

AJR *Information*

Volume LIII No. 11
November 1998

£3 (to non-members)

Don't miss...

Bold beneficence
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Return to sender

President Vaclav Havel's pronouncement that he wants to be succeeded in the post by Prague-born Madeleine Albright prompts proposals for the recall of other Jewish refugees to their birthplace. What about Henry Kissinger as German Foreign Minister, George Solti as Director of the Budapest Opera, Roman Polanski as Polish Minister of Culture, André Previn as Director of the Berlin Philharmonic, Gretel Beer as manager of the Hotel Sacher and – last but not least – Golda Meir as President of Russia? Any more suggestions? □

Reflections on Islamic perversity – and new-found political realism

After the fatwa

After the Iranian government had disassociated itself from the fatwa against Salman Rushdie the *Independent* urged Teheran to lift the ban on him completely. This prompted an expression of dissent from the editor of a UK-based Islamic journal. Fuad Nahdi argued that the Islamophobia spread by Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* legitimised systematic discrimination against Muslims. He went on: 'A Jewish writer who aired antisemitic views and denied the Holocaust would not, I suspect, command such enthusiasm on your part.' (*Independent Review* 25 Sept).

This sentence deserves some sort of prize as the most perverse ever to have appeared in the public prints of this country. The existence of a Jewish Holocaust denier is as inconceivable as that of the widow of a soldier killed at Passchendaele, who denied that the Great War had taken place.

Such hypotheses as the existence of Jewish Holocaust deniers trip lightly off the tongue or pen. They demonstrate how far Fuad Nahdi's mind is from engaging with what the Holocaust meant to all Jews. (As to Jewish writers expressing antisemitic views, we have – or at least had – no shortage of them: Otto Weininger, Karl Kraus, Egon Friedell).

If one looks at Teheran's disavowal of the fatwa against Rushdie in a wider context, several conclusions emerge. One is that Salman Rushdie is a less than prepossessing hero of the fight for freedom of speech and conscience. (The beneficiary of a public school education, Rushdie used to rant about 'institutionalised' British racism). But then better known heroes of the self-same fight – such as Giordano Bruno and Galileo – had not exactly been models of rectitude either.

The other more important conclusion to be drawn from Teheran's *volte-face* is this: After nearly two decades the Iranian Revolution shows palpable signs of entering a far less virulent phase. Undeniably, *realpolitik* is playing a part in this change for the better.

Taliban-controlled Afghanistan offers the international oil companies a secure terrain for constructing pipelines from landlocked ex-Soviet

Central Asia to the coast of the Indian Ocean and thus poses a considerable threat to oil-reliant Iran's economic future.

In addition the Sunni Taliban movement is able to exert a stronger appeal to the overwhelmingly Sunni Islamic world than Shiite Iran (though it is questionable whether a regime which imprisons women in the home provides a better role model for emerging countries than one which 'merely' compels them to wear the *chador*).

Ultimately, though, Khomeini's backward-looking revolution has hit the buffers. History, despite all appearances to the contrary, has a habit of moving forward. On the very eve of the Twenty-First century the realities of the Twentieth century have finally dawned on the political – as distinct from the clerical – powerbrokers in Teheran □



Jewish Street by Imro Weiner-Kral, 1935-6, at the Sternberg Centre, London.

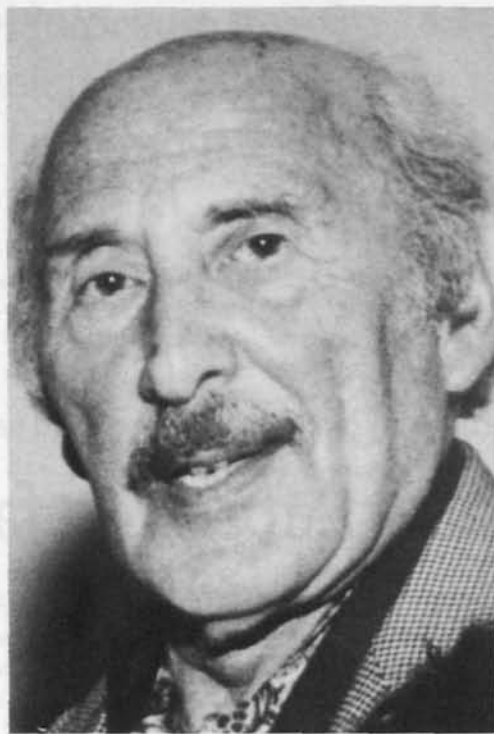
Profile

'Like it was'

Now into his 88th year, a vigorous and warm-hearted man, for many Harry Blacker personifies London's Jewish 'East End' where most Russo-Polish Jewish immigrants disembarked at the turn of the century.

When World War I ended, Whitechapel-born Harry was eight years old and already showing an imaginative artistic talent at his Bethnal Green school. His progress at Hebrew classes marked him out as a serious candidate for the Rabbinate. But the cabinet maker's son left school at 14, reluctantly eschewing an art scholarship for a process engraver apprenticeship in Fleet Street, attending Sir John Cass School of Art in Aldgate after work.

Finding himself unemployed on the day his apprenticeship ended, as a freelance artist and illustrator, commissions for the *Radio Times* led to others from the *Daily Herald*, *Daily Express* and *News Chronicle*. Within a year he was designing posters and promotional publications for Shell-Mex and BP, London Transport and the Post Office, painting theatre scenery, and even assisting Braithwait Copnall carve 15ft high bas-reliefs, still seen on the RIBA building in Portland Place. In 1932 he exhibited his sculpture and illustrations at the Whitechapel Art Gallery and joined



Harry Blacker

Simpson of Piccadilly's advertising department, working with Bauhaus founder Moholy Nagy. Later he joined a Mayfair advertising agency as creative designer.

Harry married Maidie in 1934 and their son Michael was born just before the outbreak of World War II. (His daughter Ruth was born during the war.) In 1940 he was called up to the Royal Artillery where he did secret work, published a regimental newspaper and began cartooning. After demob, Harry returned to advertising, while his cartoons appeared

in *Punch*, *Lilliput* and *Picture Post*, and won the *Jewish Chronicle's* 1962 competition. He designed Jewish charities' promotional literature gratis and in 1967 began talking to their groups about his work. Few noticed his official retirement in 1970.

Following his wife's death in 1973, Harry threw himself into raising the standard of the community's design and presentation, creating emblems which still grace the notepaper of discerning organisations. *Just Like It Was*, a compendium of his East End stories and drawings published in 1974, evoked Jewish life in the inter-war East End and brought him a far larger audience. Ever since, Harry has more invitations to speak than he could cope with. Blessed with a wicked sense of humour and an encyclopaedic memory, he has a string of jokes and anecdotes for all occasions.

Three books of cartoons followed under the name Nero, peopled with archetypal characters making penetrating comments on Jewish communal life. A fifth book, *East Endings*, in 1989, combined his story-telling with drawings and cartoons and a retrospective of his work was held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

With his trademark squashy hat and jaunty walking-stick, this reluctant celebrity's literary and artistic talents have enshrined early twentieth-century European Jewish immigrant culture in our psyche for all time.

□ Ronald Channing

Capitalising on mass murder

The publication of Dr B Burn's and Dr N Finkelstein's anti-Goldhagen work *A Nation on Trial* (Metropolitan Books NY) prompts me to wade into the fray. The joint authors and their backers described Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* as 'scandalous' and a product of the 'Holocaust studies industry'.

For the sake of educating the younger generation I must clarify a number of points.

The young will have heard of Kristallnacht but not of the one milliard Reichsmark *Judenbusse* for which it was a pretext. They could hardly have overlooked reports on Swiss banks and

Jewish depositors and their heirs, or of the gold from the teeth (and wedding rings) of the dead. They are probably unaware that Jews in Germany had to hand in not only gold but all of their valuables in late 1939, and that the same happened in occupied Europe. They know that some inmates were released from concentration camps before the war, but not that it was in return for US dollars.

They may know exactly how many Jews emigrated from Germany and Austria, but not that a *Reichsfluchtsteuer* tax had to be paid before one could leave (which some couldn't raise). They are overawed by the sheer numbers of the dead, but fail to convert them into families and their possessions, large or meagre, from furniture to pots and pans, children's toys to shoes, all taken from

their homes as soon as they had been deported.

They may have heard of the Nuremberg Laws but not of the implications which were that Jewish jobs went to the Party faithful, just as the "cleansing" of areas of Jews merely meant that Germans moved into better homes. None of this cost the state a penny. Later slave labour benefited industry; all of them still profit from that robbery. Some German brat played with my toys, plays my violin, reads my books, sits on our chairs at our table.

The perfect crime is where the victim is disposed of, disappears, and there are no witnesses. They were the only too willing executioners because there was a material gain in it for them, individually and collectively.

□ Frank Bright

The philosemite, the Jew and the antisemite

The history of European drama resembles a relay race: the English (Shakespeare, Ben Jonson) passed the baton to the French (Corneille, Racine, Molière) and they in turn handed it on to the Germans (Goethe, Schiller).

Then, for the best part of a whole century, European drama wallowed in the doldrums, with theatres everywhere staging 'wellmade plays'. (In a 'wellmade play' as written by Scribe, character was subordinate to plot, and the action followed the laws of logic rather than the vagaries of the human psyche.)

Finally, around 1880 European theatre had a new dawn. Surprisingly, the sun illuminating this dawn rose in the North – in Scandinavia, a thinly populated area from which no Europe-wide cultural impulse had previously originated.

The great re-energiser of European drama was the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen daringly widened his focus to place hitherto unmentionable subjects – hereditary VD, the frustration of women in marriage, the evil wrought by do-gooders, the crushing of the individual by society – on stage. (He was *the* giant on whose shoulders Shaw, Sudermann and other turn-of-the-century pioneers stood.)

The enthusiastic reception of Ibsen in Scandinavia, and beyond, owed a great deal to the advocacy of the Danish-Jewish critic George Brandes, 'the leader of the modern breakthrough'.

Ibsen's fellow-Scandinavian, August Strindberg, also felt greatly indebted to

Brandes for espousing a new realism in literature and drama. Like Ibsen, Strindberg was a taboo-breaker, but one who could be provocatively extreme. His hatred of women earned him the soubriquet 'misogynist', and his invectives against Christianity prompted a blasphemy trial in his native Sweden.

Permanently embattled, Strindberg looked upon Brandes as a guru figure for three reasons. For one, the critic had abandoned Judaism for free thought. For another, in Strindberg's estimation the Jews, who had no country of their own, were world citizens emancipated from any form of bigoted patriotism. Thirdly, Brandes had slain the dragon of parochialism and made Scandinavia part of the wider world.

Paradoxically, for all that Strindberg venerated Brandes as a secular saviour figure, he turned into a virulent antisemite. His rationalisation for this paradox was that no single other Jew of his acquaintance lived up to the high standard set by Brandes.

As will have been gathered, Ibsen held diametrically opposite views to Strindberg on the question of women's emancipation. A similar chasm yawned between the two leading Scandinavian playwrights on the Jewish issue. While Strindberg was a Judeophobe, Ibsen actually called the Jews 'the nobility of the human race'. (Sad to relate, George Brandes, one of Ibsen's 'aristocrats of the spirit', later became a Nietzschean, and thus approached the mindset of his greatest admirer, the increasingly deranged Strindberg.)

□ Richard Grunberger

Fontane jubilees

Berlin is currently commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the death of Theodor Fontane, a novelist whose perceptive description of Wilhelminian middle class life has prompted comparisons with Anthony Trollope.

It is a notorious fact that he suffered a grievous disappointment on his seventy-fifth birthday. The many wellwishers who turned up did not come from the segment of Prussian society for which he entertained feelings of unrequited – though not uncritical – love, i.e. the Junkers.

In place of the eagerly awaited 'vons' – 'der Jagow und Lochow/Der Stechow und Bredow, der Quitzow und Rochow' – came

aristocrats of rather older, almost prehistoric vintage:

... ohne Furcht und Tadel/Aber fast schon von prähistorischem Adel ... Meyers kamen in Bataillonien/Auch Pollacks und die noch östlicher wohnen ... Jedem bin ich was gewesen/Alle haben sie mich gelesen.'

Fontane's poem simultaneously articulated his hurt at the Junkers' philistine indifference, and his appreciation of the massive Jewish interest in his work.

This has links to our 'Gombrich debate', (see Letters p7.) In evaluating the Jewish contribution to German/Austrian culture we need to look beyond artists to the art-loving public – among whom the Jews were also disproportionately represented.

□ RG

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Reviews

Bold beneficence

Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *MEN OF VISION, Anglo-Jewry's aid to the victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998, £25.

For Jews arriving in this country as refugees from Nazi persecution, the two words Woburn House meant not just an address in Central London, but a source of help and advice on how to start life again. For British Jews the words – in fact synonymous with the Central British Fund for German Jewry – represented a means of aiding immigrants in need.

In her excellent book, Dr Gottlieb reconstructs with consummate skill a unique story, based to a large extent on hitherto unpublished material. That much of it has, in fact, not been in the public domain for many years is in no small measure due to the desire of a group of "men of vision" to exercise discretion in their proposed charitable effort, because the situation in 1933 differed from that with which existing Jewish philanthropic organisations were familiar. Thus the Jewish Refugees Committee came into being in March 1933 as an apparent off-shoot of Otto Schiff's Jews' Temporary Shelter in Stepney. Before long, support was forthcoming, both from individuals and organisations such as B'nai B'rith.

One key element of the enterprise, which the author discusses in illuminating detail, was the unprecedented undertaking by the Anglo-Jewish community to meet unconditionally all expenditure, including maintenance, arising from the granting of sanctuary to Jewish refugees, so that they would not become a burden on the British taxpayer. This promise was made without prior consultation with leaders of the Jewish communities in London or the provinces, and lengthy negotiations followed to bridge the gaps between the various interests – such as Zionist and non-Zionist – in order to establish a viable fundraising project committed to the discharge of 'the pledge'.

The author's miniature pen portraits of the good and the great ("The long list of the Appeals Council reads like a Who's Who in Anglo-Jewry"), whose underwriting of the sum to be raised resulted in the foundation of the Central British Fund, are engrossing both as literary masterpieces and as background information on

the vital role these leading figures played in the effort to save as many Jews as possible before it was too late. Dr Gottlieb describes in some detail the CBF's emigration programme and the contributions made to it by the American Joint, the Zionist organisations in Britain and in Palestine and, albeit not always with too much enthusiasm, by the British Government.

Then came the *Anschluss* and *Kristallnacht* and the flow of asylum seekers became a flood and "the scene at Woburn House ... chaotic". Once again the Anglo-Jewish community raised funds to deal with the new situation. The rescue of children became an urgent priority and the account of how it was addressed forms the subject of the most moving and memorable chapters of Dr Gottlieb's book. No summary can remotely do it justice. But mention must be made of the favourable attitude and actions of the British Government and Parliament. Indeed one of this title's most valuable features is that it rectifies certain widely-held misconceptions. Thus the author makes it clear that, even at a time when appeasement was one of Britain's main political concerns, a fair proportion of those in high places responded positively to approaches for official action to ease the precarious condition of many refugees.

The war years and the early post-war period called for renewed action. The CBF was instrumental in assisting with the problems arising from internment, deportation, naturalisation applications. Then it faced perhaps its most difficult task: the needs of Holocaust survivors. Of course, all this was long ago and memories fade. Unfortunately there is still a need for this country's Jewish communities, of which we, the first, second and third refugee generation form an integral part, to help our suffering co-religionists in Europe and elsewhere. The good news is that "the CBF, now known as World Jewish Relief, appears to have assumed permanent status".

Dr Gottlieb's book is an important record of an "extraordinary period in British and Anglo-Jewish history". It is made the more poignant by the fact that it owes its publication to the random discovery of relevant archive material in the garage of a house in The Bishops Avenue – one of the retirement homes established by the CBF. It certainly fulfils the

author's wish to convey something of the courage and determination of a group of remarkable men and women whose like, as the author says in her preface, we may not see again.

□ David Maier

The past is another country

Konstanze Fliedl Editor, *DAS ANDERE ÖSTERREICH: EINE VORSTELLUNG*, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998.

The word *Vorstellung* in the title has many possible connotations – introduction, performance, illusion – so which of these can be meant by a book about 'the other Austria'?

The anthology starts with the turmoil at the end of the war in 1918, when Austria lost all its empire and only a small rump was left, leading to a serious identity crisis. A proposal that *Deutsch-Österreich* should become part of Germany itself was vetoed by the Allied powers. The thought, however, lived on, to become the *Anschluss* 20 years later. Not every Austrian was in favour; in a piece written in 1919 Robert Musil warned that gentle, cosmopolitan and multi-cultural Austria would lose considerably in a union with a largely 'uncivilized' and harsh Germany.

The section entitled *Heimat und keine* is largely distinguished by Jakov Lind's beautiful piece *Vater und Vaterland*, yet he can only write about *Vaterland* in a literal sense as the land where his father had lived. *Die Stimme Österreichs* has some interesting articles. Awareness of the danger from Nazi Germany is vividly expressed in *Gräfin Agnes schreibt in ihr Tagebuch* (1935) by Hermynia zur Mühlen, an Austrian who lived in Germany but fled back to Austria, then Czechoslovakia and finally to England. Two short pieces by writers who spent the Nazi years in England, Hilde Spiel and Robert Neumann, are clever and interesting, both actually written for war-time broadcasts to Austria.

Schwere Wege has five pieces about persecution of the Left, concentration camps and resistance. A somewhat mixed bag here, some by people who experienced these horrors, some as fiction by younger writers who were not even alive at the

(continued)

Reviews (continued)

time. I am afraid their imaginings are not as good as the real thing.

Grillparzer is represented by König Ottokar's speech in praise of Austria, a German relation of John of Gaunt's 'This blessed isle' speech in Shakespeare's Richard II. (There is a claim in another essay that this speech had to be learnt by all Austrian schoolchildren and that it was publicly recited on all national days, but I have been unable to find anyone who can confirm this.) Just as there are parodies of the John of Gaunt speech, there are parodies of Grillparzer and we are given such material. Neither good nor funny, I am afraid, merely smut.

I read this book with interest, but it was only when I reached the editor's *Nachwort* that much of the intention of the volume became clear. Konstanze Fliedl explains how for many Austrian writers, especially the more recent ones, the country they write about is not, and never has been, in existence; it is a creation of their minds, what they would like Austria to have been. So, it is the third meaning of *Vorstellung*, that of 'illusion', that is really meant. I would have been helped if the *Nachwort* had been a *Vorwort*, my approach to, and understanding of, this selection would have been different. However, I am glad I have read these essays as I have learnt quite a lot and readily recommend this book to others.

□ Paul Samet

Herzl's homeland

GENOCIDE AND RESCUE; THE HOLOCAUST IN HUNGARY 1944, edited by David Cesarani, Berg, 1997.

One of the darkest chapters in the Holocaust, the destruction of Hungarian Jewry with over 600,000 dead, followed the German invasion of Hungary in March 1944, just when the prospect of Allied victory seemed to hold out the promise of survival. The story is one of bitter ironies: had the Hungarian government stayed loyal to its German ally and not tried to make a separate peace, the Hungarian Jews, though subjected to severe antisemitic measures by the Horthy regime, would probably have escaped direct German intervention and Eichmann's death squads.

Again, the close working relationship developed under the Habsburg Empire between the Jews and the Hungarian ruling classes, on which the former relied for protection, turned into a death trap in 1944. Psychologically attuned to their privileged status in an oasis of security, the Hungarian Jews were defenceless against the lightning speed of the German deportations, especially as these were only made possible by the active collaboration of the entire Hungarian government machinery, until international pressure and an American air raid on Budapest led Horthy to halt the deportations in July 1944. The killings only resumed in the autumn, with the advent to power of the fanatically antisemitic Arrow Cross regime, whose random brutality was then ended by the Red Army.

This book consists of eleven papers originally given at a conference at the Wiener Library in 1994. They include a magisterial survey of the Holocaust in Hungary by Randolph L. Braham, the doyen of scholars in this field, an authoritative concluding paper by Yehuda Bauer that movingly combines humanity with scholarship and a characteristically incisive introduction by the Wiener Library's David Cesarani.

Other papers cover the Jewish resistance to the deportations, rescue attempts, the responses of the Allies and the controversial efforts to negotiate with the Nazis to save Jewish lives. The consensus here is that the much discussed mission of Joel Brand, sent to barter Jewish lives for trucks for the German war effort and the trainload of Jews saved by Rudolf Kasztner could never have formed part of a larger project of rescuing thousands, since Nazi policy never intended that.

The papers on outside reactions to the developing tragedy in Hungary raise the perennially vexed question of Allied bombing of Auschwitz and the surprisingly muted response in Palestine. Tony Kushner's paper on British responses overstates its Brit-bashing case: he sees the misspelling of Auschwitz in a Parliamentary Question in May 1945 as evidence that Auschwitz had 'no meaning' for the insular British, yet ignores the comparable misspelling of the camp's Polish name by Arthur Koestler, as quoted by Cesarani – and Koestler was a German-speaking Hungarian Jew agonisingly aware of the tragedy befalling his kinsfolk.

Again, is it fair to condemn the British as callously unconcerned about the Holocaust simply because their first priority was British PoWs in Japanese captivity? Human nature, surely. How many Jewish historians, like Kushner, care about 'their' Jewish Holocaust victims, but never spare a word for the next largest group, the 3,300,000 murdered Russian PoWs?

□ Anthony Grenville

Paper bridge across a chasm

Eva Hoffman, SHTETL, Secker & Warburg, 1998, £16.99.

For her mirror of Polish-Jewish symbiosis and tragedy the author has chosen the small country town of Bransk, which had 4,600 inhabitants before World War II, half of them Jews. Now it is Jewless. She delivers a story which is fully historical and yet stands as a work of literature.

Hoffman is convinced that the story of Jews and Poles is *not* one of unrelenting enmity; that for seven hundred years Poland was a home to often thriving Jewish communities where great cultural achievements were wrought. From Prince Boleslaw the Pious and King Kazimierz the Great to the semi-dictator Pilsudski, Polish rulers assured the reasonable rights of life and property of the Jewish communities.

Lest the reader should think that Hoffman is wearing rose-tinted spectacles, she proves herself perfectly aware that there often were nasty tensions between the, eventually, three million Jews and the "natives". They lived side by side, with the Jews always being "the Significant Others". Almost from the start of the advent of refugees from the Rhineland (during the Crusades) there was symbiosis only between the more successful Jews and the small, land-owning Polish nobility (Szlachta) who considered themselves above trade and made the Jews their factors. It did not endear them to the peasants who added Christian superstitions and prejudices to economic enmity. But, argues Hoffman, there were no pogroms initiated by Poles; the perpetrators were Cossacks and Ukrainians.

(continued on page 6)

Reviews (continued)

In Poland's very chequered history, individual Jews excelled as soldiers and were fêted as national heroes in their time.

On the topic of the Holocaust, Hoffman is not very specific. The Bransk community was liquidated in 1942; the majority of its inhabitants perished in Treblinka. Hoffman insists that, whatever the attitude of some individuals, this was not a Polish crime. Three million Poles were killed in the War; resistance was stronger than in many other occupied countries. In Bransk alone nine families (circa 40 people) risked their lives for Jews and are honoured in Yad Vashem.

The author herself was born in Cracow after the war and is now Jewish-American. Unusual as her views are, she aims to draw attention to the long periods of peaceful, half separate half co-joined existence of two quite divergent groups of human beings in a small township.

□ John Rossall

Cities of dreadful night

G Sebald, *THE EMIGRANTS*, translated by Michael Hulse. The Harvill Press, 1996.

This powerful, haunting book consists of four separate stories concerned with exile and emigration, and linked only by the narrator, meticulous in his excavation of the details of the dead, shattered past. Each story centres on a single exile known to the narrator, all bar one of these figures are Jewish or part-Jewish, and all are dead at the time of narration.

Like the author, the anonymous narrator is a German who was born in the Allgäu at the end of the war, studied in Switzerland and made his academic career in Britain, first at Manchester University, then at the University of East Anglia at Norwich (where Sebald is now Professor of German).

The first story concerns a Lithuanian Jew who, in the early 1970s, inhabited a ruinous mansion outside Norwich. The central figure of the second is the narrator's former teacher, a part-Jew forced into exile, but who returned to Germany. His life is exhumed from the opaque veil of the past in tantalisingly incomplete fragments through his ex-pupil's conversations with a long-standing friend.

The third story recounts the life of the narrator's great-uncle, Ambros Adelwarth. He had emigrated to America and be-

came a 'gentleman's gentleman' to the unstable scion of a wealthy banking family. The narrator's journey into the desolate, tawdry landscape of New Jersey in 1981, where relatives tell him about Ambros, contrasts sharply with the vibrantly coloured picture of pre-1914 high-society life, as experienced by Ambros, in the hotels and casinos of Deauville; these are conjured into life, only to fall back into decay when the narrator visits them in the 1980s.

The fourth story concerns the German-Jewish artist Max Ferber, who has found refuge in the dark, post-industrial urban decay of Manchester where he commits to the narrator's keeping his memories of an uprooted life. Almost unbearably moving is the short memoir written by Ferber's mother Luisa shortly before she and her husband were deported; it describes her idyllic childhood in the Franconian village of Steinach, near Würzburg, a last declaration of attachment to a past doomed irrevocably to extinction.

The settings in which the narrator uncovers these shards of the past are without exception dark, gloomy, decaying, 'cities of dreadful night'. The past itself is never fully brought back to life, but remains a collection of fragments, captured in stasis like the black-and-white photographs scattered through the text. At the end of the book Sebald transforms his setting into a veritable city of death: he closes this testament of loss with memories of an exhibition of photos taken in the ghetto of Litzmannstadt, in Lodz, the 'Polish Manchester'.

□ Anthony Grenville

50 YEARS AGO

LEO BAECK IN GERMANY

This was Dr Baeck's first visit to Germany ever since his deportation to Terezin at the beginning of 1943.

Wherever he appeared he was greatly honoured. Despite his 75 years of age, he spent every day on studying the present conditions of his fellow Jews in Germany and discussing with them their future.

The visit brought a new strength and hope to a great number of people who still feel spiritually isolated and, in many ways, cut off from the world and the developments both in the Jewish sphere and in general.

Dr Baeck spent several days at Belsen, and attended Shabbat services at the Lubeck synagogue, one of the very few synagogues in Germany which are still intact □

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Letters to the Editor

BRICKBAT

Sir – In his oddly-titled article “Gombrich’s blotting paper” on page three of your October issue, Mr Richard Grunberger purports to comment on what he calls my “recently published lecture”. Had he the courtesy of giving chapter and verse, and told your readers that I had been invited to speak about “The Visual Arts in Vienna, around 1900”, they would immediately have seen that the long list of prominent Austrian novelists, playwrights, psychoanalysts and musicians, as well as some contemporary artists, could not have ‘swum into my ken’. “Though shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exodus 20).

London NW3 Professor Sir Ernst Gombrich

A PLEA FOR REALISM

Sir – Mrs H Rednall writes to say that she doesn’t want to be depressed by Holocaust memoirs – but to replace them with cheerful news is easier said than done. Many of us came with the Kindertransports and never saw our parents or siblings again. This trauma requires us survivors to honour their memory all our lives. We cannot lock up our feelings as if it did not happen.

We want the world at large to learn from the consequences of this monstrous episode, and only then can we spend time to enjoy what life around us has on offer.

London NW2

A Dutch

GREEK IN THE GRAVEYARD

Sir – Your September editorial delved into the Greek origin of words like democracy and politics. In 1942, after the Germans closed our school in Prague, I went to work as a gardening apprentice on the large Jewish cemetery at Vinohrady. There I once called a slightly older fellow worker an idiot. Jewish workers being a rather educated lot, he told me calmly that idiot did not mean stupid, as I had implied, but that it was a Greek word meaning a “private person”, one who did not participate in the daily business of the polis.

Ipswich, Suffolk

Frank Bright

A DAY WELL SPENT

Sir – In July I took some Anglo-Jews from Bromley Reform Synagogue to the AJR Day Centre, intending to show them how the AJR ticks, and how we survivors from Hitler’s nightmare have found comfort, advice and friendship in that organisation.

Thanks to Sylvia, Renée and Susie and their team we had the most informative and enjoyable day in Cleve Road.

After an excellent lunch and a short welcome speech by Sylvia, Michael Radbil told us about the past, present and future of the AJR. There followed musical entertainment of the highest standard, and the day ended with tea, coffee, and delicious cakes.

Petts Wood, Kent

Edith Rosner

THE AJR FLEDERMAUS

Sir – The QEH was full and the audience full of expectations. Most of those present had nostalgic recollections of past performances of *Die Fledermaus* in their erstwhile homeland.

The narrator turned out to be Prince Orlofsky – a neat twist. But perhaps a more drastic twist was to cut the operetta in half. This was exacerbated by the stiff performances of the main parts (with the exception of Adele).

But surely, the unkindest cut of all was the absence of Frosch – except for a silent drunkard. Instead we were subjected to an entirely inappropriate *Einlage* by Edna Everidge, partially alleviated by singers Valerie Masterson and others.

Despite the polite, but hypocritical applause, we left disappointed and cheated.

Wembley Park

Fred E Stern

THE SHOAH AND THE OFFICER’S PLOT

Sir – Allow me to reply to H Fisher’s gratuitously offensive remark that my view of history is “virtual”, i.e. not real. Fisher seems to dismiss the possibility that any high-ranking German could have had a bad conscience about his people’s treatment of the Jews. Why does he not believe Count Lehndorf’s opinion of Nazi atrocities? Because it does not fit in with his views of history?

I ended my army career as a Major in the “British War Crimes Investigation

Unit”. As such I interviewed very many Germans, criminals and others. I found that a few – certainly not all – were ashamed of what they had done to the Jews. May I suggest that Mr Fisher read Mathilde Wolff-Moenckeberg’s *On the other side*, the wartime diary of an upper-class Hamburg lady who actually welcomed Allied air raids on her city as an atonement for Kristallnacht.

I do not say that the suffering of the Jews was the only inducement for joining the July Plot. The main impetus was undoubtedly the real possibility of a Russian occupation of Germany. But one should not ignore the *actual* (not virtual) fact that a number of Germans, in the highest echelons, were driven to high treason by Hitler’s antisemitism.

Oxted, Surrey

Walter Freud

Restitution of property in East Germany

**Claims Conference Goodwill Fund
Deadline extended to December 31, 1998**

Individuals who failed to register claims for restitution of Jewish property in the former East Germany by the December 31, 1992 German Government deadline may apply to the Claims Conference Goodwill Fund. The Claims Conference Goodwill Fund shares net proceeds from the recovery of properties which it obtained as the legal successor to unclaimed Jewish property. Applications to the Goodwill Fund will be accepted through December 31, 1998. Please write to the address below, indicating:

The address of the property; the name of the original property owner; your relationship to the original owner; your name and mailing address.

To aid applicants who do not have complete information, the Claims Conference is establishing a Department for Property Identification. If you believe that you or your relatives may have owned Jewish property in the former East Germany, please include as much information as possible in your application and the Department will endeavour to identify such property. Please write by December 31, 1998 to Mr Peter Heuss, Department for Property Identification, at the address given below. There will be no charge for this service.

**Claims Conference Successor
Organization Goodwill Fund
Sophienstrasse 26
60487 Frankfurt am Main, Germany**

AJR Reports

SOUTH LONDON AJR

Humouresque

Artist, raconteur and wit, South London's guest speaker Harry Blacker rose to the occasion when the slide projector failed to show his drawings and cartoons. Unfazed, Harry set about recalling his East End origins, where the children taught English to their Russian and Yiddish-speaking parents. He regaled his audience with recollections of life as a WWII army sergeant and, with a constant stream of amusing stories and jokes, kept everyone in fits of laughter. It's good to laugh!

□ RL

SLAJR's fourth birthday will be celebrated on November 19th at 2pm in Prentis Road Synagogue. Katherine Klinger of the Second Generation Trust will be the guest speaker.



A memorable musical lunch

Members who attended the AJR Luncheon Club on September 16th enjoyed the double treat of being entertained as well as instructed. The entertainment took the form of pianistic offerings from the work of Ignaz Moscheles; instruction came from Mr Roche's lecture on his life.

And what a life! Moscheles – literally little Moses – had been born into a music-loving German-Jewish family in Prague in 1794. When still young he went to Vienna and studied under Salieri. Later he met Beethoven who asked him to arrange *Fidelio* for piano. He subsequently became a composer in his own right and a touring concert pianist. After marriage he lived in London, and ultimately (at Mendelssohn's invitation) in Leipzig – conducting, editing and teaching.

What added special interest to this lecture, on probably the first Jew to play a key role in European music, was the fact that the lecturer is a direct descendant of Moscheles. Given his genetic endowment, it is not surprising that Henry Roche is on the music staff of the Royal Ballet.

□ RG

Zemel Choir to perform at AJR Day Centre

Britain's leading mixed Jewish choir is to sing at the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre on the afternoon of Sunday 20th December. The Zemel Choir is admired for its interpretations of both liturgical and popular Jewish music from traditional Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Yiddish and Israeli origins.

In the past year, the choir have sung at Jerusalem's Zimriyah Choral Festival, the Eisteddfod and in London's major concert halls. Maureen Creese, its acting musical director, is selecting a programme to suit all tastes.

Admission is by ticket only, so please book early to avoid disappointment.

□ RDC

The Zemel Choir, conducted by Robert Max, have recorded a new CD entitled 'The English Tradition of Jewish Choral Music' with soloist Chazan Moshe Haschel, available on the afternoon of 20th December, at £10.

AJR MEALS ON WHEELS

If you live in North or North West London and wish to take advantage of this service, phone Susie Kaufman 0171-328 0208 for details and an assessment interview.

Medical matters

Dr Max Bayer has kindly agreed to write a regular column – to be called 'House Doctor' – in *AJR Information*, offering advice to members on how best to cope with common medical ailments which occur during the year. This month he deals with influenza vaccinations.

He is no stranger to the refugee community as his mother, Nettie, came from Frankfurt and his late father Ludwig, from Aschbach in Bavaria. They joined the Wembley community where they brought up Max and his sister Miriam.

Dr Bayer qualified in 1975. In addition to general practice, he lectures on the subject to undergraduates and newly qualified doctors, and was recently awarded a master's degree in medical education. Dr Bayer lives with his wife and children in north London □

Paul Balint AJR Day Centre

TEA DANCE & SINGALONG

with
Shelley Weldon

Lighting of 1st Chanukah candle

Sunday 13th December
3-6pm

Entrance £5 including tea
by ticket only

Contact Sylvia, Renée or Susie
Tel: 0171 328 0208

AJR 'Drop in' Advice Centre at the

Paul Balint AJR Day Centre

15 Cleve Road, London NW6 3RL
between 10am and 12 noon on the
following dates:

Thursday	5 November
Tuesday	10 November
Thursday	19 November
Wednesday	25 November
Tuesday	1 December

and every Thursday from 10am to 12 noon at:

AJR, 1 Hampstead Gate, 1a Frognaal,
London NW3 6AL

No appointment is necessary, but please bring along all relevant documents, such as Benefit Books, letters, bills, etc.

HOUSE DOCTOR

Influenza vaccination

In the autumn most general practitioners carry out their annual influenza vaccination programme. Because influenza is caused by a virus, for a normally fit person there is no specific treatment which will affect the course of the illness. The only thing to be done is to go to bed, take symptomatic relief – such as temperature-lowering tablets and cough mixture – and wait for the illness to get better by itself. This usually occurs within 3-5 days. Antibiotics are of no help at all in either shortening or avoiding the illness, but in elderly or unwell patients it may be appropriate to prescribe antibiotics to try and prevent secondary bacterial infection.

The best cure is probably prevention by immunisation in which a minute quantity of the inactivated virus is injected, allowing the body to develop anti-body defences to the real virus if it occurs. Sadly, immunisation does not prevent people suffering from common colds, coughs or other influenza-like illnesses. Some will experience a short-lived muscle ache and a slight rise in temperature for a day or two.

The Department of Health recommends influenza vaccine for all people over the age of 75, as well as those suffering from breathing, heart or kidney problems, or being treated for serious illness. Patients should contact their surgeries to make the necessary arrangements. It is probably one of the best ways to ensure that you have a healthy New Year □

Dr Max Bayer

Dr Bayer cannot, of course, enter into any personal correspondence.

Paul Balint AJR Day Centre
presents the

ZEMEL CHOR

Lighting of last Chanukah candle

Sunday 20th December
at 3.15pm

Entrance £5 including tea by ticket only
Contact Sylvia, Renée or Susie

... Viewpoint ...

Bad language

Virtually all of AJR's members are bilingual and many have several languages at their disposal. Undeniably, this provides a view of the world both broader and better informed than one restricted by being monoglot.

Benefits brought by comprehension of another national culture from the inside are still, in the main, denied to native-born Englishmen. Whether the explanation lies in the historical insularity of this sceptered isle, or in tradition bolstered by an Empire which demanded the usage of English as the *lingua franca* of a quarter of the world's population, the Englishman's deficiency perpetually keeps him at the bottom of the world's language league tables.

Englishmen abroad still bellow louder when called upon to communicate urgent needs to the natives, in contrast to their European contemporaries. The Dutch, Germans and Scandinavians, for example, speak a grammatical and colloquial English at the drop of a hat, unquestionably superior to the Anglo-Saxon mumblings relied on by the heirs of Shakespeare when pressed reluctantly into verbal communication.

Questions thrown at Herr Schröder on his election success were answered in impeccable English; President Chirac speaks good English too. In this sphere at least, the UK has a Prime Minister who can address the French Parliament and hold his own in its national tongue without the squirmingly painful 'county' enunciations of Ted Heath and Margaret Thatcher when they held down the job.

A decade's genuine attempts to chivy the educational system into correcting this imbalance do not seem to have produced the desired effect. Schoolchildren still avoid speaking the languages with which they should have become conversant. Language places at university and training colleges remain unfilled.

While the USA retains its dominance of world affairs and English remains the prime language of finance, diplomacy and computer-speak, its pre-eminence can survive intact. In the new millenium, however, when Asians speak directly to Asians and Latins to Latins, the curtain could ring down on the dominance of the English-speaking world.

□ Ronald Channing

PAUL BALINT AJR DAY CENTRE

15 Cleve Road, West Hampstead, NW6

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Call Sylvia Matus - 0171 328 0208

Afternoon entertainment programme -

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1998

- | | | |
|------|----|---|
| Sun | 1 | The Kentertainers |
| Mon | 2 | KARD & GAMES KLUB |
| Tue | 3 | Geoffrey Strum and Helen Blake |
| Wed | 4 | Judith Silver |
| Thur | 5 | Katie Bingham-Best, mezzo and Mark Packwood, piano |
| Sun | 8 | Viva Voce |
| Mon | 9 | KARD & GAMES KLUB |
| Tue | 10 | Shirley Gurevitz and Anne Berryman |
| Wed | 11 | Sylvia Eaves and Margaret Eaves, piano |
| Thur | 12 | Karla Entertainment |
| Sun | 15 | John Cunningham, baritone and Geoffrey Whitworth, piano |
| Mon | 16 | KARD & GAMES KLUB |
| Tue | 17 | Vivienne Trenner, soprano, |

- | | | |
|------|----|--|
| | | David Rose, baritone and Daphne Lewis, piano |
| Wed | 18 | LUNCHEON CLUB |
| Thur | 19 | THE SUNSHINE SINGERS |
| Sun | 22 | Gina Fergione, soprano and Angus Cunningham, piano |
| Mon | 23 | KARD & GAMES KLUB |
| Tue | 24 | Anna Morris, violin and Julietta Demetriades, piano |
| Wed | 25 | Carol-Ann Grainger, soprano and Stephen Dickinson, piano |
| Thur | 26 | Helen Blake, voice and piano |
| Sun | 29 | Amanda Palmer, opera |
| Mon | 30 | KARD & GAMES KLUB |
| Tue | 1 | Karen Grace, soprano and Joan Oates, piano |
| Wed | 2 | HOUNSLOW COMMUNITY OPERA |
| Thur | 3 | Amanda Palmer, opera |

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deaths

Freitag. Hedy Freitag recently passed away peacefully, aged 94. Deeply mourned by her son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren.

Parnes. Bernard Parnes died 6.8.98, sadly missed by his heartbroken wife, daughter, son-in-law, son, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandson, relatives and friends.

Rosenstrauch. Arnold Adalbert Rosenstrauch, of Reading, Berkshire. On 8 October died at Middlesex Hospital, London. Sadly missed by his many devoted friends, relatives, grandchildren and children. "He walked upright in the path of righteousness". "...and the bush was not consumed."

Winter. Oskar Winter died 19 September. He will be missed by his wife Annelise, family and friends.

CLASSIFIED

Miscellaneous

Retired couple in Hampstead NW3 area seek person to help with shopping and cooking evening meal, 4/5 afternoons/eve, for 3/4 hours per day. Please telephone 0181 455 7728.

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Day Centre

Shirley Lever at the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre. New Clothes for Sale, dresses, underwear, cardigans etc. Tuesday 10 November, 9.45-11.45am.

Societies

Association of Jewish Ex-Berliners. Please contact Peter Sinclair 0181 882 1638 for information.

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.

Many former refugees have found their association with the AJR a rewarding one. This is an opportunity to support the AJR Charitable Trust.

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at

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15 Cleve Road, NW6

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Dr Howard Solomons BSc FBCO

**Dental Surgeon
Dr H Alan Shields**

&

**Chiropodist
Trevor Goldman SRC**

by appointment at

**The Paul Balint AJR Day Centre
15 Cleve Road, West Hampstead, NW6**

*Please make appointments with
Sylvia Matus, Tel: 0171 328 0208*

AJR GROUP CONTACTS

Bournemouth: Ralph Dale
01202 762 270
Leeds HSFA: Heinz Skyte
0113 268 5739
Midlands: Edgar Glazer
0121 777 6537
North: Werner Lachs
0161 773 4091
Nottingham: Bob Norton
01159 212 494
Pinner: Sheryl Smookler
0181 866 0185
S. London: Ken Ambrose
0181 852 0262
Surrey: Ernest Simon
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Art Notes

Mirror Image, at the National Gallery until December 13, is an innovative exhibition devised by Jonathan Miller, combining science and art. Through paintings in the Gallery's own collection and loans from public and private collections, the pictorial effects of mirrors and reflections are explored.

Arranged in 15 sections, the exhibition shows how mirrors are put to use by artists in diverse ways, such as self-portraits or as devices to expand space. The detailed commentaries on the pictures, as well as the optical effects of real windows and mirrors, provide a most stimulating experience.

The Tate Gallery has mounted a major exhibition of the work of **John Singer Sargent** (1856-1925), who made an important contribution to the introduction of Impressionism into England, before adopting a more distinctive style. Although he won fame and fortune as a fashionable portrait painter in Europe and America, he has since his death often been regarded as a marginal figure in modern art. The full range of Sargent's work, including paintings, watercolours, oil sketches and drawings, shown here together for the first time, reveal him as an artist worthy to rank with the great figures of the late 19th and early 20th century art. Until January 17.

After viewing the **Picasso** ceramics at the Royal Academy, visitors should adjourn to Helly Nahmad's spacious new gallery at nearby 2 Cork Street to enjoy a first-rate exhibition of important paintings by Picasso from all periods of his career. Until December 18.

The Mercury Gallery is exhibiting, until November 21, sculpture and drawings by **Henri Gaudier-Brzeska**, who was killed at the age of 23 fighting in France during World War I. They show a wonderfully creative imagination and extremely fine craftsmanship.

Finally, the effectiveness of art as a therapy was reflected in a charming, unpretentious display of pictures shown recently at Belsize Square Synagogue. The works were by some of the elderly, the visually disabled and the handicapped, inspired to use their talents in



'La Parisienne Japonaise' by Alfred Stevens at the National Gallery.

creative ways by **Irene White**, whose caring for them is legendary.

□ **Barry Fealdman**

SB is on holiday; his next contribution will appear in the December issue.

Museum seeks European memorabilia

The Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition, due to open in May 2000, has now reached the detailed design phase. Many AJR members have already related their experiences to the Exhibition design team and there have also been a number of offers to donate or lend items for display.

Detailed work is now being done on the section dealing with the emigration of families from Germany and Austria between 1933 and 1939. The design team would very much like to hear from AJR members who possess any items they managed to bring with them which reflect pre-war family life, such as small pieces of furniture, chinaware or even music stands.

If you should be able to help the Holocaust Exhibition team's search for such artefacts, please speak to James Taylor at the Imperial War Museum, Tel: 0171 416 5286/0171 207 9863 Fax: 0171 416 5278 □

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SIR MARTIN GILBERT

British Policy Towards Refugees 1933-1946

Tuesday 10th November at 6pm
University College London

Bookings:

Charlotte Lane,
The Estate Office, Ashton,
Peterborough PE8 5LE

FORTHCOMING EVENTS – NOVEMBER 1998

- Ongoing: Coats of Many Colours:** Prints, drawings & costumes from around the world. Jewish Museum, Camden Town till Jan 99
- Kristallnacht Commemoration:** a small exhibition at the Jewish Museum, Finchley till Jan 99
- 1 - 29 **London International Jewish Music Festival:** For Festival Calendar call 0181 909 2445
- 1 - 10 **Slovakian Artist Imro Wiener-Kral, Paintings & Prints:** Sternberg Centre
- 30 - 5 **Jewish Film Festival of North London:** Phoenix Cinema, 52 High Road, N2. Information 0181 444 6789 & Spiro Institute
- Sun 1 **Across the Bridge:** Story of Holocaust survival, written & performed by Anna Cropper & Dahlia Friedland. Jewish Museum Finchley, 7.30pm, £5
- Sun 1 **Arpeggione String Quartet** play Mozart, Schmidt & Beethoven. Conway Hall, 6.30pm, £4
- Sun 1 **Ignaz Moscheles and Bach, Beethoven & Bloch:** St Giles Cripplegate, 7.30pm, £8. 0171 638 8891
- Mon 2 **Israel, Musical Melting Pot:** Lucy Skeaping & the Burning Bush. St Johns, Smith Square, 7.30pm, £8-£18. 0171 222 1061
- Mon 2 **A Second Brecht Evening** (in English & German): Devised by Ernst Flesch & Hans Seelig. Club 43, 8pm
- Tue 3 **German Cabaret's Response to National Socialism:** Joanne McNally, Sussex University, 5.15pm
- Thur 5 **Lunchtime Recital:** Danielle Salamon, piano, plays Beethoven & Granados. Sternberg Centre, 1.15pm, £2
- Thur 5 **Light-hearted Tour of English Literature:** Barbara Lanning, Pinner AJR, Pinner Synagogue, 2pm
- Sun 8 **World of Jewish Music:** Alexander Knapp, Joe Loss Lecturer, City University. Jewish Museum Finchley, 11am, £5
- Sun 8 **Liam Abramson, cello, & Charles Wiffen, piano,** play Beethoven, Barber & Rachmaninov. Conway Hall, 6.30, £4
- Sun 8 **Jews of Slovakia, lecture, concert & exhibition:** Prof Paval Mest'an & Ervin Schönhauser. Sternberg Centre, 7.30, £5
- Mon 9 **Reflections on Kristallnacht:** Harrow Arts Centre, 7.30pm, £8. Booking 0181 428 0124
- Mon 9 **Slave Labour & the Third Reich - A Secret History?** Rhoda Atkin. Club 43, 8pm
- Tue 10 **What is Jewish about German-Jewish Literature?** Ritchie Robertson. Sussex University, 5.15pm
- Tue 10 **Sir Martin Gilbert: British Policy Towards Refugees, 1933-1946.** University College London, 6pm. (Information from Wiener Library)
- Wed 11 **City of London Sinfonia recital,** Heinrich Stahl House 10.30 & Osmond House 12pm
- Wed 11 **Prof Peter Pulzer: A Minority in a Democracy, the Jews of the Weimar Republic.** Leo Baeck lecture, 11 Fitzjohns Ave, NW3, 8pm
- Sun 15 **Solomon Trio** play Mendelssohn, Schwartz & Beethoven. Conway Hall, 6.30, £4
- Mon 16 **Electoral Politics in America:** Eva Wohlgemuth. Club 43, 8pm
- Tue 17 **Identities in Women's Writing:** Sarah Colvin. Sussex University, 5.15pm
- Thur 19 **Lunchtime Recital:** Alistair Bamford, baritone, & Annette Saunders, piano, perform Mozart, Rossini & Verdi. Sternberg Centre, 1.15pm, £2
- Thur 19 **Katherine Klinger of the Second Generation Trust:** South London AJR, Prentis Road Synagogue, Streatham, 2pm
- Sun 22 **Costume & Prejudice:** Prof Lou Taylor, Jewish Museum Finchley, 2.30pm, £5
- Sun 22 **Ani Schnarch, violin, & Alvin Moisey, piano,** play Beethoven, Schumann, & Richard Strauss. Conway Hall, 6.30, £4
- Mon 23 **Three Generations of Salonian Jews:** Bea Lewkowicz. Club 43, 8pm
- Tue 24 **German Writer Elisabeth Langgässer, 1899-1950:** Cathy Gelbin, Sussex University, 5.15pm
- Sun 29 **Allegrì String Quartet** play Haydn, Borodin & Schubert. Conway Hall, 6.30pm, £4
- Mon 30 **Medieval Jewish Philosophers:** Prof Alfred Ivry, New York University. Gustave Tuck Theatre, University College London, 6.30pm, free admission
- Mon 30 **Andrusier Ensemble: Musical Life of Terezin.** Sternberg Centre, 7.30pm, £7.50
- Mon 30 **Literary & Masonic Anticipations in the German Enlightenment:** Dr EM Batley, London University Institute of Germanic Studies, Club 43, 8pm
- December**
- Tue 1 **The Right Words in the Right Order:** Gabriel Josipovici, Sussex University, 5.15pm
- Wed 2 **Modern Jew as City Dweller Par Excellence:** Seminar, University College London, Room 216, Foster Court, 6pm, free admission
- Thur 3 **Lunchtime Recital:** Opera Gala, Verdi, Puccini & Bizet. 1.15pm, £2
- Thur 3 **Chanucha afternoon with Latkes & Donuts:** Pinner AJR, Pinner Synagogue, 2pm
- Sun 6 **Schidlof String Quartet** play Haydn, Shostakovich & Beethoven. Conway Hall, 6.30pm, £4
- Sun 6 **London Archduke Trio** play Beethoven, Mendelssohn & Lakner. Sternberg Centre, 7.30pm, £8
- Mon 7 **Tel-Aviv, Marvel or Monstrosity?** Seminar, University College London, Room 216, Foster Court, 6pm, free admission
- Tue 8 **What is the Berlin Republic?** Charles Lees. Sussex University, 5.15pm

ORGANISATION CONTACTS

- London International Jewish Music Festival,** PO Box 232, Harrow, Middx. HA1 2NN. Tel: 0181 909 2445
- Club '43,** at Belsize Square Synagogue. Hans Seelig Tel: 01442 254 360
- Wiener Library,** 4 Devonshire Street, London W1. Tel: 0171 636 7247
- University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies.** David Groiser Tel/Fax: 01273 678 495
- Jewish Museum, Camden Town,** 129/131 Albert Street, NW1 7NB. Tel: 0171 284 1997, and at Sternberg Centre
- Sternberg Centre for Judaism/Jewish Museum, Finchley,** 80 East End Road, N3 2SY. Tel: 0181 346 2288/349 1143
- Institute of Jewish Studies.** Lectures: University College, Gower Street, WC1. Tel: 0171 380 7171
- South London AJR.** Ken Ambrose 0181 852 0262
- Spiro Institute,** Kidderpore Avenue, London NW3 7SZ. Tel: 0171 431 0345
- Pinner AJR,** Pinner Synagogue, 1 Cecil Park, Middx. Tel: 0181 866 0185 or 4833
- City of London Sinfonia recitals.** Leanda Walters Tel: 0181 209 0022
- South Place Sunday Concerts,** Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, WC1. Details from Lionel Elton, Tel: 01494 726 106

How not like an angel?

Alongside impeaching errant presidents, some segments of society have developed a taste for persecuting artists whose morals or demeanour are deemed wanting. The *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie may at last have been lifted, but how it has affected the way we regard him – or how he will now regard his own literary canvas – is another matter. Rushdie was accused of blasphemy by his co-religionists in the Islamic world, most of whom had never even read his offending work, *The Satanic Verses*. The condemnation alone put it out of bounds. Earlier this year it was the epic sculptor, Eric Gill, who faced opprobrium not like Rushdie because of his work, but because of his paedophilia. And even CS Lewis, in his centenary year, is not immune from personal criticisms. Childrens' writer Philip Pullman has condemned the *Narnia* cycle as "one of the most ugly and poisonous things I've ever read", while the American critic, John Goldthwaite, attacks the "misogyny, racism, and sado-masochistic relish for violence that permeates the whole cycle."

Not that there is anything new in all of this. Society loves to pull down those it most reveres. And artists and politicians are always the most vulnerable to such public mood swings. Often religion is at its root. Pity the composer Salieri in Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* who longs for Mozart's genius to convey his love of God and is appalled when the irreverent, re-constructed punk Mozart gets all the best tunes. And, of course, we all sympathise with poor old Salieri, who underscores our somewhat primitive, yet tenacious belief that only the angelic deserve to be geniuses.

As an A-level student, I shrank from the discovery of TS Eliot's lurking, anti-semitism. I would rationalise his description of the "Jew who squats on the windowsill," or the "protozoic slime" of "Burbank with a Baedeker, Bleistein with a cigar" as purely cosmopolitan imagery. I convinced myself that Eliot's intention was merely to expose the tendency of small-town America to demonise those whose background may be different from their own: darker, deeper, worldlier.

And, equally, who could not forgive Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice* on reading Shylock's immortal phrase – "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew

hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?" Perhaps it was an excess of self-protective wrath that led certain Jewish schools to ban *The Merchant* from their school syllabus. Or perhaps it was not. Who can say? Everything depends on how you read it. But remember, this was sixteenth century England, as far from racial tolerance as we are from Planet Pluto, and which was anyway more noted for persecuting Elizabethan Catholics than Jews.

Wagner was banned for years – and only recently reinstated – by Israel, for the naked fascism implicit in his work. Scholars have said that Wagner wrote the *Meistersingers* as an act of revenge against his half-Jewish critic, Hanslick, and that the opera contains clear antisemitic references suggestive of the dark side of human nature. That is enough, surely, to damn it at the overture. But can you actually hear the stamp of the Nazi jackboot in *Tannhäuser's* elegiac Venusberg music?

When she spied Cardinal Hume gazing at Eric Gill's acclaimed Catholic sculptures at Westminster Cathedral representing the 14 stations of the Cross last Easter, it was the last straw for Margaret Kennedy. She is the founder of Christian Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Eric Gill was said to have had incestuous relationships with his daughters and his sisters. More than half a century ago when Gill carved the statues, his personal life barely raised an eyebrow. But today artists and politicians must be seen to be perfect. What hounds President Clinton to the point of impeachment is neither lies nor sex, but an element of puritanism which has its root in the Pilgrim Fathers. But are we right to expect moral perfection from anyone less than the Pope or the Chief Rabbi? And isn't there a danger in making artists like Eric Gill a totem of hysteria and hatred, a figure in the stocks of post-modernism at a time when society gives no resting place to released child killers like Sidney Cook? Gill was no killer and while there is no excuse for those whose morals are so base that they will pervert the childhood of their own children, I would suggest that we would be less than human ourselves to condemn the man along with the crime, to excoriate the song with the singer, to thrust from our presence a work that so speaks from the heart. Because to do that invokes the ugly spectre of book-burning, which, in every time and in every place is undertaken by small-minded fas-

cists acting not out of love but out of fear of creative thought.

Gill's sculptures are lauded for an ineffable greatness, an expression of the will of art to transmute the mere ordinary into a state of grace. Perhaps it is those who have known most keenly the relentless dark night of the soul who have wrestled hardest with their angel to create such transcendent art.

So perhaps Salieri got it wrong. What was given to him, had he but known it, was the inspiration of prayer, the knowledge of spiritual elevation, that special means of the entranced to worship. Sometimes it is the work of more turbulent mortals to transform their anguish into the art that dares to speak its name.

□ Gloria Tessler

Kristallnacht

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B'nai B'rith

LEO BAECK LONDON LODGES

Professor Peter Pulzer
of Oxford University delivers the annual
Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture

'A Minority in a Democracy, the Jews
of the Weimar Republic'

Wednesday 11th November 1998 at 8pm
Leo Baeck Hall, 11 Fitzjohn's Avenue, NW3

All welcome, entrance free

Cooking with Gretel Beer



Onion Soup

This is comfort food at its best – warm, soothing and with just a dash of invigorating spice.

- 4 – 6 medium sized onions
- 2 heaped tablespoons butter
- 1 flat tablespoon flour
- 1½ pints (800ml) good clear stock
- ¼ pint (110ml) white wine
- salt and pepper
- grated nutmeg
- 4 thin slices bread
- butter for frying
- grated cheese

Peel the onions and cut them into very thin slices – the thinner, the better. If you own a food processor this is of course a

matter of minutes, but if you have to cut them by hand, a mandoline cutter is splendid – on no account skimp on this part of the job.

Melt the butter in a thick, large saucepan, then add the onions and leave to simmer very, very gently until the onions have practically 'melted', but not browned. This will take at least 20 minutes and is the part which cannot be hurried – just be patient and shake the pan from time to time. When the onions are soft, turn up the heat, stir and allow the onions to colour a little – they should be a good golden colour – then dust with flour, stir again and let the flour take a little colour too. Now pour in the stock and the wine and season with salt, pepper and a little grated nutmeg. Leave to simmer for about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile cut the bread into quarters and fry gently in butter until golden brown on both sides. Put the bread into a soup bowl – or divide between individual soup bowls – and sprinkle grated cheese between the slices. Pour the boiling soup onto the fried bread slices which will float to the top and sprinkle a little more grated cheese over the top. Put into a very hot oven to brown or, if using individual soup bowls, simply slip them under a hot grill for a few minutes. Serve at once □

Classic Austrian cooking

Not just strudel and schnitzel... First published in 1954, Gretel Beer's classic collection of Austrian recipes has never been out of print. Written when rationing was still in place, the book has remained ever popular. For a new edition only a few mistakes, unnoticed for 44 years, have been corrected.

In addition to readers of *AJR Information*, Gretel has spent a lifetime sharing the delights of Austrian cuisine with her British followers. In accordance with her original family recipes she has added metric measures and believes that some recipes are now easier to accomplish as most kitchens have a food processor, foil and clingfilm. Her recipes have stood the test of time, the cakes and pastries in particular sound just as enticing.

□ RDC

'Austrian Cooking' is published by Andre Deutsch in its *Cookery Classics* series, priced at £9.99.

Surviving in Serbia

In a talk to members of Leo Baeck B'nai B'rith Lodge in London, *AJR Information* deputy editor Ronald Channing recounted his own brush with death while he was a student.

Driving a car back from Athens through Yugoslavia, his friend fell asleep at the wheel and crashed, killing himself and another passenger outright. At the hospital in Belgrade, Ronald was also given up for dead, but on the way to the mortuary moved under the shroud. After a highly skilled operation performed by Vienna-trained Prof Dr Stanislav Bucharov, Ronald survived. However, he still recalls the 'near-death experience' in which he looked down at himself on the operating table. The friendship of the Serbian people, concern of the doctors, and the humanity and nursing skills of the wimpled Sisters of St Vincent de Paul will always be valued by him □

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Obituaries

Else Nathan

Mannheim-born Dr Else Nathan has passed away at the age of 93. She studied at Heidelberg University where she wrote a thesis on *Inflation and Public Opinion* which was recently re-published in English.

She came to England in 1936 with her husband. During the Second World War she made camouflage netting and was later involved in the St John Ambulance Brigade. She also cared for many refugees who lived in her house during the bombing. She founded the first WIZO group in the 1950s in Amersham, where she helped to develop active Jewish community life.

As a WIZO activist she took a keen interest in the Hadassah Baby Home in Jerusalem. On her 85th birthday, a celebration took place in Jerusalem in her honour.

Since her husband's death, she devoted even more of her time to welfare activities. Music was a great hobby. She visited Dartington Hall each year and bought masses of tickets for the annual AJR concert.

□ CN

Eva Reichmann

It is with great regret that we learn of the death of Eva Reichmann in her hundred-and-second year. 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 Töchterchule* 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 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 Verbängnis 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. She was a last 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

Saving Jewish lives worldwide

For 65 years the Central British Fund, now known as World Jewish Relief, has reacted to emergencies affecting Jews around the world, from the rescue of Jewish children from the Nazis with the Kindertransporte, to sending aid to Sarajevo in war-torn Yugoslavia.

In 1956 the CBF rescued Jews from Egypt during the Suez crisis and from Hungary during the uprising. In the 1960s the work was mainly in North Africa and the Middle East – in Ethiopia, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria and Egypt. The organisation continued to maintain discreet aid and relief programmes for Jews in Arab and other Moslem countries. Prior to their flight to Israel in Operation Solomon, the CBF housed and fed Ethiopian Jews. Life-saving supplies were also sent secretly to refuseniks in the USSR.

Last year World Jewish Relief concentrated its major effort on the

Western Ukraine, providing more than 40,000 hot meals and 10,000 food parcels, welfare and medical services, winter clothes and heating. During 1998 this aid has been increased to £1 million. WJR is the UK's only national Jewish organisation dedicated to sending aid to the former Soviet Union, where people who have survived the ghettos, Stalin and the Nazis may not come through this winter unaided.

WJR's Jewish Refugees' Committee continues to help present and past refugees with advice, documentation and financial assistance. Applicants for asylum receive help appropriate to each individual case, including those Jews from Arab countries who have been able to join their families already settled in the UK. World Jewish Relief's entire purpose is to save Jewish lives.

□ Eli Benson, WJR Campaign Director

Copies of Amy Zahl Gottlieb's new book, 'Men of Vision', Anglo-Jewry's Aid to the Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945, may be purchased direct from World Jewish Relief for £25 plus £2.50 post and packing. (See review on page 4).

SEARCH NOTICES

Dr George Hauser escaped with his parents from Austria to England in December 1938. British Passport Control in Vienna advised that visas were available for the family; to this day he does not know how they were selected or who acted as guarantors. Any information please to Dr G Hauser, 47 Windermere Road, Auburndale, MA 02166, USA.

Kobe, Japan, during World War II. Israeli researcher is interested in collecting personal memoirs of Jews of German origin who spent the war years in Kobe, Japan. Any information or documentation, published or private memoirs, would be appreciated. Please contact Yael Naaman, 39 Midbar Sinai Street, Jerusalem 97805, Israel. Tel: 972-2-581-5279. Email: yael@cc.huji.acil

AJEX Jewish Military Museum is seeking holders of badges of the Jewish Relief Unit and Jewish Hospitality Committee (JHC), who served during and after WWII in Europe or UK, who would donate them to the museum. Please contact AJEX Assistant Archivist Martin Sugarman, 18 Brenthouse Road, London E9 8QG.

Rudi Bach, from Stuttgart early 20s; lived in West Acton for 1-2 years. Information please to Phyllis Nathan, née Bernstein, 8 Bembridge Gardens, Ruislip HA4 7ER. 01895 67 2037 □

NEWSROUND

Pius XII's word blindness

Gerhart Riegner, of the World Jewish Council in Geneva during WWII, warned Pope Pius in a telegram some six weeks after the Wannsee Conference of January 1942, that the Germans intended to use gas chambers and annihilate the Jews. This key document is omitted from the Vatican's authorised history. Riegner, now 87, recalled asking the Vatican to intervene where it had influence. Had Pope Pius spoken out against the Holocaust, countless lives may have been saved.

St Edith of Auschwitz

Pope John Paul II has canonised Jewish-born Edith Stein, who converted to Catholicism and was murdered in Auschwitz, as St Benedicta. The Polish-born Pope's wish to improve Catholic-Jewish understanding appears to have misfired; Jews regard this daughter of a German orthodox family as being victimised for her Judaism, not for her Christian acts of humanity in Auschwitz.

Spielberg's list

Germany's President Roman Herzog presented a prestigious state honour to film director Steven Spielberg in recognition of 'Schindler's List', his film on the Holocaust, and the establishment of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. The Foundation is completing the interviewing and videotaping of 50,000 survivors to create a unique, permanent record.

Poll of Poles

An opinion poll in a leading Polish daily indicated that half the population believed that Poles suffered most during WWII. 20% agreed to a permanent memorial at Auschwitz to Polish victims replacing the crosses, whose retention even fewer supported.

Slave labour compensation

Giant engineering company Siemens has established a £6.6 million fund from which to offer compensation to WWII slave labourers, of whom there were up to 20,000, reports the *Jewish Chronicle*. However, legal proceedings in the USA for full compensation are proceeding.

Archer off target

Lord Archer of Sandwell, who heads the Board of Trade initiated investigation into Jewish refugees' confiscated assets under the 1939 Trading with the Enemy Act, has been criticised for suggesting the imposition of a monetary limit on compensation. This would contradict the undertaking that validated claims would be met in full.

Two decades of tolerance

The Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles, which includes the events of the Holocaust in its Museum of Tolerance, celebrated its 20th anniversary. Founder Rabbi Marvin Hier announced plans to build a museum for the promotion of tolerance in Jerusalem.

□ RDC

A Catholic jihad

When the first Polish Pope made a triumphal return to his native land in 1979, he conducted mass at Auschwitz, last resting place of one and a half million people, ninety percent of them Jews.

The 26ft high cross erected as a focus for the ritual was dismantled. Only in 1993 was it re-erected in a gravel pit close by the original Auschwitz camp where, in 1941, 152 Poles were murdered by the Nazis. The adjacent Carmelite



Barracks, fences and a sentry box in Auschwitz I.

convent (housed in the camp's former Zyklon B store) was then belatedly resited following Jewish protest and Papal intervention; the cross remained *in situ*.

The 1978 Unesco accord banning any religious symbols on the site was finally complied with in December 1997 by the removal of crosses from Auschwitz-Birkenau. Catholic-Jewish relations improved commensurately. Paradoxically, there were and are no Stars of David, menorahs or other Jewish symbols of any kind in what is the world's largest Jewish cemetery.

Earlier this year a proposal that the papal cross would also be moved – to be replaced by a memorial – provoked a rabid nationalist response. The Catholic radio station, Radio Maryja, controlled by antisemite Father Tadeusz Rydzyk and backed by zealous Christian nationalist MPs, called on its four million listeners physically to prevent the removal of the cross and to support it with the planting of a further 152.

Daily prayers were organised at the site; 130 Catholic MPs petitioned for the cross to stay; Lech Walesa lent his support; Polish primate Cardinal Glemp stamped his clumsy imprint on the

spurious defence of an immovable 'symbol of love in suffering'. Poland's Chief Rabbi responded by demanding respect for Auschwitz's Jewish dead and for Judaism.

Out of the woodwork then crawled an obdurate 67-year-old antisemite and extreme nationalist, Kazimierz Switon. Protesting that the cross's removal would mean the enslavement of the Poles by the Jews, he threatened to immolate himself.

The Israeli Prime Minister and Yad Vashem called for an end to provocation and the removal of all crosses. By August the Polish Catholic hierarchy had begun to appreciate the harm being done to the country's standing in the world and called for the removal of all crosses erected during the campaign, while the Government set about rescinding tenancy rights at the site.



Fateful gateway to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

As yet, no action has been taken to end this impasse. A meeting of the International Auschwitz Committee, on which all religious and state interests are represented, may herald the advent of sanity. Replacement of the papal cross with the intended memorial would surely lead the way to the original Auschwitz barracks being regarded as an appropriate place of remembrance for Polish camp victims.

Auschwitz-Birkenau should remain in perpetuity the protected and respected last resting place of over one million Jewish victims. It is time the Catholic Church excommunicated rabid antisemites like Switon and Father Rydzyk before they further disseminate their poison.

□ Ronald Channing