

Reflections on German reunification

Now that the flurry of media activity provoked by the twentieth anniversary of the reunification of Germany in November 1989 has subsided, one can try to situate that event within a wider European context. Of course, there are readers of the *AJR Journal* who, for very understandable reasons, can never be reconciled to Germany and the Germans and who regard Germany as the land of the eternal enemy. Others will regard any enlargement of Germany with fear and suspicion, in view of its record of aggressive and ultimately criminal expansionism during the period 1871-1945.

Nevertheless, the reunited Germany is now a settled factor at the heart of the reunited continent of Europe and, as such, a major factor in the diplomatic, political, economic and cultural relationships of the states of Europe and beyond. Nobody looking at Europe today can shut their eyes to Germany. It is also only fair to point out the enormous changes that the social and political culture of Germany has undergone since the days of the Kaiser, the Weimar Republic and Hitler. German society is now as peaceful, anti-militaristic and internationalist in its views as any in Europe.

The British are fond of poking fun at Germany as the land of military uniforms, jackboots and dreams of conquest. Yet it was not Germany that invaded Iraq, or sent a task force several thousand miles down the Atlantic to reconquer the Falkland Islands. The office of the President of Germany is very much a civilian post, quite unlike that of the Queen, his constitutional equivalent as British head of state, whose public function is inextricably intertwined with a multitude of military duties and ceremonies. Public opinion in Germany would hardly accept the grooming of Princes William and Harry for their future roles by service in the armed forces as unquestioningly as is the case in Britain.

Internally, the reunification of Germany has been accomplished largely



Fall of the Berlin Wall, November 1989

successfully, to the extent that few people can now imagine Dresden and Magdeburg being cut off by barbed wire and watch-towers from Munich and Hanover. Fewer still will regret the passing of the former East Germany, a totalitarian surveillance state that had to wall its citizens in to preserve itself from death by depopulation. Though substantial differences in wealth and employment rates persist between the former East and West Germany – largely due to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's politically inspired decision to allow the East German mark to be converted into West German marks at the rate of one to one – by and large the two former German states have merged smoothly into one.

It was in the sphere of external relations that the reunification of Germany aroused the greatest fears. Whereas West Germany, some 60 million people strong, was broadly on a par with France, Britain and Italy in terms of population and economic weight, the reunited Germany, with a population of some 80 million, is a power potentially of a different order. Yet the reunification of Germany has not been accompanied by German efforts to expand or extend its sphere of influence at the expense of other European states, other than in the acceptable forms of free competition by German companies in European markets and Germany's attempts to further its national interests within the institutions of the European Union. Germany's borders with its Eastern neighbours, agreed in the

1970s through the *Ostpolitik* of the Brandt and Schmidt governments, have not been challenged by any renaissance of German military might.

The reason for this lies partly in the fact that the reunification of Germany took place within the broader framework of the reunification of Europe as a whole. When the Berlin Wall came down, it brought the entire Iron Curtain down with it, allowing all the countries of the Warsaw Pact – Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria – to join the EU and NATO,

along with the Baltic states, which regained their independence when the collapsed USSR. The potentially destabilising impact of a more powerful Germany was thus counterbalanced by the entry of ten Eastern European states (including the former Yugoslav republic of Slovenia) and some 100 million Eastern Europeans into the European comity of nations. Europe became too large for Germany to dominate; the EU supplied a degree of cohesion

continued overleaf

Kindertransport Chairman Erich Reich Knighted



Erich Reich, Chairman of the AJR's Kindertransport special interest group, has been knighted in the New Year's Honours List.

Sir Erich, 74, was born in Vienna and came to this country in August 1938. Like many others, he never saw his parents again.

In 1987 he set up Classic Tours, which organises fundraising trips abroad for charitable purposes. He has since inspired over 40,000 people to raise around £60 million for charities in this way.

'I want to thank the people of Britain for allowing the Kinder to come to the UK and for this amazing honour,' Sir Erich said.

REFLECTIONS ON GERMAN REUNIFICATION *continued from page 1*

lacking in the 1930s, when Germany had been able to pick off the small Eastern states one by one.

The admission of the countries of Eastern Europe into the EU and NATO has guaranteed peace and stability in the area of Europe formerly controlled by the Soviet Union. The separation of Slovakia from the Czech Republic passed off without bloodshed. The various ethnic tensions that in the 1930s had been resolved by force have not led to violence since 1989: the potential for conflict between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania, between Poles and Czechs over Cieszyn (Teschen), Romanians and Bulgarians in the Dobrudja, or Slovaks and Hungarians in southern Slovakia, has been held in check. These states understand full well that allowing militant nationalism to explode into discrimination against minority ethnic groups or violence against neighbouring states would only deprive them of the benefits of EU membership.

The case of Yugoslavia, which did collapse into an orgy of violence, proves the point. For Yugoslavia had never been part of the Soviet-controlled area of Europe, since Tito, its leader, had broken with Stalin in the 1940s. It was therefore less directly affected by the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. Whereas all the other Eastern European countries underwent a change of regime when the Iron Curtain fell, Yugoslavia did not; its Serbian-dominated leadership, under Slobodan Milosevic, passed swiftly from Titoist Communism to radical Serb nationalism.

That transition then ignited the flames of nationalism in Yugoslavia's other constituent republics, leading to their secession from Belgrade and to the Yugoslav wars. Only Slovenia, which played no part in the fighting, was admitted to the EU, following the path of the rest of peaceful Eastern Europe. The other Yugoslav republics either would not or could not abide by the European rules of democratic government, ethnic tolerance and international peace, were excluded from the European settlement and descended into carnage. But outside the western Balkans, the pattern of the fall of the Communist regimes and their replacement by elected governments, followed by admission to NATO and the EU, has brought a measure of stability, prosperity and democracy to the peoples of Eastern Europe.

That said, the creation of a single German state changed the balance of power within Europe and presented other nations with a challenge that, in view of

Germany's past record, could have proved difficult to meet. The most obvious loser in 1989 was Russia, which emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union with territorial losses even greater than those it suffered in 1918; shorn of the Baltic states, Ukraine and Belarus, Russia was in no position to oppose the reunification of Germany, however sensitive it was to the historical threat of invasion by Germany. The United States, by contrast, had little to fear from German reunification and much to gain from the collapse of the Soviet Union, its Cold War rival, and the extension of NATO across Eastern Europe. President Bush (senior) supported German reunification.

Britain and France were in a more difficult position: neither was prepared for the emergence of a united Germany and both felt threatened by it. As we know from documents released by the foreign ministries of both nations, President Mitterand and Prime Minister Thatcher were united in their misgivings about German reunification. The French played a clever hand, concealing those misgivings and planning to accommodate the enlarged Germany into a greater and more integrated Europe by means of European economic and monetary union (EMU), culminating in the creation of a single European currency. The French succeeded, in effect, in subsuming a united Germany within the broader dynamic of European integration and thereby neutralising the threat of German preponderance.

This was not possible for Margaret Thatcher, whose deep-seated aversion to Germany (made public by the revelation of her notoriously negative comments on the German national character) was matched by her hostility to European integration in general and the single currency in particular. Under her leadership, Britain found itself isolated in its opposition to German reunification. For what could Britain do to stop it? Send a gunboat up the Elbe? Organise a flypast of Spitfires over the Kurfürstendamm? Order the evacuation of the British Army of the Rhine across the North Sea on a flotilla of small boats?

In this lost cause, Mrs Thatcher even attempted to enlist the aid of President Gorbachev in delaying the disappearance of (Communist) East Germany and its absorption by (democratic) West Germany. This bid to prolong the East German regime by keeping Soviet forces on German territory was a sorry end to the Iron Lady's previously impeccable record of support for freedom and democracy for

Fourteen-year struggle for justice succeeds at last

Last year some 200 or so Kindertransportees in the UK benefited from a considerable increase in their hitherto weak German pension.



Hermann Hirschberger

In the early 1990s, the German government agreed to grant members of the Kindertransport resident in the UK a pension under the German pension scheme. Payments would be made to all not yet in employment (too young or in further education) in 1939-48 and residing in the UK. These payments began in 1995 but most eligible recipients were bitterly disappointed. Because they had started paid employment and thus paid UK pension insurance contributions, the German full pension allocation was reduced by one-ninth for each such year.

Hermann Hirschberger alone took it upon himself to fight to rectify the situation. He wrote numerous letters to MPs and arranged meetings with ministers. He worked with a solicitor and even succeeded in meeting the German ambassador after months of pleading. Ministers and German officials as well as the solicitor were sympathetic. However, they insisted there was nothing they could do.

Hermann battled on resolutely until, after nearly 14 years, with the support of a new minister of pensions at Whitehall, a new amendment to the insurance act in the UK was passed. The German authorities were prepared to honour the new situation and Hermann had finally won his campaign.

The 200 or so refugees alive today who were saved by the British government in 1938-39 owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to this country and to Hermann Hirschberger for having fought so hard to ease their financial situation.

Steven Mendelsson

the peoples of Eastern Europe. It did little to enhance Britain's standing in Europe.

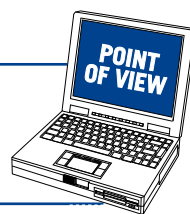
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Jew against Jew

We Jews are an argumentative lot. I went to *shul* with my wife the other week because we both had a *Yahrzeit*. A lady sitting in front of me (yes, we belong to a *shul* where men and women sit together) turned around and asked me 'Aren't you Peter Phillips? I don't like you because I hate what you write in the *AJR Journal*.' So she decided to sit elsewhere. I wasn't upset. I like to be liked but I don't mind being disliked. It's being ignored that I would hate!

Anyway – as you will have guessed by now – it is a Liberal *shul* to which I belong because this is a form of Judaism with which I have the greatest sympathy. It's logical. Except for the responses, I like the services. And there is little or no hypocrisy. Which is more than I can say for Orthodox Judaism. And as for Ultra-orthodoxy, even I dare not give you my views in case the *Journal* and I are sued for libel.

So here is my first example of Jew against Jew. Orthodox Jew versus Progressive Jew. I won't repeat the story of how Rabbi Sacks, who is called Chief Rabbi – though not by me – decided not to go to the funeral of his friend Rabbi Gryn because Rabbi Gryn, a Holocaust survivor, was a Reform rabbi. We all know about that. But how about the more recent case of the Jewish Free School, which would not admit the son of a Jewish father and a Jewish mother because the mother was converted to Judaism by a Reform synagogue? This case went to the Court of Appeal and, thank goodness, the court found in favour of the parents. Even so, the JFS is going to appeal against the verdict. We are *all* Jews. Do we have to discriminate against each other? There have been letters galore in this journal deriding my Liberal beliefs. I pity the writers.

Next, we have those Jews who, like me, believe that the foundation of Israel was, for Jews, the happiest occasion in

the last 1,000 years. Of course the new state has made some mistakes. It is, after all, only 60 years old. Giving as much power to the religious parties as Israel has done was wrong. It is a secular state – not one for religious fundamentalists. Mea Shearim used to be a suburb of Jerusalem. Now its oddities have spread over nearly the whole of Jerusalem. I cannot, however, understand the Jewish do-gooders in this country who wish to condemn Israel in the press by taking out full-page advertisements attacking our homeland for over-reacting in Gaza. Hamas, Hezbollah and Ahmadinejad of Iran (he who denies the Holocaust) want to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. Does Israel not have the right to defend itself, even if, sometimes, with more violence than might be necessary? Do these Jewish do-gooders have to wash their dirty linen in public? Do they agree with the British judicial decision on Tzipi Livni? I find these so-called Jews almost as disloyal as Neturei Karta, who at least have the excuse of being *meshuggah*! Shame on the lot of them.

Lastly, we have the tricky relationship – still – of the Jews who came over to Great Britain at the time of Tevye, fleeing the Cossacks in the late 1800s-early 1900s, and those who came over, fleeing Hitler and the Nazis, in the late 1930s. The first lot were poor, settled mainly in the East End of London and didn't particularly want to assimilate. They spoke Yiddish and followed the trades their fathers had had in Eastern Europe. Let's be honest. They weren't too happy when the influx of Continental Jews arrived, mostly from Germany and Austria, educated and, in the countries from which they fled, already qualified as doctors, dentists, lawyers and accountants. They mainly spoke German, not Yiddish, and thought of themselves as superior to their predecessors. After all, they settled in NW3 – in Hampstead! As Anthony Grenville said, 'Bildung' was all-important. They even had their own synagogue – Belsize Square – where the prayer-book was half in Hebrew, half in German. The two factions still do not sit comfortably together. Idiomatic though it may seem, there is a class division!

My wish to all Jewry for 2010 is to forget the biases. I shall try to be tolerant towards the 'frummers'. I shall try to understand why some Jews feel obliged to attack Israel in our press and to side with critics like Richard Goldstone. I shall also try not to consider myself superior just because I was born in Vienna! What are *your* New Year resolutions?

Peter Phillips

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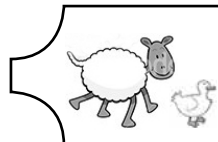
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THE FARM

by Gerald Jayson



Last night I dreamt I was ten again, on the Farm, with its rolling fields, walking up the 200 yards from the road that skirts the Irish Sea. In the dim skies above floated the whole of the Belfast Jewish community. To the fore was Maurice Solomon, the treasurer, Leo Scop, the chairman of the Refugee Committee, and the president, Barney Hurwitz. Rev Fundaminsky was also there in the clouds, attempting to restart my knowledge of Hebrew. They were trying to see how we refugees from Nazi Germany and Austria were faring on the Farm in Millisle, County Down, Northern Ireland.

Beside me was Herr Patriasz (in the early days grown-ups were still Herr), the Farm boss, frightening me with the amount of weeding I had to do. Then came Herr Dr Kohner and his wife, telling me not to look over the partition into the girls' dormitory and that, in view of my character, in future I would still have to eat a lot of dirt ('Du wirst noch viel Dreck fressen müssen'). There was also Herr Mündheim, glove-size 8 ('Handgröße 8'), wanting me to cut an exact right angle into a piece of metal. With that I woke up and pulled the blankets back over me from my wife's side.

That Farm in Northern Ireland, on which I spent eight years, has held me in thrall more than any other eight years of my life. As one of the children on the Farm, my first four years there were spent at primary school in Millisle. When it was stormy, the waves from the Irish Sea would break over the road to school and we had to run to avoid a drenching. As you were coming up the track, the Farm was on the right, and Mr Beresford's trees on the left. You did not enter those woods, even for a lost ball, because it was laid down by the grown-ups that a Jewish refugee from the Nazis must not aggravate the neighbours. We might be sent back to Germany. We were the lucky ones who had escaped. I couldn't understand that. I thought, and felt, it was natural to be alive, even if there were Nazis and you had to be sent to a Refugee Settlement Farm.

Originally, my sister Edith and I were an emergency case, having been Kindertransported to England from Berlin. My father and mother had been arrested. Despite the fact that my father had been a volunteer for the Germans for four years in the First World War. We were lucky! In time my parents, all my uncles, aunts and a few cousins were murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz. No doubt we would have ended up the same. But we didn't know anything about it, being



Children at the Farm, in Millisle, County Down: Gerald Jayson (Gert Jacobowitz) is seated, second from left

safely taken care of by the Belfast Jewish community.

My final destination, Belfast, was decided by the fact that the Turkish lady who sold nightdresses to my father in his Berlin shop had a sister (Mrs Wolf) in Northern Ireland who pleaded with the Jewish Committee to give us a chance when the Committee were mainly helping Jews from Nazified Austria. In June 1939 the Farm was meant to be a holiday spot for refugee children gathered in Belfast.

Before September 1939 the Farm at Millisle had been a training place for young Jews from Europe to learn agricultural skills. Jews were not well versed in agricultural skills so the Farm had been set up for them. By 1939 it was painfully obvious that they were not wanted back in Europe. So the Farm, with Herr Patriasz from Hungary as a manager and teacher, was set up. Mr Patriasz, in his high boots, was a hard man, and looked it. The young trainees (*chalutzim*) were circulated round the different jobs on the farm so they could learn the details of each one. Cereal crops, root crops (particularly potatoes in Ireland!), kitchen gardening, dairy and chicken farming – all were given their few months' rotation. They learned them well because in 1947, when the Farm was disbanded and most of the young workers went to Israel, they cultivated barren lands into beautiful farms.

As refugees of all ages were sent out to live on this farm it also became a Refugee Settlement Farm. We refugee children were on our summer holidays and slept in large tents, one for the boys and another for the girls. As the beds were aired each day and the rains came, we never slept with the same bedding twice.

After September 1939, our parents couldn't get out of Europe, our stay on the Farm was made permanent, and we slept in more converted stables and the little farmhouse. A year later the large, long wooden hut was built and we slept in its large dormitories as we

had done in the tent. It also contained a synagogue and entertainment/play rooms. I remember boys running through the sleeping quarters shouting 'Sh, sh, Larry's sleeping!' and waking the baby up.

The arrival of the refugees of all ages added nursery, health, laundry and kitchen training to the rota taught to the girls on the Farm. It was their child care training that affected me, one of the children on the Farm.

From 1940 onwards we went to the public Elementary School in Millisle with the other children from the village. Mr Palmer took all the classes at once in one large room and Mrs Mawhinney looked after the baby infants. I was ten but began in the infants because I didn't know any English.

On the Farm for the first few years we spoke and read German. It was only with the coming of comics – *The Beano*, *Dandy*, *Hotspur* etc kindly passed on by the Belfast Jewish children – that my English began to improve. The other children (there were about 12 of us), Harry, Robert, Felix and Maxi, had come over earlier and were more advanced in English. The girls were Sonya, Erna, Gertie, Annie, Daisy, Erica and Mausli.

By 1942 the young women had gone through their child training on us children several times, without doing us any harm. We were then placed in the care of Erwin Jacobi, an elderly saxophone player from Vienna, and, although he didn't look very motherly, he was the best child-minder of all because he saw to it that we got a grammar school education.

My barmitzvah took place on the Farm in 1941. While the other boys went to Bangor Grammar School, I went a year later to Regent House School in Newtonards.

Under Mr Mündheim's direction, the *chalutzim* built a byre out of home-made, reinforced concrete bricks. It must be the strongest byre in Ireland and will stand forever unless blown up. It is a lasting memorial to the Refugee Settlement Farm.

Every Sunday a part of the Belfast Jewish community would come out to the Farm to see how we were getting on. At this time we received clothing and presents. Naturally, we always looked forward to that, especially the comics. Occasionally we went to the cinema in Donaghdee – the afternoon 3d show. Our pocket money went from 3d at the beginning to 9d and higher. Living on a farm, you work on it, even when you're

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The Kitchener Camp: The Sandwich response

by Clare Ungerson

Recent issues of the *AJR Journal* have contained a number of references to the Kitchener Camp. An article by Anthony Grenville in the May 2009 issue outlined the history of the Camp and last month a Sandwich resident, Hilda Keen, shared her memories of it.

The story of the Camp, which was funded by the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF) and rescued about 4,000 men from Greater Germany, has been rather overlooked in the general histories of British attitudes towards refugees just before the Second World War. Given the number of men rescued, the Camp is, to my mind, almost as important as the Kindertransport. Its importance lies in the way the CBF found the means, through the generosity of the Anglo-Jewish community, the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Society of Friends, to fund the Camp, and the way in which the Camp was organised and successfully run by three young men from the Jewish Lads' Brigade with the help of the refugees themselves. I am in the process of researching and writing about the Camp using archival material I have found in the Wiener Library, the Imperial War Museum and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and, last but not least, using interviews with men who lived in Kitchener in 1939. In addition, I have the advantage of living in Sandwich in east Kent, where the Camp was located. One of my great delights has been talking to the residents of Sandwich, many of whom – among its older population – remember the Camp and 'the refugees', as they call them, with affection. In last month's *Journal*, one of those older residents, Hilda Keen, now 83, told of her fond memories of Dr Laski, Franz (Frank) Mandl, Mr and Mrs Rosenberg and the others who often came to her parents' bakery in Sandwich. She described how her mother was persuaded to buy 'proper' coffee by Dr Laski and to sell it on to the refugees. An intriguing thought: a sort of Viennese café squeezed into a tiny shop in a medieval street in such a very English town.

The CBF had been anxious about the reception the refugees would receive locally and were worried that large numbers of men wandering about Sandwich (which, with a population of less than 4,000, was smaller than the camp itself) might lead to an upsurge in anti-Semitic feelings among the British. They were keen to keep the men inside the camp as much as possible and ensured this by filling their time with hard work and hard play, and having perimeter fences, guarded gates, evening roll calls and permits for men who wanted to leave the camp overnight. The CBF knew there was a well-organised branch of the British Union of Fascists in Sandwich run by a local businesswoman, Lady Grace Pearson, who was also president of the Sandwich Chamber of Commerce, and they also



Franz (Frank) Mandl with Hilda Keen (right) and her sister Doris at the Kitchener Camp

would have known that Captain Robert Gordon Canning, a virulent anti-Semite, lived on the Sandwich Bay Estate. He and his grand friends from London (including, it is rumoured, the Prince of Wales before the abdication) used to meet there at the weekends to play golf on the famous Royal St Georges Golf Course. (After the war, Captain Gordon Canning purchased the bust of Hitler sold at the auction of chattels from the German embassy and kept it in his house in Sandwich.)

But the stories Sandwich people tell me – of going to concerts at the camp, 'walking out' with some of the young men in the camp, joining them for sports activities – demonstrate a much more positive response than the CBF had expected. The truth is that Sandwich was divided – there were some Fascists in the town but they were largely drawn from the upper-class people of Sandwich. Far more important were the relationships between the men in the Kitchener Camp and the more ordinary people of the town. They met largely through the work of the Camp itself: for example, local builders helped with the reinstatement of the Camp, local market gardeners and coal merchants provided much-needed food and fuel, and local teachers volunteered to give English lessons to the men. The mayor of Sandwich was a strong supporter of the Camp and a frequent visitor to it. The town was intrigued by the men in the Camp – who seemed exotic and were very well-mannered, had travelled and came from major European cities. Sandwich was depressed at the time and many of its residents had probably never been to London, let alone Vienna or Berlin. And the Camp added fun to the goings-on in Sandwich and neighbouring towns of Ramsgate and Margate – there was a Camp jazz band, a Camp orchestra (which by all accounts was very good), Camp comedians and actors – even a trapeze artist. The weekly local newspaper had a slot for 'The Kitchener Camp' where the Camp's activities were briefly described, alongside the doings of the local Women's Institute and the local churches. In that lovely summer of 1939, the Camp sent a float to the Ramsgate Carnival with 'Our Thanks To England' emblazoned on a

banner along its side; the jazz band played at one end of the lorry and a refugee sat in his nightshirt in a bunk bed at the other and pulled funny faces.

A number of men were invited to the homes of Sandwich residents. Some of these events were grand: a couple called Peto used to invite a select group of men to tea in the beautiful gardens of their big house, but more often individual men were invited to rather more modest homes. Peter Mansbacher, who eventually emigrated to the USA, wrote a memoir which is now deposited in the Wiener Library. A Kindertransportee, he was one of a group of 'Dovercourt boys' who volunteered to live in the Camp and help with the repair of the huts in the early days of the Camp's life as a refugee camp. He describes evocatively his invitation to Sunday tea with a Mr and Mrs Gray. I find the description of this event particularly moving, especially if one remembers the context of the visit: Peter was a young man entirely on his own, having left his parents behind in Lübeck. The scene beside the coal fire, the silence and the sleepy dog are resonant of the family life Peter had so sadly lost:

After tea Mr Gray lit the fire and he and I settled into easy chairs in front of the fireplace. He had put out all the lights and only the light from the dancing flames in the fireplace lit up the room. Now Mr and Mrs Gray were sitting on either side of me while their dog had his head in my lap. How peaceful it was and how different from camp life. It was so enjoyable. In camp we had become numbers. There was no privacy, no place where we could be alone with our thoughts. In camp we were all in the same boat and there was little sympathy for one another. Most of us had had to leave our parents, wives, children, our loved ones ... The peace, the warmth and the dancing flames made me realise how lucky I was to be where I was. I appreciated what they had done for me and I was grateful for their silent company. When I returned that evening to the camp and looked about me, I so much wished that I could change things and comfort many of the men in camp.

As Peter Mansbacher indicates, life in the Kitchener Camp was no bed of roses and there could be intense loneliness in a crowd. But my evidence from Sandwich indicates that many ordinary people in Sandwich recognised the hardships endured there and understood something of the awful circumstances surrounding the arrival of so many refugees on the edge of the town. There was no local upsurge in anti-Semitism – quite the reverse. Indeed, the Kitchener Camp seems to me to be really worthy of celebration – for many reasons.

If you have memories and/or mementos of the Kitchener Camp, please contact Professor Ungerson by email at clareungerson@aol.com or via the Journal.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

HOLOCAUST AND OTHER GENOCIDES

Sir – Mary Rogers asks (January) for members' responses to her view that it is inappropriate to include victims of other genocides in memorial services for victims of the Holocaust.

I respect her view as the universal right to a personal opinion is very precious to me. But I would have liked her to tell us the criteria on which she bases her view, as I totally disagree with it as it stands in her letter.

Yom Hashoah, the Jewish annual day for remembrance of the Holocaust, existed well before 27 January 2001, the first national Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD). HMD was instigated through an international committee concerned that all people – not only Jews – need to remember the Holocaust.

Already, on 27 January 2001, the Wiener Library held a public meeting, not on the Holocaust but on genocide. It was at this meeting that I first learned, with shame at my ignorance, about the Armenian genocide from an Armenian survivor. It was clear to me then that to focus solely on the victims of the Holocaust would be likely to perpetuate ignorance and denial of other genocides.

The Holocaust was unique in many ways – and may it remain so. But something that has happened once can happen again. Only by bearing to know about all genocides can we, hopefully, contribute to making sure there will be no more genocide. As there have been about 50 genocides, including several major ones, since 1945, we have a lot of learning yet to do.

Sadly, there are still some who consider the Holocaust 'the property of Jews'. The Jews suffered, and so did many others, but, in my opinion, the Holocaust and all genocides belong to the whole of humanity. They add up to a massive loss to humanity and this needs to be mourned by the whole of humanity together.

Each genocide in which we do not intervene in the six early stages to prevent it reaching the seventh stage of mass murder, in my opinion, makes a 'blood red footprint' in the human soul – the inner life of every human being. We should be as concerned about genocide footprints in our 'internal environment' as we are about carbon footprints in the external environment.

Ruth Barnett, London NW6

Sir – Why does Mary Rogers object to HMD and HMD services being devoted to all victims of all racially motivated exterminations? Is it right to consider the death camps and their

6 million Jewish victims whilst ignoring their 5.5 million other victims? If 'victims of mass murder' is too loose a definition, and one restricts the term 'holocaust' only to those groups whose total extermination was intended, one would have to group the gypsy and gay communities with European Jewry.

Otherwise, the onus is on Ms Rogers to show what makes the 1941-45 extermination of the Jews different from population exterminations before or since.

There is another approach – which I would prefer. We can all mourn our ancestors, whether they died in Auschwitz or in their beds. For persons of faith, the date and procedure of mourning may be prescribed, but essentially mourning is a private or 'family and friends' act. What then is the purpose of HMD? Is it not an act of witness to condemn mass murder? Should it not climax in an affirmation that all persons are equal and share an obligation towards each other? And, if that is right, there is nothing to distinguish our suffering from that of the descendants of Armenians, Kurds, Rwandans, Congolese ...

Francis Deutsch, Saffron Walden

Sir – I was pleased that Mary Rogers questions if it is appropriate to include other genocides on HMD. It's a subject that has troubled me ever since its inception and I therefore mostly stay away from the event. The very first HMD was coupled with Bosnia. To recall, Bosnia-Herzegovina was a puppet state of the Nazis and a Bosnian Waffen-SS division fought alongside the Germans, engaged mainly in killing thousands of innocent Serbs and Jews. Prior to attending the opening ceremony, I was unaware there would be a Bosnian aspect to it and, when a Bosnian was introduced to speak, my blood ran cold as I wondered just how much the large audience knew of the wartime events that led to the massacre. How ironic that we should be asked to remember the Bosnian victims but not the Serbs, although the earlier crime was far more serious.

A year earlier, I was present at a consultation meeting chaired by the redoubtable Stephen Smith at Beth Shalom, to gauge survivors' views on the annual Holocaust commemoration Tony Blair was keen to introduce here, in line with other European countries. The first HMD took place in London the following year, on 27 January 2001. Stephen Smith was appointed chairman of the HMD Trust.

Some of those present at the meeting, including myself, were not wholly in favour. We have our Yom Hashoah and felt we didn't

need another remembrance day. We also thought it could invite accusations of 'Why the Jews?' when so many others died in the war and it could end up doing us more harm than good. Some also foresaw the event being abused by those with a different agenda, who would want to include any massacre – even alleged massacres. This is exactly what happened in 2005, when the Muslim Council had the gall to demand what some describe as the 'Palestinian holocaust' to be included.

It is, of course, fitting that the day be restricted to all victims of Nazi persecution – not just Jews – and for the Holocaust to act as the catalyst for what intolerance and scapegoating can lead to. This is as far as I would go – otherwise it should have been named 'Genocide Day'. To the best of my knowledge, Holocaust Day in Europe is not coupled with other genocides as it is here. I put this down to political correctness, which seems to afflict this country far more than Europe.

Apart from the first HMD, I attended the January 2009 event in Coventry as the theme 'Stand up to Hatred' appealed to me because of the re-emerging anti-Semitism. Hazel Blears, who then held the Cabinet post of Communities Secretary, pledged in her speech that her government would vigorously fight racism from the right. As we were milling around at the reception, she failed to answer the question 'What about racism from the left?' put to her by a survivor friend from Leicester. Significantly, anti-Jewish hatred never even got a mention on this auspicious day.

Rubin Katz, London NW11

Sir – I feel the same as Mary Rogers. At last year's HMD event organised by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, the speaker from Rwanda monopolised the proceedings. While I strongly sympathise with all victims of genocide, I do feel that the Jewish Holocaust is unique in character and scale. It was perpetrated on an industrial scale with meticulous planning and ruthless efficiency. These horrors were perpetrated by the same race as had produced Goethe and Beethoven among many others.

Bronia Snow, Esher

Sir – It is not correct to include the victims of Rwanda and other genocides in HMD. We European Jews were not involved in civil war and no other people was ever transported to gas chambers.

Clare Parker, London NW3

KINDERTRANSPORT CHAIRMAN KNIGHTHOOD

Sir – I am sure we are all delighted at the news of the knighthood bestowed on Kindertransport Chairman Erich Reich. It is an honour not only for him but, to some extent, for the entire Kindertransport movement and its founder, Bertha Leverton.

I have a slight personal connection with this news in that it fulfils my wishes of 12 years ago. After the successful reunion of 1998, I felt there should be some public appreciation of Bertha's work and persuaded

Richard Grunberger to join me in suggesting to the relevant office in Downing Street – without telling Bertha of course – that she should figure in the next Honours List. Nothing seemed to come of it at the time. I was, of course, pleased when she eventually got an MBE, but I never knew whether this had anything at all to do with our initial approach all those years ago. Nor do I know whether the recent knighthood had anything to do with it ...

*Francis Steiner
Deddington, Oxfordshire*

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Sir – John Goldsmith's letter (January) took me back to Cambridge, where my sister and I were taken in when we arrived with the Kindertransport in April 1939. Greta Burkill was our guardian angel too and so was John's mother Malli Meyer. She was our dentist for many years. My late husband and I visited Cambridge frequently from Oxford, not only to see my parents Salli and Luise Rath and my husband's aunt Leni Ursell, but also to continue our dental treatment by Malli Meyer – not only a good dentist but a very elegant lady. Incidentally, John and I attended the same golden wedding party last summer but I didn't recognise him at the time!

Doris Moritz, Cardiff

QUAKERS AND REFUGEES

Sir – I was interested in Marion Smith's letter (December). It is well known that Quakers did more for us than any other denomination, given the fact that at the time there were only 19,000 of them. I have been involved with Friends as friends and have tried to research this topic. Some years ago, I wrote up this study and used it for a talk to the Midwest KTA in Madison, Wisconsin and to a Kindertransport Association meeting in London in 1989. Should any reader wish to see a copy, please contact me at the email address below.

I admire the work you are doing and think the *AJR Journal* is the best of all the magazines or brochures I have seen here and in the USA on the topic of refugees.

*Ruth David, Leicester
rdavid2334@gmail.com*

SAYING KADDISH

Sir – I would very much like to hear from anyone whose loved ones perished at Maly Trostinec, near Minsk. I have notification from the Austrian State Archive that my parents and sister were taken there from their last address in Vienna on 20 May 1942 and shot immediately on arrival. No less than 15,000 Jews from Vienna, Cologne and Königsberg met a similar fate between May and October that year. From June onwards, special gas wagons were put into operation. A simple but beautiful monument has been erected on this site and is looked after by members of the Minsk Jewish community. I understand that there were only 17 survivors but it is doubtful if any of them is alive today.

I wonder if any of your readers has actually visited the site. It has long been my ambition to go there and say Kaddish.

However, as I am no longer in the best of health and in my eighties, I don't suppose my wish will come to fruition.

Otto Deutsch, Southend-on-Sea

FEWER JEWS IN THE UK

Sir – The Jewish population in this country has halved in our time here. Another 70 years may well cause a further diminution and it is likely that only an insignificant number of Jews will inhabit these lands by the end of the century. Similar trends are evident abroad. Even in Israel, visited recently, one could discern the influence of non-Jewish settlers, thereby diluting the Sabras, who deprecate the influx of Russians who declared themselves Jews to escape the hard life of their country.

Regarding this country, it is not necessary to single out reasons for blaming the government for the diminution of the Jewish population as all social life is directly or indirectly influenced by government action or inaction. The persistent changes in education, which is of great importance to Jewish families, under-achievement, lowering of standards and the squabbles over single-faith schools, make parents doubtful about having their children educated here. Inheritance taxes are a further reason for packing their bags. Jews in the financial sector are now thinking of emigrating because of government interference. Some have themselves to blame for the consequences of their behaviour. The liberal, uncontrolled immigration factor is of concern, especially when compared with the then barriers to keep out our brethren, whilst we, a mere fraction, luckily managed to overcome them.

Fred Stern, Wembley, Middx

LIFT VANS OF LONG AGO

Sir – We called them 'lifts'. They were smaller than today's containers and made of wood. Liesl Munden (January) asks about customs duties exacted by the Nazis. In May 1939, when we left for Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), my parents had to make a complete inventory of every item to be exported stating the date when it had been bought. A customs official came to our apartment to supervise the packing and finally sealed the 'lift'.

If I remember correctly, on brand new items such as tropical-weight clothes, electric fans and a refrigerator, we had to pay 100% duty. Articles acquired between 1933 and 1938 attracted 50%, and even on articles acquired before 1933 we had to pay 33%. Despite these punitive rates, it was advantageous to take goods rather than transfer money. Each adult was allowed to take out a mere 10 Marks in German currency. Foreign currency had to be purchased at special rates of exchange for emigrants. We had to pay 100 Marks to obtain 8 Sperrmark. These could then be exchanged for sterling at commercial rates, i.e. the Nazis seized 92% of our money. It was a long time ago and I was only a child so I cannot be absolutely certain of the percentages.

Peter Fraenkel, London EC2

Sir – Liesl Munden reminded me of the 'lift' my parents had filled with furniture, clothing, toys and treasures from our life in Olomouc, Czechoslovakia. We were not as fortunate as Liesl in that the 'lift' was stored in Hamburg waiting shipment when war broke out.

I still have the letter from Julius Schumacher addressed to a Lance Corporal Garvin dated 23 August 1945 advising that, in accordance with an order of the Gestapo II/B/2/980/41 dated 18 March 1941, the 'lift' was auctioned by Carl F. Schluter Co. I still possess the originals of the letters concerned; the contents have never been seen again. We can be forever grateful that it was the 'lift' that got stuck in Hamburg and not our family.

Peter Briess, London NW3

Sir – During the early years of the Second World War, when I was seven to nine years old, I remember my mother constantly bemoaning the loss of our 'lift' container. She missed most our bed linen and clothes – not to mention my very own life-size teddy bear (of which I never had any recollection whatsoever!).

I still have somewhere a postcard dated late August 1939 from a Jewish ex-solicitor in Germany expressing reassurance that the lift paperwork was in order and there was nothing more to worry about ... I also have the list of contents, which was later the basis of a restitution claim. After sending at least 100 letters to the United Restitution Office over the years, my widowed mother received a final payment, for my father's books in the lift, in 1966. Corresponding with pre-1920s school friends after the war, she found replacements for a couple of family photos, all of which were lost forever with the lift.

L. Paget, Brighton

BRITISH FIRST, JEWISH SECOND?

Sir – I wear a little Star of David. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't take it off. It is part of me.

Neither religion nor nationality is important. What is really important is something I have received throughout a very long life: simple helpfulness and good nature.

My aunt and cousin were murdered in the gas chambers in Poland. My father, who had fought in the First World War, was brutally mistreated in Sachsenhausen. Fortunately, he was released and had to leave Germany within eight hours of his release.

It is an incredible paradox that I have been able to live quite an adventurous life, finding people at home and in all corners of the globe kind and helpful.

Order and law are not imposed: they are a spontaneous part of human behaviour. I am dubious about the state. I am dubious about religion. The Inquisition; the burning of Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley in Broad Street, Oxford; the Thirty Years' War. Get away with you!

Hans Hammerschmidt, Oxford

Sir – If Mr Stern (December) cannot accept that Jews worldwide are, and will continue to be, outnumbered by those of other faiths, he should have arranged with his parents never to have been born. There never was any other answer.

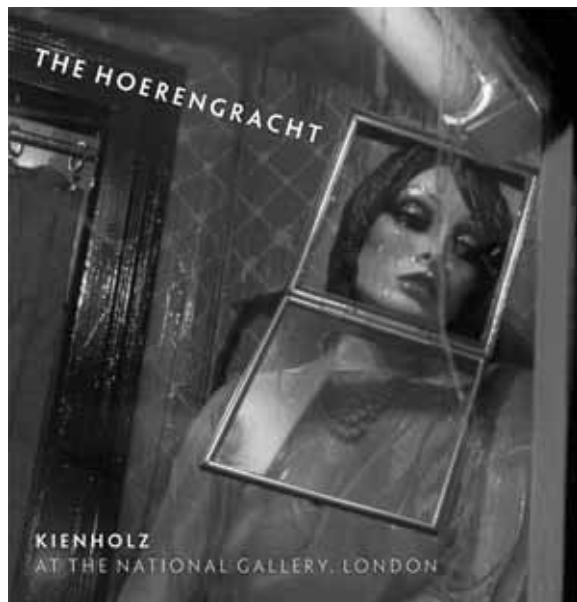
Alan S. Kaye, Marlow, Bucks

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR continued on page 16

ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

You may consider today's artistic celebrities – whether in film or installation art – to be the masters of warts-and-all realism, but their early-seventeenth-century Spanish ancestors have the edge. **'The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600-1700'**, at the National Gallery's Sainsbury Wing, suggests the link between high art and religion left no holds barred in terms of blood and pain in order to evoke compassion and spiritual identity. To see this at work, look no further than the religious artists of the Spanish Golden Age.



Edward and Nancy Reddin Kienholz, *The Hoerengracht* (detail), 1983-8 © Kienholz Estate – Courtesy of LA Louver, Venice CA

The exhibition includes masterpieces by **Diego Velazquez** and **Francisco de Zurbaran** plus works by **Gregorio Fernandez**, whose Spanish polychrome wooden sculptures were so horrifically lifelike that they could shock and stimulate their viewers into intense religious fervour. It was a highly popular technique with many seventeenth-century artists, including Pedro de Mena and Juan Martínez Montañés.

And just as a twenty-first-century Damian Hurst or Mel Gibson will not shrink from shock-horror subject matter, Fernandez's polychromatic sculpture shows a bloodied corpse whose eyes and mouth are open to reveal the torture of crucifixion and his neck splayed at an acute and unnatural angle. To achieve this synthesis of anguished realism,

Spanish sculptors even used glass eyes and tears, ivory teeth and human hair. Ribera's painting *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ* also shuns the bloodless, spiritualised transformation of much crucifixion art, to show the pallid body of a man who has just been crucified. The exhibition also explores the links between polychrome sculpture and painting.

From the religious to the profane. You may prefer the NG's representation of Amsterdam's Red Light District. **'The Hoerengracht'** is a walk-through evocation of Amsterdam's sex city created in Berlin by American artists **Ed and Nancy Kienholz**, with particular reference to the Gallery's own collection of seventeenth-century Dutch masters. You can feel you are in the narrow streets with lit windows from which the semi-nude models ply their trade. It is designed as an exposé of the ugliest aspects of society and is said to have inspired contemporary artists like Mike Kelly, Paul McCarthy, Mike Nelson and Damien Hirst.

Jacqueline Crofton displays her prolific and increasingly diverse output in her seasonal show at Hampstead's **Jiq Jaq Gallery**. From her poignant, intimate nude pastels, she moves to a collection of abstract and semi-abstract paintings in soft yet brilliant blue, mauve, fuchsia and tangerine. There is always a romantic strength in Crofton's work no matter which creative avenue she explores.

Husband-and-wife team **Althea McNish and John Weiss** celebrated a busy decade in the arts. Described as Britain's most distinguished black textile designer, McNish's brilliant floral designs were featured in the **Trade and Empire: Remembering Slavery** exhibition at the **Whitworth Art Gallery** and in the **Ferens Art Gallery**, Hull, where she created eight patterns for the Hull traders. Jewellery designer John Weiss completed a silver scroll and crown and a pair of scroll finials for the Bristol and West Progressive Jewish Congregation. He also exhibited jewellery at the Barbican Centre.

Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street (off New Bond Street)
Tel: 020 7629 7578 Fax: 020 7491 2139

CONTEMPORARY PAINTING
AND SCULPTURE

REVIEWS

A remarkable portrait of the German-speaking refugee community

JEWISH REFUGEES FROM GERMANY AND AUSTRIA IN BRITAIN, 1933-1970: THEIR IMAGE IN 'AJR INFORMATION'
by Anthony Grenville

London/Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010, 286 pp. hardback £45.00, paperback £19.95

This book sets out to depict and record the lives and life trajectories of a community of men, women and children – the Jewish refugees from National Socialism who arrived in Britain during the 1930s and have subsequently made their home here. Although afflicted by misfortune, deprived of their nationality, their homes, their professions, their families, their entire way of life in their home country, this group has proceeded to flourish in Britain, as Dr Grenville's book strikingly demonstrates.

The opening chapters of the book, as an introduction to the subject, cover relatively familiar ground: the refugees' enforced emigration from Germany, Austria or Czechoslovakia; their arrival and initial reception in Britain; the outbreak of war and their designation as 'enemy aliens'; the trauma of internment and deportation; and the eventual participation of the refugee population in the British war effort. However, from the end of the war, which, as Grenville maintains, represented still more of a turning point for the refugees than for the British host population, this book moves into largely uncharted territory in its examination of the processes whereby the group transformed themselves from 'enemy aliens' into 'Continental Britons'.

The first, crucial, step towards settlement was naturalisation, all the more significant since it had by no means been a foregone conclusion that the refugees would be permitted to remain in Britain after the war. Once British citizenship had been granted and, hand in hand with that, the decision to settle permanently in Britain had been taken, the way was open to the ex-refugee population to start to build a new – British – life for themselves. As Grenville points out, though, historians have tended to lose sight of the former refugees at this stage since, as British citizens, there was nothing to mark them out officially from the rest of their fellow citizens. Grenville bases the post-war chapters of his book, which constitute its most valuable contribution to the field, largely on the refugee journal *AJR Information*. This unique source, one previously overlooked by scholars, has throughout the post-war

period chronicled the lives and concerns of the members of the Association of Jewish Refugees, who are the journal's target readership and simultaneously the subjects of the present study.

And what a rich resource the *AJR Information* proves to be! First and foremost, with its scholarly editors and contributors, with its wealth of reviews and other literary and musical offerings, the journal provided a link between its readers and that high Central European culture that the refugees had performed left behind them but which, though destroyed by the Nazis, still 'survived in exile almost as a memorial to its own past'. Secondly, it served to forewarn or advise its newly British readers on the mores of their new country. Thus, warnings of racial discrimination, overt and covert, that the former refugees might face in everyday Britain rubbed shoulders with counsel on getting to grips with the British system – 'To What School Shall We Send Our Children?', for example. The 'Letters to the Editor' columns prove particularly telling of the mood of the community, as exemplified by a debate in the early 1950s as to whether the word 'refugees' should be dropped from the AJR's title and, moreover, whether the journal should be published in German rather than English. On the latter point, it was generally agreed that such a shift would run counter to the community's ongoing efforts at integration into British society. On the former, however, the great majority of correspondents declared themselves opposed to a change of name, evidently seeing no negative connotations in their existing designation.

The *AJR Information's* advertisements, too, on a miniature scale, turn out to be a veritable goldmine of information: on the one hand, they testify to the ex-refugees' continuing predilection for such decidedly non-British items as continental quilts and *Knackwurst*; on the other, they demonstrate the readership's growing affluence, on a par with the rest of middle-class Britain, through offers of televisions, saloon cars and, in 1959, even a jewel-studded gold Colibri lighter to the tune of £1,200. Of course, this was not the whole story: there were personal advertisements too in the columns of *AJR Information* that spoke of bereavement, loss and loneliness. Moreover, the elderly – more precisely those over the age of 50 on arrival in Britain – tended to find the challenge of assimilation an altogether unequal struggle. Yet, all in all, the picture presented in this book is of a group well integrated into British life and society who have nevertheless succeeded in retaining, at least among the first generation, many aspects of their distinctive German-Jewish culture.

It is this first generation of refugees with whom Dr Grenville is primarily concerned, hence his decision to make 1970 his study's cut-off point. By the 1960s,

this group of former refugees had been in Britain for perhaps 30 years and had, in numerous cases, proved strikingly successful. Grenville chooses to close his account on a high symbolic note – with the setting up of the 'Thank-offering to Britain' Fund, an appeal launched by the AJR to express the community's gratitude to their host country. The list of perhaps 4,500 donors included such luminaries as Anna and Ernst Freud, Ernst Gombrich, Otto Kahn-Freund, Claus Moser, Max Perutz, Peter Gellhorn, Peter Stadlen – all household names in mid-twentieth century Britain (though, of course, hundreds of 'ordinary' ex-refugees also played their part here).

As the present Consultant Editor of *AJR Information* (now renamed *AJR Journal*), Anthony Grenville knows his field as few others do – and he has done justice to his rich subject matter. He has produced a social history of the German-speaking refugee community that is, to an unusual degree, both scholarly and eminently readable. In it he succeeds in painting a remarkable portrait of the collective internal identity the community has developed for itself while also illuminating the singular contribution to British life and society that community has made.

Charmian Brinson

Charmian Brinson is Professor of Humanities at Imperial College London

THEATRE

Telling the bitter truth

OUR CLASS

by Tadeusz Slobodzianek
in a version by Ryan Craig
directed by Bijan Sheibani
Cottesloe Theatre, London

It begins with ten schoolchildren, Jews and Catholics, giggling with childish hopes and dreams. This is 1925 Poland, a township of farmers and wagon-drivers, shoe-makers and mill-owners whose children are deeply bonded, often calling out *mazaltov* to each other. Even when the Jewish children are politely sent away during Catholic prayers, they continue laughing and joking. But in the distance, unemployment and militant nationalism loom alongside Catholic anti-Semitism followed by the Nazi and then Soviet invasions. In their wake come betrayal, beatings, looting, rape and killing. Only two former classmates hold back from the violent sprees.

The climax of the first half of this powerful drama, which almost resembles a Greek tragedy, is the murder of the entire 1,600 Jewish population of the town of Jedwabne on 10 July 1941. Originally laid at the door of the Nazis, it is now accepted that the Poles themselves were responsible

for locking their Jews into a barn and burning them alive. The rest, they say, is history, and playwright Tadeusz Slobodzianek does not flinch from an agonised admission of his country's culpability.

Director Bijan Sheibani sets the action in a bare rectangle. Above is another rectangle which lights up as it descends amid dark smoke, effectively suggesting the fire. The actors are always on stage; the chairs representing the classroom recede with each death, but the personalities remain as the ghosts who haunt the surviving classmates as they descend into denial and self-righteousness. It is all spoken in a chilling mixture of the first and third person; each classmate has his own story. At the first rumour that Jews might be sent to Madagascar, Abram (Justin Salinger) leaves and becomes a rabbi in New York. He is thus divorced from the misfortunes of his classmates, to whom he continues to write. There is the Jewish blonde, Dora (Sinead Matthews), the class beauty they lust over. Dora describes much of the growing horror of the first act gasping incomprehension.

Married now, with a colicky baby, Dora is raped by her former classmates, led by the treacherous Zygmunt (Lee Ingleby), who manages first to quieten the child. Later, she is made to pluck weeds with a spoon from paving stones, desperate for water, vainly begging a girlfriend for help. 'I feel sorry for her, she is so pretty,' murmurs another classmate. Dora's terrible and graphic description of the fire which kills her is intensified by the comment of another schoolfriend, who finds her body among those 'tangled together like the roots of a tree'. Her baby was clinging to her breast. Conscious or not, the poignancy of the young girl and her baby suggests a Christian metaphor for betrayed innocence.

In the second act, Rachelka (Amanda Hale) marries the rough-and-ready Catholic who saves her and she converts. She is now Marianna. Her wedding gifts are Jewish booty and her wedding dance is a surreal dance of despair. Near to collapse, she is dragged, helpless as a marionette, around the floor.

In their different ways, Hale and Matthews give convincing performances as hapless innocents, neither dignified nor courageous, but behaving as people in this situation might behave.

The author is clearly a sensitive man with the courage to tell the truth. He is also anxious to convey a sense of poetic retribution. By bringing the play up to date and revealing the tragedies later visited on all the perpetrators, he tries to make sense of the senseless. But their comeuppance in an overlong second act seems irrelevant. It diminishes nothing. It satisfies nothing.

Gloria Tessler

Reviews continued overleaf

REVIEWS *continued from page 9***Unusual record of an unusual family**

**DES KINDES CHRONIK
(THE CHILD'S CHRONICLE)**
by Dorle Potten (née Essinger)

2003, reissued 2009, large format paperback 237 pp., £16 plus £4 p&p; private publication obtainable from Mrs D. Potten, 15 Manors Way, Silver End, Witham, Essex CM8 3QR

This is the history of a very large German-Jewish family which included several redoubtable women such as Klara Weimersheimer and Anna Essinger, who were in the forefront of progressive education in southern Germany and later in England in the 1920s-30s. Lovingly put together and written by a non-professional writer, it is a fine portrait of the extended Essinger family and therefore of interest not only to those with some connection to Alt Herrlingen and Bunce Court avant-garde boarding schools but also to those with an interest in German-Jewish history.

In her foreword the author explains the genesis of this family history. It was partly triggered by two boxes that belonged to her father and were not opened until years after his death. One contained bundles of letters, poems and photographs stemming from First World War battlefields near Verdun, where her father had worked for four years as a medical orderly for soldiers suffering from infectious diseases. Whilst serving in the German army, he became convinced of the rampant anti-Semitism in the officer class and, in the 30s, he saved virtually his whole family by persuading them to leave Germany.

The other box contained numerous cuttings from a newspaper called *Die Jagdzeitung* describing blood transfusions given to soldiers in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. With the aid of a metal tube, blood was directly transfused from the arm of the donor to that of the recipient, to which the author's grandfather, Dr David Essinger (1817-99), rightly and vehemently objected, making himself highly unpopular. This book therefore has, among its topics, medical matters of yore.

Among the large Essinger clan were doctors and businessmen, but the two women who made their mark, Klara and Anna, worked in the field of education and pioneered the notion of *Reformpädagogik* in southern Germany. In 1911 Klara, who had no formal training, used her dowry to open a home for problem children in the village of Herrlingen, near Ulm. When the children reached school age it was Klara who suggested the formation of a progressive boarding school, and it was she who bought a plot of land on which the Landschulheim Herrlingen was built in 1926. It was this school that Anna,

the oldest of the nine Essinger children, developed into a progressive boarding school and which, in 1933, she moved with many of the children and some of the staff to the North Downs of Kent – Bunce Court School. Originally it had not been an exclusively Jewish school, but under Anna Essinger's successor it became just that. The Ulm school lasted until 1938, when it was closed by the Nazis.

Meanwhile, Anna, who had studied for an MA in the USA before and during the First World War, developed Bunce Court School, which became a haven for many children (such as me) who came to the UK in Kindertransports. It was Anna who achieved the distinction of having an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* devoted to her many years after her death.

Part of the Essinger family lived in or near Mannheim, and in chapter 10 Dorle Essinger vividly describes the life and fate of the Jewish population there. Persecution culminated in October 1940, when some 6,000 Jews, including old people and even some from hospital wards and mental institutions, were deported to Gurs, a detention centre near Pau in the Pyrenees. Originally French, this vast camp was taken over by the Germans and it was here that Charlotte Salomon, the young and gifted painter from Berlin who was staying with her grandparents in Provence at the time, was likewise interned and eventually sent to her death in Auschwitz, a fate that also befell most of the Mannheim Jews.

The book is richly illustrated with photographs, facsimile letters and documents. It is an unusual record of an unusual family.

Leslie Baruch Brent

MUSIC

Flamenco with soul

LOS DESTERRADOS
West London Synagogue,
Sunday 20 December 2009

History was never supposed to sound this good. Nor this hot. Having researched and mined a wealth of Ladino music from fifteenth-century Spanish, Turkish, Moroccan and Baltic sources, Los Desterrados (The Exiles) bring to life these ancient Sephardic melodies with a flamenco rhythm.

It is exciting, bravura, foot-stamping, hand-clapping stuff, and the songs are so vivid and memorable that this group are always greeted with popular acclaim.

Flamenco may not be everyone's taste, but there is a soulful beauty and often attractive dissonance here which lends the music exceptional pathos. For example, Daniel Jonas, the very spirit of Ladino in his black knitted kipa and his gravelly fado singer's voice belting out *Abraham Avino*, in which everyone joins in. Or my personal favourite: the deeply haunting, chant-like

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY

To 28 Feb. 'A Journey Out of Darkness: Leicester's Collection of German Expressionist Art'. Collection donated by refugees New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester, tel +44(0)116 225 4900

To 14 Feb. *Faces in the Void: Czech Survivors of the Holocaust*. An exhibition by poet Jane Liddell-King and photographer Marion Davies. Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, tel 02476 832386

Mon 1 Gerald Holm, 'Fast Food World' Club 43

Wed 3 Hannah Lessing (General Secretary, Austrian National Fund), 'Holocaust Remembrance and Responsibility in Austria'. Presented by AJR, Anglo-Jewish Association and Austrian Ambassador Dr Gabriele Matzner-Holzer. At Residence of Austrian Ambassador, 18 Belgrave Square, London SW1. Reception 6.00 pm, Lecture 6.30 pm. Tel 020 8385 3088 or email rosemary@ajr.org.uk

Mon 8 Hugh Courts, 'James Bond and the Goya' Club 43

Tues 9 Anne Sebba, 'Rescue and Romance: Love in Word and Deed' The sisters Ida and Louise Cook and their efforts to rescue Jews from Nazi Germany. 7.00 pm at Wiener Library, tel 020 7636 7247

Mon 15 Ken Baldry, 'My German Ancestors' (with slides) Club 43

Mon 22 Jim Burtles, 'A Knight's Tale: The Military and Hospitalier Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem – 1,000 Years of Tradition and History in a Charitable Cause' Club 43

Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Ernst Flesch on 020 7624 7740 or Helene Ehrenberg on 020 7286 9698

El Rey de Francia tres Hijas Tenia, which Hayley builds with power and delicacy.

The group's real beauty is that they are more than the sum of their parts. Each musician contributes a personal sound with such finesse that it retains its individual clarity, while yielding an almost mystic harmony. Over the years, Ariane Todes's exquisite violin-playing has become much more prominent within the group and Andrew (Drew) Salida has gradually developed the look and stance of a flamenco dancer, singing and playing the flute with great panache. Mark Greenfield, a brilliant percussionist, now joins the vocalists with his moving song of a desperate lover, *Por la tu puerta*.

As for the diva herself, Hayley Blitz proves a singer capable of handling wide-ranging material, which includes humour, as in the Chanukah song *Ocho Kandelikas*, and the innocence of *Ni pudra yevo ni kolor*, so sensitively partnered by Jean-Marc Barsam on vocals and bass guitar.

The songs' message has not changed. It is still lost love, boy meets girl, the wicked mother-in-law, or a mother's advice to her daughter on the eve of her wedding. But their Jewish content sounds the eternal note of joy and heartache too – most hauntingly in *Adio Kerida*, in which the Jews bid farewell to their native Spain from the boats which take them into exile.

Gloria Tessler

A moving experience: The Winton Train journey from a daughter's perspective

by Vera Sklaar (née Knight)

Last September, I was one of 40 second-generation family members accompanying the 22 'Kinder' who were recreating their 1939 journeys from Prague to London on board the 'Winton Train'. Among them were my mother, Josephine Knight, and my aunt, Alice Masters.

Like many in the second generation, I grew up in England keenly aware that our lives had been shaped in a particularly painful way. My parents and their friends spoke with Continental accents and cooked wonderful Continental food, but there was no getting away from it – we were different. As a child, I wondered why we had so little actual family and yet so many 'aunts' and 'uncles' from so many countries. As I grew older, I learned more about our history, but I believe I held back from asking too many probing questions, intuitively aware perhaps of the pain such questions might bring. Being a passenger on the Winton Train brought an extraordinary opportunity to close that gap and to step into my mother's past in a way I would never have thought possible.

Flying with us to Prague, about to start a term studying there and curious to know more about her family's past, was my 19-year-old daughter Joelle. She was deeply moved by the ceremonies and performance of *Brundibar* at the National Museum on the evening prior to the train's departure; it was no small thing to be standing beside her grandmother and great-aunt in an ornate hall in which their history of being uprooted at such a tender age was being commemorated. The next morning she came to see us off at Wilsonova station. A BBC cameraman caught our tearful farewells on camera. As the train pulled out of the station, whistle blowing, belching clouds of steam, the irony of the moment wasn't lost on any of us: 70 years ago a train just like this one carried my mother and her sisters away from their parents, family, friends and homeland. This time we represented a story of renewal and survival.

On board the train it was thrilling and deeply comforting to talk with other second-generation family members and to find out that we had shared such similar childhoods. As we talked, I discovered that I wasn't alone in my reluctance to travel through what is still perceived by many of the second generation as hostile territory; memories of childhood nightmares we



The author's mother (left), daughter and aunt

could only partly understand had clearly not been dispelled with the passing of time.

We second-generation travellers felt the enormous weight of our parents' pasts. We had all worried about the physical and emotional demands the trip would place upon them. We needn't have been concerned. Our 22 Kinder, survivors through and through, took it all in their stride, earning the admiration and respect of all on board. They displayed resilience, grace and patience. They told their stories and showed their photographs and documents repeatedly to reporters, TV crews and government officials in the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK.

In addition to the news coverage, the Kinder were summoned to the original 1930s carriage at the rear of the train by director Matej Minac in order to film scenes for his film *Nicky's Family*, due to be released in 2010. Undeterred by the bouncing, jolting train, our intrepid travellers made their way there, jostled precariously from side to side, passing from carriage to carriage on the sliding metal platforms. They told us about their feelings on their original journey, when they sat nervously together in the sealed carriage, armed German soldiers keeping watch. They commented that there were no people standing in fields and at small stations en route to cheer them on, take photos and wave, as there were now.

As they told their stories, I was so impressed by their approachability, intelligence and strength of character. I understood with a new sense of clarity how important it was to them to know that their story was being heard – and deeply listened to – once again, this time by a new generation. And I believe that it was the respect that was paid to them at every stage of the journey that

helped them to navigate through the experience.

I remembered my mother always telling me that arriving at the Hook of Holland was the first time she and her sisters, coming from landlocked Czechoslovakia, had ever seen the sea. Even in 2009, I was overwhelmed with relief on coming to the coast. Holland, from what I had understood from my mother's stories, had brought memories of windows opened at last, kind Dutch ladies on station platforms with hot chocolate and bread, and no more soldiers menacing them.

Arriving in England the following morning, I understood at last how strange this new land must have seemed: its language, its landscapes, its soft, white bread. It is hard to describe the emotions experienced as we arrived at Liverpool Street Station and watched our parents stride along the platform to greet Sir Nicholas.

The second-generation family members were asked to walk as a group behind the Kinder. As had been the case for much of the journey, we were invisible to the media but, had anyone asked, we would have had much to say about our own complex emotions: joy and sadness, a renewed sense of loss and life, a greater understanding of what they had been through, and a greater understanding of what it means to be a child of a survivor. As the cameras rolled, and the Kinder greeted Sir Nicholas, I had the unspoken sense that we were all grateful to the Czech Railways executive whose idea this journey was, the Winton Train organisers, the film-makers, TV crews and reporters, for giving our parents this gift of recognition. It was a

continued on page 15

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INSIDE the AJR

AJR trip to Israel 'a huge success'



The holiday was a huge success and I was fortunate that Carol Rossen and Carol Hart were wonderfully helpful answering my questions, filling in so many gaps in my knowledge. The programme they had planned was very good and guide and driver were excellent.

Many of the others (there were about 25 of us) were as delighted as I that Bertha Leverton and her daughter joined us for supper one night. I had never met Bertha before – she is quite a woman!

My son James enjoyed the trip as a 'second generation' member. He came with different expectations – all greatly exceeded. By the way, I find your newspaper very interesting and am impressed with the high standard you maintain. *Friedel Hollis (née Israel)*

Essex Escape from Denmark

Blanche Benedick spoke movingly about her early childhood and escape from Denmark. Describing the kindness of non-Jewish neighbours and the support of the Danish king, she provided insight into this unique period of history. *Esther Rinkoff*
Next meeting: 2 Feb. Alan Cohen, 'What is Art?'

Excellent tea and entertainment at Yorkshire Chanukah Party



(From left) (Back) Stephan Ruff, Arek Hersh (Middle) Yvette Gould, Ralph Black, Bronia Veitch, Rachel Hunter, Annie Perez (Front) Susan Castle

The excellent entertainment provided by David Apfel was followed by a sumptuous tea. Ruth Rogoff narrated the story of Chanukah, after which we lit candles and sang *Maor Tsur*. Members from Bradford, Halifax, Harrogate, Leeds, Sheffield and York thoroughly enjoyed meeting each other. *Barbara Cammerman*

Newcastle Great entertainment and a sumptuous tea

Around 30 people came to our Chanukah Party, some for the first time. Entertainment

was provided by Anne and John Havis, who sang songs from popular shows. Following a sumptuous tea, Kurt Schapira gave Anne and John a vote of thanks. A most enjoyable afternoon's entertainment.

Gail Knoblauch

Glasgow/Edinburgh Chanukah Party a great success

Entertainment provided by Irene Conway was hugely enjoyed. The raffle, which proved most popular, was followed by a scrumptious tea – with latkes of course.

Agnes Isaacs

Wessex The Suchet family

After an excellent Pre-Chanukah tea, Peter Suchet spoke to some 20 of us about his family, in particular his brothers John, a broadcaster and authority on Beethoven, and David, internationally known for his film role as the detective Poirot.

George Ettinger

Ilford Anne Frank Trust Prison Project

Steve Gadd told us about this exhibition. Hearing these testimonies appears to have a good effect on prison inmates – one prisoner, Steve told us, wrote a stirring poem on the subject.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: 3 Feb. Helen Fry and James Hamilton

Pinner A vigorous Hava Nagila

About 50 of us had a lovely Chanukah Party. Jenny Kossov led us on her accordion in lively singing, even persuading some of us to dance a vigorous *Hava Nagila*. Plus, of course, latkes and doughnuts. *Paul Samet*
Next meeting: 4 Feb. Alan Cohen, 'Women of the Bible'

Cafe Imperial A morning well spent



(from left) Harry Rossney, Willy Field, Freddie Edwards

It was lovely to greet new guest Jonathan Broucher, whose grandfather was on the *Dunera* with Willy Field and the late Frank Berg. Freddie Edwards brought his photo album, enabling a nostalgic look at childhood times spent in Stuttgart, while Andre brought some interesting German newspaper articles. A morning well spent. *Esther Rinkoff*

Liverpool Pre-Chanukah Get-together

Liverpool Schools Parliament co-ordinator Jeff Dunn told our Get-together (including members from Kendal, Preston, Runcorn, St Annes and The Wirral) about the HMD event for schools to be held at Liverpool Town Hall. We were also entertained by Jim Hutton (violin) and Steve Mann (cello and keyboard), both of the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Susanne confirmed that the second edition of the *Liverpool Holocaust Memorial Book*,

complete with the film 'Never Forget': *Merseyside Holocaust Survivors – Their Memories*, had been distributed to local secondary schools. *Guido Alis*

Weald of Kent 'A Kibbutz in Ireland'

Edith Bown, one of our members, told a well-attended meeting about her and her brother's stay on a refugee farm in Northern Ireland (see page 4). *Inge Ball*
Next meeting: 16 Feb. Brian Beeley, 'Israel's Options'

Wembley An auspicious occasion

We joined our regularly attending member Feo Kahn on her 100th birthday, enjoying a massive tea party provided by Myrna. Once again, congratulations and good health to Feo!

Tom Heinemann

Next meeting: 10 Feb. Social Get-together

Manchester A family affair



(Back) Werner Lachs, Ruth Lachs, Kerry Lynn, Abby Lynn (Front) Susan Lynn, Anne Cohen (mother of Susan, grandmother of Abby and Kerry)

Our Chanukah Social saw a full house of members and friends enjoying once again a most congenial afternoon. Entertainment was provided by Abby Lynn, a talented soprano who delighted us with a range of songs from the shows. Abby is the granddaughter of one of our most esteemed members, so it was also a family affair. Thanks to the many members who helped serve the refreshments, again of a high standard. *Werner Lachs*

Cambridge Chanukah geld and goodies

Myrna came bearing Chanukah geld and goodies: the Binks were unable to prepare their usual generous refreshments as John was suffering a fractured hip. The seasonal quiz Myrna brought was won by Adrian Malcolm. Myrna also initiated a discussion on Chanuka's origins and practices. A relaxed and enjoyable occasion. *Francis Deutsch*
Next meeting: 18 Feb. David Merron, 'The Kibbutz Crisis'

HGS Nazi looting of art

A talk by Professor Richard Evans on the Nazis' looting of art and jewellery was most enlightening. It was encouraging to hear that important works such as Klimt's pictures had recently been returned to the heirs of their original owners. *William Kaczynski*
Next meeting: 8 Feb. Jerry Lewis, BoDs

Radlett Preventing another crisis

The Bank of England's Tim Pike analysed for us the causes of the current financial crisis. Afterwards, we had an animated discussion on means for curing it and, hopefully,

preventing a future crisis. *Fritz Starer*
Next meeting: 17 Feb. Ruth Bourne, 'The Bletchley Park Code Breakers'

Temple Fortune A great Chanukah welcome

Esther gave everyone a great Chanukah welcome before introducing our entertainer Rob Lowe, who told jokes and sang songs accompanied by Geoffrey Whitworth on the keyboard. The Chanukah tea that followed included delicious doughnuts. *David Lang*
Next meeting: 11 Feb. Ladislaus Löb, 'Rezso Kasztner – a Jewish Schindler'

Essex Chanukah Party

We attended a Chanukah Party at the Southend and Westcliff Hebrew Congregation. Rabbi Bar thanked the volunteers and lit five candles symbolically. Entertainment was provided by Elan, who sang in English and Hebrew. *Larry Lisner*

Next meeting: 9 Feb. 8th anniversary and Howard Falksohn (Wiener Library), 'Argentina: Place of Refuge for Jews, Nazis and other Germans'

West Midlands (Birmingham)

An educational Regional Lunch

Our special guest speaker, Sir David Hart, Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, spoke of the wide variety of issues he encountered, including at what age children should have specialist teachers. His talk was preceded by a delicious lunch prepared by Corinne Oppenheimer, Eva Lorimer and Lia Lesser and helpers from the Progressive Synagogue. *Philip Lesser*

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

Bradford Continental Friends
 Lilly and Albert Waxman 01274 581189

Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region)
 Fausta Shelton 01273 734 648

Bristol/Bath
 Kitty Balint-Kurti 0117 973 1150

Cambridge
 Anne Bender 01223 276 999

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 Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

Cleve Road, AJR Centre
 Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

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 Agnes Isaacs 0755 1968 593

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Ilford
 Meta Rosenell 020 8505 0063

Leeds HSFA
 Trude Silman 0113 2251628

Liverpool
 Susanne Green 0151 291 5734

Manchester
 Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

Newcastle
 Walter Knoblauch 0191 2855339

Glasgow CF Yiddish Song Project

Our outing to the Yiddish Song Project was a great success. Before the concert we met with Stephanie Brickman, who has a most beautiful voice, and the band members, resulting in a lively exchange of Yiddish. The group treated us to music from the Musical Theatre of New York's Lower East Side, Yiddish swing, and traditional folk song and Klezmer tunes. *Agnes Isaacs*

ALSO MEETING IN FEBRUARY

Sarid (Brighton) 15 Feb. Dr Gerry Adler, 'Update on Israel-Arab Conflict'
Edgware 16 Feb. William Kaczynski, 'Postal History of Jewish Refugees'
North London 18 Feb (NOT 25 Feb).

Alan Moss, 'Hans Casparius – Photographer Extraordinaire, Palestine 1934'

Hendon 22 Feb. 'London's Finest Hotels'
Cleve Road 23 Feb. Prof Gerald Curzon, 'A Strange Affair: Hannah Arendt and the Nazi Philosopher Martin Heidegger'

LONDON TRIP 2-4 MARCH 2010

Our 3-day trip to London will include visits to the theatre, museums, London attractions etc

Dinner with London members as below Accommodation at a London hotel

Trip open to all members – Approx. cost for all events and accommodation £350 For further information, please call Susan Harrod at Head Office on 020 9385 3070

On Tuesday 2 March there will be a dinner at Belsize Square Synagogue to coincide with the above trip.

A guest speaker will be announced shortly. If you live in the London area and wish to attend, please call Susan Harrod at Head Office on 020 8385 3070 Cost £22

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

Members requiring benefit advice please telephone Linda Kasmir on 020 8385 3070 to make an appointment at AJR, Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL

Norfolk (Norwich)
 Myrna Glass 020 8385 3077

North London
 Jenny Zundel 020 8882 4033

Oxford
 Susie Bates 01235 526 702

Pinner (HA Postal District)
 Vera Gellman 020 8866 4833

Radlett
 Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Sheffield
 Steve Mendelsson 0114 2630666

South London
 Lore Robinson 020 8670 7926

South West Midlands (Worcester area)
 Myrna Glass 020 8385 3070

Surrey
 Edmée Barta 01372 727 412

Temple Fortune
 Esther Rinkoff 020 8385 3077

Weald of Kent
 Max and Jane Dickson
 01892 541026

Wembley
 Laura Levy 020 8904 5527

Wessex (Bournemouth)
 Mark Goldfinger 01202 552 434

West Midlands (Birmingham)
 Corinne Oppenheimer 0121 705 9529

Paul Balint AJR Centre
 15 Cleve Road, London NW6
 Tel: 020 7328 0208

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Wednesday 17 February 2010

Antony Godfrey
'Three Rabbis in a Vicarage'

Please be aware that members should not automatically assume that they are on the Luncheon Club list. It is now necessary, on receipt of your copy of the *AJR Journal*, to phone the Centre on 020 7328 0208 to book your place.

KT-AJR

Kindertransport special interest group

Monday 1 February 2010

Hermann Hirschberger
'The Kindertransport Survey'

KINDLY NOTE THAT LUNCH WILL BE SERVED AT 1.00 PM ON MONDAYS

Reservations required Please telephone 020 7328 0208

Monday, Wednesday & Thursday
 9.30 am – 3.30 pm

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS CLOSED ON TUESDAYS

February Afternoon Entertainment

Mon	1	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue	2	CLOSED
Wed	3	Ronnie Goldberg
Thur	4	William Smith
Mon	8	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	9	CLOSED
Wed	10	Annie's Quiz
Thur	11	Chris Sausman
Mon	15	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	16	CLOSED
Wed	17	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	18	Michael Heaton
Mon	22	Kards & Games Klub – Monday Music Matinee
Tue	23	CLOSED
Wed	24	Sheila Games
Thur	25	Nat Paris

Hazel Beiny, Southern Groups Co-ordinator
 020 8385 3070

Myrna Glass, London South and Midlands Groups Co-ordinator
 020 8385 3077

Susanne Green, Northern Groups Co-ordinator
 0151 291 5734

Susan Harrod, Groups' Administrator
 020 8385 3070

Agnes Isaacs, Scotland and Newcastle Co-ordinator
 0755 1968 593

Esther Rinkoff, Southern Region Co-ordinator
 020 8385 3077

KT-AJR (Kindertransport)
 Andrea Goodmaker 020 8385 3070

Child Survivors Association-AJR
 Henri Obstfeld 020 8954 5298

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Engagement

Mazeltov to Susie and Andrew Kaufman on the engagement of their daughter Nicole to David Feldman.

Deaths

Bieber, Lyddia Traute in her 102nd year. Missed by Charles and Jo, grandchildren Julia and John, Katie and Steve and great-grandchildren Lucy and Chloe. May she rest in peace.

Sigler, Gisela (Gi). Died 25 December 2009 aged 89 after a very long illness. Deeply mourned by her husband, daughter, son and four grandchildren.

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Dramatic Success of Child Survivors Association

The Child Survivors Association joined the AJR as a special interest group three years ago. At the time, its membership was just over 60. We are pleased to report that the membership has increased to close on 100. This is due mainly to the care with which staff at the AJR office scrutinise the incoming membership renewal and application forms for possible 'child survivors'. This success could be described as 'dramatic'.

Henri Obstfeld

Secretary, Child Survivors Association – AJR

www.ajr.org.uk/childsurvivors

AJR Trip to Glasgow

We are delighted to offer a trip to Glasgow from

Sun 9 May to Wed 12 May 2010.

We will be flying from Luton Airport and staying at a hotel in central Glasgow.

Our tentative itinerary includes a tour of the Gorbals, the former Jewish area; a visit to Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, including narration from the lady who set up the Holocaust section; Garnethill Synagogue and Scottish Jewish Archives; a meal at Le Chaims, the city's kosher restaurant; talks and musical recitals.

The cost will be £350.00-400.00, including flights, accommodation and entrance to all attractions, but this is dependent on flight availability.

Bookings and full payment must be received by Thursday 4 March.

If interested, please call Susan Harrod on 020 8385 3070.

THEO MARX

The AJR notes with great sadness that its former Chairman, Theo Marx, has passed away after a long illness and extends its condolences to his wife Anne, daughters Caroline and Eleanor, son Geoffrey, and all the family.

There will be Memorial Prayers at 6.45 pm on Tuesday 16 February at West London Synagogue (Prayer Room), Upper Berkeley Street, London W1.

An obituary will appear in a forthcoming issue of the Journal.

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OBITUARY

Kurt Rose (Rosenberg), born 8 March 1919 in Berlin, died 2 December 2009 in Solihull

The wonderful thing about Kurt was that, in the darkest of times in which he was destined to live, he always maintained a positive and happy disposition.

His school in Germany migrated in 1933 to Bunce Court with Dr Essinger when Kurt was 14 to complete his education. He was temporarily adopted by the Joseph Cohen family in Birmingham but internment and service in the Pioneer Corps precluded further studies. He became an interpreter in the Intelligence Corps. As I recall, he once dived into the Bristol Channel to save a young boy's life and for this received a special commendation. Kurt was a wonderful entertainer. His accounts of army adventures and observations were a delight to listen to.

Demobbed in 1946, Kurt began the task of building the House of Lerose, a textile company specialising in Jersey wear and knitwear. The company grew rapidly under his dynamic leadership and became a leading public company in 1961. Lerose expanded beyond the factory in Birmingham to Scotland, Leicestershire and Holland.

Kurt's sense of design and colour

was an important ingredient for success. So was his leadership and understanding of people – above all, his unbelievable generosity.

He was born into a comfortable middle class home but lost his father very early in his life. Fortunately, his mother, known to all as Tante Emmy, and his sister Anni were able to leave Germany and make a new life in Birmingham.

Kurt's dream was to build a modern, well-designed manufacturing base among green fields and flowers with the best facilities for his work force. He succeeded in all these ambitions. Finally, the company became wholly vertical, from the production of the basic fabric to the final garments, even adding important retail shops. All these enterprises had the hallmark of good design.

Kurt was modest in his own person and lifestyle yet the most generous



of donors to Israel and a wide variety of causes, Jewish and non-Jewish. He supported education and research and, within the family, helped nephews and nieces to gain a step up the ladder of success.

In 1966 he married Isabel and they created a very happy, hospitable home, a place for good conversation and fine food and wine, which he himself loved.

Sadly Kurt had to undergo drastic heart surgery and later suffered further health setbacks, which forced retirement on him. Isabel, herself beset by health problems, took charge of every detail of care so that, after a stroke affecting his arm, she arranged their lovely apartment to become the finest nursing home imaginable. Kurt's long life was the result of Isabel's loving care. They travelled widely and enjoyed a very happy marriage.

Kurt had a wide interest in politics and a deep social conscience and everyone who knew him was enchanted by his sense of humour and sheer goodness. His passing is a great loss to his family, friends and the wider community.

Stephanie Kester

THE FARM *continued from page 4*

a child. Any holiday we were out in the fields. Hay-making and potato-picking were particularly busy times.

When the American army passed through Northern Ireland on their way to D-Day we discovered that there were Jewish officers, soldiers and chaplains chewing gum and chocolate. We collected metal for the war effort. At secondary school, I became a member of the Army Cadet Corps and played rugby. Read the English classics, took the Junior and Senior Certificate, and gradually turned into a little English gentleman. My sister had left the Farm to become a nurse at Newtownards hospital.

For all of us, that sheltered life on the Farm dissolved into 'normality' when the war ended. The *chalutzim* went to Israel. Everyone sought their relatives. Few were found because the Germans had murdered them. If any were found, the now grown-up children joined them. Robert went to the US with his mother. Harry went to Columbia. I stayed in Northern Ireland another few years and managed to persuade the Committee to

let me go to Queens University and get a degree.

We Jewish refugees from the Nazis will always be grateful to the Belfast Jewish community for saving our lives, guaranteeing a £100 per refugee, and looking after us so well and long. We had freedom, food and a wonderful healthy life, in the beautiful Irish countryside. What more could you want?

This is an edited version of an article which appeared in the Belfast Jewish Record in September 2005.

A MOVING EXPERIENCE *continued from page 11*

joy to see them being so honoured.

My daughter has been inspired to use her time in the Czech Republic to do research on Jewish community life before and after the war, with particular emphasis on our family history. She has travelled back to her grandmother's village in Slovakia's Tatra Mountains. There, she visited the gymnasium, a new school

built only a stone's throw from what was once her great-grandparents' house: the students and teachers are all familiar with it. Close by is the former synagogue, now used as a shoe shop, but recently repainted. A plaque has been placed on the front of the synagogue, in memory of the Jewish citizens of the town. It was the result of a recent initiative by the history teacher and students at the school.

Two of the teachers assisted my daughter in visiting the town hall and regional archives. A student assigned to be her guide took it upon herself to go in search of people who might remember our family and succeeded in finding two elderly ladies who had many memories to share. In addition, my daughter was invited to speak to two classes at the gymnasium and was shown photo-essays done by the students cataloguing the homes and businesses of Jewish community members before the war. She has been promised that they will continue to share the results of their research with our family.

We are much comforted by the knowledge that the torch has been passed to the third generation and our story continues ...



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



Klemperer and Korngold

No, not the conductor Otto Klemperer, but his cousin Viktor, Professor of Romance Languages at Dresden University. Most of Viktor's extended family had left Germany for the US well before 1939, but Viktor had no children, was married to a non-Jew, had fought in the German army in the First World War, and considered himself a true German patriot. Besides, he and his wife had just built themselves a house. In addition, oddly enough for someone who was an expert in eighteenth-century European literature, he did not feel his command of English was sufficient to enable him to earn a living in the USA or England, and he did not wish to become a burden on his relatives or the Jewish community.

So he remained in Germany. Viktor Klemperer's story is probably no different from those of many Jews who were unwilling or unable to leave Germany (except that he survived), but Viktor wrote a diary in which he kept a precise record of the daily indignities, punitive legislation and increasing privations endured by Jews who had the temerity to remain in the Third Reich in the years

leading up to and during the Second World War. The diary, referring to the period from 1933 to 1945, was published some years ago.

As time went on, even keeping a diary was punishable by deportation or execution, so Klemperer's loyal and courageous wife Eva would smuggle pages of it to Gentile friends outside the city. In common with other Jews still in Germany, the couple were obliged to live in a crowded Jews' house. Nonetheless, Viktor continued to read scholarly books and make notes for his philological project on the language of the Third Reich. He was required to do forced labour, digging earthworks or shovelling snow, leaving him ever weaker and exhausted. At the last moment, he was saved from deportation to the east when Dresden was bombed by the Allies at the end of the war. Subsequently, he and Eva tramped for miles through the countryside in an effort to find food and refuge. Later, once the war was over, they trekked for hundreds of miles to get back to Dresden. Miraculously, they survived all these hardships, their property was returned to them, and

Viktor was able to resume his post at the university.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold, child prodigy and noted Viennese composer, managed to flee from the Nazis and build a successful career writing music for films in Hollywood. He returned to Vienna after the war, but found his music was no longer appreciated, and after his death in 1957 was soon forgotten. However, in October 2009 his opera *Die tote Stadt* (City of Death) was performed in Paris to general acclaim. Throughout that month, his music was played constantly on the French classical music programme France Musique and, in France at least, his name is no longer consigned to the mists of oblivion.

I happened to be in France in October, and had taken my copy of Viktor Klemperer's diary with me. Although it was not exactly holiday reading, I had decided it was time to tackle it after having had it in my possession for several years. To read it is to live through those terrible times together with its author and, as I did so, I listened to the radio and heard the music of his contemporary, Korngold, coming over the air-waves.

Returning to Israel, basking in its sunshine and being surrounded by friends and family was like emerging from the long, dark tunnel of the Second World War. But it took some time before I could shake off the gloomy mood aroused by that book and that dark, brooding music.

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *continued from page 7*

Sir – I absolutely agree with everything Victor Ross (December) had to say about living in this country and the rootlessness of most of us!

(Mrs) Anne Pisker, London SW15

NO LAUGHING MATTER

Sir – I suppose Frank Bright is trying to be funny (January) when he claims to 'have it on good authority that over time, from the expulsion from Paradise to the present, Jews have acquired immunity from swine flu.' However, his comment 'What is not clear is whether that applies to all Jews who are Jewish or ... only to those permitted to enter Jewish schools' is in poor taste. Following the

Supreme Court's ruling, which he probably has not read, only those who satisfy some religious test will now be allowed to be admitted.

The Masorti, Reform and Liberal ideologies differ significantly from Orthodox Judaism, making them essentially separate religions, admittedly based on Jewish sources. But, then, so are Christianity and, to a lesser degree, Islam.

Since the JFS is defined as an Orthodox Jewish school under the guidance of the Chief Rabbi, this must mean that children of their adherents will have to be excluded – not only those who are not Halachically Jewish.

The alternative would be that, for

example, children from the Jews for J movement, which claims to be a stream of Judaism that differs from others only in its acceptance of the Christian messiah, would be equally entitled to admission.

Perhaps it will be necessary to insist that applicants join an Orthodox synagogue, but this is as likely as 'pigs might fly' – the past tense of which might well be 'swine flew'!

Martin D. Stern, Salford, Lancs

Sir – Neither swine flu nor the problem surrounding entry to Jewish schools is a laughing matter. I am surprised you published such a puerile letter.

(Dr) Sarah Nachshen, London NW4