

AJR journal

Association of Jewish Refugees

National sovereignty and national interest

As the Treaty of Lisbon wends its weary way through parliament, the familiar arguments for and against European treaties are rolled out. The populist press echoes to accusations that under the treaty Britain is sacrificing elements of its sovereignty, allowing supranational bodies like the Council of Ministers a measure of control in British affairs, and generally conceding to 'foreigners' powers that it ought to preserve for itself as a nation-state. Pro-Europeans are forced onto the defensive, arguing that the concessions are inconsequential and that Britain has negotiated opt-outs from the more significant provisions of the Treaty – or whatever else they can come up with.

What is seldom challenged is the assumption underlying the entire debate – at least as it is conducted in Britain – which is that the preservation of national sovereignty is an overriding priority, the sole, totemic touchstone by which the national interest is to be calculated. Rather as in Victorian attitudes to virginity, national sovereignty is on this view a pristine indicator of good, to be kept as far as possible intact; if, inevitably in a wicked world, it is infringed, such deviations from the path of virtue should be kept to a minimum, endured with gritted teeth while lying back and thinking of England.

However, the argument that it is always in the national interest to preserve national sovereignty to the maximum extent is plainly simplistic and fallacious. If it were true, then nations that followed that path, excluding all others from influence over their internal decision-making and refusing to co-operate with others over matters of common concern, would be those most successful in promoting their national interest. But the most prominent examples of such states are North Korea and Burma, or in Europe the former Communist regime in Albania – states that reduce their citizens to levels of misery unmatched in the civilised world. It is, of course, possible for states of continental dimensions, like China or the USA, to be so self-sufficient that they can effectively act independently of other states, but that is impossible for medium-sized states



like Britain.

It is also easy to cite cases where the surrender of national sovereignty is indisputably in the national interest. Take the crucial area of Britain's control over its armed forces, for example. In the First World War, at the critical juncture when General Ludendorff's offensive in spring 1918 threatened to overwhelm the Allied armies on the Western front, the British put their forces under the command of the French supreme commander, General Foch, and the crisis was overcome. In the Second World War, the British forces in Europe in 1944-45 were placed under the command of an American, General Eisenhower. During the Cold War, British forces combined with those of other Western nations in NATO, under a joint command structure, to withstand the military threat from the Soviet Union. These initiatives all represented major sacrifices of national sovereignty, and all were unquestionably in the national interest.

The whole way in which our national peacetime life is structured also depends on mutual surrenders of sovereignty between

states. Our economic system depends on the free entry of goods and services from foreign countries and the free export of our goods and services in return, by agreement between the states concerned; because of mutually advantageous concessions of sovereignty between Britain and Germany, for example, Britons drive BMWs and German companies take advantage of the financial expertise of the City of London. Here too, the idea that the national interest can simply be equated with the preservation of national sovereignty is unhelpful.

The states of the Eurozone have gone further, giving up control over their individual currencies and thereby over such important levers of power as the ability to set their own interest rates. They evidently calculate that the benefits of belonging to a single currency zone and a single market of some 300 million people outweigh in real terms the disadvantages of abandoning national currencies. They may have a point. Does anyone seriously think that the USA would be the economic powerhouse that it is if it were divided into several units, each with its own currency? For a medium-sized country like Spain, having a share in the full prosperity and power generated by 300 million people is, in terms of national interest, arguably worth more than having all of that generated by 40-odd million people, national sovereignty notwithstanding. Sharing control over part of a large cake can be preferable to enjoying exclusive control over a small one.

This notion of shared control is habitually decried in Britain as 'allowing Brussels to interfere in our sovereign affairs' or 'parting with our hard-won freedoms'. Personally, I find it hard to see what freedoms we as British citizens have lost. (The British state has certainly lost some of its powers, but as it is an over-centralised construct ill-suited in many ways to the present day, I can live with that.) The fact is that our freedoms of religion, speech, assembly and the rest have remained unimpaired, or have been reinforced by European legislation safeguarding our rights as individuals.

In practical terms, I owe a significant

continued overleaf

NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIONAL INTEREST continued from page 1

extension of my freedoms to the increase in European co-operation resulting from the pooling of national sovereignty: I can take up an academic or research post in Germany or Austria as easily as a German or Austrian can, while my wife, who is a Belgian national, can come and live in London without enduring the paper-chase for visas and residence permits traditionally visited upon foreigners. British citizens who tried to live, work and manage their financial affairs in France or Italy will recall with a shudder the problems they faced, before the introduction of the free movement of people and labour within the EU made Provence, Tuscany and the Costa del Sol destinations of choice for Britons in search of homes in the sun.

More serious is the argument that the British parliament, our supreme elected body, has lost powers to Europe. That the House of Commons is perceived as having steadily lost its position at the heart of national life is very much to be regretted, though that is largely due to the failings of the British system itself, in particular the glacial slowness with which long-overdue parliamentary reforms are enacted, not to mention the vicious misrepresentation of politics and politicians peddled daily by sections of the British media.

The problem facing our parliament here is that its area of competence is limited to that of the nation-state it represents, and the model of the European nation-state no longer meets the demands and needs of a globalised world. It is, for example, plain that environmental problems can be tackled on a European-wide basis, but hardly by Britain alone; much the same applies to issues like international crime. It is, in other words, not a question of the

European Union usurping the rights of the British parliament, but rather that in certain fields the British parliament is not the appropriate body for the task.

Some problems are indeed best dealt with at national level; others need to be tackled Europe-wide, others again at regional level. The evident success of the devolution of powers to parliamentary assemblies in Scotland and Wales – however much one may dispute the policies of the governing parties there – suggests that the devolution of power ‘downwards’ to regional bodies in the remainder of the UK may well be at least as necessary as its transfer ‘upwards’ to the European level. British reluctance to remove powers from Westminster means that vigorous regional self-government on the model of Bavaria or Hesse is unknown in the English regions.

Importantly, when powers have been transferred from Westminster to EU institutions, this has occurred with the consent of the British parliament, which makes such decisions democratically, as the elected body representing the British people. It is perfectly constitutional for a parliament to give up control over elements of national sovereignty, if its majority decides that it is in the national interest so to do. In 1707, at the time of the Act of Union – to take an extreme example – the Scottish parliament opted to give up its national sovereignty altogether, by deciding to unite with England to form Great Britain and thus to vote itself out of existence.

Scottish nationalists apart, few would dispute the enormous advantages gained by Scotland over the following centuries when it stood at the heart of the British Empire. Now,

it appears possible that Scotland may reclaim the sovereignty conceded in 1707. That would be a formidably difficult task. In the same way, taking Britain out of Europe would be fraught with problems – not because those cunning foreigners have devised a fiendish constitutional trap to ensnare the dewy-eyed British, but because Britain is inextricably linked by connections of national interest to her European neighbours. In the last analysis, constitutional arrangements have to reflect real national interests, not abstract notions of national sovereignty.

Anthony Grenville

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of the
ASSOCIATION OF
JEWISH REFUGEES
TUESDAY 3 JUNE 2008, 11.00 AM

at the
Paul Balint AJR Centre
15 Cleve Road, London NW6

Lunch will be served at a cost of £5. Space is limited. If you would like to reserve a place for lunch, please call Head Office on 020 8385 3070 by Thursday 22 May 2008.

Agenda

Annual Report 2007
Hon. Treasurer's Report
Discussion
Election of Committee of Management*

*No person other than a committee member retiring by rotation shall be elected or re-elected at any general meeting unless:-

- (a) he or she is recommended by the Committee of Management, or
- (b) not less than twenty one clear days before the date appointed for the meeting, notice executed by ten members qualified to vote at the meeting has been given to the Association of the intention to propose that person for election or re-election together with notice executed by that person of his or her willingness to be elected or re-elected.

Yom Hashoah: Recalling the Kindertransports

On Thursday 1 May, Pinner Synagogue will once again be holding its well respected and significant evening remembering the Holocaust and paying tribute to all who perished in those dark days.

This year's theme is 'Reflect and Act'. The focus of the evening will be the 70th anniversary of the Kindertransports, when some 10,000 children were separated from their parents and left Nazi Europe on trains bound for Britain. The first transport left barely one month after Kristallnacht and the last on 1 September 1939, just before Britain's entry into the war.

The evening will include a number of dignitaries and West European ambassadors. Two former Kinder, Susi Bechhofer and Hermann Hirschberger, will give keynote speeches sharing their thoughts of that experience and will answer questions.

Hermann Hirschberger, the former

chairman of the AJR's Kindertransport special interest group, was born in Karlsruhe and arrived in England in March 1939 with his brother. Now in retirement, he is an engaging speaker at schools and colleges and is a founder member of Belmont Synagogue.

Susi Bechhofer and her three-year-old twin sister Lotte arrived at Liverpool Street Station in May 1939 and became foster children of a Baptist minister and his wife. Susi's story is one of great courage - and fascination as she learned many years later of her real identity and Jewish background.

AJR members are cordially invited to attend this event and encouraged to bring their friends and members of their families, particularly their teenage grandchildren. The evening (for which there is no charge) will begin at 8:00 pm and refreshments will be served at 10.00 pm.

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Views expressed in the AJR Journal are not necessarily those of the Association of Jewish Refugees and should not be regarded as such.

SHARING A COUCH WITH FREUD

by Victor Ross

My family tree had many branches – some straight, some crooked, now alas cut back to a few gnarled sticks with a few new twigs beginning to show. But there was a time of teeming family life, an international cousinage spreading from the Black Sea to South America: we could have been the Rothschilds if we had had the money.

What we had in plenty was eccentrics of every hue: revolutionaries, philosophers, serial bankrupts, a medically qualified abortionist to the (English) gentry, a test pilot in the Kaiser's air corps, and even a midget. He wasn't really a midget, just my very small great-uncle, a chess prodigy. So good that my grandfather was able to conceal him in a 'chess automaton' and use him as a star turn in his variety shows. He was not the first to play the trick of the concealed human inside the machine, but he refined it to such an extent that the Tsar summoned him for a demonstration. Unfortunately, something went wrong just when the court's best player was about to be check-mated. The official version was that my unfortunate uncle was unable to suppress a cough in his cramped and dusty hideout, forcing my grandfather, a Napoleon of the theatre, to beat a hasty retreat from Moscow. My mother, a supreme realist, told me that a monumental fart issuing from the chess machine, all lights blinking, had given the game away.

Nourishing family quarrels, tended across generations and continents, bound us together: many had to be conducted by correspondence across vast distances – I still treasure letters between warring factions of the family, exchanged by sea mail between Berlin and Buenos Aires, delivered into my hands by a frustrated relative whose life was drained of all meaning when his adversary died after a lifetime of mutual bitterness. Such quarrels ranged from the sublime (was it permissible for a Jew to wallow in Wagner?) to the scandalous (accusations of multiple bastardy bandied about without the very restraint advocated by the parties concerned).

The menfolk in the family were a mixed lot – the only ones who made a reputation

and a good living were my two grandfathers, who also happened to be brothers.

They kept the show on the road, in a very real sense, since one of them was a successful theatrical impresario and the other a prominent advocate. Between them, they maintained the philosophers, the eternal students, the gamblers, the bankrupts.

But the stars in our family were always women. They had the brains, they believed in self-improvement, they occupied the moral high ground. There was that great-great-something of mine who had a son fighting in the revolution of 1848. He was taken prisoner and arraigned before a court-martial. Here the accounts diverge. Some say he was condemned to death, others that he received a long prison sentence for treason. But there is no doubt that his mother was determined to save him, by going to the

top. Her idea, good Jewess that she was, was to get the Pope to intercede on her son's behalf. She gathered up her skirts and two weeks' provisions to travel from Frankfurt to the Vatican, relying for access to the Holy See on being subcontracted to sew buttons on the uniforms of the Pope's Swiss Guard. Anecdotal ambiguity was a family staple, but there is no doubt that her son was spared. Whether and what the Pope was spared is not on record.

Her grand-daughter was a formidable figure, muse to great thinkers and writers, Rilke and Stefan George among them. A well-known painter committed suicide for unrequited love of her. She was well-read and wrote aphorisms in the style of her day, developing among other ideas a Platonic approach to housework with which she terrorised staff and a circle of young women who came to live and study with her.

Continued on page 10

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Where were you on 11 March 1938?

Well, I can tell you exactly where I was. As on every Friday evening, my cousin Lilly and I were attending a class of rhythmic gymnastics. That particular lesson, however, ended abruptly when someone burst into the room crying 'Hitler is at the border!'

We both hurried home – I to the 3rd district, Lilly, my senior by 10 years and married to a prominent non-Jewish socialist, to the 7th.

My parents and I sat huddled together that evening, with little to say. We were kept awake all night by chants of 'Sieg Heil' and 'Wir danken unserem Führer'.

By Monday morning, on my tram ride to the office, I saw swastikas everywhere – fluttering from public buildings, in people's windows, on policemen's armbands. The weather was brilliant – 'Führer weather', the Nazis said.

The firm I worked for published fashion magazines and was owned and managed by Jews. The mood at the office was mixed. The known Nazis were openly jubilant, the Christian Socials dejected, we Jews confounded. We hadn't yet grasped the enormity of what had happened: that overnight we had become *Untermenschen*, vermin, with whom contact should be avoided at all costs by all right-thinking Aryans. There were

shocks. I froze when Peppi, our amiable young messenger, by his own account a committed Social Democrat who had fought bravely in defence of democracy in 1934,

appeared in SA uniform. He smiled sheepishly when our eyes met.

When I got home that evening, Levinsky, the grocer downstairs, waylaid me. 'You said you wanted the Führer to be torn into little pieces, and I'm going to report you,' he said. I was speechless. I had never had any conversation with the man, but I had read enough about Hitler's Germany to know that, if he carried out his threat, I might well end up in a camp. We had all heard of Dachau and Buchenwald.

My father appealed to our lodger, Fräulein Öser, who, although an ardent Nazi, was also genuinely fond of us. She interceded on my behalf, allegedly citing the Führer's magnanimity in victory and, more importantly, promising Levinsky that my step-mother would do all her shopping at his store in future. For that was what it was all about.

It was not long before I found a letter on my desk at the office. I had been



fristlos entlassen (dismissed without notice). The firm was being 'aryanised' – it could do without any Jews, including the managing director and chairman.

There were the Levinskys and the Peppis, but there were others. There were helpful and courteous officials. There were the two church-going spinster sisters on our floor. When I met them on the landing on the evening of 11 March, one of them said 'Austria is lost.'

And let us not forget Fräulein Öser, who possibly saved my life. Nor do I wish to forget our other lodger, an elderly Czech woman, unobtrusive to the point of invisibility, who lived in what was meant to be the maid's room, had we been able to afford one. On that terrible night, she crossed herself and said 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph, what is to become of you?' On the whole, practising Christians behaved better than the comrades.

Well, 70 years on, I am here to tell the tale. Less bright than I was at 18 and certainly no wiser, a lot worse for wear but, with some of my faculties still intact, here I am. I have survived, as have all the readers of the *AJR Journal* who were also in Vienna on 11 March 1938. This must count as something of a victory, albeit a pyrrhic one. Here is to us!

Edith Argy

A woman whose story speaks for itself

The following are excerpts from an article by Sonja Kuba, whom I met through the Austrian Letter to the Stars project, which bonds individual young Austrian men and women with Holocaust survivors around the world. I applaud this attempt to bridge the gap that still exists between us now aged Austrian refugees and the present young Austrian generation. It has convinced me that it is high time that we survivors begin to forgive what we were made to suffer, though of course we are unlikely ever to forget what we have gone through. Unless we do forgive, the mutual distrust and hatred are likely to continue, with disastrous results for succeeding generations – T. Scarlett Epstein.



I have no idea why fate brought Dr T. Scarlett Epstein and me together. All I can say is that I am profoundly grateful that it did.

People often ask me what it feels like to have known a Holocaust survivor as long as I have known Scarlett. My answer is always the same: sooner or later, the 'survivor' label vanishes, in exactly the same way as does the association with the Second World War, persecution and suffering. What remains is the most important of all, namely Scarlett.

For four years now, I have done everything I could to shed light on the

numerous aspects of Scarlett's life. Yet the more I try to do this, the clearer it is that I will probably never reach the exact point at which I can claim I know everything there is to know about her (though I'm not entirely sure I want to reach that point!).

I have heard a great deal from Scarlett, including the most detailed accounts of how her escape from Nazism affected her and – four years after I first met her – I'm still amazed that I can't absorb some of the stories she tells me. These stories are, without exception, as precise and detailed as can be. For instance, she can remember as

though it were yesterday what she was wearing when she was 15 years old.

Scarlett often tells these stories with a certain detachment, as if it were not *she* who experienced these events but they happened to someone else. The stories sound as though they are told at a distance, far from reality, as if they had taken place anywhere – and certainly not in *my* homeland. Sometimes I forget that all these things happened less than 100 years ago! Unbelievable!

Given the reverence I hold for Scarlett and what she has lived through, I can only wonder where she gets the

continued opposite

Pink, brown or white?

Sixteen years after the war I visited Vienna again. I had last seen it decorated with swastika flags, but now the tall buildings, whose height had so overwhelmed me as a child, had no such decorations. Much else had changed, but the skyline was still dominated by St Stephen's Church and the Giant Wheel.

I went to see all the places which held special childhood memories – the local park where I had played hopscotch with my friends, the chocolate shop from across the road where I had lived, and my first school, and I spent a few reflective, ghost-filled days. And then I remembered where I had almost forgotten to go: the building on the outskirts of the town, where my Onkel Adolf and Tante Ida had lived and where, once a year, I was treated to the most delicious ice cream I have ever eaten. It was home-made by my uncle and aunt's faithful old housekeeper Jenny and served on the balcony of their fourth-floor flat on a hot summer afternoon, the ceaseless traffic roaring beneath us. There were three kinds of ice cream: strawberry, coffee and vanilla. Never any other. I don't know if Jenny employed a machine for making it or whether she still used the old-fashioned freezing pot, but its taste was pure ambrosia.

'Which will you have?', Tante Ida asked me teasingly every time, because she knew I always had the pink. Of course. Pink was for strawberries and ribbons and party frocks. Brown was for



And now I know what white is for. It is for the sheet – the sheet that faithful Jenny covered Onkel Adolf and Tante Ida with when one morning she found them dead in bed. They had found a way out.

coffee and coffee was drunk in the adult world I was not yet ready to enter. And it was for the drab dress Jenny often wore. But what was the white for? I didn't know. It was a dead colour. My synaesthesia played a bigger part in my life than I realised at the time, and it determined many of my choices.

And so I took the tram to the suburbs and, after asking the way several times, finally arrived at the building I remembered so well. I opened the big front door and was at once confronted by the lift. Whatever else had changed, all the lifts I had encountered in Vienna

were the same ancient ones, with ornate interiors and upholstered seats, and they never went wrong. In an East European city some years ago a notice posted in a hotel lobby read: 'The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable.' Whatever was unbearable in Vienna, it had nothing to do with the lifts.

But I didn't get in. In the end I couldn't. There would be no pink ice cream at the end. What was the use of going up? There had been no more visits to my aunt and uncle after the swastika flags appeared. I don't know whether Jenny lost the will to make ice cream, but Jews were not allowed on trams anyway. My uncle and aunt had tried very hard to emigrate. One day, after queuing for many hours, when their application for a visa had been refused yet again, my uncle asked the icy, uniformed figure at the other side of the desk: 'Why won't you give us a visa when you want us out?' He replied: 'Es heisst ja nicht Jude verreise – es heisst Jude verreckel!' (We're not saying Jews should go away, we're saying Jews should die!)

They couldn't leave, but they didn't want to stay.

And now I know what white is for. It is for the sheet – the sheet that faithful Jenny covered Onkel Adolf and Tante Ida with when one morning she found them dead in bed. They had found a way out.

Inge Joseph

energy to do all these things and to lead her life in such a positive direction.

I confess I have never asked all these questions. I'm not sure why – maybe I'm still afraid or guilty to do anything wrong.

Things which seem important in the normal course of events become trite when you meet people like Scarlett Epstein and hear their stories. In the course of the Letter from the Stars project, I have heard and seen much and lived through moments no one can take away from me. Moments with people who have influenced me most profoundly and from whom I have learned so much. One such person is Scarlett Epstein, a woman whose story speaks for itself.

Sonja Kuba

THE JOURNEY

The Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire is creating an exhibition aimed at primary-school children based on the experiences of the **Kindertransportees**.

The first room of **The Journey** is a pre-war German living room.

To recreate this scene, we wish to source the following items/artefacts:

- A pre-war menorah/chanukiah
- Pre-war German toys
- Other contemporaneous decorative articles (pictures, ornaments, crockery, etc) which would help us create the tableau
- Original suitcases of Kindertransportees to be used as part of the main exhibition
- Exercise books or school records

Should you have any such items, and wish to donate them for the benefit of Holocaust education in the UK, please contact **Mike Caro** on **01623 836627** or at mike.caro@bethshalom.com

Portraits of Holocaust survivors

I am a portrait photographer with over 100 images in the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery.

My subjects range from Baroness Thatcher to the Spice Girls.

I would like to complete a series of portraits of Holocaust survivors together with a few words of recollection from each participant.

Please contact **Harry Borden** on **01823674355** or **07968547714** <http://www.harryborden.com>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor reserves the right
to shorten correspondence
submitted for publication

THE YOUNGEST KINDERTRANSPORT REFUGEE?

Sir – I endorse Gerda Meyer's letter (March). It is historically and humanly important that we pay tribute to *all* the people who rescued us. In Vera Gissing and Muriel Emanuel's *Nicholas Winton and the Rescued Generation* and my own memoir *Lifesaving Letters* (under my birth name Milena Roth), we give, as best as we can, an account of the work in the Prague refugee office in 1938-39.

It is without detriment to Winton's (and his mother's) vital work that we remember his colleagues. There was not only Trevor Chadwick but also Martin Blake (Winton's friend, who initially called on Winton to help) as well as Bill Barazetti, Dorothy Warriner and two young volunteers, Beatrice Wellington and Josephine Pike.

These people all remained in Prague in danger to themselves, under the threat of the Gestapo (in at least one case suffering lengthy interrogations), preparing the papers that both German and British governments demanded, thus enabling as many children as time allowed to leave. They all performed many brave deeds and kindnesses and only just got out in time themselves.

One of my mother's 1939 letters describes her repeated queuing to see 'Miss Wellington' to try to secure my freedom. She wrote 'they are all overworked'.

I have long thought it sad and unjust that these people, who risked their lives for us, have not also received the public tribute they deserve. *Milanka Jackson, Eastbourne*

FIRST KINDERTRANSPORT

Sir – Could anyone who came over to Dovercourt on the first transport arriving 1 December 1938 please contact me via the Journal.

Herbert Goldschmidt, London NW2

VOYAGE OF THE DUNERA

Sir – I refer to the letter concerning the *Dunera* by Frank Berg (formerly Franz Juliusberg) which appeared in your March issue. According to my records, the officer in charge of the guards on the *Dunera* was Captain John O'Neill V.C., who was subsequently court-martialled and relieved of his Victoria Cross, and his wife was denied a military pension following his death due to a heart attack.

Also, in 1941 two of the NCOs of the Pioneer Corps appeared before a court martial accused of 21 charges of stealing internees' belongings on board the *Dunera*. They were RSM Charles Albert Bowles and

Sergeant Arthur Helliwell. Unfortunately, I have no information on their fate.

*Peter Schwab (Internee No. 39246)
London NW8*

EXPERIENCES OF INTERNMENT

Sir – Re the articles on the Isle of Man (February and March), my father arrived in the UK at the turn of the century from what was then part of Austria. My mother, who came from a similar area, met and married my father in London. They settled in London and had two children, my brother and sister.

At the outbreak of the First World War, my father was interned as an enemy alien and sent to the Isle of Man. In 1917 my mother was offered an exchange passage to Austria organised by the Red Cross. This was to include my father. My mother accepted the offer. Alas, my father was not released until after 1918.

I was born in Vienna in 1923. Having many relatives in England, we had no real problems in getting to the UK in 1939. My brother and sister had already left for England to further their education some years earlier.

In June 1940 the police came to intern me. My father insisted that it was meant for him but this was to no avail – he was not taken. I was interned in Huyton near Liverpool.

My brother, who was already an officer in the British army, came to visit me in the camp. This must have made history. I was released one or two weeks later and was free to volunteer for the army.

Robert Acker Holt, London NW3

BACK TO VIENNA

Sir – George Vulkan's mention of Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg (March, p. 4) brings to mind a verse chanted by schoolchildren in 1938-39: 'Heil Schuschnigg unser Führer, wir werden immer dürrer, die Juden immer fetter, d'rum Hitler unser Retter.' Does anyone else remember this?

About four years ago I took my younger son to Linz. I showed him the house where my parents and I had lived. It was well maintained with an intercom system on the front door. I rang one of the bells, explaining that my son would very much like to see the flat where his grandparents had lived. I told the lady who answered that my parents had been forced to move out in 1939. Suddenly, she became quite pleasant and asked us in. In the living room, to my amazement, hung a large portrait of her father in full Nazi uniform. We couldn't believe our eyes. Should they not have removed this painting long ago or were they

unaware of the implications of leaving it dominating their living room?

Helga Zitcer, London NW3

FOR THE RECORD

Sir – Many readers may not have been aware of the recent, very moving '6 Million plus' exhibition at Brent Cross in north-west London. This was a display using buttons, leaflets, etc originally designed for Kirklees (Yorkshire) Community Education Project by Leeds-based Jewish artist Antonia Stowe.

This display was lent to Barnet Council for the weeks before and after Holocaust Memorial Day. As exhibition volunteer helpers in a small way, we wish to put on record our appreciation of, and gratitude to, Rachel and her team – all non-Jewish – from Barnet Council who volunteered to organise and staff the display for long hours each day, including two weekends. They dealt sensibly and knowledgeably with queries and comments, mostly positive but also a few negative ones.

Understandably, many emotions were stirred by the exhibition. Without the altruistic people from Barnet Council, the exhibition may well not have been possible.

Sylvia and Josef Winroope, Radlett, Herts

'PEACE FOR OUR TIME'

Sir – Philip Goldsmith's crude misrepresentation of the EU (February) would be laughable were it not repeated day in day out in the red-top press.

Surely your readers are aware that there are no unelected bureaucrats in Brussels with power to dictate to us! The Commission alone proposes legislation, but the final law-making body is the Council of Ministers. In a few areas – to be expanded if the Lisbon Treaty is approved – there is co-decision-making, when the Euro-Parliament has an equal say with the Council. Conversely in Foreign Affairs, Security, Immigration, and similar, the Parliament has no say. The Commission has very little say – and no right to propose. This too will be democratised if Lisbon is approved.

Perhaps a subtler rebuttal comes when one draws attention to the fact that the bulk of EU legislation is in 'outline' directives. These merely set out the objectives to be achieved, and the main conditions to be applied, but leave it to the member-states to fill in the locally applicable details.

It may be difficult to love a unit of 450 million people but, if we believe that Britain is frequently (not always) a beneficial influence in world affairs, than let us be glad that it is still a major regional power able to exercise a leading role in the EU. The EU is big enough not to be ignored and – after Lisbon has been approved – can be expected to conduct a more active foreign policy.

Francis Deutsch, Safron Walden

AFTER ANNAPOLIS

Sir – Has Peter Prager (January) not heard that by the time the 1929 Hebron massacre ended, 67 Jews lay dead, 60 more were injured, and those still alive had fled to Jerusalem. Hebron had been made *judenrein* for the first time in hundreds of years and remained so until the great victory of 1967.

It is the Arabs who are the *Zugereiste*. Since the Oslo agreement, the small Hebron Jewish community has been subjected to suicide bombings, stabbings and thousands of rounds of rifle fire. Twelve Israelis were killed in an ambush on the way to the Cave of the Patriarchs, an infant was killed by a sniper, and quite recently two Israelis were shot dead.

Frank Bright, Ipswich

Sir – As I write, Qassam rockets are raining down randomly on Israel, killing civilians. Israel's army retaliates, killing not only Palestinian militants but civilians and children. Hamas, whether we like it or not, is the democratically elected government of the Palestinians. The present peace negotiations are going nowhere. The British government talked to the IRA and thereby solved the Northern Irish problem. So why not talk to Hamas?

Inge Trott, Cheam, Surrey

'PALESTINE' AND 'PALESTINIANS'

Sir – Mr Storz (February) raises interesting historical points but – 'official' or otherwise – the practice of so naming the geographical area long predates the First World War. Herzl himself used the term. Furthermore, the argument that Arabs elsewhere should accommodate their unfortunate brethren is devoid of morality and downright cynical. Above all, the distinction between sovereignty over land and property rights within it must not be overlooked. The latter is every bit as important as the former. In addition to Herzl and the Balfour Declaration, London University was in the late 1940s offering a course on Palestinian law, a concept which, alone, rebuts the suggestion that 'Palestine' was a more recent idea.

Alan S. Kaye, Marlow, Bucks

Sir – As a postscript to my article about Palestinians in the February edition, I refer to an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 1 February 2008 under the heading 'Yep, they still hate us'. This quotes instances in the Arab media sourced and translated by BBC Monitoring in which the Palestinians are referred to as Arabs. For example, a Lebanese TV channel said that the Jewish state endangers Arabs living in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948.

I believe Golda Meir once said that there is no Palestinian race. I assume she meant there is no separate or distinct Palestinian people, as they are part of the Arab nation – which is more or less what I suggested in my article.

Mendel Storz, London N16

Sir – Would a population exchange similar to what happened in India (Muslims and Hindus) and French North Africa or the resettlement of Germans from Czechoslovakia (Sudetenland) or Poland etc not be an answer? Instead of keeping the Palestine problem as a permanent red herring, why not arrange resettlement in the vastness of the Arab world?

Anthony Goldsmith, Wembley, Middx

WHAT IS A JEW?

Sir – I agree with Harold Saunders (March). If he still feels there is a comparison

between 'Jews for Jesus' and Progressive Judaism – even if it is only on whether Judaism can pass through the paternal line – there is no point in continuing any correspondence with him.

More interesting are the views of Mrs Margarete Stern. She believes that the Liberal and Reform movements 'are doing their very best to undermine [Judaism]', both as a race and a religion. Without the Progressive side of Judaism, we would be left with only the Hassidim and the Traditionalists. Judaism in both the United States and the United Kingdom would then be in danger of disappearing, certainly as we know it.

Perhaps Mrs Stern believes that only the 'Frummers' have a right to be called Jews. It is a view, but one with which I disagree vehemently. I am a Jew racially. I am also a Jew religiously because I do not believe any religion makes more sense than Progressive Judaism. If it did not exist, I would still be a Jew racially, but certainly not one through religious belief. I would have to call myself a theist or even an agnostic. Mrs Stern is very knowledgeable on the derivation of the words Islam and Muslim. Perhaps she should be more practical in her thinking on today's Judaism.

Peter Phillips, Loudwater, Herts

'MUSINGS IN THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE'

Sir – Just back from a winter cruise, and no Victor Ross in January or February. Have you sacked him? A mistake! Or has his flight been called? He could make my husband smile and that takes some doing!

Elizabeth Tennor, Tonbridge, Kent

I am delighted that Victor Ross is back this month and writing better than ever – Exec. Ed.

TWO RUSSIAN-JEWISH PAINTERS

Sir – In her article on the From Russia exhibition (March), Gloria Tessler omitted to mention two of the Russian-Jewish painters who also feature. As the magazine is aimed at Jewish readers, I believe this should be rectified. Look out for the portrait of Diaghilev by Leon Bakst and the portrait of Anna Akhmatova by Nathan Altman. Akhmatova was a close friend of the murdered Jewish poet Osip Mandelstam and his wife.

Janos Fisher, Bushey Heath, Herts

FROM MINOR TO MAJOR

Sir – HS [Exec. Ed. Howard Spier], who puts the symphonies of Sibelius on a par with the greats (February), is wide of the mark! Many of us would sooner be on a desert island with the Brahms 4th, let alone several of those by Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert, etc.

As I learned at the excellently presented recent talk by Gerald Holm at Club 43, Sibelius himself would hardly have agreed with the claim. He destroyed his 8th and wrote little during his last 30 years because of, doubtless, a feeling that he had come to the end of his creative powers. We would do him a disservice by overrating his symphonies, fine though they are, especially No. 6.

L. D. Wiseman, Loughton, Essex

Sir – I was intrigued to note the disagreement between Mr Holm and some of his Club 43 audience regarding Sibelius's status as a symphonic composer. Whilst acknowledging the pre-eminence of Beethoven, may I suggest that we refrain from creating a ranking order for the great composers as if they were football teams in a league competition?

For example, one can admire the taut construction and individuality of each of Brahms's symphonies without diminishing one's respect for Bruckner's expansive, but less varied compositions, each one resembling a different perspective on a sublime alpine landscape. As for Sibelius, the austere beauty of his symphonies and symphonic poems is unique in Western music. We should cherish them.

James Betts, New Malden, Surrey

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ART NOTES

Gloria Tessler

What better time to celebrate celebrity itself than the time of the Oscars? Into the melee of actors and their designer labels, the National Portrait Gallery launched its Vanity Fair Portraits photo show – from



Hilary Swank, by Norman Jean Roy, 2004 © Norman Jean Roy

the jazz and modernist era of 1913 to 1936, when the magazine ceased publication, to its resumption in the clamorous, glamorous 1980s.

The time-frame excludes Monroe and Bardot, but we have George Hurrell's Jean Harlow and Mario Testino's super-natural Diana. Daffyd Jones's Madonna with Mick Jagger and Tony Curtis is a clever pose of jagged intimacy.

It's not all eye candy. The journal's first period celebrates greyer matter. Einstein, Charlie Chaplin and a host of authors like Hemingway, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Rebecca West, and George Bernard Shaw are captured by Edward Steichen, Cecil Beaton and Man Ray. And there is something to be said for the master stroke in black-and-white, which often conveys the subtlety of mood and gesture more accurately than the colour photography which defines the later period.

Generating art in photography is a bit of a hot potato. Some critics maintain that it is not a pure art form and bears no comparison with painting. The photographer's gift is to place the subject within the frame of his or her time, to capture a mood or moment, not an eternity. Thus Annie Leibowitz – who so controversially snapped the Queen – presents Joan and Janet Collins as two lushes in contrast to her formally posed *Hollywood Legends*. Helmut Newton's overpowering Margaret Thatcher in black-and-white is coldly magisterial.

In 2001 *Vanity Fair* turned more to serious reportage, and Jonas Karlsson's award-winning *Fire-Fighters near Ground Zero, 9/11* has all the pathos of uniformed men helpless in the face of catastrophe. Contrast this with the quirkiness of Steichen's vision of an ironic yet static world, expressed in his 1924 photograph of Gloria Swanson.

The eighteenth-century painter Pompei Batoni is hardly a household name, but the National Gallery has launched an exhibition on the work of this stylised artist, who captured the British and Irish glitterati on the European Grand Tour. These mannered portraits gave him the chance to show off his exceptional draughtsmanship, a talent for which he was outstanding among contemporaries. Yet this most celebrated Roman painter of his time – the natural successor to Michaelangelo, Raphael and Carracci – fell into neglect in the nineteenth century because much of his commissioned work remained in private hands. Forced to juggle with work and parenthood – he supported five children after his wife's death – Batoni was also the master of mythological and allegorical painting. Some of his works may seem too prettily sentimental; others are impeccable studies handled with great detail and sensitivity. In *The Death of Meleager*, even the sheets in which the dying man is entwined, used to wipe away his lover's tears, have a life and a grief of their own, shared by the poignant Italian greyhound at the base of the painting. Batoni was more adept than most at conveying canine realism!

REVIEWS

THEATRE

Hopelessness beats eternal ...

THREE SISTERS ON HOPE STREET

by Diane Samuels and Tracy-Ann Oberman
directed by Lindsay Posner
Hampstead Theatre, London

This attempt to transpose Chekhov's subtle and pessimistic *Three Sisters* from a Russian garrison town to post-war Liverpool in the days of incipient Jewish statehood is a brave but awkward one. Following the success of *Kindertransport*, we have come to expect dramatic courage from Samuels but, while writers often reinterpret old classics, the issues here are different. Chekhov's Prozorov sisters – Olga, Masha, Irina – yearn for Moscow in a Russia of deep political change. Hope Street's Lasky siblings – Gertie, May, Rita – are less rooted in their society. Far-flung from their native New York to Liverpool after their mother's death, they have no psychic link with such national identity.

Israel, too, is unknown, unfelt – the girls only resemble the Prozorov sisters in their fragility. Does it matter? Only that it poses unnecessary strain on the structure of the play, which sticks rigidly to the Russian format, while it might have flowed more explorative without it.

Hope Street is home to the Lasky sisters and their brother Arnold, who, like Chekhov's Andrei, had academic hopes pinned on him by his father, but his marriage to the simpering butcher's daughter Debbie has reduced them to nostalgia. Debbie, an obsessive mother to his two children, attempts to push the sisters out of their home.

This is postwar-austerity provincial Britain: 1947 with ration books and the birth of the NHS – and for Jews with the Holocaust still aching, personal insecurity looms large. Into this 'temporary' homeland enter three American officers with dreams of their own. Idealistic Tush (Russell Bentley) wants to whisk youngest sister Rita (Samantha Robinson) off to Palestine; the passionate middle sister May (Suzan Sylvester) falls for the more sanguine First Sergeant Vince (Finbar Lynch) (but he has an annoying wife somewhere); and the sour GI Solly (Gerard Monaco)

equally hankers after Rita, on whose loveliness all the family dote.

Throw into this mix local riots at the Irgun's hanging of two British soldiers and young proto-Zionists singing in the street, and you wonder where there's time for personal ambition, let alone lament. I had difficulty caring what any of the characters had to say. The 'saintly' eldest sister, Gertie, is portrayed too weakly by Anna Francolini to exert that elder-sister responsibility which might have added depth to the plot and there is little meaningful dialogue to build the tension. So that even tragedy appears as just another inconvenience whittled down by the girls' self-absorbed dreaming.

The writers' attempt to deal with the breadth of their material tends to diffuse the drama. However, this is an interesting historical period, with Revisionists pitted against mainstream Zionists in the grip of emergent nationhood, and the writers do not flinch from conveying the controversy.

What works in this play is the Chekhovian sense of nostalgia and weariness, expressed poignantly by Nate Weinberger, ageing gynaecologist and back-street abortionist, who lodges rent-free with the Laskys and whose commentary on the times is a leitmotif for static pessimism. This role builds successfully in the hands of Philip Voss, as does Daisy Lewis's Debbie, whose cooing over her babies belies a heart as stony as the missiles hurled by the Brownshirt mob at their windows. Jennie Stoller's Auntie Beil, long-suffering grandmother-figure, gives the Jewish theme its *shtetl* roots, while the bitter-sweet flavour is enhanced by a smattering of Yiddish, plus Gershwin, Cole Porter and Irving Berlin. Thematically, this ambitious play does not need Chekhov, but it does need to care more for its characters.

Gloria Tessler

THEATRE

A poor man's William Joyce

AN ENGLISH TRAGEDY

by Ronald Harwood

directed by Di Trevis

Watford Palace Theatre

Ronald Harwood's play charts the background to the trial of John Amery, who was executed for

treason in 1945. His father, Leopold, an ex-cabinet minister and school friend of Churchill, and his mother, Florence (known as Bryddie), were 'as English as could be'.

John Amery was a poor man's William Joyce and a virulent antisemite. In Berlin he recorded ten radio propaganda speeches for the Nazis. Following the broadcasts, he persuaded 57 Allied PoWs to fight alongside the Waffen SS in a new battalion he named the Legion of St George. The Germans changed this to the British Free Corps – a name he thought too teutonic.

Harwood presents Amery as a sometime charmer with a seriously disturbed personality – a disaster from the word go. Amery was expelled twice from Harrow and was described by his housemaster as 'the most difficult boy he had ever had to manage'. Fond of fast cars, women and grand hotels, he ran up massive debts.

Amery went on to serve as an aide to Franco, allegedly adopting Spanish nationality. His lawyers later attempted to use this as a defence – that as a Spanish national he could not be tried for treason in Britain – but he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to death. Three weeks later he was hanged.

The performances are excellent, though Richard Goulding as Amery looks too young and healthy for a debauched drinker and smoker of 33.

The tragedy of the title is that Leo Amery regretted living his life as a lie: he concealed his Jewishness by pretending that his mother was Hungarian. His antisemitic son seemed to hate him as much for the lie as the quarter of Jewish blood that coursed through his veins.

It may be of particular interest to readers that the designer of the play, Ralph Koltai, came to England from Berlin via the Quakers. He was a reference librarian at Nuremberg and in 1946-47 worked with the War Crimes Interrogation Unit in Bayswater.

Laraine Feldman

The special few

THE BOOK THIEF

by Markus Zusak

London: Doubleday 2007, 584 pp.,

£19.99 paper

Liesel Meminger, the heroine of this novel, which is set in Nazi Germany, is sent to foster parents

Impact of the Holocaust

The Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust Studies at the University of Leicester is seeking Jewish families to partake in a multi-generational study on how the Holocaust continues to impact on Jewish lives.

For further information, please email Dr Olaf Jensen at oj6@le.ac.uk

in the town of Molching, near Munich. En route, her brother dies and, after the hasty funeral, the undertaker's assistant drops a book – a gravedigger's manual. Liesel keeps it, beginning a career as a 'book thief'.

We learn about the attitude to Nazism of the inhabitants of Molching. Hans Hubermann, Liesel's adoptive father, refuses to join the Nazi Party: when the Brownshirts parade through the town, he 'wore a face with the shades pulled down'. Alex Steiner, his neighbour, does not hate Jews, but is relieved when Jewish shops are closed down – there will be more work for him as a tailor. The children are forced to join the Hitler Youth, but Rudy, Liesel's friend, rebels. The owner of the sweet shop refuses to serve anyone who does not say 'Heil Hitler!' on entering her shop.

We experience the horrors of the bombing from the German side. Zusak reminds us that not only are the villains killed but the good people too. But this is not a grim book – it is full of humour. When there is a book-burning in the town, Liesel cannot resist stealing a book from the smouldering embers: 'They began to leave the scene of the crime and the book was well and truly burning her now ... "What's wrong?" Papa asked. "Nothing". Quite a few things, however, were most definitely wrong: smoke was rising out of Liesel's collar. A necklace of sweat had formed around her throat. Beneath her shirt, a book was eating her up.'

This enthralling book raises many questions. We are left in no doubt that the Germans knew of the camps and of the ill-treatment of the Jews. Some are Nazis, some are indifferent and a special few are 'Menschen'. Were the latter just normal? Or were they outstanding in the prevailing evil?

Thea Valman

Bruno Jablonsky – 'One of ours'

A few months ago, a discussion on BBC Radio 4 concentrated on the danger to the survival of this country towards the end of the Second World War. It was established that there was no doubt that the Battle of Britain finally succeeded due to the invention of the Spitfire airplane, thus ending the war victoriously for Great Britain and her Allies.

I wrote a letter to the BBC telling the producer that a semi-relative of mine had invented extra-speedy propellers for the Spitfire. His name was Bruno Jablonsky, a nephew of my step-grandmother. He came to England as a young man. I heard that he flew with the Wright Brothers. Apparently he was also involved with special equipment for parachute jumpers and, among other feats, he invented light equipment for the Everest expedition. His looks were also much admired and compared to those of the actor Errol Flynn!

He visited our home in Berlin when we were small children – probably together with his aunt, our beloved Oma Erie, who later perished in Minsk. Flying was his profession and his hobby. During the war he worked for the War Office. He was highly respected in those circles and connected with an aircraft factory in Croydon. After the war, the British government gave him an award of £10,000 for his Spitfire propeller invention.

We met him and his wife, Anne. My husband and I were invited twice to his

home in Croydon for lunch at Christmas time – this was around 1953 or 1955 – together with our baby son, Louis. All the seasonal wishes on display were from Lord and Lady so and so. When the Queen spoke, he stood up. A loyal subject.

Eventually, he and his wife moved to Lugano in Switzerland. However, we kept in touch. After his death, Anne always remembered us and always asked after my sisters. Then I heard she was in a home. This year I had no

further news. She probably met her maker.

I noted that Bruno did not care for the fact that he was a Jew. His sister and other relatives perished in the Holocaust. I remember one or two episodes when this came to light.

All the same, it should be of interest to our community that 'one of ours' – now apparently forgotten – played such an important part in our victory.

Laura Selo

ARTS AND EVENTS DIARY – APRIL

Wed 2 April to 8 June 'Whitechapel at War: Isaac Rosenberg and His Circle', Ben Uri Gallery, 108a Boundary Road, London NW8, tel 020 7604 3991

Sun 6 *And Then They Came for Me – Remembering the World of Anne Frank*, a play directed by Nic Careem with the support of Dr Eva Schloss, The Big Issue and the AJR, Criterion Theatre, London W1, 7.00 pm

Mon 7 Dr Gwen Williams, 'Fairy and Fantasy in Nineteenth-Century English Literature' Club 43

Tues 8 Prof Sir Ian Kershaw, 'The Uniqueness of Nazism's Racial War', Wiener Library/Birkbeck, Univ of London Joint Lecture Series. Venue: Birkbeck, Lecture Theatre B33, Malet Street, London WC1, 7.00 pm

Thur 10 Prof Tilman Allert (Univ of Frankfurt am Main), 'The Führer Gruss: Story of a Gesture', Wiener Library, 7.00 pm

Sun 13 *And Then They Came for Me – Remembering the World of Anne Frank*, Millfield Theatre, Silver Street, Edmonton, London, 7.30 pm, tel 020 8807 6680

Mon 14 William Kaczynski, 'Struwelpeter Goes to War' Club 43

Mon 21 No lecture (Passover)

Mon 28 Dr Rudolf Muhs, 'Robert Pries and Henry Böckow: Two Self-made Men from Mecklenburg in Victorian England' Club 43

Thur 1 May 'Yom Hashoah – Recalling the Kindertransports' At Pinner Synagogue. This year's focus: the 70th anniversary of the Kindertransports. Speakers: Hermann Hirschberger, Susi Bechhofer. 8.00 pm

Club 43 Meetings at Belsize Square Synagogue, 7.45 pm. Tel Hans Seelig on 01442 254360

SHARING A COUCH WITH FREUD continued from page 3

She was the only human being of whom my mother, courageous and upright to a fault, confessed herself afraid. So much so that she used to lock herself in the lavatory when Aunt Laura came to visit. I have written about my mother elsewhere, describing how she came to be befriended by the Freud family, became Sigmund's patient, and led a life that was a beacon to others.

It all started with a rather disreputable cousin of hers. While studying medicine, he had discovered a facility for hypnotism, and realised that he could make more money showing off his extraordinary gifts on the stage rather than in the consulting room. Or preferably a bit of both. My grandfather was delighted to use him as a performer. Uncle changed his name, joined the freemasons, and discovered yet another talent – architecture, although I am not sure whether he ever built anything. But he liked to be addressed as

'Masterbuilder' (Herr Baumeister) and I remember that he wore a miniature silver spirit level on his watch chain. He was, of course, quite mad. His face was marked by the obligatory duelling scars (*Schmisse*) of the Prussian gentleman – which my father claimed were acquired each morning anew, with the help of make-up.

Between exercising his various talents, he used to disappear for long periods. I always imagined it was into prison, but this was strenuously denied by those close to him. During one of his medical phases, he gave a lavish party in one of the grand houses he used to rent on short leases. During the day he had practised hypnotherapy on some of his patients and conducted one particularly sleepy lady into his salon, to allow her to come to slowly. Having forgotten about her, he took his guests to the self-same salon while the patient was still asleep on a sofa under a protective covering

until my mother sat on her, with the expected consequences – embarrassment and confusion. As with Freud, the couch and a distrust of therapeutic hypnosis became career-determining factors in my mother's life, albeit not in identical circumstances. Still, she became a believer, Freud's patient, disciple and ultimately a skilled practitioner. She was a model of emancipation at a time when this was not yet the norm. She could laugh at family scandals and transgressions, turn a blind eye to outrage. Only one subject was taboo. She hated to be reminded of the fact that her father was the Mr Tussaud of Berlin, owner, among other places of entertainment, of a wax works in the Friedrichstrasse. Ploughing back the money thus earned into hopeless cultural ventures such as putting Hauptmann's masterworks on the New York stage could never wipe out the shame.

Neither a love nor a hate relationship

Austria meant little to me. Though growing up in it, I didn't feel part of it. Going to school, however, one had to become – like it or not – a member of the Vaterländische Front, an Austro-fascist organisation, to counteract growing pan-Germanism. School discipline forced us to attend mass meetings which tried to hype up enthusiasm for a cause few believed in.

Until I left Austria, I considered it normal that a stranger's first reaction to me should be to wonder whether I was Jewish or not. That's how it was then; that's how it still appears to me now. The only difference is that the scarcity of Jews in today's Austria makes the task of recognition more difficult. This intuitive reflex is deeply rooted in the Austrian psyche governing all social encounters.

For many years I had no connection with Austria whatsoever. It was enemy territory. I declined to join an Austrian youth movement in London whose members' aim was to return to 'liberated' Austria once the war was won. As an anti-assimilationist Revisionist, I attacked them in speech and writing. My rage was directed especially at those who were Jewish, who were the majority.

My first face-to-face encounter with the enemy – Austrian soldiers in the Wehrmacht – took place in PoW camps, where I served as interpreter, censor and political re-educator. Anxious to see them in defeat, and curious to find out who, how and what they were, I sought them out from the myriad of Germans surrounding them. Not surprisingly, there were no signs of arrogance or of Aryan bluster. They were a beaten, disillusioned lot, eager to find favour with the staff sergeant, who let them know where he hailed from.

How roles had changed. They were the down-and-out, and I, well groomed and smartly uniformed, was in charge of them – though I never had the urge to take advantage of them, as they, in all likelihood, would have done of me. It was they, or men like them, who had killed the first girl I had been in love with. Not foreseeing her fate, I had left her behind, doomed to perish at the age of 20 in an

East European ravine. I still carry that scar, wondering if I did all to rescue her. And there were others who vanished – an uncle, two aunts, and millions I never knew.

I came prepared to dismiss stories of their suffering, recalling the torment they inflicted. Equally, I disbelieved their professed anti-Nazi sentiments. Despite all that, a sneaking sensation, best described as empathy, took hold of me. I couldn't ignore their pain. Now, perhaps, with my help they could be weaned from the evil tenets which had caused anguish – in vastly different degrees – to all who were exposed to it.

It was the effect of speaking to fellow-

When I am in the company of an Austrian who, as far as I know, has no Nazi past, an innate bond prevails. Bafflingly, that rapport can come to pass in less time than with a Brit or a Canadian.

Viennese for the first time in many years that unexpectedly caused this mellowing in me. Was it the familiar lilt of the Viennese dialect, the references to well-known places, or shared memories of the past that lowered my guard?

These encounters in the last days of the war were the first moderating steps in my attitude to post-war Austria. German spoken with a soft Austrian sound is – for better or worse – my mother tongue. Then again, I prefer Austrian food to any other. I consider the Austrian landscape one of the most beautiful in the world. Melodious Austrian music delights me. Austrian actors such as Schenk and Brandauer are my favourites. Pre-1938 Austrian authors like Werfel taught me to love books. Although I spent barely a fifth of my life in Austria, they were formative years. Impressionable childhood and suggestive teenage recollections,

many of them subconscious, are indelibly imprinted on my mind.

There is another question that haunts me. As it is hypothetical, it must remain open-ended. Had I been born a gentile, blond and blue-eyed, how would I have behaved in 1938, when a mass psychosis of hatred swept the country? Would I have fallen under its sway like millions of others, most of them despite their Christian faith? Or would I have been one of the righteous few to stand up to the monstrous regime? I cannot say.

I disapprove of collective guilt. Not all Turks are responsible for the massacre of Armenians, nor all Spaniards for the terror of the Inquisition. Though there had to be widespread approval for the persecution, and even the extermination, of European Jewry and other so-called sub-humans, there were many who disapproved, and a few who paid with their lives for opposing the barbarians.

When I am in the company of an Austrian who, as far as I know, has no Nazi past, an innate bond prevails. Bafflingly, that rapport can come to pass in less time than with a Brit or a Canadian. By contrast, a boisterous British mob in a crowded pub, or rollicking Canadians in a tavern, are less intimidating to me than a mass of beer-swilling Austrians in a smoke-filled beer tent.

I have neither a love nor a hate relationship with Austria. Rather, it is a mixture of guarded like and dislike, of wanting to be accepted, but apprehensive of being rebuffed. While I have no desire to square the circle by returning to Austria for good, I will always feel the bond that ties me to the country in which I was born.

Recently, on a visit to Vienna, I stood opposite the grey, war-damaged building in which I grew up. I looked up to the second-floor windows which belonged to what was once our flat. Neither nostalgia nor animosity took hold of me. The past was past, though not to be forgiven or forgotten.

Jussi Brainin

This article is excerpted from the author's 'My A (For Austria), B (For Britain), C (For Canada) Trilogy: Short Version'.

INSIDE the AJR

Temple Fortune inaugural meeting

Our inaugural meeting at Alyth Gardens Synagogue attracted a capacity crowd of 70. Esther Rinkoff, co-ordinator of the group, introduced herself along with Hazel Beiny and Myrna Glass. This – the AJR's 41st group – will meet on the third Thursday of each month (except in April when there will be no meeting because of Pesach). A varied programme has been arranged for the months ahead.

David Lang

Theatre outings: 13 April: *And Then They Came for Me – Remembering the World of Anne Frank*, Criterion Theatre Piccadilly; 21 May: *Gone with the Wind*

Hull Continental Friends

Dina Le Boutillier and her brother Ralph gave us a fascinating account of their lives and of how the Quakers helped them to come on the Kindertransport. Otto Hirshfeld, 96, and his wife Sylvia told us the story of his miraculous escape from Ravensbrück concentration camp and the journey to England.

Olive Rosner

Next meeting: 1 June, at home of Rose Abrahamson

Oxford history lesson

Susannah Alexander gave us an overview of the effects of the migration of European Jewry in the twentieth century up to the present time: the influence on British society, Zionism, the growth of Progressive Judaism, and much more.

Anne Selinger

Next meeting: 8 April. The Wiener Library's Howard Falksohn

Ilford: A superb selection of Jewish singers

Alan Bilgora gave us a superb selection of Jewish singers from years gone by. Not only were we charmed by the beautiful voices, but we were impressed by the facts and figures Alan had put into his programme.

Meta Roseneil

Next meeting: 2 April. Alan Bilgora, part 2

Liverpool concert cheque

Guido Alis was presented with a cheque for £1,443.12 arising from a sell-out concert at Princes Road Synagogue. The money will go towards publishing the Liverpool Holocaust Memorial Book and installing a display cabinet at a permanent exhibition in Liverpool.

Guido Alis

Pinner afternoon at the movies

Alf Keiles ensured we enjoyed the magic of *Singing in the Rain*. He told us the superb quality of the screening was due to having the original full format of the old film transcribed to CD.

Walter Weg

Next meeting: 3 April. Howard Falksohn, 'The Wiener Library'

HGS: 'What is art?'

It was impossible not to be swept along by the enthusiasm of art historian Alan Cohen. We learned that an artist would use his or her imagination, creativity and ability to communicate an original idea and utilise colour, light, form and composition to create that elusive masterpiece.

Laszlo Roman

Next meeting: 14 April. Otto Deutsch, 'Weekends in Vienna'

Essex sixth birthday party

The AJR's Hazel, Helena, Darren and Myrna attended our 6th birthday celebration. There was a reporter from the local paper *The Echo* and a photographer. Boris, 87, entertained us with his mandolin. Bert, 95, the oldest member, blew out the six candles in one breath.

Larry Lisner

Next meeting: 8 April. Richard Shine of Jewish Care

Harrogate Continental Friends

As always, a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. As someone said, 'We are more like a family than a bunch of friends.' We heard reports about the trip to London, the Chanukah party in Shipley and Holocaust Memorial Day.

Inge Little

Next meeting: 19 May

Wembley: Reading of extracts from travels

Harvey Goldsmith read us extracts from a record of his worldwide travels, particularly in Hawaii. As usual, Myrna organised the refreshments beautifully.

Tom Heinemann

Cambridge: Superb talk on Wiener Library

We enjoyed a superb talk on the Wiener Library by its archivist Howard Falksohn. A most rewarding morning, which will have stirred memories and assuaged concern about future distortions of an eventful period.

Keith Lawson

Next meeting: 10 April. Susanne Lewis, Ben Uri Gallery

Edgware: Jewish Care

Our friendly group was privileged to hear Simon Morris speak to us about Jewish Care. This charity, which goes back almost 150 years under various names, endeavours to fill many needs in our community. The shortfall of funds is a constant restraint, but the aspirations for the future are ambitious.

Eve Glicksman

Next meeting: 15 April. Ronald Channing

Ilford outing to glassblowing factory

We visited Peter Layton at his glassblowing factory in Bermondsey, where his showrooms are packed with beautiful, multi-coloured vases, containers, paperweights. We watched as one of Peter's colleagues produced a superb vase from a blob of molten glass and placed it in the cooling box.

Meta Roseneil

Wessex talk on history of South Africa

With the aid of a video Dr Sheila Marshall gave us a whistle-stop tour of South African

Out-of-towners' trip to London



Baroness Neuberger and Philip Lesser of the West Midlands group

Members from Bath, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Cambridge, Nottingham and elsewhere enjoyed a hectic two-and-a-half-day trip to London. Highlights included a theatre visit to *Billy Elliot* and visits to the Ben Uri Gallery, the Kindertransport statue at Liverpool Street Station, and the AJR Centre.

The main event was a dinner at Belsize Square Synagogue with Baroness Rabbi Julia Neuberger as guest speaker. London-area members too were invited and an audience of 70 listened intently as Baroness Neuberger explained how her life had been shaped both by her mother and grandmother having been refugees and by the role the AJR had played in it.

Myrna Glass

history from the first settlement in 1652 in West Cape up to the present day.

Michael Stewart Rivlin

Radlett: The Jews of Greece

Rabbi Simon Franses gave us an excellent talk on the Jews of Greece, who, he told us, had been centred in Salonika. Some 50,000 Jews had been deported from this great Jewish centre to concentration camps, with very few surviving.

K. Metzger

Next meeting: 16 April. 'Safety in the Community'

Leeds HSFA

A group of musicians led by Mr P. Lazenby gave a performance of Celtic music as well as of works of Jewish origin. The event was well attended and all agreed it had been a very successful and enjoyable occasion.

Martin Kapel

Herts coffee morning

We met up for a coffee morning at Monica Rosenbaum's house, where we were served delicious snacks and had a very nice informal chat. A few life stories came to light and a thoroughly enjoyable morning was had by all.

Hazel Beiny

Next meeting: 29 April. Afternoon social

Bradford Continental Friends

Susanne Green gave a detailed account of the Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) events in Liverpool at which she was an adviser. The Chanukah party and the local HMD event were both praised. At the HMD, Rudi Leavor's short oratorio *Enosh* was given its

first performance and was videoed for the local Jewish archives.

Rudi Leavor

Hendon: The Jews of Shanghai

Kurt Wick told us about his life in Shanghai, the only place to which refugees could emigrate without difficulties, where he was at the age of six with his family. In 1945 they were liberated by American troops. The last emigrants left Shanghai in 1951 for Israel, the US and England; some returned to Austria and Germany. *Annette Saville*
Next meeting: 28 April. Rabbi Charles Emmanuel

Cleve Road: What is art?

Alan Cohen gave us an insight into art illustrated with many slides, some of which were of contemporary art he had purchased during his extensive travels. If you buy art to display in your own home, he told us, it should be because you enjoy it – not because it may increase in value for your grandchildren. *David Lang*
Next meeting: 29 April. Alan Bilgora, 'Famous Jewish Opera Singers'

OTHER APRIL MEETINGS

Kent 1 April. Sheila Marshall, 'History of South Africa'

Kingston CF 2 April. Social get-together; 30 April. Outing to Kew Gardens

Cardiff 7 April. 'The Jews in England'

Sarid (Brighton) 14 April

South London 30 April. Outing to Kew Gardens

North London 30 April. Outing

HOLIDAY FOR NORTHERN MEMBERS

Sunday 20 July 2008 –

Sunday 27 July 2008

AT THE FERNLEA HOTEL

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The hotel charges a supplement per room for sea view or deluxe room

Programme includes

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OUTINGS

MEET OLD AND NEW FRIENDS

Travel to St Annes by RAIL,

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020 8385 3070

DIARY DATES

Monday 26 May – Sunday 1 June

Bournemouth Holiday (Cliffside Hotel)

Tuesday 24 June

Day trip to Brighton and Hove

Jewish Day Centre

Sunday 20 July – Sunday 27 July

St Annes Holiday (Fernlea Hotel)

Sunday 21 Sept

AJR Tea at Hilton Watford

Sunday 26 October – Sunday 2 Nov

Eastbourne Holiday (Lansdowne Hotel)

For further information, please call us on 020 8385 3070.

AJR'S GROUP TEAM

Myrna Glass joined the AJR in November 1998 following a career in education. Her task was to develop a network of nationwide social groups in support of the AJR's grass-roots organisation. At that time, there were 6 groups in the entire UK. Currently there are 41 groups.

In 2001-05 Myrna started 12 groups, including North London, Essex, Ilford, Kent, Norfolk, Oxford, Cambridge and Cardiff. By the beginning of 2006 she was facilitating 19 groups in London, the Midlands and the South and could no longer cope alone with all this entailed – organising speakers, meeting rooms, outings, etc. Myrna sees AJR members as a special brand of people and as a role model for us all.

Susanne Green, previously a social worker for Merseyside Jewish Community Care, began working for the AJR as Northern Groups Co-ordinator in May 2001. There are now 14 social groups in the North of England and Scotland. The smaller groups (Continental Friends) meet in members' homes, the larger groups in a local meeting room. Each summer there are joint functions, day outings, and a Northern groups' visit to London.



(from left) Esther Rinkoff, Hazel Beiny, Myrna Glass, Susanne Green, Susan Harrod

Hazel Beiny joined the AJR in March 2006 having been a volunteer at the Holocaust Survivors Centre. She has opened Hendon, Edgware and Kingston upon Thames Continental Friends groups, while the Welwyn Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb groups have gone from bi-monthly to monthly meetings. Hazel has also introduced a programme of theatre outings, including trips to *Fiddler on the Roof* last year and *Gone with the Wind* this year.

Esther Rinkoff joined the AJR in September 2007 from a charity background as a fundraiser. She was brought on board to open new groups due to ever-increasing demand. It is evident that members want local gatherings as they are less able to travel far and can look forward to monthly socials with interesting

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

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

Wednesday 16 April 2008

Wally Leaf

'Inside Israel at 60'

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 7 April 2008

Jon Blair

will talk about his work as a film producer and director over more than 30 years

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

April Afternoon Entertainment

Wed	2	Mark Rosen – 'MUSIC FOR YOUR PLEASURE'
Thur	3	BINGO
Mon	7	KT LUNCH – Kards & Games Klub
Tue	8	CLOSED
Wed	9	Madeleine Whiteson – 'TRIO KINOOR'
Thur	10	Toni Green – 'SADIE GOLDBERG – JEWISH MOTHER'
Mon	14	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	15	CLOSED
Wed	16	LUNCHEON CLUB
Thur	17	Francis Spiegel – 'CURTAINS UP'
Mon	21	CLOSED – PESACH
Tue	22	CLOSED
Wed	23	Jen Gould – 'WEST END DREAMS'
Thur	24	Jill & John – 'JAZZ TWO'
Mon	28	Kards & Games Klub
Tue	29	CLOSED
Wed	30	Margaret Opdahl – 'OPDAHL TRIO'

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

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

speakers. Esther opened the Radlett group in October 2007. This month she opened a group in Temple Fortune – the 41st AJR group – with a turnout of 70.

Susan Harrod joined the AJR in August 2005, having previously worked for the United Synagogue. Susan works closely with Myrna, Susanne, Hazel and Esther. She confirms speakers and venues and provides members with details of future meetings. Recently she organised the first London visit for members not in the Northern region.

CLASSIFIED

Day Centre

Pamela Bloch at the Paul Balint AJR Centre Clothes sale, separates etc. Thursday 10 April, 9.30-11.45 am.

Chiroprapist

Trevor Goldman. Wednesday 30 April, 10-11.30 am.

AJR DAY TRIP

Join us for a trip to Brighton & Brighton & Hove Jewish Day Centre
Tuesday 24 June 2008

Coach leaving AJR Centre, Cleve Road, London NW6 at 10.00 am
£20 per person to include transport, lunch and tea

Please contact Carol Rossen or Lorna Moss on 020 8385 3070

Places are limited so please book early



ARE YOU DISPOSING OF BOOKS PRINTED IN 1920s OR 1930s GERMANY?

The Holocaust Exhibition at Imperial War Museum London is looking for books printed in 1920s and 1930s Germany that were banned under the Nazi regime.

If you have any books meeting that description which you might be willing to give or sell, please contact Sarah Batsford at sbatsford@iwm.org.uk or 020 7416 5286
IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM LONDON

BRIDGE DAY

AJR CENTRE

MONDAY 28 APRIL 2008

10.00 am for coffee and biscuits
A 3-course lunch at 1.00 pm
Continue playing till 3 pm
Make up your own four or come along and meet new people

Entrance £5

To book, please call the Centre on 020 7328 0208

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17 April 2008

12.00 for 12.30 pm
Led by Rabbi Katz

£10.00 per person
payable in advance

First-come-first-served basis
Please send cheque payable to AJR to AJR, 15 Cleve Road, London NW6 3RL

KINDERTRANSPORT LEGACY

A major TV channel is considering making a documentary on the legacy of the Kindertransport.

They would like to contact second- or third-generation members who have either had an especially interesting life or are known in their field of expertise.

Please contact Andrea Goodmaker at the AJR on 020 8385 3070

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AJR HOLIDAY IN BOURNEMOUTH

Monday 26 May to Sunday 1 June (6 days)

We are going back to Bournemouth this summer and will be staying at the Cliffside Hotel

£400 + £25 single room supplement
Price includes dinner, bed & breakfast, transport from and back to Cleve Road NW6, lunch on the journey to Bournemouth, outings and entertainment in the hotel

As always, places are limited so book early
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OBITUARY

Carl Franz Flesch

The passing of Carl Flesch, who died on 11 February 2008, has taken from us one of our last links with the great heritage of German Jewry. Carl had to emerge from the shadow of a famous father, then as a young man to flee the Nazis and build a new life from next to nothing in Britain. Those of us who had the privilege of knowing him can testify to his success in meeting those challenges.

Carl Flesch was born on 23 June 1910 in Rindbach, Austria, where his family spent their summer holidays; he was brought up in Berlin. His father was the celebrated violin maestro Carl Flesch, one of the greatest virtuosi of his era, who also developed methods of teaching the instrument that have kept his name alive to this day. His mother, Bertha Josephus, was from a well-known Amsterdam Jewish family. The Flesch family was highly assimilated. Carl was baptised as a baby – he used to joke that he had been a ‘Liegegoy’ – but re-established his links with Judaism. He was educated at the famous boarding school Salem, where he was friendly with Thomas Mann’s son Golo. In Berlin, the Flesch household was familiar with the most famous names in music such as Kreisler, Schnabel and Furtwängler.

Carl studied law, but Hitler’s accession to power in 1933 put an end to his career. He left for Holland in 1933, moving on to Britain the following year. His first years in London were typically difficult. Nevertheless, it was in the late 1930s that he established himself as an insurance broker. In 1937 he married Ruth Seligsohn, a partnership that lasted until her death, almost 49 years later. Their son Michael was born in 1940, followed in 1946 by their daughter Carol. After the war, Carl’s insurance broking business, Leroi, Flesch & Co, prospered. Though he regretted not having practised law, his intelligence, ability and capacity for work made him a successful businessman. He had no compunction in re-entering the labour market at the age of 70,



enjoying eight further successful years advising on insurance in Germany.

Carl organised the annual concerts of Self-Aid of Refugees, one of the contributions to the life of the refugee community for which he will be most gratefully remembered. The concerts, which the AJR subsequently took over, were one of the highlights of the refugee calendar. In 1964 he was appointed to the AJR’s Board and in 1965 to its Executive. He also served on the management committee of the Old Age Homes that the AJR ran with the Central British Fund, and was a member of the committee that organised the ‘Thank-You Britain’ Fund, which raised over £90,000 in the mid-1960s as a token of gratitude to the refugees’ adopted homeland.

In retirement, he turned to writing, publishing four books after reaching the age of 80. His family memoir *And Do You Also Play the Violin?* appeared in 1990, followed by *Where Do You Come From?* (2001) and *Who’s Not Who and Other Matters* (2006), books that mix memoirs with reflections on the refugee experience in Britain. He also published a book on the insurance industry. His great hobby in his later years was bridge; his flat in West Hampstead became the centre of a circle of bridge-playing friends, held together largely by affection for him.

Carl Flesch always remained conscious of his German-Jewish background and its proud artistic heritage; his flat was filled with memorabilia recalling a century of the great names and events of European musical history. He was a devoted family man, though sadly he suffered great losses: after the death of his first wife, he married Sheila, who also predeceased him, and he lost his daughter Carol to cancer. He is survived by his son Michael, whose career as a lawyer must have more than fulfilled his father’s own ambitions, by Michael’s and Carol’s children – Carl’s grandchildren – and by his great-grandchildren.

Anthony Grenville

AJR REPORT

Michael Newman

Stealing Klimt premiere

The AJR was proud to sponsor the premiere cinema screening of *Stealing Klimt* at the Odeon Swiss Cottage at the end of February.

The film, which depicts the story of Maria Altmann’s battle to recover her family’s artworks, which were stolen by the Nazis following the occupation of Austria, had appeared on the BBC’s *Imagine* series last year.

Organised by the Jewish Film Festival, the screening of the film was followed by a panel discussion featuring the AJR Journal’s Consultant Editor Dr Anthony Grenville, the film’s writer and executive producer Martin Smith, historian Professor David Cesarani, and Minister of the Austrian Embassy Ms Elisabeth Koegler, who participated in a personal capacity.

Seeking heirs of 115 former residents of Nuremberg and Franconia

We have received the following notice from the Commission for Looted Art in Europe:

The Nuremberg Municipal Library has in its collection approximately 10,000 confiscated books illegally taken from Jews and other victims of Nazi persecution. The Library has been carrying out provenance research and has so far identified 115 Jewish former owners whom it wishes to trace. The 115 former owners were residents of Nuremberg and Franconia and the Library has compiled a list including their names, addresses and occupations.

The London-based Commission for Looted Art in Europe and its sister organisation, the Central Registry of Information on Looted Cultural Property 1933-1945, have published an online list of former owners on their website: <http://www.lootedart.com/MVL106734651>

The Commission will provide free assistance and guidance to any heirs and descendants to enable restitution. All details are on the webpage above. They can be contacted at: Jennifer Anderson, Commission for Looted Art in Europe, 76 Gloucester Place, London W1U 6HJ tel +44 (0)20 7487 3401, fax +44 (0)20 7487 4211, email info@lootedartcommission.com

Enquiries seeking advice and clarification on Holocaust restitution and compensation matters should continue to be sent to Michael Newman at Central Office for Holocaust Claims (UK), Jubilee House, Merrion Avenue, Stanmore, Middx HA7 4RL, by fax to 020 8385 3075, or by email to mnewman@ajr.org.uk



LETTER FROM ISRAEL



England anti-Semitic?

Forty-odd years ago, when I was a student at the LSE, the members of the Jewish Society would go along 'for a laugh' to the annual London University Students' Union debate on the proposal to abolish the State of Israel and establish an Arab state in its stead. No Jewish student took the subject seriously, and the anger displayed by the handful of Arab students (there were no Palestinians at that time) seemed futile.

Many things have changed since then. A recent edition of the *San Diego Jewish World*, an internet journal serving the Jewish community of that august city, contained Norman Greene's account of an address given there by the well-known American author, Harvard professor and lawyer Alan Dershowitz. It sent a shiver down my spine.

According to him, 'the most virulently anti-Semitic, anti-Israel country in Europe is not Poland, the Ukraine or Russia, it is America's closest ally, England ... Many of the people who describe themselves as being pro-Palestinian are virulently anti-Israel, which means that they want to see no Jewish state more than they want to see a Palestinian state.'

Dershowitz claims that anti-Semitism is endemic to English society, dominating the media and the institutions of higher education, its chief perpetrator being the BBC, which 'spends more time on the supposed humanitarian crisis in Gaza ... and virtually no time reporting on the Congo, where millions of people have died.'

England anti-Semitic? What paranoid mind could produce a greater calumny? England is the country which took up arms against Hitler, which gave us and our families refuge, which took in 10,000 children on the Kindertransports and much more besides.

But that was 60 years ago, and the situation is very different today. Since then, England has given refuge to a plethora of populations, including many

who adhere to the Muslim faith. And while some people claim that Islam is a religion of peace, it cannot be denied that almost all the acts of terrorism that have plagued the Western world in recent times have been perpetrated by persons claiming to be acting in the name of Islam.

Anyone who, like me, left England 40 years ago and returns to visit from time to time cannot fail to notice the change that has overtaken Britain. A stroll down one of my favourite haunts, Oxford Street, now brings one into contact with a variegated, multi-cultural throng, while the shops and eateries around Marble Arch and the Edgware Road resemble downtown Beirut more than the England I grew up in.

This may well be a good thing. It can't be bad for a country to emerge from insularity and become more cosmopolitan. It need not necessarily follow, however, that this should bring on an access of anti-Semitism and a wish to annihilate Israel.

We all know that many students from Arab countries attend British universities, as do large numbers of English students who are Muslim by birth. By sheer force of numbers they have managed to get pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel resolutions passed by their student unions and recently almost succeeded in imposing an academic boycott on Israel.

The British man-in-the-street tends to support the underdog. Thus, the misrepresentation by the media of the situation in the Middle East, focusing on the suffering of impoverished Palestinians rather than their leaders' intransigence or inability to come to the negotiating table, doubtless plays a role in furthering the view that Israel has no right to exist.

When Israel removed its settlers from the Gaza Strip the whole world applauded. Now, however, as I write, its civilian population inside Israel proper is bombarded daily by rockets from Gaza. Did that ever get a headline in *The Guardian*?

Dorothea Shefer-Vanson

Newsround

Hakoah sports club re-opens in Vienna

The Jewish sports club Hakoah has re-opened in Vienna 70 years after being dissolved at the time of the Nazi takeover of the country. The re-opening of the centre took place during a week of events commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Anschluss. Founded in 1909, Hakoah was an eminent name in pre-WWII European sport.

Hungarians recognised for saving Jews from Holocaust

Sixteen Hungarians have been recognised as Righteous Gentiles by Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Centre for helping Jews during the Second World War. Among the honoured are those who hid Jews in their basements and a Budapest hotel manager who saved up to 100 Jews by using fake guest names.

Lawyer jailed for fraud in dealing with Jews' pensions in Germany

The Tel Aviv district court has sentenced attorney Yisrael Perry to 12 years' imprisonment for embezzling 320 million German marks' worth of insurance premiums from Israelis who claimed retirement benefits. He was also fined NIS 21.75 million and sentenced to five-and-a-half years' suspended imprisonment.

Cracks in Berlin Holocaust memorial slabs to be sealed

Some two-thirds of the slabs that make up the Berlin Holocaust memorial, which opened in May 2005, have cracked. Repair work is due to start when the weather improves, according to an official. The memorial, designed by the American architect Peter Eisenman and located close to Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, cost 27.6 million euros to build.

Poland's first woman rabbi appointed

Tanya Segal, 50, is the first full-time female rabbi in Poland. An actress and singer in Moscow's Jewish Chamber Musical Theatre before emigrating to Israel, Segal lives in Warsaw but travels frequently around Poland with a guitar, on a mission to bring Jewish traditions to Poland. 'Jews are still here', she says, 'they are looking for their identity, for their roots.'

Rise in assaults on British Jews

The Community Security Trust (CST) recorded 114 incidents of violent crime last year, the highest number since its records began in 1984. Overall, the CST said, there were 547 'anti-Semitic race hate incidents' in 2007, the second highest total on record.