

# AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

## The UK Holocaust Memorial

On 27 January 2016, Holocaust Memorial Day, Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the UK Holocaust Memorial would be located in Victoria Tower Gardens, next to the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. The memorial is to be built by the end of 2017 and plans for 'an associated world-class learning centre' will be announced shortly. The report of the Holocaust Commission, published last year, recommended 'a focus on promoting and furthering Holocaust education and a programme to record and preserve the testimony of Holocaust survivors'. Testimony will be integral to the curation of the centre, though it is late in the day for interviewing survivors of Nazi persecution. The announcement also largely begs the questions: what precisely will be memorialised and what will be the aim(s) and content of the learning centre?

Taking the memorial first, the obvious problem is that the Holocaust did not take place in Britain, which was never occupied by the Nazis, excepting only the Channel Islands. It is entirely appropriate that formerly occupied countries like France, from where Jews were deported to the death camps in their thousands, should commemorate those events through such institutions as the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris. Germany and Austria, as successor states to the Third Reich, also owe it to the victims of the Holocaust to erect monuments and museums in their memory, as they have done in Berlin and Vienna. Outside the occupied countries of Europe, institutions rightly exist in countries that have a special relationship to the Jewish people, most obviously Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington DC. It is greatly to be hoped that the UK memorial will be more than a pallid replica of these, worthy in sentiment but lacking their focus and their natural connection to the events that unfolded in mainland Europe under Nazi rule. The design of the memorial will be put out to tender.

The memorial, we were informed a year ago, will 'ensure that the memory of the Holocaust is preserved and that the lessons it teaches are never forgotten'; it and the learning centre 'will have a number of key

characteristics, including a place for prayer, interactive elements, factual information, and details on Britain's efforts during the Shoah'. The factual information will presumably be housed in the learning centre and, again presumably, within the framework of an



Victoria Tower Gardens, Westminster

overall history of the Holocaust. But if the UK Holocaust Memorial is truly to fulfil its purpose it can surely do so only if it has a specifically British dimension, recording the particular historical role that Britain played with reference to the Jews of Europe in the years after 1933. All that has so far been outlined in this respect is the vaguely phrased intention to include 'details on Britain's efforts during the Shoah'. But Britain, like the USA, undertook virtually no operations during the war, and therefore during the Shoah, designed specifically to attack the death camps or otherwise to impede or destroy the Nazi machinery of extermination. Britain also made little effort to rescue Jews from occupied Europe after it had declared war on Germany in September 1939.

This highlights the unusual nature of Britain's contribution to the saving of Jews between 1933 and 1945. Britain's principal efforts on behalf of the Jews in fact occurred before the war, and therefore before the Shoah, which historians usually date as occurring between 1941, following the invasion of the Soviet Union, and the end of the war in 1945. The special British dimension to the rescue of the Jews of Europe, on which the UK Holocaust Memorial should in the interests of historical accuracy focus, is dominated by the large number of pre-war refugees admitted by the British government, if sometimes

reluctantly, between 1933 and 1939, and in particular during the last 18 months of peace, between the annexation of Austria by Germany in March 1938 (the *Anschluss*) and the outbreak of war. Britain was exceptional among the countries of the world in that the number of Jews from the Reich that it admitted increased from about 2,000 a year between 1933 and 1938 to about 3,000 a month between March 1938 and September 1939 – precisely the period during which other countries were closing their doors to fleeing Jews. Among the territories that closed their doors was Palestine, then administered by Britain under a League of Nations mandate.

The refugees who were admitted to Britain did not fall victim to the Nazis, unlike those who had sought refuge in other European countries subsequently occupied by the Germans. In those

countries, such Jewish communities as existed after the war were largely composed of camp survivors and those who had survived in hiding or by virtue of special protection. Holocaust survivors, arriving after 1945, also occupied a more prominent place than did pre-war refugees in those countries outside Europe that admitted numbers of Jews after the war, most obviously Israel and the USA. By contrast, the number of Jews who came to Britain from Europe after the war, the great majority of them Holocaust survivors, was quite small, very considerably smaller than the number of pre-war refugees. After 1945, the British government allowed in only a relatively small number of Jewish child survivors, most famously the group of several hundred known as 'The Boys' and a limited number of adults with family connections to Britain, under the Distressed Persons Scheme that was announced in autumn 1945.

Among the countries that admitted substantial numbers of Jews in the decade and a half after 1933, Britain was exceptional in this respect: the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution who settled here were predominantly refugees, not camp survivors. In the areas in Britain where Jews displaced by Hitler settled in large numbers, principally north-west London, the social culture was heavily influenced by refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia who

 The UK Holocaust Memorial  
*continued*

had arrived before September 1939, not by those who came after 1945. The great names associated in the public mind with the victims of Nazism are in Britain's case almost exclusively pre-war refugees, from Karl Popper to Max Perutz, from George Weidenfeld to Judith Kerr, from Anton Walbrook to Ernst Gombrich. It is surely essential that any memorial established in the UK to the victims of Nazism should reflect this. No one would deny that the victims and survivors of the Holocaust are uniquely deserving of commemoration, a function that the UK Holocaust Memorial will doubtless fulfil. That function should, in all equity, not obscure the story of the pre-war refugees from Nazism, a story that is of such particular historical significance to Britain.

The overarching narrative of any memorial to the Holocaust must be the attempted extermination of the Jewish people in the Nazi death camps, in the mass shootings carried out by the *Einsatzkommandos*, and by a multitude of other means. Without wishing to establish a hierarchy of suffering, it is plain that the experience of those who survived the Holocaust in Nazi-controlled Europe is qualitatively different from that of other groups of victims of Nazi persecution. It is to be hoped that the UK Holocaust Memorial will strike the delicate balance between that overarching narrative and the specifically British dimension to the events of 1933-45. A British narrative would encompass the Kindertransport children, the many thousands of Jews, mostly women, who came on domestic service permits, and the 4,500 men, so-called 'transmigrants', accommodated at Kitchener Camp in Kent, often after being released from German concentration camps. It would cover the mass internment of some 27,000 'enemy aliens' in summer 1940 as well as the contribution those same 'aliens' subsequently made to the British war effort, some 10,000 of them on active service in the British forces and many thousands more in factories and workshops.

The narrative would convey the flavour of the reception accorded to the Jewish refugees from Nazism on arrival as well as

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## Kindertransport

A special interest group of the  
**Association of Jewish Refugees**  
SERVING HOLOCAUST REFUGEES AND SURVIVORS NATIONWIDE



### KINDERTRANSPORT EVENT FRIDAY 1st JULY 2016

Sadly we have had to cancel our planned five day trip to Europe to visit some of the commemorative statues and to mark the journeys of the Kinder from 77 years ago.

As this trip was supposed to culminate with a ferry crossing from the Hook of Holland to Harwich, we would be delighted if you could instead join us for a special day trip and Service of Remembrance in Harwich on Friday 1st July.

As part of this event there will be a special train journey from Harwich to Liverpool Street Station.

Please see separate box below for additional information concerning events in Harwich.

AJR will arrange transport from London to Harwich on the morning of Friday 1st July

**Please register your interest by calling**  
**Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070 or email [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk)**

the nature of their relations with the host community in the post-war years of their settlement in Britain. One thinks here of the 'anti-alien' petition mounted in the London Borough of Hampstead in autumn 1945 which demanded, but failed to achieve, the repatriation of the refugees to their native countries, ostensibly in order to free up accommodation for 'British' people. One also thinks of the process of naturalisation which, after a slow start in 1946, saw the granting of British citizenship to tens of thousands of Jewish refugees by 1950. The story of the contribution that the refugees from Hitler

have made to British society includes not only that of the high achievers whose names have adorned almost every field of endeavour in Britain over the past 70 years, but also that of the mass of 'ordinary' refugees who have so greatly enriched the culture and society of their adopted homeland, in the face of every obstacle and setback. We can only wish those responsible for planning the UK Holocaust Memorial well in their efforts to achieve their objectives.

**Anthony Grenville**



### AJR FILM CLUB

at Sha'arei Tzedek North London Reform  
Synagogue in Whetstone

120 Oakleigh Road North,  
Whetstone, N20 9EZ

on Monday 4 April 2016 at 12.30 pm

A lunch of smoked salmon bagels,  
Danish pastries and tea or coffee will be  
served before the film.

**'ABOVE AND BEYOND'**

In 1948, just three years after the liberation of the Nazi death camps, a group of American-Jewish pilots answered a call for help. In secret and at great personal risk, they smuggled planes out of the US, trained behind the Iron Curtain in Czechoslovakia, and flew in Israel's War of Independence. As members of *Machal* – 'volunteers from abroad' – this ragtag band of brothers not only turned the tide of the war: they also embarked on personal journeys of discovery and renewed Jewish pride.

**'ABOVE AND BEYOND' is their story**

**BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL**  
Please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385  
3070 or email [susan@ajr.org.uk](mailto:susan@ajr.org.uk)  
£7.00 per person

#### ADVANCE NOTICE • ADVANCE NOTICE

### Day Trip by Special Train: London to Harwich 1 July 2016

On Friday 1 July 2016 a number of 'Kindertransport 77' special trains will run from London and elsewhere in the UK to Harwich to mark the first anniversary of Sir Nicholas Winton's passing and the 77th anniversary of the arrival in Harwich of his largest single transport of 241 children. It will also coincide with the arrival in Harwich of the group above from Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Hamburg.

A Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving will be held in St Nicholas Church in Harwich together with other events in the town which welcomed many thousands of *Kinder* to safety in 1938-39 and accommodated many hundreds at Dovercourt.

The organisers wish to invite any *Kinder* – not only those on the Czech transports – to attend with their families.

**For further information,**  
please phone 01908 410450,  
email [kt@papyrus-rail.com](mailto:kt@papyrus-rail.com) or go to  
[www.papyrus-rail.com/kt77](http://www.papyrus-rail.com/kt77)

## Reflections of an unrepentant German Jew

I wonder how many of your readers share my experience. As I grow older, I feel more German with every day that passes. It shows itself in many small ways – childhood memories popping up which have lain in a *Dornroeschenschlaf* (see what I mean!) for decades, looking at my grandchildren's comics and remembering the names of the boys' magazines I favoured (and my mother disapproved of), and the advertising jingles I used to chorus. German words spring unbidden to mind; I enjoy the rare opportunities to speak my native tongue and am gratified by my fluency. As for my foreigner-perfect English, the bedrock of my livelihood, is it getting a little frazzled at the edges?

But the real awakening from an English coma happens in my head. Culturally I am a German Jew. The ignorance of most English people about German culture offends me. They have never heard of Heine, have not read Goethe (a retro pop group?), know about Moses Mendelssohn – if at all – only because of Felix, and are comfortably unaware of the building blocks of European civilisation. To me as a Jew, this feels more, not less, diminishing: another put-down since the German-Jewish relationship was, like no other, a symbiosis that produced unprecedented treasure. As I write, the media celebrate Einstein's vindication, some of them graciously throwing in Freud and Marx. But mutual fertilisation went far deeper and wider than the appearance of a few supermen. Let me just remind you of the names of some who made me who I am and perhaps made you too: Schoenberg (music), Hirschfeld (sexology), Cassirer (philosophy), Reinhardt (theatre), Rathenau (politics), Herzl (Zionism), Arendt (history) – each of them an *avatar*. The list is random – my link to that elite is anything but.

The Germany created by Bismarck, who disliked but valued Jews (as did the Kaiser), which turned into a republic after the First World War, was disproportionately promoted by Jewish thinkers and doers,

often on opposite sides of the revolution, and is thus yet more proof of how deeply Jews were embedded in German

*The death rattle of German-Jewish culture resounds in the memories of a few survivors. Soon it will fall silent and one will have to read about us in history books. I won't be mentioned, but many of the great men and women I knew will make an appearance. Until then I remain an unrepentant German Jew.*

affairs – to the extent of briefly stopping their internal quarrels for the greater good of quarrelling for Germany. The Weimar Republic and constitution were significantly promoted by Jews inside and outside parliament; some of them helped to create that parliament; some did their bit to bring it to its knees.

The 20th Century should really have been the German century, with us taking some of the credit, just as the 19th was England's with us taking none. The title of Amos Elon's history of Jews in Germany between 1743 and 1933, *The Pity of It All*, says it all. It is about what might have been: the German-Jewish symbiosis which might have put the first man on the moon, tested the first atom bomb, pioneered undreamed-of advances in medicine and engineering, become the focal point of the arts – all this aborted by the mustachioed monster who allowed Goebbels to burn the books of such as Mann, Zweig, Musil, Toller, Heine and Ludwig and proclaim 'the end of the age of Jewish intellectualism'. There is nothing unnatural in my claiming a share of the Germany that might have been. The good and the bad were two sides of the same coin. If we really belonged together, we had to love each other. And if the other side could not love us – could feel whole only without us – it had to

eliminate us. What might have been a brotherhood ended in fratricide.

The chance will not come again. The USA became the owners of the 20th Century (with the help of a lot of Jews who had been destined to play that role in Germany) and who can tell what the present century will bring? Certainly no joy for us Jews. The death rattle of German-Jewish culture resounds in the memories of a few survivors. Soon it will fall silent and one will have to read about us in history books. I won't be mentioned, but many of the great men and women I knew will make an appearance. Until then I remain an unrepentant German Jew.

Victor Ross

### KT LUNCH ADVANCE NOTICE

Wednesday 11 May 2016  
at Alyth Gardens Synagogue  
12.30 pm

We are delighted to welcome  
Dame Esther Rantzen DBE



Dame Esther is a journalist and television presenter, best known for the hit BBC Television series *That's Life!* for 21 years from 1973 to

1994. Also well known for her work with charitable causes, she is the founder of the child protection charity ChildLine and The Silver Line, designed to combat loneliness.

Dame Esther famously made a documentary for ITV about Sir Nicholas Winton entitled *Winton's Children*.

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

*We look forward to seeing you*

REMEMBER  
TOGETHER  
WE ARE  
ONE



**YOM HASHOAH**  
SUNDAY 8TH MAY 2016 – 2PM  
BARNET COPTHALL STADIUM  
[YOMHASHOAH.ORG.UK](http://YOMHASHOAH.ORG.UK)

## Two refugee camps - then and now

In this article I seek to draw out some of the differences and similarities between the Calais 'Jungle' Camp and Kitchener Camp in Kent, camps separated by over 70 years.

I gasp at my first sight of the so-called 'Jungle' Camp, which is of a sprawl of never-ending tents and of groups of young men walking aimlessly in squalid conditions. The 6,000, predominantly young male migrants originate from Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan and Eritrea with a few from Somalia, and the camp is divided into these national quarters indicated by the respective flags. There are also about 350 women and 125 children. The existence of this refugee camp in 21st-Century France shocks and distresses. The camp reminds me that my father found sanctuary in a refugee camp in Kent after his incarceration in Buchenwald concentration camp and in 1939 fled for his life from Nazi Germany to the UK.

I was in Calais with Exiled Writers Ink, a charity I founded in 2000, which comprises a large network of refugee and exiled writers. We are at the 'Jungle' Camp library to perform poetry and run a creative writing workshop and have brought books in the languages of the refugees. The spoken-word poets from Somalia, Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan begin by explaining how they originally came as refugees to the UK. The Arabic-speaking audience members respond emotionally to the Syrian's poem, which describes the pain of leaving his country and of life as a lost exile:

### **Andalucia of the Trains (extract) by Hussam Eddin Mohammad**

We shall leave our grandfathers  
Asleep under the oaken hill  
And leave at the end of the night  
For the farthest of borders ...

We shall tell how we  
crossed the Aegean Sea  
And were lost like Ulysses  
How we travelled the sea  
to a jungle in France  
And the rescuers surrounded us with  
barbed wire and presents.

I was never clear about the means by which my father had reached the UK from Nazi Germany as he was reluctant to talk about his traumatic past. I always assumed that it was connected either to the Pioneer Corps, in which he had enlisted, or to the Isle of Man internment camp in which he had been incarcerated. Only this year did I become aware of the role of Kitchener Camp. As



(from left) Shabibi Shah (Afghan memoirist and novelist), Fatima Hagi (Somali poet), Firdos Ali (Somali playwright), Jennifer Langer (poet and founding Director, Exiled Writers Ink), Hussam Eddin Mohammad (Syrian poet); Note: Selam Kidane (Eritrean-Ethiopian poet) was also part of the group

I browsed the internet about the Wiener Library Kitchener Camp exhibition, a photo appeared of Jewish male refugees on a Ramsgate Carnival float which proclaimed 'Our Thanks to Britain' and suddenly I recognised my father's face.

Opened in 1939 in Kent, Kitchener Camp provided refuge in old army huts for some 4,000 German- and Austrian-Jewish men aged 17 to 45. About 25 per cent of them were married. It offered sanctuary solely to men because it was German-Jewish men who had been imprisoned in concentration camps after being arrested on Kristallnacht. About 30,000 German-Jewish men were subjected to torture, starvation and arbitrary death in these camps, including my father in Buchenwald. The only means by which the Gestapo would release prisoners was if there was documentary proof of emigration, with the stipulation being that the men had to leave Germany within a few days of release. In the case of the UK, the documentation could be acquired only if the refugee had a British sponsor who possessed the resources to support the potential refugee. I have seen the desperate letter my father wrote to his contact at Triumph-Norton, the British motorcycle manufacturer from which he imported motorbikes for his racing, but the response was negative. Gaining a place at Kitchener Camp saved his life. However, the men had to leave their wives and children, parents and siblings in Nazi Germany and Austria.

One fundamental difference between the Calais and Kitchener Camps is that no official organisation or government has taken responsibility for the Calais Camp, whereas Kitchener Camp was set up by the Central British Fund for German Jewry. The Kitchener Camp refugees were assigned to rebuild the Camp, which meant building roads, digging drains

and refurbishing the huts. Eventually the Camp provided a range of facilities including compulsory English lessons, sports such as table tennis and football, a post office, a first aid station, theatrical performances, exercise classes, a concert hall and a donated cinema.

At the Calais Camp, the so-called 'Jungle' mired in mud, the French authorities provide very limited basic utilities in the form of standpipes, mobile toilets and lighting along the main route through the Camp. In early November 2015 a Lille judge ordered that the Camp be improved to prevent serious human rights violations. Predominantly

British volunteers provide services, such as English classes and assistance with building shelter and facilities, but generally they are not permanently based at the camp. Yet the refugees themselves have constructed wooden framed structures covered by plastic sheeting, such as the 'Jungle' library, Eritrean church, restaurants and shops, which they run themselves. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the refugees are unwelcome and unsupported by the French authorities and, furthermore, are under intense French security police surveillance.

While it can be argued that the Calais Camp refugees possess some agency inasmuch as they have chosen to pass through the town, the German- and Austrian-Jewish men were totally dependent on being selected for rescue by the Jewish agencies in Berlin and Vienna. It is apparent that my father met the criteria of age, urgency and prospect of ultimate emigration. Of course, as Calais is an unregulated camp, there is no limit on the numbers living there. In contrast, 30,000 men were left in three German concentration camps and an estimated 300,000 men remained in Germany, striving to be accepted by any country whatsoever, yet no country was keen to receive the Jewish refugees and many, such as America, imposed strict quotas. Similarly, the refugees at the Calais Camp have fled from dire situations in their home countries and experienced further trauma on the way. Eritrea is ruled by an authoritarian regime with forced, indefinite conscription in place; Syria is war-torn with diverse factions involved; conflict continues in Afghanistan with a deteriorating security situation caused by increased violence by the Taliban in the form of bombings and

## Rabbi Werner van der Zyl: A tribute

The *yahrzeit* (anniversary) of Rabbi Werner van der Zyl's death on 10 April 1984 and the 60th anniversary of Leo Baeck College, which he founded and was regarded as his outstanding living memorial, is an appropriate time to pay a tribute.

Rabbi van der Zyl was born on 11 September 1902 in Schwerte, Germany, and brought up in a liberal Jewish family. Possessing a lovely voice, he expected to be a *chazan* (cantor) and enrolled in the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, where Leo Baeck z.l. (Of Blessed Memory) and others persuaded him to become a rabbi. He graduated in 1929, obtained a doctorate in 1931, and served the Berlin Friedenstempel and Oranienburger Strasse congregations from 1932 until his emigration in 1939.

In the Nazi period, van der Zyl proved an effective *Seelsorger* or *Roey-Tson* (shepherd of the flock), bringing succour and help to the threatened Jewish community. He was an outspoken opponent of the regime. In one sermon, knowing there were Nazi spies in the congregation and surrounded by Jewish First World War veterans who had been awarded the Iron Cross, he declared: 'At that time, we were celebrated for our heroism in the service of this country. Now, we are criminals.' He was promptly arrested.

My first meeting with Werner van der Zyl was a happy one, my last meeting a sad one. On 22 October 1938 I was due to have my *barmitzvah* in the Friedenstempel. He was to officiate and needed to meet me beforehand. As a pupil of the Theodor-Herzl-Schule, where Hebrew was taught, I was well prepared yet nervous. But he put me at my ease, approved my readings, encouraged me, and wished me *mazel tov* (congratulations). At that time, when

benches painted 'Nur für Juden' (Jews only) in yellow were set up in parks, he told me: 'Don't be afraid or ashamed to sit on those benches. The Germans should be ashamed!' He was of course re-arrested, but was released on the intervention of Leo Baeck.

The last occasion on which I spoke to him was in a hospital in Zurich in September 1982. He had suffered another mild heart attack. Contrary to the pleading of his family and his doctor's advice, he had come out of retirement from Mallorca to help the small Or Chadash Liberal Community in Zurich. He enjoyed his 80th birthday when the Zurich congregation honoured and celebrated him. He was looking forward to inducting me but, alas, he was in hospital and the community president delivered his message instead. When I visited him on his sickbed he was as optimistic and encouraging as ever and wished me success and *mazel tov*. He then recovered to be taken back to Mallorca, where he enjoyed a further two years with his beloved wife, Annelies, whom he had married in Berlin in 1931, and visits from his only daughter Nikki and grandchildren. He died on 10 April 1984. Hugo Gryn z.l. had his remains brought back to London and he is buried in Hoop Lane Cemetery in Golders Green.

Like Leo Baeck, Rabbi van der Zyl wished to remain with his flock in Berlin but was urged to go to England, which he had previously visited. Lily Montagu of the World Union for Progressive Judaism obtained a visa for him and he accompanied a Kindertransport to England in March 1939.

Like most refugees in Britain he was given the status of 'enemy alien' and interned in the Kitchener Camp and, after

May 1940, in the Isle of Man. There he became a much respected leader and lectured and preached. On his release in 1943 he was appointed Rabbi of Alyth Gardens Reform Synagogue, which he served with distinction until he was called to be Senior Rabbi of the West London Synagogue, which he served equally beneficially until a heart attack forced him to retire in October 1968.

Tributes have been paid to his outstanding leadership in Reform Judaism. He continued to be a *Seelsorger* for the Post-War Refugees Committee

and assisted many in need. Following in the footsteps of his mentor Leo Baeck, he was humble and self-effacing, never using the word 'I' in sermons but 'We' and 'Us' and speaking up effectively and forcefully against inhumanity and injustice. Following Leo Baeck again, Werner van der Zyl bore no hatred towards Germany; he believed in reconciliation and, soon after the war, went back to lecture and preach there.

Rabbi Werner van der Zyl certainly lived up to the ideal enumerated in Psalm 15: 'Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth from his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his friend, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbour; who swears to his own hurt and does not change. He who does these things shall never be moved.' Rabbi van der Zyl did these things and was never moved. Therefore his memory will endure for blessing.

**Harry Jacobi**

*Rabbi Harry Jacobi is Vice President of Liberal Judaism*



### Two refugee camps – then and now *continued*

other attacks. Despite all this, as in 1939 the British government is unwilling to accept significant numbers of refugees, even from Syria.

While the aim of the German-Jewish men was to seek refuge at Kitchener Camp, the Calais Camp acts as a base for refugees' multiple, dangerous attempts to reach the UK clandestinely by lorry, train or ferry. Given that they have undertaken perilous journeys involving paying large amounts to smugglers, they are determined to reach their UK goal. Some refugees informed me that they therefore avoided having their fingerprints taken or seeking asylum in the countries in which they first entered the EU, although the Dublin Convention

allocates responsibility to the state in which an asylum seeker first enters the European Union. However, some refugees intend to claim asylum in France. Indeed, many Sudanese are awaiting the results of their asylum claims to settle in France and the French government is in the process of dispersing the refugees to various parts of France. Hence, there appears to be an element of choice in terms of the country in which the refugees claim asylum.

In contrast to the Kitchener Camp refugees, whose family members were not granted visas by Britain, current EU asylum seekers' applications to bring over family members are, in theory, viewed favourably. The Dublin Convention

makes some allowance for family unity. The humanitarian clause of the Dublin III Regulation states that an EU member state *may* bring together family members, as well as other dependent relatives, on humanitarian grounds (Article 15(1)).

I am profoundly saddened and angry that the people in Calais are denied their humanity and forced to survive in atrocious conditions in the 'Jungle' Camp. Both in the 1930s and in 2015, refugees are under suspicion because they represent the 'other' and the tendency is to dehumanise the other. Simply, refugees are desperate to flee danger and seek safety, freedom and dignity.

**Jennifer Langer**



# Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

## 'DEPLORABLE STATE' OF WEISSENSEE CEMETERY

Sir – To Mr Spencer (March) and others who are unhappy with the state of Weissensee Cemetery – the situation is complicated. First, though this may come as an unpleasant surprise to several people, each of whom thinks they are 'the leading Jewish person in Germany', there is, in fact, no such person and no such title – not even the head of the Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland, Dr Schuster. The cemetery is owned and administered by the Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin, which has indeed put large amounts of (grant) money into refurbishing the buildings at the cemetery, the prayer halls, the administrative buildings etc, and quite a few of the larger graves. The sections of the cemetery closer to the entrance gateways which are still in regular use are also kept very well maintained. So no argument there. The sections with military war graves also, and those of certain prominent former rabbis and cantors, are kept clear and some restoration work has also taken place.

The problem is that the cemetery is so vast. In my time as *Rabbiner*, I once had to officiate at the burial of someone who had reserved a plot next to a family member – a family member who had died many decades ago – and the cemetery authorities had to hack a path through the woodland to get to the spot. Another time, I did a stone-setting in a section which lies outside

the walls – yes, beyond the walls there are yet further sections! Much here too has reverted to woodland. The cemetery has full records of which plot is where but not enough staff to clear away every bush and tree. For some people, this adds to the morbid charm of the place.

The cemetery is now a UNESCO *Weltkulturerbe* – part of the world's cultural heritage – which allows for money to be raised for work but also restricts the work that can be done if it alters the atmosphere of the place. To most tourists, I would not think it gives a 'bad impression' – quite the contrary as the areas around which most would wish to walk are clear and well maintained and the surrounding woodland gives the impression of peace, deadens the sound of traffic from surrounding roads, and adds greenery.

I must stress that I write here in a personal capacity only. I can sympathise with those who wish to visit a specific grave and can only say that, if necessary and with notice, ways can indeed be cleared. As one who has had to locate and restore a family grave in Breslau/Wroclaw, which has also turned into a forest, I understand some of the issues. The sad fact is that there are very few people lying here who still have family members who wish to come to visit. A compromise is necessary.

*Rabbi Dr Walter Rothschild, Berlin*

## ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

Sir – Leslie Baruch Brent (March) viciously attacks Frank Bright for putting some of the blame for the Holocaust on Arab shoulders.

Question: Who put pressure on the British government at the time to restrict and stop the flow of Jewish refugees from Europe to Palestine that could have saved millions of Jewish lives? Answer: The Arab governments and lobby. Furthermore, who after the creation of the Jewish State did their best to eradicate the infant State of Israel?

Today as yesteryear the Arabs are really not interested in a 'two-state solution' but only in a one-state 'Palestine'.

They want a state *without* Jews, Mr Brent and his ilk notwithstanding!

*Ernest G. Kolman, Greenford, Middx*

Sir – I was struck by the back page of your February issue. At the top of the page was 'Letter from Israel', a regular feature that should be coloured in beige since it's so bland. Directly below it was a powerful and probably controversial letter from Jenny Manson which was definitely *not* beige or bland and dealt with some serious concerns about Israeli policy towards the Palestinians. I hope Jenny Manson gets a serious answer to her and many other people's concerns. I'd also invite Ms Shefer-

Vanson to let us know her response to Jenny Manson's letter.

*Glenn Hess, London NW2*

Sir – I am not sure what Jenny Manson is trying to achieve with her contributions on Israel. If it is to trouble the super-sensitive consciences of AJR members she should at least get her facts straight. The Palestinians on the West Bank are tried by military courts and the Israelis living there are tried by civil courts in accordance with strict international law – not 'as a result of a military order to authorise this legal oddity'. Were it otherwise, Israel would be breaking the law.

Personally, I am very fearful of a two-state solution at the present time. It would be suicidal for Israel to release the West Bank into the hands of the PLO and Hamas. Never mind about Israel 'losing its moral compass' – Israel should wait until the Palestinians *find* a moral compass!

*Hanna Nyman, London W1*

Sir – Leslie Baruch Brent (March) can call me what he likes, but then it's not my fault that he hasn't heard of Haj Amin al-Husseini. The present *Mufti* of the Palestinian Authority, Muhammad Hussain, has likewise preached that it is an Islamic obligation to kill Jews. It is thus their official policy.

I am sure Israelis have always wished to live in peace with their far, as well as their immediate, neighbours rather than being stabbed, stoned, blown up or having their historical links to the land denied. However frequent marches and demonstrations for a peaceful two-state solution by a minority of Israelis are, it takes two to tango and there are no such demands by the opposing party – they demonstrate solely for the complete and utter demise of the State of Israel, which has already disappeared from all their maps.

*Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk*

Sir – We visited the West Bank last summer to find out the situation for ourselves and, like Jenny Manson, were shocked. Palestinians are not only restricted in their movements by the so-called Separation Barrier but by Israeli checkpoints, watchtowers, walls, concrete barriers, fenced-off areas and segregated roads within Palestinian towns. We saw an immensely high concrete wall with watchtower which cuts off streets and areas within Bethlehem making them inaccessible to the Palestinians. Hebron is divided into two zones – H1 and H2 – with the former theoretically controlled by the Palestinian authorities, while the latter is under Israeli military control. The border between the two parts of the town is marked by concrete barriers and a security post. H2 is the area where the Palestinians are subject to severe restrictions on movement and commerce and where about 800 settlers are protected by 2,000 Israeli soldiers.

The dire water shortage for Palestinians was apparent. Water supply is spasmodic

and, as it is sometimes cut off for several days by Israel, all Palestinian homes need water tanks on their roofs. In contrast, Israeli settlement homes receive a constant, plentiful supply and water tanks are absent from their homes, as we observed when passing numerous settlements.

The Israelis we met were apathetic or lacked any empathy for the Palestinians. Currently, democratic values have been eroded. The Culture and Education Ministers, Miri Regev and Naftali Bennett respectively, are reshaping the society, legislating against free speech, rewriting the curriculum so that it reflects right-wing nationalist views, and intimidating those with different views, labelling them as traitors. Racism and intolerance of the 'other' are deeply embedded in the fabric of the society.

*Dr Jennifer Langer, London NW11*

### KINDERTRANSPORT TO BELGIUM?? NEVER!

Sir – Yes, there really was a series of trains bringing children to the safety of Belgium! I can vouch for this as my brother and I were part of one of these transports. It is thanks to a group of influential Brussels ladies that a committee was formed to obtain permission from the government to allow 1,000 children to come to Belgium with the proviso that they would leave at the end of hostilities. Permission granted, these good women set about recruiting families to take in the young strangers and so it came about that trainloads of children were met at Cologne railway station and taken from there by rail to Brussels – 'Into the Hands of Strangers'.

But not all were taken in by families: many were sent to hostels, one for girls and one for boys (Home Speyer in Anderlecht).

This brings me to another part of this story, for one of the boys from this hostel became a journalist in the USA and has written a book about what became of some of these girls and boys when war was imminent. If you wish to know more, see Walter W. Read: *The Children of La Hille: Eluding Nazi Capture during World War II* (Syracuse University Press, 2015, obtainable through Amazon).

*Susie Shipman, Ilford, Essex*

### IS EXILE REALLY ALL AROUND US?

Sir – I should like to take issue with the reviewer (and indeed the authors) of the book reviewed under the heading 'Exile is all around us' in your March issue. To me at least, the word 'exile' implies that you consider your absence from your country of origin as only temporary and hope that you will be able to return to it when the conditions necessitating your emigration have improved (I have to admit that this definition is not supported by the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, which describes it only as 'a long absence from one's native country').

I would never dream of explaining my presence in this country – and acquiring its nationality – as being 'exiled from Germany' and am fairly certain that most of your

current members would agree with this view. When we left Germany before the war (it's unimportant exactly when) we knew we would never wish to return but wanted to become 'British' as quickly as possible, both by nationality and outlook.

*Fritz Lustig, London N10*

### NOT ONLY NICHOLAS WINTON

Sir – I appreciate the deserved recognition that Nicholas Winton has received in the media and elsewhere for years and have queried the *AJR Journal* several times about who else was active in other places, for example in my own case for Kindertransport in Berlin, with virtually no response.

Although I have heard his name some time I have only recently become aware that Frank Foley was one of these wonderful people, saving, it is reported, 'thousands' of refugees – in other words, many, many more than Nicholas Winton.

This, it seems to me, amounts to gross lack of credit and recognition for the achievements of Frank Foley.

To redress this imbalance at last, could you be persuaded to produce one of your excellent editorial articles in the *Journal* and publicity at least equivalent to that for Nicholas Winton?

If this has already been done and I am merely badly informed I apologise. Nevertheless, some repetition would not go amiss. If not, it illustrates again how unjust the world is!

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

### WINTON COMMEMORATION AND TODAY'S REFUGEES

Sir – Congratulations to those who persuaded the Royal Mail to produce a stamp (issued 15 March) honouring the late Sir Nicholas Winton for his magnificent work in helping to organise the Kindertransport.

However, it is surely bitterly paradoxical that at the same time as the work of Sir Nicholas is remembered, there are thousands of refugee children stranded throughout Europe.

Commemoration of Sir Nicholas's work, while fulfilling one objective, does not allow us to abdicate responsibility for today's refugees.

With many thanks for your continuing excellent Journal.

*Arthur Oppenheimer, Hove*

### THANK YOU FOR THE JOURNAL

Sir – Many thanks for your Journal every month.

I found the 'stories' in your March edition particularly inspiring, namely 'First Day', 'Eleventh of the Eleventh', and the very moving poem 'To My Unforgettable Dan'.

It is always wonderful to read the heroic

stories of those who survived and made it to safe shores and, of course, we must not forget, sadly, the ones who were unable to reach safety.

It is so important to publicise our history so that it will not be forgotten by the next generation.

Thanks for all your wonderful work.

*Hannah Rabinowitz, Gateshead*

Sir – I am sorry to have to tell you that my husband, Felix Burnell, died in July 2015. However, I would like to carry on subscribing to your marvellous magazine, which is erudite, extremely well written and informative, and I look forward to receiving it each month.

*Ilse Burnell, London NW9*

### 'WE ARE ALL SURVIVORS'

Sir – United Nations Article 14, dated 10.12.1948, Resolution 217A (111), is the basis of human rights. It states that 'Everybody has the right to seek and enjoy Asylum in other countries.'

Asylum is sought by persons who are being persecuted by the regime in their country in order to escape imprisonment or execution. None of the present migrants fall into this category and they are therefore not asylum seekers. Nor are they refugees as they are not persecuted and their lives are not threatened. Yet they can't be blamed for seeking a better life. However, persons citing 'human rights' at lib have, in fact, no right to demand or assert asylum.

At present, there is only a Human Rights Act in the UK, which the government wishes to repeal in favour of a British Bill of Rights. The German expression *Menschenwürde* (human dignity), containing the term *Menschenrecht*, is at the base of German law, dating back to 1949. The plural of the latter term was incorporated by me as 'human rights' in my work on IT at the British Standards Institution in 1980.

So far, I have refrained from replying to readers seeking reasons to make their case. One persistent contributor refers to my internment, naming Winston Churchill as the protagonist of the great British mistake, more recently admitted. Churchill exclaimed the words 'Collar the lot' with great relish. Those of us who were deprived of our liberty after being admitted to this country as refugees – our official designation – have never forgotten this episode. We lived here as 'enemy aliens' until we managed to free ourselves of that title. The article 'My Internment', covering two earlier editions of this Journal, may help in understanding our psyches.

The recent missive was originated by a survivor who does not call himself a refugee. What on earth is he doing in the Association of Jewish Refugees? He may take comfort in this hallowed organisation because an ever increasing number of members are not refugees either. Surely a correct description might be 'Associate Member'. Perhaps the AJR is waiting a

*continued on page 16* ➔

# ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

It is fashionable today to feature a specific artist's influence on future generations. The exhibition **Delacroix and the Rise of Modern Art** at the National Gallery (until 22 May 2016) is the latest in a trend which includes **Rubens and His Legacy** at the **Royal Academy** in January 2015 and, in the same year, **William Morris in Anarchy and Beauty** at the **National Portrait Gallery**. The **V&A's** blockbuster exhibition this spring will feature what is claimed as the biggest haul of **Botticellis** seen in London for decades, while describing his influence on artists like **René Magritte** to **Andy Warhol** and **Cindy Sherman**.

Eugène Delacroix was described by Baudelaire as a 'poet in painting'. His effect on Modernism and Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Symbolism and Fauvism made him the first to push back the boundaries of art, to use exotic colour and imagery, both in landscapes and visionary paintings, and therefore to move the goalposts for generations of artists like **Renoir**, **Gauguin** and **Matisse**, who exceeded him in fame.

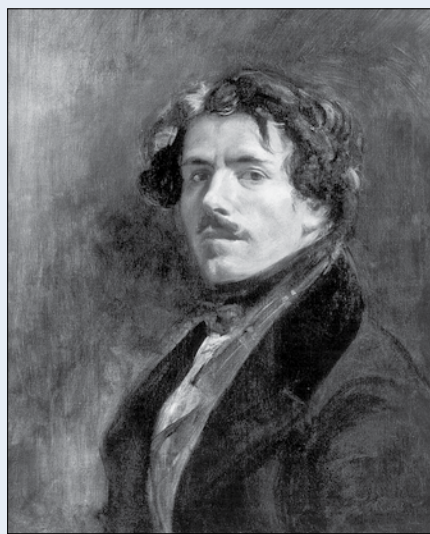
Delacroix was inspired by his visit to Tangiers in 1832. His *Jewish Wedding in Morocco* was copied by Renoir and his *Barque de Dante* by **Manet**. His energetic painting of the Convulsionists, a mystical brotherhood in Tangiers in 1838, was, like all his North African work, delivered to canvas only after long periods of gestation. He could take up to 20 years to ingest what he had seen and, once he had forgotten the details, he recreated the scene from imagination and memory.

But he first had to run the gauntlet of the critical French establishment. The Paris Salon in 1822 derided his *Barque de Dante*, though the French state later purchased it. Rejecting French academicians' insistence that artists must work in monochrome before using colour, Delacroix taught himself to paint by copying masterpieces. Other artists followed, freeing themselves to paint in the same luxurious colour as he did and often copying his themes. Matisse created a vibrant still life by assembling richly patterned objects and fabrics but, dissatisfied with Neo-Impressionism, he

reduced the pointillist technique to a pattern of dots – but it was all a take on Delacroix's interweaving techniques.

Arguably, Delacroix remains at his most masterful in his religious works, such as *The Lamentation*, in which the luminous whiteness of the body of Christ and his curvilinear shape are perfectly pitched to the composition of the red-robed, bowed figures of his mourners. There is a similar, though less exploratory sense, in his *Christ on the Cross*, where the mourners at the base of the Cross bend and sway with the dark augury of the clouds above.

To see Delacroix's influence you have to study his daring exploration of religion, myth and literature which helped shape the Romantic movement, influencing contemporaries like **Courbet**, **Fromentin** and **Baudelaire**. In the defiant and ferocious way he painted a lion, for instance, you can predict the wild energy of **van Gogh's** swaying olive trees in the asylum of *Saint-Rémy de Provence*. Sometimes other artists referenced his work. Beside his hexagonal *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise* a miniature version appears at the top of a painting by Gauguin. What greater tribute can any artist ask?



Eugène Delacroix *Self-Portrait* c1837  
Photograph: RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre)/Jean-Gilles Berizzi

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## REVIEWS

### New findings on internal Austrian anti-Nazi resistance

THE AUSTRIAN RESISTANCE 1938-1945

by Wolfgang Neugebauer

Vienna: Edition Steinbauer, 2014, 334 pp., £17.50

In October 2014, the mayor of Vienna unveiled a memorial dedicated to the 30,000 soldiers of the Wehrmacht and to civilians all over occupied Europe who had been sentenced to death by Nazi military courts for desertion, disobedience, sabotage and resistance. The monument is prominently located on Ballhausplatz in the political centre of the Second Republic, just opposite the Chancellery and the Office of the Federal President. Designed by German artist Olaf Nicolai, it can be regarded as a symbolic follow-up to the legal rehabilitation of Wehrmacht deserters and other victims of Nazi military justice enacted by the Austrian National Assembly in 2009 after a ten-year public discussion. The memorial is indicative of the new interest in anti-Nazi resistance and, in broader terms, in partisan warfare, disobedience, non-compliance, non-conformism and the rescue of the persecuted in public and scholarly discussions of Austria's Nazi past. Among recent publications dealing with such topics, Wolfgang Neugebauer's latest book, *The Austrian Resistance 1938-1945*, is outstanding, as it reflects the rediscovery of the resistance in a comprehensive way.

It is well known that following the collapse of the Nazi regime in Austria in 1945, the importance of the politically motivated resistance to Nazism was overestimated for some years, in order to flesh out the infamous, self-serving myth whereby the Austrians had been the 'first victims of Nazi aggression' and therefore did not bear any responsibility for the crimes of the regime. This short period of political instrumentalisation was replaced by the marginalisation of the resistance (and even more of the victims of racial and anti-Semitic persecution), when the reintegration of former members of the NSDAP into Austrian society and the general whitewashing of the Wehrmacht became the dominant tools of Austrian nation-building. Consequently, the first phase of serious and systematic historical research on the resistance,

between the early 1970s and the mid-1980s, was dominated by a patriotic approach, not least in order to counter the revival of revisionist and German nationalist groups as well as the anti-resistance propaganda of Wehrmacht veterans.

In contrast, within the broader context of research on the Nazi regime, the involvement of many Austrians in the annihilation of the European Jews and other crimes remained widely underexposed. The recent approach to the resistance takes a somewhat different perspective. It neither revives the myth of Austria as a victim nor shifts the focus away from racial and anti-Semitic persecution. It is fully aware that the forces of the resistance formed only a strikingly small minority and it does not avoid tackling and reflecting on the internal conflicts and rivalries that beset the resistance, the illusions prevalent in popular attitudes, and the blind spots common among the politically motivated resistance fighters, such as their widespread disregard of the Shoah.

In his comprehensive survey, Wolfgang Neugebauer not only presents an updated version of his own decades-long research into the persecution of political opponents by the Nazi machinery of repression, including the Gestapo, the criminal police, the SS and the judicial system. One of the most distinguished pioneers of research on resistance in the German-speaking countries, he also succeeds in including in his overall analysis the recent findings of younger scholars on resistance inside the Wehrmacht, the Slovene partisans in Carinthia, resistance in exile, Jewish resistance, and the Austrian refugees who served with Allied secret services such as the British Special Operations Executive (SOE). Thus, hitherto neglected and unknown aspects of the subject are brought out. Among the most active militant resistance fighters in Austria were several young men of Jewish descent, for example Leo Engelmann and Walter Wachs, two commanders of a partisan group in Styria.

By far the most effective military resistance to the regime within the borders of Nazi Germany (and not just Austria) was provided by Slovene partisan units operating in the Karawanken mountain range in the Austrian-Slovene borderlands. Up to 900 Carinthian Slovenes joined these units, which had been founded by the Slovene Liberation Front in 1942-43 and were armed by the SOE in 1944.

Neugebauer discusses recent findings on the basic rivalry between parallel Communist and British-led operations aimed at building up resistance which, in reality, hampered rather than fostered anti-Nazi activities. Finally, he offers updated figures: around 9,500 Austrians lost their lives through political persecution; around 66,000 Austrian victims of the Holocaust have been recorded; the number of patients in psychiatric hospitals and care homes who fell victim to the Nazi regime's so-called euthanasia programmes is between 25,000 and 30,000; the racial persecution of the Romany (Gypsies) led to the deaths of more than 9,000 Austrians.

In all, at least 110,000 Austrians lost their lives as victims of the Nazi regime. However, Neugebauer makes it clear that, with the notable exception of the Carinthian partisans, nowhere and at no time up to the final stage of the war were opponents of Nazism and resistance fighters able to find enough popular support to challenge Nazi rule. The liberation of Austria was the exclusive achievement of the Allied forces, which lost 30,000 soldiers on Austrian soil in the year 1945. Nonetheless, Neugebauer's work gives credit to those who gave or risked their lives in resisting the Nazi regime in Austria from within.

Peter Pirker

## A valuable record

### A FAMILY TRILOGY: PART 1: ARE THERE GUARDIAN ANGELS?

by Max Sussman

*Arima Publishing, 2015, 260 pp.*

*paperback, Amazon £9.99, ISBN 978 1 84549 665 4*

The book, a reconstruction of the plight of Professor Sussman's family in Nazi Germany, has a Foreword by Siegfried Hirsch's daughter Adele Lustig (not related to me), a Preface by the author, and an Introduction. There is also a very helpful chapter entitled 'Dramatis Personae', in which the background of individuals mentioned in the published letters is fully explained, and further comments appear in one of the Appendices entitled 'People and Places'. Another Appendix provides 'Abbreviations and Glossaries', which are necessary as many Hebrew expressions, given in Hebrew lettering, appear in the text.

The first Appendix contains the original German text of all the letters (they are translated into English in the

body of the book) and any potential reader who is fluent in German should read the original version as only then can one feel the 'spirit' behind them, which in my view cannot be translated.

The Hirsch family were Orthodox Jews living in Hamburg, where their forebears had been living since at least the mid-18th Century. Pincus Hirsch apparently went to the synagogue every day and his and his wife Adele's faith is obvious from the letters: the Almighty is invoked frequently and rarely fully spelt out ('der Allm<sup>g</sup>cht'ge', 'G'tt'). The text of the letters is usually full of Hebrew quotations.

The 'Hamburg Letters' are in one direction only: from Siegfried's parents to him; his replies were not preserved. But from the existing letters it is possible to guess more or less what was in them. His mother wrote to him at least twice a week and expected (but did not always get) a reply to every letter.

The last letter is dated 6 September 1939, three days after Britain declared war. This seems to me rather surprising as I myself sent an open postcard to my parents in Germany on 1 September, the day on which Germany invaded Poland, and this came back to me as 'undeliverable' two days later. The letter from Siegfried's parents does not mention the war at all – deliberately perhaps – and therefore also omits the likelihood that their frequent correspondence will no longer be possible.

The 'Australia Letters' from Siegfried to his parents were originally written in draft form and the writer indicates which paragraphs Siegfried omitted from the letters he later sent. It would appear that the internees in Australia were not restricted in their correspondence. I remember that as internees on the Isle of Man we had to use special paper, issued to us twice a week, and had to keep our letters short (I think 25 words was the limit). Siegfried's letters to his parents (which probably went by POW mail through the Red Cross) were quite long and so were his parents' letters to him.

The last letter in the 'Australia' series is from Siegfried's cousin David in New York and is dated 28 August 1942. Apparently Siegfried received it only in March 1943, by which time he was back in England, where he died in February 1990. His parents were deported to Theresienstadt in July 1942 and subsequently sent on to Treblinka, where they were murdered.

The book has many photographs of people and documents and is a valuable record of the times it covers.

Fritz Lustig

## MY LIFE

When I look back at my long life I can reflect on how fortunate I am to be able to write about it now. However, I have twice borne tragic losses which have greatly saddened me. In 1986 my wife Jenny and I moved to London because of a location change in my workplace. Jenny, who had enjoyed a part-time job at Trinity College, Cambridge University, was delighted to find further employment with the BBC as secretary to the Head of Listener Research in White City. All went well until she fell seriously ill and didn't recover from an operation to save her life. I was heartbroken. Many years had passed since I had arrived in England in 1939 with my six-year-old sister Hannah as refugees travelling with the Kindertransport.

I was born in 1930 in Breslau, a city which now finds itself in Poland and is known as Wrocław. My father was a lawyer who was appointed district judge in a town called Opatów (now Opole), where we lived until 1938. He was dismissed from his job in 1937 as a result of the Nazi law which excluded Jews from holding positions in the German civil service.

He left the family for over six months to gain a qualification as a Hebrew teacher at a Berlin college. He found it hard to obtain a teaching post as so many members of the German-Jewish community were emigrating. Fortunately the position of manager of the Hanover Palestine office was offered to him and the family moved

to that city in July 1938.

After some difficulties my parents found a suitable flat in a large villa owned by the single daughter of an

*A few weeks after the war we learned the tragic news that our parents had been deported to the Riga Ghetto. They presumably died either by being murdered or through disease or malnutrition. Although I had feared the worst for many months, the stark news of their death affected me palpably. It was the first really tragic blow I had felt in my life and the pain of it will never go away.*

eminent Jewish businessman who had died earlier in the year. Jews were allowed to rent accommodation only in properties owned by Jews so we were lucky to find this apartment.

My sister and I went to a Jewish school as Jewish children were forbidden to attend non-Jewish schools. Jews were also not allowed to attend public performances in theatres, cinemas, concert halls or sports halls.

Nevertheless, our family lived happily together in those times and our parents shielded us from the terrible events that were happening around us. Our flat overlooked a large square where Stormtroopers would parade regularly and Nazi rallies were held. Being a

keen listener to the radio, with the ambition one day to become a radio announcer or sports commentator, I would sometimes hear broadcasts, including Hitler's ravings and rantings addressing his followers.

Life went on peacefully for us until the night of 9 November 1938: Kristallnacht. We heard about the savage attacks on Jewish properties, including synagogues, and the arrest of Jews following the assassination of a junior German diplomat in Paris by a young Jewish student. My parents were worried that my father would be taken away but fortunately that did not happen.

However, my grandfather and my uncle were arrested and my uncle didn't return home. A few days after Kristallnacht my father took me to the site of our synagogue, which was in ruins and still smouldering from the flames that had set it alight.

Thereafter my parents did their utmost to find a way to emigrate. My father would have liked to go to Palestine as he had always been a keen Zionist but only immigrants with manual skills were welcome there, not lawyers. He found a guarantor in the USA but the family was low down on the waiting list for visas. As manager of the Hanover Palestine office, he had good contacts with the Jewish authorities in Berlin and was able to organise my and my sister's emigration with the Kindertransport.

On 22 August 1939 my parents took Hannah and me to Hanover train station and handed us over to the organisers of the Kindertransport. We were on the way to England safely out of the way of the Nazi oppressors and murderers. We found caring homes with two Jewish families in Liverpool who looked after us, ensuring that we obtained a good education that would set us up for successful careers and happy marriages in Great Britain.

We heard little from our parents during the early part of the war apart from occasional brief messages via the Red Cross. These ceased to arrive at the end of 1941.

A few weeks after the end of the war we learned the tragic news that our parents had been deported with 1,000 other Hanover Jews to the Riga Ghetto in Latvia. Nothing more had been heard from them. They presumably died either by being murdered or through disease or malnutrition. Although I had feared the worst for many months, the stark news of their death affected me palpably. It was the first really tragic blow I had felt in my life and the pain of it will never go away.

Michael Brown

### Pinner Synagogue: Yom Hashoah Evening Wednesday 4 May 2016 8.00 to 10.00 pm

The focus of this year's commemoration will be on a Holocaust childhood, the destruction of a family and the involvement and help of OSE (Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants), a French-Jewish humanitarian organisation tasked with rescuing children.

The evening will start with a candle-lighting ceremony. Then a memorial service will be followed by readings by young members of the Pinner community.

The keynote speaker will be Eva Mendelsson. Born in Germany in 1931, Eva grew up in Offenburg. On Kristallnacht her father was arrested and sent to Dachau. He was released after six weeks on condition that he leave Germany immediately but he was unable to bring his family out.

In 1940 Eva, her sister Myriam and their mother Sylvia were deported with other Baden Jews to Gurs internment camp in south-west France and from there to Rivesaltes. The girls were rescued by the OSE. Sylvia, however, was deported and murdered at Auschwitz aged 38. In 1945 the two sisters were reunited with their father in England.

Eva has spoken frequently to German schoolchildren about her wartime experiences. In 2004 a book of her mother's poems and writings – a couple of which will be recited on the night – was published in Germany.

**All are welcome. Entrance is free. Doors open at 7.15 pm for a prompt 8.00 pm start**



Eva Mendelsson

## Personal records of Jews who arrived in Britain before and after the Holocaust now made accessible to family members

World Jewish Relief (WJR) has been contacted by hundreds of families across the world following the digitisation of family members' records charting how Jews left Europe for Britain before and after the Holocaust.

WJR launched the open-access project earlier this year, when it made the personal records of over 40,000 Jews who arrived in the UK before and after the Second World War under the auspices of the Central British Fund – now World Jewish Relief – publicly available for the first time.

The records include the case files of the 10,000 children who came to Britain on the Kindertransport in 1938-39. In

addition, there are files relating to 'the Boys', the 732 Jewish orphans, boys and girls, who arrived in the UK in 1945-46.

The WJR's Richard Verber said 'This project has taken more than a year to bring to fruition as every case had at least one or more pieces of paper and some files had written and photographic material.'

Many of the files include fascinating personal details, showing people's occupations or sometimes their degree of Jewish observance. Much of the information relates not only to an immediate arrival but often includes a follow-up over subsequent years. The files also show details relating to the £50 guarantee a British citizen had to

give for each Jew, young or old, who arrived here.

Many who arrived in the UK after having been rescued by the Central British Fund eventually emigrated to other countries. WJR expects continuing requests from all over the world as the sons and daughters of the lucky few Jews who escaped the Holocaust by coming to Britain apply for their parents' papers. Many of the 40,000 moved on to the USA, Australia, South Africa and, ultimately, to Israel. The WJR has drafted several volunteers to deal with the anticipated requests.

**For further information on these family files, visit [www.worldjewishrelief.org/get-involved/archives](http://www.worldjewishrelief.org/get-involved/archives) or call the Archive volunteers on 020 8736 1250**

## Gathering the Voices

The aim of the Gathering the Voices project is to collect testimonies from Holocaust survivors who have made their home in Scotland and to make these testimonies available on



Marion Camrass

the World Wide Web. The project commenced in 2012 and one of its key aims is to educate current and future generations about the resilience of these survivors and their contribution to Scottish society.

The Gathering the Voices (GtV) Association comprises six volunteers from Glasgow: Hilary and Steven Anson, Howard and Claire Singerman, and Angela and David Shapiro. To date, over 30 testimonies are on our website: [www.gatheringthevoices.com](http://www.gatheringthevoices.com) These testimonies can be freely accessed in audio and written form. The interviewees discussed their lives, including their earliest memories of life in Europe, the horrors of Nazism, their experiences of migration, and their gradual integration into Scottish society. We now have over 15,000 regular visitors to our website.

The GtV Association has also

created a mobile exhibition stand for use in Scottish schools, libraries and museums. The stand exhibits extracts from interviews, photographs, memorabilia and other historical information. To date, over 25,000 people

have visited our exhibition, which has been on display at venues throughout Scotland, including Kelvingrove Museum and, more recently, the Scottish Parliament over Holocaust Day 2016.

Given that a key aspect of the GtV project is reaching out to the digital generation we recently launched the Marion Camrass Educational Computer Game at the Scottish Parliament at a reception sponsored by Stewart Maxwell MSP and hosted by Consul General Jens-Peter Voss of the Federal Republic of Germany, Edinburgh. This coincided with the display of the mobile exhibition at the Scottish Parliament. In addition to the many positive comments made by the MSPs, the game has attracted extensive media publicity, including the *Scottish Sunday Express*, *The Week Junior* magazine, and the Jewish and Scottish press.

The development of the computer



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game was funded by GtV and Sense over Sectarianism and is a joint venture by GtV and Glasgow Caledonian University. Based on the refugee experience of Marion Camrass, whose testimony can be heard on the GtV website, the game is a computer simulation which enables young people to understand the challenges and difficulties which faced a family forced to flee their home as a result of the Nazi invasion of Poland. This game is unique as it is narrated by Marion herself. Please visit our website to play and experience the game yourself.

**David Shapiro**



### NEWCASTLE *If It's Not Impossible*

Barbara Winton talked about her father and, in particular, his singlemindedness. This character trait helped him to achieve his goals, leading to the saving of 669 'Winton children'. It was a privilege to meet Barbara, who signed copies of her aptly named book *If It's Not Impossible*.  
*Agnes Isaacs*

### CAMBRIDGE Varied and Interesting Backgrounds

As the new southern groups co-ordinator I was delighted to meet local members, who talked about their varied and interesting backgrounds by way of introduction. We were joined by Tracy Elster, who is doing a Master's in drama therapy with a special interest in First and Second Generation Holocaust survivors; she explained how drama can be a helpful tool in dealing with difficult memories. After a delicious lunch, Kathryn Prevezer played musical pieces chosen by members.  
*Eva Stellman*

### KENSINGTON Making New Friends

We met at Ruth and Peter Kraus's flat. The AJR's Sue and Eva were in attendance and thank heavens for that! Many mugs of tea and coffee and piles of smoked salmon sandwiches, cookies and mini-cupcakes were consumed. We all made new friends and exchanged phone numbers and email addresses.  
*Ruth Kraus*

### EALING 'Desert Island Discs'

Marion Friend, who has had a very distinguished career in the field of classical music, presented 'Desert Island Discs', playing items ranging from Bach, Mozart and Handel to Richard Strauss and Verdi which related to particular experiences in her life.  
*Leslie Sommer*

### PRESTWICH CF An Enjoyable Get-together

It was lovely to see a very full room at the home of Ruth and Werner Lachs. Though there was a 'suggested' topic to discuss, the conversation ranged from Second Generation perspectives to Holocaust Memorial Day and more. An enjoyable get-together.  
*Wendy Bott*

### BOOK CLUB Refugee Crisis

A very lively discussion on current affairs, particularly the refugee crisis, with much discussion on how the *Kinder* had to be sponsored before being allowed into the UK. As no one had finished Ann Tyler's *A Spool of Blue Thread*, this will continue to be read as well as *The Red Notebook* by Antoine Laurain.  
*Esther Rinkoff*

### EDINBURGH CF A Wide Variety of Musical Tastes

A lovely atmosphere at Edinburgh's musical afternoon 'My Favourite Music' revealed a wide variety of musical tastes. Lilian and our ever young Jonathan couldn't resist a very professional twirl round the room. Thanks are due to Françoise for her superb hospitality.  
*Agnes Isaacs*

### ILFORD 'The Most Famous Jewish Business in Victorian London'

David Barnett gave us the fascinating story of E. Moses & Son, an early forerunner of big stores such as Selfridges. This was early in the 19th Century and it was a novelty in the business world. Unfortunately none of Moses's sons was keen to keep the firm going, so by the 1870s it faded away. We applaud David for his wonderful research!  
*Meta Roseneil*

### PINNER Memories of Green Shield Stamps

For those of us who remember collecting Green Shield Stamps in the 1960-70s, it was particularly interesting to hear Ted Adams speak about the hectic task of running the whole show under the boss, including the printing and distribution of the stamps, the provision and storing of the free gifts, and monitoring the staff of this huge business.  
*Walter Weg*

### LIVERPOOL Super Afternoon

Liverpool members were entertained by the musical presentation 'The World of Tchaikovsky', given by Manchester's Roger Bower and Braine Green. Homemade cakes for tea rounded off a super afternoon.  
*Wendy Bott*

### ESSEX (WESTCLIFF) 'Guided Tour' to Austria

Otto Deutsch, a former official tour guide, described the coach trips from England to Vienna he used to accompany. He 'took' us through Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland until we arrived in Austria, where we enjoyed Mozart's music in Salzburg, coffee and cake in a Vienna coffee house, and a trip on the Danube. Otto's descriptions and knowledge made it all live for us.  
*Susie Barnett*

### AUERBACH AT THE TATE

#### One of Britain's Leading Painters

Frank Auerbach came to this country fleeing from the awful happenings in Europe. Today he is one of the UK's leading painters. Most of his paintings depict the area in which he lives, north London. A few show Primrose Hill, though, like many of his paintings, they leave much to the imagination.

After digesting Auerbach's paintings, it was time for refreshments – there's nothing like a good English Tea and that's exactly what we had to round off a lovely afternoon.

*Erich Reich*

### BRADFORD CF Convivial Banter et al

Despite the freezing weather our members gathered for an enjoyable afternoon. Topics discussed ranged from the 'suggested' one of 'best and worse inventions' to convivial banter, which produced much laughter as many a humorous anecdote was told.  
*Wendy Bott*

### BRIGHTON Recollections of a Hitchhiker

At the age of seven Geoffrey Gould was evacuated to the Lake District, where he was given kosher food. There he met Jeremy. When they were 15 they hitchhiked across the country from Land's End to Glasgow. Godfrey was 22 when he first went abroad and since then he has visited many countries.  
*Ceska Abrahams*

### WELWYN GARDEN CITY A Close-knit Group

This was my first acquaintance with this close-knit group, who have been meeting at Monica Rosenbaum's beautiful home for many years. Not surprisingly, conversation flowed with ease over Viennese and other Continental biscuits and freshly brewed real coffee. Young nonagenarian Sam Ostro talked about how he had been brought to this country as part of a group of young Jewish men by the Quakers and Diane spoke about her mother's work in the intelligence service translating the bugged conversations of German PoW officers. Our thanks to Monica for her generous hospitality.  
*Eva Stellman*

### EDGWARE Meeting with New Co-ordinator

Our charming new AJR Co-ordinator Eva Stellman was very interested in learning about our backgrounds and we were also asked about our

past holidays. Leaflets with details of planned events and outings were handed out and members were asked about their particular interests.

*Susan Jacobs*

**RADLETT A Uniquely Memorable Event**

We watched *Churchill's German Army*, which relates the wartime experiences of a handful of German refugees out of the many who joined Britain's armed forces. One of these was Colin Anson, who had been seriously wounded during the Allied landing in Sicily but, after he had recovered, fought with the British army right through Europe. By pure chance, Colin and his wife Alice, who had served in the WAAF, were present at our meeting, which thus became a uniquely memorable event.

*Fritz Starer*

**SHEFFIELD Riveting Story**

Ian Vellins spoke to us about the dramatic true-life story of Peter Stevens. Born into a German-Jewish family, Peter was something of a black sheep. After changing his identity and becoming a RAF pilot, he was shot down and captured. He escaped five times! An absolutely riveting story.

*Peter Mayer*

**NORTH WEST LONDON**

**A Remarkable Family**

Jenny Manson told us about members of her remarkable family. One of these was Esther Polianowsky from Ukraine, who, in 1918 aged around 17, rescued her

immediate family and their neighbours from a pogrom of which there were over 317 victims. In 1921 Esther left Ukraine for Berlin to study physics. In Berlin she met Albert Einstein, who advised her to continue her studies in Cambridge and wrote her a letter of introduction to Professor Pyotr Kapitsa.

*David Lang*

**AJR FILM CLUB  
Story of a Smoked Salmon and Herring Deli**

We had a lovely sandwich lunch followed by a showing of *The Sturgeon Queen*, the story of a refugee family who made good in New York by founding a smoked salmon and herring deli. The family members told their stories with great humour. Many thanks to all the organisers – we look forward to the next meeting.

*Fred Kalb*

**KENT The Right Note**

Mike Piper from Kent Fire and Rescue Service struck just the right note in his very informative illustrated talk on home safety. We all resolved to be more careful with appliances, check our smoke alarms, and not leave mobile phones charging all night!

*Janet Weston*

**WEMBLEY The Life of Lady Judith Montefiore**

David Barnett told us that Judith Montefiore was a good Jewish wife as well as a great philanthropist. She also wrote the first Jewish cookery book and kept diaries detailing all her travels and social events. One of the Jewish community's most notable women and an interesting early 20th Century personality!

*Kathryn Prevezer*

**GLASGOW Fresh Approach to A Midsummer Night's Dream**

A very modern but extremely good production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* drew a mixed reaction from Glasgow members. The new-look, stripped-back version was a totally fresh approach to Shakespeare's fantasy and certainly had everyone talking.

*Agnes Isaacs*

**NORTH LONDON An Inspirational Life**

Rabbi Harry Jacobi had a large audience for his interesting talk on 18th Century religious leader and philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, who had inspired him through the years. He told us about Moses's life and explained many of his philosophical theories. A thought-provoking morning.

*Kathryn Prevezer*

**CONTACTS**

**Susan Harrod**  
Lead Outreach & Events  
Co-ordinator  
020 8385 3070 susan@ajr.org.uk

**Wendy Bott**  
Northern Outreach Co-ordinator  
07908 156 365 wendy@ajr.org.uk

**Agnes Isaacs**  
Northern Outreach Co-ordinator  
07908 156 361 agnes@ajr.org.uk

**Kathryn Prevezer**  
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator  
07966 969 951 kathryn@ajr.org.uk

**Esther Rinkoff**  
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator  
07966 631 778 esther@ajr.org.uk

**Eva Stellman**  
Southern Outreach Co-ordinator  
07904 489 515 eva@ajr.org.uk

**KT-AJR (Kindertransport)**  
Susan Harrod  
020 8385 3070 susan@ajr.org.uk

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

**APRIL GROUP EVENTS**

Hull	3 April	Social Get-together
Newcastle	3 April	'Beyond the Headlines' with Colin Grant
Film Club	4 April	<i>Nowhere in Africa</i>
Ealing	5 April	Lawrence Collin: 'Don't Write Me Off Just Yet – Jewish Nonagenarians'
Glasgow CF	6 April	Film Morning: <i>Woman in Gold</i>
Ilford	6 April	Lesley Urbach: 'Herbert Morrison, Labour MP and Campaigner'
Cambridge	7 April	David Barnett: 'Lady Judith Montefiore – Her Life Story'
Pinner	7 April	Rachel Kosky, Blue Badge Guide: 'The History of London Cinemas'
Kingston/Surrey	10 April	Coffee Morning
Cheshire	11 April	Social Get-together
Kensington	11 April	Social at home of Peter and Ruth Kraus
Essex (Westcliff)	12 April	Naomi Angel
Bromley	14 April	Social Get-together at home of Lianne Segal
Edinburgh	14 April	Social Get-together
Nottingham	14 April	Lunchtime Social Get-together
Welwyn GC	14 April	Social Get-together
Brighton	18 April	Lawrence Collin: 'Don't Write Me Off Just Yet – Jewish Nonagenarians'
Edgware	19 April	Michael Greisman: 'Vintage Wedding Glamour in London's East End'
Kent	19 April	Lunchtime Get-together at home of Janet Weston
Radlett	20 April	David Barnett: 'Lady Judith Montefiore – Her Life Story'

## Survivors Portrait Project

I'm a photographer searching for refugees and survivors of the Holocaust located in London for a non-profit compelling portraiture project. I'd love to have the opportunity to meet you and photograph you as part of the project.

For further information please contact:

**Taryn Ferguson – Photographer**  
Tel 07460 634 007  
survivorportraits@gmail.com

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## FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Birth

Lorna and Peter Moss are delighted to announce the birth of their first grandchild, **Olivia**, born on 25 February 2016.

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## 'FIRST THEY CAME FOR THE COMMUNISTS ...'

This well-known text ascribed to Martin Niemöller is often quoted, particularly on Holocaust Memorial Day. It encapsulates so well the sequence of the Nazi attacks against the regime's opponents, as well as Niemöller's own failure to speak out on behalf of other persecuted groups to whom – as he says – he did not belong.

In using the expression 'belong to', Niemöller adopts a rather static point of view and is also rather too kind to himself. We may be born into the context of some group or ideology but eventually we choose which groups we want to belong to or not. Niemöller chose to be a national conservative and supporter of Imperial Germany and its expansionist aims. He chose not to be a democrat. When Germany was defeated in 1918 he blamed the revolution for it. He did not support the new democratic Germany but helped to undermine it. In this he was typical of a large part of the German intelligentsia. This lack of support for the Weimar Republic and its democratic values paved the way for Hitler.

Before we classify Niemöller as an 'anti-Nazi theologian', as some want to see him, we ought to take a look at his life before Hitler as well as during the Third Reich. At the beginning of the First World War he volunteered for the navy and eventually became a U-Boat commander and was decorated for his bravery. For that he was later much praised in the Nazi press. His autobiography *Vom U-Boot zur Kanzel* (From U-Boat to Pulpit) became a bestseller in

Germany at the time. As a conservative nationalist, he despised the Weimar Republic and joined the right-wing anti-democratic Freikorps, who were responsible for a large number of



political assassinations in the early 1920s and did much damage to the democratic government. He supported the 1921 Kapp Putsch in Berlin which aimed to overthrow the democratically elected government and establish an autocratic regime supported by the military.

Niemöller supported the Nazi Party and Hitler even after he became a Lutheran pastor in 1929. In free elections he had voted for the Nazi Party, which he had praised as a 'renewal movement on a Christian foundation'. He also agreed with the Führer's war aims. As a Lutheran, he took the view that a curse lay on the Jews due to their refusal to accept Jesus as the son of God.

After the war Niemöller explained

that his eventual opposition to Hitler was on theological and not political grounds. Neither he nor the Bekennende Kirche (Confessional Church), which he helped to found in opposition to the majority 'German Christians', protested against the 1933 'Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service', which excluded Jews from the civil service. Nor did they express opposition to any of the numerous discriminatory laws and measures against Jews and other minorities. He came into conflict with Nazi policy only when in 1936 Hitler wanted the Lutheran Church to apply the 'Aryan Paragraph'. On the basis of church doctrine, he took the view that once Jews were baptised as Christians they were 'fully entitled members of the Holy Spirit', could no longer be regarded as Jews, and did not therefore fall under that law. Essentially he could not permit state interference into church affairs. It was the position of the Lutheran Church that was important to him, not the wellbeing of all Germans, Jews or not.

As a footnote, I might just add that when Niemöller was imprisoned in Buchenwald and Dachau he enjoyed considerable privileges. As 'Hitler's personal prisoner', he was not subject to camp discipline and not obliged to work. He was free to communicate with other privileged prisoners and continued his writing undisturbed. At the start of the war in 1939 he made an unsuccessful request to be allowed to fight for the Nazis.

Jürgen Schwiening

### ARTS AND EVENTS APRIL DIARY

**Thur 7 A Tribute to Anti-Semitism Scholar Robert Wistrich** Speakers will include Rex Bloomstein, Margaret Brearley, Tanya Gold; chair Trudy Gold. 8.00 pm at JW3. Tickets £8. Tel 020 7433 8988 or visit [www.jw3.org.uk](http://www.jw3.org.uk)

**Sun 10 'Lest We Forget' A Programme of Music by Jewish Composers Banned by the Nazis, Including Music Composed in Terezin** Pianist: Mignonette Aarons; guest speaker Dr Peter Tregear, Professor of Music at The Royal Holloway, University of London. At the home of Mignonette. 2.30 for 3.00 pm. Tickets £12. Tel 020 8205 1310 or 020 8204 8778 or visit [mignonette@sky.com](mailto:mignonette@sky.com). All proceeds to AJR and B'nai B'rith Shoe Programme

**Tue 12 Apr Professor Erika Hagelberg: Is There Such a Thing as a Jewish Genome?** 6.30-8 pm. In partnership with The Second

Generation Network. Admission free but booking essential. At Wiener Library, tel 020 7636 7247

**Wed 13 Genocide: Do We Care Enough?** A panel discussion with Dr Helen Fry, to include Ruth Barnett and other speakers, on issues surrounding whether Europe has learned enough from the Holocaust and genocide. 2-4 pm at JW3, tel 020 7433 8988 or visit [www.jw3.org.uk](http://www.jw3.org.uk)

**Thur-Fri 14-15 International Workshop: The Holocaust and the Struggle for Civil Rights** Organised by the Sussex Centre for American Studies, the Centre for German-Jewish Studies and the Department for Art History. At University of Sussex, location tbc. For further details contact Gideon Reuveni at [g.reuveni@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:g.reuveni@sussex.ac.uk) or Kim Wünschmann at [K.Wuensmann@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:K.Wuensmann@sussex.ac.uk)

**Wed 4 May Pinner Synagogue: Yom Hashoah Evening. Keynote speaker Eva Mendelsson** The focus of this year's commemoration will be on a Holocaust childhood, the destruction of a family and the involvement and help of OSE (Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants), a French-Jewish humanitarian organisation tasked with rescuing children. 8.00-10.00 pm

**Wed 4 May Yom Hashoah Concert Commemoration: Degenerate Music** Devised by Peter Braithwaite: baritone, Nigel Foster: piano; introduction by Dr Malcolm Miller. At JW3, 7.30 pm, tel 020 7433 8988 or [info@jw3.org.uk](mailto:info@jw3.org.uk)

**Thurs 5 May From Hitler to Hi-De-Hi: Winter 1938** Mike Levy tells the story of the first Jewish refugee children at a freezing cold holiday camp near Harwich. At JW3, 3 pm, tel 020 7433 8988 or [info@jw3.org.uk](mailto:info@jw3.org.uk)



## LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

### Plus ça change ...

It was very gratifying to hear two of our grandsons (aged 22 and 18) express a desire to be taken on a tour of the exhibition entitled 'By the Rivers of Babylon' concerning the exile of the Jews of Judea by Nebuchadnezzar II in 586 BCE and currently being held at the Bible Lands Museum, where my husband Yigal is a guide.

The tour, in Yigal's customary thorough fashion, began with a session in front of a large, illuminated wall map showing the entire Ancient Near East at various stages in its history. Apart from Egypt, the first to establish cities and some form of writing (i.e. 'civilisation') were the Sumerians (situated in what is now southern Iraq). Their territory was invaded and conquered by the Akkadians from what was known then as Babylon or Akkad, followed by the Assyrians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Muslims, the Turks, and lastly the British – to name but a few. Finally, following the First World War and the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, the entire area was divided up among the major European colonial nations, only to disintegrate into mutual enmity, chaos and mayhem in recent years.

The exhibition itself, about which I have written before, is well done, attempting to arouse interest and provide food

for thought for visitors of all ages, with animated films that explain how and why the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II eventually decided he had had enough of the fractious Judeans and their rebellious kings (particularly Joakin, Joachim, and Zedekiah), who rebelled and refused to pay their tribute taxes. After laying siege to and conquering Jerusalem, the troops dealt with the defeated enemy in the manner customary at the time, namely the total destruction of everything in sight, including the (First) Temple, and forced ethnic cleansing by means of a massacre and exile of the remaining population.

But, as the exhibition shows, the Israelites' ability to adapt to changing circumstances came to the fore in Babylon. Exhorted by their leaders to display obedience to and co-operation with the authorities, the Jews farmed the land they were granted, established families, adhered to their religion and prospered. When the Persians under Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BCE all exiled nations were allowed to return to their lands, but not all the Jews undertook the journey back to Judea. The exhibition displays dozens of clay tablets from the Soffer collection recording transactions undertaken at the time by Jews, primarily in the Jewish settlement of El Yahudo in the region of Babylon.

Those Jews who remained in Babylon flourished for 2,000 years, producing *inter alia* the renowned Babylonian Talmud. Those who returned merged with those who had managed to remain behind in Judea and eventually built the (Second) Temple, and hung on to it for some 500 years. Once again, however, internecine conflict and rebelliousness caused the all-powerful Romans to come down upon them with the full force of their might. As everyone knows, this led to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and the exile that lasted 2,000 and ended only 67 years ago. In a nice touch, the exhibition ends with the reggae song 'By the Rivers of Babylon', recorded by the Boney M group and popular in the 1970s. The last Iraqi Jews were deprived of their property and expelled from Iraq shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel. Like the many thousands of other Jews who were turned overnight into refugees, they were absorbed into the general population.

No one knows whether the people currently inhabiting the various regions of what was once the Ancient Near East share the same genetic makeup as the original inhabitants of the region. What we do know, however, is that the tendency to engage in mutual warfare involving massacre and enmity on a gigantic scale has endured. Sadly, our newspapers and TV screens are filled on a daily basis with the tragic results of what appears to be a longstanding tradition of mutual intolerance and the desire to dominate others.

Plus ça change ...

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

few more years to call itself 'Association of Former Refugees' and will then fold itself up.

In any case, the objections, bordering on the pedantic, are of no significance: irrespective of age, we are all survivors!

*Fred Stern, Wembley, Middx*

#### WAR CRIMES INVESTIGATION UNITS

Sir – I am a mature PhD student at Royal Holloway University, London, researching the war crimes investigation units in relation to the Second World War. I am contacting you on the advice of the historian Dr Helen Fry to ascertain whether anyone within the AJR had any dealings with these units as an investigator, an interpreter or in any other capacity.

I do appreciate this is 70 years ago but even if no one can assist perhaps they have access to diaries, records or other

documents relating to the time which may be pertinent. I am willing to meet up with anyone who is prepared to help me at a time and place of their convenience.

*Robert Sherwood, tel 07881 511 177,  
robert.sherwood.2012@live.rhul.ac.uk*

#### COSMO PHOTOS SOUGHT

Sir – Any photographs of the Cosmo Restaurant in Finchley Road in its heyday as an emigre haunt urgently sought for publication on Czechoslovak artist and refugee Fred Feigl.

*Rachel Dickson racheld@benuri.org  
or Ben Uri on 020 7604 3991*

#### A JEWISH LADY WHO LEFT AUSTRIA FOR THE UK

Sir – I have found private pictures and letters belonging to Edith Newton, a long

deceased tenant of Pennethorne House, during a spring clean.

Edith (born Kramm) married Paul Neugroeschl on 3 August 1946. The letters and some of the pictures are dated the 1940s and earlier.

The information I have about Edith is that she was a Jewish lady who left Austria for the UK before the Second World War. I have contacted the Austrian Embassy for any relatives but they did not have any record of them. I am hoping her legacy will not be forgotten even though she may not have living relatives.

It would be nice to find a good hand to give her letters and pictures to as they seemed to be very precious to her.

*Darinka Rilk, Scheme Manager,  
Pennethorne House, 204 Albany Street,  
London NW11 4AA, tel 020 3503 0957*

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Telephone 020 8385 3070 Fax 020 8385 3080 e-mail [editorial@ajr.org.uk](mailto:editorial@ajr.org.uk)

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