

## News of the Yitzchak Rabin Lodge

Lorna Fitzsimons, Chief Executive of BICOM (British Israel Communications & Research Centre), addressed a joint meeting of Yitzchak Rabin and Shlomo Argov Unity Lodges on 4th February.

Lorna was the Member of Parliament for Rochdale before losing her seat in the last general election. She said she was proud to be considered associated with us. She was glad she had accepted the invitation to lead BICOM, because it led from her intense interest and involvement in Israel ever since her student days. Being non-Jewish was often helpful in getting Israel's case across to non-Jews. Lorna explained the work of BICOM, showing how rapid and informed response to inaccuracy or distortion in media coverage resulted in corrections being made.

Groups of editors and correspondents were regularly taken to see key locations in Israel to ensure they were well briefed. Lorna warned against knee-jerk defensive reaction to the slightest criticism of Israel and urged her listeners always to present a positive viewpoint.

On 18th February, Paul Anticoni, the Executive Director of World Jewish Relief, gave a presentation of the work of World Jewish Relief, entitled 'Our work around the World'. He also gave an account of his career from the time he took a degree in agriculture to the present, including his work in many parts of the third world. He treated us to an amusing story about arriving at a road blockade where identity documents were required. The only document he had was his Hillingdon public library ticket, which he produced. After studying it in great detail, the armed guard, clearly satisfied, allowed him to pass! Paul asked us to distribute details of the gifts in kind that are needed for communities in Eastern Europe and the location of World Jewish Relief's warehouse to which such gifts can be delivered.

On 27th February, Lodge members enjoyed a theatre outing to see "Three Sisters on Hope Street", written by Tracy-Ann Oberman the well-known actress, and Diane Samuels, the author of 'Kindertransport'. The play was based on the Chekov story, but set in Liverpool in the post-war period when there was overt anti-Semitism.

On 26th March, the Discussion Group met to discuss 'Intermarriage: do we condone or condemn it?'. The discussion ranged over a wide range and passionate views were expressed.

The Rabbi Michael Leigh Memorial Lecture was held on 22nd May jointly, with the Edgware & District Reform Synagogue. The speaker was the well-known Jonathan Freedland. His subject was 'How can we best support Israel?'. He explained that the birth rate of Israelis was lower than that of the population of occupied territories and that by 2020, it was likely that there would be more people in the occupied

territories than in Israel. The result will be that, having no vote, these people will be governed by a minority which would be unacceptable and argued that the only solution is to have two states.

At a joint meeting held on 1st May with Shlomo Argov Lodge, Max Kohn, a psychoanalyst and professor at University Paris Diderot, spoke on Jewish Humour. He touched on a wide range of topics and asked if there was a specific Jewish humour and explained how a person might have more than one language, for example, there was the sacred language and the language of the state with Yiddish lying between them.

On 17 June, Dr David Ryde, a retired medical GP spoke about his career and how he treated patients with hypnotherapy which he first saw being used by Doctor Bertie Herman, under whom he trained after first qualifying. He digressed to tell us about how, due to the Nazis, Dr Herman hurriedly fled Vienna on whatever train was available and arrived in Albania where he soon became the personal physician of King Zog. After two years of wandering, he reached Dumfries where his wife and child had found refuge. He first used hypnotherapy on his wife, then successfully on his patients and detailed some of the many cases he had treated, from slipped discs, burns, sports injuries, anxiety, phobias depression, helping people give up smoking to relieving the pain of breast cancer.

Throughout the year we continued to raise funds for our two main projects, support for Holocaust survivors in Kiev and for poor families in Kiryat Gat.

Our annual musical soiree was held, as always, at the home of Tony and Jean Etherton, where we greatly enjoyed the singing of Steven Leas, tenor and cantor, who was accompanied at the piano by Malcolm Miller. The varied programme included Italian music from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, cantorial singing and some Israeli and Yiddish songs. The programme ended with a spirited rendering of Adon Olam in which Steven was enthusiastically joined by the audience. The evening was a great success, leaving us looking forward to the next soiree in a year's time.