief Rabbi, Holocaust survivors Ben Helfgott and Jack Kagan, and representatives from the Arts Council, the War Museum, etc.

As James Young (*The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993)) so eloquently states, 'monuments suggest themselves as everlasting remnant-witnesses by which subsequent generations would remember past events and peoples.' But he also says that 'Once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember.'

Members of the public who wish to make a representation can do so until 25 May via the website <https://engage.number10.gov.uk/contact-the-holocaust-commission/> I believe it is vital that members of the AJR use this opportunity to express their opinions. There are too many unloved and anonymous statues of generals (and their horses) in practically every square and park in London and the recent erection of the inaccessible and crass Animals in War Memorial in Hyde Park is another example of a memorial designed for oblivion. It would be a disgrace if Holocaust memory, memorial or monument suffered the same fate.

Arthur Oppenheimer, Hove, Sussex

NOMINAL TICKET PRICE FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AT LJCC

Sir – LJCC is delighted to have received funding enabling us to host here at Ivy House Holocaust survivors at a nominal ticket price of only £2. We are also able to fund transport costs if genuinely required.

We circulated details of some of our programmes with the *AJR Journal* in January. The uptake has been marvelous.

However, we do need to remind people who may be interested in attending the Centre that they need to book – and be in possession of a valid ticket in the usual way. If they don't book, on any occasion they run the risk of being unable to get into very popular events – which sell out quickly. It is like going to the theatre or cinema: do not turn up without a ticket!

To book, please telephone Ben on 020 8457 5021. If he is away, telephone 020 8457 5002.

*Alan Fell, General Manager,
London Jewish Cultural Centre*

KINDERTRANSPORT PLAQUE REDEDICATION

Sir – Having regrettably missed the recent Kindertransport rededication ceremony at the House of Commons, I would like to add a few words about the circumstances behind the plaque's original creation and unveiling.

A small Kindertransport committee decided that it would be a good idea to have some sort of permanent record of this historic event ... something in the

House of Commons? They asked me if I could deal with it. I found the House of Commons switchboard telephone number and asked the operator 'Excuse me, do you do plaques?' She calmly put me through to the chairman of the Works Committee. He was charming and helpful. We had a number of meetings and I was told that I could have a brass plaque, maximum size of so many inches height and width. Words to be incised in the plaque (and filled with pink paste?) were suggested.

I changed the text quite a bit to what it reads now. And, yes, it was Betty Boothroyd, the then Speaker, who spoke at its unveiling.

The occasion was filmed by Sue Read and Jim Goulding, who also made the documentary about the Kindertransport *The Children Who Cheated the Nazis*. Lord Attenborough, who is in it, got it on to Channel 4. But that's another story

Bea Green, London SW13

THE MILIBAND CONTROVERSY

Sir – I appreciate the interesting article 'The Miliband Controversy in Historical Perspective' by Anthony Grenville, which appeared in your December issue. It is, indeed, an insightful perspective. I must thank you for the thoughtful words regarding my father.

David Miliband, International Rescue Committee, New York

'ELITE CLUB'

Sir – Re letters on this subject in your February edition, a personal experience. Aged 18, a post-Auschwitz refugee, I arrived in the UK in January 1946. I became friends with a girl of Jewish working-class background. Her parents told her, in no uncertain terms, that she had to stop seeing me because I was a foreigner. A one-off?

Harold Saunders, Manchester

DES KINDES CHRONIK

Sir – My mother, Dorle Potten née Essinger, wrote a history of her family which included memoirs of Bunce Court and my remarkable great-aunt Anna Essinger. The book was reviewed in the Journal in February 2010 but sadly she died around the same time.

We have quite a few copies of the book which we would like to give away to anyone interested in reading it. Please contact me with your address if you would like a copy (p&p is about £5 and would be welcome but is not essential).

Marion Gaze

*Poplar Farm, Silverleys Green,
Cratfield, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0QJ
marion.gaze@btinternet.com*

SINGLE ESCAPES

Sir – On page 2 of your January issue mention is made of single escapes from Nazi Germany. I was such a one, taken

to the Hauptbahnhof in Berlin in May 1938 and 'given' to a couple of Jewish strangers who were asked to take me to London. I was nine at the time. Parts of the journey were a nightmare as the couple, and therefore I, were taken off the train at the frontier with the Netherlands for a *Stichprobe* and the train went on without us!

My story forms part of an autobiography I'm writing and a film has also been made – *Tom's Story*, which can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/72385340> with the password 'tomtom'.

Tom Jacobs, Twickenham

MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

Sir – Just to say all six of us from Hampstead Quakers very much appreciated being at the AJR's Holocaust Memorial Day event at Belsize Square Synagogue. Thank you for inviting us. Over the years we have had quite a few refugees who have been part of our community and while, sadly, many have died or are now very frail, their influence is still felt.

From everyone I spoke to I found an interest in Quakers, in what we believe and in how we worship. What came across to me was a commitment to respecting the humanity in everyone and making the world a better place that made me feel quite at home.

Susan Seymour, London NW5

RELUCTANT TO RECOGNISE THE PAST

Sir – I read the moving article by Dr Scarlett Epstein in your last issue with great interest and admire her successful achievement in persuading her old school to recognise the injustices of the past. I myself have not had the same success. Although I have spoken at several schools in Vienna, I have been unable to arrange a visit to the Schottenschule, which I attended before and just after the Anschluss. The primary school itself no longer exists but the Schottengymnasium on the same site seems reluctant to recognise the past.

One of the items which usually raises considerable interest among pupils is my original exercise book from the school, which effectively charts the change from being a proudly independent Austria (with flags, Kruppenkreuz and a blessing on the first page!) to a paragraph dictated in March 1938 which marks its end. This is headed 'Deutschösterreich' and reads 'German-Austria is a part of the Deutsches Reich and our Chancellor, our Führer, is Adolf Hitler.' This was later angrily crossed out!

After the Anschluss I was told to sit at the back of the class and not play with the Aryan children. Later, like Scarlett, I was 'expelled' and sent to a Jewish school.

continued on page 16 ➔

ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

How the space in which we live and work can change is examined by the **Royal Academy of Arts** in its latest show, **Sensing Spaces: Architecture Reimagined** (until 6 April 2014).

Seven creative architects took up the challenge to change our physical perspectives, but the endgame is the same: hugely imagined constructs, in bamboo, polypropylene, pine or concrete.



Pezo von Ellrichshausen's monumental structure challenges the viewer's sense of perspective. Picture: Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2014. Photography: James Harris/© Pezo von Ellrichshausen

Diébédo Francis Kéré presents a tunnel of white, light-emitting arches made of 1,867 polypropylene honeycomb panels with holes into which you can poke something resembling coloured straws.

The architects' mantras decorate the walls: 'What are you aware of in the space you inhabit?', 'How do spaces shape our lives?', or this from Chinese philosopher Laozi 'What is important is what is contained, not the container.'

And in the main octagonal Central Hall, the point from which all the galleries radiate outwards, you can read Churchill's message: 'We shape our buildings. Thereafter they shape us.'

The love of classical harmony is reflected in Portuguese architect **Eduardo Souto de Moura's** severe, grey arches; others,

like **Álvaro Siza's** courtyard installation, also underscore the historical values of Burlington House.

The last time the Royal Academy daringly offered its glorious 19th-century Beaux Arts, neo-classical interior to a radical challenger was to Anish Kapoor, whose outbursts of spluttering red wax from cannon fire and trains must have required a mammoth clean-up operation.

These architects are a gentler species. One rather delightful installation – and it feels safer to call it that because nothing here offers a practical living space – are Chilean **Pezo von Ellrichshausen's** triangular pillars in untreated pineboard and steel, standing solid beneath their plain pediment.

But behind them is a corridor through which you reach an inner space, rather like a priest's hole or confessional with a stairway. You can climb or walk up – to meet the gilded angels on the ceiling. Look down and you'll see the four round stairwells with black steel handrails. Great fun for the kids!

Other works includes **Li Xiadong's** twiggy labyrinth and much is made of the desire to engage with the structures, textures, sounds, spaces and scents. This immersive, multi-sensory experience also includes two rooms in which heavy concrete blocks suspend and generate light designed by the Irish company Grafton Architects. The lighter room offers white seating all around; the darker one has a skylight which throws light down.

The most beautiful of all is that of Japan's **Kengo Kuma**. Through a curtain you enter a dark space illuminated by his wall mantra 'Always start with something small. Break down particles into fragments.' He uses whittled bamboo sticks infused with various aromas and scents natural to Japan and plants them like saplings in tiny lit holes in the ground. Their slender, spectral shapes reach the ceiling. This bamboo installation is inspired by a *Ko-Do*, or Japanese smell ceremony. The smell is even keener in the second room, which seems suffused with *hinoki* and *tatami*, and, as you re-enter the pine structure afterwards, your nose picks up the scent of pine even more acutely than before.

Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street
(off New Bond Street)
Tel: 020 7629 7578
Fax: 020 7491 2139

CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

Far more than just another family history

SCATTERED GHOSTS: ONE FAMILY'S SURVIVAL THROUGH WAR, HOLOCAUST AND REVOLUTION

by Nick Barlay

London: I. B. Tauris, 2013, 240 pp.,
hardcover, ISBN: 978 1 78076 662 1

Although this book is based on the history and fate of one extended family, it is in fact far more than just another family history. Its scope covers the period from the early 19th century to the present day and involves many countries, for the most part linked to Hungary in some way. In writing the book, Nick Barlay faced a real challenge as initially there appeared to be little information – just odd letters and faded photographs of unknown people. Moreover, he was based in Britain, while much of the family had lived and died in Continental Europe. Through meticulous research, a great deal of patience and the ability to draw out information from elderly relations and acquaintances, as well as a useful award from Arts Council England, he succeeded in fully meeting this challenge.

To some extent, surmise had to replace certainty in the early years, but each of the characters is drawn in considerable detail and described in a warm, sympathetic way which makes them come alive to the reader. Inevitably, the dominating features in the lives of the individual family members relate to the two World Wars, and especially the Holocaust, but their lives in more peaceful times are also recounted.

The first six chapters cover in some detail the stories of some of the author's ancestors at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and what later became independent Hungary. Inevitably, this part is dominated by the First and Second World Wars and the fate of Hungarian Jews during the latter.

One of the most moving stories is of great-great-uncle Joszi, who in the First World War fought in some of the bitterest battles on the Italian front. He survived both wars and the Holocaust, but many of the family fell victim to the latter.

In the Second World War the Jews in Hungary, although persecuted by the fascist Horthy regime, initially escaped the death camps. The men were, however, drafted into labour battalions and sent to the eastern front. Among these was the author's grandfather, who was taken away in 1940 and later disappeared to an unknown fate. The position of the Jews deteriorated rapidly after Horthy tried to sue for peace in March 1944 and the Germans occupied

continued opposite ➔

the country. The Jews in the provinces, including family members, became early victims, whilst those in Budapest initially seemed to escape deportation. This, however, was only a delay and many Jews were later deported, although relatively large numbers managed to survive. In the capital the main threat came from the fascist Arrow Cross organisation and the author's father remembered vividly a massacre of Jews by the Hungarian fascists in October 1944 in the area where they lived. He and his cousin survived by being hidden in a cellar. Sadly, even at the present time, fascism has still not been eradicated in Hungary.

The second part of the book, now based mainly on first-hand experiences as related to the author by his parents, covers the dramatic events of the 1956 Hungarian uprising. Up to that time most of the surviving family had continued to live in Budapest and, while experiencing the same hardships as other Hungarians, were no longer singled out as Jews. The coming of the Communists was at first welcomed as being the enemy of fascism and Jews were evident among their leadership. But as the regime became increasingly oppressive and paranoid, demonstrations turned into revolt and eventually confrontation with the Russian army. Thousands of Hungarians decided to flee and the author's wider family, more by chance than design, found itself divided between those who stayed and those who escaped. The account of the escape by the Bokor family, as it then was, involved danger, bribery and even the selling of blood to raise money. Eventually, however they were successful in being allowed entry to England and starting a new life with a new name. Fortunately for the author it became possible for his father to bring his mother, Lili, over to London and she became a good source of information (as well as of Hungarian recipes!).

The concluding chapters of the book describe the many journeys between England and Hungary in search of information. There were numerous meetings with family members and much research in documentation centres in many countries, enabling the author to construct an authentic account of a period of history as it affected ordinary people. Nick Barlay can justifiably feel that the *Scattered Ghosts*, whom we met in the first chapter, can now rest in peace.

The book is well illustrated and readers will make frequent use of the comprehensive family tree which shows the relationships between the people described as well as their dates of birth and death. Most importantly, the author has brought his skills as a novelist to writing this family history, meticulously recreating the background scenes and bringing to life his ancestors. This vivid style involves us in one family's story and at the same time gives us an understanding of the wider history of Central Europe.

George Vulkan

A case of scholarly sensationalism

THE COLLABORATION: HOLLYWOOD'S PACT WITH HITLER

by Ben Urwand

Harvard University Press, 2013,
hardcover 317 pp., £19.95,
ISBN 9780674724747

Ben Urwand's book casts new light on the 'golden age of Hollywood' as he unravels the troubled relationship which existed between the leading American movie studios and the Nazis in the 1930s.

He attempts to knit together a number of strands: Hitler's obsessive interest in the movies; the cowardly behaviour of the American studio bosses, who avoided putting Jewish themes and characters on the screen and failed to produce any anti-Nazi films; and the alleged influence of George Gyssling, the German consul in Los Angeles, an influence often exercised in tandem with Joseph Breen, the anti-Semitic official representing the Hays office in Hollywood charged with enforcing the notorious Production Code of movie censorship in the US. In fact, the Code began to be enforced more stringently for the first time in 1934, the year after Hitler's rise to power, and the continuing worldwide Depression meant that the Hollywood studios were desperate to retain their overseas markets.

At the core of the book are case studies of a variety of films and film projects – a somewhat unpredictable mixture of well-known titles such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* with less familiar movies including *Gabriel over the White House* and *The Prizefighter and the Lady*, starring the Jewish boxer Max Baer. Urwand even devotes much space to some fascinating unfiled projects, most notably *It Can't Happen Here*, adapted from the novel by Sinclair Lewis, and *The Mad Dog of Europe*, which originated as a film script by Herman J. Mankiewicz, who is best remembered today as the co-author of *Citizen Kane*.

Urwand rightly points out that the Nazis' first major impact on Hollywood was in 1930, when their thugs disrupted the first screenings of *All Quiet on the Western Front* in Germany and managed to get the film banned: 'The Nazis' actions against *All Quiet* set off a chain of events that lasted over a decade.' He goes into some detail in his opening chapter regarding the cuts which studio boss Carl Laemmle agreed in order to get the picture re-released in 1931.

Typical of the book's approach, Urwand has uncovered some original behind-the-scenes information to back up his main argument – that the studios 'collaborated' with the Germans throughout the 1930s. However, he neglects to mention – surely he must know this – that *All Quiet* was a long film (2 hours and 20 minutes) and

had been screened successfully in the US and all over the world in 1930, winning the Oscar for best film and Jewish director Lewis Milestone. Since it was normal practice for a long picture to be re-released in a shorter version, the Germans may have thought they had won a major concession from the studio when this may not have been the case at all. Most surprising, Urwand seems to think that Leni Riefenstahl, in her notorious documentary *Triumph of the Will*, 'was restoring the honour of the German nation by responding to the movie that had caused so many problems four years earlier, *All Quiet on the Western Front*.'

It is also worth pointing out that the Nazis' thuggish behaviour had a wider historical significance, which Urwand fails to mention: by targeting a film which presented a quite sympathetic treatment of young German soldiers caught up in the horrors of the Great War, an event widely reported by the press, it represented a key element in revealing to the world the true nature of the Nazi phenomenon.

Urwand has performed a useful service by digging up much interesting new information regarding the activities of the Hollywood studios in the 1930s. The text is quite readable and the new facts he presents are well documented, with a full 60 pages of footnotes. But it is his interpretation of the material that is most open to question. For instance, he regards *The House of Rothschild* (1934) as virtually an anti-Semitic film because the Nazis were able to extract scenes for use in the notorious documentary *Der ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew) in 1940: 'The only Hollywood film that addressed the persecution of the Jews in this period contained ideas so compatible with Nazi ideology that it was incorporated into the most extreme Nazi film of all time.' And when Urwand gave a talk in London at the Wiener Library last November, he included these same clips, out of context, to prove his point. The story of the Rothschilds' emergence as powerful international bankers could easily be twisted to give an anti-Semitic interpretation. But to condemn the entire film is unjustified and, unfortunately, typical of Urwand's approach.

Similarly, after delving into the early versions of Chaplin's script for *The Great Dictator* in 1938, Urwand is scathing in his criticism of the final version of the film: '[Chaplin] shifted the location of the persecution of the Jews from a concentration camp to a ghetto.' Yet this was a daring and original movie for Chaplin to make at the time, in 1939-40, long before the US had entered the war.

As David Denby has pointed out in *The New Yorker*, 'Throughout the book he [Urwand] gives the impression that the studios were merely doing the Nazis' bidding ... The charge of "collaboration" is inaccurate and unfair – a case of scholarly sensationalism.'

Joel Finler

PARISIAN INTERLUDE

In September 1947 my two-year stint with the US Army in Germany came to an end.

A stateless person with a British travel paper, I belonged nowhere.

My choice now was between London and Paris. Britain had saved my life and had been my home for seven years but my closest relatives lived in Paris. Also, I had fallen in love with the city exactly nine years earlier when I spent three days there on my way to England. Paris won.

My brother Leo and his family as well as my father rented small apartments in a *hôtel meublé* in the chic 16th arrondissement and Leo found me a tiny studio flat in the same hotel.

I managed to get myself a job with the 'Joint', the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, as secretary to one of the departmental managers. As in the US Army, there was a hierarchy of employees: first came the Americans, next 'Allied' staff with a perfect command of English, and, finally, locals, those permanently resident in France. With my British travel document, I fell into the same category as pukka Brits.

Although I didn't form part of the American elite I was still extremely well paid. In addition to my salary in sterling,

which went straight into my bank account in England, I received a 'living allowance' in French francs which was so generous that some French families had to live on less.

I spoke German with my family and English with my colleagues but was determined not to live in a country without mastering its language.

A French colleague recommended a post-graduate student, a charming and able young woman who became my teacher, and, under her tuition, I made rapid progress and was soon able to enjoy plays at the Comédie-Française and read books by Camus and Sartre.

My favourite companion was Susi, my niece, 12 years old by then and bilingual in German and French. Some weekends, we would take a train from the Gare Saint-Lazare to the countryside near Paris and we'd walk and explore and she'd teach me French songs.

And I made friends at work. One of them was Kurt, a German-speaking Czech who had enlisted in the British Army in Palestine, where he had met his wife Hanka, a Polish Jew who had managed to fool the Germans and survived the war working for a ministry in Berlin.

Through Kurt I met three Auschwitz survivors: Terka and Paul Kubin and a Dr Benes. It was trivia, told casually, that brought home the full horror of the camps to me. Terka, for instance, had developed a heavy cold while working in a factory as a slave labourer but, despite her pleas, none of the German women there would give her a handkerchief. And Benes was eternally grateful to Kubin for once sharing a crust of bread with him.

Another friend was Minnie, an American seven years my senior. Clever, attractive and generous, she held a senior position at the Joint and could afford to rent a flat in the rue St Honoré (just off Concorde) and to import a large car from the States, in which we went to Versailles and Fontainebleau and toured the châteaux country. We also had gorgeous meals in expensive restaurants and I learned to love escargots. (It still baffles me that in France, which had been occupied for four years, one could eat so well, whereas England, which had won the war, was still severely rationed.)

And, of course, there was Paris. Unlike London, which still bore the scars of the Blitz, and Munich and Frankfurt – where I had worked recently – which lay in ruins, Paris was untouched by the war and its beauty enchanted me every day afresh.

Yes, I led a charmed life in Paris. I was close to my family, I had good friends, I was affluent and I loved the city. So why did I leave it at the end of April 1949 for Sydney? Well, my friend Stella, whom I had met while working for the US Army, was in Australia and painted a rosy picture of life there. I felt I might be able to settle down in a new country with almost unlimited opportunities.

I must have been destined to go there because in January 1952, with a husband and a British passport, I returned to London, where I have been living happily ever since.

Edith Argy

Honouring the rescue of Jewish refugees by the Albanians

Albania was the only Nazi-occupied country to end the war with more Jews than at the war's beginning: not a single Jew was surrendered to the Nazi occupiers. Sixty-nine Albanians are remembered among the Righteous of the Nations at Yad Vashem.

Earlier this year over 400 people gathered at Pinner Synagogue to hear this story. The Albanian Ambassador to Britain, HE Mal Berisha, gave a brief address introducing the film *Besa: The Promise*, about the Albanians' code of conduct, which ensured

that Jews fleeing persecution were welcomed and protected during the Nazi occupation of Albania.

The film highlights how Albanians (the majority of the population Muslims), from King Zog through politicians, the police, organised religion, and ordinary men, women and children, observed the *Besa* code of honour. Jews were sheltered, fed, hidden and offered aliases – all at personal risk to the rescuers.

The event was part of Harrow activities recognising Holocaust Memorial Day and took place on Tu B'Shvat, 'New Year of the Trees'.

Chairing the meeting, Gaby Glassman presented Ambassador Berisha with a certificate acknowledging his visit to the Synagogue and the planting of a tree in the Lord Sacks Forest in Jerusalem 'in grateful appreciation of the courageous acts of the Albanian people in rescuing and sheltering Jewish refugees from the Holocaust'.

Brian Eisenberg



Gaby Glassman presents a certificate to Albanian Ambassador HE Mal Berisha

ARTS AND EVENTS MARCH DIARY

Mon 10 Michael Haas: 'Hans Gal's *Sacred Duck* and a Journey from Vienna to Edinburgh' Wiener Library 6.30 pm – 9.30 pm. Tel 020 7636 7247. Admission free but booking essential

Wed 12 Philo Bregstein: 'Parallel Lives: The Cousins Otto and Victor Klemperer' Wiener Library 6.30 pm – 8.00 pm. Admission free but booking essential

Thu 27 to Sat 29 Conference: 'Labour and Race in Modern German History' Pears Institute for the study of Antisemitism in partnership with the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, Birkbeck, University of London and the Wiener Library. All day. At Wiener Library. For further information email pearsinstitute@bbk.ac.uk

'JOURNEYS' HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY, 2014**AJR
EVENTS****SERVICE AT BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE**

Over 150 people gathered in Belsize Square Synagogue for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) service. Among those present were representatives of the German and Austrian Embassies, students from the German volunteer organisation Action Reconciliation for Peace, and, for the first time, representatives of the Quakers, who played such an important role in helping refugees from Nazi-occupied Central Europe to settle in this country.

Following a candle-lighting ceremony and the reciting of the Kaddish, guest speaker Allan Noel-Baker spoke about his grandfather Philip Noel-Baker (1889-1982), who initiated the debate in Parliament on 21 November 1938 which

paved the way for the Kindertransport. In addition to being from a Quaker background, an Olympic athlete, a leading member of the Labour Party, and winner of the 1959 Nobel Peace Prize, Philip Noel-Baker was a passionate supporter of Zionism.

AJR member Michael Spiro, born in Chemnitz in 1929, reflected on his family's travels around the globe, including a long stay in New Zealand, following their departure from Germany in 1938. Now Emeritus Professor of Physical Chemistry at Imperial College, London, he expressed his gratitude to England for welcoming his family here.

Janet Weston, whose father was a refugee from Germany, gave a reading



Allan Noel-Baker (Photo by Alan Ezekiel)

of W. H. Auden's poem 'Refugee Blues'.

The service was led by Rabbi Stuart Altshuler and introduced by AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman.

THE NORTH WEST

The Manchester Jewish Museum had a full house for a presentation about the Kindertransport 'Journey'. This included readings from the diary kept by the girls at the Harris House girls' hostel in Southport. AJR member Lisa Wolfe, her daughter and granddaughter, were present to hear the readings: Lisa's mother was the matron at the hostel.

Over 100 members of the public attended the Museum of Liverpool joint event with the AJR held at the Museum. AJR members Inge Williams, Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines and Fay Healey were the main speakers, with Kay Fyne's daughter Naomi Brown reading Kay's parents' last letters to their children before they were deported. Lara Stone read Kay's brother's poem 'Just a Hug', written when Walter was in his 60s (he was three years old when he last saw his parents).

AJR member Chanita Rodney, who came on the Kindertransport from Berlin

to Liverpool, was the guest speaker at the Civic HMD Commemoration at Liverpool Town Hall. Chanita now lives in Israel.

Inge Williams, Fay Healey and Chanita Rodney spoke to over 150 primary school children at the Liverpool Town Hall Schools Parliament.

Eric Cohen, Hana Eardley, John Goldsmith and Sonia Strong spoke to schools throughout Merseyside. Fay Healey spoke to schools in Crosby; Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines spoke at FACT Picture House Liverpool and at schools in Preston, Merseyside and throughout the country; and Anita Canter spoke to several Merseyside schools about her childhood escape from Denmark.

The AJR had a stand at the Anglican Cathedral Liverpool for the Wiener Library Exhibition, which was hosted by the Merseyside Council of Christians and Jews.

Susanne Green

AJR North West Groups Co-ordinator

SCOTLAND

A group of 30 members travelled by special invitation from Edinburgh and Glasgow to Stirling to attend the main HMD event. Maureen Sier of Interfaith Scotland ensured every comfort was provided for our members by laying on a kosher reception and providing transport and reserved seating.

The main speakers were Alfred Munzer, who spoke about his journey as a young child hidden and cared for by an Indonesian family, while Arn Chorn Pond, who escaped from Cambodia after being held by the Khmer Rouge, gave an emotional presentation.

It was one of the most moving HMDs the group attended.

Agnes Isaacs

AJR Scotland and Newcastle Co-ordinator

AJR ANNUAL LONDON TRIP

Tuesday 6 May – Thursday 8 May 2014

This year's trip will include a visit to Kenwood House; dinner at the London Jewish Cultural Centre with guest speaker Ian Austin MP; a guided tour of the National Theatre and a matinee performance of their latest production *A Taste of Honey*; a relaxing evening and dinner at an award-winning kosher Chinese restaurant; a visit to Camden Arts Centre; and a boat trip down The Thames with lunch. Plus, as always, the opportunity to meet friends old and new.

Accommodation will be at a London hotel for members based outside London. Members living in London can participate in the daily events.

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

**AJR GROUPS
OUTING**

**Thursday 15 May 2014
at 11.00 am**

**BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir,
Neasden, London
Europe's first traditional Hindu Temple**

Join us for a visit to see this masterpiece of Indian design and workmanship in the heart of London and marvel at the intricate marble and wooden carvings.

Our visit will last approximately 2 hours and will consist of a short welcome and introductory address, a video presentation, and a guided tour of the Mandir. We will then have lunch at a nearby vegetarian restaurant.

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



Pinner Bombay Childhood

Illustrating her talk with numerous photos, Margery Cohen recalled her idyllic childhood in Bombay. With a grandfather in the grain trade, she remembered the constant clatter of her mill home and Jewish customs with an Indian flavour such as the 12-inch *matzot*. At her convent school, there was never any pressure to convert.

Walter Weg

Ealing Who Made the Greatest Impression?

Members spoke about the person who had made the greatest impression on them during their lifetime. This triggered a lively discussion on a wide range of issues, relating particularly to people's upbringing in times of trouble.

Leslie Sommer

St John's Wood Kindertransport Passion

We were joined by Tracey Childs and Andrew Hall, producer and director respectively of Diane Samuel's play *Kindertransport* and both recognisable actors from, among other TV dramas, *Broadchurch* and *Howard's Way*. They delighted us with their passion for the play they have brought back to life and which is currently touring the country – Kinder are welcome to go free but please contact me first.

Hazel Beiny

Glasgow A Difficult Subject

The 14th Holocaust Memorial Lecture at Glasgow University, by Prof Paul Weindling, was on the theme 'Human Experiments on the Holocaust: A Victim-Based Analysis'. Though the subject matter was a difficult one for our members, they felt compelled to attend.

Agnes Isaacs

Glasgow Book Club A Chance to Ask Difficult Questions

J. D. Simons's latest novel, *An Exquisite Sense of What is Beautiful*, was much admired, especially as the author joined us for the afternoon. It was a great chance to ask all those questions that are normally left to ponder at the end of a book.

Agnes Isaacs

Essex (Westcliff) All-England Champion

David Barnett took us back to the heyday of boxing: the year 1795 saw the birth

of boxing legend Daniel Mendoza, listed among the 100 most influential Jews of all time. Mendoza died aged 72, almost penniless despite earning the equivalent of £3 million in today's money.

Esther Rinkoff

Edinburgh CF A Good Read

Members spent the afternoon at the home of Maria Chamberlain recommending a Good Read. Everyone had something interesting to offer and this inevitably led to discussions relating to long ago. A very enjoyable afternoon and superb hospitality.

Agnes Isaacs

Radlett The Story of Jewish Jazz

A very pleasant start to 2014 – tapping our feet to Alf Keiles's excellent jazz programme, including a version of 'Hava Nagila'. As always, thanks to Alf for his kind hospitality.

Esther Rinkoff

Hull CF 'A Life of Letters'

We enjoyed calligrapher Sara Mack's talk 'A Life of Letters'. Everyone went home with a personal handwritten 'calligraphy' of their name!

Wendy Bott

Philomena: AJR Outing to Everyman Cinema

Although shocking and disgraceful, the true story of Philomena's search for her baby son was moving. Judy Dench as Philomena and Steve Coogan as the journalist Martin Sixsmith who helped her, acted brilliantly. Highly recommended.

Bruno Miller

Brighton-Sarid (Sussex) Swimmers' Reunion

We watched the excellent documentary *Watermarks*, about the pre-war Vienna Jewish sports club Hakoah. Members of the women's swimming team talked about their lives in the Nazi era and, after 65 years, six of them returned to their pool in Vienna for a reunion.

Ceska Abrahams

Edgware Kindertransport Insight

Tracey Childs gave us insight into how she came to produce Diane Samuel's play *Kindertransport*, which is currently touring England. An actress before she became a producer, Tracey told us how her career had developed from initial ballet classes. Altogether an interesting afternoon.

Edgar H. Ring

Wembley Lively 'Shmoozing'

A very interesting get-together, with our friend Laura Levy reading from her book about Jewish life in England in the 13th century. Nice tea and lively 'shmoozing'!

Avram Schaufeld

Book Club Funny and Inventive

Meeting at Joseph's Bookstore, we discussed Jonas Jonasson's *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared*. We all thought it funny and inventive. Afterwards we enjoyed a delightful lunch. Next book: *The Housemaid's Daughter* by Barbara Mutch (at 3.00 pm).

Irene Goodman

York/Harrogate CF The Youngest Attendee So Far

Edith Jayne's talk on the Quaker movement and its association with the Kindertransport children was most interesting and members had the opportunity to ask many questions. We also had the pleasure of meeting a member's 10-day-old granddaughter – the youngest attendee so far at an AJR meeting!

Wendy Bott

Surrey Special Treat

It was a special treat to meet the Surrey group in Edmee's lovely home in Epsom. Eating delicious food and drinking good strong coffee while looking out at Edmee's beautiful garden from her glass conservatory, Hazel and I chatted to members and gathered new ideas and suggestions for future meetings.

Kathryn Prevezer

North West London Exercises Followed by Cheesecake

Having worked off delicious jacket potatoes and fillings with Extend Exercises led by Ruth Berman, we sat and stretched our limbs to beautiful music. Then we tucked into delicious cheesecake and roulade.

Hazel Beiny

North London 'From West End to the City'

Colin Davey chronicled the migration of the legal profession in the footsteps of the financial one. Given that his talk also recalled some personal experiences, it proved even more fascinating. A great morning.

Herbert Haberberg

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AJR OUTINGS PLANNED FOR 2014



Full details will appear in the Journal 2 calendar months before each outing

Tuesday 25 March

Florence Nightingale Museum – afternoon visit and tour following lunch

Tuesday 6 May to Thursday 8 May

Annual London Trip – 3 days of events open to all

Thursday 15 May

Shri Swaminarayan Mandir Temple in Neasden – morning visit followed by lunch

Sunday 15 June

Gilbert & Sullivan Opera and cream tea at Grimm's Dyke Hotel, Stanmore

Sunday 29 June

Judith Kerr OBE, a German-born British writer and illustrator, will be speaking exclusively to AJR at LJCC. Families welcome: children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren

Thursday 10 July

Frogmore Paper Mill – lunch, guided tour and making your own paper

Thursday 17 July

Montifiore Synagogue in Ramsgate – with lunch beforehand by the seaside

Tuesday 22 July

Viennese tea at The Delaunay in Central London

Make a note in your diary not to miss these exciting events!

CONTACTS

Hazel Beiny
Southern Groups Co-ordinator
07966 887 434 / hazel@ajr.org.uk

Wendy Bott
Yorkshire Groups Co-ordinator
07908 156 365 / wendy@ajr.org.uk

Susanne Green
North West Groups Co-ordinator
0151 291 5734 / susanne@ajr.org.uk

Susan Harrod
Groups' Administrator
020 8385 3070 / susan@ajr.org.uk

Agnes Isaacs
Scotland and Newcastle Co-ordinator
07908 156 361 / agnes@ajr.org.uk

Kathryn Prevezer
London South and Midlands Groups Co-ordinator
07966 969 951 / kathryn@ajr.org.uk

Esther Rinkoff
Southern Region Co-ordinator
07966 631 778 / esther@ajr.org.uk

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
Andrea Goodmaker
020 8385 3070 / andrea@ajr.org.uk

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

MARCH GROUP EVENTS

Hull CF	2 March	Social
Cardiff	3 March	Sue Kurlander, Head of AJR Social Services
Cheshire	4 March	Tbc
Ealing	4 March	Peter Sampson: 'The Story of the Mona Lisa'; plus 5th birthday celebration
Book Club	5 March	Social Get-together and Discussion
Ilford	5 March	Chris Moncrieff, former Parliamentary Journalist, Press Association
Midlands East (Nottingham)	5 March	Lunch and Social Get-together
Pinner	6 March	Richard Furnival Jones: 'The Palace of Knightsbridge'
Glasgow	9 March	Details to follow
Bath/Bristol	10 March	Social
Harrogate/York	10 March	Social
HGS	10 March	Kenn Taylor, John Soane Museum
Essex (Westcliff)	11 March	Dora Kohler, Action Reconciliation for Peace intern
Broughton Park/ Crumpsell	12 March	Social
St John's Wood	12 March	Tanya Byron, Child Psychologist
Glasgow Book Club	13 March	Social
Brighton-Sarid (Sussex)	17 March	Godfrey Gould: 'Bernhard Baron, Cigarette Philanthropist'
Marlow	17 March	Social
Edgware	18 March	Stephen Wordsworth, Executive Director, CARA refugee academic charity
Midlands West (Birmingham)	19 March	Concert and Lunch
Radlett	19 March	Leslie Sommer: 'Life at the Home Office'
Welwyn GC	20 March	Social at home of Monica
Wessex	20 March	Chris Moncrieff, former Parliamentary Journalist, Press Association
Leeds HSFA	23 March	Judith Angel: 'Burma, Short and Sweet' – a talk with photographs
Prestwich/Whitefield	24 March	At home of Werner and Ruth Lachs
Didsbury	26 March	At Bridge Club
Manchester	26 March	'Kindertransport' at Opera House, 7.30 pm, talk with cast after show
Wembley	26 March	Lucy Daniels: 'Nutrition, Health and Enjoyment: Trying to Get it Right'
Liverpool	27 March	'Kindertransport' at Opera House, 2.30 pm
North London	27 March	Elaine Wein, City and Westminster Guide: 'Let's All Go Down The Strand'
North West London	31 March (at Hendon)	Rob Lowe: 'The Story of the Savoy'

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Making a difference

Council of Christians and Jews seminar at Yad Vashem

In October 2013 the Council of Christians and Jews took another group of British Christian leaders to Jerusalem for a 10-day seminar at Yad Vashem, enabled by sponsorship from the AJR and others. The 18 clergy and educators were greatly moved by what they learned and many were inspired to find ways of making a difference back home.

Revd Sheena Williams, an Anglican curate from Southampton, writes:

It's not an exaggeration to say that my trip to Yad Vashem was life-changing. I had visited Yad Vashem before, spending only a few hours there, and that visit made a big impression. I was privileged to be able to return with CCJ and a great group of Christian ministers. The quality of teaching was very high and we had some great lectures from outstanding scholars. Particularly helpful was a session on the history of the relationship between Christians and Jews, leaving us in no doubt that there is much for the Church to repent of. I found a session about the music of the Holocaust especially moving as we explored how music expressed some of the unspeakable truths of what people were experiencing.

I appreciated the interactive workshops, which helped us to learn about Jewish life in Europe before the Holocaust, ghetto life and the experiences of survivors. I came away with a deeper appreciation of the reality of the Holocaust, an awareness of how much I still have to learn, and a determination to play my part in ensuring that genocide will be something future generations will know only from history books.

Revd Keith Sandow, a Superintendent Methodist Minister in the Ashton-under-Lyne Circuit, had visited the Holy Land several times before. He writes:

The big question that came

up repeatedly throughout the seminar was: How could the Holocaust have happened? While there is no single answer, we were able to identify several elements that, when put together, created a perfect storm, including theological narratives painting the Jews in a negative light, an economic climate that led to a rise in fascism, and laws and conventions that made discrimination legal and legitimate.

Many ethical questions were raised during the trip that are still very relevant for today such as: What is the responsibility of the bystander? How does one identify the essential and necessary ingredients used by some to foster discrimination and contempt against another human being? And just because something is written in law, theologically understood or mandated in policy – does that make it morally just?

Returning to the UK, I feel I have a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and a desire to share the Yad Vashem experience and the work of CCJ with my local community. I would like to lead a series of talks to various fellowship groups and take a group to Auschwitz as part of a future study course. Because of a rise in political and cultural tensions across the world, I feel that creating places for dialogue and understanding is critical for multicultural and multi-faith societies.

See more about CCJ's Yad Vashem seminars at www.ccj.org.uk/Groups/173119/The_Council_of_Programmes/Yad_Vashem_Seminars/Yad_Vashem_Seminars.aspx

Fiona Hulbert

Fiona Hulbert is a Programme Manager at the Council of Christians and Jews and leads its trips to Yad Vashem.



FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Death

Eric Richmond, 1924-2014, born Vienna, came to London as a 14-year-old. He passed away after a long illness and will be greatly missed by his spouse Ursula, daughter Juana and grandchildren Maia, Joshua and Siana.

In Memoriam

3-4 March 1943, Martin and Lotte Reichenback and the other 281 Dresden Jews deported from Hellerberg camp and murdered in Auschwitz that very night.

KINDERTRANSPORT LUNCH

9 April 2014

Please join us for our next lunch, which will be held at North West Reform Synagogue, Alyth Gardens, Finchley Road, London NW11 7EN

Daniel Cainer

will be entertaining us on keyboard

To book your place please phone Andrea Goodmaker on 020 8385 3070

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OBITUARIES

George Strauss, born Aussig 15 February 1919, died Cambridge 6 November 2013

From Bohemia to Bournemouth to Cambridge – some lives take directions that could not easily have been predicted. Born in 1919 in Aussig (now Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic) to a father who was a high civil servant - rare for Jews then (he was honoured with a medal by Emperor Franz Joseph) - and to an energetic and talented Austrian mother, George felt he was destined for an academic career.

So it was no surprise when in 1937 in Prague he enrolled in Charles University. Should he follow in his father's footsteps and study medicine or pursue his other love - languages? When in doubt, do both, he decided. He embarked on a five-year medical course and passed his examinations to teach French.

However, when rumours of persecution reached the Strauss household he decided to go to Palestine. Having landed in Haifa, he made his way to Jerusalem, where he signed up at the university for the following term. He then found a job as an auxiliary policeman in Binyamina.

When he saw an article in a newspaper asking for unskilled workers to join the RAF, George reported to the military base near Tel Aviv asking to be trained as a pilot. 'Can't promise you that!' was the reply. So George became a mechanic on 17 shillings a day.

During his six years in the RAF he spent time in Egypt (he always bore the scars on



his hands from trench digging there) and Southern Rhodesia, where he attended flying school. There he trained alongside Ezer Weizman, later head of the Israeli Air Force and President of Israel.

George was then moved to Burma fighting the Japanese. There he first experienced the pleasure of air conditioning, an industry in which he later found work with a large American company in Letchworth.

In Burma he also had the honour of meeting Vera Lynn, the 'Forces Sweetheart', who planted a kiss on his cheek - which, he said, he had never washed off!

While his father perished in Auschwitz, his mother managed to survive the camps and the harsh regime of a labour camp. In England George was told to take a plane

and go and fetch his mother from Prague and bring her to England, where she then lived for the rest of her life with her daughter Joanna (later Hellman). George visited his mother every week as well as keeping an eye on his widowed sister and her two young children.

George's arrival in Britain marked the beginning of a much more settled time. Not only did he gain training and a job but he also married his beloved Pamela Keeping. Settling in Wimbledon, the couple had three children and George pursued a very successful career in refrigeration and air conditioning.

Tragedy was to strike once again when his wife died in 1969. But, as previously, George's indomitable spirit meant that even a setback as great as this (on top of all the others he had experienced in his life) was taken in his stride.

After living in Wimbledon for over 50 years, he spent the last five years of his life in Cambridge with his son Daniel. Here he spent many happy days in the company of the Cambridge Jewish Residents' Association, who provided a wonderful social network for him.

George was a much loved father and grandfather, whose bravery, selflessness and devotion to others was, and is, an inspiration to all who knew him.

Walter Goddard and Dan Strauss

Gertrud Edith Holmes, born Vienna 8 June 1911, died Lewes, Sussex, 25 December 2013

Trude Holmes (née Gertrud Edith Falk) was born in Vienna in 1911 and fled to London in 1938.

Her parents, born in what became Czechoslovakia, were middle class, Jewish but non-religious. Her father, Berthold, played chess in Vienna's Café Central, which was also frequented by Freud, Lenin and Trotsky. Her mother, Olga, sang with the Vienna State Opera Chorus; she also spoke several languages, as did Trude.

Trude completed a doctorate in psychology at Vienna University in 1935. Her work was clearly well appreciated by the University and she was invited to join a team conducting the first-ever market-research study in Austria – on why the Viennese didn't drink tea! Her own research was on child development and she collaborated on a book with her supervisor, Professor Charlotte Bühler, which is still available online. She was active in the socialist youth movement in Vienna and was a close friend of Wolf Speiser, whose father Paul was deputy mayor of 'Red Vienna'.

Trude managed to get an exit visa to the UK and, like so many others, obtained a job as a nanny and a domestic servant. Her



talents didn't lie in those areas, however, and at one point she sent a telegram to her mother to ask how to make Viennese coffee! But, as letters sent by her parents between 1938 and 1941 reveal, they tried to conceal the full state of affairs, though they wrote about their attempts to get US visas. They were deported to the Lodz ghetto in October 1941 and died in spring 1942. Trude discovered this only in 1947.

She was able to train as a teacher and, after the war, she made a very successful career as an educational psychologist in Essex. She had many friends from the same refugee circle, among them Rosl Holmes, who died in 1974. In 1975 Trude married Rosl's widower, Geoffrey Holmes, a metallurgical chemist at LSM (London

& Scandinavian Metallurgical Co) in Rotherham, Yorkshire. They shared a rich and rewarding retirement in Sheffield. They travelled widely and saw friends, including the Pankhurst family and the members of the great Lindsay String Quartet, all over the world. They moved to Lewes in 2005 to be nearer family.

Geoffrey died in 2008 and, for the first time, Trude began to speak of her past. As a result of a newspaper article about her on the occasion of her 100th birthday, her family received a message in 2012 revealing that, unknown to her, she had had an Austrian half-brother (1919-2010): her father had had an affair with a maid in 1918 and a child was born. He had survived the Nazi period and knew of Trude's existence as a result of her registering her parents' deaths. But only after his death did his daughters feel able to search for her.

Sadly, Trude's remarkable memory – which had retained an image of praying for the deceased Kaiser in 1916 – began to fade, along with her eyesight, and she died peacefully in her sleep in December 2013. She leaves a stepson and daughter-in-law and will be remembered by many friends.

Peter Holmes



LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Ugly associations

I wanted to prepare a suitable version of the advertisement for my novel *The Balancing Game* for inclusion in a website which posts my articles from time to time and whose motto is 'There is a Jewish Story Everywhere.' For this purpose I enlisted the help of one of my sons, who, among his many talents, is a designer and computer whiz.

'Oh, no!' he exclaimed when I showed him the site on my computer. 'Not *Fraktur* font! That's what the Nazis used!'

To me it seemed that the editor had chosen a fairly innocuous, possibly quaint, Gothic-type font. The effect it had on me was to call to mind ancient texts and artistic calligraphy, but obviously my son's association was very different.

Just to be on the safe side, I decided to try to verify what my son claimed. I remembered that tucked away somewhere in one of the three large files of documents, letters and other material that my late father had brought with him out of Germany in 1938 were a couple of posters put up by the Nazi Party and evidently taken down by him clandestinely.

Luckily, years before, when I had first

opened those venerable files and inspected their contents I had decided to index them. My father had put everything in alphabetical and chronological order, but I removed the yellowing pages from the rusting ring-binders and, keeping their order, placed them in three plastic box-files.

All I had to do was look at the index page at the front of each box-file and within minutes I had found what I was looking for. Sure enough, right at the end of the last of the three files, the one containing material from between 1932 and 1934, were two folded-up posters, evidently dating from 1932, both screaming exhortations to the German public to vote for the National-Socialist Party (NSDAP) and, of course, the lettering used was the *Fraktur* font that my son had immediately identified. At first sight, the text seemed fairly innocuous:

In 8 months

2 million workers have lost their jobs and are starving!

**Get rid of the class struggle and its parties!
Smite Bolshevism!
Defeat provincialism!**

**One Reich
Will restore order and cleanliness!
One nation -
One Reich -
One leader!**

**That is what will be achieved under
Hitler's leadership!
Hitler will**

**Set the country to rights and restore its
honour!**

**Germany's honour is your honour!
Germany's fate is also your fate!
Vote Yes!**

For Hitler and the NSDAP.

We all know what happened next. However, it seems a shame that this elegant and artistic font should arouse such ugly associations. Such, it would seem, is the power of print and visual association.

The sight of the posters caused my son to become quite agitated. For someone born and brought up in Israel, for whom the Holocaust and the tragedy of the Jews of Europe is something he has learned about from history books or possibly heard about from survivors, to see and touch such tangible evidence from that terrible time was a moving experience.

The posters were printed on poor-quality paper and are beginning to deteriorate. They are large, measuring 32 inches by 23, and are therefore too big to go into my photocopier.

But for the sake of posterity, I have included the content of that poster in the text of my forthcoming novel, *Time Out of Joint: the Fate of a Family*.

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

Perhaps the Schottengymnasium does not wish to be reminded of this period?

George Vulkan, Harrow

ETHOS OF REUTH

Sir – Both as a member of the Reuth UK committee and a niece of one of the founders of Reuth, Gerda Ochs, I felt that I must add a postscript to the excellent article by Dorothea Shefer-Vanson in your last issue, which captured the ethos of Reuth. If readers would like to know more about Reuth or the work of the UK committee supporting Reuth's work, please visit our website www.reuth.org.uk. Readers are also most welcome to contact me on 020 7692 0137.

Ann Rau Dawes, London NW3

BIOGRAPHY OF ANTON DIFFRING

Sir – I am writing a biography of the actor Anton Diffring with the assistance of his family. I have found that his name and

productions he appeared in made regular write-ups in the 'Old Acquaintances' section of the *AJR Newsletter* in the 1950-60s.

Anton Diffring was Jewish; his real name was Alfred Pollack. When he escaped from Germany before the Second World War and arrived in England, he was held as an 'enemy alien' and shipped to Canada, where he was placed in an internment camp for a couple of years. Do any readers remember if the information about him was provided by his agent (Rita Cave) or were they following his career and posting it themselves?

*Christopher Gullo,
Bohemia, New York, USA*

HAVING MORAL SCRUPLES IS NOT TREASON

Sir – I must own up to the crime of regarding a newspaper's stance on Israel, while important, as not the primary criterion of its worth. If Peter Phillips

believes Mr Gove's sending a Bible to every school in the land and creating schools where kids are taught by people who are not teachers will raise our educational achievements, that is his right.

But calling Edward Snowden a traitor when he has had nothing but a hard life out of whistle-blowing British and American surveillance culture is pretty fundamental. The background Peter and I have in common should have taught him that the power the Nazis exerted in enforcing the compliance of the population in excesses against Jews and other 'undesirables' was based entirely on the Party keeping people under strict surveillance. Today's technology makes surveillance potentially much more far-reaching. Even Obama and Cameron have come round to seeing this danger. Having moral scruples is not treason. The *Guardian* sees this; Peter Phillips does not.

Marc Schatzberger, York

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Telephone 020 8385 3070 Fax 020 8385 3080 e-mail editorial@ajr.org.uk

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