

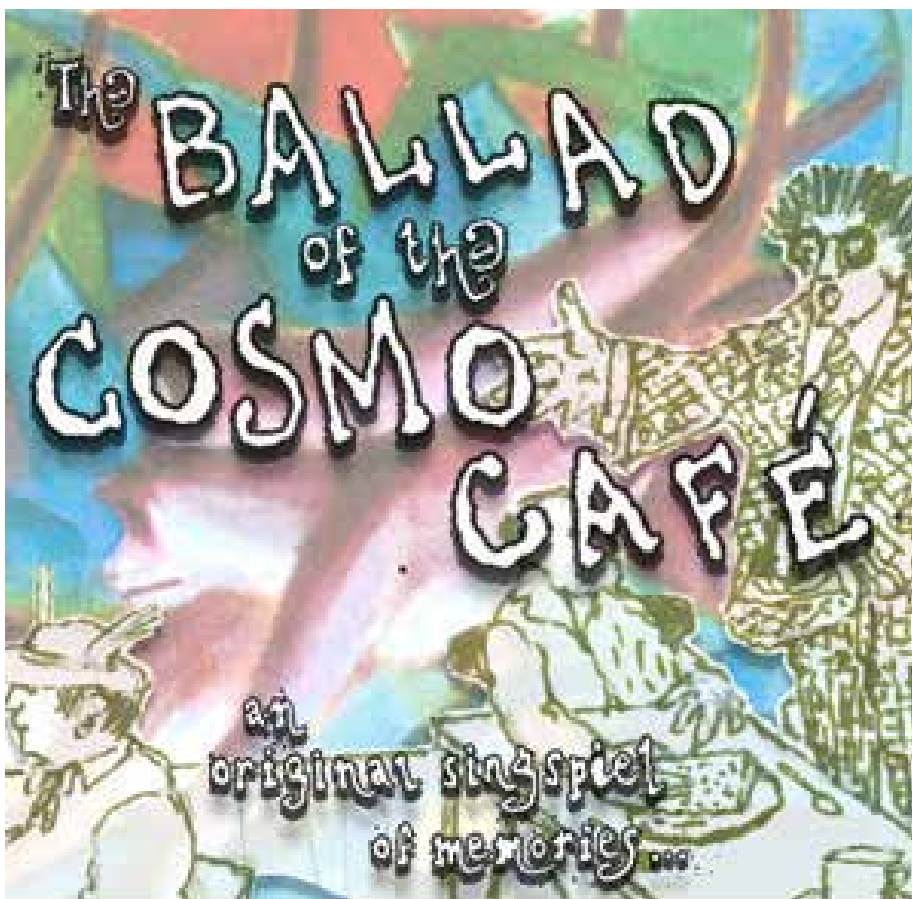


AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

Lasting Legacies

How fortunate we are, in hindsight, that the year-long **Insiders Outsiders Festival** officially ended on 31 March. The Festival consisted of more than one hundred and fifty talks, concerts, exhibitions and events, all over the country, paying tribute to the impact of refugees from Nazi Europe on British culture since the 1930s.



ADAPTING TO THE TIMES

We hope you are well and managing during these extraordinary times.

Here at the AJR we have adapted our organisation and resources to continue to provide essential frontline services. You can read about this on pages 4 & 5, while on page 24 we have listed some activities that you might consider personally interesting.

As is usual for this time of the year, we've also included our Annual Report for 2019, making this a 'bumper' issue. We hope you enjoy reading it and, as always, would be delighted to receive any feedback.

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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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Plans are in the pipeline to bring back the brilliant *Ballad of the Cosmo Cafe*, performed to great acclaim last November

The AJR was proud to back the Festival, the brainchild of the art historian and curator, Monica Bohm-Duchen, who drove the project with huge energy and ambition.

It has been a very personal project for

Bohm-Duchen. As she wrote recently, 'Both my own parents arrived in this country from central Europe as teenagers in the very late 1930s, "just in time", but suffered profound personal losses – my
Continued on page 2

Lasting Legacies (cont.)

father in particular, who could never speak of them.' Her mother is the distinguished refugee photographer, Dorothy Bohm. She was born Dorothea Israelit in 1924 in Königsberg, East Prussia. From 1932 to 1939 she lived with her family in Lithuania and was sent to England in 1939 where she became one of Britain's leading post-war photographers.

What is perhaps most impressive about the Insiders Outsiders Festival is the range of events. Venues have included major cultural centres, such as Sotheby's, Kings Place and the British Film Institute. But they have also included less well-known places all over the country, from Truro Cathedral in Cornwall to the Fermoy Gallery in Norfolk; from the Pier Arts Centre in Orkney to Kendal in Cumbria. Interestingly, only very few were explicitly Jewish.

Then there is the range of cultural figures represented, from a season of Alexander Korda films at the BFI to artists like Kurt Schwitters and John Heartfield, from Pamela Howard's *Ballad of the Cosmo Café* to an exhibition at Sotheby's last Summer on émigré art dealers, curated by Sue Grayson Ford. There was an event at this year's Jewish Book Week about fashion in Weimar Berlin and a concert called *Farewell to Vienna*, featuring the work of refugee composers including Hans Gál and Joseph Horowitz; an academic conference in Cambridge, *City of Scholars, City of Refuge*, about scholars and scientists who settled in Cambridge and a touring exhibition about refugee artists, currently on show at MOMA, Machynlleth, in Powys in Wales.

Exhibitions, performances and talks are by their very nature transient. But there are lasting legacies. First, there is a book, *Insiders Outsiders*, edited by Bohm-Duchen and published by Lund Humphries last year. The contributors are a Who's Who of critics and cultural historians who have studied the impact of refugees on British visual culture, from Daniel Snowman (author of *The Hitler Emigrés* and a trustee of the Festival) and Sarah MacDougall, a curator at Ben Uri, on émigré art teachers, to Anna Nyburg on designers and Michael Berkowitz on photographers. Beautifully illustrated, the book explores, in the words of Daniel Snowman, 'What resulted when people

schooled in the culture of pre-Hitlerian Central Europe (Expressionist art, Bauhaus architecture, Schoenbergian Modernism, Brechtian drama) began to mix their labours with the arguably more genteel culture that they found in Britain: a world of Bloomsbury, Garden Cities, the BBC and the olde-world revivalist architecture of Edwin Lutyens or the musical pastoralism of Vaughan Williams?'

Secondly, Andrew Snell, has directed a series of filmed interviews with both first- and second-generation artists, entitled *Fractured Worlds*. Snell worked at ITV's *The South Bank Show*, was editor of BBC 1's *Omnibus* and was one of the leading arts TV documentary-makers of his generation.

The Festival website (<https://insidersoutsidersfestival.org>) and newsletter will continue for the foreseeable future, offering information about relevant cultural events. Discussions about the Festival's afterlife are ongoing. It is hoped there will be events marking the 80th anniversary of internment and the 70th anniversary of the Festival of Britain, both significant moments for many refugee cultural figures.

Then there is the title itself. There was never just one kind of cultural refugee. Refugees were complicated, divided between Insiders and Outsiders. Insiders often came from the great cultural centres of central Europe – Berlin, Vienna, Prague. Often young, many learnt English and grew up in Britain, assimilating quickly. Others soon found a home in central British institutions, Oxford and Cambridge, the BBC and Fleet Street, the galleries of Cork Street and Britain's most famous concert halls.

Perhaps the classic example was Isaiah Berlin. A Jew from Riga in Latvia, he was a professor at Oxford, knighted, a Trustee of the National Gallery, President of the British Academy, presided over the opera committee of the Royal Opera House and was offered (but declined) a peerage. He watched the Coronation of the Queen from the *Daily Telegraph* window in Piccadilly, sat with Margot Fonteyn and Cecil Beaton to watch the trooping of the Colour ceremony in 1954.

But then there were the Outsiders, more often from eastern Europe, who struggled to fit in. These included Expressionist

artists, Marxist historians and sociologists, Yiddish writers, atonal composers.

Refugee artists often had very different experiences and impact for a number of important reasons. Some were too old to adjust to a very different culture. Alfred Kerr, for example, was one of the best-known theatre critics in Weimar Germany. But he never learned fluent English and couldn't build a career here. His son, Sir Michael Kerr, QC, by contrast, went to Cambridge and became one of Britain's leading lawyers and Michael's sister, Judith, learned fluent English and went on to become a famous children's writer.

It mattered where they came from. German physicists and chemists were already well known in the science labs of Oxford and Cambridge. Poets and artists from Poland had no such networks or reputations. Their work was too foreign, too European, too Jewish. 'No one is as lonely as a Yiddish poet,' said the Polish poet, Itzik Manger. He never settled and eventually moved to Israel. In his poem, *The British Museum Reading Room*, Louis MacNeice wrote,

'Between the enormous fluted Ionic columns
There seeps from heavily jowled or hawk-like figures
The guttural sorrow of the refugee.'

In the British Museum Reading Room the historian, Norbert Elias, worked on his masterpiece, *The Civilising Process*. Now considered one of the great social historians of the second half of the 20th century, Elias arrived in Britain in 1935, but he couldn't find a permanent university post for almost twenty years. He joined the sociology department at Leicester when he was 57. No major university would take him. His work wasn't widely known in Britain until he was 'discovered' in the late 1960s.

The Insiders Outsiders Festival has been an astonishing achievement, celebrating the success of so many important cultural figures, but also reminding us of those who have been neglected for far too long. It has brought together exhibitions and concerts, but, perhaps above all, it has asked the right questions about these extraordinary figures and their impact on Britain.

David Herman

LETTER FROM ISRAEL

BY DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON



THE SUNSHINE HOSTEL



I grew up knowing that the Sunshine Hostel had been an important part of my parents' lives. 'Hostel children'

were frequent visitors in our family home, even though many or most of them were no longer children. Somehow their relations with my parents remained warm throughout their lives. As a young married couple they had been employed as house parents at a hostel for children who had come to England via the Kindertransport. For most of WW2 that was their occupation, and although not an easy task, it saved them from being interned in a camp, unlike many of their refugee friends and acquaintances.

I was born in 1942, when the hostel was located in a spacious old house in Hampstead (Rosecroft Avenue, I think), and I have photos of myself as a baby in the arms of one or another of those children. I imagine that I must have been very spoiled and showered with love by them.

During the Blitz, when bombs rained down on London, many of the children, myself included, were evacuated to the countryside. I still have in my possession copies of the typed and stencilled letters my father sent every week to each of their 'children,' informing them of the whereabouts and addresses of the others, passing on little snippets of news and adding a few words about the weekly *sidra*. The tone of the letters was always cheerful, even humorous, although those must have been difficult emotions to express at that time.

Some time ago I received an email out of the blue from someone I did not know informing me that her mother had been a 'Hostel child'. The author, Mindy Hermann, said that she lived in New

York and her mother, Ruth Hermann, née Fortgang, now over 90, was in California. Mindy wrote that she sometimes visited her mother, and that on her next visit she would try to make contact with me via Skype so that her mother and I could have a chat.

Mindy told how she had found me on the internet because her mother had been trying to find a book my father had supposedly written about his life. No such book had ever transpired, though a chapter by him in a book about our family (originally written in Dutch and translated into Hebrew and English) was published in 1991, but was never made available on the internet. However, the Google trail had led Mindy to me because I had published my own novels on Amazon and had added my maiden name to my married name. Strange and wonderful are the ways of the internet in this day and age.

So, one day, as I was having breakfast and it was evening in California, via Skype I found myself face-to-face with a nice-looking, well-coiffed elderly lady (Ruth) and her lovely daughter (Mindy) with whom it was very easy to talk. Ruth's first words to me were: "Dorothea, I was there when you were born!" There aren't many people in the world who can say that, though I think she meant that she was there when my mother brought me home from the maternity hospital. Ruth went on to tell me how wonderful my parents had been, what good and loving care they had taken of 'their' children, adding "after all, they were just honeymooners." I'm not sure that's exactly correct, as they were married in September 1940, but they were definitely newlyweds. She added that she had only really appreciated what my parents had done when she herself became a mother.

It was nice to hear the kind words Ruth had for my parents, and I would like to thank her and Mindy for keeping their memory alive and taking the trouble to reach out and share that precious sentiment with me.

Around the AJR

The AJR's programme of face-to-face events and activities is currently on hold, pending relaxation of the national lockdown. We apologise therefore for the absence of our normal events listings within these pages.

In the meantime AJR staff and volunteers around the country are carrying out a phone-around to check in with members. If you have not yet heard from us but do have concerns or needs, please let us know. Although we are now working remotely, the switchboard remains open during office hours on 020 8385 3070 and you can also directly contact our Outreach Manager, Susan Harrod, via email on susan@ajr.org.uk

Self-isolation A POEM

Corona, corona, corona -
I have to be alone.
But if I'm the fortunate owner
Of a corded telephone -
If I've got a piece of paper
And an ink-filled biro pen
Then I've got some real companions
And I won't be alone again.
Oh the corded phone is working
And the mobile phone is dead.
Where is the virus now lurking?
In my eyes, on my hands, in my head?
Just give me a pen and some paper
And I will write out a list.
I will find it again tomorrow
As I know that it will still exist.
All the things I want to remind me
Even though they don't matter a jot
Like the names of books and of music -
Though alone I still love what I've got.
Mrs. Audrey Rosney, Oxford

Business not quite as usual

Despite the lockdown AJR is continuing to provide frontline services to support our members. Although operating remotely, AJR staff, trustees and volunteers are endeavouring to be in touch with those AJR members with the greatest needs whilst also connecting to members to suggest ways to keep busy. These are a few of the activities we are undertaking during these challenging times:

- **Telephone call-around** – starting with our members aged 90 and upwards, including some centenarians, AJR staff, trustees and volunteers are in regular phone contact with our members to check that they have enough food, are able to obtain medicines and basic provisions. Above all, the call is to offer reassurance and a calm and friendly voice.
- **Claims Conference emergency funding** We are working with the Claims Conference which has established a special emergency fund for Holocaust survivors during the COVID-19 Crisis, to access additional support for our members.
- **e-Newsletter** – to complement the monthly AJR Journal, now into its 75th year of continuous publication, we launched an e-Newsletter to keep in more regular contact with members during this time. The weekly bulletin provides options for mental stimulation, such as TV and film opportunities, recipes, virtual tours of the world's iconic museums and excerpts from the AJR testimony archives.

- **Food deliveries** – Our Meals on Wheels service remains in operation as we continue to provide weekly food deliveries.
- **Online conferencing** – The acclaimed author Hadley Freeman, speaking about her new book *House of Glass*, was our guest speaker on 22 April for our first AJR Book Club Zoom broadcast event
- **Recording of testimonies** – We are advancing our *Refugee Voices* testimony recordings and *My Story* books by interviewing members via Skype, Zoom and by phone.

AJR member **Rev Bernd Koschland**, who came to the UK on a Kindertransport from Germany, told us: "I feel that isolation shuts out family and friends. To alleviate the boredom the mind must remain active and I do this by reading, writing and other activities. I have received calls from my AJR social worker which made me feel that I have not been forgotten. This illustrates the care and time taken by the AJR to contact the elderly."

Another member, Holocaust survivor **Lili Pohlman**, commented: "It is such a lovely thought that AJR has taken the time to give me a call. I am grateful and it is nice to know there are people who care. It restores hope in humankind. Nobody likes to feel isolated and I am cut off from my family who live abroad so I really appreciate being contacted."

AJR Chief Executive, Michael Newman, said: "At this critical time, we are making every effort to stay in close contact with our members and to continue providing our social and welfare services. We are able to access additional funds specifically for survivors and refugees and urge colleagues to let us know if there is anyone else who might need our help."

We hope you find these individual reports from some of our staff interesting:

THE SOCIAL WORKER



Jim Sutherland is one of 15 AJR social workers who between them cover the length and breadth of Britain to support our most vulnerable members.

Jim joined AJR in 2012, originally on a temporary basis to cover someone's sick leave. He has been in his current role for just over three years, looking after AJR members on the east coast of Scotland.

Used to working remotely from head office, the biggest challenge for Jim has been the inability actually to visit his members or meet up with colleagues from AJR and local agencies. The social work team now meets regularly via video conference and keeps meticulous records of all contact with AJR members, in the event of someone else needing to step in.

Jim's current case book includes approximately 30 individual households. These range from families who, in 'normal' times, he might only visit occasionally to some he sees very regularly, in some cases multiple times a month. Since lockdown was introduced he is making much more frequent contact with all these members, especially with those who are older or more vulnerable, or whose families live away.

"Generally they all seem to be coping remarkably well," said Jim. "Some of them are being helped by neighbours or local community projects and I have heard of some remarkable acts of kindness. One couple cannot praise their postman highly enough, while another lady – who lives on her own in a remote area – is having meals delivered by a local hotel and is taking part in Bridge games with people from all over the country and, in the evenings, even from across the Atlantic.

"They all tell me how much they appreciate the AJR's support during this difficult time, and to please keep on phoning."



THE OUTREACH CO-ORDINATOR



Karen Diamond is part of a five-strong team of Outreach Co-ordinators who organise events and activities for AJR members across the country.

Because of the vulnerable age of many of our members we suspended all face-to-face meetings in early March, well before the national lockdown.

Having phoned most of our members, including the ones who come regularly to our regional groups, we realised that we could use digital technology to engage with at least some of them. So in early April we introduced virtual meetings via 'Zoom', and so far these have proved to be very successful. It's particularly nice to see people's faces and see them smile, and to be able to ask them in person how they are doing.

Although you can 'Zoom' from anywhere we are sticking to small local groups of people who already know each other, to make sure everyone has a chance to speak. So far the chat has been mainly social but we may move on to themed discussions, depending on how long this goes on for, so that people get a chance to think and talk about something other than Coronavirus.

Sadly we have had to cancel our five-day trip to the Cotswolds, which required a lot of work. We had the most amazing itinerary lined up so our plan is to replicate it exactly for 2021. We had also planned quite a few day trips over the summer, but fortunately these hadn't yet been advertised, so we're keeping them on ice to reschedule for as soon as we are able to. I hope this will give members a few days out to look forward to, once the current travel restrictions are relaxed.

THE ARCHIVIST



Dr Bea Lewkowicz runs the AJR's Refugee Voices Archive, which has captured the testimonies of hundreds of Holocaust survivors and refugees. She writes:

I am working in my home office, listening to the many voices we have recorded for the AJR Refugee Voices Archive, checking interview transcripts, looking at all our photographs and talking to colleagues about which stories to feature on Social Media and new films. I feel that while we are confined to our homes, with every trip outside potentially dangerous, the testimonies speak to us in a different way.

I find myself thinking about the interviewees who were in hiding for a long time, not knowing when things would change. I think of the interviewees whose parents shielded them from the 'outside', so that they would not understand the threat they were in. I think of my mother, who always said her teenage years were stopped by the war. I think of the interviewees who talk about food and rations. I think of the refugees who helped the war efforts, by volunteering for the British army, doing war work or becoming nurses, such as Hortense Gordon, who was in charge of a ward of 31 children during the Blitz, wearing a tin hat and a gas mask and putting red blankets on the children's beds to protect them from debris.

In no way do I want to compare our mostly comfortable confinement to the experience of our interviewees, but I do believe we can take inspiration and wisdom from those who lived through a very difficult period of history, in which they had to face separation, displacement and uncertainty. I love listening to the messages recorded at the end of each interview. One in particular comes to

my mind, from Viennese-born Walter Brunner, who came to Britain, aged 16, with the help of Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld. He says: "Try to help people, people who are in need, try to give some time, give some effort, give some love to the community, to the people, they desperately need it, and never mind, you might need it as well sometimes, so give it now whilst you can. I am grateful to many, many people who have looked after me, who have helped me".

It seems many people in the UK are taking this message to heart and helping in any way they can. Personally, I am indebted to the carers and nurses taking care of my parents, both Holocaust survivors. The Corona crisis has certainly turned the world of many second generation refugees and survivors, like myself, upside down. Daily contact and daily phone calls are limited, if at all possible. Any time I call the care home, I worry about the news. I cannot be there to comfort my mother, who survived the war in hiding in Slovakia, and who never trusted anyone outside the family. In these new times of Covid-19, we all need to trust the amazing doctors, nurses, and carers to do the very best for our relatives.

Although we are separated from our parents, children, or grand-children, we can be grateful to our computers, tablets, and phones which connect us to the outside world, our families, our friends, our synagogues. Some of our interviewees have taken up the digital challenge and are now even preparing to talk to school children through tablets or computers. The AJR Refugee Voices Archive is also going digital by piloting 'remote interviews', either on the phone or through Zoom. If you (or a family member) would like to participate in 'Remote Refugee Voices' interviews, please contact me at bea@ajr.org.uk - I am looking forward to these new virtual encounters.

AJR staff are all now working remotely, but we remain contactable on 020 8385 3070 and by email at enquiries@ajr.org.uk

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.

HOW TO CELEBRATE VE DAY

I very much liked David Herman's editorial about VE Day (April). As always, he writes un sentimentally, precisely and unemotionally about the real victors of the war. He mentions the enormous human sacrifice of Russia and its people in fighting Hitler's might, while their victory only strengthened the Soviet system, as cruel and inhuman as the Nazi system was.

When celebrating the end of the war I always tremble, thinking of my mother (42) and sister (just 14) who were gassed in Auschwitz at the end of October 1944, less than 3 months before this hellish camp was liberated. My father died there too. I became one of the 30 million who never returned to their homes, as David Herman writes in his excellent article.

Frank Fantl, East Grinstead, West Sussex

David Herman is to be commended for asking just how we should now commemorate victory in WW2. All the more unfortunate that so much of his answer involves denigrating Britain's own war effort.

For a start, it is a simple fact – not a “cherished myth” - that for a full year in 1940-41 Britain was alone in continuing to proclaim resistance to Nazi Germany and its allies (the latter at that time including, at least in theory, Stalinist Russia).

Secondly, casualties were of course incomparably greater in eastern than in western Europe (including North Africa), but Mr. Herman swallows far too readily the suggestion of Norman Davies – hardly the “open-minded observer” of his own imagining – that relative casualty statistics are the only legitimate indicator of what was strategically important. What such statistics indicate rather more reliably is the respective leaderships' indifference to human sacrifice.

Thirdly, whatever one may say about the bombing of Dresden or indeed the post-war deportation of Cossacks to the Soviet Union, Mr. Herman has no business implying that Britain was somehow complicit in the destruction of Warsaw or the atrocities committed against German

civilians by the Red Army.

Last but not least, with the relevant events receding into the distance, why continue to commemorate Britain's contribution and Britain's sacrifice in this partial manner, forgetting about events in the Far East and the Pacific? Especially when Britain surely was complicit in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Peter M. Oppenheimer, Oxford

THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS

I have got very bad news for Michael Johnson (Letters, April) who quite rightly complains about the novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Its publisher lumps it together with the author's other novels. There is no claim that it is based on facts. There are some good historical novels about but this is not one of them. Yet for the last 14 years it has been the staple diet in primary schools, where it is taught as fact and thus wrongly influences young minds who believe that what teacher says can be trusted. Their Holocaust education thus starts on the wrong foot because, however misleading, impossible and poor the fiction is, it is easy on the brain. It is being taken at face value without questioning. That explains the poor state of Holocaust education. What should have put every adult reader on high alert was the praise heaped on it by the likes of *The Guardian* (“a small wonder of a book”), *The Observer*, *The Independent*, *The Irish Independent*, etc. which all ought to have known better.

The picture on the front says it all. The two boys could have never come anywhere close to one another. Yet not only are they shown sitting on either side of a single fence with the hands of both being so close to the wire that electrocution would have been inevitable and obvious to any intelligent being. When I pointed out the shortcomings in front and throughout the book I was told, with conviction, that it had been made into a film, as proof that it must be true. Here I side with Schiller in his “*Maid of Orleans*”: *Gegen Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens* (Against ignorance even the gods fight in vain).

Frank Bright, Martlesham Heath, Suffolk

I read with interest the letter from Michael Johnson, who had the chutzpah to suggest that the film *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, which David Herman praised (March), was “down there in the same gutter” as *Life is Beautiful*. The fact remains that Michael J. may not have enjoyed the film but, in my view, his criticism is way over the top and something of an affront to David Herman. Michael J. says that of the two boys who were featured in the film, the son of the commandant would have been indoctrinated in the Hitler Youth: Improbable, because I believe the film was based on Rudolf Hoess, commandant of Auschwitz, so it is highly unlikely that the son was given tuition to become a Nazi! Their villa was directly next to the camp.

Michael J. writes “What are we meant to make of the ending? That it was a tragic ‘mistake’ for a German boy to be killed along with his Jewish friend and we should sympathise with the grief of the commandant's wife?” This is, in my view, a normal reaction: irrespective of the nationality of a mother whose child is killed, it is a tragedy for her and she understandably weeps for her lost child.

In our religion forgiveness is prized above all else: The late Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck spent two years in Theresienstadt. When the camp was liberated in 1945 he prevented the lynching of the Nazi guards by embittered inmates. Following his release he went back to Germany to seek reconciliation.

Gordon Spencer, Barnet

Let us hope that the virus situation will not take too long to get sorted - for all of us! I look forward to future copies of the Journal with anticipation, for my partner also to read. Many thanks for all you are doing.

After my Kindertransport from Berlin in 1939 I consider that I have had a very lucky and enjoyable life - wonderful foster parents (also refugees who knew my parents), six happy years in three different refugee/Jewish boys' hostels, education leading to a degree in mechanical engineering, 37 years interesting working life in an aircraft test laboratory, marriage to

my wonderful Scottish wife (sadly deceased in 2015), our lovely daughter Heather and son-in-law Ian, grandson Alexander and fiancée Lizzie, and now a joyful continuation with a lovely lady partner aged 80, still enjoying holidays (e.g. a week in Berlin last October, and elsewhere).

Concerning the letter from Michael Johnson, I have always thought that *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* could NEVER have happened in reality, considering the unbelievably inhuman atrocities by the Nazis in the camps and in general life. I have been reading *Alone in Berlin* by Hans Fallada in which the action describes very chillingly life in Nazi Berlin during WW2 amongst ordinary people. It is based on real life characters and I know it ends badly. I am, however, aware that there were also some (rare) good Nazis.

The older I get, the more I find myself living in the past, bad and good. Recently I had a sudden desperate wish to be able to talk to my parents as an adult - never possible in the prevailing times of my youth. This must also be so for others.
Werner Conn (formerly Cohn), Lytham St. Annes

Michael Johnson is completely justified in taking issue with the BBC's showing of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as part of its HMD 2020 programming. The 'two sweet little boys' and what transpires with them do indeed defy credibility in terms of the plot.

A few years ago, as a supply teacher, I was given work to present to a Year 9 class (13-14 year-olds) whose current topic of study was the Holocaust. The 'work' was to watch as much of a DVD of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as the lesson time would allow. It is not for a supply teacher to question set work, but I did preface the showing by indicating to them the problems I had with the film, including much of what Michael Johnson has indicated.

There are additional glaring errors in the film. It would of course have been

completely impossible for two very young children, one German and one Polish, to speak to each other on more than one occasion from either side of the Auschwitz fence without being noticed by guards in watchtowers. How would the boys have understood each other anyway? The idea of a child of primary school age succeeding in breaking into Auschwitz is of course ludicrous. The main objection is not that it did not happen, but that the portrayed events could not remotely have happened.

Those involved with the making of the film received their accolades and awards – and were no doubt very well remunerated – yet truth was left behind somewhere.

The number of survivors able to tell their story is sadly fast diminishing; but fictionalised portrayals must not take their place in terms of educating our young. Neither should they be part of a major network's HMD programming. There are enough documentaries available in which survivors tell their true stories.

Whatever next? WW1 taught through a showing of the final *Blackadder* series? (Honestly, this happens in some schools!). WW2 through *Dad's Army* and 'Allo, 'Allo? America through *Pocahontas*? Ancient Egypt through *Clara*? Marine biology through *Finding Nemo*? Prehistory through *The Flintstones*?
David Wirth, London SE21

EDUCATION AND COMMEMORATION

Ruth Barnet (*What to tell the children*, June 2019) wrote that in 2001 she heard for the first time about the Armenian genocide from a survivor at the Wiener Library.

The first person to write about the Armenian genocide was Franz Werfel, in his 1932 book *40 days of Musa Dagh* (see my article *A Song which Resonates*, July 2019). Werfel gave a good description of the destruction of Armenian Christians by the Ottoman Empire. Hitler copied Turkish policy in the destruction of European Jewry, with the persecution and deportation of the weaker ethnic group.
Dr. Elena Rowland, London SE18

ZOOM INTO AJR

Thank you for this wonderful way to keep in touch during our enforced lockdown via the AJR e-Newsletter. We know that even when this period ends things will not go back exactly as they were before Covid-19.

However, being able to zoom into London events is certainly a bonus for many of us who do not live in the capital. For us to come to late afternoon or early evening events is not always possible. I certainly hope that events such as the AJR Book Club meeting with Hadley Freeman on 22 April will hopefully just be an introduction to more inclusive events for all in the future.

Judith Gordon, Wilmslow

LEOPOLDSTADT

I can understand Peter Phillips's enthusiasm for Tom Stoppard's play *Leopoldstadt* (Journal, April) in which he sees parallels with his life, but I do not share it.

The author is a johnny-come-lately to Judaism. He invites us to watch him play catch-up as he ticks off every Jewish dilemma from antisemitism to Zionism - new to him, old hat to us.

This tedious exposition introduces the large Merz family and the complicated relationships of four generations between 1899 and 1938. It is conducted throughout in contemporary English, a disconcerting anachronism by a master of language.

Given the inevitability of the outcome, Stoppard seeks to create tension with subplots of which a duelling episode is the least convincing. But there are two redeeming high spots: a farcical misunderstanding about a *brith*, and a tragic scene of expropriation and humiliation. There is even an echo of the coin game played by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Many critics were struggling to say something nice about the play. Closing down the Wyndham Theatre has saved a master dramatist from an ignominiously short run. I do not expect *Leopoldstadt* to be revived in its present form.
Victor Ross, London W9

Family Matters

My grandfathers Victor and Theodor Rosenfeld were brothers. My parents were first cousins. It's one way of keeping it in the family. There is more: my mother's mother-in-law was also her sort-of aunt, being the sister of her aunt's husband. I leave you to work this out for yourself.

When my parents got engaged, my father wrote to Sigmund Freud asking for his opinion on marriage between first cousins. Freud replied that it might result in any outstanding characteristics shared by the parents being accentuated in their children. My sister certainly inherited much of what was best about them.

I have taken after my grandfathers. Theodor was an entrepreneur whose heart was in show business; Victor enjoyed prominence in the show-off business as advocate in a string of notorious cases. Even so, I wish my father had kept Freud's letter; it's my birth certificate.

My grandfathers were the leading lights among six brothers and a sister, a loving and quarrelsome tribe. The less successful brothers were unstintingly supported; even the serially bankrupt Hugo Rosenfeld felt he made a contribution by offloading dead stock on his brother Leo who bought and sold junk. The sister, a muse to artists and thinkers, was adored and spoiled.

Theodor had marketing flair, notwithstanding a humble start selling footwear from a cart whose sides proclaimed "*Die besten Schuhe in der Welt/ kauft man bei Theo Rosenfeld*". (The finest footwear in the world/ is bought from Theo Rosenfeld).

Salesmanship is versatile and Theo moved from shoe-biz to showbiz, gilding commerce with cultural ambition. Again the family delivered. Helped by his brother Karl he collected talent, among them a cousin, Dr. Walter Dahle, a believer in therapeutic hypnosis, and Dahle's nephew, a dwarf with showbiz potential.

When patients were scarce the doctor performed as stage hypnotist, my grandfather having found him countrywide engagements. My father told me that Dahle's ability to put people in a trance, not just one-to-one but half a dozen at a time, was phenomenal. In those days anything went and he got people to perform some pretty embarrassing tasks, yet never ran out of volunteers from among his audience.

Theo developed a taste for acting as artists' agent and in time the agency grew into an international business. At its height, he and his brother represented two of the greatest stage personalities of their day: the actress Eleanore Duse and Yvette Guilbert, the *diseuse*. Having both Marilyn Monroe and Marlene Dietrich on your books wouldn't come close.

For one of his culture missions my grandfather decided to introduce Yvette to the American public. He took an apartment on Fifth Avenue for his wife and Karl, and the two men made the rounds of New York's impresarios and theatre directors. Once they had found a suitable venue and fixed the opening date, the next step was to fix the critics.

Theo realised that favourable reviews would be hard to come by. Yiddish was more readily understood on Broadway than French. Eventually he found an obliging newspaper editor willing to accept a notice written by "a knowledgeable critic". This was the signal to send for his brother-in-law, Max Schiller, a Romanian journalist with a doctorate in chemistry.

Max (my mother's uncle) would be needed to chaperone Yvette Guilbert and supply reviews. Speaking excellent French, he studied Yvette's art and practised writing in the local lingo. Theo's tame editor was well served: Max presented him with 150 words of measured enthusiasm within an hour of the first-night curtain. They had been ready since lunchtime.

It was not enough. The American dream turned into a costly flop. But there was a happy end. Max's engagement with

Yvette Guilbert's art bloomed into an engagement to Yvette herself - chemistry?

Karl remained in New York and became an American citizen. And my mother was born on Fifth Avenue in 1892, destined to acquire an aunt immortalised by the genius of Toulouse-Lautrec.

Losses suffered in the cause of culture were offset by profits from putting on plays in Vienna and running Berlin's most popular entertainment venue, a cross between London's Palladium and Madame Tussauds. The programme of comedians, singers, acrobats, jugglers and magicians was changed every week, and on Saturday nights my grandmother would draw up at the stage door in a grand carriage to help count the week's takings. Forty years later she showed me how to wrap twenty coins in a piece of brown paper with one deft twist. Even when the nightly show was over, the revels continued. There was music and dancing; there were waxworks featuring murderers, freaks, and scenes of carnage. It was rumoured that there were *chambres séparées* on the premises. I asked about this but failed to get a straight answer.

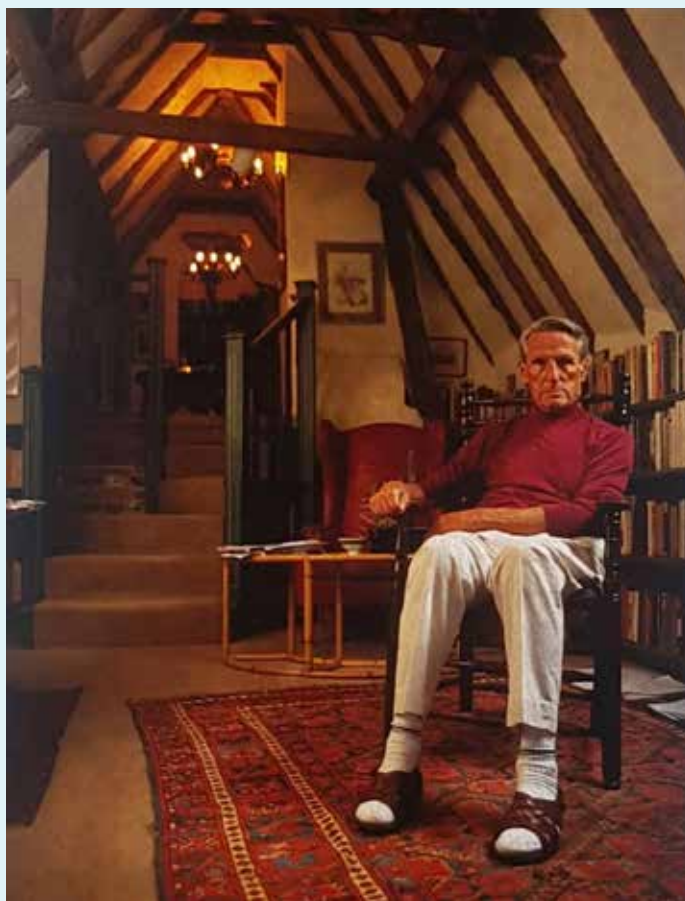
Grandfather Theo never lost his appetite for touring. When money was rolling in on the home front, he would get out the chess machine, had it scrubbed up and hung with new bells and whistles, ready to go. The idea of a chess-playing automaton was not new but Theo had perfected a model that rarely lost a game and was so compact as to put it beyond suspicion of trickery.

The software in this early computer was Dahle's diminutive nephew Albert Schlesinger (later Slazenger) who suffered from extreme dwarfism and chronic flatulence. He was an excellent chess player who protected his record by sounding a siren and having a voice proclaim a draw whenever danger loomed.

The machine's renown earned my grandfather an invitation to the imperial



Yvette Guilbert, by Toulouse-Lautrec (Yvette Guilbert was Victor Ross's great-aunt)



Victor Ross in his library

court in Moscow. A few demonstrations convinced the courtiers that it was worthy of appearing before the Tsar. When the great day dawned Theo's team discovered that they were up against a grandmaster. Albert became agitated, suffered stomach cramps, and had to be coaxed into his machine - the show had to go on.

The opening moves followed classic lines but as the pressure got to him Albert was unable to suppress a succession of trumpeting farts - surprising in one so small - that heralded discovery and disgrace. According to Uncle Max (who liked to joke in five languages) the

courtiers were left winded.

The retreat from Moscow forced the retirement of the chess machine. It coincided with a decline in the business and in Theo's health. The palace of fun in the heart of Berlin had to be wound up; the wax figures were melted down.

Albert acquired a Russian bride a mere inch short of six feet tall. Max said she carried him in her pouch.


Looking back I have often wondered what might have been, believing myself capable of carrying on the tradition, running my own palladium and cabaret,

even making an occasional appearance as MC - day dreams. Theo's death and war were the reality.

In the end I became a publisher of helpful and entertaining reading, pioneering direct sales based on algorithms - something of a novelty in those days. "To shift the books you need a boss / cut in the shape of Victor Ross." No, I didn't have this painted on my wagon, but since the marketing instinct does not discriminate, I like to think that I would have made it in show business and, if it came to that, in the shoe business.

Victor Ross

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ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

He was nocturnal in nature, an insomniac who prowled Ostende in search of flashes of light in the darkness, a window, a beach hut looking out to sea, a solitary girl standing windswept on a rock, the white lift of her petticoat as the sea lapped towards her.



Leon Spilliaert. *The Shipwrecked Man*

In its first major exhibition of the Belgian artist **Leon Spilliaert**, the **Royal Academy** presents a man who worked in the time of the Impressionists and Symbolists, but was totally unlike them. He was an original beyond category, even when he left Ostende and Flanders to work in Paris. Eschewing brilliant colour, he would create a landscape or portrait in Indian ink and charcoal with perhaps just a hint of blue crayon to add depth.

His own self-portraits in dark glasses, suggest a weird other-worldliness, his short blond hair upswept in a modern punk style, dark, ominous figures looming behind him. A main preoccupation were the women waiting for their fishermen, faceless, like one woman at a window in a dark blue skirt, her upper body etiolated like a ghost.

This artist exposed their melancholy and loneliness, he achieved the effect even with a simple enamel bowl, painted to show the way the light illuminated it. He loved the detail of light, especially coming through a white curtain, swept open by the wind in a dark bedroom with a wooden wardrobe.

There is an inner energy in Spilliaert's work which often depicts sky, sea and land with an equal grainy definition. His oeuvre was shaped by literature and philosophy, particularly Edgar Allan Poe and Nietzsche. He began illustrating Maurice Maeterlinck, and the poet Emile Verhaeren, who introduced him to the Austrian novelist Stefan Zweig.

In 1908 he rented an attic studio over the bustling Belgian port. With its wide beach,

lighthouse and promenade, fisherfolk and dramatic moving skies, Ostende inspired his art and his nocturnal walks through the streets and seafront, observing the diffused street lights and the moisture on the pavements. His geometric perspectives were revolutionary, too. This was not an artist who depended on models or facial exactitudes. His fishermen's wives are usually painted from the back, and one that captivated me, *Princess Maleine*, has the swerve of a violinist.

His seascapes or townscapes with unusually challenging perspectives depict an inner loneliness. Young girls break into the waves, which seem as solid as they are. He offers an eternal sense of waiting for something which might happen. His striking portrait of *The Absynthe Drinker*, a *demi-mondaine* under a broad hat, tinged with blue, is a bleak image of a "fallen woman" facing her demise. She is not looking at us but deep into her own trauma. It is a rare painting of a full face. In the Impressionistic *Needlework*, the woman's face is obscured as she bends over her work; but she is very present in a white and orange glow.

Another, where he allows himself some colour is *Waiting* 1908, a profile of a brunette in a white dress, the white disappearing into an orange circle, a sense of sea and the imagined fisherman in the background, giving a sense of *Madame Butterfly*. Indeed the sparseness of his imagery and the directness of his touch often suggests a subtle Japanese influence. Nothing is explained; all is nuance.

Spilliaert has been compared with other introspective Nordic artists like Edvard

Munch, Vilhelm Hammershoi and Helene Schjerfbeck.

Due to the Coronavirus the Royal Academy is temporarily closed. Until 25 May this exhibition can be 'virtually viewed' on the Royal Academy website. www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/leon-spilliaert

If you ever feel in need of a moment of calm why not take a look at **The National Gallery's Picture of the Month**. An initiative that was first started during WW2, this series of beautiful 60-second films showcase some of the best works in the National Gallery's collection. www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/picture-of-the-month

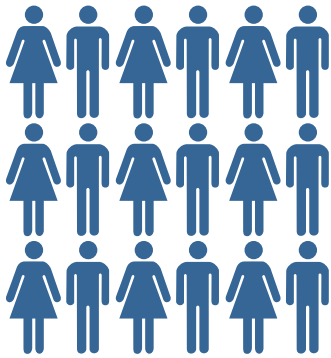


Akseli Gallen-Kallela, 'Lake Keitele', 1905 - The National Gallery's April picture

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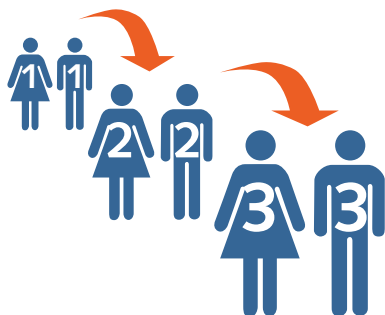
CONTEMPORARY
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1,902
AJR
MEMBERS



559
MEMBERS
AGED 90+










729
2ND & 3RD
GENERATION
MEMBERS

54

AJR STAFF

320

AJR
VOLUNTEERS
OF WHOM

-  **75%** FEMALE
-  **20%** UNDER 30s
-  **19%** OVER 80s
-  **45%** HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR 2 YEARS OR LESS
-  **12%** HAVE VOLUNTEERED FOR OVER 10 YEARS
-  **20%** 2nd OR 3rd GENERATION
-  **70%** JEWISH

43

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RESERVES CARRIED
FORWARD

2019 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Last year was another tremendously busy twelve months for the AJR. We delivered many essential services to our First Generation members whilst also looking at how best to service our increasing number of Second Generation. We also looked very carefully at our overall mission and vision in the light of our changing membership and set out our priorities for the coming years.

As you might expect, many of our plans for the current year have been dramatically affected by the current Coronavirus outbreak. While this report focuses on our activities for 2019, I send my sincerest best wishes to you all and hope that you and your loved ones are well and that we will soon be able to share each other's company, not just virtually.

SUPPORT & OUTREACH

AJR's Outreach team, led by Susan Harrod, successfully engaged hundreds of members throughout the country at our regular regional meetings and events.

In the south of England, Karen Diamond and Ros Hart brought many new speakers to our Groups, with increased attendances during 2019, especially from among the Second Generation.

In the north of England and Scotland, Wendy Bott and Agnes Isaacs co-ordinated numerous meetings and events. Owing to the location of some groups, the meetings comprise a handful of members, providing a vital lifeline. Our annual Northern Regional meeting, held in July at Huddersfield University, attracted nearly 100 members, while the then Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell MP, name recorded an inspirational message for our annual Scottish Regional meeting.

A five-day trip to Nottingham was attended by 35 members, whose packed itinerary included Chatsworth House, Beth Shalom and Wedgwood Pottery. Other outings included Audley End, a boat trip along the Thames, not forgetting fish and chips in Westcliff.

In September we organised a cruise holiday to Norway and the spectacular Fjords. Several members also enjoyed our annual week in Eastbourne, where they were once again blessed with fine weather, good food and great company.

Lunches for AJR's Kindertransport Special Interest Group continued monthly. Speakers included Asa Bruno, an architect for the new Holocaust Memorial, Sheila Gewold from the Board of Deputies and travel photographer Les Spitz.

Our Annual Lunch was transformed into a sumptuous cream tea at South Hampstead Synagogue, where Robert Habermann performed *The Great American Jewish Songbook* to the enjoyment of a large audience and we paid tribute to the outgoing Director of the Wiener Library, Ben Barkow.

We also organised numerous events and services around the country to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom HaShoah, and the anniversary of Kristallnacht. We are grateful to every member who took part.

The final highlight of the year was our main Chanukah Party in London, attended by over 100 members, while regional members also gathered for smaller parties.

SOCIAL CARE

Our team of 18 social care workers worked closely with over 400 members throughout the year, ensuring that their needs were assessed and met, and that they received all the financial help they are entitled to, as well as visiting them at their homes and providing support in other ways.

SECOND GENERATION

In September Debra Barnes was appointed to develop AJR's offer to our Second Generation members. In the final quarter she launched a survey for all 2G, including non-members; liaised with other 2G groups including Second Generation Network, Generation 2 Generation and the Kitchener Camp group. While she also procured sponsorship from Chelsea Football Club for a two-day conference, we have now, regrettably, had to postpone this event.

REFUGEE VOICES ARCHIVE

The Archive now consists of over 250 interviews and 3,500 photographs and documents. As well as consolidating the archive and overseeing the digitisation of our first 150 interviews, during last year we also produced several educational resources, and considerably increased our social media presence. In November we launched our new website at the Wiener Library to a packed audience, in the presence of six interviewees and Lord Finkelstein, who described the Archive in his column in the Jewish Chronicle 'as a tool of research and education, a truly magnificent endeavour'.

Dr Bea Lewkowicz, who runs the Archive, curated a special exhibition on the Kindertransport, entitled 'Still in our hands', using photographs and life stories from the Archive. It was shown at the Jewish Museum, University College London, the International Kindertransport Forum and the Dulwich Festival. Bea also gave a number of lectures and moderated discussions with Kinder at various events.

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

The AJR continued to support educational and remembrance initiatives across the UK. Projects that we supported in 2019 include the Council of Christians and Jews' annual seminar for Christian clergy at Yad Vashem; the Holocaust Educational Trust's annual residential training course for teachers; the Vision Schools Scotland programme; and the National Holocaust Centre and Museum's 'Virtual Journey' project.

2019 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

We also supported synagogue-based educational workshops for local schools organised by Holocaust Learning UK (formerly Northwood HMD Events); Finchley Reform and South Hampstead Synagogues – along with other commemorative events at University of Sussex and the annual Yom HaShoah events. Other grants were awarded to some of the country's leading museums that educate about the Holocaust including the Imperial War Museum, Jewish Museum London, Manchester Jewish Museum, the Scottish Jewish Archive Centre and the Holocaust Heritage and Learning Centre at University of Huddersfield. We also helped fund the year-long *Insiders / Outsiders Festival* that celebrated the remarkable achievements of Britain's Jewish refugees.

In April 2019, the AJR hosted the landmark event *Remembering and Rethinking: The International Forum on the Kindertransport at 80*, in partnership with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the German and Austrian Embassies. Following that, in November, we launched the podcast *Kindertransport: Remembering and Rethinking* that remains available to download.

Five new 'AJR Blue Plaques' were installed during the year to commemorate people and places that played a significant role in the history of the refugee community. Those honoured include Sir Ernst Chain, Belsize Square Synagogue, the Kitchener Camp, Milein Cosman & Hans Keller, and Otto Schiff for his role as the founder of the Jewish Refugees Committee.

VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteer's department currently supports nearly 300 AJR members on a regular basis. Services include befriending, telephone befriending, computer help and dementia befriending. Our *My Story* project continues to grow and coordinators have been appointed in the Midlands and Scotland, enabling members throughout the country to benefit from this project. The *My Story* website has been launched and at

present eighteen *My Story* books can be downloaded. .

Our volunteers also help out at regional group meetings, support us at national events, provide an audio version of the AJR Journal, help at Head Office and sit on advisory committees. We offer a bespoke training programme for our volunteers as well as regular support and supervision. We held thank you events for our fantastic volunteers in Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow and London.

As many of our members are carers at home, Caryn Bentley was appointed to the new role of Carers Support Coordinator. She has begun to identify members who would benefit from support, be it emotional or practical.

COMMUNICATIONS

As part of our strategy to raise awareness of our services and activities we continued to strengthen our relationships with key media. By appointing a dedicated public relations officer we sharpened our key messages, focusing on thought leadership in the areas of Holocaust commemoration and education. We achieved success with many national and regional media outlets, plus of course within the Jewish publications. Meanwhile our flagship communications tool, the *AJR Journal*, continues to attract a wide and varied readership and most months its Letters bag, full of wit and wisdom, is full to bursting.

ORGANISATION AND STAFF

The Social Work team said farewell to Elysia Polin and welcomed Leah McKay to its administration. We were also joined by Lesley Black and Madeleine Blecher who replaced leavers from the end of 2018. To head the Social Work team, Nicole Valens joined, bringing a wealth of experience to lead the team forward.

The Volunteers team said farewell to Jennifer Aizenberg, who worked on our dementia project, and welcomed Larissa Jaffe to coordinate the computer project and befrienders. Sharon Mail joined to

launch the *My Story* project in Scotland and the north east of England.

Janine Kohan joined in a new role to lead us on Communications, Marketing and PR.

We are thrilled to have such a strong team to support our members and their families.

FIVE YEAR PLAN

At the end of December my fellow Trustees and I devised a Five Year Strategic Plan, which sets out three key objectives for the AJR until the end of 2024: continuing to support the First Generation; developing new services for the Second Generation; and facilitating and supporting Holocaust education, commemoration and learning.

For the first time in our history, we also adopted mission and vision statements that provide clear direction for all this activity:

AJR MISSION

To represent and care for Britain's Jewish refugees and survivors of Nazi oppression and commemorate their experiences and contributions to society. To combat antisemitism by supporting teaching and learning about the Holocaust.

AJR VISION

A society free of antisemitism that remembers the Holocaust and those who were murdered, and that honours the Jewish refugees and survivors of Nazi oppression.

At this critical time, in the midst of an epidemic that has greatly impacted our work, activities and services, my fellow trustees and I would like to thank all our fantastic staff, so ably led by Michael Newman, as well as our volunteers and supporters, for all their efforts and achievements during 2019 and into 2020 thus far.

Andrew Kaufman MBE
Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT

This year I write in self-isolation as the entire organisation deals with the repercussions of the Covid-19 emergency. No doubt you have read about and possibly experienced the steps we have taken to continue to deliver services to you, our members. Our Finance team is no exception and in the three short weeks since the need for home working became necessary, the delivery of financial support to our members and the wider Umbrella Group, which we lead, has continued unabated with very little delay. During these few weeks leading to Pesach more than £650k in welfare payments for care and other services have been made and the team is now well placed and equipped to continue to perform its role remotely for as long as is required.

Normally the Treasurer's Report is substantially a retrospective comment focused principally on the financial year just ended. This year I have had to comment on the upheavals of the last few weeks as well.

2019 saw continued growth in all major areas of our activities. Welfare payment for care and other emergency services funded from all sources increased by nearly £550k (21%) to £3.2m, of which the AJR itself contributed £0.9m in Self-Aid payments to our most vulnerable members.

As always, we extend gratitude to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany for providing the balance and for their continued support as well as their great success in the

negotiations with the governments of Germany and Austria in the provision of funds for these activities.

Their funding to the entire Umbrella Group increased by £1.2m. Over the year 190,000 hours of care were funded for AJR members and 337,000 hours to survivors and refugees through other Umbrella Group agencies.

The trustees of the AJR remain committed to ensuring the historical memory of the Holocaust and its impact is preserved through general education as well as in ways that are personal to our members. Further grants to external bodies commemorating and memorialising the Holocaust were given with £300k being allocated to this important activity.

While legacy income fell back significantly in 2019 we remain grateful to former members whose bequests supported the organisation. I again encourage our members to remember that legacies provide a vital income source that enables our critical services to be enhanced and delivered.

Strong market recovery in 2019 produced investment gains of £2.8m so that at the end of 2019 net assets fell by less than £100k. However the subsequent impact of Covid-19 on our investment portfolio has been dramatic. This is not reflected in these accounts as it falls outside the year and it is too early to estimate the ultimate outcome. We are not immune to these changes. The Trustees continue to take regular steps to ensure the organisation has sufficient liquid resources to maintain our vital services. Our reserves remains strong to enable us to ensure that these services can continue uninterrupted for the foreseeable future.

I offer my sincerest thanks to the finance team, who are now managing the finance function in most unusual circumstances.

David Rothenberg
Treasurer
12 April 2020

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.

DOCUMENTARY SUBJECTS

Estee Elora is making a documentary to be entered in a film festival. It will explore how the identity of refugees fleeing persecution (displaced to where nothing is familiar and where everything about them is perceived as strange and different) affects the sense of self, the world and humanity. She would love to hear from any Holocaust survivors and their descendants who are able and willing to be interviewed.

estee.elora@gmail.com or
07967 327 774

PREECE, HABERLAND and UNGER

George Fogelson seeks information on:

- Alix PREECE née Stiel (1898 -1987) and brother Ernst Gunter STIEL born 1906.
- Hedwig HABERLAND née Sternberg, born 1872. Lived in Berlin. Mrs. Haberland's two married daughters lived in England.
- Toni UNGER née Goldschmidt, born 1874. Lived in Berlin.

fogelson@berkeley.edu



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2019 AJR ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

FINANCE REPORT

The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR)
Summary Income and Expenditure Accounts
Year ended 31st December 2019

NB all figures are subject to audit

	2019		2018	
	£	£	£	£
Income:				
Claims Conference, Six Point & Other Grants	2,754,804		2,165,959	
Subscriptions/Donations	113,572		73,177	
Investment income	580,829		740,253	
Other Income	19,439		7,013	
		3,468,644		2,986,402
Legacies		362,385		873,155
Total Income		3,831,029		3,859,557
Less outgoings:				
Self-Aid, Homecare and Emergency Grants	3,152,488		2,605,891	
Social Services and other member services	1,260,123		1,265,106	
AJR Journal	88,059		84,012	
Other organisations	445,561		226,283	
Internal Educational Initiatives	261,328		169,914	
Administration/Depreciation	1,399,249		1,284,418	
		6,606,808		5,635,624
Net outgoing resources for the year		-2,775,779		-1,776,067
Surplus/-Deficiency on realised and unrealised investments		2,788,983		1,927,587
Net movement in funds		13,205		-3,703,654

The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR)
Summary Balance Sheet
Year ended 31st December 2019

	2019		2018	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets and Investments		21,835,252		19,344,549
Current assets	6,733,741		8,456,979	
Current liabilities	2,613,114		1,987,409	
Net current assets		4,120,627		6,469,570
Net assets		25,955,880		25,814,119
Reserves brought forward		25,942,645		29,646,299
Net movement in funds for the year		13,205		-3,703,654
Reserves Carried Forward		25,955,850		25,942,645

A Trip down Memory Lane

We are grateful to Michael Brown for sharing his reflections of the visit he made last summer to his birth town in Germany.

My plan was to commemorate and relive the journey I made with my sister Hannah via Kindertransport in August 1939 when I was nine years old and Hannah a mere six years old. Little did we know then what the future would hold and we certainly did not imagine that we would never again set eyes on our beloved parents. Of course we were unaware of the torment and anguish our parents must have been suffering when they made preparations for our departure. This pain must have increased manifold in the hours prior to our departure and even more so as our absence grew longer and longer.

Little stays in my memory of our actual departure from Hanover. I cannot recall the farewells at the railway station nor boarding the train and its journey through north Germany and Holland. My earliest recollection is boarding the ferry to England at the Hook of Holland in the evening and then being taken to a small below-deck cabin which I was to share with a couple of boys of my own age who were strangers to me.

The night was spent in this gloomy, darkly lit cabin and it was refreshing to arrive on the following morning at the English port of Harwich. After disembarking I remember standing on the quayside inhaling the warm summer air. Like sheep, our large party of young refugees was led to an awaiting train that took us to our London destination, Liverpool Street railway station, where we all assembled in a large hall, awaiting someone to collect us and take us to our final destination. In the case of Hannah and I, we were met by a young Oxford

graduate doing a PhD in philosophy. David took us by train to Liverpool where we would settle for the next number of years, myself in David's parents' home and Hannah in the home of the parents of one of David's friends, Jack Jaffe.

Eighty years on, in August 2019, I was about to make a similar journey but under vastly different circumstances. Firstly, my journey started in a democratic country no longer subjected to the fanatical racist intolerance that prevailed in Germany in the 1930s. Secondly, I would afterwards be returning, not as a stranger, to the country that enabled me to make a permanent home and raise a happy and devoted family.

The idea for this journey occurred to me some months previously and had it not been for the persistence and indeed assistance of my son, Conrad, it would never have come to fruition. He helped me consult time tables and travel guides, enabling the appropriate train and ferry tickets and hotel bookings to be made.

My plan was to first spend a short time in Berlin to visit my cousin Erik and his wife Monica. Indeed it was the last time I was to see Erik, who sadly died a few months later. From Berlin I would travel to Hanover to join my son Conrad, his wife Nicole and my granddaughters, Maddy and Jemima. Prior to our visit we had contacted members of the organisation that maintains the Holocaust memorial centre in Ahlem, a nearby suburb of Hanover, who had kindly offered to entertain us.

On my arrival in Berlin I was welcomed by a young man, Andreas, who manages the Ahlem memorial centre. He showed me around Hanover, finally taking me for a meal.

Next day I visited the impressive memorial in front of the Hanover Opera House. This marble monument has inscribed on it the names of all the Hanover and district victims of the Nazi terror, amongst which are the names of my parents, who perished in Latvia and Poland respectively.

In the afternoon I visited the Hanover Region head office for an appointment with the Region's chairman, whom I had met on a previous visit and who greeted me warmly. It was in fact the Hanover Region, comprising the outlying land surrounding the city of Hanover, which had funded the establishment of the Hanover Memorial centre.

In the evening I met up with my son and family who had arrived from England. We dined at an Italian restaurant by the same railway station from which I had departed for England 80 years earlier.

The following day was a busy one. It started with a morning visit to the Ahlem Memorial centre where we were met by Andreas and his manager, Stefanie Burmeister. Present was also a group of press reporters who interviewed me about our visit to Hanover. Later one of the reporters drove me and Maddy to the building in Bruhl Strasse where I had lived in 1939. Outside, on the pavement in front of the building, were two Stolpersteine that had been laid a few years previously, each showing one of my parents' names and where they had met their death. It was a very moving experience.

That evening our family was entertained by Stefanie, her husband and other members of her staff at an elegant restaurant in the outskirts of Hanover. How friendly these Germans are and doing their best to atone for the iniquities of their forebears.



The young Michael on the balcony of the villa in Bruhl Strasse, Hanover, not long before his departure to England in August 1939.



Michael Brown and family taken at the Ahlem Memorial Centre during their August 2019 visit. The lady on Michael's right is Stefanie Burmeister, the manager of the centre.

The following morning our planned journey back to England began. We packed ourselves into a heavily peopled train heading for the Netherlands. The train passed through some low lying countryside. At the German-Dutch border there were no guards entering the train to inspect our luggage and confiscate the non-permitted items, as would have happened in 1939. Eventually we arrived in Amsterdam where we stayed two nights.

Conrad and I visited Amsterdam's Jewish museum and were impressed with the exhibits that showed how the Dutch Jewish community had been betrayed by Dutch collaborators who did not hesitate to report their fellow citizens to the German occupiers for a crock of gold.

Finally it was time to complete the final leg of our journey, via train and then bus to the Hook of Holland where we boarded the awaiting ferry. We made our way to a small VIP lounge which

Conrad had booked for this special journey. We luxuriated in the comfort of armchairs, next to a bar offering free drinks and snacks. As the ferry set sail we climbed on to the top deck for a view of the slowly disappearing sandy shore where sunbathers were lounging and we gazed at the calm sea water reflecting the sunshine from a cloudless sky above. What a contrast to the sea journey I had made 80 years previously.

Upon arrival at Harwich harbour the ship's captain, aware of the significance of our journey, warmly embraced me - after all the Coronavirus had not yet arrived - and bade me a fond farewell.

Our trip ended with a train back to London, arriving at Liverpool Street in late evening. There I parted from my family, each of us making our way home. How strangely different I felt from the gauche young boy travelling to an unfamiliar home in a distant city with a perfect stranger - now I was an octogenarian travelling to my Ealing

flat where I had lived for more than 30 years.

The journey allowed me to reflect on the sheer suffering that my parents must have had to endure, parting with their beloved young children. But it also made me very mindful of my good fortune to be rescued from the terrible range of atrocities that were to be inflicted on the victims of the Nazi terror, not least the Jewish community. I pray that such horrors will never occur again.

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The Pasha from Upper Silesia

He was born at Oppeln in Upper Silesia (then Germany) in 1840 and was named Eduard Isaak Schnitzer. The world, however, knows him as Emin Pasha.

The British sent a mission deep into the “Dark Continent” to rescue him but discovered Emin had no wish to be rescued. Various books about him appeared in the 1880s and others followed later but several got his origins wrong. Alan Moorehead, for example, says he came from German Protestant stock. Wikipedia, on the other hand, asserts he was from a German Jewish family.

I can confirm that Wikipedia is right. My family were friends of his family. As a child I addressed his nephew as “Uncle Gutfreund”. He was not a blood relative but what, in German, they call a *Wahlverwandter* – a relative by choice.

Gutfreund had been a long-term friend of my parents in Upper Silesia. He owned and managed a brewery there. By the later 1930s, with the Nazis becoming ever more aggressive, it was dangerous being a prominent businessman and a Jew in a small provincial town, so Gutfreund sold up and moved to Berlin.

My father had been acting as head of the Income Tax department at Kosel in Upper Silesia. He too decided, rather belatedly, that we had to leave and in 1939 we set out for Northern Rhodesia [*Zambia*]. On our way we stopped some nights with Gutfreund at Berlin.

I, aged 12, boasted I knew all about America – I had read the thrillers of Karl May about Sioux and Apaches and Cherokees. I also knew there were some Paleface Americans but had not found them very interesting. Since we were heading for Africa, it was unfortunate that I knew so little about Africans.

Gutfreund went to his bookshelf and pulled out an illustrated book. It



EMIN PASHA

was about Emin Pasha, governor of the Equatoria province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

“He was my uncle”, he explained.

My parents and I expressed astonishment.

“Yes, he came from Oppeln, only a few kilometres from Kosel where you Fraenkels used to live. By profession he was a medical doctor, but by temperament an adventurer. He had worked in the service of the Ottoman Sultans – in Anatolia and Albania and later in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. He was a great linguist speaking (according to Moorhead’s book “The White Nile”) French, German, English, Italian,

Turkish, Arabic, Persian, demotic Greek and several Slavonic languages. However, he saw himself mainly as a scientist. He studied botany and zoology though his chief interest was in ornithology. He identified several species of previously unrecognised birds and sent carefully prepared skins and feathers to European collections – always accompanied by precise and scholarly notes. By 1876 he was chief medical officer for the Equatoria province of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. There Eduard renamed himself Emin – the Faithful one. Later they even appointed him governor for that province. I suspect there were not many applicants for the job. It looked dangerous. The title Pasha must have come with the post.

NEWCASTLE MEMBERS GET STONES

Days before lockdown a staunch group of AJR members came together in Newcastle on a cold windy Sunday afternoon to paint stones. Why? I hear you ask.

The inspirational event came via an invitation from the AJR's North-East co-ordinator, Agnes Isaacs, to paint stones as a commitment to remember and learn from the past. These Foundation Stones are intended to be buried among the foundations of the proposed multi-million pound Holocaust Memorial in central London which I personally hope will come to fruition very soon.

So Agnes, with a little help from her husband, drove down from Glasgow armed with marble stones, paints and brushes for all of us to express in paint what was most meaningful to us, lest we ever forget the atrocity. Some

others painted "Shalom" while others, including me, painted family names of relatives who perished in the Shoah (my names were Gamler, Sadofsky, Suznitski, all in Lithuania). Others drew a Magen David, others wrote "Jude" on a yellow stone. After an hour of painting which was very therapeutic, we washed our hands thoroughly and sat down to a welcome tea, all ready and packed in Glasgow!

What a thoroughly worthwhile and thought-provoking afternoon, especially as it was the day before Purim! Ironically, just as the Jewish people triumphed and survived Haman, we, the people of Israel, have prevailed once more over evil antisemites seeking to destroy us. May that always be so for evermore!
*Gwendoline Lamb
 (Gittel Shayna Leibovitch),
 Newcastle*



In the book was a picture of a man sporting a bushy black beard. He was wearing a fez with black tassels.

A very dangerous post it turned out to be. There was an Islamic rising against foreign invaders. It was led by the Mahdi, a Moslem fanatic who claimed to be a reincarnation of the prophet Mohammed. His men murdered General Charles Gordon at Khartoum. Next the Mahdi's men overran the entire Equatoria Province. They would almost certainly have murdered Emin too but he managed to save himself, probably by accepting conversion to Islam. However, once out of the clutches of the Mahdi's men, Emin would never admit to such a conversion. The British government who had, earlier, suffered criticism for abandoning Gordon to his fate, did not enquire too closely into how Emin had managed to stay alive.

Junk, a German writer, refers to the "undeniably oriental stamp" of Emin's features and speculates this must have helped him among Turkish officials. An oriental appearance is, of course, also sometimes found among Jews.

Emin got a German tutor for his little daughter, Ferida, the daughter of an Ethiopian wife who had died young. If he were to come to a sticky end, he wanted the child taken to Germany to be brought up by his family there. Most of the time while he was campaigning against Arab slavers in East Africa, the little girl was with him, carried in a hammock.

His scientific work eventually came to be recognised in Germany and the Kaiser awarded him a medal and referred to him as "a great son of his people". Most of his career Emin had served the Sultans of Turkey or the Khedive of Egypt, but he now worked increasingly to advance German colonial interests in East Africa. The British, who had sent an expedition to 'rescue' him, were irritated to find that the Germans were becoming the main beneficiaries.

Frequent bouts of malaria with very high temperatures undermined Emin's health. He suffered a fall from a balcony which lost him hearing in one ear and broke several of his bones. However, he continued to lead military campaigns against Arab slavers in East Africa. It was said of him, however, that

he was far better as a medical man and scientist than as a military commander.

In 1892 his luck ran out. A group of Arab slavers surprised and overwhelmed him in his tent and slit his throat. This happened in Uganda, at a place variously referred to as Kanema or Kinema –but no longer on maps today. He was 52. He has been rated as among the great African explorers. The last German Kaiser referred to him as a "great son of his people."

Among Emin's last diary entries: "Caught a red mouse at last. Collected 25 fresh species of birds."

His little daughter Ferida was taken into the care of relatives in Germany. In the numerous books that refer to him there is no mention how the child fared there.

If any reader of the AJR Journal happens to know what happened to Ferida and any descendants of hers, I should like to know and, I suspect, so would other AJR Journal readers.

Peter Fraenkel

LIVES IN FOCUS

An Interview with Helen Bamber

This is the third of a series of interview profiles from the AJR Refugee Voices Archive. Helen Bamber was interviewed by Dr Bea Lewkowicz.

Helen Bamber OBE was a psychotherapist and Human Rights activist. She was born in London in 1925 and joined the Jewish Relief Unit in 1944. A few months after liberation in 1945, she was sent to Eilshausen to work with Henry Lunzer, the head of the Jewish Relief Unit in Germany and was part of the first rehabilitation teams to enter the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. After returning to the UK in 1947, she became a case worker for 'the Boys'. In 1985 she founded the Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture. She was awarded the OBE in 1995 and set up the Helen Bamber Foundation in 2005. She died, aged 89, in 2014. Dr Bea Lewkowicz interviewed her in 2003. The following excerpts are printed in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Bergen Belsen.

I was taken by a driver to Belsen and there was already a small team of people under the auspices of Rose Henriques, the wife of Sir Basil Henriques. Camp 1 had been burnt down. The thing I remember most was the smell and I have never forgotten it. It was the smell of geraniums, like that sweet dank smell of geraniums and even to this day I sometimes go on my small patio to smell [the geraniums]. It is to

make contact with one's past and to remind oneself of the truth.

In Belsen I spent time talking to the survivors in those dark, cold barracks. When you first listen to the stories that survivors tell you, you feel overwhelmed with the enormity of it all. Mainly the losses of so many people: "If my husband had only done so and so, and if only he had listened to me, he would not have been killed". That kind of *if* quality. Most of the stories were around the *if* - when nothing, but nothing, could have saved them and you listen, knowing it. The stories were terrible and some have never really been told properly. The story of how one woman lost an eye when she was being whipped and how the other women had to stand round and watch this. Stories like that which you heard time and time again.

You felt so helpless. And then I began to feel that I had to make closer contact with the survivors and we would sit on the floor and people would hold on to you. They dug their fingers into your arms and I found that rocking, as children who are very deprived and unhappy, rocking became the kind of mode that we adopted and we would rock and they would tell their stories. Some were terrible and some have never really been told properly [...]. But I began to realise something and I began to get a sense of agency. I felt that I am listening to this and they want me to listen so perhaps my role is to be their witness and to say to them that is my role, to say to them the truth: I cannot bring those people back but I can listen and I can be your witness and I will be your witness. And I think to those people who were going to die, and there were people who were going to die and I knew that, I think it was incredibly important. And people say to me, "Why is it so important that people's story must be told?" But it is absolutely vital that their story is told and that they know that their

story is going to be told and so that became in a way a role for me.

Back in Britain I found the public on the whole was blunted by war, wanting to get on with life and lay the past to rest. Returning soldiers were not encouraged to speak about their experiences. 723 children known as "the boys" (though there were also some girls) arrived in this country - all from concentration camps, slave labour camps, death marches. They had seen their siblings and their parents killed. By the time they were allowed to enter Britain, the feeling was quite entrenched that everyone must get on with their lives. The small committee that was established to look after them was in difficulty. Its resources were limited. It was set up to establish and help the rehabilitation of these young people. But I think, in a way perhaps, they had no alternative. They slipped into the mood and reflected the mood of the time, which was: get the young people started again, get back into life, get on with life. And we were successful, I believe, in helping the young people to study up to a point, go to school, to be apprenticed, to find jobs.

I was a case worker for this group, one of the case workers for quite a large number. My job was to look after their general well-being, their training, their accommodation, their health but not so much their inner world. Although I was being trained at the time by the director of the organisation who was a practising psychoanalyst, the message of the day was: 'don't lift the lid, it is too soon, people are not ready'. People are never ready in that sense. Each one is an individual. Each one who draws a picture of their home or of an animal or of their mother is telling you something. And I do not think that we addressed their losses and their anger sufficiently or even at all. And you do pay a price for that.

Helen Bamber



Helen Bamber working with the Jewish Relief Movement after WW2

When I look at what has become of these young people, they have done remarkable things, achieved so much and in social terms they have succeeded. But I wished that we had addressed loss, grieving and anger more than we did. There is a collusion then between the people who cannot tell easily, cannot speak easily of what they are suffering and those people who cannot hear, and that is the price that society and the people pay for not being able to address the real effects.

There was one very brilliant young boy. He is now a well-known professor of chemistry in Canada. I was to try to get him accepted in a prestigious school in North London and had to take him before a group of headmasters. We were interviewed, his work was reviewed and they asked me to explain a little bit about his background. In doing so, I told them that he had been in the camps and I explained that obviously his schooling had been severely interrupted and that there had been several years of no schooling. The Chair of the headmasters said, "But didn't they give them books to read?" Now everybody knew about the concentration camps if they wanted to. Most people knew that there had been gas chambers, so the question about

giving them books to read was interesting.

Some years later, when I began to understand what the French were doing in the war of liberation in Algeria, I joined Amnesty International. The French army was committing atrocities which were actually being sanctioned by the generals at the time. It was also the understanding that torture, killings, genocide go on elsewhere. I went into Amnesty International in that spirit and I learned a lot. In the early 1970s a group of health workers, just three of us actually, set up the first medical group in the British Section of Amnesty International, with a view to researching the world-wide practice of torture. Our work became recognised and our doctors and forensic pathologists, surgeons, therapists and others became proficient in the taking of testimony and documenting evidence of torture.

In 1985 one doctor said to me: "I have a group of Chilean exiles living in South London and they have all been tortured. I have not got the time to address the variety of physical and psychological injuries. I have not got the time to look at the effect on their families and the next generation, I have not got the time to look

at the broken marriages through torture or listen to the children who couldn't be heard. I have not got the time to listen to the silences." And that is exactly what I had found among Holocaust survivors and the young people who came from the camps.

So we set up the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture at the end of 1985 and until today have seen more than 35,000 people from over 90 different countries whose experiences may have been as recent as yesterday or as long ago as the Second World War.

I think it is my Jewish identity that has taken me all along through this, which is odd as I am not a religious person but I have a very strong sense of Jewish identity, of being Jewish and what that has taught me. I do not have a sense of achievement and I do not have a sense that I set out in 1945 on a path to do this or that. But I do think that it is my Jewish identity and my horror of persecution and violence that has brought me to where I am today. I do believe that and whilst I do not always live as a Jew, I hope to die as a Jew. I do not wish for my identity not to be recognised when I die.

REVIEWS

'ZEITSPIEGEL' - THE WARTIME WEEKLY FOR AUSTRIAN REFUGEES

Zeitspiegel - Eine Stimme des österreichischen Exils in Großbritannien 1939-1946
new academic press.

Eighty years ago, a London-based German-language weekly, with a circulation of just three thousand, began to record how Britain was screening and interning refugees from Nazi Europe. At first internees were not allowed to communicate with the outside world. When the ban was lifted, *Zeitspiegel*, the organ of the Austrian Centre, received disquieting reports from camp inmates. Many could not understand why Britain was reluctant to let them fight the common enemy. According to Jana Waldhör, a Viennese scholar, conditions in camps were 'katastrophal'.

In a profound analysis of *Zeitspiegel's* history, from 1939 to 1946, Jana Waldhör notes how the publication quickly launched a vigorous campaign, not just to make the internees' lives more bearable, but to secure their release from the camps. She also recalls how at the time it was far from clear whether Austrian refugees would want to return to Austria. Officials running their organisations wrongly assumed that most émigrés did wish to go back to the Heimat when the war was over. *Zeitspiegel* published a letter from the Austrian actress Maria Schanda (who was not a refugee) urging readers: 'Come back soon, if you really love your Vaterland.'

On a lighter note, Jana Waldhör found that the 'Wiener Küche' was much on readers' minds. Under the title 'Apfelstrudeldämmerung', (Twilight of the Apple Strudel) Valerie Merck in 1946 joked that the old Viennese gods were 'Walzer, Backhendl und Apfelstrudel' (waltzes, fried chicken and apple strudel). And she warned that a true Viennese Köchin would make a strudel 'nach dem Gefühl' (by intuition) and not according to a recipe.

Martin Mauthner

DEFYING THE HOLOCAUST: TEN

COURAGEOUS CHRISTIANS WHO SUPPORTED JEWS

by Tim Dowley
ISBN 978-0-281-08362-6

War produces the most unlikely heroes and this fascinating book tells the story of ten incredibly brave Christian individuals who risked their own lives to help Jews in peril. Being improbable made Nazi suspicion less likely and all had a strong conviction that they should save their fellow men from the horrors of racial persecution, transports and death. Some stumbled on desperate escaping Jews almost by accident but their courage and that of those around them never faltered even if it cost their own liberty and lives. Their selfless and tireless efforts involved working with other networks and resistance workers to obtain money, forged documents and passports spanning several European countries.

Mother Maria of Paris – later Saint – was a twice-married mother leading an unorthodox life as a nun. She set up a refuge in the French capital first for Russian refugees and later for sheltering Jewish fugitives. In Vienna Rev Hugh Grimes and Rev Frederick Collard were two elderly Anglican parsons in antisemitic pre-war Vienna who issued baptismal certificates to 1800 Jews enabling them to obtain exit visas. Scottish matron at the Mission school in Budapest Jane Haining remained to care for Jewish boarders after her colleagues left.

In Haarlem Dutch watchmaker's daughter Corrie ten Boom helped hide Jews and resistance workers – she was taken to Ravensbrück but later released – apparently as the result of an administrative error. Even in Germany Dr Elisabeth Abegg was at the centre of a group hiding Jews after her close friend was sent to Auschwitz. Amazingly Stanislaw Leszczynska a Roman Catholic midwife delivered 3,000 babies in Auschwitz – where she was sent for helping Jews in Poland – defying orders to kill them at birth. In Belgium learned monk Dom Bruno Reynders spent much of the war concealing Jewish children in family homes and religious houses at great risk to himself.

"Vatican Pimpernel" Monsignor Hugh

O'Flaherty helped conceal fugitive Jews in religious houses, churches and private homes under the eyes of vigilant German soldiers. Committed Swedish Lutheran Pastors Erik Perwe and Erik Myrgren at Victoria Church, Berlin helped hide and rescue "submerged" Jews. Finally Elsie Tilney - a single nonconformist missionary in Paris used her administrative role in the German internment camp Vittel to conceal the identity of Jewish inmates, one even hid in the bathroom of her superior accommodation!

The stories unfold against a history of the horrifying war situation sparking the desperate need of the rescue work as Jewish mortal danger increased. In the midst of horror the most remarkable saviours and resistance workers arose. Indeed the most compelling thing about the book is the number of different personalities it embraces – especially as they worked with others – including the eccentric and colourful. Each chapter features different characters and handy information boxes highlight the most important points helping separate one from another. Photographs bring everyone to life. The author draws on records and diaries with background about family, education and peacetime life as well as later honours bestowed including recognition from Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.

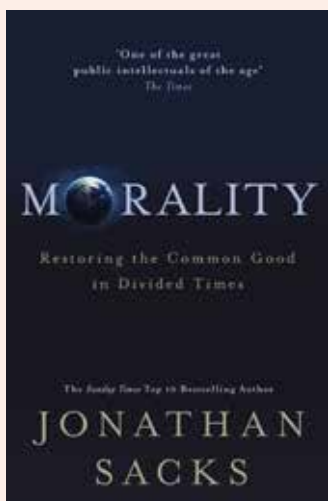
Janet Weston

MORALITY

By Jonathan Sacks
Hodder & Stoughton 2020

As expected, Rabbi Lord Sacks' latest book, *MORALITY*, is, like virtually everything he has written, profound, intellectually challenging and inspiring. The subtitle, *Restoring the Common Good in Divided Time*, gives a hint of how complex this study of what many would think of as a fairly straightforward subject, really is.

While the author's basic definition of what constitutes morality – the requirement that the 'WE' should take precedence over the 'I' - is repeated throughout the book, numerous other variants of the title's subject are raised and discussed.



Part of the core message is looking out for others, and the more positive side of the Golden Rule: 'Do not unto others that which is hateful unto thee' is brought up several times in more contemporary terms. In addition to referring to the Bible and the writings of Jewish sages, it would appear that there are no philosophers and thinkers to whose work he has not referred, discussed, analysed and challenged with his very clear logic. Nevertheless, the book is very readable and the arguments easy to follow.

A large part of the book refers to what every human being frequently encounters and it is full of anecdotes to illustrate the argument. There are two examples of caring for others that inspired me. One occurred in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 when several hundred passengers on planes bound for US airports were diverted to Gander, a small town on the island of Newfoundland, Canada. They were warmly welcomed by the people of the town, feasted, invited into homes where they could shower and feel refreshed and treated like members of the family.

Another features a Muslim-Israeli paramedic who was giving a speech at a Jewish wedding in Israel in which he described his first encounter with the bride ten years earlier. He had arrived at the scene of a car crash in which she was suffering from cardiac arrest and appeared to have died. This was the view of the doctor who had reached the scene in an earlier ambulance. However, the paramedic, inspired by what he called 'a message from above' felt he had to try and save her. He performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for 40 minutes while she was stuck in the car and continued in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. At the entrance of the hospital, her heart

started to beat. At the wedding, the paramedic said he was there to thank the bride, whose story had motivated him to continue with his work, in spite of all the deaths he was constantly faced with.

Others who inspired the author are survivors of the Holocaust who, he says, are among 'the strongest, most life-affirming people' he had ever met. He wondered how they had managed to survive at all, having 'lived through the deepest darkness ever to have descended on a civilisation'. The answer, he finally realised, was their determination to focus on the future and not to see themselves as victims. One such survivor was Yisrael Kristal, who died the world's oldest man in August 2017, shortly before his 114th birthday. The author compares his story to that of Abraham, whose life was 'fraught with trial after trial' and who yet 'died in good old age, old and satisfied'.

Religion should also be considered one of the bases of morality. In this context, the author cites, among several others, the nineteenth-century French philosopher, Emile Durkheim, who related religion to the creation of 'a moral community'.

In contrast, the author sees a society without a shared moral code, which was the basis of a 'fateful experiment' carried out in Western countries during the 1960s, as the root of several contemporary problems, such as the 'dysfunctions of the market and the state' and the loneliness and isolation suffered by many.

Democracy is also endangered by the strain imposed by advances in technology, such as the internet and social media and the speed of global communication which have, in addition, contributed to the mutation of the moral sense from the 'We' to the 'I' and the weakening of many of the institutions of civil society such as marriage, the family, communities, places of worship among others.

Nevertheless, the author's conclusion is not pessimistic. As he says towards the end of the book, 'the beautiful thing about morality is that it begins with us. in its truest sense it cannot be outsourced. It is about taking responsibility, not handing it away.'

Emma Klein

BBC LICENCE FEE DELAYED

Readers will be interested to learn that the BBC licence fee will NOT be payable by people aged 75 or over for the time being. It has been postponed for now and will only become mandatory in August 2020. For further information see: www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/entertainment-arts-51911065

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Why don't you....?

During this uncertain period, we are aware that many of our readers might be isolated at home with little social contact. At the AJR our priority is to help our members through this difficult period. So here are a few tips on activities, both on and offline, while at home. We look forward to hearing your suggestions and feedback to incorporate into future issues.

VISIT A MUSEUM

You can now experience some of the top museums in the world without leaving your armchair. Many famous institutions, including the British Museum in London, the Guggenheim Museum in New York and many more, have made their collections available online. Sit back and relax while you go on a virtual tour of these famous museums.
www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours

GO TO THE GARDENS



The Botanic Gardens in Chicago can now be toured virtually

Spring is well and truly here, and while we may not be able to enjoy public spaces right now, why not take a virtual tour of some of the world's most beautiful gardens. House Beautiful magazine has compiled a gateway to eight stunning gardens ranging from Kew to Hawaii.
www.housebeautiful.com/uk/garden/g31913008/best-virtual-tours-garden/

TAKE IN A GALLERY

Over the past year the Ben Uri Gallery has

been preparing an expansive and exciting new digital presence. Its new platform will launch very shortly, and in the meantime the Gallery is actively sharing stories and artworks on www.benuricollection.org.uk and via social media.

SPEND A NIGHT AT THE THEATRE

The National Theatre has come up with a novel way for people to enjoy the best from the stage during the lockdown. Every Thursday at 7.00pm on the theatre's official YouTube channel, they release a new show which is available to watch for a week, completely free.

www.youtube.com/user/ntdiscovertheatre

TRY YOUR HAND AT BRIDGE



Fancy a game of Bridge? Traditionally, Bridge is played, so we're told, around a table with friends enjoying a cup of tea and strudel. These days we need to find other ways to enjoy the game. One example is an online Bridge club, which allows you to play with real people from all around the world. Social or Serious? - you choose. Play with your favourite partner, reserve your seats, and much, much more.

www.bridgeclublive.com/

There are also a number of Apps available for download from the App Store (Apple) and Google Play Store (Android). There is a good overview on <http://greatbridgelinks.com/gblsoft/itunes-android-apps/>

KEEP FIT

Every day on Maccabi GB's Facebook page

Neil Taylor is delivering chair and seated exercises especially for people with injuries or mobility problems. You can join in with his previous routines or tune in for a new one every day at 11:30am.

www.youtube.com/user/maccabigb/videos

Meanwhile the nation's PE teacher, Joe Wickes, who is everyday helping hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren to stay fit during lockdown, has also created a range of 10-minute workouts especially for seniors. Just go to YouTube and look for The Body Coach.

SORT OUT YOUR PHOTOS

Do you have many photographs from years gone by? Why not take the time to write on the back as much detail as you can remember. Who is in the photo? What is their relationship to you? Where and when was the photo taken? There are some good ideas on this in

www.lifestorage.com/blog/organization/need-organize-photos-get-started/

FINALLY, TAKE CARE

Although the majority of people want to help during this time of uncertainty, there are some police reports of people trying to take advantage of the more vulnerable population. We strongly advise people to be wary of unsolicited offers of help even if they come from known subscriptions.

Note from Editor: Most of these tips have also been included in the new AJR e-Newsletter which has been introduced to help members during lockdown. We would like to thank members for sending in their ideas which we hope to add in future issues of the e-Newsletter. Please feel free to send us your suggestions, write-ups and anything else you think will be of interest to members. Contact or subscribe via ideas@ajr.org.uk

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