



AJR JOURNAL

The Association of Jewish Refugees

The King's visit

Eighty-five years since the terrifying pogroms of Kristallnacht, the AJR held a very special event during which His Majesty King Charles III spoke to Kindertransport refugees and other AJR members and staff.

PHOTO © ADAM SOLLER PHOTOGRAPHY



HM King Charles III meets AJR Kinder

The event was held at Central Synagogue on 9 November, 85 years to the day since Kristallnacht. Over 200 members and guests of the AJR were in attendance, including leaders from across the UK's Jewish community.

The King meaningfully engaged with each Kind, asking how old they were when they fled, from where they came and whether they ever returned to the cities of their birth. He mentioned a few times how amazing the Kinder are and how important it is they tell their stories. In chatting to trustees and members of our Kindertransport committee, he was

also thrilled that next generations are part of the AJR's work.

The reception with the King immediately preceded the AJR's annual Kristallnacht service, which this year had the added poignancy of being officiated by the Chief Rabbi and included a prayer for the situation in Israel, as well as contributions from Rabbi Lerer and Chazan Leas and testimonies from AJR members Albert Lester and Thea Valman which stood out.

See pages 10-11 for more photos and reports of this very special event.

IMPORTANT DAY

The past month has proved challenging for the AJR, as it has for most of the Jewish community here in the UK and across the world. Which is why we were so delighted to welcome His Majesty King Charles to meet some of the AJR Kinder. It was a profoundly important day for The AJR and the wider community and we hope you enjoy the photos and report on pages 10-11.

Other articles this month include the tale of a sefer torah rescued from Kristallnacht (p12) and a biography written by a member who is also a TV and film celebrity (p14-15).

As always, we will be delighted to receive feedback about our Journal or, indeed, any aspect of the AJR's work.

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

AJR Team

Chief Executive Michael Newman
Finance Director Adam Daniels

Heads of Department

HR & Administration Karen Markham
Social Services Nicole Valens
Education & Heritage Alex Maws
Volunteer Services Fran Horwich

AJR Journal

Editor Jo Briggs
Editorial Assistant Lilian Levy
Contributing Editor David Herman
PR & Communications Gemma Blane

Has the media learned anything?

David Herman contrasts the British media's coverage of the Israel-Hamas war with its coverage of growing Nazi persecution in the 1930s.

It has been deeply disturbing following the British media coverage of Israel over the past weeks. Too often news reports have contained errors, omissions and bias. There was the BBC's extraordinary decision to refuse to call Hamas a terrorist organisation; its coverage of the missile attack on the Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza City, which the BBC News Channel initially blamed on Israel; its failure to call out fake footage shot by Palestinians; its insistence that the UN is a neutral player, even though the UN has attacked Israel for many years; and the reliance of BBC presenters on statistics from the Palestinian Health Authority which they must have known has no independence from Hamas. No wonder former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett accused the BBC of "a lack of moral clarity."

There was considerable sympathy for Israel after the 7 October massacre. But once Israel started to attack Hamas, with their use of civilians as human shields, the media coverage filled with terrible images of young children, the destruction of Gaza City and talk of a humanitarian catastrophe, blaming Israel for what we saw on our screens. No one asked why Hamas had failed to provide essential supplies for civilians when they knew such a reprisal would happen. Reporters didn't ask what had happened to the huge amounts of humanitarian aid to Gaza over recent years. Too often there was silence where serious questions should have been asked.

In the 1930s how did the British press report the plight of Jewish refugees from central Europe? Unfortunately, the answer is deeply depressing. In his new book, *Aliens: The Chequered History of Britain's Wartime Refugees* (2023), Paul Dowsnell focuses on the British press. The worst offender was the *Daily Mail*,

then as now hostile to refugees. It was sympathetic to Oswald Mosley ('Hurrah for the Blackshirts', ran one headline). 'Let us rid ourselves of the delusion that Hitler is some kind of ogre in human shape,' wrote Lord Rothermere. In April 1939 the *Daily Mail* addressed the issue of domestic servants being allowed into Britain: 'even the paltriest kitchen maid ... is a menace to the safety of the country.' On 17 April 1940 the newspaper anticipated the policy of internment with an article entitled: 'I Would Lock Up Doubtful Aliens.' 'We could do with a spot more French suspicion instead of carelessly vouching for Germans and Austrians because they are "such nice inoffensive people", and in some cases are useful...'

The *Daily Express*, writes Dowsnell, 'was also sympathetic to the fascist cause.' One headline in 1933 proclaimed, 'Judea [sic] declares war on Germany.' The *Daily Mirror*, very different then from the left-wing paper of today, published an article in May 1933, which concluded: 'The alpha and omega of the persecution of the Jews all over the world may be summed up in one word – money. They are hated because they are so clever in getting so much of it.' On 27 April 1940 it published a piece attacking the 20,000 Italians in Britain: 'There is a stinking wind from the Mediterranean which bodes no good. Yet we still tolerate Mussolini's henchmen [sic] in this country!'

In his book, *Journeys from the Abyss* (2017), the historian Tony Kushner describes how the *Daily Express* described the *Exodus 1947* ships on 4 August 1947: 'Three dirty steamers slid through the English Channel yesterday carrying 4,300 illegal Jewish immigrants back from Palestine to Germany. They were escorted by three British destroyers, gleaming white against the rust of the cargo ships.' Kushner points out that this was 'part of a discourse that presented the *Exodus 1947* ships and their passengers as foreign, other, and racially undesirable.'

Then as now, the devil was in the detail. Sometimes the British press was guilty of overt bias and prejudice, supporting Mosley and Hitler, attacking Jews for their love of money. On other occasions, it was the language which directed readers to turn against Jewish refugees (the 'gleaming white' British destroyers as opposed to 'the rust of the cargo ships' carrying Jewish immigrants, or describing Italian immigrants as 'Mussolini's henchmen').

Today we need to listen with just as much care to signs of anti-Israel bias in BBC reports. One theme remains the same: prejudice against Jews, whether refugees from central Europe then or against Israel today. The language now is not full of the stereotypes of usury or big noses but the same lesson applies, however. Read and listen with care.

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The White Factory by Dmitry Glukhovsky had its world premiere at the Marylebone Theatre this autumn. A group of 23 AJR members attended a special performance which included a panel of Q&A with members of the cast and crew. Set in an abandoned Catholic church used to manufacture feather pillows for the Nazis – hence the name – this excellent play centres around the story of Chaim Rumkowski, the head of the Jewish Council of Elders in the Łódź Ghetto appointed by the Nazis, and the terrible choices he was forced to make. It was a powerful and difficult piece to

watch, particularly for descendants of ghetto victims and survivors, but also in context of the current war in Israel and rise in antisemitism in the UK.

Despite it being a matinee day, members of the cast were generous with their time in the Q&A after the performance, and it was fascinating to learn more about the symbolism in the play. For example, the use of the cameraman is a nod to Henryk Ross, Jewish photographer for the Jewish Council in Łódź, and the names of murdered Jews on pillowcases filled with black ash in place of white feathers.

MAZELTOV HANNA



The AJR wishes a very hearty mazeltov to our member Hanna Cooper, who celebrated her 101st birthday last month.

Hanna, her brother Peter and their father Siegfried Rosenfeld were able to flee Germany shortly before the outbreak of war. Unfortunately her mother, Dr Else Rosenfeld, was unable to obtain a visa and was forced to remain in Germany until she eventually escaped into Switzerland.

Hanna is pictured here holding a copy of her mother's book, *Living in Two Worlds*, which has recently been translated into English and published by Cambridge University Press. An article about Hanna's story will appear next year here in the *AJR Journal*.



This photo shows one AJR member presenting a British Empire Medal (BEM) to another. Jacques Weisser, who was honoured in the King's Birthday Honours list this summer for services to the Jewish Community and to Holocaust Remembrance, received his medal from HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire Robert Voss at Hertfordshire County Hall. Robert described the event as "A memorable day for us both!"

SPECIAL SCREENING OF KINDER



On 5 December the AJR and South Hampstead Shul are co-hosting a special screening of the film *Kinder*, which was co-written by Janet Eisenstein and Tom Fry.

Janet is a second-generation member of the AJR and a member of South Hampstead Shul. The screening of the film will be followed by a Q&A chaired by author and historian Mike Levy.

More info and booking via: <http://bit.ly/KINDERfilm>

SURVIVING ST OTILLIEN

St. Ottilien was a DP [Displaced Person] Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre. In 1945 two US Army reporters described its conditions as "Genocide by neglect".

On Sunday 17 December @ 7.30pm the author Rachel Kovacs will share *Surviving St. Ottilien*, looking at the challenges faced in recovering from catastrophes and drawing broader application to modern crises response.

More details from www.NorthernHolocaustEducationGroup.org

MEETING THE KINDER

AJR Trustee Danny Kalman has, together with our CEO Michael Newman, held 1-2-1 meetings with many Kindertransport refugees in the past year. Here he reflects on the experience.

I felt proud to be given the opportunity to become the first 'second generation' Chair of the Kindertransport special interest group within the AJR. I had worked closely with Sir Erich Reich for a number of years and after he sadly passed away last year, Michael Newman asked me a few months later if I would chair the group.

My father had come to the UK, together with his younger brother, on the Kindertransport from Frankfurt in April 1939 and settled in Sheffield, where I was born. Even though I was aware of his journey, it has only been in the last six years that I have made it my mission to know more about my family story.

On becoming Chair, I decided to deepen my knowledge and general understanding of the Kindertransport and have read several books on the subject. However, I thought the best way to get true insight into the experiences of the Kinder was to talk to some of them. In anticipation of the 85th anniversary of the first trains arriving into Liverpool Street Station on 2 December 1938, I suggested to Michael that we embark on a nationwide journey to meet some of the Kinder in their homes. He readily agreed and in the last ten months we have met Kinder in London, Birmingham,



Danny & Michael visited Rev Bernd Koschland in January, one of their first 1-2-1 meetings with various Kinder

Manchester, Cornwall and Glasgow. With their agreement a photo was taken during each visit and we made notes of our conversations, often resulting in a feature in this Journal.

It was so interesting listening to their stories and we felt that the fact we had arranged to see them in their own homes and given them our undivided attention was much appreciated. My previous meetings with any Kinder had been at various AJR events, with lots of other people making it difficult to have a long and uninterrupted conversation. During our visit we would ask whether they still had any possessions they brought over in the tiny suitcase they had brought from home to take on the journey. In many cases the Kinder had nothing remaining, but we did get photos of some Kinder holding a teddy bear, a family photo or a scarf.

The age of the Kinder when they left their family varied from four to one, meaning that their recollections of their journey was sometimes 'sketchy'. However, all the Kinder had some memories to share of their life in the country of their birth before they embarked on their journey to the UK. Sadly, many never saw their parents again, and in some cases have chosen not to return to the countries of their birth as it was too painful. However, others have returned to their birthplace and in some cases have given talks at local schools.

It has been a privilege to meet the Kinder in their homes, in some cases meeting their family members too. It was also wonderful that some of the AJR local social workers or outreach team joined our visits. We will continue to meet more Kinder in their homes during next year and look forward to many more fascinating conversations.

PAINTING WITH AN ACCENT

The German Embassy London has created two digital resources to coincide with the 85th anniversary of the Kindertransport.

Painting with an Accent: German-Jewish Emigré Stories, is an online exhibition and tribute to the many

German-Jewish émigrés who fled the Nazi regime and Nazi-occupied territories in Europe to find liberty and a new home in Britain. It has been created in partnership with the Ben Uri Gallery and can be viewed at <https://benuri.org/exhibitions/72/overview/>

Staying Connected is a podcast series,

with episode 17 focusing on the Kindertransport. It features the moving stories of Maria Ault and Kurt Marx: what it was like to arrive in the UK as children, their journeys, whether they saw their parents again, and the importance of Holocaust education. It can be listened to on <https://linktr.ee/stayingconnected>

DOROTHEA SHEFER-VANSON'S LETTER FROM ISRAEL



When England declared war on Germany in 1914 and again in 1939 it had not been invaded, its frontiers crossed or its citizens murdered. The basis for the outbreak of hostilities in both instances was simply a mutual defence agreement with other countries.

War is a terrible thing. It involves death, destruction and misery that can end quickly, as happened in Israel in 1967 (the Six-Day War), or go on for months or years, as happened with WW1 and WW2. Whether England was justified in going to war in both cases may be open to debate, but once the country had embarked on that course there was no turning back. The wholesale death and devastation incurred as a result had an indelible effect throughout Europe.

Some wars are initiated out of greed or the desire to control more territory and gain wealth, as was the case with many

of the wars that raged in the Ancient Near East and Europe from the dawn of history. Some of them are mentioned in the Bible and the annals of the Mesopotamian nations of the time. An enormous *bas relief* now in the British Museum depicts in gory detail the conquest of Lachish by the Assyrians in the first century BCE. Alexander the Great conquered most of the known world because he wanted to extend the territory he controlled. The Romans conquered and subjugated nations wherever they could in order to extend their empire and enrich Rome. The War of Jenkins' Ear, which lasted nine years in the 18th century, was the result of long-standing enmity between England and Spain and erupted when Spanish sailors boarded an English ship in the Caribbean and cut off the captain's ear.

So when a heavily-armed band of Hamas terrorists from Gaza entered Israel by force and proceeded to slaughter anyone they could lay their hands on, including children, babies and the elderly, in the most cruel way imaginable, making sure to film their actions and proudly display them for the world to see, Israel was well within its rights

to retaliate with as much force as it could muster. If the murder of innocent civilians isn't considered a just cause for declaring war, then what is?

And now there is uproar all over the world at the loss of innocent lives in Gaza. No one is complaining about the way the murderous Hamas rulers embedded themselves in Gaza's civilian population. And everyone is ignoring the constant barrage of rockets fired from Gaza at Israel's civilian population. Israel has created a formidable defence system preventing those rockets from wreaking the destruction they are intended to achieve. In contrast with Hamas, Israel does not target civilians, but where would we be today if the world had objected to civilian casualties in the WW2, when the Allies carpet-bombed German cities, especially Hamburg, Dresden and Berlin, in response to the German bombardment of London, Coventry and other cities? Unfortunately, civilian casualties are an inevitable by-product of war, and anyone who is concerned for the welfare of their population should refrain from initiating hostilities.

Never Again is NOW!

Last month UNESCO brought together experts from academia, education, civil society and international organisations for a high-level discussion on education's role in combating antisemitism and other forms of hatred.

The event took place at the UNESCO General Conference which is held every two years for representatives of every UNESCO member state.

The AJR's Head of Education & Heritage, Alex Maws, was invited to the meeting to help explain contemporary antisemitism. He focused on the symptoms of antisemitism which are less easy to recognise, many of which he described as simple adaptations of ancient myths about power, control, bloodthirstiness, and disloyalty. He also talked about the links between antisemitism and Israel, and how the tendency has been to take common

antisemitic slurs but instead of applying them to people, applying them to the world's only Jewish State, so that Israel and Zionism have become codewords for Jews.

According to Alex, this has resulted in a tendency to only consider Jews as powerful oppressors, and never as victims. Considering what makes antisemitism different to other hatreds, Alex highlighted the "complicated topic of skin privilege...to white supremacists Jews are not white, but to anti-Zionists Jews are white colonizers. This highlights one of the defining features of antisemitism today: whatever you don't like, whatever your big problem with the world is, the Jews are that. Both brown and white. Both fascist and communist. Tools of the right, tools of the left. Subhuman and

yet all powerful. In an antisemitic world, Jews are all of these at once."

The AJR is now the largest funder of Holocaust education programmes in the UK, currently working with over 20 partners, many featured in this Journal.



UNESCO conference on 16 November



The AJR's Alex Maws speaking at the UNESCO conference

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.

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Dear Members of the AJR, Dear People who have lived, whose parents and grandparents have lived, through horrors.

Once again cruelty and unthinkable brutality have been let loose in Israel and the world. I will not try to repeat the shocking descriptions of what Hamas has done to Israel or the horrors of the war which we are now witnessing. We, all Israel and the Jewish family across the world, are shocked to the heart. We feel only pain at the loss of any and every innocent life.

I just want to say that we are here, the generations of the Jewish People. Our political opinions no doubt differ, but we are here, together: 'mir zaynen do'. We love our community. We cherish and respect you, you the generations who saw such suffering yet came to this country and to other lands across the free world, you who helped found Israel, you who established new life for us and our children to enjoy.

We study and learn from our history, which teaches deep resilience. We cleave to our Torah, our 'tree of life to those who clasp it'. We strive, even in this time of cruel terror, to be faithful to Judaism's core teachings of humanity and respect for every person, created equal in the image of God. We strive to care for each other and for everyone, here, in Israel, Jewish and non-jewish, to whom we can reach out and who reaches out to us.

Though our hearts may feel lonely, we are not alone. Here in this country we have the support of our Jewish Institutions, the Community Security Trust, the police and the government. We have each other.

We pray for Israel. We pray for all innocent life, In Israel, in Gaza, caught up in this war against the terrorism of Hamas. We pray for the triumph of humanitarian values. We pray for better times and a better world.
Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg

With regard to Israel's fight back against the atrocities committed by Hamas, Israel gave the Palestinians Gaza as a state of their own, which entailed the removal of the Jews who had lived there. If the Palestinians had lived there in peace with their neighbours, there would have been no occupation. Instead the Palestinians rained rockets on Israel and, in their own words, wanted to push the Jews into the sea.

Perhaps, some group, MP, or other notable person, could point this out to the wider world who think that Israel bears some responsibility for the unrest in the Gaza strip. This is never mentioned when the present situation is discussed but is at the root of everything that is happening at the moment.

Please see what can be done to set the record straight. Not everything that Israel has done in the intervening years has been correct, but Israel is fighting for its right to live in peace in its own land, and to give a safe haven to all who need it.
Hannah P. Gummers, Ulverston, Cumbria

My grandparents ended their days happily in Israel after leaving Germany before the war. Dad went with them and didn't come to England till 1946 to study at UCL and, having later met Mum, never went back. So we have strong affiliations and some relatives out there. I remember Oma coming over to stay with us during the Six Day War and later other relatives staying with my parents during the Gulf War. So we can only pray for more peaceful times – and soon!

Janet Weston, Westerham, Kent

Hamas' murder, torture, rape and kidnap of more than 1,600 Israeli civilians on 7 October was unbelievably shocking and cruel. In his *Letter from Israel*, Martin Stern's grief is palpable and is shared by Jewish families and friends and millions of others throughout the world. Martin poses the question: "How can we move forward to rebuild the Israel that we love after this trauma of immense

proportions?" Martin goes on to criticise the breakdown in unity during the 10 months since Netanyahu returned to power and asserts – "Without unity we have no future."

It is true that Israel's future is now less certain because of the events since the attacks by Hamas on 7 October. However, unless I am mistaken, Martin is calling for Jews all over the world to unite behind Netanyahu and I must ask – can he really be serious?

The view of the overwhelming majority of people around the world is that a two-state solution is essential for Israel to have any chance to thrive and prosper in peace.

Netanyahu and his ilk have set Israel on a path which looks likely to lead to its ultimate demise. Now, amidst the grief and destruction is the time for Israel to change and adapt. Israel should unite, behind a government that vigorously pursues a two-state solution, and at the same time, pursues the evisceration of Hamas, but within the rules of International Law. These are necessary conditions for Israelis and Palestinians to have a chance to live flourishing lives.

I recommend those of your readers who have not done so already to read Jonathan Friedland (especially in the *Guardian* over recent weeks), and to listen to Yuval Noah Harari *The Rest Is Politics* Leader series. Gershon Hachohen Maj. Gen. at Mir Yam also offers many valuable insights.
Name & address withheld

I see the headline in the November *AJR Journal*, and indeed prominent on the website, "We stand with Israel" with regret and must consider resigning. I am one who does not.

Hamas are terrorists who do not represent the Palestinian people. Israel's response from a position of overwhelming power and purporting to represent the Israeli population has put them in a morally indefensible position, with the inevitable consequence of further anti-Jewish

sentiment that will last for the foreseeable future. I was, and remain, proud of my Jewish heritage. Not of Israel.
Jim Newmark, Lutterworth, Leics.

In Martin Stern's 'Letter from Israel' in the November Journal there are many sentiments with which I disagree but one point I particularly want to make is that our trauma and suffering as Jews does not inevitably lead to blind defence of the Israeli government. Like Mr Stern's father my late husband, Ben Abeles, came to England on a Kindertransport from Prague and was the only member of his immediate family to survive the Holocaust. This instilled in him a horror of demonising 'the other' – an Israel that failed to ensure security and equality for all troubled him deeply. I know that the AJR supports the expression of diverse views and hope that in future Journals you will reflect the horror many of us feel at the violence visited on innocent Palestinians, many of whom are themselves refugees or their descendants. I do not think this would detract from condemning the shocking, frightening and traumatising 7 October attacks within Israel.
Helen Abeles, Leicester

THE POWER OF A STAMMTISCH

Note from Editor: This letter was sent in by one of our Next Generation members, in response to his invitation to the AJR's bi-monthly Stammtisch for 3G members. The next date is 7 February, email debra@ajr.org.uk for details.

I wanted to share with you a story about a Stammtisch. We had never discussed them in my family and I had not heard the word until 2008.

In that year, I arranged a family reunion at the town where my father was brought up, Riedlingen in Southern Germany. One evening I went for dinner with my mother and Rolf to a hotel owned by the family of a boy my father had been at school with. The only table with space was a Stammtisch.

We sat next to a stranger. The old man asked why we were in Riedlingen. I wondered whether to just say we were on holiday – or that my father had lived there as a boy and had to leave as he was Jewish. I plumped for the latter. "Your father wasn't an Oettinger was he? I played with one when I was a boy", he replied. My father's mother was an Oettinger, the same name as his parents' shop. The stranger must have played with my father's younger brother. The power of a Stammtisch!
David Bernheim, St Martin Vésubie, France

EU PASSPORTS

One of my daughters and one of my granddaughters have applied for and obtained Austrian nationality in order to get EU passports. I was born in Vienna and the Austrian government some time ago decided to offer nationality to all descendants whose parents had their nationality stripped from them by the Nazis. My daughter had asked me beforehand whether I had any objections. I could hardly object since I too now had an Austrian EU passport and we had had Brexit.

Her next question was more difficult to answer. What would my parents have thought? When I had my Austrian nationality returned in the 1990s my parents were already dead. My guess is that my father would not have minded. I always felt that he was quite proud to have been Viennese, perhaps because he had fought for Austria in WW1. My mother, on the other hand, I think would have been quite upset. She would have reminded me that Austria had not been "occupied" as they claimed to have been, and that they were every bit as Nazi as Germany.

My daughter knew my mother. They loved each other dearly. She was already 25 years old when my mother died. Should I tell her what I believe my mother would have thought? I think perhaps not – but what do other AJR members think?
Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts.

LOOKING FOR?


LEIPZIG JUDENHÄUSER 1939-1945

As part of his grandparents' research, Dr. Lansley would be grateful for any information or book recommendations (in English) on the LEIPZIG JUDENHÄUSER (Jewish Houses) 1939-1945 (brought about by the enactment of the German Law "Gesetz ueber Mietverhaeltnisse mit Juden" (Act concerning tenancies with Jews) on 30 April 1939. In particular the one at Packhofstrasse 1 Leipzig.
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ART NOTES: by Gloria Tessler

Although Frans Hals' portraits are noted for their lavish and ornamental style of dress, the expressions on the faces of his subjects tell a different story.

Celebrated in his lifetime for introducing a much less formal and more flexible portraiture, the Flemish baroque painter may have retained the fashion extravaganza of his period, but there is something that almost heralds Impressionism in his whimsical or just plain cheeky faces above the white, pleated lace ruffs. He is the master of the fleeting image.

The paintings in the **National Gallery's** first exhibition of this artist for 30 years, includes 50 works from museums and private collections around the world. Hals may lack the psychological depth of a Rembrandt, but he was a storyteller, pure and simple. You can feel the presence of his sitters.

His most famous painting, the enigmatic *Laughing Cavalier*, on first time loan from the Wallace Collection, could not be more lavish. Yet beneath the lace ruff and embroidered doublet and rakish hat there is something of the court jester about this cavalier, who smiles beneath his twirling blond moustache, but whose eyes betray a worldly cynicism.

If not his greatest work, it is his most popular. Hals' group portraits offer a glimpse into a world of merchants, burghers, and entrepreneurs during the transformation of the 17th century Dutch republic into a world power. They invite comparison with the work meeting of today, the zoom get together, the drinks party or even a night out at the pub. This democratisation of the group is revealed in works like *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company*, where Hals painted each subject individually in his studio, releasing a vivid spirit of dynamic energy. The most forceful character in this group stares straight at us with his elbow outstretched. He appears to have

upturned his glass to suggest he wants a refill!

Hals' subjects are often dressed formally in black with a lace pleated ruff. But in *Portrait of a Couple*, this formality contrasts with the innocence of their mutual affection. Both are smiling and the woman's hand, bearing the ring on her finger, is placed with quiet confidence on the man's arm. A vine surrounds the tree behind them, symbolically enhancing their clinging love.

Hals does not desist from difficult subjects either. A disturbing portrait of a Harlem lunatic, *Malle Babbe* with a rather questioning owl on her shoulder, archly symbolic of wisdom, is much more roughly drawn, almost with a sense of caricature. But the quizzical expression on the face of Russian silk trader *Isaac Abrahamsz Massa*, makes you feel part of some forensic debate on trade.

Portrait painters before Hals rarely showed their subjects smiling. Whether it was deemed too difficult or simply inappropriate, Hals broke new ground with his relaxed and convivial sitters, some with a hand nonchalantly resting on the hip, others laughing, achieved with fleeting brushstrokes which conveyed the relaxed mood he sought.



Frans Hals, 'Portrait of a Couple, probably Isaac Abrahamsz Massa and Beatrix van der Laen', about 1622

© RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

One of his most charming portraits is *Catharine Hooft With Her Nurse*. The child, clearly from a wealthy family, looks about 18 months old and is dressed in an embroidered gold dress with a lace collar and headband. Her nurse, kindly faced and more simply attired, offers the child a biscuit and the affection between the two is visible in the way the little girl touches the woman's collar.

Frans Hals was born in Antwerp in the early 1580s, but his family emigrated from the Spanish Netherlands to the vibrant textile industry of Harlem. His father, Franchois, was a cloth merchant, and although Frans was only two at the time of the move, exhibition curator Bart Cornelis suggests that he brought an innate Belgian aesthetic to his paintings. The texture of cloth runs through Hals' work. He painted more than 100 single portraits and six group and family portraits. But his gift for revealing the character of his subjects came to the fore during his old age.

Frans Hals: Credit Suisse Exhibition; National Gallery runs until 21 January 2024.

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**CONTEMPORARY
PAINTING AND SCULPTURE**

IMPACT OF THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

On 21 December the AJR is hosting an intimate event for our 3G members, looking at the immediate and longer-term impact of the current conflict. Admission will be by invitation only, but the event will be live-streamed for all to watch (check the weekly e-news for details).

Chaired by our CEO Michael Newman, the event will feature:

Natasha Hausdorff: a barrister and expert commentator on international law, including the law of armed conflict, foreign affairs and national security policy. She holds law degrees from Oxford and Tel Aviv Universities and was a Fellow in the National Security Law Programme at Columbia Law School in New York. Natasha previously worked for American law firm Skadden Arps, and clerked for the President of the Israeli Supreme Court, Chief Justice Miriam Naor, in Jerusalem. She voluntarily serves as the legal director of UK Lawyers For Israel Charitable Trust.

Jake Wallis Simons: editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, a writer for the *Spectator* and the *Telegraph*, and a broadcaster for *Sky News* and the BBC. Formerly, he was a foreign correspondent who reported from all over the world. He has written four novels; his first work of non-fiction, *Israelophobia: The newest version of the oldest hatred and what to do about it*, is out now.

The event will begin at 6.30pm in central London. Email debra@ajr.org.uk for more details.

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Hand on our Heritage for Chanukah

As Chanukah approaches, we reflect on the importance of preserving our heritage, celebrating our traditions, and passing down the rich legacy of our ancestors to future generations. This Chanukah, we invite you to embrace the spirit of giving and consider a meaningful gift for your children and grandchildren – membership to The Association of Jewish Refugees.

On the Festival of Lights, the lighting of the menorah’s candles symbolises hope and resilience in the face of adversity. Our own history, marked by challenges and triumphs, is a testament to the strength of our community. Now, it is our duty to ensure that the flame of our heritage continues to burn brightly, not only in our hearts but in the hearts of our descendants.

As you know, the AJR is more than just an organisation; it is a family, a community that stands united in the face of challenges. Our members find comfort in being with others who have a shared history—a history marked by courage, resilience, and a commitment to preserving our cultural legacy.

The AJR provides a platform for younger generations to learn about their heritage, engage with their peers, and contribute to the preservation of our collective legacy. By gifting a membership to your children and grandchildren, you are fostering a sense of belonging, a connection to their

roots, and a deep appreciation for our values.

Together, we will overcome the challenges that come our way, just as our parents and grandparents did. We will stand strong as a community, and we will continue to pass down the stories and traditions that make our heritage unique. With your support, we can ensure that the flame of our legacy never flickers or fades.

This Chanukah, let us give the gift of community, family, and legacy.

To purchase membership for your loved ones, simply visit our website or contact our membership secretary on karin@ajr.org.uk or **020 8385 3070**. We are here to assist you every step of the way, and we will send both you and the new member a special gift as a thank-you.

Let us come together this Chanukah and celebrate the past, present, and future of our vibrant community.

Remembering

CAPTURING HEARTS AND MINDS



The King chatted to Kinder while the Chief Rabbi, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, and the AJR's Mike Karp and Michael Newman looked on



His Majesty also met several descendants of Kinder

His Majesty The King's heartwarming meeting with AJR Kinder immediately before our Kristallnacht commemorative service inspired media around the world as well as the people who physically attended the event.

Images of the event were broadcast on Sky News and BBC World Service, while lengthy and glowing articles appeared in no less than eight national newspaper and over 200 regional newspapers. Headlines included *You make me very proud, King tells refugees saved from Nazis* (The Times), *King thanked for 'loving kindness' in 'fractured world' at Kristallnacht event* (Glasgow Times) and *King's example of our Kinder times* (Daily Mirror).

Tributes have also poured in from guests at the event. One second generation members wrote: "What a fabulous day we have all had and mum – Alexandra Greensted – has had the treat of her life meeting King Charles. Thank you so much for all your hard work and organisation. A day she will never forget."

Janet Weston, a regular contributor to this Journal, wrote: "The AJR arranged such a wonderful afternoon when the King visited the dear Kindertransport refugees. It would have been impossible to arrange a more moving commemoration of the terrible events they experienced 85 years ago."

AJR Trustee Miriam Kingsley perfectly reflected the mood of the afternoon when she suggested that "...the timing of this event couldn't have been more poignant. I think it sends a message to many in the Jewish community not just in the UK, but in Israel, and around the world, that during these dark times, with the wave of antisemitism that sadly is growing, we have the support and patronage of a King who is highly revered around the world. He always has been a friend of the Jewish community, but this occasion cemented that wonderful relationship, and sent out a reassuring signal that many of us badly need to see at this time."



Kristallnacht



Lighting the memorial candles



Thea Valman sharing her memories of Kristallnacht



Thea when she was a young child



Albert Lester sharing his testimony

On 9 November, immediately after our reception with His Majesty King Charles III, the AJR held a Commemorative Service to remember Kristallnacht and honour those whose lives were ripped apart by antisemitism and to stand in solidarity, ensuring that the struggles of the Jewish community are never forgotten.

The service, which took place at The Central Synagogue, London, was officiated by The Chief Rabbi and featured vivid eye-witness accounts from AJR members who experienced the horrifying November 1938 Pogroms.

Speakers included Albert Lester (96) who escaped Nazi Germany, via the Kindertransport, in 1938. Albert's heart-rending testimony retold the story of the terrifying raid of his school. Albert remembered:

"[I was] swept away by a torrent of screaming, crying children running into the dining room. The swarm then ran down a metal spiral staircase into the kitchen and from there over the kitchen garden to a wooden fence erected on top of a ten-foot-high retaining wall preventing the property

from falling onto the streets below. One by one, the children climbed over the fence and jumped down the wall. When my turn came, I looked down in terror...there was little else to do but to follow the crowd."

Also speaking was Thea Valman (89), who directly witnessed her father's arrest and the terror which befell her hometown of Vienna. She said:

"At midnight I was woken by the sound of shouting, screaming and banging on doors all over our block. Through the window... I could also hear the smashing of glass. Totally bewildered I ran out of bed to find my white-faced parents standing in our hall... Then there was a loud banging on our door... Three men in uniform came in, took my father by the arms and walked him away..."

"My mother was pale and shaking... I thought it was like the time there had been an earthquake... through the windows we could still hear the sound of glass smashing and screaming voices.

"Years later I learnt that the Gestapo had arrested my father together with other Jewish men from our building, in order to take them to prison prior to deporting them to a concentration camp. My father had broken loose and run down to the caretaker's flat, who hid him in the cellar.

"My father stayed in the cellar for five

days. My mother brought food down to the caretaker, who gave it to him. On my father's return, we packed a few things and went cautiously to my grandparents' flat. On the way I saw men on their knees, scrubbing the pavements. 'Tomorrow, these pavements will be very clean,' I thought to myself. Then I noticed that many of the scrubbers were elderly Jewish men, with beards like my grandfather's, and that some of the onlookers were laughing."

Six other AJR members took part in a moving candle lighting ceremony and the congregation was addressed by The Chief Rabbi, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, and Rabbi Barry Lerer.

Other guests of honour included Lord Pickles – The UK Envoy for Post Holocaust Issues and Ambassadors from Germany, Austria, Sweden and The Netherlands and representatives from the Czech, Slovak Republic and Polish embassies.

AJR CEO Michael Newman underlined the vital importance of marking milestones in Holocaust history, commenting: "Today, 85 years on from the horrific events of Kristallnacht, survivors of the Holocaust are witnessing, once again, terrifying atrocities and the uprise in antisemitic acts. That is why it is so important, that we pause to remember anniversaries such as Kristallnacht, to educate people where antisemitism unchallenged can lead."

‘The bush burned but it was not consumed’

The story of a Sefer Torah which miraculously survived the tragic events of Kristallnacht and was brought to the UK by a Jewish refugee.

In November 1938 the air was increasingly unbearable. Manele Spielman knew that things would get worse and made a decision that may have put him in an even greater danger than being a proud member of the Jewish community in the Mitte district of Berlin in the midst of Nazism – to remove a Sefer Torah from the synagogue and hide it in his home.

Shortly after, on the night of 9 November, the synagogue burned. Hordes of paramilitaries, including the Hitler Youth and many civilians, set fire to and destroyed synagogues and businesses and murdered Jews. The history is well known. Although he was stateless (he was formerly from Poland and left in 1919) and after six years of desperately trying, Manele managed to obtain a visa for the UK. After being arrested and imprisoned in Berlin, he was released and allowed to emigrate. He arrived in England and took up residence at the Kitchener Camp for German Jewish refugees in Sandwich, Kent in February 1939.

The Sefer was used for services in Kitchener until Manele was able to leave and be joined by his wife Deborah and seven-year-old daughter, Elli, in June 1939. Manele found work in Birmingham as a butler and so the Sefer Torah went with them. It spent time and resided variously at the Central Synagogue, later at Park Road Synagogue and then at the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation for the next 60 years. Sadly, Manele died in 1985.

In 2000, Manele's grandson, Mark Faerber, who was born in England, decided to move the Sefer to his community, Borehamwood & Elstree United Synagogue

in Hertfordshire, where it has remained ever since. Inscribed in Hebrew and inlaid in ivory at the top of the wooden rollers of the scroll are the words: *Pesach Kalonymus son of Asher Dov and his son Reb Mordecai* and the Hebrew date 5638 which equated to 1878 in the Gregorian calendar. This makes it currently 145 years old. Mark had two mantles (covers) made for it: a blue one for weekly use and a white one for the High holidays. On them is embroidered a verse from the Book of Exodus chapter 3 verse 2: ‘The Bush burned but was not consumed’ referring to the story of the Burning Bush and the metaphorical allusion to the burning synagogues and this particular Torah which was not burned.

In October 2022 in time for the festival of Simchat Torah, Mark arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina – with the Sefer Torah. It was the first time since 1939 that it had left the UK. It had been taken there on the personal invitation of Rabbi Shimon Axel Wahnish, the rabbi of ACILBA, Comunidad Israelita Latina de Buenos Aires – which is one of the first Sephardic Jewish communities in Argentina made up of Jewish immigrants from Morocco. Mark had been very surprised when Meir told him of the rabbi's interest and request to bring it. No-one had expressed such interest and excitement before.

The rabbi had heard the story of this Sefer from Mark's son-in-law, Meir Chami (who married Mark's daughter, Daniella Faerber both of whom live in Buenos Aires with their four children). On hearing about the miraculous survival of this Sefer Torah, the rabbi took great interest and immediately requested that it be brought to Argentina in order to celebrate with it. The rabbi saw divine intervention that the Almighty saved Manele Spielman so that he could preserve and save this Torah. He said that although the history of this Torah was interesting, it was the spiritual importance of what it represented.

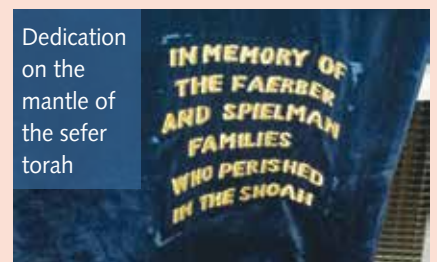
When this Torah was read from the Bimah in the shul in Argentina at the end and at



Mark Faerber with the Sefer that was rescued by his late maternal grandfather from a Berlin shul on Kristallnacht



Manuel Spielman on his motorbike in June 1929



Dedication on the mantle of the sefer torah



The scrolls of the Spielman Sefer Torah

the beginning of the annual Torah reading cycle on Simchat Torah, the young boys of the community were called up to read from it. The young are the future and this Torah represented a link to the past and the triumph of good over the evil that tried to destroy *yiddishkeit* and our holy Torah values. It was very moving.

When Mark took his own one-year-old son, Netanel, to the bimah at his shul on Simchat Torah on one of the most joyous occasions in the Jewish calendar, he reflected that Netanel was the fifth generation of the family to dance with this Torah.

A TALE OF TWO MANUSCRIPTS

Howard Falksohn sheds insights into one of the most symbolic operas to survive the Holocaust.

It is well known that the notorious Theresienstadt (Terezin) Ghetto was a hot bed for cultural activity. So many talented and accomplished Jewish writers, artists, musicians, scientists and professors were forced together cheek by jowl. Many of them continued to be creative even under such prohibitive conditions. Impromptu lectures were given, plays were written, portraits painted and music was composed and performed.

The Wiener Holocaust Library has extensive material documenting some of these activities. Amongst its treasures is one important collection which the library acquired in the 1980s via his cousin, Käthe Fischl née Strenitz: the archive of Petr Kien (1919-1944). Petr Kien was an outstanding and prolific artist and author of plays and poetry, who produced a considerable corpus of work whilst director of the technical drawing department during his incarceration at Terezin, much of which has survived. The centre piece of this archive is the original manuscript libretto, which he drafted in Terezin, for the opera, *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*.

This opera, composed by Viktor Ullmann (1898-1944), tells the narrative of Emperor Overall, who cannot rule chaos on Earth any longer because Death has decided to go on strike, a strike caused by his unwillingness to put up with wars and starvation any longer. This poorly disguised critique of the Nazi regime would never get performed in the ghetto.

Kien, an assimilated Jew, attended the prestigious Prague Academy of Fine Arts. Whilst there he shared an apartment with his cousin Käthe Strenitz (later Fischl). Käthe, who came to Great Britain on a Kindertransport, became the creator of what is now the *Wiener Library Petr Kien archive*. In December 1941 Kien was deported to Terezin with his wife, Ilse Stranska, and her family.

Viktor Ullmann, already a musician and



Petr Kien (1919-1944)

composer of some note, like Petr Kien, was very productive in Terezin. Both Kien and Ullmann were murdered at Auschwitz in 1944

Petr Kien's libretto for the opera along with other original papers survived by being placed in a case and hidden in the shower block of the ghetto hospital, where it was correctly assumed that the SS wouldn't enter for fear of contracting Typhus.

When the manuscript finally found its resting place at the Wiener Library, alongside the handwritten version, replete with annotations and deletions to the text, it included the first page of a typescript version. This latter was written on the back of what appears to be authentic administrative paper from the ghetto, namely a completed questionnaire from an inmate.

Not much thought was ever given to this anomalous rogue page until it was brought to the library's attention by a musicologist at the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel in 2021. This institution, which specialises in original musical manuscripts, has the remaining pages of the typescript version of the libretto, and was keen to have this one page 'repatriated'.

It turns out that this typescript version of the libretto not only has a different provenance, but closer textual analysis suggests that the generally fuller handwritten version is a working draft. A comparative study of the two versions could shed light on the working relationship between Ullmann and Kien.

Ullmann had been a friend of Hans Günther



Viktor Ullmann (1898-1944)

Adler (1910-1988) German-language poet, musicologist, scholar and Holocaust survivor. They met again in Terezin and were both deported to Auschwitz but Adler survived. Ullmann had placed his papers comprising many musical manuscripts including the typescript version of the libretto into the custody of Emil Utitz (1883-1956), a philosopher and the librarian at Terezin. Utitz, who also survived the Holocaust, approached Adler after the war in Prague and asked if he would take care of Ullmann's legacy. This seemed appropriate on account of their friendship, Adler's interest in musicology and as Adler was leaving imminently to the West, it would avoid the manuscripts falling into the hands of the communists.

Adler looked after the manuscripts until 1985/6 when he placed them on long term loan at the Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft in Dornach (acknowledging Ullmann's interest in that organisation). Some years before, Adler had commissioned Kerry Woodward, a London-based musician and arranger to conduct the first ever performance of this opera with the Dutch National Opera on 16 December 1975 in Amsterdam. Having borrowed the typescript version, it is thought that whilst scrutinising the two versions at the home of Käthe Fischl, this one page became inadvertently separated and ended up with the handwritten version and subsequently deposited at the Wiener Library. The typescript version was later given on loan to the Paul Sacher Foundation and this one rogue page has now been successfully repatriated.

The opera has been performed multiple times in various languages including a symbolic performance at Terezin itself in 1995.

Not many AJR members can claim to have appeared in *Star Wars*, *Dr Who*, *The Dirty Dozen* and two Bond films. But such is the biography of **George Roubicek**, who recently reclaimed his Austrian citizenship.

George's school picture from Toowoomba, Queensland



George as Captain Hopper in *Doctor Who* – *Tomb of the Cybermen 2*



A REFUGEE WITH STAR

George and his family fled Austria in early 1939 after his mother paid for his father's release from Buchenwald. He arrived in the UK when he was 19 years old, and has had a successful career as an actor, dubbing artist and director. He is now 87 years old and lives in Suffolk and has recently written his life story. This is an abridged version:

My father, Ernst Roubicek, was born in Vienna in 1905. My mother's family was German. By the time she was born, in 1908, they had moved to Vienna where her father, Ludwig Ernst Tennenbaum, managed a nearby paper mill. Although their name Tennenbaum was Jewish, apparently they were not. I believe they had converted at some point. However, Ludwig was once offered a civic award by the then Mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, which he turned down saying he "...would not bend (his) knee before such an antisemite!".

My mother's family was friendly with an artistic circle. Arthur Schnitzler bounced her on his knee, Gustav Mahler didn't, and one of her brother's great heroes and mentors was the Wagnerian tenor Richard Tauber. Music, art and literature were very important to them. My father played guitar well, my mother did not play any instrument but, boy, she could listen and was very knowledgeable.

My parents married in 1930 in a Lutheran church. My father was 25 years old, my mother 22. He became a salesman, first for his father, and later started his own business. My mother was one of the first women to graduate in medicine at the University of Vienna, specialising in childhood diseases and vaccination.

We lived at Hermann-Pacher-Gasse 12,

Vienna XVIII, right on the outskirts of Vienna. The house was 1930s Bauhaus style and was designed by Fritz Mellion.

So, there we were, living a comfortable middle-class life. Mum was doing her internship at the Central Hospital in Vienna. Dad devoted more time to politics than to business, and we had a live-in treasure named Anna Swoboda.

On 31 May, shortly after the *Anschluss*, my father was arrested for being a left-wing socialist and Jewish. He was taken first to Dachau and then transferred to Buchenwald.

My father rarely spoke about his nine months of imprisonment but I once overheard him talk of a guard who regularly punctured prisoners' eardrums. I also heard his nightmares.

My mother was incredibly brave in standing by her husband and fighting to get him released, which took place on 27 January 1939. We fled Vienna the following month. Part of our story, and it's romantic enough for me to want to believe it, is that pieces of the family jewellery were sewn into my teddy bear, which I innocently clutched through all the border controls.

There was a problem finding a place to take us. Emigration to the United States was bureaucratically problematic and we were told that the British quota for 1939 was full. My father's best friend from school days, Bill Puregger, had met an Australian woman while mountaineering in Austria, and got us an entry visa to Australia after emigrating there with his wife.

We left Vienna from Westbahnhof, travelled through Holland and across the North Sea to

Harwich, then onto London. I still remember a woman sitting in our compartment who had bright scarlet fingernails that I found very attractive. We spent a few days in London with Aunt Heidi, who had left Austria some time before. She had a tiny apartment in Swiss Cottage and I had to sleep on a short sofa in a pillowcase, about which I complained bitterly. My parents didn't like London. They thought it was dirty and vulgar, but they were glad to be safe.

We left England from Southampton on a Dutch ship called *The Christian Huygens*, which took us as far as Columbo in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where we transferred to a P&O liner called *Narkunda*, which was later converted to a troopship and torpedoed during the war. I don't remember anything about those ships but the beautiful smell. In Brisbane, the arrival hall was a corrugated iron hut on the banks of the river, the temperature was 90°F and the mosquitoes were terrible. My parents didn't know any English and we had virtually no money.

We lived in Brisbane for a year and then settled in Toowoomba, Queensland, in a colonial style house built on stilts to keep it cool. The wash house was underneath, and the toilet at the end of the garden. We had snakes under the house, parakeets and other exotic birds in the garden, and poisonous spiders were not uncommon. All a dramatic contrast to our life in Austria.

My older brother Peter found the transition to Australia and our English language school very difficult but I had no trouble fitting in. I won a scholarship to the prestigious Toowoomba Grammar School, and was on both the rugby and cricket teams and in the school's drama club. During a tour by the Shakespeare Theatre Company I appeared



George played one of Stromberg's allies in *The Spy Who Loved Me*



George Roubicek as his *Star Wars* character



A more recent photo of George

PHOTO © FANTOM EVENTS

(WARS) POTENTIAL

as an extra in their performances of *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*.

I had a remarkable English teacher, "Bluey" White. He wrote about me to Anthony Quail of the Stratford Theatre Company (later the RSC) who recommended me to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) in London. I first had to complete six months of National Service, which I enjoyed very much and was paid £8 a week. I was one of 20 men selected for the Queen's Guard at Government House, Queensland, during a visit by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip in March 1954.

In summer 1954, at the age of 19, I left Australia to attend RADA in London with the ambition of becoming a professional actor. We had spoken German at home and I kept it in my subconscious until I started my career in acting and later, translating, dubbing and directing for film and television.

My mother was never allowed to practise as a doctor in Australia. She worked at the Willburn Mental Asylum in Toowoomba and then as a researcher for the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. In the all-too-short years I knew and loved him, my father was never anything but hopeless at business, managing to go broke at least three times. His last job was as a taxi driver.

My parents both played bridge and my father was a member of the Toowoomba Chess Club and a Masonic Lodge. My mother was friendly with several fellow Austrian refugees and made *Sachertorte* every year for my father's birthday and *Kipferl* and *Mohnkuchen* at Christmas.

My parents carried their love of music with

them to Australia, helping to arrange classical music concerts by visiting musicians. We also travelled to Brisbane for concerts, including one conducted by Otto Klemperer.

My mother kept in touch with relatives and post-war developments in Austria. After the restitution decision in December 1948, her property in Hermann-Pacher-Gasse was returned to her, plus a share in her parents' house. The sale of these lost assets enabled my parents to build a new house in Toowoomba. Sadly, my father died of a heart attack in 1959, aged just 53, while I was living and working in London.

I have returned to Austria several times. In 1954, I spent my first Christmas outside Australia in Austria in Steiermark, with my mother's sister Trude and her husband Dr. Karl Kriegshaber. They were very hospitable, and I spent a lovely Christmas with them. The following summer, I returned to work on their farm in Weng, which I had visited as a child and really loved.

In the early 1970s, I worked for six weeks at the English Theatre in Vienna, performing in the play *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. My first wife Dagmar accompanied me to Vienna and travelled with us on tour to Israel, where we performed in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem, which was wonderful. In 1979/80 I was back in Vienna working on *Bad Timing*, in which I played an Austrian policeman. My oldest son Bruno performed with the British theatre group Forced Entertainment in their production of *Bloody Mess* at the Kunsthalle in Vienna. Margaret, my second wife, and I visited around the time of my birthday in May 2004.

With Austrian citizenship, I feel like I have three cultural identities and affinities,

Australian, British and Austrian. Several fellow Roubicek family members have also acquired Austrian citizenship.

With the encouragement of my daughter, Sasha, I recently reconnected with members of my Austrian extended family via Zoom! They say I still have my Viennese accent when conversing in German.

George Roubicek began his film acting career with roles in such films as *The One That Got Away* (1958), the mystery adaptation *Chance Meeting* (1959) with Stanley Baker and the Janet Blair adaptation *Burn, Witch, Burn* (1962). He also appeared in *The Victors* (1963), *The Bedford Incident* (1965) with Richard Widmark and the action film *The Dirty Dozen* (1967) with Lee Marvin. His film career continued throughout the sixties and the eighties in productions like the action movie *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) with Roger Moore, the Ulrich Von Dobschuetz drama *Winterspelt* (1977) and the thrilling mystery *Bad Timing* (1980) with Art Garfunkel. His work around this time also included a part on the TV movie *Foreign Exchange* (ABC, 1969-1970). In the nineties through the early 2000s, Roubicek lent his talents to projects like *Faust* (1994), *The Infiltrator* (HBO, 1994-95) and *Roujin Z* with Allan Wenger (1996). His credits also expanded to *This is the Sea* (1997) starring Richard Harris and *Azur & Asmar* (2008) starring Patrick Timsit. Most recently, Roubicek worked on *Tales of the Night* (2012) with Arlette Mirapeu.

George Roubicek is one of 10 people who are featured in *The New Austrians*, a book jointly published between the IKG Vienna and the Austrian Foreign Office which was launched in Vienna last month.

REVIEWS

MY FRIEND ANNE FRANK

Hannah Pick-Goslar

Rider Books/Penguin Books UK

Hannah was born in 1928 into 'a comfortable life of relative privilege' in Berlin. Her father had served in the German army in the First World War and had been a deputy cabinet minister in Prussia. All must have seemed secure but, of course, it wasn't. The transition to Nazi rule altered everything and the sense of shock and insecurity is vividly portrayed. 'My family had called Germany home for a thousand years' but 'We were no longer safe', so they moved to London. Both parents spoke English so all might have been well. However, her father's employer expected him to work on the Jewish sabbath and her mother had earlier travelled to British Mandate Palestine and decided it was not for her. So, fatally, they moved to the Netherlands.

It is here that Anne Frank comes into the story. Hannah made friends with her on her first day at school and found out that they were next-door neighbours. That led also to their families becoming friends. Hannah's mother assured her that Holland was safe from Hitler, but it wasn't. The Nazi invasion on May 10 1940 was followed by surrender and the imposition of many restrictions on the Jews. We get a child's eye view of the occupation: 'forbidden to go to playgrounds, parks or even public beaches'. Jews could no longer go to the normal schools or even visit the homes of non-Jews. In the Jewish school Hannah once again found herself in the same class as Anne Frank. Then one day Hannah rang the Frank's doorbell and was told that the family had left for Switzerland.

'One day the Germans will return to their senses, they have to,' Oma would repeat daily, but they didn't. Instead, a Nazi official came to their door and told the whole family to pack their bags. They were sent east on a three-day journey to Bergen-Belsen. One day Hannah was shocked to discover that Anne Frank was not safely in Switzerland but near to

starving on the other side of a fence in the same concentration camp. For two days Hannah was able to pass some food to her. On the third day she wanted to do the same but 'Everyone was gone'. Hannah was among the few who survived and eventually settled in Palestine. Anne Frank's father also survived and kept in touch with Hannah, signing his letters to her as 'Uncle Otto'.

The link with Anne Frank is the presumed selling point of this book; even were it not for that connection this would still be an account well worth reading; another gripping, fascinating and at times frightening story.

Michael Levin

HANNAH ARENDT UND HEINRICH BLÜCHER: BIOGRAFIE EINES PAARES

Barbara von Bechtolsheim

Insel Verlag GmbH (in German)

Hannah Arendt was on her way to lunch with her mother, in the summer of 1933, when police arrested her and took her to police headquarters at Berlin's Alexanderplatz. They searched her apartment and confiscated documents. They also roped in her mother Martha. Both were questioned, separately: what was Hannah, the future political theorist and author of the controversial *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, up to in the Prussian state library?

Arendt was researching her life of Rahel Varnhagen, the German-Jewish writer who ran a literary salon in early nineteenth-century Berlin. But that became a cover for illegal work: assembling antisemitic material for a Zionist congress in Prague. When the Gestapo released Arendt after eight days in custody, she resolved to flee. Without travel documents, and via Prague and Geneva, she headed for the 'Emigranten-Metropole' – Paris. There, she rejoined Günther Stern, whom she had married in 1929. The couple had met while both were philosophy students at Marburg. Stern had escaped to Paris in March 1933, after the Reichstag fire.

In Paris, Baroness Germaine de Rothschild recruited Arendt to run her philanthropic activities, including help for child refugees. Arendt also found work as

general secretary of Youth Aliyah, now in Paris, but set up in Berlin in 1933 to prepare youth for emigration to Palestine. Hannah earned enough to support both her and Günther, busy completing a lengthy novel. The couple lived together and had common activities such as attending philosophical lectures; they shared the same friends such as Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. But they were married in name only. When Stern left for New York in June 1936, it amounted to a separation, and the couple divorced the following year. That spring of 1936 Arendt had met another refugee, Heinrich Blücher, seven years her senior and working illegally teaching philosophy, art and history. He had fled to Prague after his Berlin home was raided by police, eventually reaching Paris via Vienna.

Where Arendt's middle-class family were part of Königsberg's German Jewish cultural cream, Blücher, a Protestant, had grown up a half orphan in working-class Berlin. He had been an early member of Germany's Communist party, his enthusiasm waning later. Despite their different backgrounds, they shared an interest in philosophy and politics, and quickly grew closer. Arendt and the twice-divorced Blücher would marry in January 1940. By then, Arendt had lost her German citizenship, becoming stateless for eighteen years. She had also lost her Youth Aliyah job: following Kristallnacht, the office was moved to London, where her successor was Günther Stern's sister Eva Michaelis, renowned for saving many children before and during the Nazi era.

With the German invasion of France in May 1940, Arendt was rounded up as an 'enemy alien', put on a train and interned at Gurs, the camp near the Pyrenées. After Arendt obtained liberation papers, she hitchhiked to Montauban, near Toulouse, where many refugees had congregated. By chance, Arendt met her husband in the main street. French guards had released Blücher, interned after war was declared, as the Germans approached Paris, and he joined the thousands fleeing south.

The couple now began their quest for
Continued on page 17



MATINEE PERFORMANCE

OPERATION MINCEMEAT

TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2024
FORTUNE THEATRE, COVENT GARDEN



Operation Mincemeat is the fast-paced, hilarious and unbelievably true story of the twisted secret mission that won us WW2. The question is, how did a well-dressed corpse wrong-foot Hitler? This classic has now been made into a musical, showing at the Fortune Theatre, Covent Garden.

We have secured a limited number of discounted rate tickets for the matinee performance on Tuesday 12 March 2024

£30 per person.

roshart@ajr.org.uk



HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2024

MONDAY 22 JANUARY 2024
BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

There will be an online stream on the day – details will appear in the January Journal

You only need to book if you wish to attend in person

susan@ajr.org.uk

Mazeltov

The AJR wishes mazeltov to our member **Felix Couchman** who this month will be presented with the German Order of Merit (Bundesverdienstkreuz) at the German embassy in London.



PRIVATE SHOWING

**ONE LIFE
The Story of
Sir Nicholas Winton**

WEDNESDAY 6 DECEMBER AT 8PM
THE EVERYMAN, BELSIZE PARK



The AJR is being given a private premiere of the new Warner Brothers biopic *One Life*, starring Anthony Hopkins as Sir Nicholas Winton. The film follows Winton's efforts to help Jewish children to escape German-occupied Czechoslovakia in 1938–39, and also stars Lena Olin, Romola Garai, Alex Sharp, Jonathan Pryce, and Helena Bonham Carter.

Cost £15 per person including refreshments.

<https://shorturl.at/inEP7>
or call 020 8385 3070

MAKING SCIENCE ACCESSIBLE



Speaking as someone who dropped all science subjects at the earliest opportunity at school, I want to thank Professor Jonathan Seckl, AJR member and son of a *Kind* from Austria, for his fascinating and accessible talk on 'the role of the stress hormone cortisol in fetal life, notably in 'programming' adult disease'.

Prof. Seckl explained the effects are proven to be greater in those who were younger at exposure – something particularly relevant for us whose parents were children during the Holocaust. As a result of our survivor parent having high levels of cortisol, produced to prepare the body to respond to danger, the effects would have been passed to us in the womb. The result is "epigenetic" changes which cause low cortisol levels in 2G, which can lead to anxiety and depression, among other effects.

The good news is that the third generation are unaffected; they "start on a blank slate", although there is another factor which may cause some upset: liquorice increases levels of cortisol in the fetus and should therefore be avoided by pregnant women. I can't imagine why anyone would like liquorice, but sorry to pass on the bad news.

Debra Barnes

REVIEWS *continued*

Continued from page 16

visas to enter the U.S. That involved several visits to Marseille, where the U.S. had a consulate, and where Varian Fry, called the 'American Oskar Schindler', and his colleagues ran a charity that saved famous Europeans, including Max Ernst and Marc Chagall. Arendt has a cameo role in *Transatlantic*, a recent Netflix series highlighting Fry's exploits. With her ex-husband providing the

necessary affidavit, Arendt cycled illegally to Marseille to pick up the U.S. entry visas. The Blüchers obtained permits to leave France and, after a three-month wait in Lisbon, reached New York in May 1941.

For the next three decades, almost inseparable, they became a focal point for artists and intellectuals, as the United States grappled with McCarthyism, the Vietnam war and student unrest. It was an unusual reversal of traditional gender roles, as Barbara

von Bechtolsheim admirably brings out in her recent 'biography of a couple'. While the academically unqualified Heinrich lectured on philosophy, not publishing anything, Hannah was in the limelight, never more so than after she covered the trial of Adolf Eichmann. Bechtolsheim shows how Blücher influenced her work; he may have suggested 'banality of evil', the provocative phrase used by Arendt to sum up Eichmann, and thereby the Holocaust.

Martin Mauthner

AN AFTERNOON



The AJR's annual tea party took place on a sunny Sunday afternoon in October, just a week after the war broke out in Israel.

Despite the sombre context, some 150 AJR members and guests enjoyed catching up over a delicious cream tea, with the atmosphere boosted by the enthusiastic and surprising entertainment of our singing waiters.

We hope you enjoy this gallery of photos from the event.





IN PERSON EVENTS

DATE	TIME	IN PERSON MEETING	CO-ORDINATOR
Sunday 3 December	12.30pm	Glasgow Chanukah Party	Agnes Isaacs
Tuesday 5 December	11.30am	Central London	Karen Diamond
Tuesday 5 December	12.30pm	North Manchester Chanukah Party	Michal Mocton
Wednesday 6 December	12.30pm	South Manchester Chanukah Party	Michal Mocton
Thursday 7 December	2.00pm	Pinner 25th Anniversary and Chanukah Party	Karen Diamond
XXXXX X December	12.30pm	Liverpool Chanukah Get-together	Michal Mocton
Monday 11 December	12.30pm	Sussex/Hove	Ros Hart
Wednesday 13 December	12.30pm	Enfield	Ros Hart
Thursday 14 December	12 noon	Chanukah Party in London – please see separate advert	Karen Diamond & Ros Hart
Monday 18 December	TBC	Glasgow Coffee & Cake, with artist Karl Stern	Agnes Isaacs
Tuesday 19 December	2.00pm	Bromley	Ros Hart
Wednesday 20 December	12.30pm	Edinburgh Chanukah Lunch	Agnes Isaacs

CO-ORDINATOR DETAILS

Agnes Isaacs
agnes@ajr.org.uk
 Tel: 07908 156 361

Ros Hart
roshart@ajr.org.uk
 Tel: 07966 969 951

Karen Diamond
karendiamond@ajr.org.uk
 07966 631 778

Michal Mocton
michalmocton@ajr.org.uk
 07966 886 535

OUTREACH TEAM MANAGER
Susan Harrod
susan@ajr.org.uk
 020 8385 3078

ZOOMS AHEAD

Details of all meetings and the links to join will appear in the e-newsletter each Monday.

Monday 4 December @ 4pm	Deb Filler – American Comedian Singer https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/84647423139	Meeting ID: 846 4742 3139
Tuesday 5 December @ 2pm	Suzanne Anisfeld, author of <i>All Hands on Deck – Tales from the (Bridge) Table</i> https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/89509130189	Meeting ID: 895 0913 0189
Wednesday 6 December @ 2pm	Dr John Hall – Parkinsons Disease research, from a Jewish perspective https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83536756392	Meeting ID: 835 3675 6392
Wednesday 13 December @ 2pm	AJR Book Discussion (no speaker) – <i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i> by Harper Lee https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/83712155414	Meeting ID: 837 1215 5414

KEEP FIT WITH AJR

All AJR members & friends are invited to take part in these online exercise and dance classes throughout the coming month.

Every Monday
@ 10.30am
Get Fit where you Sit (seated exercise)
<https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/85246889439>
UNTIL 18 DECEMBER Meeting ID: 8524 688 9439

Every Tuesday
@ 11.00am
Shelley's Exercise class
<https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/88466945622>
UNTIL 19 DECEMBER Meeting ID: 884 6694 5622

Every Wednesday
@ 10.30am
Dance Yourself Fit with Jackie Turner
<https://ajr-org-uk.zoom.us/j/86302485494>
UNTIL 20 DECEMBER Meeting ID: 8630 248 5494



AJR
CHANUKAH LUNCH
WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER IN LONDON N20

Please join us for a delicious two course lunch with a special guest speaker.
 £25.00 payable at the door
 Pre-booking is essential

 roshart@ajr.org.uk

SCAN
HERE TO
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WITH US



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Telephone 020 8385 3070 www.ajr.org.uk
 For general enquiries please contact: enquiries@ajr.org.uk
 For press enquiries please contact: gemma@ajr.org.uk
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