



German Passports and Jewish Refugees

After the war, many refugees faced a difficult question: Did they want to return to their homeland? Of course, there were terrible memories of loss and persecution. Who would want to go back to countries where their families had been killed, their homes confiscated, their values trampled upon?



For most people, the issue as to whether to apply for a German passport goes a lot deeper than simply the ease of cross-border travel.

A surprising number of refugees did go back. The playwright Bertolt Brecht moved to East Germany, where he famously set up the Berliner Ensemble. The Austrian writer Hilde Spiel moved between Britain and Austria after the war before permanently settling in Vienna in 1963. Sometimes this split families.

The artist Ludwig Meidner was one of many German refugees who went back but his wife remained in Britain. The wife of Alfred Kerr, the great Weimar theatre critic, returned to Germany, even though her children remained in Britain.

In my own family, my maternal grandfather and great-uncle both returned to Germany after the war and lived there until they died. But my mother and grandmother refused to go back.

This question, do you go back or not, was surprisingly complicated. Some could not bear to give up their native language (Thomas Mann and Robert Neumann compromised by moving to German-speaking Switzerland). Or their beloved German landscape or food. Others missed German central heating. There are countless stories of refugees who came
Continued on page 2

LEAVE THE LIGHT ON

This month marks the 81st anniversary of Kristallnacht. Many shuls are leaving a light on overnight after Shabbat on 9 November to commemorate the tragedy and you may like to do the same at home.

November is also Jewish Legacy Awareness Month and AJR is proud to be among the partners supporting #JLGMonth #whatisthepoint.

Meanwhile we invite all our Second Generation readers to complete our special survey - see page 3.

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Please note that the views expressed throughout this publication are not necessarily the views of the AJR.

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German Passports and Jewish Refugees (cont.)

to Britain and couldn't bear the terrible cold and primitive heating. It's a recurring complaint in refugee memoirs.

Others couldn't face it. Whatever they missed, they would not go back. However much they struggled with conditions in post-war Britain, the rationing, the problems of assimilation, they stayed.

For the second and third generation, it was very different. Born and brought up in Britain, we are British. Some became interested in refugee history and culture. But as many immersed themselves in British history and culture. Who could be more English than Stephen Fry's Jeeves or Ben Elton's *Blackadder*?

Two things happened which changed everything. First, the vote to leave the EU. Many third-generation children have applied for passports from EU countries, especially German passports. They didn't hesitate. The Nazi past seems far away and long ago. The political Right may be on the move, but no country in central or eastern Europe has tried harder to come to terms with its demons. Go to Berlin and see the extraordinary Jewish Museum or visit countless German towns and see the *Stolpersteine*, or "stumbling stones," commemorating victims of the Nazis. For younger people Germany is a different country. Modern, progressive, democratic.

Many young people also feel more European. Thanks to Ryanair and easyJet they travel regularly to European cities for weekend breaks. This would have been almost inconceivable before 1989. Today, they look enviously at the terrific funding of the arts and better maternity and paternity leave in some European countries. They watch European TV dramas. Ireland suddenly seems liberal and welcoming after the social revolution of the past decade. Even if they don't want to live in Germany, a German passport would allow them to live and work anywhere else in the EU.

And then there's Britain, which a younger generation increasingly associates with austerity, division and decline. Housing

is unaffordable. The first and second generations of refugees were immersed in British culture and history. Think of Emeric Pressburger's *Colonel Blimp*. Historians like GR Elton and Lewis Namier reinvented large parts of the story of Britain. Younger people today are less sure about how British they feel or even what it means to be British.

Secondly, there is Corbyn. I am one of many British Jews who would not wish to live in a Britain ruled by Jeremy Corbyn. Not because of higher taxes or worries about what might happen to the British economy, though these are real enough concerns. But because of Labour antisemitism flourishing under Jeremy Corbyn. To live in a country which knowingly elected someone who has associated with antisemites, Holocaust deniers and terrorists seems inconceivable. There has never been anything like this in post-war British politics.

A year ago, my older daughter and I were interviewed by *The Times*. Why had we applied for German passports? "It was all about Brexit," my daughter explained. She wanted the option to live or work in Europe. My reasons were different. For me it was all about Corbyn and Labour antisemitism.

A few days later, Danny Finkelstein wrote a piece in *The Times*, "No, I won't be asking for a foreign passport." His reasons were typically thoughtful. "I understand and respect ... those who have applied for dual citizenship," he wrote, "but I won't be doing so myself." For two reasons. First, he's an optimist about Britain. "I think things will be basically all right." He has no illusions about Jeremy Corbyn but "not enough to consider fleeing."

Second, he doesn't think "obtaining citizenship is just another transaction." Being a citizen, he wrote, "is to accept a profound bond with your fellow citizens." He feels loyal to Britain: "[Britain] gave us a home and our liberty and peace. And I'm never going to be part of anything else."

This is a moving argument. Eloquent and decent, as you would expect from Finkelstein. Why am I not convinced? First, I don't share his optimism. Electing a government led by Jeremy Corbyn

would be a watershed. It would place a decisive question mark against centuries-long traditions of British decency and tolerance. I hope Danny is right to be optimistic. But in his article he gives no grounds for his optimism.

Citizenship is about a "a profound bond with your fellow citizens." No one has been more loyal to Britain than the refugees who came in the mid-20th century. Everywhere in Britain you can see the impact of refugees, from the Royal Festival Hall to the London bus-stop, from the Penguin Pool at London Zoo to *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*.

However, these refugees fled terror in Europe and came to a liberal, decent Britain. Of course, they felt loyal to the country which offered them safety and a chance to rebuild their lives. What if things became reversed and Europe offered a liberal and decent alternative to a Corbyn government (or, some might say, a Johnson government)? Is this "profound bond" permanent? Is Britain always going to be tolerant and safe? My grandparents thought the same was true of Germany. One member of my family was murdered in Berlin, the rest fled for their lives. Societies change very suddenly. Not just Nazi Germany. Look at the former Yugoslavia less than thirty years ago.

I hope, as much as you, that Britain becomes a more decent country, led by admirable politicians. But if it doesn't? My suitcases are packed, said the great critic George Steiner. I know so many friends whose parents kept two different passports in their desk drawer. Just in case.

David Herman

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CALLING ALL SECOND GENERATION

Tell us what you would like from the AJR

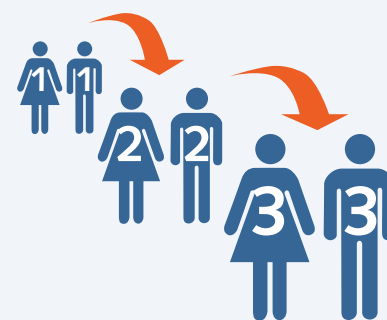
Over one-third of AJR's membership identifies as second generation of survivors and refugees from Nazi-persecution. Now we are looking to develop specific services and areas of interest to appeal to both existing Second Generation (2G) members and also to attract new members.

Please fill in our survey (whether you are currently a member of AJR or not) to help us provide what you would like. We promise it will only take five minutes of your time.

You can access the survey at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AJR2G> or there is a link on our website and social media pages (Facebook and Twitter). Please pass the message on to other Second Generation friends and family members in the UK.

Here are some of the ideas we would like to ask you about. Which of them appeal to you?

- Social activities (with other Second Generation) such as coffee mornings, card and games evenings, outings etc.
- Cultural activities to celebrate our parents' heritage such as concerts, trips to the opera and art galleries or our own art exhibition etc.
- Trips to our parents' places of birth
- Information on how to arrange for a *Stolperstein* for family members
- Workshops and help with writing our parents' life stories and printing in a book
- Advice on how to become a speaker, telling our parents' stories
- Adding our parents' names to a virtual hall of remembrance (on the AJR website)
- Adding our parents' names to a physical hall of remembrance at an appropriate venue
- Purchasing a legacy pack to provide AJR membership for our own children to ensure the continuation of our parents' heritage
- Attending seminars of interest to Second Generation eg historical talks,



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2ND & 3RD
GENERATION
MEMBERS

- psychological impact, etc
- Volunteer opportunities working with First Generation AJR members, eg befriending
 - Obtaining emotional and therapeutic support
 - Obtaining financial support
 - Guidance on how to apply for an EU passport
 - Advice on what to do with our parents' documents, photographs and historical artefacts
 - Guidance on how to carry out genealogical research

Austrian citizenship eligibility

The AJR warmly welcomes the introduction of an amendment to the Austrian citizenship law that widens the eligibility criteria for former refugees and survivors of Nazi oppression and their descendants to be able to apply for Austrian nationality.

Particularly noteworthy is that a descendant of a refugee can apply to become an Austrian citizen irrespective of whether their antecedent chose to do so, and that obtaining Austrian citizenship will have no bearing on an applicant's British nationality. Ahead of 1 September 2020, when the amendment takes effect, we look forward to working with colleagues at the Austrian embassy to guide our members and their families who express interest in pursuing an application.

British Jews whose ancestors fled the Nazis will be allowed to reclaim Austrian citizenship in London from next year. The liberalisation will apply not only to the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, but potentially great-grandchildren too.

The applicants will neither have to reside in Austria nor surrender their British citizenship in order to obtain an Austrian passport.

New Library Director

The AJR congratulates Dr Toby Simpson on his appointment as Director of The Wiener Holocaust Library. Toby, who has worked at the Library for eight years, most recently as Head of Development, takes up his

position this month following Ben Barkow's recent retirement. During our annual tea (see page 5) the AJR paid tribute to Ben's 32 years of dedication to the history of our special community.



Toby Simpson, new Director of the Wiener Holocaust Library

MARSEILLE TO MARTINIQUE - REFUGEES' 'LAST EXIT':

Slipping out from under the Nazi boot, some five thousand European refugees escaped wartime Europe and reached Martinique from Marseille. They were a mixed bag of political and intellectual dissidents, Spanish Republicans, anti-Nazi Germans and Jews. Among them were the influential French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the French writer André Breton, regarded as a founder of Surrealism, Victor Serge, the Russian revolutionary writer who broke with Stalin, and the German Jewish novelist Anna Seghers and her two children. All four wrote about their harrowing experiences, Seghers notably in her semi-fictional *Transit*.

That 'last exit' from the Continent was brief: between the fall of France in June 1940 and May 1941. United States pressure, in particular, led France to close the route to the Caribbean; soon thereafter, Vichy would be sending many of the thousands of remaining refugees in the opposite direction – towards the death camps.

Prodigious research by Eric Jennings, a leading expert on the modern French-speaking world at the University of Toronto, has unearthed many details of this desperate quest to flee Europe's dictators, only to land in the limbo of the Vichy-controlled island in the sun. In *Escape from Vichy: The Refugee Exodus to the French Caribbean* (Harvard University Press) Professor Jennings shows how the tropical island, with its harsh internment camps and antisemitic colonial officials, was no paradise, despite its luxuriant vegetation and blue skies.

It had, however, proved simpler to get

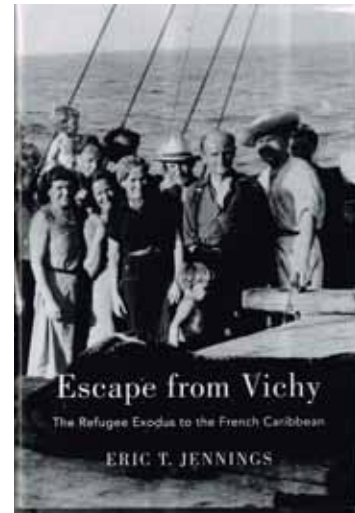
the crucial paperwork for the Caribbean colony than for the USA, the ultimate goal for most refugees. That did not mean it was easy to embark from the Mediterranean port. On the contrary, escape was a lottery, dependent on connections, and especially on what Jennings calls 'hefty' sums of money to bribe officials and secure boat tickets or forged documents.

Lots of luck helped, too. Take the case of Rudolf Hilferding, finance minister during the Weimar Republic, and Rudolf Breitscheid, ex-president of Germany's Social Democrats. They and their families eventually cut the red-tape and were allowed to take a ship to Martinique. But the *Wyoming's* cabins were already taken. Instead of accepting dormitory bunks, the refugees chose to await another boat. Vichy officials then revoked their exit visas and handed them over to the Germans: the Gestapo murdered Hilferding in Paris, while Breitscheid is thought to have perished in Buchenwald.

Jennings has for almost two decades been writing about French colonial history, including schemes to ship Europe's Jews to Madagascar. Born in 1970 and a dual citizen of France and Canada, Jennings first realised the scope of the exodus to the French Antilles while preparing his dissertation at Berkeley on the Vichy regime overseas.

'The thrust of the thesis,' he says, 'was that the Vichy regime cloned its ideology (antisemitism and all) overseas, without any German prompting. I uncovered numerous telegrams from colonial governors steadfastly refusing the arrival of desperate migrants, only to see them arrive anyway. This piqued my curiosity. I was puzzled about whether this was an expulsion or a rescue; I argue that it was a bit of both - a mix of humanitarian and xenophobic imperatives'.

Jennings consulted archives in France, Germany, the Czech Republic, the Caribbean, the United States and Canada. He pored over shipping line receipts, artwork, police correspondence, maritime



reports, camp records, biographical data, rescue organisation files, family histories, among other types of sources.

Many migrants had no idea why and how the providential Martinique route had opened. Anna Seghers believed she had been helped by a bureaucrat who was putting her own job at risk. An official at the Marseille prefecture did assist Seghers and her family, but may well have been following instructions from Vichy in doing so. Although Varian Fry placed many artists, intellectuals and politicians aboard the boats for Martinique, he did not know why the ships were allowed to leave, even less could he claim any credit for their departure.

In Jennings' view, the Martinique corridor closed because Washington feared the presence of Nazi spies among the German-speaking refugees. That led to a Free Dutch vessel intercepting one of the ships steaming towards Martinique, thereby cutting the route.

Martin Mauthner

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A SHOWSTOPPER OF A PARTY



In September the AJR welcomed members and their families to a lovely afternoon tea and medley of songs from *The Great American 'Jewish' Songbook* sung by acclaimed singer Robert Habermann.

The tea was held at the beautifully refurbished South Hampstead Synagogue, the shul where some of the refugees came to pray in the early years after the AJR was founded in 1941, and which from 11 November will host AJR's latest regional group, Hampstead, for a monthly meeting for members who live nearby.



In his welcome speech, AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman MBE described the stellar event as "the highlight of the AJR calendar" before mentioning that the AJR would not be the organisation it is today without the support of its thriving membership of just under 2,000 members, with two thirds from the first generation.



Andrew also reminded us that there are those in the AJR community who require critical social welfare and volunteer services as well as financial assistance. He mentioned, "This year the AJR will be spending in excess of £7m in direct assistance in Homecare and emergency funds from our own funds and with monies provided from the German and Austrian governments made available thanks to the Claims Conference."



Looking ahead to the future Andrew stated that "We anticipate further developing our Holocaust educational and commemorative grants programme to use our uniquely placed position as the UK's largest funder of Holocaust education to see how the output of the whole sector can be improved."



L-R AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman and Chairman Andrew Kaufman MBE, with the outgoing Director of the Wiener Library, Ben Barkow



Irene and Marcel Anisfeld with their family celebrating their diamond anniversary at the AJR Tea Party

Formalities over, guests enjoyed a wonderful selection of hit songs from many of the iconic American Jewish songwriters.

Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication and respectfully points out that the views expressed in the letters published are not necessarily the views of the AJR.

AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

You don't publish many critical views of the Journal. Here are mine:

Star contributors: Gloria Tessler and Dorothea Shefer-Vanson - 10/10 for consistent quality. David Herman: accessible and unpretentious.

Repetitive: letters page - same names recur too often (although better last month).

Rarely shown: Sense of humour.

Most moving: Search notices.

Mystery: Wide spaces between paragraphs.
Most useful: Restitution and compensation news.

Occasional lapses: Energy of book reviews.

Predominant sentiment: Nostalgia.

Unhelpful: Small type - hard on elderly eyes.

Obsession: Kindertransport - Kinder represent a small proportion of refugee community.

Good judgment: occasional contributions by:

Victor Ross, London W9

The October Journal has just reached me here in Prague. I always look forward to receiving it and this time was delighted to read the excellent article "Gift for a lifetime" by my friend, Victor Ross.

His habitual modesty probably won't welcome my writing that he should certainly be included in the "best of the bunch" of refugees who have contributed to the English language. I would only mention his wonderful book *Basic British* and his great articles and letters published in the *AJR Journal* over the years.

Also I hope that I won't provoke his displeasure even further by publicly congratulating him on his 100th birthday!

Tom Schrecker, Czech Republic

Note from Editor: May we also congratulate Victor on his century and publicly thank him for his contributions and very helpful critique of the AJR Journal. If any other readers want to send us similar critiques we would be very happy to receive them.

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION (SEPTEMBER)

The article by David Herman about lack of knowledge on the subject of the Holocaust probably applies to most historical events. Ask young adults about WW1, or even about Churchill, and they don't know much. Education is only of use to those who want to be educated and unfortunately the standard of education is not very high.

I wonder if antisemitism is given too much prominence: too much media exposure may be counterproductive. There were 384 reported incidents last year, which is 384 too many, but not a huge number in itself. In this age of social media, trolling etc it is not only Jews who get abused but practically everyone who is in the spotlight.

What worries me is that if Corbyn loses the next election, it will be attributed to "the Jewish vote".

Victor Garston, London NW11

I think we should be measuring the impact of Holocaust education in the Jewish world. How well have we absorbed and applied the lessons we share with others? How tolerant are we towards each other regardless of personal (or institutional) affiliation and identification as well as to other minority groups and other communities? Where is the active public voice of Jewish Holocaust educators and educational community supporting people being persecuted by a state for what or who they are? For example, we keep asking why the world stayed silent and inactive before the war and throughout, yet the Uighurs have been persecuted for years by the Chinese including being placed in concentration camps (for "re-education") or worse and we are silent and inactive. We need to learn and actively apply the lessons ourselves. We should teach (and lead) by example.

Michael Hilsenrath, Borehamwood

ANNUAL AJR TEA

Thank you so much for a wonderful afternoon, it was just excellent! Everything was planned so well, food and

entertainment first rate and everybody had a most enjoyable and relaxing time. The arranged transport went exactly to plan - so important with the very elderly who find buses and trains just too difficult. There was certainly enough praise for everything on our table from Dad and his Surrey colleagues and he arrived home tired but happy.

It was our second AJR event in four days as we also had a really great trip to Henley with such beautiful weather. We were very grateful to co-ordinators Ros and Karen for how well they organised everything and helped everybody, making the day really work so well.

We are also most appreciative of Carol Rossen for organising the Association's holidays. Isn't it wonderful for somebody in their 99th year to visit a new country as Dad did with Norway? It must have been a lot of hard work for her and Ros Hart to take care of everyone so well. Dad always thoroughly enjoys and looks forward to the annual Eastbourne visit as I know so many of your members do. We remain very indebted for the extremely hard work, commitment and compassion shown by the AJR.

Janet Weston, Kent

A SURPRISING STATISTIC

According to *My Heritage* (an Israeli online genealogy platform) in comparison to the number of residents, after Israel Hungary has the most residents of Jewish origin. This is based on DNA tests of 1.8m people. Out of 4,981 Hungarians, 7.6% had at least 25% Askenazi origins, which means at least one of their grandparents was Askenazi. This ratio is much higher than the one in the U S which is only 3.5%.

The large discrepancy between the study's findings and previous estimates proves that in Hungary there are many people who are not aware of their Jewish origins at all or they kept them secret. Considering all this, the study concludes that the number of Hungarians of at least 50% Askenazi origin is approximately 130,000, which was a surprise to the participants and to the

demographers too. Not so much to me, as so often meeting new people anywhere in the world, they turn out to have Jewish ancestors from Hungary.

Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath, Herts

RECHA FREIER, YOUTH ALIYAH

Recha Freier (August) was one of the people who helped Hermann Sinsheimer, a German lawyer who worked as a journalist, theatre critic and writer. She got him a visa for Palestine and when he had not found work and was in very bad health she helped him get to London in June 1938. He died in 1950 and I am re-publishing a three volume edition of his work. Leonard Woolf gave him quite a lot of reviewing to do.

Dr. Deborah Vietor-Engländer

ANTISEMITISM IN THE LABOUR PARTY (SEPTEMBER)

In reply to the denials made by Professor Miriam David and Professor Gaby Weiner about the behaviour of the Labour Party towards its Jewish members, I quote Rachel Sylvester in the *Times*. "Luciana Berger, who received antisemitic threats as a Labour MP, is relishing attending the Liberal Democratic Party conference without the need for police protection".

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts,

Professors Miriam David and Gaby Weiner quoted facts in disproving Ian Austin MP's accusations of the Labour Party being antisemitic. Ian Austin had left the Labour Party and now sits as an independent MP. Greg Lubinsky (October) does not disprove a single fact. Instead he throws out hints and suggestions and quotes other people's accusations as if that makes them facts.

I came to this country in 1938 as a refugee from Austria and have been an active member of the Labour Party since 1946. I occupied various leading positions in my local Labour Party in West London and am still an active member, but now in South London. Throughout all these years of my membership, I have never come across any antisemitism in this party.

Eric Sanders, London, SW16

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Thank you for another excellent edition of the Journal. I enjoyed reading David Herman's article about Jewish refugees settling in Britain (October) but should point out that the artist Kurt Schwitters was not Jewish. He left Germany in 1937 following the purge of "degenerate artists" and went to Norway. He came to the UK in 1940 after Norway was invaded. He knew my wife's grandparents from his time in Hanover and often visited them in Twickenham, sometimes staying there and giving them paintings in lieu of rent.

Anthony Spiro, New Malden, Surrey

When my father obtained the certificate that he could practice dentistry in 'England' the clerk prohibited settling in London or Manchester. My father asked: 'Where can I work?' The clerk metaphorically stuck a pin into a map of England and as Bradford lay fairly centrally he said: 'go to Bradford'. That is how we came to this wonderful Northern town and are still here.

Rudi Leavor BEM, Bradford

GIFT FOR A LIFETIME

In response to the article by Victor Ross about language (October) I came to London in March 1939, without knowing any English. Two weeks after my arrival, the 'Truant Officer' arrived at my hosts' house and said "There is a 12 year old boy here; why is he not at school? ". The reply was: "He cannot speak English". The official said; "That is none of my business, he had better be at school tomorrow".

I attended the Shacklewell Lane School in E5 the next day! I learned the language fairly quickly, but older refugees spoke 'Emigranto'.

**George Loble MBE,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

PS Many refugee industrialists were admitted to the UK, due to the high unemployment here. It is said that by the 1950s they employed 250,000 British workers.

FROM TROTSKY TO CHAGALL

Janos Fisher (October) explained how the Jews founded Marxism-Leninism, but not how it made them move away from their race and religion. The poverty and pogroms in Russia made them communists and revolutionaries, but not Jews.

Tsar Nicolas II was an autocratic, inexperienced leader with no sympathy for poor people or ethnic minorities and no political skills. His regime was responsible for several antisemitic riots in the 19th century, mainly in acquired territories in Poland and Lithuania. He was responsible for 'Bloody Sunday', when a large number of demonstrating workers were killed. His military incompetence caused large casualties when his army was defeated in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 and he was at war with Germany and France in 1914. All these circumstances led to his downfall.

Many revolutionaries were not from Jewish families. Lenin was from a Russian Orthodox family (his father had converted to the Russian Orthodox Church from Judaism before his marriage).

Many people plotted to get rid of the Tsar. Funding for the revolution came from Germany which wanted to destabilise Russia in order to stop fighting on the Eastern front. The execution of the Russian Royal family was a collective decision by the Ural Executive Committee including Lenin, Sverdlov and Dzerzinsky. The Royals' application for asylum had been refused in several countries but there was a fear that the approaching White Army might rescue them.

Yurovsky read the execution order and the Tsar was shot before the rest of the family. The women had diamonds sewn into their bodices which acted as bulletproof vests, so the executioners ended by stabbing them with bayonets.

Just as Jews were persecuted as a race during WW2, many communists were also taken to concentration camps. But they were there as political prisoners and thus had a much better chance of survival.

Dr Elena Rowland, London, SE18

ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

It's immersive, it's interactive, it's crazy. But despite the serious message within Antony Gormley's solo show at the Royal Academy, this exhibition manages to transform the main issues of our time into an experience that can be enjoyed by everyone, children and adults alike.



Antony Gormley at the RA

It starts with metaphor. There, as you cross the large Annenberg courtyard, lies the life-size figure of a newborn baby, curled in the foetal position; *Iron Baby* is also a time bomb of human potential, both positive and dangerous.

Gormley is known for his *Angel of the North* in Gateshead, itself causing controversy when erected in 1995, partly because it was compared to Albert Speer's *Icarus* commissioned by Hitler to celebrate the Luftwaffe in 1935, and less problematically for his men rising out of the sea at Margate and Crosby, or lying around the world's beaches.

In this new exhibition we discover his interest in the body within space, using industrial materials like iron, steel and lead to pare down the human form into 14 masses, constructed geometrically, from which you can discern the image of man kneeling, recumbent or with knees bent into the foetal position. Here is the basic geometry of the human figure. In other sculptures he fills a room with steel curvilinear structures you can walk or crawl through, using steel girders above you as a gradient or an immersive series of dark metal tunnels through which you

gripe towards the light – hey I did it, despite my claustrophobia!

So what is this? Is Gormley groping through the tunnels of birth and death? In his imagination, science, philosophy, religion, and the eternal question of the origin of life and the natural world, have all taken root. In one early work, *One Apple*, he shows the development of an apple from seed to full fruit, encased in 53 lead cases containing the seed through all the stages of ripening. They reference the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden and consider the nature of space and linear time. At this point Gormley's *œuvre* seems filled with philosophical issues - the things of the earth, bread, and the heavy industry with which man is surrounded.

As the exhibition moves eloquently towards the body of man that is Gormley's marker, we first see a drawing of a male body on a blanket, or an upside down figure falling to earth against slices of bread! Then the human figure finally emerges as sculpture – encased in whorls of steel – behold the man.

And finally we come to the *pièce*

de résistance. Halfway through the exhibition is the room we have been waiting for; filled with personifications of his own body – standing, hanging, falling, gravity-defying – metal men first seen on the rooftops of the Hayward Gallery in 2007.

Gormley is a Buddhist and there is something clearly meditative about his figures; their stillness remains with us; the meridian lines of steel that dissect one or two of the rooms have something to say about focus and time; the whirling steel structures you crawl through perhaps describe our inner torments, our recurring problems or nightmares, our indecisiveness. Or perhaps, the idea of conceptual art is just that; it is anything you decide it to be.

And finally comes the statement Gormley has been making so often, in which he submerges the floor of the beaux-art room in earth and sea-water; only inches deep, the statement suggests creation and destruction through climate change.

Antony Gormley, supported by BNP Paribas, continues at the RA until December 3.

KINDER CORNER

Building on from our recent series 'Remembering & Reflecting on the Kindertransport', from December the *AJR Journal* will carry an ad hoc section dedicated to news or information specifically about the Kindertransport. **Kinder Corner** will replace the separate

newsletter that used to be produced four times a year for the AJR's Kindertransport Special Interests Group and will allow us to deliver relevant news on a more regular and timely basis.

Our thanks go to Bernd Koschland for editing the KT Newsletter over recent years.

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LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



ONLY IN ISRAEL



Like every country, Israel has its advantages and its disadvantages. One advantage is its climate, which is on the

whole pleasant (at least in Jerusalem) with sunny days throughout the summer, often with cool evenings and nights. It also has a long coastline giving most of the population access to the sea with all its benefits.

Considering its small size, the country encompasses a particularly wide range of interesting geographical features, with hilly areas in the north, and even mountains on which one can ski in winter. Going south there's the Dead Sea, with beneficial health properties known since ancient times, as well as the Negev desert, with its unique geological formations and wealth of fauna and flora.

You can hardly take a step anywhere in Israel without coming across some archaeological or geological site, starting with the origins of homo sapiens, and continuing through the history of the

ancient Near East, resulting in a plethora of holy sites for the three main religions.

But what most distinguishes Israel is its population. Jews from all over the world have come to live here, bringing a wealth of genetic heritages that are mixing and mingling with one another. The population is far from homogeneous, as regards both hereditary characteristics and cultural traditions, yet on the whole there is some kind of modus vivendi between all the different people. Notwithstanding, differences in background can often give rise to differences in manners and mores, and this can sometimes cause conflicts or disagreements, but the country somehow manages to keep going, no matter how deep the internal divisions.

The current political divide has the country split almost exactly in half between those who support the current government and those who oppose it. The political impasse has given rise to two general elections within the last six months and may well give rise to another one in the not-too-distant future. The prospect is dismaying for all concerned, but unless some radical solution is found that will be our fate.

But at a time like now, when the high holidays have just been celebrated

throughout the country, there is an unaccustomed atmosphere of tolerance and even amity between total strangers.

Thus, as I waited one morning to be seen by an official in the Health Fund in order to arrange an appointment for a medical screening, there was much good-natured grumbling among the waiting patients. But no-one raised their voice or protested, and no-one really tried to push in out of turn (as often happens at non-festive times of the year), and everyone wished their neighbour good luck, good health, and a good year as their turn came.

The best moment for me was when, after returning home with the precious referral in my hand, I rang the central Health Fund number to book the screening. It was the first working day after a very long weekend and so the line was busy. Eventually, however, one of the attendants at the call centre picked up the phone and was ready to hear my request. What happened next left me flabbergasted.

When I repeated my name, at her request, she said "I see tomorrow's your birthday. Many happy returns!"

She really made my day.

NORDIC TRAVELS

The ship was enormous, accommodating 3,000+ passengers in 15 floors of cabins and public rooms. In future I'll pack a compass so I can navigate to the nearest lift! We joined (or not) with on-shore activities at our various ports of call. And we all met for supper daily at two adjoining tables in one of the restaurants. We partook of some of the movies and shows, played card games, swam in one of the three pools, read, and chatted to each other. Visits/stops were: Stavanger, Olden, Alesund, Bergen and return to Southampton. This was my first cruise with AJR and it was a really exciting experience. There were sufficient activities on the ship to keep us



A group of 12 AJR members and staff recently enjoyed a Nordic cruise. This report was written by **Edith Jayne** one of the members

occupied between stops and sightseeing opportunities whenever we were docked. I particularly was enchanted by Stavanger's countryside and Alesund, where we saw glaciers, snow-covered mountains and sparkling clear lakes. The pollution-free air was noticeable, the architecture interesting

and the people friendly.

I thoroughly recommend giving one of the AJR cruises a try – see wondrous sights and enjoy good company.

Edith Jayne

Inside the Arolsen Archives

The world's most comprehensive archive on the victims of National Socialism went about its work behind closed doors for many years. This has to do with the history of the institution, which was established by the Allies as a tracing service for victims of Nazi persecution in the town of Bad Arolsen in Germany. Nowadays, the **Arolsen Archives – International Centre on Nazi Persecution** publishes its valuable documents online to make them accessible to people all over the world. And the centre plays a very active role in educational and research projects on the Holocaust and its consequences.

More than 200,000 people used the Arolsen Archives' recently published online archive in the first weeks alone to research information about their ancestors: "Although I have already received data from Yad Vashem in the past, it is completely different when you search by yourself and browse through your grandmother's maiden name to find more and more of her lost cousins," wrote Assaf Elrom from Israel. "I feel that the direct approach to the online archive gives us, the children and grandchildren of the survivors, an unprecedented path to what was left of their lives. It's a telescope pointed 3,000 miles and 75 years away, and it's so important that we look through it."

The database contains a comprehensive collection of documents from concentration camps, including prisoner cards and death notices. There are more than 13 million documents available online, featuring information on over 2.2 million people persecuted by the Nazi regime. The project is part of the UNESCO's World Documentary Heritage and is the first of several large collections scheduled to go online in future.

The permanent exhibition in Bad Arolsen, Germany, guides visitors through seven decades of tracing missing persons and documenting NS persecution.



© AROLSEN ARCHIVES

Imparting knowledge, keeping the memories alive

The new online archive is just one of many projects which the centre is currently working on in an aim to increase the visibility of the institution and strengthen the role of its historical knowledge in social discourse. This task is more essential than ever as right-wing extremism, racism and discrimination threaten our democracies worldwide. Given this context, new projects focusing on education and the need to keep alive the memory of the collapse of civilisation caused by the National Socialist regime of terror take on added importance.

One example is the #StolenMemory campaign that was launched in 2016. The Arolsen Archives keep nearly 3,000 personal effects of concentration camp inmates. Often they were the last remaining belongings of the victims of Nazi persecution, the things they had with them at the time of their arrest by the National Socialists. The main goal of the campaign is to return these stolen memories to as many relatives as possible – so far almost 350 families could be found. But the pictures of the personal belongings - pocket watches and wristwatches, rings, wallets, family photos, everyday items such as combs, powder tins or razors – that are shown in exhibitions throughout Europe succeed in touching today's viewers and invite them to explore their owners fate.

Enquiries come in from all over the world

Over a period of several decades, the institution founded by the Allies in 1947 collected documents on the paths of persecution of people from all groups

persecuted by the Hitler regime and used these documents to trace missing victims of the Nazi dictatorship. The total collection now numbers some 30 million documents, with information on about 17.5 million people.

Even today, enquiries about more than 20,000 people still reach the Arolsen Archives each year – from around 70 different countries. Most of them come from family members. If the enquiries received since 1947 and their associated correspondence were put in a pile, the resulting stack of paper would be 6,476m tall – higher than Mont Blanc. These documents, which often include detailed descriptions of the persecution suffered by individuals, constitute an important part of the holdings of the Arolsen Archives.

Although it is now rare for the organisation to be able to reunite families, it still happens about 30 times a year. Half-siblings get to know each other through the Arolsen Archives; children who were adopted into a small family find out more than 70 years later that they actually have a large family with many cousins, some of whom have children themselves.

A unique collection

Some of the documents kept in the archive are the products of Nazi bureaucracy, others result from the work of the Allies and relief organisations. During the last months of the war, survivors' initiatives set about securing Nazi documents. As the Allies advanced, they too took possession of documents connected with concentration camps and Nazi bureaucracy, provided they



Prisoner card from the Buchenwald concentration camp: The Arolsen Archives have around 30 million original documents with information on 17.5 million people.



More than 13 million documents on the victims of Nazi persecution can be searched in the new online archive of the Arolsen Archives.

had not already been destroyed by the SS. In addition, during the late 1940s, ITS staff searched for traces along the routes of the death marches and combed through the holdings of registry offices and orphanages in search of clues as to the whereabouts of missing and stolen children from abroad. Survivors were interviewed in order to gather additional knowledge about the National Socialist terror apparatus, the various places of detention, and the mass crimes committed. Documents on foreign forced labourers were collected from authorities, businesses, and insurance companies. Added to this are millions of documents concerning the registration, care and emigration of Displaced Persons which came from the Allies and from relief organisations. These millions of documents form the core of the Arolsen Archives collection, which was recognised in 2013 by UNESCO for its unique size and significance.

When the archive was first created, its primary purpose was to collect information which was to be used in order to trace missing persons and clarify their fates. However, documenting the horrors of Nazi persecution, supporting the criminal prosecution of perpetrators, and helping people to apply for compensation were also important activities. In the past, the documents were used on a daily basis. In 1998, work began on scanning the documents and today about 85% of them are available in digital form.

A few years turned into decades

When the institution was first founded, it was presumed that its work would be

completed within a few years. However, when it became clear that the search for missing persons was going to take longer than expected, the question arose as to who should assume responsibility. Handing the documents back to the country of the perpetrators seemed inconceivable to many. For this reason, an international commission was formed in 1955 and this body defines the guidelines for the work of the Arolsen Archives to this day. Eleven countries belong to this commission, including the UK. A different member state holds the chair each year. The 2019 chairman is our own Lord Eric Pickles.

The funding of the institution – about 14-15 million euros – is provided by the German Federal Government, or more precisely by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. Nowadays, about 240 people are employed by the Arolsen Archives. The team includes historians, archivists, educators and IT specialists who work together to meet the new challenges facing the Arolsen Archives today: making the documents accessible to the families of survivors, to educators and researchers, and to the public. Soon, no survivors or witnesses will remain to tell their stories. For that reason, it is essential to let the original documents speak to the next generations on their behalf, so that, to paraphrase Elie Wiesel, the documents themselves become witnesses.

Floriane Azoulay, Director of the Arolsen Archives

Floriane Azoulay is a French human rights expert and was appointed Director of the Arolsen Archives in 2016.

New name – New tasks

In May 2019 the centre formally became known as **Arolsen Archives – International Centre on Nazi Persecution**. The original name 'International Tracing Service', bestowed on the institution by the Allies, no longer did justice to the many tasks it is called upon to fulfil today. The name change was accompanied by a fresh corporate image and a modern website complete with an online archive to reach out to a larger audience worldwide and inform them about the consequences of antisemitism, discrimination and racism.

UK Access to the Archives

The International Tracing Service archives are available on site at **The Wiener Holocaust Library (WHL)** in London, the custodian for the UK's digital copy of the archive. The WHL accepts enquiries and conducts research for Holocaust survivors, refugees, their descendants and families, and others who were impacted by the Holocaust and WWII.

For further information, please contact Elise Bath ebath@wienerlibrary.co.uk or visit <https://wienerlibrary.co.uk/ITS>.

Eli's Story

The main speaker at AJR's Kristallnacht commemoration service this month will be 90-year old Eli Abt, who remarkably undertook a 13,000 feet tandem skydive this August in aid of Jewish Care to celebrate, among other things, his rescue on the Kindertransport 80 years ago. This is Eli's story and if you would like to contribute to his fundraising efforts the link is www.justgiving.com/fundraising/eli-abt-jewishcare

I was born in Berlin in 1929, the eldest of three children. In 1936 my family moved to Breslau, now Wroclaw in Poland, where my father Harry had been appointed head of the Jewish secondary school on the Rehdigerplatz.

Eighteen years earlier he had been conscripted to serve in the trenches on the Western Front until the Armistice. My mother Frieda hailed from Fulda in Hesse where her Nussbaum family had lived since at least the 16th century. Neither of these stories were to make any difference to the way the Nazis dealt with us. By 1938 we were already banned from using the park benches with their "Aryans only" markings

I recall hearing, from behind closed curtains in our apartment, the mass hysteria on the occasion of Hitler's motorcade through the streets for the city's Sports Festival in July of that year.

On the morning of 10 November my mother, younger sister and I picked our way through streets punctuated by shards of plate glass from Jewish shopfronts, to help retrieve what we could from the wreck of our little Pinhas synagogue in the Hoefchenstrasse. (My

father happened to be in Berlin and had fortunately managed to evade arrest.)

We passed the vandalised Storch Synagoge, its windows smashed and its contents heaped outside, as well as the burning Neue Synagoge, the second largest in Germany, with fire appliances in attendance merely to ensure the flames would not spread to adjoining property.

Our own prayer room, situated on the first floor of a residential building, was a scene of utter devastation. The Torah scrolls were lying on the floor tattered and urinated on, the benches upturned and prayer books flung in all directions. It is an image seared into my memory.

I remember my mother weeping bitterly over a newspaper headline announcing a fine of 1 billion Reichsmark imposed on the German Jewish community for the damage caused to its own property.

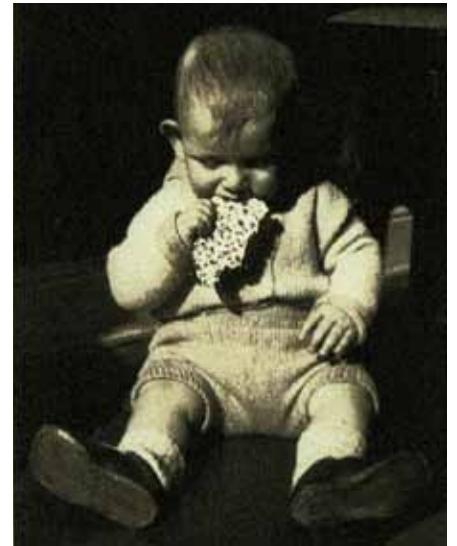
For some reason we had to abandon our home after Kristallnacht to occupy rooms in my father's school. I recall one of his colleagues returning through the school gate from Buchenwald, haggard almost beyond recognition.

While walking with my mother in a park in December a Hitler Youth, ignoring her screams, attacked me and flung me into the snow. Fortunately I managed to escape unhurt, but the time for our escape as a family was running out rapidly.

In March 1939 my eight year old sister Ruth received a Youth Aliyah permit for entry to Eretz Yisrael. She was put by my father on a train to Trieste, with a placard around her neck asking that she be helped find the right ship to Haifa where she would be met by an uncle. Fiercely independent even at that young age, she arrived there safely eight days later.

In April my parents were advised I had been granted Kindertransport permit no. 5156 through the efforts of my father's colleague Erich Klibansky, head of the Jawne school in Cologne.

I recall our group of parents and children



Eleven-month old Eli eating his first matzo, in Berlin 1930

being addressed on a station platform in Berlin with my father holding me tight on his lap before I boarded the train.

I remember nothing of the journey to the Hook of Holland, nor the Channel crossing to Harwich, but do recall someone trying valiantly to welcome us to Britain in impenetrable German at Liverpool St. station.

I was taken to a hostel in Brighton for about 30 refugee boys. None of us had any idea when we would see our parents again. I was to be one of the fortunate few: most of the group never did.

Apart from being the second youngest (I was now 10), I believe I was the only one from an observant Jewish home in a group where many had come from wholly assimilated families. In this fraught environment it was inevitable that, in *Lord of the Flies* fashion, some of the boys in my dormitory would turn on me. "Warum bist Du heiliger als uns?" (why are you holier than us?) I was asked one morning.

I believe I became deeply traumatised in all these circumstances. Whereas I am now thankfully proficient in a number of languages, I did not learn a word of English during my six months there and sat through seemingly endless days at school, virtually unable to comprehend anything that went on around me.

The one bright interlude in my week was my singing in a little choir during Shabbat morning service in Brighton's magnificent Middle Street synagogue. Together with



Eli with his mother, sister & brother in Breslau in 1936



Eli & Muriel Abt visiting Japan in 2018



Eli Abt and his co-pilot making the jump



Eli during his 120mph sky dive

memories of my mother's lovely voice at the piano, that redeeming Shabbat experience was to secure firmly for me the pivotal role of music in my life alongside my Judaism.

In August my father managed to reach England on a temporary visa for himself only, to spend days on end in London's government and Jewish community offices attempting to extricate my mother and four year old brother Raphael from Germany.

On Sunday 3 September - I recall it was a lovely day - he came to fetch me from the hostel and sat me down on a park bench. "You know they've declared war today", he said, "I don't know when we will see your mother or Raphy again".

Barely had he uttered those words than we saw a woman with a young child approaching us from the distance. We literally could not believe our eyes. Unbeknown to my father, my mother had succeeded in escaping on one of the last trains before the borders were closed for war. She had traced us from London to a Brighton park, inquiring about our whereabouts along the way.

Miraculously, we had all escaped to freedom, but my parents had no permission to stay. Instead they had succeeded in securing entry permits for South Africa expiring in December 1939 on the strength of guarantees given by an uncle in Cape Town, and notwithstanding that country's Aliens Act of 1937 barring entry to Jewish refugees.

Embarking on the *Arundel Castle* at Southampton on 9 November 1939, precisely a year since Kristallnacht, I recall my father's bitter tears as the band struck up *God save the King* when they released the ship's slip lines from the quay. His whole world had been taken from him.

Further trials were to come. Instead of making straight for Cape Town the ship, blacked out at night, zig-zagged to and fro across the Atlantic to evade the U-boats as well as the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* on their hunt for British shipping.

Inevitably we missed our entry expiry date when reaching Cape Town, were refused debarkation, and were held on the ship as she called in turn at Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban, then returning via those ports on her way back to Southampton.

My parents were desperate. They had no entry permits for the UK and they were all too aware of the attempts by the SS *St. Louis* earlier that year to discharge her refugee passengers in port after port without success.

But miracles do happen. A young Oxford graduate by name of Zena Stern had befriended us on board. She was going out to marry her fiancé Abe Herman, a Jewish Agency emissary to the Johannesburg Jewish community.

She telegraphed him details of our plight, whereupon Abe contacted the South African Jewish Board of Deputies who petitioned the Smuts Government. They

finally let us land at Cape Town in January 1940 after two months at sea.

Years later Abe Herman was to become Avraham Harman, Israel's Ambassador to the United States, later Head of the Hebrew University, while his wife Zena was to be elected to the Executive Board of UNICEF. These two outstanding people had effectively made a new life possible for us, a precious gift for which I was eventually able to thank Avraham in Jerusalem.

For a time we were totally impoverished in South Africa, and there was no party for my Bar Mitzvah in the early summer of 1942. But I was fortunate to be alive.

Unbeknown to me Erich Klibansky, the Cologne headmaster who had effectively saved my life, was murdered by the Nazis with his entire family in a forest near Minsk at around the time that I was singing my first portion of the Torah in Cape Town's Great Synagogue.

I have not spoken until now about this first part of my story because I did not want it to define or overshadow the rest of my life. I thank a merciful Providence for giving me the zest to celebrate that life which might, in other circumstances, have been taken from me.

If you would like to hear Eli tell his story in person please join us at Belsize Square Synagogue at 2pm on Thursday 7 November when he will be taking part in our annual Kristallnacht commemoration service.

Around the AJR

These are just a few of the many recent AJR events around the country.

BIRMINGHAM



Members enjoyed meeting the editor of the AJR Journal, Jo Briggs, and discussing possible story ideas. They are keen to see greater regional spread within these pages.
Karen Diamond

CHESHIRE



18 members met at the home of Linda Lee where Danny Herman spoke to us about his appearance on *The Antiques Roadshow* with a treasured silver Seder plate, after which much lively discussion over a lovely sandwich lunch ensued.
Wendy Bott

LEEDS

Egyptian born Diane Dickson told how her family were forced to leave their extremely privileged life in Egypt to flee virtually penniless to France. Eventually Diane came to the UK to work as a clothes designer for Marks & Spencer and Phase Eight, to name but a few.
Wendy Bott

LIVERPOOL

Arek Hersh MBE, accompanied by his wife Jean, recounted how after surviving Auschwitz, Birkenau and Treblinka he became one of the 300 'boys' sent to the Lake District. Arek works tirelessly for Beth Shalom, has lunched with the Queen and shared his story with thousands of schoolchildren.
Wendy Bott



**PLEASE JOIN US
AT OUR NEW
HAMPSTEAD GROUP
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
SOUTH HAMPSTEAD SYNAGOGUE**



**Monday 11 November 2019
2pm-4pm**

**at South Hampstead Synagogue,
3 Eton Road, London, Nw3 4AY**

*Rabbi Shlomo Levin will be our guest
speaker at this inaugural meeting.*

We will then continue to meet on the second
Monday of each month.

**Please contact Ros Hart on
roshart@ajr.org.uk
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AJR ANNUAL ELECTION MEETING

The Annual Election Meeting of the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) will take place at 3pm on 5 December 2019 at Winston House, 2 Dollis Park, London N3 1HF.

All questions for the chair should be submitted by **Friday 29 November** to the Chief Executive at the same postal address, or by email to michael@ajr.org.uk. If you wish to attend please contact Karen Markham on 020 8385 3070 or at karen@ajr.org.uk.

FORTHCOMING AJR EVENTS

TITLE	DATE	VENUE	DETAILS	CONTACT
KRISTALLNACHT SERVICE – PRESTWICH	5 November 12.30pm	Prestwich Hebrew Congregation (Shrubberies)	This special event will begin with lunch, followed by our keynote speaker, Dr Bea Lewkowicz, Director of AJR's Refugee Voices. The event will end with Rabbi Eisenberg reciting the Memorial Prayer for Victims of the Holocaust and Kaddish, together with a candle lighting ceremony.	Wendy Bott
KRISTALLNACHT SERVICE – LONDON	7 November 2pm	Belsize Square Synagogue	Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg will officiate the service, which will include a testimony from AJR member Eli Abt and an address by Clare Weissenberg of the Kitchener Descendants Group.	Karin Pereira
KT Lunch	13 November 12.30pm	North Western Reform Synagogue, Alyth Gardens	Les Spitz – stunning photographs of Antarctica, The Arctic, Vietnam, Singapore, Venice, and the Isle of Man	Ros Hart
Film Club	18 November 12.30pm	Sha'arei Tzedek North London Reform Synagogue, N20 9EZ	Hugh Jackman leads an all-star cast in <i>The Greatest Showman</i> , the glorious musical inspired by the story of P.T. Barnum	Ros Hart

REGIONAL MEETINGS

The AJR operates a nationwide network of Regional Groups that offer our members a unique opportunity to socialise with friends of similar backgrounds. There will be an interesting programme of speakers, plus the opportunity to meet up with old friends and make new friends.

There will always be the opportunity for socialising at each meeting, plus a cup of tea or coffee and some cake in true AJR style. All AJR members are welcome at any of these events; you do not have to be affiliated to that particular group. Please contact the relevant regional contact for full details.

GROUP	CO-ORDINATOR	DATE	TIME	EVENT
Ealing	Ros Hart	5 November	2.00pm	Judy Karbritz – Stories from Behind the Movie Camera
Ilford	Karen Diamond	6 November	10.30am	Rosie Axion – Chiltern Music Therapy
Pinner	Karen Diamond	7 November	2.00pm	John Benjamin – From <i>The Antiques Roadshow</i>
Hampstead	Ros Hart	11 November	2.00pm	Rabbi Shlomo Levin – South Hampstead Synagogue
Edgware	Ros Hart	19 November	2.00pm	Peter Maxton – Amusing stories of a Tour Guide
Hertfordshire	Karen Diamond	20 November	10.30am	Brian Nathan – The A-Z of Jewish Band Leaders
Bristol	Ros Hart	25 November	12.30pm	Lunch and a social get together
Book Club	Karen Diamond	27 November	2.00pm	Discussion on latest book read
North London	Ros Hart	28 November	10.30am	Rabbi Shulamit Ambulu – Senior Rabbi of Sha'rei Tzedek Synagogue
Muswell Hill	Ros Hart	28 November	2.00pm	Charlotte Balazs – The Dorice Restaurant in Finchley Road

REVIEWS

LEGACY: ONE FAMILY, A CUP OF TEA AND THE COMPANY THAT TOOK ON THE WORLD

Thomas Harding

William Heinemann

ISBN: 9781785150883

Many readers of the AJR Journal will have visited one of the establishments set up by J. Lyons & Co, mainly in London, but also in the provinces. The company provided high grade hotels, teashops, the corner houses where you could meet your date, or the strawberries at Wimbledon championships. At home many will have drunk their Lyons tea or coffee with Lyons Swiss Rolls. Some may have worked for Joe Lyons. But few would have known the story behind the growth and development of Britain's largest food empire and fewer of its collapse at the end of the 20th century

That story is told by Thomas Harding, himself a scion of the founding family, the Salmons and Glucksteins. He takes us on a virtual reality journey from the life and times of Lehmann Gluckstein (born 1798) in Germany, the Netherlands and finally London's East End, always on the move, escaping harassment and pogroms, founding a large family and the beginnings of a rudimentary business, to the present day. The journey is a fascinating one, taking us from poverty in Whitechapel to the most splendid properties in London; from being outsiders of society's fringes, to becoming members of the élite within the establishment, but retaining pride in their Jewish identity.

Harding takes us through the founding originally of the tobacco company, which started with family members rolling cigars on their kitchen tables to what became the largest chain of UK tobacco retailers. This was followed by the establishment of J. Lyons, to provide hotels, teashops, restaurants, bakery goods, tea, ice cream and confectionery. By the 1930s Lyons was the UK's largest food empire and

senior family members had joined the establishment as Conservative Party MPs and in the London County Council as well as on the Jewish Board of Deputies. The collapse of such a well-run and successful company in a very few years has been a mystery to many and Harding shows how overweening ambition, combined with the oil and foreign exchange crisis of the 1970s, led to an unsustainable expansion of the business.

An indication of the high regard in which their enterprise and managerial skill were held was the request in WW2 for family members to set up a munitions factory providing the shells and bombs required by the armed services. The success of this venture in what was to the family a very alien enterprise, boosted their confidence in facing any business challenge; thus company executives recognised the potential of computers in running the Lyons offices and led them amazingly to design and build the world's first business computer LEO (Lyons Electronic Office) and create LEO Computers Limited to design, manufacture and market business computers around the world.

The book is a page turner, certainly for us with our Jewish refugee heritage. It has some flaws in that at times it lacks balance, perhaps elevating the human interest over long-term impacts, but this criticism does not invalidate a superb story, superbly told.

Frank Land

Emeritus Professor, LSE and ex Lyons employee.

A JEWISH COMMUNIST IN WEIMAR GERMANY: THE LIFE OF WERNER SCHOLEM

By Ralf Hoffroge

Chicago Press

ISBN 978 1 608 469963

Scholem is a figure rarely heard of in the UK. The author presents much detail on the period 1919-1926, drawing on a remarkable number of original sources about Scholem's personal and political life.

Scholem was originally part of *Jung Juda*, a Zionist group largely of high

school students. Zionism of the time was secular and had broken with the prevalent assimilationist perspective, which many in this group abhorred. Although the book does not suggest this, maybe this early positioning encouraged Scholem's later much-needed resilience. Although originally in favour of settling in Palestine, Scholem soon became critical of Zionism's 'war objectives'.

He moved from Zionism to revolutionary politics. A Communist Party member first of the Prussian Parliament and then of the Reichstag, he witnessed regular displays of antisemitism, especially from the right-wing parties, which Scholem, unlike most of the KPD deputies, railed against. He highlighted that the especial prejudice against Eastern European Jews, including by Western European Jews, was a matter of class. The Social Democratic deputies, although not explicitly antisemitic, talked in code of the 'foreigner problem' and not allowing more Jews into Germany, which Scholem condemned. Scholem, more than most left deputies, consistently took seriously the rising tide of Nazism and antisemitism.

Scholem dedicated himself to the revolutionary struggle in Germany, going through a number of left organisations and ending up sympathetic to Trotskyism. In the meantime, he was the Nazi's bogey man, a Communist and a Jew, and from early on, they caricatured him. First arrested straight after the Reichstag fire in 1933, he was ultimately sent to Buchenwald. Assigned quarry duties, he was taken off to one side by the SS guards and shot in July 1940.

Merilyn Moos

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN THE HOLOCAUST

By Agnes Grunwald-Spier

Amberley

ISBN 978 1 4456 7147 5

We all know, to various extents, the harrowing stories of Nazi persecution but the general focus is 'the Jews' as a whole and seldom are the demographic differences discussed within that

overarching unit. Agnes Grunwald-Spier's book starts to fill this gap by allowing the women who survived Nazi persecution to speak for themselves, not just as Jews, but as Jewish women. The specificity of womanhood and what it entails in the context of extreme despair, brutality, but also hope, is explored in all its facets in this monumental work.

Women from all walks of life are given the chance to speak up, many of them posthumously. Readers have a glimpse of what it must have meant for women to be thrust from an often domestic existence, into a life of persecution and resistance. We get to know mothers and wives who relentlessly struggled to keep their families together; women who fought to free their male loved ones from prisons and camps, all while attempting to assure their own survival.

To me, one of the most striking parts is the section dedicated to Jewish women who resisted. In my opinion, just by existing and refusing to relent, all the women discussed were somewhat part of the resistance. Grunwald-Spier also meets women who were on the verge of death outside the doors of the gas chambers, yet made their last stand and fought back, injuring or killing SS men.

Grunwald-Spier introduces every woman, her history, and how she came to know about that woman's story in short introductory paragraphs before moving onto personal accounts, recollections, diary entries and many other forms of writing. These short introductions not only give the reader interesting background information and insight into the context in which the women lived, but they also give a very personal insight into the research of the book itself. This book shows the best of women, their unbelievable resilience and strength, while also giving them the opportunity to show their fears and weaknesses in the face of unbelievable brutality and cruelty.

While Grunwald-Spier's mission was to lay bare the experiences of Jewish women in the Holocaust and give them a space to narrate and to be remembered, she inevitably also tells her own story, inserting herself into the

narrative as another Jewish woman who survived Nazi persecution. The book ends with her telling the story of her own family's history, yet she does not finish it. Her family story remains incomplete, along with thousands of other stories of victims and survivors of the Holocaust, but with this book, the number of unheard and forgotten voices has been reduced.

Alessandra Bassey

Reprinted with the kind permission of The Wiener Holocaust Library, on whose blog this review first appeared.

ANNA AT WAR

By Helen Peters

Nosy Crow

ISBN 978 1 788 004718

Well, what can I say? Wow!

I was gripped from the first sentence and couldn't put it down! I would have to say that it isn't a book for the light-hearted. However, I would recommend it.

I love how Helen Peters touched on some very sensitive issues and showed them to the reader exactly as they were. I love how it addressed that things were awful back then and that there was no way of escaping in a way that makes one realise how good the world around us is today.

I did feel as though at some points, it was very grown-up and throughout the story, it centred around some very adult themes, so I would recommend it to somebody about the age of 11 and upwards.

In spite of those reasons, I loved the book and would definitely read it again. It grabbed me in a way that I never thought a book could and dragged me through highs and lows.

When Anna was confessing the truth to Molly, I started to realise that everything could end in a good way. I loved how it completely showed each character's emotions fully.

So, overall, I would say that this book was awesome!

Imogen Gibson, age 11

AJR ANNUAL CHANUKAH PARTY



WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2019

12pm – 3.30pm

New North London Synagogue

Please join us at our Annual Chanukah Party

A welcome by
Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg
and **Michael Newman, AJR's CEO**

Entertainment by:

Judy Karbritz
The Story of Musicals

and

Sandra Lee
Operatic Singer and soloist with The Zemel Choir

The chance to socialise with friends old and new

A two-course hot lunch
£10.00 per person payable on the door
Places must be booked in advance.

Please contact

Ros Hart or Karen Diamond on
roshart@ajr.org.uk or
karendiamond@ajr.org.uk
or call the office on 020 8385 3070



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LOOKING FOR?

The AJR regularly receives messages from our members and others looking for people or for help in particular subjects. Here are some of the most recent requests – please get in touch directly with the person concerned if you can help.

GUNTHER RUF and FAMILY

Andy Lawrence, a History teacher at Hampton School, is seeking information on Gunter Ruf (born in Herne, Germany) as well as on his family.
A.Lawrence@hamptonschool.org.uk

SETTLING IN THE UK

My husband and I often give talks at the Holocaust Museum at Laxton. I came over on the Kindertransport and our talks are about my parents' escape from Germany and their lives in Hitler's Germany. Most of the speakers, because of time limitation, do not relate what happened to them once they were safely in England. There is very little written or spoken about the lives of the Jewish refugees post 1939. I wonder if those interested in this subject might like to write a short account of how they managed to survive in a country at war with Germany, or any other country from which they were driven. I would like to compile a booklet on their experiences. Photos, poems or art work could accompany accounts.
ruthschwiening@gmail.com

JEWISH COOKS

Justine Kanter is involved in a writing project that looks at Jewish people's relationship with the kitchen and the particular characteristics of the Jewish cook.

She writes: "We are our kitchens. Our entire relationship with food - healthy



Information panel about the Rushen internment camp (Isle of Man Internment)

and unhealthy, responsive or restricted, adventurous or timid - is indelibly shaped by our earliest experiences in a single room. The kitchen is where we first experience the concept of shared eating and cooking. It is where we learn how food may be a crucial aspect of social bonding in our lives, rooting a family in a shared culture and particular tastes. A kitchen teaches us about tradition, and it plays an important role in the handing down of culinary skills and traditional menus.

"The Jewish cook revels in the creation of familiar dishes, ones that bring pleasure to loved ones, but these dishes are much more than just the flavour and taste that they bring to the table. Behind each recipe is a story of local traditions and daily life, each recalling a certain romance and nostalgia of a vanished world. The memories of ancestors and lost cultures holds firm and through food we are able to reconnect to our past. For Jews, who have always been on the move, leaving things behind in times of upheaval and distress, this holds extra importance.

We have had to evolve and adapt, but our cultural identity through food has remained strong and powerful."

Justine is hoping to find a number of stories, some troubled, others tender and funny, about Jews who have an interesting and remarkable relationship with cooking.
justinekanter@googlemail.com

ISLE OF MAN INTERNMENT

AJR members Helen Grunberg and Sue Arnold recently had a very informative trip to the Isle of Man and have passed on this message from the Manx Museum:

"The Museum is trying to reconstitute its records as the men's card details were destroyed after the war, though 75% of the women's details survived. So if you know of anyone who was interned on the Isle of Man, please contact The Manx Museum with the internee's full name, date of birth and nationality, and any other information."
Sarah.Christian@mnh.im

JOSEPH PEREIRA
(ex-AJR caretaker over 22 years)
is now available for DIY repairs
and general maintenance.
No job too small,
very reasonable rates.
Please telephone 07966 887 485.

Books Bought
MODERN AND OLD
Eric Levene
020 8364 3554 / 07855387574
ejlevine@blueyonder.co.uk

OBITUARIES

MARGARETE MENDELSON

Born: 2 January 1930, Berlin

Died: 1 September 2019, Hove, East Sussex

Margarete Mendelsohn was the only child of Selma and Alfred. Initially her life was idyllic and carefree, but she experienced several traumatic events before escaping Germany in 1938.

Margarete vividly remembered coming face to face with Hitler, as he sped past an adoring and screaming crowd in a motorcade. It left an indelible mark on the young Margarete. In another incident, a group of Nazi youths broke the china head of her much cherished doll.

In November 1938, just a month before leaving Germany, she saw the streets littered with glass and torn up pieces of a Torah, covered in human excrement. She also experienced the trauma of having her mother arrested by the Gestapo, for not having the right papers.

In finally reaching England, their first few years were spent living in run down boarding houses in London. Margarete soon mastered the English Language and obtained a placement at Anna Freud's therapeutic nursery on Finchley Road which led to a qualification in nursery nursing. Margarete worked in the sector for several



years before joining her parents' retail business in leather goods in Slough. Meanwhile the family discovered that several relations had killed their children and themselves rather than be taken by Nazis.

Toward the end of her twenties, Margarete married and settled in the south of England to raise a family. In later life, Margarete struggled to write her autobiography, but an opportunity to talk about her writing plans on Radio Sussex led to finding an editor and a publisher. In 2012 *The Nazis – through the eyes of a child* was published.

Despite her increasing frailty she always managed to attend her local synagogue on the holidays and remain involved in some social activities. Last November, to mark the 80th Anniversary of Kristallnacht, she gave a talk to the congregation and was interviewed on local TV.

Margarete is greatly missed by her four children, David, Jonathan, Francesca and Simon, grandchildren, Michael and Amy, and great grandchildren, Isabella and Theo.

David Mendelsohn

STEPHANIE KESTER (née Leyser)

Born: 26 February 1927, Chemnitz

Died: 3 October 2019, London

Steffi-Carola Leyser was born into an extended family of successful industrialists, scientists and professional people. Her father invented a particular form of knitwear and manufactured stretchy bandages for the German army.

Steffi's maternal grandfather, Albert Sommerfeld, was one of the founders of the Berlin Zoo and often took Steffi there. By trade he was a chemist and his wife, her grandmother Laura, had a beautiful voice and played the piano.

But Germany was changing and Steffi was banned from attending the Gymnasium despite her exam success.

She volunteered to join a Kindertransport in the hope that her parents would follow. Just weeks before WW2, Martin and Paula successfully escaped but her grandparents and other members of the family did not survive.

Steffi was fostered by an Anglo-Jewish family, the Whites, in Welford-on-Avon. Steffi has stayed in touch with Pamela White, who was a similar age to her and showed much kindness.



As a young girl Steffi was both an academic and creative pupil and earned herself a place at Birmingham art school. She then launched her own fashion label and her husband Simon Kester, whom she married in 1957, enjoyed helping her. Eventually she sold her own label to devote herself to her children and to Wizo, the charity she held dear.

She recently recorded her story, astounding everyone with the clarity of her memory. Throughout her life she could recite poetry, beat the intro to name classical composers, and discuss the plots of literary works in English and German. She will be hugely missed by her adoring husband Simon, children Mimi and David, their spouses, five grandchildren and many friends around the world.

Miriam (Mimi) Kester

Events and Exhibitions

REFUGEE CRISIS THEN & NOW

To commemorate the work of the Revd James Parkes (1896-1981), one of the most important campaigners for Jewish refugees and educators against antisemitism in the 20th twentieth century, there will be a special event featuring an exhibition and a talk by Barbara Winton, with a response by Prof Tony Kushner. *Wednesday 13 November at 7pm West London Synagogue, W1H 5AU*
Paula.churchill@wls.org.uk

MAKING THEATRE IN EXILE

Delving into a suitcase full of sketches, songs and letters, the theatre group *Foreign Affairs* will bring to life the story of the Laterndl theatre in Hampstead, established by a group of exile actors and writers from Nazi-occupied Austria during WW2. *14 November at 6.30pm and 8.30pm*

Hampstead Jazz Club, NW3 1JD
www.hampsteadjazzclub.com

MIGRATIONS: MASTERWORKS

The Ben Uri Collection's exhibition of artworks from migrants across three centuries is now on show in Gloucester to help mark the 20th anniversary of Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers. *Until 28 January Museum of Gloucester, GL11HP*
www.gloucester.gov.uk/museum-of-gloucester/

CHILDREN UNDER THE NAZIS

Professor Nicholas Stargardt will share his research into the impact of Nazism on children during the Holocaust. *Tuesday 3 December at 6.15pm Wiener Holocaust Library, WC1B 5DP*
www.wienerlibrary.co.uk



ROSH RING AROUND

Charlotte Balazs and Danielle Prieto were among our team of wonderful volunteers who managed to contact almost every AJR member aged over 90 to wish them Shana Tovah. Their calls were much appreciated – as one recipient, Eva Evans MBE, wrote "I am 95 and the number of telephone calls I receive is now much reduced. Please pass on my thanks to the people who take the trouble to make these calls."



DOUBLE MAZELTOV

AJR member Renee Frew (on front row, in green) who came to Britain on a Kindertransport when she was 13 years old, recently celebrated her 94th birthday, which coincided with the Golden Wedding of her daughter and son-in-law, Joann and Ivor Lipsey.
© *Glasgow Jewish Telegraph*

New AJR Plaques

The AJR is planning to unveil two new plaques in our scheme to form tangible links between key locations where refugees were welcomed and/or lived or worked.

A plaque honouring the artist and illustrator **Milein Cosman** and her musician and writer husband **Hans Keller** will be unveiled at their former home in Hampstead on 25 November. They were both very prominent émigrés and you can watch a wonderful interview with Milein in AJR's Refugees Voices website www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/films.

The following month, on 18 December, we will unveil a plaque in London to honour the British banker and philanthropist **Otto Schiff**, who helped save 12,000 German and Austrian Jews from the Nazis. The location of the plaque will be the site of the first offices of the Jewish Refugees Committee that Schiff founded and chaired.

For more information about either of these events please contact **Melanie Jawett** on melanie@ajr.org.uk or **020 8385 3072**.



Milein Cosman and Hans Keller, somewhere near Piccadilly Circus in 1948

Published by The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), a company limited by guarantee.

Registered office: **Winston House, 2 Dollis Park, Finchley, London N3 1HF**

Registered in England and Wales with charity number: 1149882 and company number: 8220991

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Printed by FBprinters, Unit 5, St Albans House, St Albans Lane, London NW11 7QB Tel: 020 8458 3220 Email: info@fbprinters.com

The AJR Journal is printed on 100% recycled material and posted out in fully recyclable plastic mailing envelopes.