

# AJR *Information*

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## Unhealthy appetite

**F**ifty years after the Fuehrer's death the German public's appetite for Hitleriana remains dismayingly keen. Right now whole forests are being cut down for the Austrian historian Brigitte Hamann's tome entitled *Hitler's Vienna* (Piper Verlag).

The book acquaints readers with a philosemitic young Adolf, who only took up Jew-baiting in imitation of Lueger. This slant places Hamann among the 'functionalist' historians who see antisemitism merely as a ploy rather than the mainspring of the Fuehrer's thinking.

Not that such diverse interpretations of Hitler's motives need concern non-historians. What matters rather more is the Germans' continuing fascination with that phosphorescent icon of evil, compounded by the fact that Hamann's young Adolf vaguely prefigures David Irving's old one (who had nothing to do with the Final Solution). Attempts at humanising Hitler render a disservice to democracy □

An ongoing debate among Jewish, and other, pedagogues

## Teaching the Holocaust

**T**hough the Holocaust now figures as a topic in the National Curriculum, and the Imperial War Museum will soon have a permanent exhibit, disagreements about the value of 'teaching the Holocaust' remain.

Critics divide into two groups: those who oppose such teaching on pragmatic grounds, and 'philosophical' opponents.

The 'pragmatists' point to the psychological burden acquaintance with the facts of genocide might impose on growing children (not least Jewish ones). The 'philosophers', on the other hand, reject the assumption that education can inculcate morality as fanciful pie-in-the-sky, and quote the number of PhDs and classical music aficionados in the upper echelons of the SS.

In recent years the sceptics have also been able to argue that the substantial amount of Holocaust teaching undertaken in postwar Yugoslavia signally failed to inoculate that particular society against the horrors of ethnic cleansing.

In thus setting the moral value of education at naught, the sceptics are – perhaps deliberately – throwing out the baby with the bath-water. What they leave out of account is the fact that any educational system operates as part of a specific national culture. And national consciousness matters hugely. The SS officers with doctorates had been educated by the sort of schoolmaster Heinrich Mann depicted in *Professor Unrat*. In the interwar period Nazi support at German universities even exceeded that among the population at large; whereas Mosley gained a following in East London and Liverpool, but none at Oxford or Cambridge. (In further contrast to Germany, French schoolteachers provided the electoral base for Georges Clemenceau, who published Zola's defence of Dreyfus). While it may be true that education failed to live up to the grandiose expectations of Renaissance humanists or the *encyclopedistes*, its value – even as an inculcator of morality – should not be gainsaid.

The fact that by 1914 Europe had become a much more civilised place than a hundred years earlier is surely in large measure due to the spread of education.

1914 was such a calamity that it could be described as the collective mental breakdown of humanity. In its wake came horrors – especially in Russia and Germany – which only ended with the deaths of Hitler and Stalin. Since then there has been, at least in the West, resumption of moral-cum-material progress – hand in hand with ever wider availability of education. Of course, the picture is far from uniformly white, but on looking into the pockets of darkness one finds that the likes of Le Pen, Haider or Zhirinovskiy are borne along the resentment of the under-educated. It is in the selfsame 'constituency of the ignorant' that Holocaust denial flourishes. Surely it is up to the schools to try and remedy such defects.

So much for the philosophical objections to teaching the Holocaust. To the 'pragmatist' objectors our answer must be that if children can be exposed to the horrors of the Somme and Hiroshima without becoming traumatised, they should not remain ignorant of Auschwitz. The Holocaust, after all, carries a more wide-ranging warning to a world still mired in racial conflict and fanaticism than any other calamity in human history. (And as for the danger of Jewish pupils perceiving their past only in terms of lachrymose martyrology, successive generations of Israeli schoolchildren have not taken noticeable harm) □



Inmates of the Lodz ghetto, 1941

## Profile

## A hundred years of plenitude

In this country everyone who reaches their hundredth birthday receives a greetings card from the Queen in recognition of that rather amazing feat. In Eva Reichmann's case congratulations are due not only because she will turn a hundred on 16 January, but also – and above all – on account of her life's work.

Eva, née Jungmann, was brought up in Oppeln, Silesia, around the time that Leo Baeck – a lifelong friend – started his rabbinical career in that town. After attending a *Höhere Töchterschule* she completed her studies with a doctorate at Heidelberg, where the university offered her an assistant lectureship. However, she rejected a career in academia, which might have offered glittering prizes in Weimar days. Instead, she elected to work in the less rarified atmosphere of the Jewish community, heading a department of the *Central Verein*, and editing the magazine *Der Morgen*.

The advent of the Nazis engendered a heavier work load amid much personal suffering. Eva's husband, Hans Reichmann, was incarcerated at Sachsenhausen concentration camp, and after his release



Eva Reichmann

the couple came to the UK. Eva used the enforced leisure of her early London years to research the roots of German antisemitism; the resultant PhD thesis became the book *Hostages of Civilisation* (1950) published in Germany as *Flucht in den Hass* (1956).

By this time she was Director of Research at the Wiener Library, while Hans, a co-founder of the Leo Baeck Institute, served as Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the AJR during its years of postwar growth.

She herself contributed to several volumes issued by the Leo Baeck Institute

and undertook lecture tours of Germany, where her second major book, *Grösse und Verhängnis deutsch-jüdischer Existenz*, was published.

Eva was widowed in 1964, having given up her Wiener Library post somewhat earlier. In retirement she continued her involvement with the Leo Baeck Institute and other causes close to her heart. More recently she has become housebound, but still receives, and enjoys, our journal.

We salute this remarkable centenarian – a living link with the generation of the founding fathers of the organised refugee community: Dr Alfred Wiener, Rabbi Leo Baeck, Robert Weltsch, Werner Rosenstock and (the sadly missed) Hans Reichmann. □ RG

### ATTRIBUTE FROM THE LEO BAECK INSTITUTE

On her 100th birthday the London Board of the Leo Baeck Institute pays tribute to Eva G Reichmann, who has been connected with it since its foundation and is now the only surviving member of the Institute's founder generation.

Eva Reichmann has contributed immeasurably to German-Jewish historiography and we are proud of our association with this remarkable woman and great scholar. We send her our warmest wishes □

Professor Werner E Mosse      Dr Arnold Paucker  
Chairman                              Director

## Lost battle

Gitta Sereny, author of the controversial biography of Hitler's chief architect and Minister of Armaments, Albert Speer, explained that while she detested all that he stood for and had not the slightest wish to meet him, after having done so she "grew to like him". However, Sereny remained convinced that Speer *was* an antisemite, as indeed were many Germans and Austrians.

At a lecture organised by the Wiener Library, Gitta Sereny faced an audience many of whom were Holocaust survivors. Ms. Sereny defended herself against any suggestion that she had humanised Speer, and robustly refuted accusations that she had fallen under the spell of this highly intelligent, knowledgeable and suave survivor of the Nuremberg Trials, despite his having been Hitler's closest confidant.

Speer became a convert to National Socialism in 1931 following an address Hitler gave to academics and university

students. "He loved Hitler and Hitler loved him back – like a son", according to Sereny.

As an architect, Speer developed Hitler's plans on a grand scale. When the then Minister of Armaments and Munitions was assassinated, Hitler immediately named Speer as his successor, despite few relevant qualifications and no experience of such an immense task. In fact, Speer proved exceptionally able and greatly increased war production.

Speer claimed that it was only in October 1943 that he found out about the mass genocide of the Jews and was ill for five months. While there remains controversy over the exact meeting at which the extent of the 'final solution' to the Jewish question was fully revealed to him, any supposed ambiguities would by then have been stripped away.

In the last six months of the regime Speer did oppose Hitler's scorched earth policy and travelled around countermanding his orders; it is a mark of Speer's special status that he lived through and

survived this period.

In Gitta Sereny's view, Speer was multiply guilty and should have been hanged. Responsible for the use and abuse of seven million slave labourers and hundreds of thousands of deaths, it was inconceivable that he should be absolved of responsibility – though his deputy was executed!

Sereny believed that Speer "wanted to find the strength to admit to guilt" – though only for the murder of Jews. This may explain her book's subtitle 'His Battle with Truth', but more convincing is Speer's daughter's unequivocal belief: "Of course he knew".

At Nuremberg, and then in Spandau, Speer appears to have built and perpetuated a myth about himself that continues beyond the grave. If so, he is not entitled to it – history's judgement should be harsh, not lenient. It was injustice enough that the architect of the brutal deaths of hundreds of thousands should himself escape the hangman's noose.

□ Ronald Channing

## France's flickering screen

In 1995 the centenary year of cinema, the French Post Office mooted the issue of a stamp commemorating the pioneer film makers Louis and August Lumière. The idea was dropped when close scrutiny of the brothers' careers revealed that they had been honoured by the collaborationist Vichy regime.

The French *fin-de-siècle* birth years of cinema had coincided with the Dreyfus case, which sharply divided the country into right and left. This division was to haunt French politics for generations: when the collaborator Charles Maurras was sentenced to death after the war, he screamed 'this is the revenge of the Dreyfusards!'

The split also affected film making; in fact it could be said that the content of films on occasion pre-empted actual political developments.

Thus in 1931, several years before the formation of the Popular Front, René Clair's *A Nous la Liberté* showed a workers' co-operative taking over a factory. In 1935, several years ahead of the establishment of Vichy, Jaques Feyder's *La Kermesse Heroïque* demonstrated – albeit in the most entertaining manner – that sleeping with the enemy was preferable to fighting him.

(The British cinema, by contrast, remained disconnected from politics until *Love on the Dole* and *Pastor Hall* [both 1940] although, responding to events in Germany, Gaumont had screened *Jew Süss* in 1934).

The more politicised French film industry had meanwhile come up with two masterpieces – both bearing the unmistakable signature of Jean Renoir. *La Grande Illusion* (1937) aimed to warn mankind of the drift into another world war; in 1939, one short year before the collapse, *La Règle du Jeu* depicted the French upper class as corrupt, vicious and antisemitic.

During the war one section of the French film industry, exemplified by Maurice Chevalier, Arletty and Vivienne Romance, collaborated to the hilt with the Nazi occupiers, while another – René Clair, Jean Gabin, Jean-Pierre Aumont – worked for, or fought with, the Allies. In 1943 the great Jewish actor Harry Baur died in a Gestapo prison (though, mysteriously, earlier he had actually appeared in the German-French co-production *Sym-*

*phonie eines Lebens*, 1942).

Under the Occupation, too, the outstanding Jewish scene designer Alexander Trauner secretly assisted the director Marcel Carné in making the arcane anti-Hitler allegory *Les Visiteurs du Soir* (1942), and the justly far better known *Les Enfants du Paradis* (1944).

Postwar the French cinema periodically focused on the Nazi experience. The seminal, highly impressive evocation of Auschwitz was Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* (1955) though it was left to the Jewish documentary maker Marcel Ophuls *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969) to touch on the fraught issue of collaboration. The latter topic was also to the fore in Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* (1975) which had a maladjusted young Frenchman turned Gestapo agent as its central figure. Louis Malle also made the brilliant *Au Revoir les Enfants* (1987) which was based on a heart-rending incident from his own schooldays.

The artistically less accomplished, though commercially more successful, *The Last Metro* (1980) told the story of a Jewish theatre manager who continues to direct his players while hiding from the Nazis in the basement of his own theatre. This was the work of the 'new wave' director Francois Truffaut who had shot to fame with *Four Hundred Blows* (1959). Born in 1932, Truffaut died over ten years ago. A hot-off-the-press biography informs us that his early intellectual mentors had been two collaborationist Jewbaiters: the journalist Robert Brasillach (executed in 1945) and the film critic Lucien Rebatet (whose death sentence was commuted).

One can only surmise that Truffaut must have suffered a trauma on subsequently discovering the Jewish identity of his own father. This may well have been a conversionary experience, for immediately after *The Four Hundred Blows* he mooted plans for an Eli Wiesel-scripted film about the Nazi camps (which, however, remained on the drawing board).

Alas, no survey of the postwar French cinema can be complete without mention of two superannuated Le Pen supporters: the sex-kitten-turned-animal-nutter Brigitte Bardot, and the nonegenarian director Claude Autant-Lara (*Le Diable au Corps*, 1946).

But being a tinseltown story this survey must have a 'happy ending' – and who better to supply that than Claude Berri, director of *Jean de Florette* (1986). Earlier on Jewish-born Berri had made his name

with Jewish-oriented films like *Mazel Tov* (1968). Earlier still, as a child during the war, he had been hidden by a Vichy-supporting farmer, and this experience probably accounts for his overly benign view of collaborators, as evidenced in *Uranus* (1990).

Berri's striving after a national feelgood effect also coloured his modern version of *Les Misérables* (1995) where Jean Valjean improbably saves a whole Jewish family.

The greatest feelgood moment in the director's personal career must have occurred earlier in 1992, when President Mitterrand's entire cabinet attended the gala première of Berri's *Germinal*, the most ambitious French cinema epic since Abel Gance's *Napoleon* (1927).


*Germinal*, of course, brings us back to Zola and *l'affaire Dreyfus* – as well as to the anti-Dreyfusard Lumière brothers, the first ever movie-makers.

□ Richard Grunberger

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## Reviews

## Musical accompaniment to murder

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, *INHERIT THE TRUTH 1939-1945*, Giles de la Mare Publishers, 1996, £9.99 (pb).

If Holocaust survivors do not talk about their terrible experiences it is not, according to the author of this remarkable autobiography, because they are reluctant to speak of their ordeal but because they are rarely asked to do so and, perhaps more significantly, because their tale defies the imagination.

Although Anita Lasker-Wallfisch herself has never had an overwhelming desire to "talk about it", she was determined to break the Holocaust taboo. In her book she does so with meticulous regard for the importance of documented evidence: photographs, letters from family and friends, official communications, newspaper reports and war crimes trial records.

Life for the teenager Anita Lasker, as for most other German Jews, was still relatively 'normal' even after 1933 until Kristallnacht shattered all illusions. For her it meant the end of cello lessons from Leo Rostal and her return from Berlin to her family in Breslau.

Her father tried to arrange emigration before the outbreak of war, but only one of her sisters managed to come to England with a Kindertransport. In April 1942 her parents were deported to one of the death camps, and she and her sister Renate were left alone in Breslau. The two girls attempted to escape from forced labour, but failed and were instead arrested on a criminal charge, convicted and imprisoned, then 'transferred' to Auschwitz. Only the fact that she was selected to be the cellist in the camp orchestra saved her from the gas chamber. But it also led to her 'evacuation' to the horrors of Bergen-Belsen. Miraculously, she and her sister survived, and both were liberated by the British Army in April 1945.

Her description of this and the subsequent weeks and months, during which she and Renate began to put their lives together again, cannot fail to make an indelible impression on the mind of any reader. One can only guess at how much anguish she must have suffered in the course of committing her memories to paper, reliving her adolescence in the harrowing circumstances of the Hitler years.

It is to be hoped that, in writing this book, not least for her children and grandchildren (to whom it is dedicated), she will also have achieved some kind of catharsis.

As Lasker-Wallfisch points out, her book is not an academic study of the Holocaust: her field is music, not history. But the account of her experiences will go a long way towards discrediting the spurious arguments of pseudo-scientific Holocaust deniers, and as such its value cannot be underestimated.

□ David Maier

## Eyewitness of horror

Zoltan Frankl, *WHIRLWIND* - available from 85 Greenhill, London NW3 5TZ, £5.99

The author followed in his father's footsteps and qualified in medicine and dentistry, the normal training for a dentist in Hungary. He practised in the late thirties and for part of World War II (including some forced labour service) until the German take-over of Hungary in October 1944. Arrested with many other Jews, including medical personnel, he was transported by rail in appalling conditions to Austria. There he became part of the forced labour units, digging trenches against advancing Russian tanks, moving westwards from Hungary into eastern Austria. Finally, by forced marches, he and the remains of his group arrived in April 1945 at the infamous Mauthausen concentration camp.

Following liberation, Zoltan returned to Hungary and attempted to take up his former life. He was happily reunited with his wife and family, and continued to practise in what soon became a Communist state. Not surprisingly, he found that antisemitism was still rampant.

At the outbreak of the Korean War, he was 'volunteered' to serve in Korea as part of a medical team sent out by the Hungarian government. After the 1956 uprising Dr. Frankl managed to arrange for his wife and children to fly to England 'on a visit', whilst he flew to Italy, ostensibly to attend a medical conference.

When the family were reunited in the UK, Zoltan began to practise in Harley Street as an oral surgeon.

Dr Frankl is able to recollect his sometimes horrific experiences with some degree of detachment arising from his total absorption in his profession. He seems to have come to terms with his life here and is now enjoying a well-earned retirement.

□ Eric Kirby

## Doing well - and good

Fred S Worms, *A LIFE IN THREE CITIES: Frankfurt, London and Jerusalem, Halban*, £18.99, (1996)

Though somewhat wary of autobiographies I was pleasantly surprised by the wit and self-deprecatory modesty which relieve Fred Worms' inevitable recital of achievements and successes. He has certainly ridden high in business, professional and Jewish communal life.

A man with a love-match wife and three loyal daughters, he evinces not the slightest doubt on the value of the family in Jewish life and, in effect, all civilised life. Attachment to 'the much despised central Orthodoxy...Maimonides' classical middle' underpinned his life from happy school days in Frankfurt-am-Main to business life in Britain and highly honourable work for charity and education in both Britain and Israel unto an apparently happy old age.

There is no doubt that Fred Worms has met the Great and the Good in all the three countries implied in the title: Chancellor Kohl, assorted Rothschilds, the two Herzogs (the presidents, respectively of Israel and of Germany), Teddy Kollek, Yitzhak Rabin, various Royals, Jim Callaghan, Ted Heath and Margaret Thatcher. If this appears like name-dropping, it is negated by frequently funny asides about them and himself.

During stays in Israel, where his offspring live, Teddy Kollek often used him as a 'trouble-shooter'.

Professionally, Worms trained in accountancy but he branched out as an entrepreneur. Some of his schemes read like a novel. Suffice it to say that in both London and Wales he became the head of Tudor, an accessory company for the flourishing motor industry, and virtual co-inventor of the modern screen-wiper.

When Tudor declined, Swiss army knives became a strong business interest.

For Worms charity began at home...at all three homes. He was a strong supporter, and sometime leader, of the Maccabi movement, as well as of B'nai B'rith and its offspring the Hillel Houses for Jewish students. He is very proud too of his part in the relocation of the Cochin Synagogue to the Jerusalem Museum.

All in all a rich mix, albeit lightly handled when not dealing with the Jewish tragedy. And it reads well.

□ John Rossall

## New-age peerage

The principle of monarchy, which has underpinned British life for centuries is eroding more and more, largely due to the tarnishing of the Windsor image by the peccadillos – adultery, bulimia, compulsive shopping – of the younger Royals. Their offence is in turn compounded by other shortcomings – drug abuse, pop concert promotion, careless driving – displayed by all too many sprigs of the aristocracy.

Now, while the egalitarian Scandinavian countries can stay monarchies without the prop of an aristocracy, class-conscious Britain would be hard put to retain its pyramidal structure unless an aristocratic substratum supported the coping stone of royalty.

But all is not lost! We are not about to jettison the hereditary principle and turn Republican. The reason is that, like nature, society abhors a vacuum. Consequently, as the old aristocracy declines a new one stands waiting in the wings. Dubbed the *glitterati*, this new elite is in the main drawn from media and showbiz personalities.

It, too, strictly follows the hereditary principle. Proof? If a latter day Rip van Winkle had fallen asleep in 1960 and woken up today he would find people with the same surname (Dimpleby) prominent on TV, bearers of the same names (Redgrave, West, Stephens, Cusack) prominent in the theatre, Waughs and Amises prominent in literature, Lawsons prominent in politics/journalism, etc.

Sometimes the same name blazes in a different sphere. Day-Lewis senior was Poet Laureate, Day-Lewis junior is an Oscar winner. The senior Freuds were connected, respectively, with painting and dog food, the junior ones are scattered across the media.

In addition the *glitterati* have alreadyaped the aristocracy by adopting a favourite obfuscating device of theirs. How many non-readers of Debretts know that Fitzallan, Manners and Churchill are the family names of, respectively, the Dukes of Norfolk, of Rutland and of Marlborough? By the same token a profusion of monickers disguises the interconnected web of *glitterati* power-brokers. M Drabble is wife to M Holroyd and sister of A S Byatt; A Fraser is wife to H Pinter and daughter of Lady Longford; H Bonham-Carter is great-niece to A Asquith (film director) and great-granddaughter of H Asquith (Prime Minister).

And seeing that the *glitterati* are on course to becoming tomorrow's aristocracy they may well provide us with a future monarch – a prospect brought much closer by last month's marriage of Daniel Day-Lewis to Rebecca Miller. A Day-Lewis-Miller child would boast a genealogy beside which the Habsburg family tree constitutes potential woodpulp. Consider: father Daniel a Hollywood megastar, paternal grandfather Cecil an anthologised poet, paternal grandmother Jill the silver-tongued actress daughter of Sir Michael Balcon, founder of Ealing Studios. The list continues: mother the film actress Rebecca Miller, maternal grandfather the Pulitzer playwright Arthur Miller, maternal grandmother the photographer Inge Morath.

Inge Morath – as the name indicates – is 'one of us'. And so, in the co-religionist sense, was Sir Michael Balcon, and is Arthur Miller. In other words my putative *glitterati* monarch of the future is preponderantly descended from the House of David – as, according to their medieval court genealogist, the Kings of England have traditionally been. □ RG

### Making a Will?

#### Please remember the AJR

Though we cannot take our worldly possessions with us, we can see that whatever is left behind goes where it will be appreciated, do some good and is needed.

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## Letters to the Editor

### COCA-COLONISED ISRAEL

Sir - I want to express my annoyance with the contents of R Willers' letter (November issue). It is one thing to disagree with your political opponents, but it is wrong to heap abuse on the likes of Rabin and Peres. It is thanks to these men and their 'gurus' that Israel exists today. *AJR Information* does a disservice to the memory of the creators of Israel in publishing such letters.

Disley, Cheshire

GV Wolf

### HAIDER'S COURT JEW

Sir - In Peter Sichrovsky we have a man whose opportunism knows no bounds. On a visit to Vienna, I learnt that he had only recently applied - albeit unsuccessfully - for the editorship of the Jewish community organ *Die Gemeinde*.

Ignatz Bubis, the head of Germany's Jewish communities, whose autobiography Sichrovsky had partly ghost-written, alleged that he fabricated at least a quarter of the script. "He imputed to me remarks which, far from reflecting my own views, tend to represent antisemitic clichés. As a result I had to end our collaboration and found myself forced to re-write 70% of the book."

Likewise the interviewees listed in Sichrovsky's *Fremd im eigenen Land* stated collectively 'Whilst the text is based on our CVs, additions to and omissions of what we actually said have completely distorted the overall picture'.

Truly, Haider and Sichrovsky deserve each other.

Chigwell, Essex

Fred Rosner

### BULLET-SCARRED BALLOT

At the time of which E Sanders writes (December issue) neither the ancient Greek nor Roman nations existed as we now know them.

The world was not made up of nations but of tribal groups each seeking to settle where land and water were available.

The Philistines were a proto-Greek people from the Aegean who invaded the Middle East.

The Israelites invaded also for land and water and after time established the Mosaic code which benefited all.

Israel is the only country in the world to which a title has been given by God and man.

Netanyahu is attempting to hold back the flood of Moslem fundamentalism threatening to engulf her.

Lindsay Drive  
Kenton

H Needham

### JECKE

Sir - In his review 'The Last of the Few' (November issue) JR seems to be puzzled by the derivation of the term *Jecke*.

When I lived in Palestine I was given a plausible explanation:

Polish/Russian Jews used to wear long coats and kaftans, whereas German Jews wore short jackets (Jacken).

Sheffield

Otto Fleming

### THE MELODY LINGERS ON

Sir - I wonder if any reader might be able to complete a poem/song which is on my mind all the time since I pruned some of my roses, some with rosehips?

*Sag wer mag das Männlein sein,  
das da steht im Wald allein?*

*es hat von rotem Purpur ein Mäntlein um...*

Wembley Park

Mrs Ilse Shindel

Middlesex

### ROTTEN HEART OF EUROPE

Sir - It is debatable whether, as AW Freud suggests, we should be grateful for any Wiedergutmachung received. 'They' stole our property, our chances, our youth, and in many cases, our lives.

Some while ago we were burgled. In the unlikely event of the thief returning some of the loot, do I really have to feel grateful?

Gt Bookham, Surrey

Robert Miller

### THE 'LUCKY' ONES

Sir - At the outbreak of the Second World War many Jewish people escaped from Poland to Russia, where they were deported to Siberia, Uzbekistan and other parts of the country.

Years of extreme hard labour in sub-human conditions caused deaths, diseases and emotional turmoil. And yet they were regarded as the 'lucky' ones compared to those who suffered directly at the hands of

the Germans. Their voices were usually silenced as soon as they uttered the first sentence of: 'We escaped to Russia'.

How lucky were they? How did they adjust to life after the war? How do they fare now? It is my wish to contact these survivors and their children in order to share/record experiences and also hear about their current needs/difficulties with a view to engaging constructive help.

If the above concerns you, please get in touch with me via *AJR Information*.

Brookside Road  
London NW11

Eda Spinka

### UPSET

Sir - I didn't like the editorial Good comes of Evil. I was very upset to read it, having lost my family and friends.

Irene Dillenberger

Victoria Nursing Home

### RESTITUTION

Sir - Take heart Mr Lester (Letters, December issue) I know of two cases where after a long and hard battle extending over several years, the heirs of the original owners finally achieved restitution.

Richmond  
Surrey

Richard Tait

### DECEMBER ISSUE

Sir - Looking at the front page I saw the lovely little drawing of the old synagogue at Worms. This was my late husband's birthplace/hometown; how pleased he would have been to see the picture and the article. Thank you.

Minehead  
Somerset

Anne Fields

### MOT JUSTE

O learned sage Richard,

Let me just ask you this:

Instead of *pace* in your editorial

Should you not have written *viz*?

Aberdare Gardens

Ezra Jurmann

London NW6

### A DATE OF INFAMY

Sir - You quite rightly condemn the quote in the latest Riefenstahl biography that had Hitler died at the end of 1938 he would have gone down as one of the greatest Germans in history. What you did not mention, and what the world has apparently forgotten, was the brutal deportation of thousands of Jewish families to Poland on 28 October 1938.

Park Lane  
Middx

Lilli Englehard

## From clogs to clogs with a coal fortune in between

**A**dolf Schramek, my maternal great-grandfather, was born in eastern Austria-Hungary in the 1840s.

As a young man, he came to Vienna to try his luck. He started life as a barrow boy selling coal. Family lore has it that every morning at 4am he went to the railway station to buy his coal before the competition turned up. Such effort had its reward, and before long he became a proper coal merchant, owning a number of coal mines by the turn of the century.

He built himself a lovely villa at the spa town of Baden near Vienna. He gave my mother, his favourite grandchild, a gold dinner service off which we ate at special occasions. Being very Jewishly public-spirited, he also, with his own money, built the beautiful synagogue in the Pazmanitengasse and was generous to poor Jews. He was the typical successful Viennese Jew and was voted on to the Jewish community council. Being in addition a keen Austrian patriot he bought Austrian war bonds, *Kriegsanleihe*.

In normal times, the family would have benefited from his life-long efforts. We could have expected to inherit shares in

his coal-mines, or in his villa at Baden. We would have continued eating off golden spoons. At the very least, we would have had a free seat in 'our' synagogue.

But times were not normal. His coal-mines, located in that part of Austria which became Czechoslovakia in 1919, were expropriated by the new state. The warbonds weren't worth the paper they were printed on. The rest of the money disappeared in the inflation. His villa at Baden was turned into the Russians' HQ in 1945. They left it ten years later so badly damaged that my mother sold it for a song. The new owner was more astute and managed to restore it to its former glory. The golden dinner service was stolen by the Nazis at their first search of our flat in March 1938. 'His' synagogue was, of course, burned down during the Kristallnacht, November 1938. Worst of all, his only daughter, my grandmother Ida Drucker ended her life at Auschwitz. (After escaping penniless from Vienna, she was trapped by the Germans in France). Nothing, not one sheet of paper, is left of Adolf Schramek's possessions. He might as well have stayed in bed till noon; getting up in the early hours did not bring him much benefit.

□ AW Freud

## The Holocaust in the Present

**A**s the impact of the Holocaust continues to reverberate in the late twentieth century, individuals and communities seek appropriate ways of commemorating and teaching the subject. In Germany, the land of the perpetrators, these issues take on a particular complexity and meaning.

Following the success of the talk *Opposite Sides of a Shared History*, presented in London by the Second Generation Trust, a conference is being held this month in Germany on *The Presence of the Holocaust in the Present*.

The conference is focusing on the after-effects of the Holocaust on descendants of victims and survivors, perpetrators, collaborators and bystanders, and an international network is being established for descendants from both sides. Highlights include contributions from Professor Dan Bar-on of Ben-Gurion University, and a concert performance given

by the European Youth Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis of Sir Michael Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, introduced by Anita Lasker Wallfisch.

Conference: *The Presence of the Holocaust in the Present*, is being held on 26 and 27 January 1997 in the Schönberg Town Hall, Berlin. Primary working language: German. Details for those wishing to participate are available from Second Generation Trust, Tel: 0171 624 5542 Fax: 0171 328 8532 □

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## The AJR at Work



AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman congratulates Sylvia Matus, left, and Renée Lee on completing 20 years of continuous service to AJR members at a reception held in their honour at the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre in London.

### DOUBLE CELEBRATION

Sylvia Matus, co-ordinator of the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre in West Hampstead, and her deputy and close friend, Renée Lee, celebrated together 20 years of continuous service to the Association of Jewish Refugees. The AJR marked the occasion with a reception and buffet supper especially arranged for them at the Day Centre by catering manager Susie Kaufman, with their families, colleagues and members of the AJR Management Committee as guests.

Sylvia and Renée both joined the AJR more than 20 years ago: Sylvia to recruit and organise volunteer assistance and manage a home help service; Renée as part of a team processing applications for entry to residential homes in The Bishops Avenue and Hampstead.

With the opening of a Day Centre ten years ago, Sylvia and Renée formed a management team and established the Centre as a welcoming and warm place for AJR members, many of whom live within the area, often alone.

AJR Chairman Andrew Kaufman said how fortunate AJR had been over these years to have the dedicated services of both these ladies who were "two sparkling diamonds". Work at the Day Centre was both tough and rewarding, but their devotion to each and every one of its members had ensured the Centre's continuing success. He wished them well in all their

future work and presented each of them with a silver picture frame as a memento.

Sylvia and Renée replied in verse, recalling that they had learned to overcome any problems so that they could bring pleasure and entertainment to AJR's members. Not to be outdone, Joanne Fresco added her witty appreciation of Sylvia and Renée's "dedication, love and care" which had made the Day Centre a veritable home from home.

Ludwig Spiro, Hon. President of the AJR and the driving force behind the establishment of the Centre, spoke warmly of Sylvia and Renée's work as "outstanding" and hoped that they would continue for many years to come.

□ Ronald Channing

### Living in Germany

Journalist Wolfe Bruer spoke to a well-attended meeting of AJR's Northern Group on the perceived paradox of being a Jew in today's democratic Germany.

Even though Germany's 35,000 Jewish citizens were favourably considered and had prospered, most still remained reluctant to play a full civic role. They had been excused conscription into the armed forces and preferred to send their children to universities in America, England or Israel rather than to those in Germany. Perhaps crucially, the community was failing to train its own rabbis and relied on

not-always-suitable appointments from abroad.

Communal leader Ignatz Bubis had encouraged the Government to grant visas to immigrant Russian Jews, which boosted the community's strength when entry to other groups was subject to far more stringent restrictions. Despite this, Wolfe Bruer believed that the attitudes of the majority of Germany's Jewish citizens remained ambivalent; they may yet have to escape the persecutor/victim relationship of the past in order to identify with the new Germany. □ RDC

### German-Jewish Studies

Professor Edward Timms, Director of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex, was the guest speaker at a meeting of South London AJR. For many years the subject tended to be submerged, but more recently, not least because of the success of Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*, the significance of German-Jewish studies has become more widely appreciated.

Prof. Timms discussed emancipation in eighteenth-century Germany, antisemitism and the Holocaust, then described the enrichment Jewish refugees had brought to English culture. He referred to the number of educational books and videos currently on offer which dealt with the Holocaust.

□ Ruth Leggett

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## It occurs to me . . .

Laugh, and the whole world laughs with you. I am sure you have long ago discovered the truth of this axiom and its corollary. However, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that laughter may well have therapeutic value. Chai Lifeline's Centre for Health includes Laughter Therapy as one of a range of complementary therapies to help people achieve a positive and healthier life-style.

Laughter, like most of our emotions, comes in a full range, from brief smiles to side aching belly laughs. Laughter can be sympathetic or it can be cruel. That depends on your nature. Some people have *Schadenfreude* (strange that only a German word expresses the feeling), and laugh at the misfortune of others. I have found that there is a common theme in what makes me laugh. It is the highlighting of the absurdities of real life.

My wife tells me she has never heard me laugh so much as when I saw Jackie Mason's first show in New York. It was self mocking - a Jew mocking his fellow Jews - and it broke all taboos of political correctness by mocking the characteristics of other social groups. The show confirmed one's worst prejudices in highlighting the differences between absurd stereotypes.

Perhaps the cleverest example of laughing at our masters came in the *Yes, Minister* and *Yes, Prime Minister* series. Both the script and the acting in these acerbic attacks on the ambitions of politicians and the wiles of bureaucrats had me in stitches.

The other day, I read a letter from a senior civil servant that could be described as pure Sir Humphrey, in that he used remarkable logic to prove that black was really grey. Being able to laugh at our rulers is also a symbol of democracy. Totalitarian rulers generally forbid such criticism.

Another example of humour arising out of being dressed in a little brief authority, was the long running *Dad's Army*, because it showed some of the ridiculous aspects of the phoney war, with the incompetence of characters taken from their everyday occupation into activities they knew nothing about.

Over the years, each of the above examples has given me enormous pleasure and relaxation from the stress of modern life.

I hope you too have the capacity to enjoy humour in all its forms. Remember, it's good for you, and laugh in the New Year.

□ Ernest David

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- Wednesday 1 CLOSED - NEW YEARS DAY  
Thursday 2 CLOSED  
Sunday 5 DAY CENTRE OPEN - NO ENTERTAINMENT  
Monday 6 WINTER MUSICAL MISCELLANY - Valerie Hewitt (Soprano - Piano & Guitar) accompanied by Anne Berryman  
Tuesday 7 CLASSICAL ROMANCE - Maria Dolores Campos (Soprano) accompanied by Margaret Marinkovic (Piano)  
Wednesday 8 JANUARY SERENADE - Anneke Freeland (Soprano) accompanied by Jeremy Cooke  
Thursday 9 ROMANTIC SONGS & ARIAS - Louise Merrett (Soprano) accompanied by Margaret Marinkovic (Piano)  
Sunday 12 DAY CENTRE OPEN - NO ENTERTAINMENT  
Monday 13 RONNIE GOLDBERG ON GUITAR  
Tuesday 14 SUNRISE - SUNSET - Heidi Pegler (Soprano) accompanied by Michael Robinson (Piano)  
Wednesday 15 DAY CENTRE OPEN - LUNCHEON CLUB  
Thursday 16 MUSIC TO SOOTHE THE SOUL - Guyathierie Peiris (Soprano) accompanied by William Patrick (Piano)  
Sunday 19 A NEW YEAR HAS BEGUN WITH A POT POURRI OF GREAT MUSICAL MEMORIES - Yacov Paul

- Monday 20 REMEMBER MY LOVE - Simone Broso (Soprano) accompanied by Margaret Marinkovic (Piano)  
Tuesday 21 A PARTY AFTERNOON - Dorothy Sayers (Piano & Accordion)  
Wednesday 22 BE ALERT TO CRIME - TALK & VIDEO PRESENTATION ON CRIME PREVENTION - Stephen Hoare of West Hampstead Police Station  
Thursday 23 MY SONG OF LOVE - Katinka Seiner accompanied by Peter Gellhorn (Piano) with Guest Artist Laszlo Easton (Violin)  
Sunday 26 DAY CENTRE OPEN - NO ENTERTAINMENT  
Monday 27 OUR MARIE - THE STORY OF MARIE LLOYD IN WORDS & MUSIC - Margaret Dent accompanied by Valerie Hewitt (Piano)  
Tuesday 28 FOR THE SCHUBERT ANNIVERSARY - Michael Downing (Baritone) accompanied by Richard Pearce (Piano)  
Wednesday 29 SHOWTIME AT THE AJR - Amanda Palmer (Soprano) accompanied by Andrew Wells (Piano)  
Thursday 30 THE GEOFFREY STRUM & HELEN BLAKE DUO

## FEBRUARY

- Sunday 2 VIVA VOCE  
Monday 3 THE GEOFFREY STRUM & HELEN BLAKE DUO  
Tuesday 4 FUN - LOVING - LIFE - Fiona Tanner (Soprano) accompanied by Frances Kelleher (Piano)  
Wednesday 5 SONGS THAT LEAVE THEIR MARK - Mark Rosen (Tenor) accompanied by Daphne Lewis (Piano)  
Thursday 6 SILVER STRINGS - Stacy Broide (Piano) & Roman Broide (Cello)

## FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Deaths

Johnson. Elisabeth Johnson, née Löwenthal. Born Vienna 27 July 1923, died London 27 October 1996.

Jurmann. Manja (Marie) Jurmann, died peacefully on 13th November 1996.

### Birthday

Tischler. Mr Walter Tischler, 2 Sarre Road, London NW2, celebrated his 90th birthday on 6th December 1996.

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### Miscellaneous

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### Organisation Contacts

AJEB (Association of Jewish Ex-Berliners). For information call Peter Sinclair 0181 882 1638.

## Barmitzvah boy?

If you had to leave Continental Europe as a youngster, you may have missed the opportunity to become Bar-Mitzvah in accordance with our Jewish tradition. Fortunately, it is not too late to have a Barmitzvah now, whatever your present age.

An AJR volunteer, Sheldon Lazarus, is organising a group Barmitzvah ceremony for former refugees and Holocaust survivors. It is being planned as a social gathering in North West London. There are no charges and no knowledge of Hebrew-reading or Judaism is necessary. You do not have to be observant, Orthodox, or a regular shul-goer .... just Jewish.

If you would like to know more about the ceremony please call AJR Volunteers Co-ordinator Debbie Picker on 0171 431 6161.

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Alice Schwab

# Art Notes

At the *Hayward Gallery* (till 23 February) Howard Hodgkin, one of the leading British post-war painters. Hodgkin emerged as a major international artist in the early 1970s, and is known especially as a brilliant colourist. In 1984 he won the Turner Prize.

Showing simultaneously at the same venue: *Art of the Insane*. In the early 1920's, the German art historian and psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn, amassed a remarkable collection of paintings and drawings by patients of psychiatric hospitals. These images were a source of inspiration to many artists of the avant-garde, including Max Ernst and the Surrealists.

At the *Royal Academy's Sackler Gallery* until the 23 January *From Mantegna to Picasso*. Drawings from the Thaw Collection at the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. The exhibition includes important examples by Rubens, Rembrandt, Claude Lorraine, Delacroix, Cézanne, Degas and Gauguin. Also at the *Royal Academy* (23 January to 6 April) in the main galleries, *Braque: The Late Works*. This gathering of some fifty paintings will include all of the great cycles of paintings from his mature years – *The Interiors*, *Billiard Tables*, *Studios and Birds*.



*Mr and Mrs Andrews* by Thomas Gainsborough, at the *National Gallery*.

A Young Gainsborough show at the *National Gallery* (29 January to 31 March) focuses on its outstanding collection of early works by Gainsborough, and complements them with loans of paintings and drawings.

Also at the *National Gallery* in *Room 1*, the *Collection of John Julius Angerstein* which had been formed with the help of the foremost painter of the day, Sir Thomas Lawrence. The *National Gallery* was actually founded in 1824 with the Government purchase of 38 paintings from the collection of Angerstein.

From 8 February to 13 April the *Liverpool Tate Gallery* stages an exhibition of *Paula Rego* – one of Britain's most respected artists – which will include over 80 paintings □

## SB's Column

60 years ago. By 1937 the German entertainment scene had been completely 'aryanized' causing a transfer of talent to Austria's stage and screen: Oskar Karlweis and Ludwig Stössel had joined the 'Josefstadt', Desi Halban-Kurz, daughter of soprano Selma Kurz made her debut as Violetta at the State Opera, and the exiled comedians Otto Wallburg, Szöke Szakall and Ernst Verebes joined Austrian film companies, as did Franziska Gaal (of *Gruss und Kuss*, *Veronika* fame). None of these artists knew that it was to be the last year of their appearances in Vienna, nor did composer Paul Abraham whose operetta '*Roxy und ihr Wunderteam*', starring the lively dancer Rosi Barsony, was staged at the end of the season.

**Birthdays.** Käthe Gold, child actress during the first world war and member of Vienna's Burg ensemble since 1947, celebrates her 90th birthday this month. A fine and most versatile actress, she made her home in Vienna after engagements in Berlin and Munich. Her range of roles spanned the entire gamut from Schiller via Ibsen's *Doll's House* to Tennessee Williams. A legend of German language theatre, Paula Wessely has also reached the milestone of 90. Much has been written about her since her debut in Prague in the twenties. Graduating under Max Reinhardt, she created an entirely new acting style with her calm yet most expressive voice; she also had great stage presence. During the thirties she extended her range, starring in films which today rank as classics (*Maskerade*, *Episode*,

*Ernte*). Marcel Prawy, dubbed the Austrian 'Opernführer', and author of a history of the Vienna State Opera, is 85. He began his career as secretary to Jan Kiepura whom he followed to the United States. There he made friends with Leonard Bernstein; postwar he initiated the art form of the musical in Austria as successor to operetta, presenting *West Side Story* at the Vienna Volksoper followed in due course by *Kiss me Kate* and *My Fair Lady* □

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## Parliament

### Compensation for Holocaust victims

*Extracts from John Marshall's address to the House of Commons adjournment debate on 12th November 1996*

Recent events have reminded the world of the depravity of Hitler's Germany and the evil that was the Holocaust. But the litany of shame engulfs civilised countries such as Switzerland and Austria, as well as Germany.

Homes were looted, property was transferred to the Germans' lackeys, paintings and valuables were confiscated, wedding rings were melted down and the gold teeth of Holocaust victims were removed from dead bodies and transformed into gold for the Germans to use. It has been estimated that by the end of the war the Germans had looted £550 million.

The Swiss used confidentiality laws to squirrel away many millions of pounds. During the pre-war period, there was apocryphal evidence of future victims depositing money in Swiss banks. After the

war, when the dependants of those victims claimed their inheritance, they were denied access to those accounts.

The gold that was given to the Tripartite Gold Commission in 1946 included much stolen gold. The gold in that pool that was taken from individuals should not be returned to Government, but should be given to those who are still working for the refugees from the last war. The lethargy that has characterised Austrian and Swiss dealings with the matter since the war is unacceptable.

Austria is another country with a record of shame. In 1955, Austria was given a pile of paintings and other works of art and instructed to return them, or to try to find the rightful owners. They squirreled them away in the Mauerbach monastery from 1955 until 1996. The Austrians should do more than apologise; they ought to be willing to make reparations to those who would otherwise have benefited.

I recently met constituents who were slave labourers during the last war. The only hope that people had of surviving the death camps was to work in the factories of Nazi Germany. The prisoners knew that, if they ever faltered in their work,

they were liable to be killed the next day. Everyone who worked in Germany from 1939 to 1945 is entitled to a pension, except people who worked as slave labourers. That is iniquitous in the extreme and I call on the German Government to right that wrong.

Victims of the Holocaust include all the children who came to England in 1938 and in 1939 through the Kindertransport system.

I call on the German Government to fulfil their debt of honour to all the people who suffered under the Hitler regime, so that slave labourers and people who had to come to Britain to secure their future life and freedom are compensated by Germany.

*John Marshall was supported by David Sumberg (Bury, South) and Greville Janner (Leicester, West). In his reply, Dr Liam Fox, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, said: "The Government are extremely sympathetic to the idea of benefiting individual victims of Nazism in the final distribution of the gold pool, if a method can be found of doing so that has a reasonable prospect of success" □*

## Notes from a Bohemian journey

Kolin, now *judenrein*, has a beautifully restored old synagogue, a section from which had been built into the fabric of our new Northwood & Pinner Liberal Synagogue. We also had a Torah scroll from Kolin which we returned to its rightful place.

Judy Herman's play *The Stones of Kolin*, tracing the Jewish history of the town, had been performed in Northwood some months ago to great acclaim, and we decided to bring it to Kolin for the 300th anniversary of the completion of the synagogue. This required tremendous organisation; the play had to be adapted, costumes, stage set and props, choir and cast - 80 people in all - plus a keyboard and the Torah scroll packed into a plane.

We arrived at Kolin town square to the sounds of a brass band and the sight of a charming group of very young drum majorettes in beautiful costumes, performing meticulously. In fact the whole town had turned out to greet us!

At the synagogue a memorial service was introduced by Hanna Greenfield in Czech and English. Kolin-born Hanna, a survivor of Terezin who lives in Israel, welcomed representatives of the churches and town, and her twelve-year-old granddaughter read from the Torah which was then returned. The beautiful singing of our choir made the service in this historic building both festive and moving.

There followed visits to the old and new cemeteries, the museum which had a special exhibition of Jewish interest, and the old town hall with its beautiful council chamber now used for weddings and official receptions. Then we sat down to a sumptuous buffet lunch.

That evening at the theatre we enjoyed a choral concert followed by our production of *The Stones of Kolin*. The performance went extremely well, the locals following through a synopsis in Czech. Congratulations go to all the performers and organisers, especially to Rabbi Andrew and Sharon Goldstein.

From Prague we visited Terezin. Guided by Hanna Greenfield and her sister, this proved a rather emotional and exhausting

experience. Friday night's Kabbalat Shabbat at Prague's Jewish Town Hall was to be followed by a choral Shabbat service in the Jerusalemska Synagogue, but due to a misunderstanding, when we arrived the place was in darkness and Andrew decided to hold an open-air service in the deserted street. The singing sounded good, but I was not the only one to feel uncomfortable. Those of us who had experienced Nazi oppression were similarly affected; only the young felt perfectly at ease.

Plzen (Pilsen) has a Jewish community and an old synagogue, derelict and unused for 100 years. A larger and more elaborate newer one is currently being restored at government expense. So we held our Shabbat service in the old building with its broken windows in freezing temperatures, but it warmed our hearts to send our choir's voices and prayers up through its old rafters.

That afternoon we spent in the old fashioned comfort of Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary), a spa with beautiful shops, restaurants and hotels, a complete contrast to Plzen.

□ Marianne Herz

## One man's war

### Part 17

#### Refugee trek

Eventually we found the huge garrison in Breslau with many large buildings, where they locked me up in a tiny broom-chamber, with not enough space to sit with outstretched legs.

The following morning Heinz came and we went through miles of corridors when we met a German soldier under guard who had all insignia ripped off his uniform. Heinz knew the other guard and stopped him, and I recognised the other prisoner as being Alfred R., who was quite pleased to see me. I heard that he was not worried about his impending court martial, anything but the Russian front. He knew that even if he were to be sentenced to death – execution would be a long time away and the war would be over before that.

Later on I was taken to a court-room, where five or six German generals were sitting at a table. Alfred R. was also there and he had a German officer as defence counsel, who wore a black gown over his uniform. Somebody asked me if I spoke German and gave me a book to hold in my right hand. I saw that it was Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, when the presiding general started to whisper to his colleagues on the left and right; then they all put their heads together and had the book taken away. They realised at the last moment that they would be creating a mockery to ask a dirty Jew to swear on the Fuehrer's life to speak nothing but the truth. After a few more questions an usher wheeled in a large two-tier trolley overloaded with tins and boxes, among which I recognised Czech black boot polish. They were all contraband items, and suddenly I understood why the Gestapo in Ratibor took over an hour to establish which items I had given to Alfred some weeks ago. They wanted to find out if I was part of a huge black market ring. I realised that my presence was required as witness for the prosecution only, and I had to leave, but I never found out Alfred R.'s sentence.

Heinz and I left Breslau in bitter cold and deep snow; arriving back in the evening at our Lubowitz farm I had my biggest surprise: everybody else had gone. My belongings were left on my bed and I stared at bare walls of what had been my home for nearly three years.

Soon enough I too was back at the

Stalag. All working parties were being recalled and the camp was over-crowded and bursting at its seams. There was no space to walk, sit or sleep. In the middle of the night we got marching orders. In deep snow and bitter cold, out of tens of thousands of PoWs, the Palestinians and the Royal Air Force were considered VIPs and were the first ordered to leave camp and march west.

We soon learnt to adapt to new conditions, reducing the weight of the load we were carrying on our backs. Every prisoner knew never to part with food and all carried some sort of iron ration. We also wore a blanket rolled into a sausage over our shoulder. Spare clothing was not thrown away but put on. If one had two pairs of long johns, one marched in three layers of underwear against the cold.

It is still a miracle to me how it was possible to survive under these harsh conditions from January to March 1945, practically without food, with rarely a roof over our heads. Farm animals did not survive the winters in these parts and had to be stabled. We must have marched between 10 and 20 miles each day, always avoiding towns.

The German escort had to find the right type of village to stay the night. Hours before we approached a village the locals were ordered to remove all milk-churns from their roadside positions. While we walked we didn't feel the cold, but sweated and became thirsty. It can be imagined how long it took a few thousand men to quench their thirst from one village pump.

The hope that we might find something to eat at the next overnight stop drove us on relentlessly. Sometimes, but very seldom, we heard that bread would be distributed at a future road junction. If true, we lined up eight or ten abreast to receive one loaf between us from a vehicle guarded by Germans with fixed bayonets. But it was never enough.

At overnight stops we filled our stomachs with animal fodder such as beets or turnips. The warmest place to spend the night was on a dunghill. The chemical process of rotting manure creates heat and as there was only a space for a limited number of marchers, some asked others to cover them up and they slept like in a warm bed. No need to be embarrassed about smelling – none of us had washed, shaved, taken off or changed their clothing for weeks and months.

After walking for about two months,

now warmer and in slush or mud, the sole of my left boot simply wore out. But I had spare boots, the officers' brown ones. However, they were tight and I soon felt pain in my left foot, and ending the day with a two inch blister on my heel. Next morning I went on sick-parade and was ordered to walk over to some horse-drawn carts. After a few hours ride we arrived at a small PoW camp with neat wooden huts, full of sick Russian prisoners. We were put into a separate building.

The running of the interior of our camp was entirely in Russian hands. The Germans informed us that we would have to make a deal with the Russians, to allow us access to the kitchen. The Germans were not prepared to do more than guard the perimeter fence – they were afraid of lice, cholera and typhus.

My foot was cleaned and bandaged in crêpe-paper and soon healed. Even the German wounded had only paper bandages. With the help of a little bit of tobacco, I was able to exchange my officer's boots for a comfortable pair of army boots in a reasonable condition.

After two weeks, twenty of us found to be well enough to leave this camp were ordered back on the road, guarded by the Germans. Passing through Dresden we were ordered into an underground shelter, as the town was being bombed by the Allies. We had to spend all daylight hours crammed together with a few hundred German civilians and felt most uncomfortable under the circumstances; but they were very subdued and ignored us in total silence.

At nightfall we started to move again. By morning the snow was gone, the sun was shining, and the roads we followed to the west were primitively marked 'Refugee trek'. The main roads to the eastern front were being kept clear for German army movements. Hundreds of thousands of German civilians were fleeing from the Russians in an assortment of carts, trucks or wagons, drawn by horses, oxen, cows, tractors, even steam-engines. It was an endless uninterrupted column, moving by day and night, overtaking us foot sloggers. But on we walked, by now weighing about half of our normal weight.

Eventually, after many more privations, we arrived at Fallingbostel PoW camp, where I still found myself when the war ended.

□ HP Weiner

The series is now concluded.

## Cooking with Gretel Beer



## Rosinenkuchen

**M**y favourite remedy for a slight cold is to bake a cake – preferably with yeast – because that means staying in a warm kitchen for a considerable time whilst the dough rises (and open doors and draughts are definitely frowned upon). If you haven't got time for this, try the following – I promise you'll feel better, and have a delicious cake into the bargain!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS –  
JANUARY 1997

- Tue 7 The Jewish Chronicle: Deputy Editor Hyam Corney. JACS, 2pm
- Wed 8-12 Blood Wedding, a play presented by Stars Theatre, Bull Theatre, 68 High Street, Barnet. Box office 0181 449 0048
- Tue 11 Jo Wagerman: 'A Life in Education', JACS, 2pm
- Mon 13 British Policy towards Germany circa 1945: Prof. Dr Lothar Kettenacker, German Historical Institute. Club 43, 8pm
- Mon 20 William Morris Revival: David Jacobs, writer & journalist. Club 43, 8pm
- Tue 21 Treasures from the Opera: Return visit by Martin Graham. JACS, 2pm
- Thur 23 Lunchtime Recital: Peter Hewitt, piano, plays Prokofiev & Chopin. Sternberg Centre, 1.15pm, £2
- Sun 26 Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts: Alvin Barnett's illustrated talk. Jewish Museum, Camden Town, £5, 2.30pm

4 eggs  
70g (2½oz) raisins  
2 tablespoons rum  
140g (5oz) unsalted butter  
140g (5oz) caster sugar  
1 teaspoon grated orange rind  
70g (2½oz) blanched almonds, cut into fine strips  
70g (2½oz) candied lemon peel, chopped  
140g (5oz) plain flour  
butter and flour for the cake tin  
icing sugar sifted with vanilla sugar for sifting over top

Pre-heat oven to 175°C, 365°F, Gas Mark 4. Butter and flour a cake tin. Soak raisins in rum until nicely plumped up. Separate egg yolks and whites. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy, beat in egg yolks gradually. Drain any remaining rum from raisins and add to the mixture. Whisk egg whites until stiff, fold into mixture alternately with the remaining ingredients. Bake for about 1 hour – test before removing from oven. Cool on a rack and serve sprinkled with icing sugar sifted with a little vanilla sugar □

- Mon 27 Beyond Dachau, Irmgard Litten's exile in London: Dr Marian Malet, Research Centre for German & Austrian Exile Studies. Club 43, 8pm
- Tue 28 Israel Today: Abi ben Ari provides an Israeli perspective. JACS, 2pm
- Tue 28 Goldhagen Debate: How willing were Hitler's executioners? Sussex University, 5pm
- Ongoing: 'The Boys', Children who survived the Holocaust: Exhibition at the Jewish Museum, Finchley, Sun to Thurs until 2nd March '97, £2

**ORGANISATION CONTACTS**  
JACS at Belsize Square Synagogue, NW3 4HX. Tel: 0171 794 3949  
Club '43, at Belsize Square Synagogue. Hans Seelig 01442 254 360  
Jewish Museum, 129/131 Albert Street, Camden Town, NW1 7NB. Tel: 0171 284 1997, and at Sternberg Centre. Sternberg Centre for Judaism, 80 East End Road, Finchley, NW3 2SY. Tel: 0181 346 2288  
University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies. Diana Franklin, 0181 455 4785 or 01273 678 495.

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## 50 YEARS AGO

## IMMIGRATION POLICY

Continuance of the 1919 Aliens Restrictions Act, House of Commons: **Mr Callaghan** demanded a greater elasticity in the administration of the Act, taking into consideration the humanitarian aspects as well as the shortage of labour. **Mr Paget** stressed that since the inception of the Act, the economic situation of the country had changed from unemployment to shortage of labour. In **Mr Crossman's** view a more generous immigration policy was a necessity, not only for economic reasons, but also for national security. Britain was under the obligation to contribute to the solution of the displaced persons problem by admitting people who were now without homes or countries □

AJR Information, January 1947

## Obituary

## Esther Simpson

Yorkshire-born Esther Simpson was a language graduate of Leeds University. In the late 1920s she taught in Central Europe and worked for the International Fellowship for Reconciliation (set up to overcome the hatred generated by the Great War).

1933 found her in Vienna, when Hitler took power in neighbouring Germany. Sir William Beveridge, Director of the LSE and Prof Lionel Robbins, who happened to be in Vienna, were horrified at the wholesale dismissal of Jewish teachers from German universities. On their return they initiated a British campaign to help the displaced academics, and with the help of Maynard Keynes and Lord Rutherford set up the Academic Assistance Council.

Esther Simpson came back to London to serve as Secretary of the Council. It was she who provided refugee academics arriving in this country with financial support and aid in securing appropriate appointments. Her services were again much in demand during the mass internment of 1940 when she worked tirelessly to bring about the release of academics, some of whom had been 'deported' to Canada and Australia.

It is no exaggeration to say that she deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as Eleanor Rathbone, as an outstanding benefactor of the refugee community.

Eventually her services were recognised. She was appointed OBE and awarded an honorary LLD by London and Leeds universities. What probably gratified her most was the presence of some of the academics she had helped at the launch of her memoirs in 1992.

□ RG

## PENSIONS BASED ON KINDERERZIEHUNG

Women born in or after 1921, who left Germany because of Nazi persecution and had children born outside Germany before 30 November 1949, are entitled to small payments in respect of the education of the children.

Moreover, entitlement to such payments could also entitle the claimant to a German pension, often quite small where the mother in the UK paid reduced rate Married Women's National Insurance contributions.

In some circumstances it was possible to transfer the entitlement to the husband, provided that he too was born in or after 1921. Because he generally had paid full National Insurance contributions in the UK, he might be awarded a higher pension.

The AJR is exploring whether it is still possible to transfer entitlement from the mother to the father where this had not been done from the beginning.

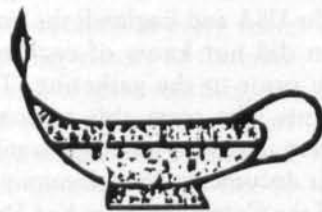
We should like to hear from couples where the wife is in receipt of a small pension based on Kindererziehung, who would be interested in exploring whether (a) transfer to the husband is still possible and (b) this brings a larger pension. We need a few specific cases to check with the German authorities what the possibilities are.

Please ring Norah Gittins on 0171 431 6161 if you are interested □

## AJR MEALS ON WHEELS

A wide variety of high quality kosher frozen food is available, ready made and delivered to your door via the AJR meals on wheels service. The food is cooked in our own kitchens in Cleve Road, NW6, by our experienced staff.

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## NEWSROUND

**Vicky's place**

A commemorative plaque has been placed on the house of cartoonist Vicky who died in 1966. Victor Weisz was a Berlin-born Jew who settled in London in 1935 and contributed his witty and incisive political cartoons to many leading Fleet Street newspapers.

**Island collaborators**

Recently released British military intelligence reports reveal the names of 40 Channel Islanders who allegedly collaborated with the German occupiers during World War II. The islands' pro-German top official, John Leale, was knighted after the war.

**All the flowers gone?**

Plans to name a street after Marlene Dietrich have aroused controversy among Berliners. Dietrich, who died four years ago, left Germany for Hollywood before Hitler came to power and entertained US troops in World War II. Though officially a heroine, she is still regarded by some Germans as a traitor.

**A question of priorities**

Documents uncovered in the USA by Prof. Richard Breitmann indicate that British intelligence possessed information on the killing of Jews in Eastern Europe in 1941. Other matters, however, were given priority consideration.

**Nazis hiding in Canada**

An American private detective claims to have interviewed 58 former Nazis now living in Canada, many of whom admitted perpetrating Holocaust atrocities. Steve Rambam approached former German soldiers, posing as a history professor.

**Literary honour**

Stella Rotenberg, a Jewish-Austrian poet living in Leeds, has received the Austrian Government's Honour Cross for Science and Art (first class) at a ceremony in Vienna.

**Military honour**

AJR member Rolf Weinberg has been awarded the Médaille Militaire, France's highest military decoration, for his services in World War II. Rolf Weinberg is the only Jew of German origin to be so honoured.

**Perpetuating the memory**

**O**n 21 August 1941 a massacre of Jews took place in the small Lithuanian town of Girkalnys in the wake of Operation Barbarossa. The death toll included some 55 members of my family. Finding a detailed written account of the massacre – including a most moving description of my uncle's escape as sole survivor – has been just one of the incredible rewards of my recently awakened interest in my family's past.

Perhaps like others under 50 I had felt hardly any desire to know members of my wider family, and had barely any knowledge of, or interest in, 'life before me'. Until recently I didn't even know the location of the towns in which my parents were born. I knew only a handful of relatives and had heard the names of a few more. Like so many Jewish families, we had been scattered around the globe, and for the most part we had no contact with each other. Indifference was probably the most positive description which could be given to my attitude.

Today there are over 1300 names on the family trees of my wife Wendy and I. We have just returned from the very first Blacher family reunion, held in Jerusalem exactly 55 years after the massacre. This gathering combined the pain of recalling those who perished, with the enormous joy of bringing together family members from Lithuania, Israel, Australia, South Africa, the USA and England, the majority of whom did not know of each other's existence prior to the gathering. The 60 participants who were able to come debated every detail on the huge family tree and other documents. In a ceremony at the Valley of the Communities at Yad Vashem, we remembered those who were murdered

(with Max Bruch's *Kol Nidre* played by a young relative on the cello); at other times we celebrated more joyfully. All despite the absence of a common language.

No exhortation of mine can engender an interest in family history in those who are indifferent; certainly for me motivation to want to know more had to come from within. I can, on the other hand, confirm that there is far more information available than I had ever anticipated, and that there are large numbers of helpful Jewish researchers all over the world ready to lend a hand. Likewise both the process of finding out and the contact with my relatives has proved far more enjoyable than I could ever have expected. Clearly, the best starting point is talking to living relatives – it is sometimes surprising what and whom they do know. The Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain (2 Milton Close, London N2 0QH) hold regular meetings and publish an excellent magazine called *Shemot*. They help in locating information and in pointing researchers to Special Interest Groups who concentrate on specific geographic areas. Also, an extraordinary wealth of material relating specifically to Jewish genealogy can be found on the Internet. I could fill pages describing the range of material and the fantastic finds of information and of actual relatives I have made with the help of 'Jewishgen' participants all over the world. My own family tree can be seen on the Internet and the wealth of materials is growing daily; if you do not have access yourself, find someone who does and you'll be amazed. The best place to start is <http://www.jewishgen.org>.

In conclusion, I can only implore readers to write down or dictate into a tape recorder as much as you can remember and can bear to recall, and to do so as soon as you can.

□ Allan Blacher

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