

AJR journal

The Association of Jewish Refugees

A tale from the November Pogrom

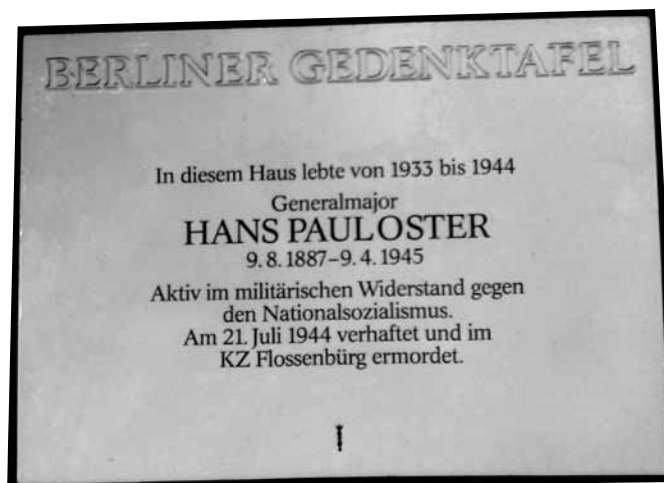
In June 1987, *AJR Information* published a letter from David Fisher, who, with Anthony Read, was writing a book on the 'Crystal Night' pogrom of 9-10 November 1938. In line with the growing trend among historians to supplement archival material and written documents with eye-witness testimony, Read and Fisher wished to include first-hand accounts of the events of that night in their book. Fisher's letter requested AJR members who 'have stories to tell which have never found a wider audience than their immediate family circle' to contact him. The book appeared, first under the title *Kristallnacht: The Nazi Night of Terror*, then as *Kristallnacht: The Unleashing of the Holocaust* (1990), and has since disappeared from view.

Fisher's letter elicited at least one response, from Mrs C. K. Rosenstiel, née Meumann, of Putney, London SW15, a Jewish refugee from Berlin, who had a very unusual story to tell. I am indebted to her son, Mr Colin Rosenstiel of Cambridge, for sending me her reply and other documents that provided the inspiration for this article. Mrs Rosenstiel's letter recounted the remarkable story of the offer by a high-ranking German army officer to help his Jewish neighbours escape arrest during the pogrom:

In the afternoon of 9th November 1938 our neighbour, the wife of Colonel, later General Hans Oster, called to offer the shelter of their home to my father who was a lawyer aged 58. The news of the arrest of Jewish men had spread to both our families. The Osters and our family lived on the same floor of a Berlin apartment block. There were two staircases, one for tradesmen. Mrs Oster proposed that if the Gestapo called at the front door, my father could easily slip across to their flat by the back door.

In the event, the Meumanns decided that the plan represented too great a risk to the Osters and opted instead to send their

young daughter to seek refuge for her father elsewhere. What none of the family then knew was that Oster was deeply involved in the clandestine activities of a group of senior military figures opposed to Hitler. Oster, who became deputy to Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Abwehr,



Memorial plaque to General Hans Oster, Berlin

Germany's military intelligence service, was to continue these activities until 1943, when men close to him were found to have arranged the escape of 14 Jews, disguised as Abwehr agents, to Switzerland; this led to his dismissal. Arrested in the wake of the 'Bomb Plot', the failed attempt on Hitler's life of 20 July 1944, Oster was tried by a Nazi court, sentenced to death, and hanged with Canaris and the Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer at Flossenbürg concentration camp on 9 April 1945. The conspirators against Hitler were forced to strip naked before being taken to the gallows.

Mrs Rosenstiel concluded her letter to Fisher by taking the story of her family and the Osters up to 1987:

I am still in touch with his surviving daughter and am planning to attend the family celebration of the 100th anniversary of Hans Oster's birth in Hamburg in August. Needless to say the Germans have never adequately recognized Oster's heroic efforts to save them from Hitler.

As the photo of the memorial plaque that was erected to Oster in 1990 on the site of his erstwhile residence in Berlin, at Bayerische Straße 9, shows, his role in the resistance to Hitler has now received the recognition that Mrs Rosenstiel found lacking in 1987. Her son, a long-serving city councillor in Cambridge, carried on the family connection to the Osters. He recalls meeting Oster's son Achim, a former playmate of his mother, and more recently had contact with Oster's granddaughter when she lived in Heidelberg, Cambridge's twin city. It was in part thanks to Colin Rosenstiel's father that the plaque to Oster's memory was installed in 1990 and its inauguration was the last occasion on which his parents visited Berlin.

The military resistance to Hitler has received decidedly mixed judgments from historians in recent decades, partly because in the predominantly conservative atmosphere of West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s it had been depicted as a group of right-minded (in both senses of the word) Germans who chose the road of honour in opposing Hitler and paid the ultimate price for doing so. During the Cold War, the military resistance was given pride of place in West Germany over the Communist and working-class resistance to Hitler, which was felt to be too close in its values and loyalties to the regime in East Germany. Modern historians now largely agree that the military resistance was politically a very mixed bag. As Gordon A. Craig demonstrated in *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945* (1955), senior officers in the Wehrmacht, the German army, were notorious for their antipathy to parliamentary, democratic forms of government, for their aggressive militarism, and for their disregard for civil rights and freedoms.

Army officers had sworn a ceremonial oath of loyalty to Hitler in August 1934 and had been more than content when he

A tale from the November Pogrom *continued*

repudiated the Treaty of Versailles (1919), the provisions of which had severely limited the size of the German armed forces, and proceeded to rearm at full speed. Nor were they critical of Hitler's policies towards his domestic opponents: they raised no objection when he crushed the Communist Party and the trade unions and destroyed the parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Republic. They were also thoroughly supportive of his initial aims at expansion; for the military, the Versailles settlement of Germany's eastern borders was a standing grievance and its rectification meant, for them, the reincorporation into Germany of territories awarded after 1918 to Poland and other Eastern European states. Their principal objection to Hitler before 1939 was that his policies risked precipitating a war with Britain and France before Germany was fully prepared and, after 1942-43, that he was leading Germany into the abyss of defeat.

Most of them, as conservative nationalists, opposed Hitler not from a standpoint of moral or political principle but because they saw that he was losing the war. That lack of a coherent moral and political alternative to the barbarity of Nazism was a crucial weakness in the right-wing resistance to Hitler. It contributed to the failure of the conspirators once they finally acted, on 20 July 1944, when the bomb planted by Colonel Graf Stauffenberg at Hitler's military headquarters at Rastenburg, East Prussia, failed to kill him, leading to the rapid suppression of the attempted *coup d'état* and the arrest, execution or suicide of most of those involved. The hub of the right-wing resistance to Hitler consisted of senior military officers, many of whom, such as former Chief of General Staff General Ludwig Beck, were hesitant about committing themselves to outright

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Kindertransport plaque rededicated at House of Commons ceremony



(from left) Sir Erich Reich; Lord Dubs; the Rt Hon John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House; Baroness Betty Boothroyd; Kinder Rolf Penzias and Eve Willman; Ruth Abraham, daughter of Kind Judy Benton; Rev Bernd Koschland

At an event organised by the AJR on 20 November 2013, former 'Kindertransportees' commemorated the 75th anniversary of the debate in Parliament that led to their rescue.

The event began with a special ceremony to rededicate the plaque erected in June 1999 in gratitude for Parliament's decision of 21 November 1938 to create the Kindertransport. Paying tribute to the *Kinder*, the Rt Hon John Bercow MP, the current Speaker of the House, reflected on his own family's migration to the UK and the huge strides that had been made in the protection of human rights since the Holocaust.

Also present at the ceremony were Baroness Betty Boothroyd, who was the

Speaker when the plaque was installed, and Lord Alf Dubs, himself a *Kind*.

Following the rededication ceremony, some 60 *Kinder* joined Lord Dubs and Baroness Boothroyd in a Celebratory Tea in the Strangers' Dining Room.

Welcoming fellow *Kinder*, Sir Erich Reich, Chairman of the AJR's Kindertransport Committee, referred to the pivotal role played by Philip Noel-Baker, the Member of Parliament who had initiated the 21 November 1938 debate, which had followed the events of *Kristallnacht*, and said 'This special occasion gives us cause to celebrate but also to recognise the significance of the debate that led to our rescue, for which we and our families will be eternally grateful.'

opposition to the Nazi regime in time of war. The resistance also had adherents in the Foreign Office, among them State Secretary Ernst von Weizsäcker, another whose commitment was less than full-hearted. The resistance won to its cause some civilian politicians, including Carl Friedrich Goerdeler, a former mayor of Leipzig who would have served as chancellor in a post-Hitler government, and Wilhelm Leuschner and Julius Leber from the banned Social Democratic Party.

There was, however, no doubt about Hans Oster's principled stand against Hitler. As his offer to help a Jewish family on the night of 9-10 November 1938 showed, he was one of the few officers to retain his moral values; these were to override his sense of military and patriotic duty to Germany even after the outbreak of war. Oster did not hesitate to pass information to the Dutch government about Hitler's plans to invade the Netherlands in 1940 – information that would have cost the lives of tens of thousands of German soldiers if the Dutch had heeded the warnings and taken the appropriate military precautions. 'Second to none in his detestation of the regime,' in Professor Ian Kershaw's words,

Oster's role in the resistance dated back to 1938, when he was at the centre of a group of conspirators opposed to Hitler's plans for an attack on Czechoslovakia; on that occasion, Neville Chamberlain's capitulation to Hitler at Munich cut the ground from under them.

But the *Abwehr* continued to provide Oster with the ideal cover for his clandestine activities, its intelligence work allowing him to set up contact with other opponents of the Nazis like Henning von Tresckow, who organised attempts on Hitler's life from his position as a senior staff officer with Army Group Centre on the eastern front, or General Friedrich Olbricht, who held a key strategic position in Berlin. Fabian von Schlabrendorff, who as Tresckow's adjutant had smuggled a bomb onto a plane carrying Hitler from Army Group Centre back to Germany in March 1943 and who only escaped execution in February 1945 when the 'People's Court' before which he was being tried took a direct hit from an American bomb, described Oster as 'a man such as God meant men to be, lucid and serene in mind, imperturbable in danger'.

Anthony Grenville

Day trip into the past

On 10 November last, Kristallnacht, or Pogromnacht as it is now called in Germany, I was invited to Freiburg to attend the premiere of the play *Die Kinder von La Hille – Eine Kinderrepublik* (The Children of La Hille – a Children's Republic). Performed by a group of non-Jewish local children, the play tells the story in words, mime and songs (some in Yiddish) of 100 Jewish children who survived the war in an old chateau in south-west France.

Die Kinder von La Hille is based on memoirs and books which have appeared over the years, including my own chapter in *We Remember* as well as my sister's book *A Girl Called Renée*. It was written and directed by Monika Hermann, a clinical psychologist specialising in theatre pedagogy who wanted to impress upon the children taking part how one can survive under the most difficult and dangerous conditions without parental or hardly any adult supervision and still remain a functioning and civilised member of society.

It was a most moving and almost esoteric experience to see my own story performed by German children, as I was one of the 100 children of La Hille. After my father's deportation to Poland on 28 October 1938, our life in Berlin became precarious and my mother took the extremely courageous decision to put my elder sister and me on a Kindertransport train leaving for Belgium, without a sponsor or the necessary entry permits, which, being *Ostjuden*, we were unable to obtain.

After some very anxious moments at the border, we were allowed into

AJR CENTRE FAREWELL PARTY: ONE DOOR CLOSSES ...

On the bittersweet occasion of the closure of the AJR Centre in December, some 80 guests attended a farewell party at Belsize Square Synagogue. Guests were entertained by a medley of songs by Glenys Groves, who regularly performs at the AJR's Annual Celebration Lunch.

AJR Chief Executive Michael Newman and Executive Director Carol Rossen paid tribute to the Centre's loyal and hardworking staff, to the role played by the then AJR Treasurer Ludwig Spiro, who had overseen the creation of the Centre, and to the philanthropy of Paul Balint, who had helped finance the project.

AJR Centre Manager Ros Collin encouraged members to come in future to the Sobell Centre, run by Jewish Care at Amélie House in Golders Green. The Sobell Centre offers a wide range of activities and services and serves hot and cold, non-meat lunches.

Ros Collin will herself be present on Tuesdays and Thursdays to help with the transition to the AJR's new meeting place. She stressed that, as was the case at Belsize Square Synagogue, the AJR would be arranging transport for members who otherwise could not attend. We very much hope members will come along.

Michael Newman

Belgium, where the Jewish Refugee Committee arranged for us to join a hostel on the outskirts of Brussels together with some 45 girls from Germany and Austria who had no family in Belgium. When Belgium was overrun in 1940, our hostel joined a group of 50 boys and together we travelled for four days in two goods wagons, without food, water or toilet facilities, until the train eventually came to a stop near a small, forlorn village in the Haute-Garonne area of France, where we were accommodated in a barn belonging to the local squire.

Life in the barn was extremely difficult: we slept on straw, had no running water or toilets, food was scarce, and the winter of 1940 was particularly hard. The following year we were moved to a disused chateau in the Basses-Pyrénées, where conditions were slightly better as we had beds to sleep on, though still no running water or sanitation. Thus we be-

came 'Les enfants du Château de la Hille'.

When life in La Hille became too dangerous for our older comrades, some of them tried to escape to Switzerland or Spain, but sadly 12 were caught by the Germans and perished in the camps. Even so, it is a miracle that most of the 100 La Hille children survived the war.

Over 400 people came to watch the performance. The interest they showed, the warm reception I received from the children and their parents, and the sensitive way in which I was interviewed by the local paper and a German TV crew will remain a lasting memory for me. It was the first time for 75 years that I had found myself alone in Germany – surrounded entirely by non-Jews – and felt at ease. It gave me hope that a new generation could heal some of the pain inflicted by their forbears and create a better future for mankind.

Betty Bloom

AJR member awarded British Empire Medal

AJR member **Thomas Eugene Shaw** (formerly Jurgen Eugene Schonfeld) has been awarded a British Empire Medal in the 2014 New Year's Honours List for his work in helping those less fortunate than himself in both the Jewish and wider community.

Born in Hamburg, Tommy, 85, came to the UK alone in 1939 as a ten-year-old Jewish refugee. Not part of any organised evacuation, he was left to fend for himself. He eventually managed to find a place at Polton House refugee camp in Scotland, where he formed life-long friendships with fellow refugees.

Tommy developed the shoe manufacturing business T. E. Shaw

Ltd into the major public company F.I.I. PLC (Footware Industry Investments). He was active in promoting international trade and the company was a major manufacturing employer in the UK. He received a personal letter from Golda Meir with regard to developing trade between Israel and the UK.

Throughout his life Tommy has dedicated himself to the service of others. For decades he was the unpaid chairman of the charity Buckets and Spades, a Jewish home for mentally handicapped children of all religions. He also served as a volunteer prison visitor, visiting lifers at Wormwood Scrubs; in the juvenile courts; and as a tax commissioner helping those appealing against what they saw as



unfair adjudications.

Today, Tommy, who lives in north-west London, continues to contribute to the community, helping charities such as the Community Security Trust, the Holocaust Educational Trust and CancerBACUP.

Remembered at last!

Growing up in a small congregation in Newcastle upon Tyne, we were always taught Jewish morals and values by our parents and grandparents. Alongside this, we visited our synagogue weekly, made Shabbat every Friday evening as a family, and were always told in an age-appropriate manner about our grandparents' terrible struggles in Europe under the Nazi regime. This made our Jewish roots an extremely poignant issue.

Our paternal grandfather, Alfred Stern, remains traumatised to this day by the events he experienced during the Holocaust in Germany. An only child, he managed to escape to England in March 1939, aged 13, on the Kindertransport and never saw his parents or grandparents again.

As 17- and 15-year-olds, we were taken to Germany in April 1999 by our parents, Monica and Gerald Stern. We visited the town of Montabaur, where our grandfather was born and where he and his parents, Willi and Betty Stern, had lived. We were all shocked to discover that Jews had inhabited the town since the 1300s. Yet the only sign that a Jewish community had ever existed there was a plaque on a supermarket denoting where the synagogue had stood until it was burned to the ground on Kristallnacht.

On returning home, our father wrote to the mayor asking if the town would consider erecting a memorial to all the Jews who had been deported and murdered. No reply was received.

We subsequently discovered that Montabaur had changed the name of its Judengasse street to Elisabethenstrasse and that it had not permitted the installation of *Stolpersteine* ('stumbling stones').

All this inspired our father to continue corresponding with Montabaur's new mayor, Klaus Mies. He also wrote to the mayor of Herborn, where our grandfather's grandparents, David and Rosa Löwenstein, had lived and from where our great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents had been deported. Various excuses were offered. In Herborn it was suggested that a memorial erected to the fallen soldiers of the two World Wars was the family's memorial too. Montabaur proposed that the Jewish cemetery, which is out of town and locked, would be a fitting place. However, our father insisted that the purpose of a memorial was to act as a lasting reminder in the family's home town of the horrific

murders which had taken place. He felt the memorial needed to be in the centre of the town. Montabaur also mentioned that they had political problems in reaching a consensus on such a matter! Finally, both towns alluded to finance being a major problem.

Our father is not one for giving up and the correspondence continued. But in September 2011, frustrated by the lack of progress, he asked for an opportunity to address the mayor and



Gerald Stern and sister Tina Kraus at the north-facing side of the Herborn memorial

town council in Montabaur personally. Despite some opposition voiced at this meeting, the proposal for a Holocaust memorial at long last received approval some three months later. The installation of *Stolpersteine* was also finally agreed and, amazingly, many current residents kindly volunteered to pay for these.

A lobby by schoolchildren objecting to the removal of the name Judengasse also ensured that it was reinstated, though alongside its new name.

Last year our parents visited and persuaded both mayors that the 75th anniversary of Kristallnacht in November 2013 would be a fitting date for unveiling the memorials. This seemed to focus their attention.

Our parents submitted a design for the Herborn memorial, naming 63 victims. The town of Montabaur held a competition and the sculptor Hans Bernhard-Olleck was commissioned to design their memorial, naming 24 victims.

On Friday 8 November, the Herborn memorial was finally inaugurated. A similar ceremony took place in Montabaur on Sunday 10 November. Both memorials were in very prominent

positions and, in fact, the Montabaur memorial was placed at the entrance to the town hall.

Reverend Bernd Koschland, who had arrived in England on a Kindertransport on the same day as our grandfather, came over especially from London and spoke movingly. He led the mourners from around the world reciting the *El Maleh Rachamim* and leading the Kaddish.

Around 30 descendants and their families travelled to Herborn from the USA, Israel and Europe, among them several who had never previously set foot on German soil but felt compelled to attend and support this event. In Montabaur 36 descendants attended, 29 of them from our own Stern family, half of whom we had never met. They too came from all over the world. Our parents were, of course, present, as were our aunt, Tina Kraus from Northwood, Middlesex, and the youngest family member, Ethan Stern, aged 16 months – fourth generation! – from Berkhamsted.

The unveiling of each memorial was a civic event presided over by the mayors, the local MP and other dignitaries. We were so proud to witness our father address the crowd of around 150 in Herborn and 200 in Montabaur! 'Today,' he said, 'is a very important day, when this town has chosen to remember its former Jewish citizens and to honour their memory with this prominent memorial. I hope that what happened in the past, here in this town and throughout Germany, will never be forgotten.' The events were covered on local TV and in the press.

Our father presented both mayors with certificates from the Wannsee Conference Memorial and Educational Site in Berlin. The certificates read 'In recognition of the contribution made to remembering their Jewish citizens who were murdered during the Holocaust so that those dark days are never forgotten.'

Over the last 14 years, our father has spent countless hours working to achieve the objective of establishing proper memorials in these towns. Others should be encouraged to do the same as many towns in Germany, Austria and other parts of Europe have sought to hide unpalatable aspects of their local history.

For our father and our family, establishing these memorials was a very emotional process and it is satisfying to

And I remember that line spoken by Max Adrian, the actor and comedian, in drag, gently mocking the Viennese refugees with their nostalgia for the coffee houses and elegant lifestyle! That must have been during the war, when bitter-sweet revues were still acceptable and before we knew the full story.

I have always remembered Vienna. I was ten years old when we left, just six weeks before the war, my parents and I together – the luckiest day of my life. Very few in our large family were as lucky. My childish memories of Vienna, coloured by my parents' stories of cultural and intellectual pursuits, by their appreciation of beauty and their love of the city, were somewhat clouded by my experience of exclusion from school and every activity I enjoyed, of bewilderment and fear and humiliation.

Like many of us, I have been invited several times to visit Vienna as a guest of the Jewish Welcome Service (JWS). Twice I made an excuse, the third time – last October – my family persuaded me to go and I did. Other Viennese refugees have written about the kindness and dedication of the largely non-Jewish organisers, the generosity and efficiency of the JWS, the appropriately sensitive programme. And all that is true. There was much talk of reconciliation, restoration, recompense, resilience and restitution. But in a fabled coffee house, I heard an older couple talk about Austria's need for a 'strong leader'.

The gracious grandeur of the city moved me but I couldn't feel comfortable. Then something happened that transformed my visit. The Vienna Philharmonic had issued an invitation to the descendants of exiled and murdered Jewish players to coincide with our stay. We joined together for some events but we were not programmed to attend concerts. It just happened that on a free afternoon a few of us were offered the opportunity to listen to a rehearsal of Anton Bruckner's Fifth Symphony. That was all we expected: the privilege of hearing music in the gorgeous, gilded *Musikverein* (all performances were sold out). We were seated in a box next to the stage; the orchestra was already on stage. Enter Dr Hellsberg, the *Vorstand* of the Vienna Philharmonic. There is no exact transla-

'YES, I REMEMBER VIENNA'

by Hedi Schnabl-Argent

tion of *Vorstand* – it is a mixture of head, chief, principal, chief executive, director, chairman – but Dr Hellsberg is none of these. He plays the violin as a member of the orchestra; he is not the leader, he is the elected representative and speaks for the musicians.

Dr Hellsberg welcomed the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the musicians who 'disappeared'. Then came the moment: he asked the players sitting at the desks of the victims to leave

There is nothing which can repair one's own mistakes and omissions: what happened or didn't happen is now a part of history ... We hope that through our invitation and your time spent with the Vienna Philharmonic, you will be assured that the sufferings and sacrifices of your fathers, grandfathers and relatives have sharpened our senses to the ethical and moral responsibilities which our orchestra must exercise. Your ancestors have the unique place which they deserve, in our consciousness and in our hearts.

the stage and the family members of the victims to take their places. Then he addressed the musicians and the ghosts of musicians and their descendants:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends of the Vienna Philharmonic:*

This is a very special day which is unique in the annals of our Orchestra's rich history. It is very significant for us all to have with us today a group of people who are the descendants of members of our Orchestra who were exiled or murdered during the era of National Socialism. On behalf of the Vienna Philharmonic, I extend to them the warmest of welcomes.

Three of these people are Charlotte Slodki, her daughter Linda, and her nephew Roger Salander – the daughter and two grandchildren of

our exiled second violinist Berthold Salander. Despite her 93 years, Charlotte has come all the way from New York with her daughter. Roger Salander lives in Breitenfurt and is known to many of us as a clarinetist and teacher at the Conservatory.

We welcome Lilly Drukker, the daughter of our exiled first violinist Josef Geringer, who has come from Philadelphia with her husband. She is 86 years old and a stellar witness to history. We greatly admired her appearance in the documentary *Schatten der Vergangenheit* (Shadows of the Past).

We are also pleased that Eva Perigo and her son, Peter Lancaster, are here today. They live in England and are the granddaughter and great-grandson of our former oboist, Armin Tyroler, who was murdered in 1944 in Auschwitz. At the time of her escape from Austria, Eva Perigo was just two and a half years old.

Two other relatives of persecuted Vienna Philharmonic musicians now residing in Austria whom we also welcome are Mag. Helen Rupertsberger-Kopp, the niece of our second violinist Leopold Förderl, who returned to Vienna after the war and taught here at the Academy. We also welcome Mr Kurt Schmid, the nephew of Rudolf Jettel, our principal clarinetist for many years and a prominent teacher.

I am very happy that all these honoured guests were able to accept our invitation and spend a week in Vienna, where, in addition to today's rehearsal, they will visit our museum and archives and hear the concert on Sunday. At this time, I would like to thank Mag. Bernadette Mayrhofer, who not only compiled the detailed and well-researched biographies of the exiled and murdered Philharmonic members for our website but also personally established contact with their relatives. It is she who paved the way for the presence of our guests here today and it was she who, together with Simone Iberer, dealt with the logistical aspects of flights and assistance.

We owe additional gratitude to the Jewish Welcome Service as well as to Mag. Susanne Traunack and Mag. Milli Segal. It is fitting that our guests have been integrated into the Jewish Welcome Service's programme. This has special meaning for me because it reminds me so vividly of our collaboration with Leon Zelman, who was so closely involved with us, and with me personally, regarding the Memorial Concert in Mauthausen in 2000. I believe

REMEMBERED AT LAST! *continued*

know that future generations can now visit the towns and pay their respects to family members who perished.

We felt overcome with emotion while attending these unveilings and were delighted to meet – in many cases for the first time – the large number of relatives who were present.

We could not be prouder of what our father has achieved and it just proves that persistence pays off. We are very grateful that these imprints of our family and their plight are now properly recorded so that they may never be forgotten.

Joel Stern and Jenna Stern

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Letters to the Editor

The Editor reserves the right to shorten correspondence submitted for publication

'Elite Club'

Sir – I was very interested to read Peter Phillips's 'Anglo-Jewry vs Continental Jewry: Time Heals' in your last issue, although I don't share his opinion that the 'so-called animosity' is over.

His article did, however, make me smile when he summed up 'Was Anglo-Jewry welcoming to Continental Jewry? No. Was Continental Jewry arrogant towards Anglo-Jewry? Yes.'

My mother-in-law came from a very German middle-class, secular background only to discover, on her arrival in the UK as a political refugee in 1938, that she was looked down on by the Anglo-Jewish community. She never felt part of their 'elite club', always feeling like an outsider until the day she died. Her left-wing politics didn't go down too well either.

Moreover, my best friend's mother, who hailed from a similar background, felt equally ostracised and misunderstood by the local Jewish community. In fact, during both their lifetimes, neither made any close Jewish friends from the UK, feeling more at ease and accepted within the society of other non-Jewish continentals and fellow German-Jewish refugees. As a consequence, both my husband and my best friend have themselves never felt part of the Jewish community in this country either and so the story goes on

Alison Prax, London, NW11

Sir – So Peter Phillips agrees with me about the prejudice of English Jews regarding refugees from Germany. But he rather spoils it by ending his article stating that now, after many years, 'we are all British Jews, living together in comparative harmony. Time heals.'

What rubbish! First of all his statement that we all live 'in comparative harmony' – either we live in harmony or we don't! And as for his view that 'time heals' – I assume he means the *Kinder*. It's fast becoming an academic matter for the last of us and it won't be long before we have disappeared through the ravages of time – healed or not healed.

Ernest G. Kolman, Greenford, Middx

Sir – Might I suggest that Peter Phillips looks back at how German Jewry received the *Ostjuden* – like my own parents – who came to Germany after the First World War, without money or other worldly goods, in order to escape the anti-Semitism rampant in Poland and to create a better future for their children.

They certainly were not received with open arms, nor was help given to them by the long-established Jewish community, who professed to be Germans of Jewish persuasion. The *Ostjuden* managed to make their own way in life by working hard to create homes for their families and they made sure their children received the education which had been denied to them. They became good citizens, paid their taxes, and obeyed the laws of the land.

When, after my father's deportation to Poland in October 1938, my elder sister attempted to get us onto a Kindertransport, she was told in no uncertain terms 'We have to look after our own (German-Jewish) children first' – something she has never forgotten. Incidentally, my father too was drafted into the Austrian-Hungarian army during the First World War – but, unlike Peter Phillips's father, he was not presented with a silver beaker by his regiment.

In this instance, Hitler made sure there was 'no time to heal'.

Betty Bloom, London NW3

A TRULY MEMORABLE EVENT

Sir – The service in Hope Square on 1 December to commemorate the Kindertransport, all the children who did not get this chance and perished, and all the parents who were murdered, was a truly memorable event. My heartfelt thanks to the AJR and World Jewish Relief for organising it.

Some very moving and powerful words were expressed, especially by the Chief Rabbi and the organisers themselves. The speech by Communities and Local Government Minister Eric Pickles, read out by Henry Grunwald as the Minister was ill, was also moving.

I feel strongly that unless we learn from

the tragedy of the massive loss incurred by the Holocaust to treat minorities justly today, those murdered millions will have died in vain.

Ruth Barnett, London NW6

OBSTACLE COURSE

Sir – Come on, Anthony Grenville ('The Home Office and the Kindertransport Parents', January)! Stop white-washing the British government over the failure to save the lives of parents of not just Kindertransport refugees but also of all other refugee children permitted entry.

Of course it was the declaration of war that put an end to the ability to get the parents out of Germany, Austria, etc, but anybody who wasn't swept up in the fever of 'peace in our time' with worthless pieces of paper knew perfectly well that sooner or later – and likely sooner – there would be a war with Hitler. Churchill for starters knew this perfectly well even if the UK in March 1938 was not ready to fight a war. Yes, there was bureaucracy from the Nazis but the British Sir Humphreys were the prime contributors to what my late mother and many other refugee children had to live with for the rest of their lives.

Sadly, it is no different today, with what we are told is a war-fatigued USA under Obama's leadership failing to stand up to Iran's nuclear machinations – never mind the countless more Syrian and Lebanese citizens who will be killed in the next few years as a result.

Peter Simpson, Jerusalem

Anthony Grenville: Hardly anyone could have predicted that war would break out as early as September 1939. The essential precondition for Hitler's invasion of Poland in that month was the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 23 August 1939, a diplomatic thunderbolt that took the whole world by surprise.

POWERFUL PLAY

Sir – The reason I was prompted to write was Ruth Barnett's review of the play *Kindertransport* in your January issue. As chair of Newcastle's Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), I discovered through a colleague that Kenton Academy, a local state school, has the play on the AS syllabus.

I offered to go in to talk to them as a second-generation AJR member and as I know the play quite well. I also shared my mother's story: she came from Berlin to Newcastle around the time of the Kindertransport, though she was fortunate enough to have a sister here who could vouch for her.

It delights me that such a powerful play, is on the AS English literature syllabus. The questions were intelligent and incisive. It also prompts me to ask how many other schools in the country are studying the text and how we could find out.

Incidentally, the school is hoping to take its students to see a performance of the play. Typically, the nearest venue is Derby – the North East is so often forgotten.

*Deanna Van der Velde,
Newcastle upon Tyne*

NO WISH TO RETURN TO VIENNA

Sir – I arrived in England on a Kindertransport in 1939 aged 13. My father was deported to Auschwitz in 1942. I didn't return to Vienna until 1953. In 1954 I took my two daughters there to visit my maternal grandmother. Subsequently we went to Austria on skiing/summer holidays but not back to Vienna until last year. When the Austrians elected Waldheim as their president I decided never to set foot in the country again.

I am a great admirer of Rachel Whitehead's sculptures and followed her long battle with the Austrian government over the acceptance of her Holocaust memorial. In 2000, after five years, the government finally agreed to its erection on Judenplatz in the Inner City! This was one of the reasons why I went to Vienna: I was very moved by the thoughtful simplicity and appropriateness of the design.

My youngest daughter, a historian, wanted to see where I came from, so I agreed to return to Vienna with her for a five-day visit last July. We were unanimous that we had no wish ever to go back there again.

Elinor Adler, London W7

A FIVE-MINUTE SLOT

Sir – A German friend (non-Jewish) in Munich sent me the following from *Deutschland Funk*: 'Montag 2 Dezember 9.05, **Kalenderblatt** Vor 75 Jahren: Der erste Kindertransport zur Rettung jüdischer Kinder trifft in Großbritannien ein' (Monday, 2 December, 9.05, **Calendar Page** 75 Years Ago: The First Kindertransport for the Rescue of Jewish Children Arrives in Great Britain). Admittedly it's only a five-minute slot, nevertheless

Ruth David, Leicester

MILIBAND AND THE MAIL

Sir – Anthony Grenville's historical perspective on the workings of the British press (December 2013) surpasses even his customary excellence and has acquainted me – no babe-in-arms! – with skulduggery of which I had barely an inkling. I suppose trying to get this marvellous piece of journalism published in the national press might be too naive?

The brief history of the Miliband family as refugees from the Nazis reminded me of the *Guardian's* reaction to the *Daily Mail's* attack in September 2013 on Ralph Miliband. Within a couple of days the big, bad *Guardian* published a long, closely reasoned accord with Ed Miliband's anger, followed a few days later by similarly sympathetic comments on David Miliband's

defence of his father.

A member of the AJR whose staple newspaper diet is the *Daily Mail* read my letter on the subject of press bias in the last *AJR Journal* and announced that she had no idea what that letter was about. No wonder the press can get away with murder!

Marc Schatzberger, York

A QUESTION OF BIAS

Sir – Does Marc Schatzberger (December, Letters) really believe that *The Guardian* is still the most objective newspaper in this country? The fact that he has read it since it was called *The Manchester Guardian* is hardly evidence! Together with its sister paper, *The Observer*, it is the most anti-Israel newspaper of all and its views are very biased to the left. There is no doubt that whistleblower Edward Snowden is a traitor and it is typical of the *Guardian* to take up his nasty cause.

As for Mr Schatzberger's attack on the Education Secretary, Michael Gove, whom he calls 'inept', has he looked at the worldwide 'education' league tables, printed recently, that show Britain near the bottom? Mr Gove is trying to restore our curriculum to what it was when we had O-Levels – when children weren't given a triple choice of answers and didn't have modules which parents could do for them. He wants to concentrate on the 3 Rs and return our standards to what they were when we had grammar schools and an educational system of which we were proud. Is Mr Gove 'inept' because the *Guardian* said so?

Professor Leslie Baruch Brent too considers the *Guardian* the 'leading paper of the world for its investigative journalism'. As a scientist, surely he needs proof for a statement such as this? Or perhaps his evidence is that the *Guardian* printed Snowden's secrets irrespective of the fact that it jeopardised our country? This is not investigative journalism – it is irresponsible journalism. Perhaps if someone as irresponsible as Edward Snowden had given the *Guardian* information about Bletchley Park during the Second World War it would have printed that too!

If the Professor abhors the Murdoch press and hates the *Daily Mail* – which I do too – may I suggest he tries the *Daily Telegraph*. It may have a right-wing bias but it does not lean to the right as far as the *Guardian* leans to the left. And most important, the *Telegraph* is unbiased about Israel.

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts

STOLPERSTEINE PROJECT

Sir – I am writing in response to Kay Sharpe's letter (January) to say how surprised I was that she believes 'probably few others in the UK know about the [Stolpersteine] project.' Not only have my children and I, as well as numerous friends of ours, known about the above for several years

but we have participated in it, as has my partner, Dr Frank Beck.

Last April, my son and daughter attended a communal commemoration service outside the apartment block in Vienna's 3rd District from which my late husband's family were deported. There was an address (in three languages) by the Israeli ambassador as well as by local non-Jewish dignitaries. Similar ceremonies have taken place all over Vienna and are continuing, as Kay Sharpe is now aware. I should also mention that much of the funding for this work has come from non-Jewish sources, as we found out from talks at the Austrian Cultural Centre in London, where we met some of these dedicated fundraisers.

Furthermore, ever since June 2009 Frank has been involved in the translation into English of the leaflets which are periodically produced about the *Stolpersteine* project. This was after he had arranged for a plaque to be laid in the 9th District for his father, who was murdered in Auschwitz.

Mary Brainin Huttner, London

THE PAINTINGS OF ISIDOR KAUFMANN

Sir – An avid reader of your excellent magazine, I was delighted to see in the 'Art Notes' in your December issue an article about the National Gallery exhibition 'Facing the Modern: The Portrait in Vienna 1960'. The exhibition included a painting – *Young Rabbi from N.* – by Isidor Kaufmann, which was reproduced in your magazine.

Isidor Kaufmann was my grandfather. He was a very well-known painter of Jewish subjects, very much recognised in the art world. A retrospective exhibition of his works was held by the city of Vienna in April 1995 to which I and my nearest family were invited. Five of his paintings are also part of a current exhibition at the Israel Museum, and the Jewish Museum in New York too has some of his paintings. I possess a portfolio in which the afore-mentioned painting in London is included.

Kitty Schafer (née Kaufmann),

*Hans Schafer (husband), Sue Walsh
(great-granddaughter), Toronto, Canada*

LONG LIVE AMÉLIE HOUSE!

Sir – We all knew it was only a matter of time. The attendance figures dropped, the expenses remained, the cost of continuing on that basis made the project too expensive to run – the Day Centre had to close. Now, it is more important than ever to remain optimistic and think positively. As I write, we are entering the New Year full of hope.

The Day Centre is closed – long live Amélie House!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at the AJR for having done an excellent job of running the Centre for many years and for now working with

continued on page 16 ➔

ART NOTES

GLORIA TESSLER

After a closure of ten months, it is worth paying a visit to the refurbished Kenwood House, home to great paintings by **Gainsborough**, **Vermeer**, **Rembrandt** and **Van Dyck**, among 63 from the Earl of Iveagh's Collection.

The change is imperceptible. The elegant Georgian house has been repainted and its flagship Great Library, established by its first owner, William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield, has a repainted ceiling in pastels of pink, green and blue, inset with



Johannes Vermeer (1632-75) *The Guitar Player* Kenwood House, The Iveagh Bequest, London

miniatures by Antonio Zucchi, the gold leaf detail hidden by removable paint. It has been refurbished for the first time in over two centuries in accordance with its original design.

The exterior details, created by the 18th-century Scottish architect John Adam, look cleaner now, but in a strange way more synthetic than before the Heritage Lottery Fund, ArtFund and Wolfson Foundation poured £5.95 million into it.

This essentially pretty – almost chocolate-box – house with its pediment sand-painted to look like stone and its Doric and Corinthian pillars, is set in the rolling grounds of Hampstead's Kenwood, beautiful in all weathers, even on the muddy, windswept day I saw it. A

portrait of Lord Mansfield stares down in disapproval at the muddy feet on the Persian carpet.

The sculptures include a Socratic bust with a carefully sculpted curly beard. Some are original marble and some, like the statue of Mercury, are plaster copies. A cast of Flora and a Muse is taken from Syon House in west London.

The Orangery is now peopled by children with ipads sitting on the floor. Each room has a linen-bound guide. Some renewed pieces have been added to reflect the wishes of Kenwood's last owner, the 1st Earl of Iveagh, who donated the house to the nation in the 1920s.

The paintings always surprise, even though bad lighting can make viewing a struggle. Some early Turners beneath a high atrium were almost invisible because the frame lights were off and others are hung too high. In a room full of pallid, limpid beauties, you can find **Sir Joshua Reynolds's** cloudy skies and prayerful ladies, Gainsborough's *Lady Briscoe and Her Dog*, and even a small **Constable**.

A must-see is Rembrandt's marvellous self-portrait as an older man: his calm and wise eyes, his bulky body, simple white cap, and the sense of just having wiped his palette clean to surprise us with his fresh candour. Also Van Dyck's *Princess Henrietta* with her little black page boy and Vermeer's *Guitar Player*, showing a rosy-cheeked woman seen off-centre and glancing sharply over her right shoulder. **Franz Hals's** arresting portrait of *Pieter van den Broecke*, in a lace collar, almost as familiar as the *Laughing Cavalier*, grins beneath his untidy brown hair.

Ferdinand Bol, a pupil of Rembrandt, painted his *Portrait of a Lady* with a detailed white ruff setting off her pellucid skin. Reynold's *Miss Cox and Her Niece* seems a charming indulgence in a house full of formal, wistful ladies. And then comes **Landseer's** *Hawking in Olden Times*, in which a hawk is flung at a heron, whose death throes in a flurry of wings fill the sky.

Angelica Kauffman's cameo self-portrait shows her as the Muse of Design with Poetry. Other famous works include **George Romney's** *Spinstress*, featuring the beautiful Lady Hamilton, his lover, in a long white shawl.

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CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

Plenty of material to think about

DIFFERENT HORRORS, SAME HELL: GENDER AND THE HOLOCAUST (Stephen S. Weinstein Series in Post-Holocaust Studies)

edited and introduced by Myrna Goldenberg and Amy H. Shapiro
Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2013, 300 pp.
paperback

This volume, edited by two American academics, contains 12 contributions on the subject of gender and the Holocaust. The first part focuses on the history of feminist theory and gender analysis of the Holocaust; the second part contains case studies on the theme.

Any contribution that moves away from generalisations towards the particularities of the *Shoah* and its victims and survivors is to be welcomed and this is no exception. In the introduction, the editors outline the history of the small number of influential studies on this subject but argue that the area is still under-researched. In the initial chapter in the first part of the book, Doris L. Bergen seems to reiterate the introductory remarks and this may be seen as one introductory contribution too many. However, Bergen focuses on the male and female perpetrators as embedded in their families – an interesting area for investigation – goes on to discuss the enmeshed relationship between Jewish victims and gentile perpetrators and bystanders, and ends with a discussion of the portrayal of the mother-daughter bond in Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*, subjects that are taken up later in the volume.

Further contributions in the first part of the volume focus on 'Philosophy in the Feminine and the Holocaust Witness' (Dorota Glowacka), with special attention given to Hannah Arendt and Sarah Kofman. Glowacka concludes that their works may be considered 'acts of the philosophical witnessing of the Holocaust in the feminine' and wonders whether there is a connection between philosophy's inability to confront the Holocaust and the neglect of women's voices. Next there is a chapter on the anti-Judaism of Simone Weil (Rochelle L. Millen), an interesting and well-written exposé which possibly lacks focus on the theme of the volume, largely due to the fact that Weil herself died in 1943. Amy H. Shapiro follows with a chapter on the representation of women in the films *Schindler's List* and *Black Harvest*, investigating the objectification of the female body in both films. This chapter, clearly a study of specific cases, makes the reader doubt the usefulness of dividing the book into two parts. Myrna Goldenberg concludes the first part of the book with a historical study of 'Rassenschande': only

continued opposite ➔

men could be convicted of race defilement but adjudication during the Third Reich was irregular and Goldenberg cites some interesting cases.

The second part of this volume contains two chapters which may be of particular interest to AJR readers. Mary J. Gallant writes on gender and the Kindertransport, a long overdue subject. It is difficult to tease out gender differences as defining factors between male and female Kindertransportees rather than see them enmeshed with other factors such as age and background. Gallant does not present any original research; for example she does not discuss the fact that many foster parents wanted to look after girls rather than boys.

Gaby R. Glassman writes about 'Survivor Mothers and Their Daughters', using material from the 'second generation' groups she has been running since 1989. Outlining the various difficulties with relationships between survivor or refugee mothers and their daughters, Glassman is able to provide analysis from larger studies and her personal practice. It is clear that some of the difficulties stem from the fact that in the overwhelming majority of cases the mother was the primary caregiver and was often unsupported, mentally and physically alike.

Themes of further chapters in the second part of the reviewed volume include representations of women in art (Björn Krondorfer and Karen Baldner), the murder of the Jewish mother (David Patterson), an investigation of the gender relations in two particular families (Suzanne Brown-Fleming), and an interview with Ruth Klüger (Britta Frede-Wenger).

Although there are weaknesses, the book provides plenty of material to think about and develop further and I would certainly invite the interested reader to make up his or her own mind.

Andrea Hammel

Combatting prejudice against the Roma

JEWS AND GYPSIES: MYTHS AND REALITY

by Ruth Barnett

CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013, 146 pp. paperback, available from amazon.co.uk

Ruth Barnett, a member of the AJR, has made it her mission to combat the widespread prejudice against Gypsies – or, as they prefer to be called, Roma. This book seems intended primarily for school students and its style is therefore fairly simple and straightforward. The author frequently addresses the reader with direct questions or statements and the book reads at times like a political pamphlet.

Ms Barnett finds that anti-Jewish and anti-Roma views have much in common: they are both the result of dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs and the perceived need to blame a group

'Yes, I remember Vienna' continued from page 5

he would have been very pleased with today's events.

Leon Zelman, whose family was eradicated and who himself survived several concentration camps, always endeavoured to present the Vienna of today to exiles and survivors of the National Socialist dictatorship. In his spirit, ladies and gentleman, we introduce to you the Vienna Philharmonic of today. We are well aware that we live not only

for the here and now but, as we look toward the future, we have the responsibility of dealing with the Orchestra's past. With this in mind we see ourselves as an association that has existed for 171 years and of which every musician holds permanent membership. This is especially true of our exiled and murdered colleagues. Twenty-five years ago we paid tribute to them in our concert programmes, the same as we have done this year on our website. This Saturday we will unveil a commemorative plaque in the Vienna Philharmonic Museum.

But the most important fact is that the memory of the victims from among our ranks is of special concern to us – that their memory remains vivid. That is why we wish to welcome you here, on the stage of the world's most beautiful concert hall, where your fathers and grandfathers performed and where they made their contributions to the Vienna Philharmonic. We do this neither out of a sense of duty nor as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – coming to terms with the past. I regard this expression as problematical as it implies the concept of making amends. But there is no way to make amends for a murder and there is no way to make amends for the damage to a soul caused by persecution and expulsion. There is nothing which can repair one's own mistakes and omissions: what happened or didn't happen is now a part of history.

But in the awareness of our own history and our own responsibility we can establish new parameters. We hope that through our invitation and your time spent with the Vienna Philharmonic, you will be assured that the sufferings and sacrifices of your fathers, grandfathers and relatives have sharpened our senses to the ethical and moral responsibilities which our orchestra must exercise. Your ancestors have the unique place which they deserve, in our consciousness and in our hearts.

The conductor rose to his feet and the musicians silently exchanged places again with the descendants. The emotional rehearsal of stirring music composed by a devout Christian seemed fitting. It finally gave us permission to weep.

*Translated from the German by the Vienna Philharmonic's retired trombone player, William McElheney, and reproduced here by kind permission of Dr Hellsberg.

Fritz Lustig

After 75 Years

I can now retire in peace: at last I have achieved what I have wanted to see happen ever since I and all the other Jewish students were expelled from one of Vienna's high schools in March 1938. We were sent with pupils from other schools in Vienna to a catchment school where we were punished by committed Nazis. I promised myself at the time that, if I survived the persecution, I would do my best to persuade the school that had expelled me and all the other Jewish students to formally admit the injustice done to us.

The expulsion from school was for us Jewish students the first step towards a difficult future. Hitler stole our youth; we were catapulted into adulthood. Many of us had to make important decisions for our elders which would decide whether our family would live or die.

It is often overlooked that those of us who survived did so only because individuals, organisations and/or countries helped us. Unfortunately, there were not enough helping hands. To ensure the world will be a better place in the future the young must realise that it is everyone's moral duty to help those who are being persecuted for no reason other than that they are of a different religion, race, gender, etc.

Sixty-five years after the Holocaust numerous schools in Vienna still showed no awareness of the part they had played in those years. This obliviousness towards crimes that had been committed made me feel very angry in 2003, when I was invited to visit the Austrian capital. The school that had expelled me had adopted the name Erich Fried Realgymnasium but nowhere was there any indication of how many Jewish students had been expelled in 1938 or any condemnation of that deed. I wrote to the then school director suggesting it was high time for the school to condemn what had happened to the Jewish students in March 1938 and display their names so that they would never be forgotten. I received no reply.

In the last few years the Austrian Gedenkdienst (Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service) and the London Jewish Cultural Centre have arranged for us Jewish refugees settled in the UK to relate our refugee experiences at British and Austrian schools, including the one which expelled me. The talks we have given have added reality to the compulsory Holocaust studies. Each time I entered the school from which I had been expelled I couldn't help but relive the frightful experience we Jewish youngsters had suffered in 1938. It always took

It was at that point back in 1938 that I decided that if ever I got out of Nazi Austria and were to marry and have children, I would do all in my power to give my children a Jewish identity so that they wouldn't feel as devastated as I were they to encounter the persecution I was suffering. I compiled a 'job specification' for my husband and was later fortunate enough to find 'Mr Right'.

me some time to recover before I could begin speaking to the waiting students. Afterwards, when I chatted with Mag. Guenter Maresch, the present school director, I pointed out that I thought it important that there should be a plaque near the school entrance formally condemning the inhuman treatment meted out to the Jewish students; such a plaque would also help ensure that the students who had suffered the unjust expulsion would never be forgotten.

The present director of the school clearly realised the importance of my request when I mentioned it to him in November 2012. Soon after he made a group of the school's older students responsible for compiling the names of all Jewish students expelled from the school following Hitler's annexation of Austria as well as for producing a plaque containing all their names. Earlier last year he informed me that my wish had been fulfilled. Moreover, he told me, he was preparing an event for the unveiling of the plaque and he invited me not only to unveil it but also to speak as part of the programme. I couldn't believe this would really happen, but it did!

The event was organised extremely impressively. Many of the school's staff participated; representatives of the authorities and other important people were invited and turned up, all praising the school for having organised the event. Mrs Brandsteidl, the head of the Vienna Education Authority, for instance, praised my perseverance as well as the school's director for organising such a great occasion. Many schoolchildren participated in the event, playing music and reciting poems composed for the occasion while their parents watched. Events such as this are clearly not only an inspiration for the students of the school

but also for Austria's younger generation as a whole.

Prior to the event, I was instructed how to pull the string to unveil the plaque and asked to speak for about 10 minutes. As I had by then related my refugee experience at numerous schools both in the UK and Austria, my brain was programmed to tell my story. I didn't therefore prepare a speech. However, when I pulled the string and saw the 120 names, almost all of which I remembered – and knew that very few of those students had survived the Holocaust – I was so moved that what I said came from the heart and not the brain.

All of a sudden, I felt the entire Holocaust with its unforgivable atrocities drowning me, though I was of course pleased that the school that had expelled me and all the other Jewish students had at last formally condemned what had been done to us. Our adolescence had been stolen from us. I also felt resentful and couldn't help but think what had been done to me. My emotions worked overtime and reminded me how much my colleagues and I had identified with this high school and the plans each of us had had for our future. All these plans had collapsed when we were expelled. It was especially difficult for those of us from assimilated families.

It was at that point back in 1938 that I decided that if ever I got out of Nazi Austria and were to marry and have children, I would do all in my power to give my children a Jewish identity so that they wouldn't feel as devastated as I were they to encounter the persecution I was suffering. I compiled a 'job specification' for my husband and was later fortunate enough to find 'Mr Right'. This brought me back to the event and, looking at the plaque, I began to feel proud of my school and thanked the director and all present for having made my dream come true. Though I'm not fully aware of everything I said in my speech, it must have been very moving judging by the tears shed by many of those present and the beautiful flowers the school's director presented to me.

T. Scarlett Epstein

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THE RIGHT CLIMATE

I thought I was past the age for epiphanies but one cannot choose the time for a revelation: the revelation decides when its time has come. Mine came one evening, a short while ago, after watching a television programme on the American musical theatre. The message was loud and clear: this particular art form and, to an almost equal extent, the movie business, was created by Jews – a massive contribution to the cultural life of the nation and its hold on the international imagination.

The lesson? When Jews act as messengers of the Muses or operate in the territory where art and commerce overlap, they leave their mark. Wherever they are allowed to do so, they season the native pie. Only in America are they not just seasoning – they are pie.

This has explained – too late to act upon it – a recurring experience that has puzzled and pleased me. Whenever I arrived at JFK on my frequent trips to New York I had my adrenaline rush, a sense of heightened anticipation that owed nothing to free champagne on Concorde. Elation turned my head. Great things might happen at any moment. Suddenly sharper, cleverer, I felt twice the man I was in England. Others have reported similar experiences.

England is where I live my double life: publicly, at work among English colleagues whom I would call acquaintances rather than friends; privately, among family and an ever diminishing circle of survivors, in an almost exclusively German-Jewish refugee milieu, cosy and shrinking. (At a recent milestone birthday party, the carefully drawn-up guest list consisted of fellow

refugees and their descendants with or without gentile partners, with not one bona fide Englishman – Jewish or otherwise – in sight.)

It's time to come clean: I am a snob, and generalisations are the snob's oxygen. I do not feel truly at home among the English, and ill at ease in the company of English Jews. I consider the typical Germanophone refugee (i.e. me) better educated, more refined, than his English peer.

educated, more refined, than his English peer, who did not make the detour via Germany, Austria, Switzerland (the Marx-Freud-Einstein triangle) but took the short cut from Poland, Russia, etc to London's East End and thence to Stamford Hill and The Bishop's Avenue, bypassing the gas chambers and much else besides.

There are inconsistencies in this analysis which I recognise. The majority of creators of American popular entertainment are the very people with whom I don't mix in England. I don't know what makes them more palatable in Hollywood; it could be the rough environment against which they don't stand out; it could be the leavening of refugees such as Lang, Lubitsch, Loewe, Lamarr, Lenya (confining myself to one initial letter keeps the list within bounds).

Why the relative paucity of the Jewish contribution to English culture? Of course, there have been, and are, prominent Jews in every walk of life, as ever with a disproportionate share coming from Hitler's cast-offs, but no one can claim that they have significantly helped to shape the England we know today. Without them the scene would be much the same. They lack critical mass; they are without a power base. There are just enough of them to stir up routine anti-Semitism without the compensation of political clout.

Of course there is anti-Semitism in the United States – quite enough not to have to go looking for it – but who cares when there is a powerful political

ARTS AND EVENTS JANUARY DIARY

Fri 7 Lunchtime Screening: Lieder ohne Worte, Images of Memory At Wiener Library, 1.00-2.00 pm. Barbara Loftus participated in exhibitions and events in Berlin held to commemorate 80 years since the Nazi takeover of power. She exhibited at the Ephraim Palais Stadtmuseum with the exhibition 'Lieder ohne Worte, Images of Memory', a cycle of paintings prompted by her mother Hildegard Barsch's unexpected disclosure of memories concerning Loftus's Jewish family in Berlin before and during the Holocaust. The exhibition was accompanied by a 30-minute film made by the artist, which will be screened at this event. Barbara Loftus will also be in conversation with Julia Winckler, a specialist in archival and memory studies. Admission free but booking essential, tel 020 7636 7247

Wed 19 B'nai B'rith Jerusalem Lodge. Brian Nathan, 'The Jewish Contribution to Popular Music in the 20th Century' At home of Sue Raingold, 2.30 pm. Tel 020 8907 4553

lobby that can make Congress quake. As for a Jewish lobby in this country, forget it. Years ago, I was part of an attempt to get one going and the fiercest resistance to our efforts, to the point of downright hostility, came from certain sections of the Anglo-Jewish establishment.

I understood none of this when I arrived in this country, lucky to be let in, lucky to be alive, thankful and anxious to show my gratitude. But I have never felt that I belonged here, that I was other than a guest, respectful of my hosts and generously tolerated by most of them.

The revelation was about the difference that being part of the pie makes: that in America you belonged from the day you arrived, however outlandish your name, however crude your accent. You are, from your first day, what you can never hope to become even after the 80 years I have lived here.

Historians have put more grandly what they have defined as American exceptionalism – a fundamental egalitarianism that has nothing to do with equality of outcome and everything to do with equality of human dignity. Just the right climate for a Jew.

Victor Ross

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Edinburgh CF Good Reason to Have a Party

In true Chanukah style, we had a wonderful time at the home of Dorothea Brander, sitting round the Chanukah candles and discussing why we light them. We agreed it was a good reason to have a party – followed by latkes and donuts, among other temptations, and a refresher course in dreidel-twirling.

Agnes Isaacs

Ealing A Year of Enjoyable Events

A most enjoyable Chanukah quiz, well prepared by Esther, followed by tea and donuts. A nice ending to a year of enjoyable events, blighted only by the passing of Herman Scott, one of our most loyal and much-loved members.

Leslie Sommer

Café Imperial It's Never Too Late!

A new young veteran has joined our group, just proving it's never too late! If there are any other Pioneer Corps or British Army veterans out there, please come and join us.

Hazel Beiny

Liverpool Chanukah Party

Second and Third Generation Greg and Bobby entertained at the Chanukah Party held in the home of Inge and Eric Goldrein. Before the entertainment, Julia Bryan, Education Officer at the Museum of Liverpool, and Kay Jones, Curator of Community History, told members about the Holocaust Memorial Day joint event to be held at the Museum on 26 January. Faye Healey (née Amschanowski) lit the Chanukah candles for the first time since school days in Danzig.

Susanne Green

Iford A Convivial Morning

Despite the chilly weather 20 members turned up for our Chanukah Party. Besides the festive fare, we enjoyed the social atmosphere and caught up with the interesting events other members had been to. A convivial morning for all of us.

Meta Roseneil

Wessex A Lovely, Festive Occasion

We met at the Synagogue for a Chanukah tea and listened to a wise and uplifting talk by the Rabbi linking the Chanukah story to the strength and determination of many AJR members. A lovely festive, social occasion.

Kathryn Prevezer

Manchester A Successful Occasion

At our Chanukah social this year, we had a programme of Hebrew songs performed by musicians from the Ezra Youth Movement. Sincere thanks to Susanne Green and her group of helpers for making the occasion a success. We were also introduced to Fran Horwich, the newly appointed volunteer organiser, and we heard from the Second and Third Generation about their programme.

Werner Lachs

From Here to Eternity A Spectacular Afternoon's Performance

A large AJR party went to the Shaftesbury Theatre in London's West End to see the new Tim Rice production of *From Here to Eternity*. This was a very adult adaptation of the classic 1950s film, set in the brooding atmosphere of 1941 Hawaii just before Pearl Harbour. Everyone enjoyed a spectacular afternoon's performance by a very talented cast aided by brilliant lighting and stage effects.

David Barnett

Pinner 16th Anniversary Tea

On our 16th anniversary, we welcomed back one-man-band Ronnie Goldberg, singing beautifully as he strummed his electric guitar to the accompanying recorded music. Ronnie entertained us with a Yiddish, Hebrew and English programme and we found ourselves singing to our favourite tunes and dancing the *Hora* before tucking in to a scrumptious Chanukah tea.

Walter Weg

HGS A Very Special Meeting

A very special meeting at which members spoke of their favourite music, film and book. The highlight was a member's edition signed by Pam Ayres from which we were read two of her favourite poems. A most stimulating discussion followed each person's *Desert Island* choices.

Hazel Beiny

Glasgow CF 90 Years Young

We celebrated the New Year early. Conversation flowed around the table as we enjoyed cocktails, party food and crackers and sang 'Happy Birthday' to Moniek, who had turned 90 years young. A great finale to Glasgow AJR 2013 events.

Anthea Berg

Essex (Westcliff) An Hour of Pure Pleasure

A thoroughly enjoyable morning with our own Otto Deutsch sharing some of his favourite Austrian music with us. Difficult to keep hands and feet still – an hour of pure pleasure!

Susie Barnett

Leeds CF Trip Superb Production

Members enjoyed Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* at the Royal Opera House Live events. It was almost like being in the theatre itself

and we left the cinema marvelling at the superb production.

Wendy Bott

Welwyn GC Coffee and Lebkuchen

We had a social morning at Monica's with coffee and lebkuchen. A very enjoyable time was had by all with interesting conversation and discussion.

Lee Koos

Kent Chanukah with a Difference

While all the eating and drinking was going on, members recounted memories of their childhood in Germany. All touched on the awful period of Kristallnacht, now known in Germany as Pogromnacht. Although the lunch was a happy occasion, the anecdotes were naturally tinged with the sadness of the past. But everyone applauded Esther and Janet for having produced such a memorable afternoon.

John Izbicki

Brighton & Hove Sarid A Happy Get-together

We celebrated a belated Chanukah Party with latkes, cake and a traditional quiz. Although a little late, it turned out to be a happy get-together.

Ceska Abrahams

Oxford A Deeply Moving Film

John Fieldsend introduced and showed us the wonderful documentary *Nicky's Children*, about Sir Nicholas Winton's rescue of children from Czechoslovakia to England. Deeply moving.

Kathryn Prevezer

Wembley The Life of Alfred Nobel

We were fascinated by Professor Spiro's talk on Alfred Nobel, the inventor of nitroglycerin, and Nobel's equally interesting personal life, which led to many questions.

Avram Schaufeld

Book Club Charming Meeting

At a charming meeting at Joseph's Bookstore and Café in Temple Fortune, we discussed J. K. Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy*. We thought it very well written but difficult to keep track of all the characters in the book. Next book: Jonas Jonasson, *The One-Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared*.

Irene Goodman

Cambridge A Very Special Morning

At our last meeting of the year we enjoyed a reading by Lotte Kramer of some of her favourite, widely published poems. Lotte is herself a founder member, with her husband, of our group. A most tasty lunch augmented this very special morning.

Keith Lawson

Leeds CF Happiness or Unhappiness?

Ruth Sterne led a most interesting discussion on 'Materialism ... Does it Produce Happiness or Unhappiness?' Tea and the gorgeous baking, courtesy as ever of Barbara Cammerman, followed.

Wendy Bott

On Growing Old

Henry Grant

As age creeps on and year by year
 You see your face grow lined
 Do not grumble or complain
 But try to bear in mind
 Those who didn't have the chance
 Of growing old like you
 Who never reached the prime of life
 Or saw their dreams come true
 Don't resent the aches and pains
 That time leaves in its wake
 That's the penalty of age
 The payment we must make
 For having lived our span
 And if some extra there should be
 Thank God for every passing day
 And live it gratefully

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FEBRUARY GROUP EVENTS

Sheffield CF	2 Feb	Social
Café Imperial	4 Feb	Social Get-together
Ealing	4 Feb	Andrea Hann, Psychotherapist: 'Positive Change'
Leeds CF	4 Feb	Social
Ilford	5 Feb	Colin Davey: 'From the West End to the City: A Lawyer's Life'
Bromley CF	6 Feb	Lunch (12 noon)
Edinburgh CF	6 Feb	Social
Pinner	6 Feb	Rosemary Green: 'When I Was in Prison'
Newcastle	9 Feb	Brenda and Martin Levinson: 'Paperclips Where It Started'
HGS	10 Feb	David Glasser, Ben Uri Gallery: 'Nazi Looted Art: Don't Confuse Us with the Facts – the Answer is Simple'
Bradford	11 Feb	Nigel Grizzard: 'The Jews of Bradford'
Essex (Westcliff)	11 Feb	Teresa Clark: 'Jewish Care'
Kingston upon Thames	11 Feb	Social Get-together
Oxford	11 Feb	Professor Michael Spiro: 'Tea and Coffee'
Glasgow CF	12 Feb	Outing to Kelvingrove: 'Jack Vettriano: A Retrospective'
St John's Wood	12 Feb	Martha Richler: 'The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz'
Cambridge	13 Feb	Dr V. Pia Spry-Marques: 'Archaeology in Film, TV and Literature'
Dundee	16 Feb	'Shared Roots'
Leeds HSFA	16 Feb	David Goodall: 'Arsenic – the People's Poison'
Brighton-Sarid (Sussex)	17 Feb	Pam Amdurer: 'World Jewish Relief'
Edgware	18 Feb	Dr Susan Cohen: 'Eleanor Rathbone'
Kent	18 Feb	David Barnett: 'All-England Champion Daniel Mendoza'
Norfolk	19 Feb	Social Get-together; speaker Keiron Pim
Radlett	19 Feb	Winter Warmer Social Catch Up
North West London	24 Feb	Martha Richler: 'The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz'
Welwyn GC	25 Feb	Heinz Skyte: His Work for Holocaust Education
Wembley	26 Feb	Howard Lanning: '80 Years in the Film Industry'
North London	27 Feb	Chris Moncrieff, Former Parliamentary Journalist for the Press Association

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THE JEWISH MUSEUM OF WESTPHALIA – A PLACE FOR HISTORY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2012 Elise Hallin (Ilse Reifeisen) visited Dorsten, the town of her birth, her first visit in 74 years. It was only shortly before her visit that the Dorsten-based Jewish Museum of Westphalia had located her in Stockholm: she had emigrated to Sweden on a Kindertransport in 1939. At the invitation of the Jewish Museum, Elise came here with her son Eric seeking traces of her family who had been deported and murdered. Though there is hardly anything in Dorsten to remind her of her family, she was 'happy to see the *Stolpersteine* in the town because I have no grave for my parents. I was very moved because it means that something of my family is still here; the spirit is still here. It's very important because the past and the future belong together.' A book on Elise's family in Dorsten, their deportation to Poland in 1938, her emigration on the Kindertransport, and much more is shortly to be published.

Almost every year descendants of Jews from Dorsten visit the town where their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents once lived. They come here to find out more about their roots, or sometimes, when on holiday, to see the place where their ancestors used to live. They are looking for photos, documents and other traces of their families. Many people from Australia, Belgium, Brazil, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and, above all, the USA have visited the Museum. Intensive research has been carried out in recent years and we have usually been able to trace the lives of those who emigrated as well as of those who were deported.

In 1945 Dorsten was almost completely destroyed and so it has no historic buildings. But there are still 27 gravestones in the Jewish cemetery. Thus the Eisendrath family, ten branches of which emigrated to the USA between 1859 and 1890, were able to find the graves of their ancestors. It was very moving to see the approximately 60 people at their ancestors' graves on the occasion of a family reunion in 2010. The story of the family can be read in *From Dorsten to Chicago: Lectures and Contributions of the Eisendrath Family Reunion 2010 in Dorsten/Germany* (Books on Demand) and there is also a great deal of interesting information (in English) on the website www.eisendrath-stories.net

A medium-sized town on the

northern edge of the Ruhr region, Dorsten was never a special centre of Jewish life but the Museum developed because a dedicated group of volunteers has been researching the history of Jews in Westphalia since the 1980s. A founding member of the group and its

Many people from Australia, Belgium, Brazil, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and, above all, the USA have visited the Museum. Intensive research has been carried out in recent years and we have usually been able to trace the lives of those who emigrated as well as of those who were deported.

first president is Johanna Eichmann, a former teacher. In *Du nix Jude, du blond, du deutsch. Erinnerungen 1926-1952* (Essen 2011), Johanna writes about her life in an extended Jewish family, her 'Schutztaufe' and the post-war period.

Since the Museum's opening in June 1992, an association of 500 (mainly non-Jewish) members has supported the project. As well as three salaried members of staff, there are almost 40 volunteers. The Museum houses a permanent exhibition on Jewish culture and regional history, hosts special exhibitions, talks and cultural events, and carries out educational work and research. Last year, for example, there were exhibitions on the Dutch artist Samuel Jessurun de Mesquita, who was murdered in Auschwitz, orthodox Jews in Germany today, and Berthold Beitz,

who saved the lives of a number of Jews.

The Museum focuses not only on the crimes committed by the Nazis, it also presents other aspects of Jewish life and involvement in our region. But it does have problems. Funding has to be secured for the tiny team of salaried staff: the financial support the Museum receives from the town and state of North Rhine-Westphalia is far too small. Although sponsors are happy to finance individual projects, funding of the basic structure is a huge concern.

But the work goes on. In spring 2014 the Museum is to hold a large exhibition on Jews as neighbours in Westphalia. Also, new publications are planned – e.g. on the Jewish cemetery in Dorsten – as well as interesting cultural events. Visitors, guests with family roots in Germany – as well as any ideas they may have – are always welcome.

Norbert Reichling and Elisabeth Cosanne Schulte-Huxel
President and Vice-President of the Jewish Museum of Westphalia

For further information (in German) and a summary in English, visit www.jmw-dorsten.de



FAMILY ANOUNCEMENTS

Death

Charlotte Norton (née Meyer), born Hamburg April 1927, died Manchester January 2014. Widow of Dr Herbert Norton, Lotte will be remembered with love and affection by her relatives in Israel, Australia and the US and by her many friends all over the world. She loved life and lived it to the full.

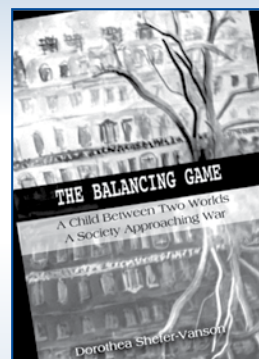
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The Balancing Game: A Child Between Two Worlds, A Society Approaching War

by Dorothea Shefer-Vanson



The *Balancing Game* describes the strange and unique world occupied by a Jewish child, the daughter of refugees from Hitler's Germany, growing up in a run-down part of post-war London. The novel also tells the story of Felicity, a young woman who is pregnant with her first child and is living in Jerusalem before and during the Six-Day War of June 1967. The two tales intertwine, eventually connecting in an unexpected way.

Available at Amazon.com or BarnesAndNoble.com; or from: dorotheashefer@gmail.com

OBITUARIES

Natalie Huss-Smickler (née Huss), born Vienna 20 March 1912, died London 11 December 2013

Natalie was born in Vienna, where she grew up in a loving family environment under the care of her father and mother, Herman and Rosa Huss, and two older brothers, Siegfried and Wilhelm.

On 17 September 1938, prior to the outbreak of the war, Natalie, like many other Jews at that time, attempted to leave Austria. The train she was on was stopped at the Austrian-Belgium border and a loudspeaker announcement said 'All Jews collect their luggage and leave the train.' When she stood up to collect her suitcase a nun in the carriage said 'Where are you going?' Natalie replied 'I am Jewish.' The nun said 'Sit down. You are not going out, you are one of us.' An SS man in uniform who inspected the carriages stopped and looked at Natalie. The nuns said 'She is with us.' Natalie looked out of the window and saw a long line of men, women and children on the platform lined up with their suitcases and marched off. Natalie arrived safely in London.

One of Natalie's brothers was working in London at the time and he arranged a domestic work permit for her. The second brother managed to escape via another route. At the outbreak of war, Natalie's brothers were arrested as 'enemy aliens' together with



a large number of Austrian and German Jews. They were placed on the *Dunera*, a PoW ship, together with German Nazis and Italian Fascists and deported to an internment camp in Australia. Whilst on the ship the internees were made to suffer inhumane conditions. Natalie went to the Houses of Parliament and at a meeting with Josiah Wedgwood MP successfully begged for their release. Unfortunately the ship bringing Siegfried and Wilhelm back to London was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine boat and both brothers lost their lives. Natalie could never get over this tragic event.

In 1948 Natalie married Samuel Smickler. Out of respect for Natalie's brothers who had lost their lives, Samuel added her maiden name to his and the marital surname became Huss-Smickler. They had two sons: Ramon

and Leslie. Natalie was blessed when she became a grandmother. Leslie has four sons and Ramon has one daughter, whom she loved very dearly.

Interviewed by the BBC on 7 March 2012, Natalie told of her journey from Vienna to London (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-16942741).

In March-April 2013, in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Anschluss, the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, the London Jewish Cultural Centre showed the AJR's photographic exhibition 'Double Exposure: Jewish Refugees from Austria in Britain'. The videoed interviews were recorded from 2003 onwards for 'Refugee Voices', a Holocaust testimony archive commissioned by the AJR. The exhibition included a filmed interview with Natalie and old family photos in Vienna.

Natalie enjoyed the last few years of her life in Selig Court, a Jewish Care independent home where priority is given to Holocaust survivors and refugees.

Natalie's recent dreams before she passed away were of joining her mother, father and two brothers. Her dreams are now fulfilled – may she rest in peace. She will be dearly remembered by those who knew her.

Ramon Huss

Franziska Kesten, born Vienna 13 December 1921, died Harrow 5 January 2014

My mother's parents were Simon Glaser and Rosa (née Eckert). He was a tailor, she a housewife. In 1934 Rosa was hospitalised with a mental illness. When Simon couldn't afford the bills she was deported to her home town of Boryslaw in Poland (although, mysteriously, we have a residence permit for her in Brussels in 1942-43).

This left my mother, at the age of 13, to cook and clean for her father, younger brother and herself. She came home one day in 1938 from work at the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde to find her father and brother had left. The Kultusgemeinde advised her to move into the *Stadtkibbutz* at Hassgasse 10, where she first met my father, Salo Kesten, and arranged passage for her on an agricultural transport to Britain. Here she worked at the David Eder Farm, where she again met my father. She met Simon again as the train passed through Brussels; her brother was busy elsewhere. The two were subsequently deported on one of the last trains to a concentration camp in Germany. There is no trace of them beyond that.

Always good with her hands, Franziska



had been apprenticed to a dress-maker in Vienna. This later secured her compensation and a pension from the Austrian government and spared her internment. Following a short spell in domestic service, she and my father got together when he returned from internment and she was his tailoress for a while.

Both of them were active members of Young Austria and its choir. She worked for some years in the 1950s making belts for a business near Oxford Street in London and started her main career as an electrical technician. Her work, for Marconi and then BAE, involved soldering connections for Instrument Landing Systems for Trident

airliners. Through all this she brought up my sister, Erika, and me, ensuring we (and, eventually, our children) had plenty of home-knitted jumpers. From the mid-1940s we lived in rooms in Kilburn.

In 1958 we moved into our first house and it was there that Franziska died quietly with a smile on her lips. She had been a keen gardener, especially interested in growing fuchsias, of which at one point she had around 100!

My mother developed stroke-induced dementia in her last years but, much of the time, even when she didn't recognise me, she was happy, surrounded by her paintings of places she had visited and photographed over the years (my children called her 'Granny Camera!'). My father, who had been an official of the Tailor and Garment Workers' Union, responsible for the bespoke trade in central London, died in 2009.

My mother is greatly missed by her children, Tony and Ricky; Tony's spouse Meg; Ricky's partner John; three grandchildren, Rachel, Jamie and Joanna; and two great-granddaughters, Libby and Jasmine.

Anthony Kesten



LETTER FROM ISRAEL

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson



Reuth - one of the best-kept secrets in Israel

Possibly one of the best-kept secrets in Israel is the existence of the formidable charitable association of Reuth. Reuth is the Hebrew word for friendship and that certainly sums up the philosophy of the organisation.

I've been living in Israel for almost 50 years and didn't know of the organisation's existence, though I was acquainted with Beit Bart, a home providing sheltered accommodation for the elderly that Reuth has established in Jerusalem. But Beit Bart is just the tip of the iceberg, as I found out recently when I visited Reuth's impressive Medical Center in Tel Aviv. In addition to this well-equipped hospital, which provides a wide variety of medical services and care using state-of-the-art equipment, the organisation has sheltered accommodation in Tel Aviv (Beit Shalom) as well as providing subsidised housing in the form of purpose-built studio apartments (Beit Bracha, Beit Achva), also in Tel Aviv.

The origins of the organisation lie in the early 1930s with the arrival in pre-State Israel of the first immigrants from Central Europe, Germany in particular. Some of those who came at that time were able to bring financial and material resources with them, enabling many of the women to give their time and energy to charitable causes. This, after all, had constituted an important aspect of community life in Germany and the ethos of helping those less fortunate and serving the community

continued to play an important part in the lives of many of those immigrants. Thus, a group of ladies organised themselves as 'Women's Social Service', setting themselves the aim of serving the elderly, the needy and the chronically ill.

They began by establishing a soup kitchen for impoverished refugees from Hitler's Germany and extended this to cater for all immigrants. The commemorative volume published in Hebrew to mark its seventieth anniversary in 2007 contains fascinating photographs showing women dressed in the height of 1930s European fashion (hats mandatory, of course) meeting to discuss the needs and aims of the organisation.

Other pictures show the same women, now wearing more practical garb, toiling over enormous cooking pots, as well as those enormous cooking pots being hauled by muscular men down to the beach where the ships unloaded immigrants arriving in the Land of Israel. The objective was to feed the hungry as soon as they stepped off the boats. I have a sneaking suspicion that many of those early activities were conducted in German as the notice above the first soup kitchen reads 'Küche, Sozialer Frauendienst, Kosher Rabbinateaufsicht' alongside the Hebrew lettering.

Among the myriad other charitable activities in which they engaged, the ladies of Reuth raised funds to lease land in Tel Aviv, commissioned architects and building constructors, and erected several apartment

blocks containing small, but well-planned studio apartments that were provided to needy tenants who paid a nominal rent. Originally, all the tenants were Holocaust survivors, though today they constitute only 40 per cent of the residents. These apartments are still functioning in their original capacity though they are in need of constant renovation due to their age.

Today, the Reuth Medical Center in Tel Aviv, which started out as a convalescent home, is a fully-fledged hospital with a large number of employees. It has a special department for treating eating disorders, extensive physiotherapy and occupational therapy departments, rehabilitation and chronic care wards, and the only facility in Israel that combines respiratory care with dialysis. The hospital is about to build an extensive addition, which will greatly increase its current 350-bed capacity. In addition, Reuth's Norma Center offers follow-up care on an out-patient basis.

Everything Reuth does is imbued with the spirit of the organisation's original mission – to provide services in a warm and caring atmosphere, paying attention to getting every last detail right, maintaining an aesthetic environment and, above all, giving those who require their services a feeling of being wanted, loved and understood. Care is not limited to any one segment of the population and, walking through the corridors of the hospital, one comes across representatives of every segment of contemporary Israeli society.

Reuth enjoys the support and fund-raising activities of its friends all over the world, especially in England, the Netherlands and the USA. Many of those who are active in these associations have family or other connections with the original founders, continuing the tradition of aid for the less fortunate.

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

Jewish Care to continue to provide a social setting where we can enjoy activities, entertainment and good food.

Henry Grant, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middx

A GREAT SUCCESS

Sir – I must compliment everyone responsible for the wonderful lunch and entertainment at the All-London Chanukah Party at Alyth Gardens on 17 December. Special thanks to Hazel Beiny, Esther Rinkoff and all the team of volunteers. A great success!

Gerda Torrence, London N2

DOWN THE DANUBE TO PALESTINE

Sir – I refer to the letter by Carmel Page and Sue Pearson in your December issue.

A number of certificates were issued to

the Jewish Agency in Berlin's Meinecke-strasse. These were intended for young people of 18 and upwards. Most, if not, all of these individuals were single but each certificate included the wife if the individual concerned was married. Thus the Jewish Agency insisted that each person receiving its certificate should be married so that in this way two people could enter (the then) Palestine instead of one, doubling the number of immigrants.

I suppose that once in Palestine many of the couples divorced but the object was achieved.

Manfred Landau, London NW11

Sir – Your correspondent George Klein (January) describes an escape from Budapest to Haifa by river. A similar adventure, albeit

with a tragic end, is described by the late Fanny Stang in her book *Fräulein Doktor*.

Fanny relates how her parents, the Knesbachs, took a boat from Vienna down the Danube when all other escape routes were closed. They were eventually trapped by winter ice somewhere in the Balkans and the Nazis finally caught up with them, with the inevitable consequence.

During their long and miserable ordeal, they were able to send the occasional letter to their daughter in England and she quotes these in her touching descriptions. The Knesbachs mention that they chose that particular boat because the alternative one, though cheaper, promised less comfort. In the event, the other boat made it all the way to Israel.

Frank Beck, London NW3

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