

AJR INFORMATION

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AT THE CROSSROADS

The Jewish past and present in Eastern Europe

The world looks on in benign bewilderment as Poland and Hungary emerge from the Soviet straightjacket to take giant lumbering steps towards full democracy. Jewish eye witnesses of this process are prone to contradictory reactions: Poland and Hungary are both countries with whose history our own has been deeply entwined.

In Poland the relationship, once fairly good, deteriorated disastrously since the Partitions till, in the interwar years, the Jews were at best second-class citizens. During Hitler's War the Poles fought tenaciously and several thousand sheltered Jews at the risk of their own lives. Even so, the Nazi policy of ridding the country of all Jews elicited widespread approval, and postwar attempts by some survivors to put down roots again foundered in the stony soil. Today the country is virtually Jew-free; the best that can be hoped for from the restoration of democracy is that the unhappy history of Polish-Jewish relations will become the subject of a liberating debate untrammelled by Catholic mystification and Communist taboo.

Hungary: a special case

The case of Hungary is rather different, both as regards the past and the present. In historic Hungary, the ruling gentry class saw the Jews as a group amenable to Magyarisation, and therefore as a convenient counterweight to the Slovak, Romanian and Croat minorities with their subversive aspirations towards independence. The landowning gentry also had the 'nous' to realise that since they themselves lacked the requisite talents for developing commerce and industry, the Jews could be usefully allowed to apply their entrepreneurial gifts in those areas.

The Magyar Establishment's 'philosemitism from self-interest' explains why Hungarian Jews felt so patriotic that Zionism — the brainchild of Budapest-born Theodor Herzl — gained few adherents among them. It also accounts for the relative late emergence — around 1900 — of antisemitism as a political force in the country.

Wartime defeat, national humiliation and the 1919 Soviet Republic led by Bela Kun (Kohn) greatly increased Judeophobia. The interwar Horthy regime operated a *numerus clausus* and other discriminatory measures without, however, making Jewish existence as onerous as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The Second World War initially almost spared Hungary's Jews, and then plunged them into the pit of hell, as SS and local Fascists 'completed' the *Shoah*.

Jews caught in the crossfire

At Liberation they numbered 180,000 — a mere quarter of the pre-war total. Many were so traumatised that they hid their Jewishness even from their own children. But it was not only the recent past that inclined them towards denying their identity; in the 1950s the Jews were simultaneously attacked as suspicious bourgeois elements by the Communist authorities, and as henchmen of Moscow by the population at large. (The men holding supreme power in Budapest till 1956 were, in fact, a 'Jewish quartet': Rakosi, Gerö, Revai and KGB chief Farkas.) The anti-Russian uprising of 1956 had an antisemitic

undercurrent represented by Cardinal Mindszenty, at the same time as the Jewish writers Tibor Dery and Gyula Hay figured among rebel spokesmen.

Paradoxical fear of freedom

Kadar's post-1956 reforms ameliorated the Jewish, as well as the general, situation somewhat, but his cautious loosening of constraints proceeded alongside almost daily tirades against Israel in the official media.

Now Kadar has gone and his system for containing expressions of discontent, including antisemitism, within 'safe' limits is being dismantled. Hungarian Jewry thus faces an uncertain future. For the span of a whole generation life, though hard, was slowly improving; above all, people knew where they stood. As of now, spontaneous evolution may carry the country in any one of several directions. The institution of Western-style democracy is a possibility, but nothing like a certainty. Though none stands more to gain from the coming of true democracy to Hungary than the Jews, they are currently racked by the anxiety unique to our chaotic century: 'the fear of freedom'.

AJR CHARITY CONCERT

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CHINESE STUDENTS ARE A MINORITY, TOO

Who first spoke of 'Anglo-Jewry'? Why was the 'German-Jewish' synthesis so unique? What do we mean by the 'American-Jewish' way of life?

Whatever the answers to such questions, they remind us of the extra dimension that many Jews find when travelling abroad. They may search out a synagogue, experience a Service, or even make contact with a local community. They may well do none of these, and still ask themselves what life is like for the Jews of their chosen destination. What is always of interest is to observe the particular blend of Jewish and local traditions that makes every community different, yet somehow related.

These thoughts were prompted by my recent visit to China, for here surely was a country where, for all its vastness, I would find no trace of Jewish life. It seemed that there were two cities of relevance: Shanghai, where between 1933 and 1945, 25,000 Jews found refuge from Nazi Europe, since here alone no visas were required; and Kaifeng, about 500 miles north-west of Shanghai, where Jews arrived from Persia or India in the 12th century, becoming known for their cotton fabric production, and where their descendants were still found at the turn of this century.

At any rate, Shanghai appeared on our itinerary, along with Beijing (Peking), Xi'an, Canton and other major cities, but Kaifeng did not. This was, after all, not a trip of specifically Jewish interest, but rather a musical one: the Bancroft's Singers (who have on several occasions entertained the residents of Osmond House and

Heinrich Stahl House) had received an invitation to give five concerts in China during April. Our repertoire consisted of folksongs, madrigals, popular song arrangements and other secular, but no sacred, music. This had been a request from our Chinese hosts, who had said by way of explanation: 'You see, we have no God in China.'

Be that as it may, we decided to oblige, and avoid jeopardizing the tour. We did sing one Chinese folksong (in Chinese!) at our concerts, which was always immediately recognized and applauded, but all our other music was Western, and we were constantly surprised by the degree to which this appeared to be appreciated and enjoyed by the audiences.

Minorities exceed U.K. total

Of course, wherever we went, we were visibly a minority group of tourists. We learned during our stay and in preparation for it that China itself is made up of no less than 56 nationalities: the Han, who make up 93 per cent of the population, and the 55 minority nationalities, who total some 67 million people (still only 7 per cent of the population). They have their own languages and traditions, and most differ in physical appearance from the Han Chinese. The smallest of the minorities — the Hezhen, living mostly in the north-eastern province of Heilongjiang, by the border with the U.S.S.R. — only numbered 1,476 in the 1982 census.

Most of the minority peoples live in the border regions, many of which are remote and sparsely inhabited. There have been numerous clashes with the dominant Han authorities over the years, who have sometimes appeared insensitive to the value of local heritage and traditions — the brutality shown towards the Tibetan monks not so long ago was an extreme example. 52 minority languages are recognised officially, and some have an established body of literature going back many centuries, while others have only in the last few decades begun to transcribe their spoken languages into written form.

Interestingly, the non-Han population is growing much faster than that of the Han majority, for whom a policy was introduced in 1984 of restricting each couple to just one child. (The alternative — a continuation of the rapid growth since 1949 and particularly during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution — was seen to spell impending disaster.) However, it is only in the cities that families with one child are the norm: in the countryside, control is harder; people desperately want sons, for traditional as well as economic reasons, and families seem prepared anyway to pay the fines involved and have more children.

The situation of the 55 minority peoples is not without interest for Jews, who are, after all minorities in every country except Israel. Indeed, the feeling of many Jewish refugees in England in the thirties, who felt themselves to be 'a minority within a minority' — continental Jews within the body of Anglo-Jewry — has a certain parallel in the adherents of various religions within the minority nationalities in China. There too, especially in the border regions, the people have developed affinities with their neighbours in, for

example, Mongolia, Korea, Burma and the Soviet Union, whether or not this is approved of by the Han authorities.

We were lucky. Our tour ended and we returned home on April 15th, the very day that Hu Yaobang died, and the students first invaded Tiananmen Square in mourning. Our reception everywhere had been so warm and welcoming, we had shared so many conversations with students in Beijing and Xi'an, thirsting for contact and eager to practise their excellent English. Despite the widespread dissatisfaction, of which people were not afraid to speak, there was no hint of the developments to come — either the spontaneous mass demonstrations with their almost carnival atmosphere, or the tragic and brutal end to them on 4 June — and we have all watched the recent events with heightened sadness. Who knows how far the opening up of China has been set back, or when choirs of English schoolchildren will next share song and laughter with their contemporaries in Canton?

One student wrote to me from Xi'an on 30 May, only days before the massacre in Beijing! 'We students want to have democracy in China, to purge corruption. The government said they agree with the students' opinion, but they don't take any measures to serve the aim . . . The government declared the martial law, but I think it is not judicious to do so.' The students may not be a 'nationality', but they have now become, through their actions, China's fifty-sixth minority group, indeed the one above all on which the whole future of China may depend.

JOHN DUNSTON



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SELF AID CONCERT

The 42nd annual charity concert, a longstanding event which places the highest standards of musicianship in the service of humanitarian endeavour, will be held on Sunday, 5 November 1989 at 3 p.m. at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

This year's artistes will be members of the Gabrieli String Quartet and Tamas Vasary; they will be performing works by Beethoven, Mozart and Dvořak.

TAMAS VASARY

Born in Debrecen, Hungary, Tamas Vasary gave his first concerts at the age of eight. His first studies were with Dohnanyi, and later having received his Diploma from the Franz Liszt Academy, he became Assistant Professor to



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Kodaly. In 1956 he left Hungary and in 1961 made his debut in London and New York and quickly established an international career. He has now appeared with virtually every major orchestra under conductors such as Friscay, Szell, Solti, Jochum, Previn, Andrew Davis and Simon Rattle. He has recently been named Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Sinfonietta.

In addition to playing numerous recitals throughout the United Kingdom, Europe and the USA in recent seasons, Tamas Vasary has appeared as soloist with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony with Sir Georg Solti, the Indianapolis Symphony, the Orchestre

National de France, the Trondheim Symphony, the Stockholm Philharmonic and the Goteborg Symphony. He has conducted and played with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Centre in Washington D.C., with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and with the American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

GABRIELI STRING QUARTET

John Georgiadis: Violin
Brendan O'Reilly: Violin
Ian Jewel: Viola
Keith Harvey: Cello

The Gabrieli String Quartet is now accepted as one of the world's most renowned quartets and for many years has enjoyed a busy international career. Tours of Europe, North America and the Far East have met with public and critical acclaim. In recent seasons the Quartet has visited France, Switzerland, Spain, Holland, Germany, Poland, Greece and Scandinavia. They also regularly visit the United States, Australia and New Zealand. In the United Kingdom, the Quartet continues to be in great demand, playing concerts throughout the country and in many festivals including Cheltenham, Aldeburgh, City of London Festival, etc.

Since 1971 they have been resident Quartet at the University of Essex, where they perform regularly and have run an annual summer school for many years. Since September 1986 they have held a teaching appointment at the Guildhall School of Music, where they are also Quartet in Residence. The Quartet reaches a large audience through its numerous radio and television broadcasts and last year celebrated its 20th anniversary.



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ANGLO-SAXON ATTITUDES

'Will this be the death of England?' was the title of a recent *Sunday Telegraph* article which triggered off a voluminous correspondence. Its author, after reciting a catalogue of calamities — from drug trafficking to rioting — visited by non-white immigrants upon this country, warned against granting asylum to an additional 3,000,000 Chinese from Hong Kong.

The great majority of the several hundred *Sunday Telegraph* readers who thereupon put pen to paper endorsed the sentiment and the warning. They included John Stokes MP to whose subliminal antisemitism we made reference in the previous issue (*AJR Information*, September, p. 6). On this occasion the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge evoked 'the homes, pubs, shops and factories of the real England — beyond Westminster, Whitehall and the Commission for Racial Equality — where still unbrainwashed English men and women talk about and love and hold dear their native land'.

Threat to Englishness

A dissenting view was expressed by a reader who asked how immigrants numbering under five per cent of the population and remote from the centres of power could pose a threat to 'Englishness'.

A rather puzzling contribution to the debate came from a Mr. Wakefield. He started off promisingly by asking if the ethnic minorities could be blamed for greed and corruption in business, inflation, bad industrial relations and the waning influence of the Church of England. Then, however Mr. Wakefield went on 'It was not the ethnic minorities who made us decimalise and metricate, redraw our ancient counties and sign the Treaty of Rome'. His final trumpet blast against the EEC read 'We are even asked to think ourselves European and to feel shame at speaking too few foreign languages instead of pride that English is a universal tongue'.

The bizarre way in which the rational tone at the start of this letter is subverted by its risible ending almost made one suspect a spoof. The impression that facetiousness had invaded the *Sunday Telegraph's* correspondence column was reinforced by a letter from Lady Mosley complaining that the paper's columnist Mandrake had called her 'an elderly antisemite'. Her letter concluded 'I am certainly very old, but it has never hitherto been suggested that I am an antisemite, which I am not. I consider the lumping together of a whole race or nation a great nonsense'.

After this one can only say (even at the risk of offending Mr. Wakefield) '*Papier ist geduldig*'.

EAST EUROPEAN SEARCH FOR ROOTS

Two hundred and forty Jewish secondary pupils and students from Hungary spent the summer vacation in Israel. Another group of visitors comprised 60 Soviet Jews aged 18 to 32 who put in ten weeks' work on various kibbutzim; 8,000 Soviet tourists had come to the Jewish State during last winter.

SOLOTHURN ENJOYS JUREK BECKER'S SOLO TURN

Solothurn may not be the best-known Swiss resort, yet it is a beautiful, quiet, though by no means sleepy old historical town of Roman origin, untouched as yet by commercial or industrial expansion. It is dominated from within by St. Ursen, an impressive elevated baroque cathedral, and from without by the Swiss Jura. By the river Aare stands the Landhaus, in whose stuffy, uncomfortable, noisily creaking Kreuz-Saal, opposite and above a restaurant, the annual gathering of Swiss-German writers (with a few colleagues from the country's other language areas) takes place during the weekend before Whitsun. Thanks to the generosity of Pro Helvetia I was privileged to be one of several foreign guests at the 11th Solothurner Literaturtage

24 Swiss-German, four French, two Italian-Swiss writers read extracts from recent, often still unpublished, unfinished, or even unpolished works. In addition four Nigerian women writers were presented in English, regrettably late in the evening when exhaustion or thirst had overcome most of us.

The bearing and attitude of the participating writers was as diverse as their writing. Some were motivated purely by PR, a few were extrovertly flamboyant, but most, especially the more famous, remained obtrusively unselfconscious. Nearly everyone who mattered (except for Frisch and Dürrenmatt) was there. Particularly impressive was the workmanlike professional attitude towards their craft, their readiness to discuss in detail working procedures and the translation of their thoughts and experiences into the often problematic medium of language.

There were some particularly stimulating readings. Franz Hohler, famous for his childrens' stories, wit, concern for the environment (physical and psychological), his brilliant word-play, as well as his cabaret appearances (with cello) read from his first full-length novel *Der neue Berg* (working title). This concerns the mysterious appearance of a mound inside a city and the contrast between private disquiet and public reassurances, a situation familiar to us in various disguises. Helen Meier read a beautiful and moving description of an author observing his own demise and burial as he drifts into possible oblivion or immortality. Hugo Loetscher read three brilliantly stylised stories from his recently published *Die Fliege und die Suppe und 33 andere Tiere in 33 anderen Situationen*, a kind of 'Comédie animale'; these are not fables, but concern animals behaving as such, though often in reaction to the intrusion of the world of humans.

Ghetto survivor

It has already been implied that the *Literaturtage* are not a purely insular and inward-looking event. Every year there is an eminent guest reader from abroad. This year it was Jurek Becker, the Polish-German-Jewish writer who now lives in West Berlin, having moved from the DDR in the late seventies. He survived both Ghetto and concentration camps (Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück) and had been a free-lance writer in East Berlin. He was expelled from the Party after

joining in the protests at the expulsion of Wolf Biermann. His novels centre mainly around his experiences in concentration camp (*Jakob der Lügner*, 1969) and East Germany (*Der Boxer*, 1976). Jews are, however, the strongest feature in his writings. On this occasion his Jewish wit, tempered with a good dose of Berlin humour, made him a particularly welcome and refreshing guest. He read two items: an extract from an as yet undelivered *Poetikvorlesung*: a conversation between a writer and his friend who had banned all his books to the cellar; gradually the attitudes and arguments become blurred and interchangeable, the roles seem to become reversed. His second text was a short story *Die beliebteste Familiengeschichte* from his volume *Nach der ersten Zukunft*. It is the story of Onkel Gideon, a Polish Jew from a small town, whose first visit abroad to London in 1922 on a business trip becomes a disconcerting, but at least in retrospect amusing, adventure. It was a testimony to the popularity and universality of this kind of humour that his reading (and performance, for that's what it was) was received with delighted enthusiasm.

HANS SEELIG, Middlesex Polytechnic

JURNET'S HOUSE — STONE RELIC OF PLANTAGENET JEWRY

The counties along England's Eastern seaboard contain three cities — York, Lincoln and Norwich — which are veritable historic and architectural treasure troves. In Norman times all three accommodated Jewries whose numbers were inversely proportionate to their economic significance. Alas, the three Jewish communities also suffered the lethal persecution characteristic of the Christian Middle Ages.

York had the 'straightforward' massacre at Clifford's Tower. Lincoln and Norwich were more imaginative: there the local diocesan clergy fabricated tales of ritual murder. Such tales also prompted pogroms; in addition they had the long-term effect of turning the site of the 'murder' into a place of pilgrimage with commensurate spin-off for local clergy, inn-keepers and tradesmen.

Lincoln led the way with the story of the murder of little Hugh who, secretly buried by the Jews, 'called out' to his mother, thus causing the grave — and the crime — to be discovered. Hugh's bones, exhibited as relics, drew such streams of pilgrims to Lincoln cathedral that the story of the 'the dead boy who sang' entered medieval English folklore and literature. (Chaucer retailed it in the 'Prioress's Tale' of *The Canterbury Tales*; as did Marlowe in the *The Jews of Malta*).

The income and influence accruing to Lincoln's Cathedral clergy from the cult aroused the envy of their Norwich-based brothers in Christ, who consequently set about concocting the story of John of Norwich — a rehash of Little Hugh's tale. Not that Norwich actually stood in need of income generated by pilgrimages (a sort of medieval forerunner of mass tourism): in the 13th

century the chief town of East Anglia ranked second only to London in population size and economic importance.

Local Jews contributed greatly to the city's economic prosperity. The leading Jewish family of Norwich were the Jurnets; Isaac Jurnet, also known as Isaac of Norwich, had such wealth that he paid one eighth of the city's taxes. Isaac also built the town's second stone building, after the Cathedral. Jurnet's House still stands today.

No entry from street

The arched and vaulted cellars, forming two rooms separated by a stone wall, are now several feet below street level, but were probably at street level in the Middle Ages and used as warehouses,



Photo Richard Denyer

and possibly a shop. For security reasons there was no doorway in front of the building, and the house was entered by a porch in the middle of the long south side of the house as the illustration shows. There was a stairway in the north eastern angle at the rear of the house, leading to the single hall above, and it does not seem certain whether another floor would have existed or not. Possibly the upper hall was divided into two, one room for eating and living in, and one for sleeping; even the wealthiest of families did not seek privacy at this time (1175).

Jurnet's grandson, another Isaac, was charged in 1253 with crimes against the King and taken to the Tower of London. Presumably to save his life, he allowed himself to be converted to Christianity but his property, including the house, was confiscated by the Crown. Henry III gave the house to Lord William de Valeres 'for his services' and over the centuries it passed into the possession of many well known Norfolk families, such as the Felbriggues, the Yelvertons and the Pastons.

The Great Hall, constructed by Sir John Paston around 1500, was the first home of the Norwich Players, who later moved to the Maddermarket. To-day the Maddermarket actors are the leading amateurs in the country — and Jurnet's House serves as a Residential Education Centre.

FOUR BRANDS PLUCKED FROM THE FIRE

One-and-a-half million children died in the Holocaust. On Sunday, 27 August, BBC 2 honoured their memory with an hour-long programme on the *Kindertransporte* (directed by Sally George). *No Time to Say Goodbye* focused on four 'children', three women and a man who had long ago left childish things behind them. The horrors hovered in the background, instead there was much nostalgia for ordinary, happy childhoods roughly interrupted. The four are middle-aged now, but it was of their youth, both on the Continent and in Britain, that they spoke.

This was no hard-edged documentary, with events tumbling over each other, and participants being subjected to searching interrogation. The four were allowed to speak for themselves, their stories being intercut with newsreel material and occasional graphics. The whole was in somewhat soft focus, underpinned by the fine voice of the narrator (actress Sarah Kestelman). If the whole presentation was somewhat impressionistic it was none the worse for that, for though occasionally confusing in detail, it gave viewers an insight into young minds whirled about by the storms of that time.

In a sense the rescued Jewish children went from the frying pan into the fire, for no sooner had they arrived and settled with this or that family or institution, than the war overtook them and (like the indigenous children) they were evacuated . . . again into this or that family or this and that institution. They were all pre-teens or early teens, immature, and longing for their lost childhood, which in the circumstances seemed like Paradise lost. Above all they longed for parents whom they perceived as being in great danger. They told of the efforts, they, the tiny tots, made to aid their parents' rescue. Who of us in a similar position does not remember such attempts . . . so often in vain, as in the case of the four in the programme?

Despite the programme's title, they all had said goodbye, but it was a brief, rushed leave-taking. One father actually sneaked on to the train and went as far as the border, making sure that all had crossed safely to freedom. Czech-born Liesl Silverstone remembered a forced cheerfulness at the railway station; the others harked back to the sadness of their departure. Liesl's mother was the only one of the parents of the four to survive (though a typhoid victim); in the end, though, that added to Liesl's sorrow, for she felt unable to make up to her mother what she had lost.

Dealing with guilt feelings

All four had to deal with feelings of guilt at having escaped. Professor Brent, who served in the British Army, and was shown in a still as a lieutenant, said he had by then acquired the British stiff upper lip. He had his breakdown later, and now feels he should have given in to his sorrow earlier. His was an interesting case. Relative fortune smiled on him: people were kind and at Bunce Hill school the staff showed great understanding. He thinks that he achieved more here than if Germany had remained his home.

However, one gathered from his words that his guilt feelings were all the more severe because of his successes.

Some of the memories were bitter. A number of householders in reception areas would not take in evacuated refugee children on the grounds that they might be 'German spies'. Vienna-born Dora Vernon told of a girl throwing herself out of the window of a hostel at Harrogate. It was Dora, then fifteen, who sent Bloomsbury House a letter on toilet paper pleading for help for her parents.

For Karola Regent, from Duesseldorf, writing it all down brought a certain release. When she visits Germany she goes to her former home; it is virtually unchanged, but she cannot get herself to go inside. . . .

The title of Thomas Wolfe's 1930s novel *You Can't Go Home Again* could indeed have served as epigraph for this programme.

JOHN ROSSALL

THE SAVED AND THE DROWNED

The temperature soared to the nineties,
The *Kinder* all stood in a line,
Recalling, perhaps, their arrival
In years 'thirty-eight, 'thirty-nine.

As strangers approached one another
And questions were eagerly asked,
The anecdotes flowed, and nine hundred
In heatwave and sentiment basked.

A torrent of painful emotions
Of which I had thought I was purged,
Like spectres, now flooded my senses,
And feelings of guilt re-emerged;

For I'd had my brother and sisters
And parents with me on the train;
— My husband and friends were the *Kinder*
Who never saw families again.

MARY HUTTRER

MANAGING MEGA-MURDER

Eighty-five minutes — a time span that allowed for a light repast, some quips and much manly laughter — sufficed to seal the fate of European Jewry.

The reconstruction of the Wannsee Conference, made for German TV and transmitted by BBC2 in August, also lasted 85 minutes. It was a quite excellent production. The actors involved were not impersonating the publicly known top Nazis so that the element of recognition did not obtrude. The 14 participants were the 'backroom boys', not the chief protagonists on the stage of history. So intense, so real, was the illusion put before the viewer that one felt shattered, as if one had been present at the conference.

The main actor — in both senses of the word — was Reinhard Heydrich, full of false bonhomie and jocularly which was always on the verge of threatening his underlings, even the efficient and devoted Eichmann. But he rejoiced the murderously antisemitic hearts of the *Ostland* (i.e. Baltic) Gauleiter, who knew that the liquidation

of the Jews had been in full swing for the best part of a year, and that the conference was meant to 'rationalise' the process and make it more efficient. But to the ministerial bureaucrats present, some of this was new, and two of them did not like it. Heydrich soon made it clear that the aims of the conference included enlisting their services and involving them and other civil authorities in the crime so that they, too, should be tainted with guilt. (*Mitgegangen, mitgehangen*, as he put it to his own staff).

Unlimited slaughter

There was another point Heydrich made clear: the slaughter of the Jews was only the beginning of a policy which would be applied to unwanted Poles, Russians, Mongolians and so on, ad infinitum, in the German Empire-to-be. Eleven million Jews (including England's 300,000) headed the list as he demonstrated on a map — and this on the eve of the German disasters of Alamein and Stalingrad.

Star among the minor luminaries was Rudolf Lange, who had come hotfoot from destroying the Jewish communities in the Baltic region. Lange's dog Hasso, a champion at sniffing out Jewish hiding places, disturbed the meeting with his barking; his master dozed off once or twice, puffed cigars, or swilled brandies. Roland Freisler, the notorious judge (at Wannsee on behalf of the Justice Ministry) who later presided over the killing of the German generals, was very subdued; 'Gestapo' Mueller distinguished himself by calling the solutions Heydrich put forward *legant*.

Two senior civil servants were studies in themselves, namely the Ministerialdirektor at the Reich Chancellery Kritzinger, and Staatssekretär Stuckart of the Ministry of the Interior. The former tried to hide his shock behind a Schacht-like, dry-as-dust manner, wanting as little gore as possible, and to know figures and minutiae, but also trying to say how much Heydrich's plan would interfere with the war effort. (His son was at the front). Dr. Stuckart, who had helped draft the Nuremberg Laws (and been made an honorary SS officer) put up a splendidly principled fight for half-Jews and their offspring. Amazingly this man, in the grip of a nasty 'flu, would not be silenced even by Heydrich. He had defined the position of *Mischlinge* in his laws, and resisted Eichmann's proposal that they were to be treated as full Jews. He shouted 'they serve in the army — or are kin of those who serve'. A Gauleiter riposted 'Will you fight the war with this *mishpochach*?' and Stuckart left the meeting, muttering that he was again asking to be sent to the front.

It all ended in anti-climax, Heydrich made an assignation with the attractive and super-efficient secretary, and offered her a job in his empire at Prague. Himmler rang from Fuehrer headquarters and was told that all objectives had been attained.

J.R.

INFORMATION REQUIRED

Anyone who can provide information about the extinct Jewish community at Slavkov (formerly Austerlitz) in Czechoslovakia is asked to contact Sandra Pike, 5 Roche Close, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6RY.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BACH AN ANTISEMITE?

Sir — No, he was not. Bach was a Christian believer, brought up on the new Testament, which he accepted as Gospel truth. I wonder whether he had ever seen a Jew or thought about antisemitism, or the finer points of difference between Pharisees and Saducees.

I have never felt my utter sense of fulfillment in listening to the *St. Matthew Passion* as a betrayal. To me it remains the crown of musical expression and experience.

Avenue Road
London N6
EVA R. EISENSCHITZ

Sir — I first came across the *Passion* in my student days on Good Friday 1936, performed in St. Thomas' Church, Leipzig, my home town. (I studied at Leipzig Conservatorium, founded by Mendelsohn, prior to emigrating to England.) Stunned by the magnificence of the music I did not pay too much attention to the text. In the 40-odd years that followed I seldom missed a performance of the *Passion*, even during the Blitz. Then came a period of questioning the text with its invidious defamation of my people. Then one day, some years back, hearing the words 'Let him be crucified' with the Jews allegedly 'baying for the blood of Jesus' I thought 'What am I doing listening to this?'

For me, a professional pianist, there is no problem as I am not involved in teaching or choral work. For J. D. the task is harder; I sympathise with his dilemma, but, frankly, one cannot separate this majestic work from its anti-Jewish message.

Abington Lodge,
Manor Road, Barnet
BARBARA JACOBSON
(née Bertl Knoblauch)

Sir — J. D. (August issue) has the same problem as we have as members of a non-Jewish Choral Society.

Much of the choral music sung in the U.K. is New Testament based, and one can do it happily for the enjoyment of beautiful music. The only piece that has really stuck in our gullet is Bach's *St John Passion*. We had already started work on it before realising its venomous antisemitism and would not sing that piece again, however beautiful the music. Maybe in future we shall check through the words of all our music before agreeing to sing in it.

Ruskin Close
London NW11
J. & H. DAVIS

Sir — As a Christian who grew up in Nazi Germany I am surprised that there could be any doubt of the anti-semitic fervour in Bach's *Passion* music. Anti-semitism is central to Christianity, and uneradicable. The Christian faith revolves around the incarnation of Christ as the Messiah promised to Jews; Jews continue to reject this claim. Anti-semitism may be repressed today. We subscribe to moral tolerance and do not punish rapists or mass-murderers, but try to understand, reform and forgive; Christian magnanimity towards recalcitrant Jews seems to me to be of that order of tolerance.

St. Swithun Street,
Winchester
GERTRUD WALTON

SHAKESPEAREAN PILPUL

Sir — I always thought Roderigo Lopez (1525-1594), the Portugese Marrano Physician was Shakespeare's model for Shylock (*AJR Information*, August '89, p.10).

He was a doctor at court, but when he failed to cure the Queen of some stomach ailment he was sentenced to hang for trying to poison her and for being in league with the Catholics. He pleaded desperately for his life, up to the last moment. His outlandish, foreign and 'cowardly' manner caused much amusement and his hanging, in 1594, provided excellent sport for the multitude, who accompanied his death throes with copious anti-semitic ribaldry. This must have been known to everyone in London at the time, including Shakespeare. The play was written in 1595-96 fitting in with this assumption.

Suggesting that Shakespeare meant both Shylock and one of his principal tormentors to be Jewish must surely rank as the height of Shakespearean *pilpul* (talmudic casuistry).

MANFRED LANDAU

APROPOS OF
'LEST WE FORGET'

Sir — I volunteered at the time of Munich to join the British army. When war broke out I was classified as a 'friendly enemy alien', category C; this did not prevent the ignorant and bovine people in charge from interning me after Dunkirk. This gave me a severe emotional shock, but did not prevent me from once again volunteering. I was duly inducted into 248 Co. of the Pioneer Corps, rising to the illustrious rank of 'War Substantive Corporal'.

In 1943, I was allowed to become a tank driver in the First Royal Tank Regiment. We were then advised to change our names 'for our own security'. What we were however *not* told was, that although our names and army numbers were changed, some wily, and possibly anti-semitic, gentleman in Army Intelligence had the good idea to prefix all our 'new' army numbers with the figure 13. The infamy of the whole scheme — presumably undertaken to keep tabs on us — lay in the fact that it gave us a totally false sense of security.

It would hardly have taken the brain of a Nobel prize winner in German military intelligence to identify any British prisoner whose army number started with the figure 13.

Carisbrooke Road
Leicester
HENRY MORTIMER

LEAVEN WITH LEVITY!

Sir — I do enjoy the magazine as a whole and think it well-written and interesting.

But may I express a wish for more lighthearted reminiscences, perhaps? The past had its happy time, too, and much to be proud of: The present spate of anniversaries drags up too many bitter memories for some of us.

Could you find more space for a little Jewish humour and folklore, or anecdotes to relieve the many serious issues that seem to dominate today? South Meadows
Wembley, Middx.
MRS. L. ENGELHARD

INVIDIOUS COMPARISON

Sir — According to the reasons given, 'Peking, Sharpeville, and the West Bank are . . . strictly speaking, not instances of the same thing at all', (*AJR Information*, August '89). But our own experiences force us to take a wider view: whenever you had rather that some other people did not exist, your conduct towards them needs to be watched.

Argyll Road,
Exeter

GERARD KLEIN

THANKS FROM OSMOND HOUSE

A most successful Open Day was held at Osmond House on 2 July. We would like to thank all our supporters and well-wishers for their generous donations both in kind and in money.

Thanks to all this generosity 19 of our residents and an equal number of helpers recently enjoyed a wonderful day's outing to Westcliffe-on-Sea.

We wish everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year in 5750.

THE HOUSE COMMITTEE

GUTTER PRESSE

A century ago Austria had an empire whose size and importance in relation to Europe was proportionate to that of the British Empire on a world scale. Austria also possessed, in the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse*, a quality newspaper as close to the centres of power as *The Times* of London.

In its heyday, under owner-editor Moritz Benedikt, *Die Presse* employed journalists of the calibre of music critic Eduard Hanslick and *Feuilletonsredakteur* Theodor Herzl.

Then, in parallel to the country's dramatic postwar decline, the newspaper too, went steadily downhill — till both disappeared in 1938 with the Anschluss. In the 1950s *Die Presse* was resurrected by the publisher Fritz Molden, a man with ideas, but little business acumen.

Austria's political malaise, whose most visible pathological symptom is the Waldheim presidency, results, of course, in good part from the dismal quality of its newspapers.

These days *Die Presse* is owned by a German media conglomerate who appoint the paper's editor-in-chief. When that post fell vacant recently, literary editor Hans Haider submitted a memorandum to the management on behalf of the journalistic staff. This criticised the former editor, Otto Schulmeister, for pro-Waldheim bias and covert antisemitism, and counselled against the appointment of Gerd Bacher to the vacant post. A onetime head of Austrian radio, Bacher reputedly belonged to the Nazi Party — to which charge he made the classic rejoinder that he had never 'knowingly' been a Party member.

Readers will not be unduly surprised to hear that Haider's memorandum had an instant two-fold result: his own dismissal, and the appointment of Gerd Bacher as new editor-in chief.

CAMPS
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PETER C. RICKENBACK

THE 'FATHER OF GERMAN LABOUR' WHO DIED PREMATURELY

On 31 August at the Jewish Lohestrasse Cemetery in Wroclaw (Breslau) *Solidarnosc* and SPD delegations paid joint homage at the graveside of Ferdinand Lassalle, founder of the German labour movement, on the 125th anniversary of his death.

So much of the cemetery had been destroyed during battles in spring 1945, that after the war Polish townplanners intended to level the site for the construction of a public building. However, the Polish Socialist Party, international Jewish organisations and the SPD, lodged strong protests against these plans; in a personal letter ex-Chancellor Willy Brandt pleaded with Polish State President Jaruzelski to preserve the cemetery, and especially the graveside of Ferdinand Lassalle, as a memorial place of the Labour movement. Finally Lohestrasse cemetery was classified as a cultural monument by the Polish authorities.

Through the special efforts of Klaus Reiff, Information Officer of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (the cultural branch of the SPD) the devastated and overgrown cemetery site was cleared, thanks to the funds of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, and the skill of Polish restorers of the Wroclaw Museum of Architecture under Maciej Lagiewski. They used photos discovered in Breslau archives and yellowed reproductions of Lassalle's grave-site; they also erected two wrought-iron gates with seven-branched *Menoroth* at the entrance.

Ferdinand Lassalle, founder and leader of the first Social Democratic Party in Germany, was born on 13 June 1825 a son of Heyman Lassal, the first Jew to be elected to the Breslau Municipal Assembly. After attending a *Gymnasium* in Breslau he studied Philosophy in Berlin and Breslau. As a young man he already took an interest in the Jewish controversies in his hometown, becoming involved on the side of Rabbi Abraham Geiger, who was attacked by the orthodox Rabbi Salomon Tiktin. He also interested himself in the Jewish *Lehr- und Leseverein* which aimed to instil secular knowledge into young Jews from the East, thus preparing them for higher education. Despite Hegel's influence he remained a member of the Jewish community right up to the last years of his life. During visits to Paris, where he met Heinrich Heine, he came under Francophile influence and changed his name to Lassalle.

Charismatic leader

He was a charismatic personality, active in the 1848 Revolution in Prussia, a 'drummer in the dawn of the German political Labour movement'. In stirring appeals at mass meetings in the unfolding German industrial revolution he challenged the workers to organise a general German Workers Union and fight for the introduction of universal suffrage with the goal of achieving opportunities for the education of ordinary people who were disadvantaged under Feudalism. In the passionate language of his time Lassalle called for an 'Alliance of Science and the Workers', to eliminate cultural barriers. He repeatedly clashed

with the law, appeared in court charged with high treason, and served time in prison, continuing his agitation all the while. He met Karl Marx, Guiseppe Garibaldi and the then Prussian Premier Otto von Bismarck who tried to dissuade him from promoting an independent Labour movement.



The restored tombstone of Ferdinand Lassalle reproduced in the catalogue published by the Architektur-Museum in Wroclaw

He founded the General German Labour Organisation at Leipzig in May 1863 and was elected its President.

Barely two years later, aged 39, he died in a duel with pistols at Geneva in consequence of a self-destructive passionate love-affair.

In under two years he earned historic merit as founder of an independent Party which aimed to represent the interests of the working class as well as of the nation. At the unveiling of a memorial tablet in Geneva SPD leader Willy Brandt recalled that in his younger years one of the most popular songs was the *Arbeiter-Marseillaise* with the refrain '*der Bahn der Kühnen folgen wir, die uns geführt Lassalle*' (We follow the courageous path on which Lassalle led us). He also pointed out that the peculiarities of his life had not been criticised, though it was known that he neither originated from the working class nor belonged to the Young Mens' Christian Association. Lassalle, said Willy Brandt, was 'a classless intellectual who bequeathed a tradition of fighting serfdom, injustice and ignorance'.

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At the request of Lassalle's mother he was laid to eternal rest at the old Jewish cemetery in Breslau where his grave attracts pilgrimages from the international workers movements.

In the course of the restoration of this Jewish necropolis the graves of other Jewish personalities from Breslau — the Reichstag deputy Max Keyser, the historian Henrich Graetz and the botanist Ferdinand Cohn — were also discovered.

WOLF MATSDORF (Jerusalem)

THE OLD JEWISH CEMETERY AT WROCLAW (BRESLAU)

In my last report (AJR Information, January 1988) I mentioned that Mgr. Lagiewski had completed a Polish-language survey of the cemetery. Not only has this now been translated, but the 'Druck Center Meckenheim in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland' has produced a very impressive 36-page booklet with many colour prints of very high quality.

Magiewski tells the story of the Breslau Jewish Community over the last 800 years as he, a non-Jew, reconstructed it from the tombstones in his care.

The oldest of those might be the stone of Rabbi Ahron, son of Rabbi Abraham and dated 1177 which formed part of a floor in ul. Kielbasnicza (Herrenstrasse) near the Ring.

The oldest Jewish tombstone in Poland as such may be one which was found as part of a floor (or walls) of the Breslauer Dom. This gravestone had been completed on the 4 August, 1203 for 'Rabbi David with the most lovely (*allerliebsten*) voice, the son of Rabbi Sar Shalom', who died on the 25th of Ab, 4963.

Those inscriptions deciphered and recorded at the Slezna (Lohestrasse) itself tell the story since the middle of the last century. Names of all places and streets are given in Polish first with the German equivalent in brackets. For Poles, Wroclaw is a Polish City, which after long German annexation is now back home in the People's Republic of Poland.

This booklet should appeal not only to former Breslauer, but to anyone interested in the history of German Jews. It contains some excellent photographs as well as a ground plan of nearly 100 of the 12,000 graves, those of 'meritorious personalities' buried at the cemetery between 1856 and 1942.

I have made enquiries as to where one could obtain this booklet, but failed, so far, to locate a distributor. I would advise readers to write to the German printers. I also failed to obtain a quotation from Wroclaw for the insertion of names — old and new — where the original bronze plates had been stolen by the Nazis. Lagiewski only disposes of a limited number of workmen and women, all employed by the Polish authorities, and his selection of items for restoration has — quite understandably — preference.

P. YOGI MAYER

INFORMATION REQUIRED

Anyone who can provide information about Ferdinand Louis Kerran, who was active in Hampstead politics during the interwar years, and helped Jews escape from Nazi Germany, is asked to contact John Fraser, 51 Cornwall Gardens, London SW7 4BG.

ART NOTES

Walter Nessler was born in Leipzig in 1912 and studied there at the Akademie Castello. On graduating he joined a group of anti-fascist artists and was forced to emigrate in 1937. He now lives in London and has exhibited widely in Europe and America. A number of his works are in public collections, including a striking picture painted in 1937 foretelling the destruction of London, which he titles *Premonition* and which is now displayed in the Royal Air Force Museum, Hendon. He has just been awarded the honour of being elected as an 'Ehrensator' by the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst in Dresden. Before leaving Germany in the Thirties, Nessler produced a series of illustrations for Ernst Toller's *Das Schwalbenbuch*. These illustrations were smuggled out of Germany before the war by a friend and have now been used to illustrate a new edition of Toller's book which has just been published by the Bund Verlag, Cologne.

Over the years photography has developed into an impressive art form and this is abundantly evident in the Photographic Art in Britain 1945-1989 exhibition entitled *Through the Looking Glass* at the Barbican Art Gallery (until 1 October). It includes works by Dorothy Bohm whose work has often been seen at the Camden Arts Centre, of which she is a trustee. Another exhibitor is Bill Brandt (1904-1983), who was born in Hamburg and came to London in 1931, working as a photojournalist for *Lilliput* and *Picture Post*; no less than twenty of his photographs are in the exhibition. Of the younger exhibitors there is Kare Knorr, born in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1954 and now a lecturer at the London College of Printing. Photographs by David Bailey, David Hockney and Richard Hamilton are also being shown.

The latest exhibition at the Goethe Institut is *Reclining Red*, non-objective painting and sculpture (until 29 October, closed 10 October). The exhibition includes 14 works by seven German representatives of a new generation of abstract artists, all well-established in their field. An illustrated catalogue (price £4.50) is available at the exhibition.

The annual exhibition of the New English Art Club will be held at the Mall Galleries (9-19 November) and will include three watercolours by H.R.H. Prince Charles. Also at the Mall Galleries (23 November-2 December) is the Annual Exhibition of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters. About 300 paintings will be on display including works by Normal Blamey, Peter Coker, Fred Cumming, Anthony Eyton, Ken Howard and June Mendoza. All the works are for sale at prices ranging from £300 to £15,000. The 113th exhibition of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers will be held at the Bankside Gallery (until 22 October) and this will be followed (10 November-3 December) by the 310th exhibition of the Royal Watercolour Society.

At the Judd Street Gallery, 99 Judd Street, WC1 there will be a combined show (1-10 October, 12-7pm daily) by Peter Ringel, born in Berlin in 1921, who started painting late in life and who has had several successful exhibitions, Maureen Gardner who runs her own gallery in

Radlett, Herts and who recently won a commission from ICI to sculpt their *Dulux Dog*, and Lily Freeman who came to England in 1940, studied at the Arthur Segal School and has had many successful exhibitions.

Eric Gill was a master-craftsman in the art of sculpting and engraving. In 1913 he moved to Ditchling Common, Sussex and established there a sort of commune of like-minded artists who shared his ideals of piety and labour. In 1918 they founded the Guild of St. Joseph and St. Dominic, but in 1924 Gill resigned and moved to Wales. Sculpture and Carving by members of the Guild, 1913-1924 is the subject of an exhibition *The Lost Idyll* at the Gillian Jason Gallery (until 27 October). A very much earlier period is the subject of an exhibition at the National Gallery *Art in the Making: Italian Painting before 1400* (29 November-28 February 1990) is a selection of eight paintings drawn from the gallery's own collection, including The Pentecost attributed to Giotto, and The Virgin and Child with Saints by the Sieneese master Duccio. An enlightening and comprehensive Catalogue is available at the exhibition (price £11.95).

From London to Manchester to the City Art Gallery to see Munch and Photography/Munch as Photographer (until 5 November). Edvard Munch (1843-1944) was much affected by photography in his work and the exhibition shows that some of the imagery in his own photographs is reflected in his painting. The early work of artists can indeed be of absorbing interest. David Hockney rose to stardom in the early 'sixties and the Retrospective Exhibition at the CCA Galleries (18 October-5 November) features some splendid examples of his early work, including a selection from *A Rake's Progress* and *Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales*. Prints from his Paris period and more recent American prints will also be on show.

In 1964 David Oxtoby, born 1938, graduated from the Royal Academy Schools and moved to America where he became Visiting Professor of Painting at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. His American Sketchbooks can be seen in the exhibition 'Blues and Roots' at the Theatre Museum (19 October-28 January 1990). His work provides an impressive view of his times, the people and places he knew, and the entertainers and musicians who influenced him. For those interested in fashion it is worth seeing *Hardy Amies - A Couture House at Work* at the Museum of London (until 29 October). The new 18th century gallery at the museum is also worth a visit.

Some 40 paintings, including oils, watercolours, drawings and etchings, by Rowland and Hilder, past President of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours and a landscape artist of great renown, will be on show at Duncan Campbell Fine Art (4 October-3 November). Runkel-Hue-Williams are mounting an exhibition *Between Lives*, works on paper by that excellent artist Dorothea Tanning (15 September-13 October). It is more than 20 years since the last one-man exhibition of the work of Bernard Meadows, one of the great British sculptors of this century. An exhibition of his works, 1955-1975, will be on show at the Chapman Gallery, 14-16 Neal St, WC1 (until 15 October).

The Ben Uri Art Society has recently been presented with a number of works by Margaret Marks and an important print by Klaus Meyer. These and other recent acquisitions will be on show in the gallery in October/November.

ALICE SCHWAB

SB's Column

The hateful subject in unusual surroundings. Within a short period the small German town of Oberhausen had reason enough to discuss their theatre: audiences were confronted with two works concerning the 'Führer problem'. There was really no special significance in the performance of *Arturo Ui* by Bertold Brecht, as this play had been staged by many other theatres before; however the presentation of *Moloch* by the early 20th century composer Max von Schillings, an opera first staged in 1906, was considered a surprising and somewhat risky venture. As a warning against fascism and dictatorship, the producer endowed *Moloch* with Hitler's looks and gestures, thereby lending the title role sharply naturalistic features; with the music acceptable, if not great, Oberhausen theatre-goers were left bewildered about the city theatre's 1989 repertoire.

San Francisco. A new Jewish stage, formerly the 'Berkeley Jewish Theatre', has just opened its doors, calling itself the 'Pacific Jewish Theatre'. As a prominent playhouse for all communities along the Western Pacific coast, it will attempt to stage plays about various ethnic and religious minorities. The first presentation was Max Frisch's *Andorra* (not the country in the Pyrenees), an interesting play about antisemitism although not a single Jew appears on stage. *Andorra*, incidentally, was first shown at London's Aldwych Theatre in 1964.

Birthdays. Will Quadflieg, the German actor, celebrated his 75th birthday. He was at home on many stages, was Salzburg's *Jedermann* for several years, and known in London shortly after the war for his recital evenings of excerpts from the German classics. Ephraim Kishon, the Hungarian-born Israeli author and satirist, whose plays have been successfully performed on many German stages in the translation by Friedrich Torberg (*Der Trauschein, Es war die Lerche*) had his 65th birthday. Another Israeli author, Joshua Sobol, who has just reached the age of 50, recently resigned as artistic director of the Municipal Theatre of Haifa; he is best known here as author of the drama *Ghetto*, currently being performed at London's National Theatre. 70th birthday honours were accorded in Germany to Wolfgang Wagner, now sole heir and successor, since his brother Wieland's death in 1966, as director of the Bayreuth Festival.

Obituary. The death in London of Austrian-born actor Michael Rittermann came as a shock to all his friends. He was 79. There is a full appreciation elsewhere in this issue; I would only add that during his London days in the Forties and early Fifties Rittermann was well known to audiences of the Blue Danube Club, Finchley Road, where he enriched the Peter Herz Revues with the elegance of his appearance, clarity of diction, versatile acting and agreeably sonorous voice.

OPEN DAY AT THE HOMES

Spread at intervals over six weeks of almost uninterrupted fine summer weather each of the annual garden parties held at the four Homes provided a field day for the community-minded, as well as for bargain-hunters and seekers after convivial company. The proceeds from sales at the well-patronised stalls, supplementing those from the raffles and auctions which generate such enjoyable excitement on these occasions, raised appreciable amounts of money for the diverse Amenity Funds. Under the aspect of finance special thanks are due to the generous donors of 'goodies', and to all those who manned stalls, sold raffle tickets, etc.; on the social side the efforts of Homes staff, helpers and volunteers to make each separate Open Day a convivial event were much appreciated.



A warm welcome for Werner Rosenstock.

GIFT TO OSMOND HOUSE

The Wernick family, owners of the old-established wood construction firm of S. Wernick & Sons Ltd., have given Osmond House a magnificent succah. It will be put up for the first time immediately after Yom Kippur.

Not only residents but their relatives and friends are cordially invited to make use of the succah during these coming Succoth holidays.

'DROP IN' ADVICE SERVICE

Twice weekly advice sessions offering help with filling in forms, checking benefits received, checking entitlements, claiming benefits, fuel problems, money matters, etc., etc., are being held as follows:—

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REVISIONISM RULES — O.K.?

While the media re-fight the Second World War — a largely innocuous pastime that yielded incidental gems like *Too Late To Say Goodbye* (see p. 5) — another battle is going on in the background. This concerns the question of whether the war was worth fighting in the first place.

In Maurice Cowling's new study of Chamberlain appeasement is vindicated as the policy that served the national interest, and Britain's involvement in the war judged a disaster resulting in heavy casualties, loss of the British Empire and domination of Europe by America and Russia.

Charles Wheeler's series *The Road to War* (BBC 2) looks, pace *The Independent*, 'a great deal further afield than simply the irrational aggression of Germany, though conservative historians may take exception to the increasingly fashionable line that Hitler never wanted to go to war'.

It was not to be expected that David Irving, indefatigable scavenger in the charnel houses of history, would pass up the opportunity presented by the 50th anniversary celebrations. Bang on time he has produced a book on Goering which both trivialises ('manicured mountain of per-flumed flab') and glamorises — in the section on

the Nuremberg Trial — Hitler's leading paladin. (*Miserabile dictu* Irving's Goering biography bears the imprint of a publishing house connected with a recent British Prime Minister.)

After such a catalogue of mental aberrations on this side of the Channel it is refreshing to hear a respected German voice spell out loud and clear: For two decades Hitler only wanted one thing — his war. (*Die Zeit* editor Theo Sommer, *Observer* 3.9.1989).

LOW RISIBILITY

A bemused participant in the recent Third International Conference on Jewish Humour held at Tel Aviv said at the end of the 3-day session 'I still can't define a Jewish joke — but I know what a Jewish conference is'.

OBITUARY

JULIAN LAYTON

Lt. Col. Julian Layton, OBE, who died aged 85, was a co-founder of that small group of Jewish people in this country who not only sensed the desperate plight of their Continental brothers but had the humanity and resolve to do their utmost to rescue them.

He was the youngest of the group comprising Professor Norman Bentwich, Sir Robert Waley-Cohen and Ernest Joseph, each of whom contributed towards the setting up of the rescue operation: Norman Bentwich by getting Home Office approval for a block permit admitting the refugees — Sir Robert organising the financial side, and Ernest Joseph providing the necessary accommodation to receive the influx. It was left to Julian Layton to undertake, at some personal risk, several trips to Berlin, Vienna and Prague to negotiate the release of those in greatest danger with the Nazi authorities: it is no exaggeration to say that the beneficiaries of his intercession owe him a life-long debt, a debt summed up in Churchill's phrase 'Never in the history of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few'.

It was as the result of this combined operation that over 3,000 men of all ages and background reached the safe haven of Kitchener Camp, Richborough, Kent before the outbreak of the war. Many of those rescued chose to make the U.K. their adopted country and in the post-war years made notable contributions to science and industry. Julian Layton was justly proud of the part he was able to play in this operation.

WALTER MARMOREK

Werner Rosenstock adds:

Julian Layton originated from a German-Jewish family who settled in England years before the First World War. He joined the Central British Fund in 1936, and was for many years Chairman of the Jewish Refugees Committee.

When the refugees were interned in 1940 he looked after the inmates of Lingfield Camp, and later alleviated the condition of those who had been deported to Australia. As the result of his efforts, many were brought back to England and joined the British Forces.

In 1971 he unveiled a plaque at the Old Toll Bridge in Sandwich commemorating the historic role of Kitchener Camp. The text of the inscription had been drafted by Professor Norman Bentwich, who had, alas, died a few months earlier

MICHAEL RITTERMANN

Michael Rittermann who died, aged 89, was born near Vienna and studied acting. He spent early years in Berlin, where his first small rôle was in a production starring Marlene Dietrich and Hans Albers. After the Rûchstag Fire, he returned to Vienna.

Following the Anschluss, Michael was brutally interrogated over his connection with a Jewish theatre group. Freed by Supreme Court Judge Omminger, he fled, with Quaker help, to England, becoming in turn a West Country pig farmer and window dresser.

Taken to Australia aboard the *Duneira*, he arranged theatrical entertainment among the internees. On his return to London, he worked for the B.B.C.'s Austrian section at Bush House, and appeared at the Blue Danube Club.

In the film *Odette*, Michael had a star rôle as an S.S. Officer. More recently, he played character parts at theatres in Göttingen, Basel and Zürich, until ill-health forced his retirement and return to London.

His last public appearance was on Channel Fours' homosexual series *Out on Tuesday*. He was interviewed about his experience with the Nazis, having been chosen on account of his association with the Magnus Hirschfeld Institute; indeed he had known Magnus Hirschfeld himself.

LOUIS GOODMAN

Louis Goodman (Guterman) who died in August, aged 65 took an interest in charitable work since before the war. He was already at that time closely connected with the Morris Feinmann Home in Manchester, acting as Honorary Accountant until his retirement in 1988, when he joined the Management Committee, and was soon afterwards elected a Trustee.

He brought to his professional and to his charity work a highly perceptive and analytical mind, enabling him to see problems clearly, and to find solutions.

Apart from the great deal of time he gave to the affairs of the Morris Feinmann Home, he advised many of the former refugees on their compensation claims.

Louis Goodman also did outstanding work for the Manchester Jewish Social Services, where he rose to become their President; at the time of his death was one of their Life Vice Presidents.

E. R. KINGSLEY

THOUGHTS ON EAST BERLIN'S CENTRUM JUDAICUM

Notwithstanding East Germany's newly discovered interest in Jewish survival the regime of Mr. Honecker is a tyranny, as was that of his predecessor. They built the Berlin Wall and gun down any of their hapless citizens who try to escape.

The regime has never admitted that all of East Germany as well as the Bundesrepublik were equally involved in the destruction of Europe's Jews. But whereas West Germany has faced up to the awful truth and has sought atonement by compensating survivors, East Germany has resolutely refused to do anything of the sort; instead, it armed Arab terrorists and remained utterly hostile to us, the few surviving victims.

Leipzig's liberal tradition

My grandparents and parents lived in Germany which they loved, and I grew up steeped in Jewish and German culture. (The two were not incompatible before Hitler!) My home-town Leipzig, with its cultured and liberal Protestant atmosphere, resisted Nazism probably more than most German cities. The Mayor, Dr. Goerdeler, later executed for his part in the conspiracy to kill Hitler, was said to have refused Nazi demands to pull down the statue of Mendelssohn outside the Gewandhaus.

Whatever the reasons, we lived relatively untroubled lives until suddenly, and without prior warning, we were seized and deported, in October 1938, together with many others, by police and S.S. Not one member of my family survived the slaughter in Poland.

After the war I tried to recover my parents' substantial property which the Nazis had seized and sold to one of theirs; after many legal efforts the 'buyer' agreed to relinquish it, and the administration agreed to act for me. They did so until the regime thwarted all my efforts by imposing a ban on all restitution of such property. The matter has thus remained frozen for more than 40 years. Multiply this crude injustice by the infinitely greater number of victims without heirs to make a claim, and by all the communal property once owned by the large *gemeinden* of Leipzig, Berlin, Dresden and others, big and small, which are now extinct. . .

The Leipzig community was prosperous and bestowed great economic benefit on the city. It had numerous fine synagogues, a flourishing school, a hospital, theatre, sports grounds, swimming pool, a splendid youth centre for all the lively youth groups and a community newspaper. Some of the city's leading stores and businesses were created and owned by Jews, such as the banker Kroch who built a model garden city in one of the outer suburbs. The list is endless. All of it was taken by the Nazis.

As long as Honecker fails to make good these economic crimes of his people — the human tragedy they unleashed can never be made good — no decent Jew should have any truck with him and his fancy schemes. They are a pretence, a cover-up, a vile charade.

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CARING FOR THE CHILDREN

Part 2. Youth Aliyah

The keeper of the gate looks closely at his visitors, then opens up with a courteous greeting. He is a boy of 12 or 13. Inside, along the road, other children run, walk, talk, rest, play. Games of basketball and football are in progress, the participants duly cheered on by their supporters. There are children everywhere, for this is Neve Hadassah, a Youth Aliyah village not far from Netanya, just off the Tel-Aviv-Haifa highway. It was founded in 1949, the year after the proclamation of the State. At that time, it took in children who had arrived in Israel without parents and with nowhere to go. The wooden huts of those early days have long since been replaced by comfortable, stone-built dormitories. There is an open-air theatre, games and leisure rooms, a spacious dining hall, school buildings. There are also reinforced shell-proof shelters, for the dangers from without have still to be guarded against.

There are 330 children at Neve Hadassah. They come from broken or disturbed homes, are orphaned or have learning difficulties, or are disadvantaged in other respects. Sometimes also, young people are placed there under care and protection orders issued by a court. In the village, trained professionals look after their psychological and educational needs as well as their physical welfare. Qualified youth workers act as resident counsellors and houseparents to dormitory groups of up to 35; and the links they forge with their young charges continue long after these have grown to adulthood. 'Last December', recalls Arie Orgad, head of the village catering, 'we organised a reunion of those who left us 20 years ago, in 1969. About 35 of them came along, together with wives and husbands and children. It was a very emotional and rewarding meeting for all concerned.'

Inaugurated in 1933

As a rule, children stay at the village schools until the age of 15. They then go into public high schools outside, or into vocational training establishments, and at 18 they start their three-year military service. After that, they face life on their own; and that they are able to do so is in no small measure due to the skilled and caring upbringing which they received at Neve Hadassah.

There are 82 Youth Aliyah villages in Israel, giving a home and schooling to 16,000 youngsters in need of special education. The scheme has come a long way since its beginning in Germany in 1932, when Recha Freier, wife of a Berlin rabbi, conceived the idea of organised youth emigration to the Jewish National Home. Treated at first with reserve by the Zionist establishment, the notion took shape, and, on January 30, 1933, the very day Hitler took power, the movement was formally inaugurated. One year later, the first group of 63 boys and girls left Germany. They arrived at Haifa on February 19, 1934, and Henrietta Szold, the veteran Zionist activist, about to retire at the age of 72, came to meet them and personally escorted them to their new home,

Kibbutz Ein Harod, one of the early pioneer settlements at the foot of Mount Gilboa. Altogether, the kibbutz ideal inspired the Youth Aliyah movement in its formative years, and many of the villages, including Neve Hadassah, are built on the kibbutz model and still have close links with neighbouring kibbutzim. However, after the war the scope of the scheme, both in educational and general terms, was considerably broadened and a wider basis of support was sought and found. As the Jewish state grew into maturity, the changing needs of its young were studied and appraised, and the programme was made ready to perform new tasks. Rehabilitation for example, became as important an aspect of Youth Aliyah activities as rescue and integration.

Operation Moses

Indeed, the movement has an enviable record of success in its response to fresh challenges. One such was the call to help in bringing to safety the orphans of the holocaust and to deal effectively with their highly complex problems. More recently, it played a key role in 'Operation Moses', the epic rescue of 20,000 Ethiopian Jews. Of these, 2,200 were children who had become separated from their parents and families, and who were in desperate need of special care and comfort and a lead into an entirely different and unfamiliar environment. Youth Aliyah villages, especially the more religious ones, were chosen to undertake this task; and they have accomplished much and will achieve more, given time and, of course, money.

The individual villages derive their income from a number of sources. Their general upkeep is undertaken by the kibbutzim, or other movements, who are the actual owners of the land on which they stand. Resources for education and social work are provided by various Israeli government departments. Any expenditure for more than the basic needs can only be met from

the proceeds of fundraising efforts undertaken by committees which have been set up for this purpose. The 'Children and Youth Aliyah Committee for Great Britain and Eire' was established in 1944, although informal activities had been undertaken in the 'thirties in the light of the dangers which were then besetting German and Austrian Jews. At one time it was hoped to secure Palestine immigration certificates for a number of the 10,000 children who had come here with the *Kindertransport*, but the outbreak of war intervened. The British Committee has now set itself the task of providing the necessary funds for the additional requirements of its six 'adopted' villages, of which Neve Hadassah is one. Their clubrooms, swimming pools, workshops, laboratories and recreation areas are the result of its efforts. 'Last year we were able to send over £1 million', states Sion Mehdi, the Committee's Executive Director. 'The money will be spent to provide a wide variety of items, from park benches to television sets, from library books to musical instruments, from dormitory heaters to a complete engineering workshop.' Mr. Mehdi speaks with enthusiasm of the work in hand and the work to be done. 'Since 1982 we have operated a Dental Health Project under which volunteer dentists from this country, about 70 per cent of them non-Jewish, practise for upwards of two weeks at a time in one or more of 'our' villages and associated schools with the most gratifying results. Some come back time and again and have formed great friendships with their young patients. And, of course, the standard of dental health has improved significantly.' Mr. Mehdi himself has been in his present post for four years and does not for one moment regret having retired from his business in order to devote himself full-time to British Youth Aliyah. 'I can think of nothing more rewarding than this kind of work', he says. 'All of us here are deeply involved in every aspect of life in our six villages. We are proud of their achievements. And we take pride also in the international reputation which our experts now enjoy in the field of special education. It gives me a sense of fulfilment to be part of the Youth Aliyah "family".'

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PODIUM POTENTATE

Herbert von Karajan, *MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY*, as told to Franz Endler (transl. Stewart Spencer; Sidgwick & Jackson, London; 1988; £12.95).

The recent death of Herbert von Karajan, at the age of 81, has been regarded as a major event by the musical public throughout the world, and this has been reflected by the media, also in this country. Although the Salzburg-born conductor, had long been struggling against a severe and painful disability, he was not expected to retire from all musical activity altogether. With him the most celebrated of present-day European conductors has left the scene which he had dominated for almost half a century.

As a man, Karajan has always been a controversial figure, not only, but chiefly, on account of his membership of the Nazi party. This has not only precluded his appearance in Israel, but has also prevented a number of prominent musicians from working with him.

Unlike colleagues like Bruno Walter and Furtwängler, Karajan kept aloof from philosophical speculation. He developed an early interest in technology into life-long involvement in the progress of the gramophone industry which was linked to his fundamental urge towards perfectionism. This urge included his activity as producer of opera, inspired by early contacts with Reinhardt and Gründgens. The opportunity for combining the tasks of conductor and producer

was realised in the Salzburg Easter Festivals for which he assumed sole responsibility.

Karajan had no intention of writing his own biography. The present volume (which, unfortunately, has no index) is based on interviews given to the author by Karajan who decided what should or should not go in, or be ignored. The focus is on the artistic career and its manifestations, with hardly any space allowed for the conductor's family background and private life. Preference is given to Karajan's views on music and performers. The decisive influence of Toscanini is very evident, but the merits of Karajan's great adversary, Furtwängler, are not denied. In view of present trends it is as well to realise that Karajan had little time for problems of 'authenticity'. In contrast to many of his predecessors, his repertoire was rather unlimited; it included Mahler (after 1945!) and the Second Viennese School of Schoenberg and his pupils.

The ominous subject of Karajan's political past has been allowed a fair amount of space. By concentrating on his membership of the Nazi party, it presents the case for the prosecution rather incompletely, omitting his performances in Nazi-occupied countries etc. There is not a word about his attitude to Nazi ideology, nor any

comment on the regime's atrocities, nor any attempt at recantation after 1945.

Karajan gives as his reasons for joining the Party his desperate search for an adequate post during a period of great frustration. I must be controversial by confessing that I consider it highly irrational to claim that the mere fact of his Party membership is likely to have polluted his interpretations. The Englishman Walter Legge (husband of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf), who appointed Karajan as conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra, which he had founded and later handed to Klemperer, is quite emphatic that, in his view, Karajan was 'not a Nazi' by conviction. It is as well to mention his early contacts with Bruno Walter and Egon Friedell. It is also stated, though not in this book, that Karajan had married a 'non-Aryan' wife during the Third Reich.

He pursued his path with relentless self-confidence, disregarding all obstacles.

He was well aware that the Nazis had used him to make trouble for Furtwängler, yet when Furtwängler, at his first postwar concert with the Vienna Philharmonic, was worried about hostile demonstrations Karajan told his old adversary 'Dr. Furtwängler, don't take it seriously. Go to the podium and conduct, and then they'll all stop protesting.' I cannot help feeling that Karajan comes off admirably in this episode.

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CRISIS OF FAITH(S)

A bleak ecumenical tour d'horizon

'Thank God I am an atheist' is a hoary old gag some people, including readers of this journal, find in bad taste. However, quite a few manifestations of faith in the contemporary world cause one to have a sneaking sympathy for the gag-writer. Right now none of the great universal religions seem to present an image of spirituality that could effectively silence sceptics.

Though Buddhism is the ideal of disoriented young Westerners seeking Enlightenment, countries where it holds sway, such as Burma and Sri Lanka, are among the most benighted places on earth. Benighted is probably too weak a word to describe Islamic Saudi Arabia and Iran (where stoning is not against the law, but using stones which are either too big or small is).

Even in relatively Westernised Egypt, Nagibe Mahfouz, winner of the Nobel prize for Literature, requires round-the-clock protection, just as Salmon Rushdie does over here.

Some rabbis emulate mullahs

If the mullahs are skin-crawling disseminators of darkness, a few Jewish rabbis run them a close second. In Israel rabbinical zealots engage in anti-Arab violence — of the physical as well as the rhetorical kind — that is nakedly racist. Alas, Judaism has also thrown up species of US-based globetrotting busybodies who should have electronic tags put round their ankles. One of these flying elephants with *smicha* recently barged into the preserve of the Board of Deputies Defence

Committee. Another, accoutred in zebra-striped concentration camp garb, staged an ill-conceived and counter-productive protest 'happening' outside the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz. A third featured in a television programme about the Jews in Estonia, setting about his tasks as (temporary) spiritual mentor to the painfully reconstructed community with a smug insensitivity that beggars description.

Canterbury inclines towards Damascus

As for the Church of England, maladroitness is too bland a term for its recent performance, especially with regard to the Middle East. At first Terry Waite, in blithe disregard of all advice, blundered into a minefield hoping to smooth his path with anti-Israeli pronouncements — and now Dr Runcie, in his endeavour to protect, or save, his emissary, issues shrill denunciations of Israel for seizing the murderous Hizbollah cleric Sheikh Obeyd.

If Terry Waite has blundered into a literal minefield, Pope John Paul II is negotiating a metaphorical one in hobnailed boots. His state-

ment that the Jews had broken their Covenant with God and not acknowledged Christ's redemptive sacrifice is casting a pall over Jewish-Christian relations, as is his refusal to expedite the move of the Carmelite Convent from Auschwitz.

Poles apart on Catholic-Jewish reconciliation

The latter controversy has also triggered an unambiguously antisemitic response from Cardinal Glemp, the Primate of Poland. Men of that cast of mind present huge stumbling blocks to the furtherance of Christian-Jewish understanding. Since, in addition, the new *Solidarnosc* Premier Tadeusz Mazowiecki is clergy-influenced, there seems little to be hoped for from either the Church or the post-Communist State. On the other hand *Solidarnosc* embraces a broad spectrum of opinion with a sizeable Social Democrat component. These Social Democrats are currently trying to combat the antisemitism that underlies the authorities' refusal to give ground on the issue of the Auschwitz-based convent; if they carry the day on the whole range of issues that divides them from their Catholic *confrères*, Poland may have a genuinely democratic future. If they don't, the country will have exchanged the dictatorship of Commissars for the tutelage of priests.

RICHARD GRUNBERGER

AN IMPORTANT VISIT

Simon Wiesenthal, who is eighty years old, will be coming to Britain in mid-October to attend the launch of his book *Justice not Vengeance* (Weidenfeld). He will also be appearing on at least one TV programme.

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Deaths

Austin:—We mourn the sudden death of our dear friend Fred Austin, one of the most popular and loyal Club members, and extend our deepest sympathy to Frieda, his wife. The AJR Club.

Katt:—Berta Katt (Tuscha), of Maida Vale, died 10 July 1989, aged

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'HAPPY DAYS'

Schöne Zeiten was the title of a recent exhibition at Nuremberg consisting of German SS men's, soldiers', and civilians' wartime photographs, diary entries and letters. The exhibition demonstrated that ordinary Germans who were eye witnesses of Nazi atrocities often not only felt no revulsion, but actually enjoyed the spectacle. For instance, at Kowno (Lithuania) in 1941 a crowd assembled in a garage forecourt to follow the

clubbing to death of 40 Jewish men with cheers and applause; some of the women present lifted their children up in the air for a better view, while others clambered on to chairs and boxes.

The exhibits gave the lie to the assiduously fostered myth that Nazi wartime atrocities took place 'behind the backs' of ordinary Wehrmacht members; it also justified the coining and dissemination of the skin-crawling term *Exekutionstourismus*, execution tourism, for the phenomenon described.

'HISTORY IS BUNK'
TO THE POWER OF SIX
MILLION

It is reported that a crack unit of the Israeli army stationed in the vicinity of Ramalla call themselves the 'Mengele squad'. The news has led a member of the Knesset to demand better education for serving soldiers; a group of Holocaust survivors have offered to tell the servicemen concerned about their own experiences.

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Monday 16	Maurice Reisman Entertains On His Electronic Accordion
Tuesday 17	'How To Get The Most From Your Bank!' — Joanna Hewitt of Barclays Bank
Wednesday 18	'Popular Violin Recital' — Marianne Olyver & Jonathan Honeyball
Thursday 19	(a) Outing to Theatre (b) 'Join The Happy Chorus' — Hans Freund
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Tuesday 24	'An Afternoon Of Varied Piano Music' — David Lawrence
Wednesday 25	'The Lighter Side Of Sitting On The Bench' — Talk by Rose Owen J.P.
Thursday 26	Wind Ensemble From Trinity College of Music
Monday 30	'Musical Entertainment With Helen & Dora'
Tuesday 31	'The Thames Trio'

NOVEMBER

Wednesday 1	'The Memsahib Was No Jungle Queen' — Isobelle Beck
Thursday 2	'The 1920s' — Gerard Tichauer
Monday 6	'The Blake Piano Trio'
Tuesday 7	'A Song For Every Mood' — Caroline Woolf & John Martin
Wednesday 8	'The Wonderful Country Of Thailand' — Slides & Talk By Inge Munro
Thursday 9	'The Melody Makers' — Kathy McCormack & Ken Penney
Monday 13	'Serendipity Of Songs' — Maureen & Les
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GUSTAV MAHLER — THE DIALECTICS OF CONVERSION

Alma Schindler's family belonged to the artistic elite of *fin de siècle* Vienna, members of which crossed the 'racial divide' at gatherings in coffee houses, studios, editorial offices and, more formally, in *salons* like Bertha Zuckermandl's. Alma's stepfather, Carl Moll, a painter connected with the *Sezession* and her mother established close bonds with their son-in-law, who addressed them affectionately as 'dear Carl' and 'Mama'. *Tempora mutantur*, however. After the Great War the Molls drifted ever further to the Right politically; both became enthusiastic members of the Nazi Party, and upon the collapse of Germany in 1945 the man whom Mahler had called *lieber Carl* followed his Fuehrer into self-chosen death.

Wife's ambivalence towards Jews

In her autobiography Alma Mahler has related how on revisiting Vienna two years after the Nazi collapse she encountered unrestrained antisemitism and cut short her stay. Yet even she who had shared Mahler's life and Werfel's flight from Nazi-occupied Europe, had not been above poking fun at Jews she disliked in her salad days. She said of Mahler's one-time friend Josef Lipiner, who hailed from Galicia 'When he writes he sounds Goethe-ish, when he speaks he sounds Yid-ish'.

This sort of witticism appears more invidious in post-Holocaust retrospect than it did when uttered; even so the unreflecting recourse to racist derogation prevalent in Mahler's Vienna still has the power to shock. Johannes Brahms applied the term 'deceitful Polish dog' to the aforementioned Lipiner. Anton Bruckner used the unwelcoming appellation *meine Herren Israeliten* when he addressed Jewish students at the Conservatoire. The principal of that institution, Joseph Hellmesberger, enumerated his three main dislikes as 'my successor as leader of the Vienna Philharmonic, shortsighted people, and Jews'. The conductor Franz Mottl said about Mahler that everybody ascribed great talent to him, but unfortunately he was a Jew. Still on the topic of Mahler, the critic Rudolf Louis, aiming to illuminate the problematical position of the Jew in Western culture, wrote 'His music speaks musical German, but with an accent, with an inflection, and, above all, the gestures of an Eastern, all too Eastern Jew'. Withal Mahler was steeped in German folk lore and poetry, as evidenced by his settings of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and Rückert's *Kindertotenlieder*. (He is even assumed by some experts to have composed the text, as well as the music, of *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*.) His world view was also largely derived from the quintessentially German philosophers Schopenhauer and Nietzsche — with the thought of the latter even receiving musical transposition in the symphonies.

The attacks on him inspired by antisemitism made Mahler, for all his obsessive involvement in work, highly sensitive to the Jewish issue. He asked Alma to warn him when he gesticulated too

much, and grew angry whenever funny stories about Jews — a staple of German-Austrian humour — were told within his hearing. Outside of this defensive posture how much of a Jew did Mahler actually remain once the notion of conversion had taken root in his mind in the mid-Nineties? It is hard to be certain, but at the operative time he had written a letter that showed



Gustav Mahler

him, twenty years after his last contact with organised Judaism, still mindful of that heritage,

A magnificent symbol of the creator is Jacob wrestling with God until he blesses him. If the Jews had been responsible for nothing but this image they would still inevitably have grown to be a formidable people... God similarly withholds his blessings from me. I can only extort it from him in my terrible struggles to bring my works into being.

Several years later he was still expressing himself in similes derived from the Old Testament. When a young provincial orchestral player turned down a proffered engagement at the Vienna Opera Mahler said,

He deserves to have done to him what the ancient Jews did to a slave who at the end of his period could take his freedom but refused to do so. As a mark of eternal self-chosen bondage a wooden stake was driven through his ear signifying that he was nailed fast to the portals of the house.

In her reminiscences of Mahler Alma wrote that he knew that people would not forget his Jewishness just because he was sceptical of the Jewish religion and had been baptised. 'Nor' she added 'did he wish it forgotten'.

The image she presents of Mahler is of a "Christ-believing Jew" who could not pass a church without going inside, and who loved the smell of incense'. Taking her cue, some experts have ascribed burgeoning Catholic religiosity to Mahler in his Twenties, although he was 37 when he changed his religion. They postulate that the choral themes in the First and Second (or Resurrection) Symphony indicate the composer's dormant Catholic inclinations, pointing the way to his eventual conversion.

Others disagree emphatically with this interpretation, and assert that his baptism was

prompted by rational career considerations and not spiritual hunger. This does not mean that he was a materialist — either in the normative, or the pejorative, sense of the word. Mahler evolved, and through his compositions articulated, a spirituality all of his own that was rooted in receptivity to the beauty of nature as well as tragic awareness of the transience of life. The Jewish thread woven into the pattern of his life was again jerked painfully when in 1907 internal *Hofoper* intrigues and the hue and cry of the antisemitic press led to his dismissal. In a letter to Alma he described himself 'as a hunted stag with the hounds in full cry, pelted with mud time after time', adding with grim humour 'the curs obviously take me for a lamp-post'. He was 47.

Tragic fate an 'invention'

In his 51st year Gustav Mahler (who, aged five, had wanted to grow up to be a martyr) was dead, having been cumulatively debilitated by grief over the death of his daughter, overwork, marital tension and illness. The Judeophobia that had shadowed — though never overshadowed — his life showed scant sign of dying away, however. In a letter to Richard Strauss, his erstwhile co-conductor at Vienna, Franz Schalk, dubbed talk of Mahler's tragic fate 'a purely Jewish invention'. As for Strauss, he called the Jewish musicologist Redlich's description of Mahler as 'one of the most German (*deutscheste*) composers' the pinnacle of Jewish impudence.

Strauss' stricture on Redlich would not have bothered Mahler whose self-perception, witness the Chinese provenance of *Das Lied von der Erde*, was never that of an *echt*-German composer. In fact the very notion of compositions categorised according to nationality was anathema to Mahler, for whom all art, and music in particular, partook of the cosmic.

Other experts on what might be termed musical ethnicity have latterly connected Mahler with a *genre* called Jewish music. The problem with the term Jewish is, of course, that it connotes both religious and ethnic identity. In the ongoing debate about whether the cast of the composer's mind was Jewish or Christian, I incline towards the former — but only in the special sense that what made Mahler a quintessential Jew was his universalism.

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