

# AJR INFORMATION

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## BERMUDA TRIANGLE

### Reflections on the interaction of Germans, Poles and Jews

The sequence of half centuries currently being commemorated reaches its climax on 1 September, 50th anniversary of Hitler's attack on Poland. The Second World War caused unprecedented devastation, especially in Eastern Europe, the locus of its outbreak. Even so, over the subsequent decades the vast wartime losses — numbering 6,000,000 in Poland, and 20,000,000 in the Soviet Union — have generally been made good by demographic increase. The Jews, alone among the victims affected, have not replenished their numbers, and probably never will.

However, in the grim annals of history, such a draining of the vital substance of our people is not totally unprecedented. The Cossack hetman Chmelnitzki's 17th century pogroms decimated the Polish community in the literal sense of the word. It is estimated that after Chmelnitzki's massacres the whole of Ashkenazi Jewry numbered under a million. (By the end of the 19th century that figure had increased tenfold, however.)

The post-Holocaust situation also differed from that obtaining after the Chmelnitzki pogroms in another essential respect: not only have areas made *judenrein* by the Nazis not been repopulated, but others — in Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and elsewhere — have been added to them. As for Polish Jewry the tragedy, imagination-boggling in its scale, of 3,000,000 dead had a grim sequel: though there were around 300,000 survivors (the majority wartime escapees to Russia), it proved impossible to reconstitute a viable community. While the postwar Polish authorities invited them to settle in the Oder-Neisse territory annexed from Germany, the horrendous Kielce pogrom in mid-1946 drove camp survivors and returnees from Russia alike into the Displaced Person camps set up by the Western Allies in Germany and Austria.

By around 1950 most of these DPs had either proceeded to Israel or North America; the residue who elected to stay put formed the nucleus of the reconstituted 'German' communities of Berlin, Frankfurt and Munich.

Two subsequent waves of westward migration followed. The first, in 1957, resulted from the Khrushchev-Gomulka agreement to transfer the remainder of Polish Jews still marooned in Asiatic Russia; the second, in 1969, was set off by a Communist directive that only 'Aryans' could occupy official positions in People's Poland. By the early 1970s the country was, in consequence, virtually *judenrein*. Absence of Jews does not, notoriously, promote the absence of antisemitism. During the recent, relatively free, elections to the *Sejm* the sound of Jew-baiting became audible again — but the elections also placed two Jews, Adam Michnik and Professor Geremek, on the opposition front bench.

Since *Solidarnosc* may conceivably form the next government in Warsaw one cannot rule out the paradoxical situation of several Jews serving as elected ministers in traditionally antisemitic (and ultimately de-Judaized) Poland. This possibility provides a tiny coda in a major key to the otherwise bleak finale of Polish-Jewish history. It is, alas, counterpointed by shrilly discordant sounds from across the Oder-Neisse line. Bundespräsident von Weizsäcker will not, as previously contemplated, be visiting Warsaw on 1 September 1989 as a token of repentance for his country's

attack on Poland 50 years earlier. The reason? Germany's ultra-Patriots are on the march again and Bonn wants to avoid a recrudescence of the rightwing backlash which Chancellor Willy Brandt provoked by falling on his knees before the Warsaw ghetto memorial. Was Nietzsche so wrong when he talked of an 'eternal recurrence'?

However, that may be taking too gloomy a view of events. The Federal Republic had, after all, witnessed a minor Neo-Nazi revival in the 1960s, and Schönhuber's Republikaner may likewise prove no more than a nine-day wonder.

On the other hand, history never repeats itself exactly. The crucial difference between the current German political scene and that of the Sixties is the absence of Franz Josef Strauss, whose death has created a vacuum within which the Far Right threatens to drum up a rising volume of support. One can only hope that the increasing integration of our continent, both within the EEC and beyond — *pace* Gorbachev's 'common European house' — will generate sufficient antibodies to counteract the noxious ultra-nationalism still washing over both banks of the Oder-Neisse. The recent deplorable scenes outside the Carmelite convent on the Auschwitz site indicate just how much still remains to be done.

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## POLISH JEWRY ON THE EVE

According to the 1931 census of the nearly 32 million Polish citizens, 10 per cent (or some three million) were Jews. In the retail trade 71 per cent of all tradesmen were Jewish; in the clothing and leather industry the percentage was almost 50. Added to the concentration of Jews in certain branches of the economy was their pauperization. Overcoming the traditional occupational and social structure of the community could be accomplished only by the acceleration of the economic development of the country as a whole, and the creation of conditions favouring the acquisition of new trades. This was done most often by the Zionist organizations which attempted to prepare groups of settlers with specialised skills. (However, the scope of this action was very modest.)

This adverse situation was also affected by some traditional customs and religion. Since many Jews observed Sabbath, it was difficult to employ both Jewish and Christian workers without disorganizing the rhythm of production. Even Jewish entrepreneurs employed a Jewish labour force unwillingly.

Thus emigration continued. Between 1927 and 1938 nearly 200,000 Polish Jews left Poland; 74,000 went to Palestine, 34,000 to Argentina and 28,000 to the United States. In the 1930's overseas emigration became limited in scope, while the number of those going to Palestine increased. According to the most reliable calculations, between 1919 and 1942 almost 140,000 Polish Jews went to Palestine, that is, some 42 per cent of the total number of immigrants accepted by that country; the largest intensification of Palestine-bound emigration took place in the years 1933-36 when the number of emigrants amounted to 75,000.

In the difficult economic situation, and the changes in legal and political status of Jews after Poland had regained her independence, various programmes of activity were formed. The traditional programme of the Agudat Israel boiled down to the observance of religious prescriptions, loyalty towards the state and the expectation of the Kingdom of God; the powerful position of this party was maintained by the authority of the *zaddikim*.

On the other hand, leftwing influence, too, continued to be strong. The most important role was played by the Bund, who demanded cultural and national autonomy for the Jews, and perceived the necessity of organizing the whole of the Jewish proletariat in one, separate national party. The party was decidedly opposed to the conservatives and discarded religion; it accused the Agudat Israel of defending the interests of the propertied classes to the detriment of the needs of the masses.

The Bund, like the illegal Communist Party of Poland to which many Jews also belonged, opposed all concepts of emigration; the socialist leaders considered Zionism to be an element weakening the forces of the proletariat.

Po'ale Zion, on the other hand, aimed at building a socialist Jewish state in Palestine.

All these left organizations, irrespective of the differences that separated them, cooperated on

important issues. They undertook a common struggle against campaigns organized by the antisemitic National Democratic Party; in Warsaw they even formed an armed underground organization to resist the nationalist militants.

During the communal elections held in the spring of 1931, those groups challenged the orthodox factions since they saw the possibility of transforming the denominational institutions into a kind of cultural and national self-government. In this conflict, representatives of the Agudat Israel resorted to various abuses of electoral regulations, such as depriving their opponents of the right to vote on the accusation that they were acting against religion.

### Ever darkening horizons

The second half of the 1930's intensified emigration sentiments among the Polish Jews. The country's economic situation did not promise any improvement. Some young Zionists grew impatient since the longed-for proclamation of a Jewish state did not materialize. Violent acts committed by the National Democrats became more frequent; in many universities they succeeded in introducing regulations aimed against students of Jewish origin. There were cases of groups of militants beating up professors (for example Professor Edward Lipiński) opposed to antisemitism. There were also instances of pogroms in small towns where the mob, incited by the nationalists, robbed and demolished Jewish booths and shops and maltreated their owners. A country-wide anti-Jewish boycott was backed by the head of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Hlond, and — despite lip service to the constitution — the government itself.

After Hitler took power in Germany mass persecutions of Jews among whom there were also some 50,000 Polish subjects started.

In the years 1938-39 more and more often Polish Jews, leaving behind all their property, were hurried across the border under threat of death. Particularly harsh measures were applied in the last days of October 1938, when some 13,000 were forced out. For several days the victims stayed in the open air, between the border points, before they were allowed back to Poland.

All these events made the picture of the future one of unrelieved gloom. Those preparing for departure from Poland had one more reason for doing so. The overwhelming majority, who had no such possibility, awaited anxiously what fate had in store for them.

Jewish organizations took an active part in civil defence and assistance to victims. The historian Bernard Mark recalls an unusual demonstration of Jews through the streets of Warsaw: 'In the first line there marched five well-known rabbis in long, black silk coats and sable hats... They were followed by students of the rabbinical college, each carrying a spade on his shoulders to dig earthworks even on Saturday.' Others took up arms and fought the common enemy. The defeat of the Polish army in the September campaign opened a new, tragic period in the history of Jews, and Poles.

## THE DANZIG COLLECTION

Among this year's 50th anniversaries, the 26th of July does not stand out as particularly noteworthy. All the more credit, therefore, to the Vancouver Museum for its decision to commemorate the events connected with that date, so long ago and so far away, by 'proudly presenting' to the public of the Canadian province of British Columbia a special exhibition entitled *Danzig 1939. Treasures of a Destroyed Community*. The exhibition was held from 2 May to 18 July; it was organised by the Jewish Museum of New York under the auspices of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and 'augmented' by the Vancouver Museum in its own particular way.

What actually happened on 26 July, 1939, was the delivery to the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York of a consignment of goods, packed in ten heavy crates and shipped from the port of what was then still (but not for much longer) the Free City of Danzig. The 'goods' were ritual objects which the American Joint Distribution Committee had purchased from the Danzig Jewish Community against payment in dollars, thus providing a valuable addition to the funds being raised locally by the sale of community assets, such as synagogue and burial ground real estate, in order to establish the necessary financial backing for the regulated emigration of the many Jews still left in the City, now that the outrages of November 1938 (carbon copies of those perpetrated in Germany itself) had demonstrated the hopelessness of their situation. A final service was held in the *Grosse Synagoge* on 14 April, 1939; then the community was dissolved and most of its members dispersed to Palestine, to America, to England, France and Poland. On 1 September, 1939, the first shots of the war were fired when a gang of German irregulars attacked the Polish Post Office and the City became part of the *Reich*. Jews continued to leave until, towards the end of 1941, the Nazi authorities put a stop to any further Jewish emigration: expulsion was replaced by deportation to the ghettos and the death camps.

All this was most poignantly recalled in the Vancouver Museum. The exhibition layout itself simulated the interior of a typical Ashkenazi synagogue, with a *bimah* structure at the front dominating the scene. The various ritual objects were grouped in showcases according to their purpose, each item being described in admirable detail both on panels and in the text of an excellent explanatory brochure. Some of the articles on show were plain and straightforward; others were skilfully fashioned and highly ornate. Most of the objects were of a kind familiar to practising Jews everywhere; but there were also several unusual pieces, such as a silver dish intended to hold the token pledge required for the *pidyan ha-ben* ceremony, the traditional redemption of the first-born son. Other examples were alms boxes and alms plates and a rather esoteric 'hanseatic' torah pointer.

In addition to the Danzig collection, and so as to complement it by such artifacts as might be missing from it because they were used for domestic observance rather than communal worship, the Vancouver authorities had enlisted

*continued overleaf*

the co-operation of local Jewish residents to arrange a peripheral display of 'objects of sanctity', which included *kiddush* cups, *menoroth*, candlesticks and *haggadoth* of both the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi traditions.

As a backcloth to the whole, the history of Danzig Jewry, principally from the 18th century onward, was given substance in a most imaginative way; and, throughout the period of the exhibition, a 'Festival of Jewish Traditions' featured music, dancing, arts and crafts.

Danzig is nor more. No Jewish life exists in the Polish city of Gdansk. But the collection of Jewish treasures, which once belonged to a great Jewish community in Central Europe, has survived to testify, thanks to the praiseworthy efforts of a Museum on the Pacific coast of North America, to 'the beauty, the strength and the purpose behind the practice of the Jewish religion'.

DAVID MAIER

## BERLIN SCHOOLDAYS

In 1936 I still attended the Grunewald Gymnasium in Berlin, but things were getting difficult. Many boys refused to sit next to Jews. Our P.E. teacher would make the entire class do punishment P.E. drills because 'one of the Jew-boys didn't pay attention'. Our music teacher taught such Nazi songs as *Wenn's Judenblut vom Messer spritzt* (When Jewish blood spurts from the knife) but would kindly tell us Jewish boys that we did not have to join the refrain.

We had special lessons on 'Racial Theory'. According to our teacher races could be distinguished according to the shape of their skulls: the highest development occurred in the Germanic Longheads. To prove his point the professor made me come to the front of the class. He explained that my skull was several inches shorter than that of the others, which meant that I was inferior. At first I was terribly frightened, but the teacher patted me on the back and said, 'There is no need to be afraid; it is not your fault that you are inferior'.

One day in summer 1936 I came home and told my mother we had been taught that Jews were more likely than gentiles to be criminals; statistics on the blackboard proved the point. Therefore, our teacher told us, it was essential to eliminate Jews from public life. We had to learn all this for homework and would be given a test the next day. This was the last straw. My father contacted the Goldschmidtschule, but said he could not afford the higher fees of this private school. Frau Dr. Goldschmidt accepted me immediately and told my father to pay whatever we could afford.

The experience of a Jewish school was something quite new to me. For the first time I worked in an environment in which I was not in the minority. When we played games I joined in as a matter of course. Anti-Nazi jokes were made openly, and Nazi racial teaching was pooh-pooed. During lesson time I was not afraid of possible anti-semitic remarks by teachers. This feeling of contentment was strange to me: I had never felt it before. My self-respect was returning. I was 10 when the Nazis came to power, and for three years, at an age when a boy is most impressionable, I had grown up in hostile sur-

roundings. I will never forget the emotion of being accepted.

Though my time at the Goldschmidtschule was a relatively happy one, one incident showed the persisting effect of the Grunewald Gymnasium atmosphere. Our history teacher told us how Disraeli was, as a child, ashamed of his Jewish profile, and tried desperately to alter its shape by pushing up the end of his nose with his finger. Though my nose was only slightly bent I was tremendously keen to look 'Aryan', and the anecdote, meant to amuse us, inspired me to emulate Disraeli. Every night in bed I pushed up the end of my nose, hoping for the impossible. I then looked into the mirror but could detect no alteration: I just would not look 'Germanic'. I did this nose-pushing regularly until I came to England. I stopped then, partly because it no longer seemed necessary to look 'Germanic', and partly because I was old enough to realize that the shape of my nose was unalterable.

Our school was an examination centre of the University of Cambridge, and we were prepared for the Cambridge School Certificate. For this purpose we had British-born teachers who taught us English, Arithmetic, English Geography and History, and Art. My parents thought I should listen to English as much as possible because I would eventually emigrate to England. These teachers spoke no German, and thus we learnt English rapidly by the Direct Method. I was very keen to ingratiate myself with the English teachers, but was not very successful. They did not seem keen to socialize. I wanted to find out what they thought of the Nazis, but they would not discuss politics. To our great disgust we learnt that some of them had absorbed Nazi propaganda and appeared to admire the 'discipline' which the Nazis had brought to Germany. They were unaware of the Nazis' anti-semitism. When we told them this, our stories were met by expressionless faces. We felt that they did not believe us. According to them we went to this Jewish school because it was private, and because of our ability to pay. They somehow thought that it operated like an English public school. Until November 9, 1938.

### German test

On the morning of the 9th I cycled to school as usual. On the way I noticed fire engines racing along in all directions. However, my mind was mainly concentrated on a German test we were to have during the first lesson. In German I was only just satisfactory and thus was always worried lest I received a low mark. At school I immediately noticed the general consternation of my classmates. For a fraction of a second I thought that they were also worried about the impending test. I soon found out otherwise. The fire engines had raced to burning synagogues with strict orders not to extinguish the flames, but to prevent neighbouring buildings from catching alight. Some of the girls were crying. Their fathers had been arrested and taken to Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

The school bell rang. It was 8 o'clock. We went into our classrooms and prepared for the test. We started to write. After 10 minutes Frau Dr. Goldschmidt stormed into our classroom. 'Pens down!' she shouted, 'Outside is a Hitler Youth mob who may try to burn the school down. I want

everybody to leave immediately by the back door. Come back in three days when we hope everything will have quieted down.' At that moment my feelings were rather ambivalent. On the one hand I was relieved that we did not have to finish that awful essay. On the other I was scared about what might happen when I reached the gate outside the school. We were lucky. The Hitler Youth, who had decided to play truant that morning, stood outside our main entrance jeering and quite unaware that we were leaving by the back entrance.

Our school was not burnt down. But several teachers were missing. They had been arrested and sent to Sachsenhausen. Our English teachers now knew the meaning of Nazism. Two weeks after the school reopened I left in order to emigrate to England.

### Postscript

In 1985 I sent a copy of the above essay to Herr Hoffmann, editor of *Die Alte Schule*, the magazine for former pupils of the Grunewald Gymnasium. He distributed it among a number of my former classmates. One replied:

'Thank you very much for your letter and report, which has disturbed me considerably. I can hardly grasp how little I realized what was happening at the time.'

A second letter (which resulted in my appearing on television in Berlin) was from Nicolaus Sombart, the son of the economist Werner Sombart who wrote the study *Die Juden und der Kapitalismus*:

'I have read your reminiscences about your days at the Grunewald Gymnasium with profound emotion and shame. Yet that is how it was. As I read it again, I remember every episode which you describe.'

PETER PRAGER

### INVIDIOUS COMPARISON

In a contribution to the debate about Hong Kong Robert Adley, MP, wrote to *The Times* in mid-June 'Peking — like Sharpeville and the West Bank — proves the truth of Mao's dictum about power issuing from the barrel of a gun'.

Those who engage in public debate really ought to take greater care in marshalling facts for their argument. In Peking military force was unleashed at protesters who, after three weeks, had not smashed a single window-pane, and at Sharpeville the South Africans shot Blacks whose only act of violence consisted of making a bonfire of their passes. Israeli soldiers, on the other hand, shoot at youngsters hurling stones which can maim, and even kill. Peking, Sharpeville and the West Bank are therefore, strictly speaking, not instances of the same thing at all.

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## FAMILY FEELINGS

Recently, before the fraught situation in Peking tipped over into stark tragedy, a joke about hardliner Li Peng, the stepson of Chou-en-Lai, was going the rounds. It had Madam Chou pleading with her husband, as mothers are wont to do, 'Give the boy a break' — whereupon Chou made him Prime Minister.

It is, of course, not entirely unknown for Communist leaders, acting on a time-honoured monarchical principle, to elevate their nearest-and-dearest to heirs presumptive: no one entertains any doubt that Kim-il-Sung I will be succeeded by Kim-il-Sung II in North Korea, and President Ceausescu by Madame C. in Romania.

However hard that may be on their respective subjects, it does at least make these Stalinist clones appear more human than their role model. Stalin's own family feelings were characteristically schizophrenic: at the same time as doting on daughter Svetlana he drove his wife and son to suicide.

Stalin's German 'twin', Hitler had, of course, no family. Goebbels, in contrast, fathered six children, to whom, swayed by his own propaganda, he denied the choice of growing up in a world sadly bereft of the *Führer*. The offspring of other top Nazis made their own choices. Rüdiger Hess showed purblind family loyalty, while the son of Hans Frank, *Reichsgouverneur* of Poland, disowned his father (thereby incurring the charge of filial impiety from some fellow Germans).

Jews are renowned for 'keeping it in the family'. According to folklore, Hollywood, that largely Jewish creation, took the *meshpocha* principle to extremes — *vide* the tinseltown pun

on a Hemingway title *The Son also Rises*, and the jingle about a famous movie producer 'Carl Laemmle brought the whole family'.

In reality, though, Jewish families are not as close-knit as is generally supposed. Famous, and infamous, deviations from the norm abound. AEG founder Emil Rathenau trenchantly said of his son Walter's books 'they are easier to write than to read'; the journalist Hans Habe adopted that name in place of Bekeczy to shed the image of his notorious father; the psychologist Wilhelm Reich, when young, denounced his promiscuous mother to his father with tragic consequences; the Jewish-Hungarian writer Julius Hay and the son he left behind when fleeing to the Soviet Union in the Twenties had a bizarre reunion in 1945: hidden by Catholics during the war, the son was now a novice monk, which affronted Hay — not as a Jew, but as a Communist!

And now, a *pendant* to the last story. As a token of adolescent rebellion the Polish rabbi's son, and latterday Marxist historian, Isaac Dentscher would spend *Yom Kippur* munching bacon sandwiches at his father's graveside — which only proves the truth of the old Yorkshire adage 'there's nowt as queer as folk'.

R.G.

## MEN IN LIMBO

As our life becomes more complex so does language and neologisms proliferate. Among the new words in common usage since the Sixties is a sub-group ending in the Russian suffix 'nik': beatnik, peacenik, refusenik. Currently another neologism — waitnik — is making its appearance. A waitnik is a refusenik in transit from the Soviet Union to a Western Country of his choice which has not yet granted him admission. Right now thousands are caught in a 'migratory bottleneck' caused by Russia easing up on Jewish emigration and America tightening its entry restrictions. Jews leave the U.S.S.R. purportedly to go to Israel, but on reaching Vienna the majority 'take a right-hand turn' and end up — temporarily — in Italy. Here the Joint Distribution Committee, or Joint, takes charge of them and provides for all basic needs through the many months it takes for their applications to be processed by U.S. (or Canadian, or Australian) immigration officials.

Waitniks are accommodated in small towns near Rome, with the largest concentration — circa four thousand — at Ladispoli, not far from

Fiumicino airport. During their period of waiting to be processed — or rejected — the Joint provides them with a money allowance, medical care, schooling, adult education (especially in English), entertainment and sports facilities. Entertainment includes the screening of films with a Zionist message, e.g. *The Ten Commandments*, or *Making the Desert Green*.

### Israel 'easier option'

While such 'propaganda' makes minimal impact on the would-be immigrants into America, the frustrations and uncertainty involved in obtaining a U.S. visa are beginning to yield marginal dividends for Israel. During the last 2 months 25 waitniks took the easier option — in the short term — and left for Israel; as the number of refusals by the U.S. Immigration Service builds up, as it is bound to, rather more will presumably avail themselves of the unconditional opening provided by Israel's Law of Return.

While in limbo at Ladispoli the waitniks have their spiritual needs catered to by Lubavitch, who have converted a disused local cinema into a synagogue. Other missionaries at work among them — so far with nil success — are American Baptists and Mormons.

A distinctly un-Christian sect who have likewise targeted the waitniks are Italian neo-Fascists. Their typically mendacious posters scream *Ladispoli: 16,000 residenti, 8,000 stranieri; swastika graffiti proclaim Juden raus!* It is an invitation to 'Jews in limbo' would be only too keen to follow.

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## BEYOND THE SOUND OF GORBY-MANIA

It was traumatic. I had not seen Bonn for nigh on 40 years; the rubble heap it was then, through which we hurried to other destinations, had been converted into one of the capitals of Europe, a 'city of destiny' celebrating its 2,000th birthday.

Bonn was my home town from the age of 2. For fourteen years I lived there until everything changed utterly for us Jews. And now all was changed again. I felt totally lost in this new creation. The place names were different, and the street in which I had lived for so long had been elongated ad infinitum; outlying villages had become suburbs with high rise skylines. When we came off the motorway I had to confess to my wife that I was hopelessly lost.

This feeling of alienation never left me entirely throughout a stay of 11 days. A few still familiar buildings and the great river Rhine seemed to be set into a picture of unfamiliarity. And it was not only the townscape which seemed strange, but the people as well.

Bonn was marking its august anniversary with two great events, one to foreshadow the future and the other to commemorate, and perhaps lay the ghost of, the past. President Gorbachev was paying court to the Federal Republic, and the former Jewish citizens were the guests of the municipality. World events lent extra glamour to the commemorative efforts. Many of us stayed at a hotel right on the *Via triumphalis*, aka Adenauer Allee, which was a sea of flags. In just we said the pennants might be for us.

Not that we were in the least neglected. The programme of events was almost too strenuous for people among whom only a few companions were relatively young. We were received both by the Oberbuergermeister (who entertained us to dinner in the old Rathaus), and the Vice-President of the Federal Parliament, Frau Annemarie Renger; we attended Jewish and Christian services as well as more informal meetings; sightseeing tours with a historical bias were organised. The tone left nothing to be desired: you are our welcome guests, our long-lost fellow citizens; the past must never be repeated.

### Election shock

Our hosts meant it, but halfway through our stay the European Parliamentary election results were announced. In parts of Europe, but particularly in Germany, the ugly past managed to get itself reborn. This agitated the German media. The question was: are the Republikaner a new phenomenon or an old spectre wearing a new veil? It's an ongoing problem.

In the circumstances this threw but the shadow of a shadow over the events. Yet it made people

remember more keenly. By the bank of the Rhine lie the stones salvaged from the incinerated synagogue. Under the lowering sun we stood, between two pleasant engagements, and watched Israel's Foreign Minister Moshe Ahrens lay a wreath.

Several of us were asked to address the pupils of Bonn's schools. My wife and I talked to, and debated with, well over 100 students of the Godesberg Pedagogium, which is not unlike a British public school. The younger pupils, and the girls in particular, were the more eager and interested. They would have preferred to speak to survivors of the death camps, but my question who among them supported the New Right elicited no reply.

### Patriotism

#### 'legitimises' Jew baiting

Altogether schools were important in this reunion, for it turned out that an inordinate number of both guests and hosts were old boys of the town's grammar school, which had had its name changed to Ernst Moritz Arndt Gymnasium in 1937 (not long after I left). I mentioned that I had heard rumours about present-day objections to the Arndt connection, because of his chauvinism and anti-semitism. I was told that in 1967-1968 there had indeed been a move 'to axe Arndt', but it had failed. After all, so many of the luminaries of the past had been romantic nationalists in reaction to the Napoleonic reforms. As to that kind of anti-semitism, the Grimms, *Turnvater* Jahn, etc. had all dabbled in it; Arndt is not now remembered for this sort of thing. In a bizarre conjunction his monument rears up almost next to a memorial stone which mourns our relatives and bears a warning to the gentiles.

JOHN ROSSALL

## ARTISTIC LICENCE

The fact that artistic talent provides no guarantee of political sense, though notorious, is still insufficiently appreciated. Examples proving the extreme disjunction between artistry and good sense are legion: the Hitler-adoring Leni Riefenstahl, the *Duce*-hailing Pietro Mascagni, the *Caudillo*-supporting Salvador Dali, the Marx-sprouting Redgraves, the Moscow-addicted Paul Robeson, 'Hanoi Jane' Fonda, etc.

Talented Jews are naturally just as prone to pontificate self-importantly on the great issues of the day as other 'celebs'. Arnold Wesker famously shot himself in the foot when, newly discovered, he picked a gratuitous quarrel with Alan Bullock on TV. Jonathan Miller, after a short visit to Israel, declared waspishly 'The only thing I liked about it was staying on a kibbutz — it reminded me of Bedales (the progressive boarding school, Ed.)'. This insensitively complacent disavowal of the Jewish community of fate surely entitles him to the Marie Antoinette-Otto Weinger Prize! Harold Pinter, only recently metamorphosed into a commentator on world affairs, has still not revealed why in *The Birthday Party* the character named Goldberg and an IRA thug torture the hero. (A reference to the Stern Gang, perhaps?) A recent item in *The Times* provided an addition to this uninspiring catalogue. It concerned Barbara Brecht, actress daughter of the famous playwright (who is *halachically* Jewish through her mother Helene Weigel). As administrator of her father's estate Barbara Brecht is to literature what the Sultan of Brunei is to the oil industry. Astonishingly, this 'first lady of East Germany' both glories in conspicuous consumption — Venetian chandeliers adorn her *Prominentenwohnung* — and hews closely to the Party line (by for instance, vetoing the performance, anywhere in the West, of *The Measures Taken*, Brecht's only play critical of Communism). The playwright, of course, also criticised unmerited privilege, arguing in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* that the disputed piece of land be transferred from its inheritors to those who can make best use of it. Enjoyment of exceptional wealth and rights — such as a passport denied to ordinary DDR citizens — in contradiction to her father's views on inheritance neither abashes Barbara Brecht, nor stops her from sounding off self-importantly about town planning, Mrs. Thatcher's policy, Soviet disarmament proposals, and world affairs in general. Karl Marx can never have dreamt that his abstruse theory of the unity of opposites would one day be demonstrated by this (U.S.-educated) lady, who, knowing that many people criticise her lifestyle, describes herself, with selfmocking candour, as a poor little rich girl'.

R.G.

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## ART NOTES

The Summer Season is here again with all its traditional events — Ascot, Henley and, not to be missed, the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy (until 20 August). There were over 14,000 entries this year and 1185 works by British artists working today were selected, sufficient to meet every taste. Among our old friends showing are Hans Schwarz, R. B. Kitaj (including a painting *Arab and Jew*), the venerable Hans Feibusch, Jack Goldhill, Mel Calman, Alfred Daniels, Sonya Lawson, Bernard Bohlen, Ben Levene and many others. Also at the Royal Academy (until 27 August) is an exhibition of works executed by the distinguished painter Frederick Gore RA over the past 50 years of his career.

Marevna (1892–1984), the daughter of a Russian nobleman and a Jewish mother, was born near Kazan in Russia. She left Russia to study in Italy, where she met Maxim Gorky who gave her the name Marevna (daughter of the sea) with which she subsequently signed her paintings. Moving to Paris in 1912 she mixed with the likes of Soutine, Lipschitz, Zadkine, Picasso, Modigliani and Diego Rivera, and in 1949 came to England, where she died. Her work has been widely exhibited, including the *Circle de Montparnasse*, Jewish Artists in Paris 1905–1945, exhibition at the Jewish Museum, New York. A fine display of her work was recently shown at England & Co, Westbourne Grove, W11; a number of her paintings can still be seen at that gallery.

The first one-man show at Bernard Jacobson's new gallery at 14a, Clifford Street, W 1, is devoted to recent paintings by William Tillyer, who lives and works at Westwood in a remote part of Yorkshire. Tillyer is a master of landscape painting with an economy of style suggesting clouds, hills or clumps of trees with a single stroke of his brush. Watercolours and prints by Tillyer are concurrently being shown at 2a, Cork Street, W1.

The *Material and Form* exhibition recently held at the Barbican Centre was opened by the new German ambassador, Baron von Richthofen. This is to be followed by a photographic exhibition *Through the Looking Glass* (until 1 October), which marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of photography and contains over 250 works by more than 70 artists, concentrating on photography as an art form rather than as a commercial enterprise.

Biddy Bunzl (born 1952) studied at the Vienna Kunst Akademie, the Camberwell School, in Amsterdam and finally in Reading. She started painting in 1980 and has exhibited widely. An exhibition of her recent work is at the Odette Gilbert Gallery, Cork Street (until 29 July). Once again the National Gallery has mounted an *Artist's Eye* exhibition. This year the distinguished abstract painter Bridget Riley has made a selection from some of her favourite paintings in the gallery's collection, including works by Titian, El Greco and Cezanne. Very well worth seeing! (Until 31 August). Incidentally, the public galleries at the National Gallery will be open this year on Wednesdays until 8.00 pm (instead of 6.00 pm) during June, July and August, and

chamber groups will play in some of the larger rooms.

Our good friend Annelly Juda is holding an important exhibition *From Picasso to Abstract* (until 29 September). An impressive array of artists are included: Arp, Braque, Caro, Francis, Hepworth, El Lissitzky, Miro, Moholy-Nagy, Moore, Pasmore, Picasso, Schwitters, Vordemberge-Gildewart, to name but a few. A large catalogue with 66 illustrations and an introduction by Bryan Robertson, will be available.

Edward Bawden, one of the most versatile and best-loved British artists of the 20th century, is still working today at the age of 86. The Victoria and Albert Museum is holding an exhibition of his work (until 29 October). Bawden was still a student at the Royal College when he was commissioned to design posters for the London Underground and in the Thirties he produced the famous Shell posters *Stowe on the Wold but Shell on the Road* and *Ashby-de-la-Zouche but Shell-sur-la-Route*. As a war artist he executed many works, including the moving watercolour about the Retreat from Dunkirk. After the war he returned to country life in Essex and continued working. He recently illustrated the Folio Society's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The Camden Arts Centre is showing *Posada: Messenger of Mortality* (until 3 September). One of the greatest exponents of the Mexican graphic tradition, Posada's work has also been shown recently at the Art in Latin America exhibition at the Hayward.

The Goethe Institut is showing the fifth of its exhibitions of the works of young German artists living and working in London (until 19th August). The present series includes works by Bernstein, Betke, Eisenmann, Heuer, Hoderlein, Jachens, Kammerl and Seemann. An illustrated catalogue is available at the exhibition. Gregory Tricker paints on 'batik', the traditional Indonesian cloth-dyeing medium. He is currently working on a new theme exhibition concerning the life of Moses, but his *Paintings for Anne Frank* were recently on show at St Clements Dane.

Finally, George Tappert (1880–1957)! An exhibition of works by this outstanding German artist was recently held at Runkel-Hue-Williams, 6/8 Old Bond Street (until 4 August) but some pictures by the artist can still be seen at that gallery later. Tappert was born and died in Berlin. Together with Kirchner, Pechstein, Heckel and Schmidt-Rottluff, he founded the New Secession in 1910, and in 1912 was invited by Kandinsky and Marc to participate in the 2nd Blaue Reiter exhibition in Munich. In 1933 he was arrested and dismissed from his post, and in 1937 40 of his paintings were declared degenerate and removed from exhibition. Later on, many of his paintings were destroyed during the bombing of Berlin. He retired from active work in 1953 and died a few years later.

ALICE SCHWAB

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## SB's Column

**Classical Schnitzler.** His dramatic opus has become an established classic, even if some of Arthur Schnitzler's work appears dated to-day, and neither officers' duels (*Leutenant Gustl*) nor the character of *Fraeulein Else* (the first veiled stage nude) now holds little interest. However, many of Schnitzler's plays, written early this century, have maintained their value and receive regular revivals before German-speaking audiences. At present *Der Reigen* is being prepared for a new presentation at Vienna's Josefstadt, *Der grüne Kakadu* can be seen at one of Vienna's smaller stages, and *Professor Bernhardi* at the Munich Cuvillétheater (proving the topicality of a problem which the author witnessed, and foresaw, more than 70 years ago).

**News from Germany.** In September the Deutsche Oper, Berlin, will be re-opening after substantial renovation work. The first operas to be presented will be *Tristan*, *Arabella* and *Samson and Delila*. Later in the season, an interesting co-production with the New York City Opera and La Scala, Milan is announced: *Das verrottene Meer*, the latest work by Hans Werner Henze; this international cooperation is new for Berlin with its tradition-loving German audience. Peter Zadek, the much-discussed stage producer is finally leaving Hamburg; his place will be taken by the British director Michael Bogdanov. German film producers celebrated the 50 years jubilee of UFA's first colour film, and to mark the occasion showed *Frauen sind doch bessere Diplomaten* (starring Marika Rokk and Willy Fritsch) on the German TV network.

**Birthdays.** Wolfgang Stresemann (son of Gustav Stresemann, the late Foreign Minister of the Weimar republic), composer, and for nearly 3 decades much appreciated *Intendant* of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, had his 85th birthday. Also 85 is Margarete Wallmann, legendary opera producer, especially of Verdi and Puccini, and much appreciated for her work in Milan and Rome; she now lives in retirement in Monaco. Octogenarians this month include actor Franz Stoss, the long-serving ex-director of Vienna's Josefstadt theatre, and Fred Liewehr, whose association with the Vienna Burg theatre started in 1933 and still continues. 80 years old, too, is Willy Boskovsky, violinist and conductor; he became particularly popular in the Seventies as the first conductor of the Vienna New Years' concerts, which later went on to be transmitted all over the world. Rafael Kubelik, sometime artistic and musical director of the Czech Philharmonic, director of London's Royal Opera House, and from 1971 to 1974 musical director at the 'Met' in New York, is 75.

**Obituary.** Yugoslav-born tenor Anton Dermota, member of the Vienna State Opera ensemble since 1936, a renowned Mozart singer, and a teacher at the Vienna Academy of Music in recent years, has died at the age of 79. Wolfgang Schaffler, the publisher who founded the Residenz Verlag in Salzburg and promoted the work of many Austrian authors (including that of the late Thomas Bernhard) has died, aged 69.

## The AJR at Work

### 2. VOLUNTEERS

An essential element in the formula for success of the AJR's activities is the support which members of its permanent staff receive from a team of volunteers, who, freely and enthusiastically, place much of their time and energy, their knowledge and experience at the Association's disposal. Few issues of this journal go to press these days without carrying a display advertisement calling for people to come forward to 'visit and befriend members, some of whom are old, frail and lonely, living alone in their own homes' or in one or other of the Residential Homes; or to help with shopping; or to act as drivers for journeys to and from the Day Centre in West Hampstead; or, not least importantly, to offer the patience and sympathy required when assistance is needed to ease a trauma.

That such publicity has to be given to the fact that there are always, and increasingly, openings for this kind of occupation is indicative of the truth that refugees from Nazi oppression are no longer young. From the time being about three-quarters of volunteers are still AJR members, but the proportion of non-members is growing, and the time is coming when, as Laura Howe puts it, 'some volunteers will need volunteers themselves'.

Mrs. Howe is a graduate of the London School of Economics. Her career has included teaching and social work. For the last two years she has been the Association's Volunteers Co-ordinator. She describes recruitment as her major problem, and she seeks to overcome it by making suitable approaches to synagogues in the London area, by maintaining appropriate contact with leading Jewish organisations, like Bnai Brith and the League of Jewish Women, by writing letters to Jewish papers and, if and when possible, by advertising.

#### 'Psychological match'

After a volunteer has been enrolled, the next step is to carry out a process of 'harmonisation', of matching that person's qualifications (in the widest sense) with the needs of his or her perspective clients. Actual availability — how often, how long and where — is, of course, a most important factor; but great care is taken to obtain also as close a 'psychological match' as possible in order to avoid any subsequent difficulties brought about by irreconcilable temperaments, diverging attitudes, mistrust and misunderstanding and mutual irritation with habits and mannerisms. At times, good will alone is not enough in the special circumstances of these not-quite-personal, not-quite-impersonal relationships, and incompatibility of one sort or another may cause distress to both parties. Laura Howe, therefore, makes a practice of being present during the introductory meeting between clients and new volunteers, and she monitors progress thereafter. All volunteers are expected to submit regular reports to which reference may be made in order to establish the client's further needs, as well as to obtain an

indication of the volunteer's effectiveness. Predictably, expectations of performance are high, and standards are maintained by Laura Howe's volunteer support scheme, part of which consists in providing the opportunity for groups of volunteers to meet in order to be able to exchange experiences and opinions and thus to learn from each other.

#### Problems of language

Asked whether language constituted a potential barrier to effective communication between volunteers and their clients, Laura Howe expressed the view that most refugees had, after all, lived in this country long enough to have acquired a good command of its language. Nevertheless, German was indeed helpful and, on occasion, essential. She recalls the time when a resident in one of the Homes requested the company of a Yiddish speaker. Fluency in that tongue is by no means universal, but eventually an elderly man was found who was able and willing to oblige. He made the visit by taxi, and concluded his 'session' by giving a brief impromptu piano recital for his 'client' and a number of her friends.

DAVID MAIER

#### A CALL TO ALL SURVIVORS

A call to Holocaust survivors living in the U.K. to participate in a nationwide Register is made today.

The *Register of Holocaust Survivors in the United Kingdom* — launched jointly by the National Yad Vashem Charitable Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust — will be a definitive record of those survivors of Hitler's war against the Jews who made their new home in the United Kingdom.

The Register will:

- ★ list all the names of Holocaust survivors in the U.K.;
- ★ help reunify families and ease contact with survivors worldwide;
- ★ record information for the present-day needs of survivors;
- ★ assist with future research into the events of the Holocaust; and
- ★ help counter Holocaust denial and revisionist history.

Greville Janner, Chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, said:

'Our survivors are living history. Their evidence must live on when they are gone. I urge all survivors to tell their story so that it will never be forgotten — and can never be denied.'

For further information, please write to: Register of Survivors, National Yad Vashem Charitable Trust, Woburn House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 0EP.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### LEST WE FORGET

Sir — Ex-WAAF's letter in your May issue comes as a timely reminder, not least to Lord Jacobovits, himself a German Jewish refugee, to attend this year's Cenotaph Remembrance service. His absence from the ceremony last November caused much offence and embarrassment to Jewish ex-servicemen and women.

Joining up was, at all times, voluntary. This applied as much to the inmates of Kitchener Camp as to those who, through no fault of their own, suffered the indignity of internment.

Whether we were more at risk than any other members of H.M. Forces is open to argument. Two Alien Pioneer Corps companies served in France in the Spring of 1940 as part of the B.E.F. One of them, 87th Coy., bore arms for 48 hours on the overoptimistic assumption by the Base Area Commander that they could help stem the German advance on Le Havre. Fortunately, saner reason prevailed, and all alien personnel were evacuated without loss of life.

In 1943, the Army Council encouraged Alien Pioneers to transfer to more active branches of the service, protected by changes of names and army numbers. I personally know of one who, commissioned into a line regiment, was taken prisoner by the German army and survived the war unscathed; of another, carrying nothing more lethal than a fountain pen, who was disabled for life when, on weekend leave, a V-1 dropped on his home in Buckinghamshire.

But why is the Lady in Air Force blue so reluctant to disclose her name?

Her letter is, after all, of charitable intent. It draws attention to and asks us to remember the many refugees who put on uniform to fight Evil in the 1939-1945 war. Sadly, not all of them survived to see the overthrow of Nazi Germany; others have died since.

To clothe ourselves in anonymity would be to betray the cause for which we were prepared to make the supreme sacrifice.

Schiedamse Vest  
Rotterdam

F. G. KATZ  
(ex-Pte. 1380.1002  
87th Coy. AMPC)

### MYTH MAKING

Sir — In Prof. Nolte's book *The European Civil War 1917-1945* he defends his thesis that the Russian revolution is at the root of Fascism and National-Socialism.

Stalin's crimes preceded those of Hitler, and were a cause, and thus part of an excuse, for Auschwitz. Auschwitz has its roots in the Russian revolution, thus Fascism is a counter movement against Soviet Bolshevism. Mentioning brown and red crimes in the same breath, Nolte writes that there was social destruction on one side, the Bolsheviks, and biological destruction on the other. The one fundamental moral axiom is that the murder of guiltless and defenceless people cannot be allowed under any circumstance.

But the Archipelago Gulag is not Auschwitz. Auschwitz constituted the methodical destruction of human beings on a conveyor belt. The Gulags were not methodical.

The Russian kulaks were liquidated as a class hostile to the Bolshevik revolution in the Thirties. The Jews, Gipsies, Homosexuals and others were not asked their political opinions.

One of Professor Nolte's opponents in this dispute, Professor Mommsen, calls the Nazi crimes unparalleled, and says that class murder cannot be set against race murder, i.e. genocide. The two cannot be compared. Although Stalin did, for instance, displace the Crimean Tartars, who cannot now return because there is no room for them, this does not add up to the destruction of a race.

Nolte's comparison of Stalin and Hitler is odious, dismisses reality and creates a new myth! By trivialising Auschwitz he helps some Germans to get away with the *unbewaeltigte Vergangenheit*.  
Avenue Road  
London N6  
EVA R. EISENSCHITZ

### GUT REACTION

Sir — 'What did G-d give us on *Shovuo*?' my nearly 5-year old grandson was recently asked by his daddy, the rabbi of Cardiff.

'Cheese cake' came the prompt reply.

Mrs. MARGARETE STERN  
Northways, College Crescent,  
London NW3

### GRIM GROM'S REDEEMING FEATURE

Once, asked by a British journalist about his role at the UN, the late Andre Gromyko responded by raising his right hand and declaring dramatically 'This was the very first hand to vote in favour of the state of Israel'.

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## THE BLOOD LIBEL

Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia *THE MYTH OF RITUAL MURDER: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (Yale University Press, 1988, £20).

The abominable belief that Jews use the blood of Christian children during Passover for the preparation of *Matzot* and other nefarious practices was widely accepted for over 1,000 years. In the first documented case — that of William of Norwich in 1144 — it is interesting, perhaps significant, that the accusation was made by an apostate Jew of Cambridge named Theobald. The myth grew and from the 12th to 16th centuries cases of blood libel kept recurring in German-speaking lands. More recent times brought a massive resurgence of the myth throughout the Western world, and its resurrection by Nazi propaganda. This happened despite the fact that the accusation had been frequently dismissed by medieval rulers, and that 19th century scholars had condemned the whole story as a fabrication devoid of a single element of truth.

The reasons for the popular acceptance of this widespread and lethal myth have been explored here. The author has studied reports of trials which took place in Emdingen, Regensburg, Freiburg and Worms, as well as much associated material: plays, poems, historical accounts, contemporary literature, etc. Blood, he concludes, is

associated in folklore with magic and is believed to have immense powers. At the end of the 12th century the Church started promoting the doctrine of trans-substantiation, i.e. the transforming of consecrated bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This doctrine gained great popularity and confirmed the magical properties of blood in popular imagination.

### Jewish magic

According to Professor Hsia the Jews of medieval Europe possessed a rich magical lore, and Jewish magic was famous and feared by the general Christian population. The Jews reputedly needed blood for their magical practices and therefore murdered Christian children. This belief became coupled with the new doctrine of the Eucharist and the Christian belief in sacrifice. The Jews had sacrificed Christian children who in popular imagination became 'sacrificial gifts' which demanded vengeance.

In his thesis the author has almost certainly grossly exaggerated the role of Jewish magic; this apart, he has surprisingly failed to take account of Professor Norman Cohn's valuable *Pursuit of the Millennium*. Cohn suggests that the Church had been equating the Jews with the AntiChrist since the 2nd and 3rd centuries — which doctrine developed into a medieval mythology of the Jews as soldiers of the AntiChrist, practising stabbing, the poisoning of wells, etc.

It would therefore seem that although Hsia's equation of the ritual murder accusations with the introduction of the Eucharist may be part of the story, it is by no means the whole; the phenomenon is more deep-rooted and complex than he supposes. The economic aspect certainly played a part, though less than the deep-seated fear of the unknown, the strange and the incomprehensible which had to be fought and destroyed. Such fear still lies not far beneath the surface and can easily emerge. In their way ritual murder accusations and the tragedy of the Holocaust may be simply manifestations of the same thing. It is a horrible thought.

With all its limitations, Hsia's book is valuable in exploring a very ugly aspect of human behaviour in great depth.

WALTER MANFRED

### DESERVED HONOUR

The 1989 medal of the Walter Meckauer Foundation has been awarded to the London-based PEN Centre of German-speaking authors abroad. The Centre — headed by Arno Reinfrank (secretary) and Fritz Beer (president) — is the successor to *Deutsches Exil-PEN*, which, founded by Heinrich Mann in 1934, numbered Literature Nobel Prize winners Thomas Mann and Nelly Sachs among its members.

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## FAMILY EVENTS

## Acknowledgement

**Leyser:**—Paula Leyser wishes to thank all her family and friends, who sent so many tokens of affection and made such splendid donations in my name, so that my 90th birthday will be shared by a wider family.

**Weinblum:**—Mrs. G. Weinblum would like to thank all her friends of the FJR who were kind enough to express their sympathies on the occasion of her recent bereavement.

**Segall:**—To all my friends a heartfelt word of thanks for the love and friendship shown to me on my 85th birthday. This made me very happy and I am deeply grateful. Dora Segall.

Information required about Ilse Wolff, née Rosenbaum, born in Kaiserau/Westfalen in 1915, married 1937, subsequently emigrated to Palestine.

Former Jewish citizens from Fechen bei Köln and from Neuenahr-Ahrweiler are sought for a research project.

Information please to Verein ehemaliger Kölner, POB 6495, Haifa-Carmel 31063, Israel.

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## Birthday

**Hirsch:**—Paul Hirsch, born 2 August 1909, of 11042 Park View South, Seattle, Washington 98178, formerly of Kempen Niederhein — Dublin, Ireland — London. Mazeltov, Daddy, on your 80th birthday. Love Susan, Edith, Roger and families.

## Deaths

**Blackie:**—Henry (Heinz) Blackie passed away 4 June, aged 75. Mourned and remembered by his family and many friends.

**Elton:**—Robert Elton — deeply mourned and sadly missed by his wife Edith, daughter Vivien, son-in-law Terry, grandchildren Michelle and Peter, and sister Herta.

**Kendrick:**—Walter Henry Kendrick, of 68 Gurney Drive, London, died 29 April 1989. Mourned by his friends.

**King:**—Erna King died peacefully on 28 June 1989 in her 94th year. Dearly loved and deeply mourned by her family and all her many friends. Her happy nature will be sadly missed.

**Wetzler:**—Lore née Braunschweig — my beloved wife passed away on 22 June 1989, aged 77. Deeply mourned by her son and daughter, their spouses and her grandchildren. She will be loved and remembered always by her family and friends for her uniqueness and genuine free spirit.

**Wolff:**—Henry Wolff died 24 June after a long illness. Greatly missed by his loving wife Rosi, family and friends.

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## Information Required

**LEDERMANN.** Would anyone having information on the whereabouts of Hans Ledermann, born Breslau 1920, arrived U.K. 1939 and stayed at Tythorpe House, Haddenham near Aylesbury, please contact the Jewish Refugees Committee, Drayton House, 30 Gordon Street, London WC1 0AN.

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## NEWS FROM THE RIALTO

Dustin Hoffman's appearance in the National Theatre's *Merchant of Venice* has rekindled controversy about whether Shakespeare was an antisemite. Hitherto it had been generally accepted that the Bard had never met a Jew — but this supposition has been refuted in a recent letter to *The Independent*. Quoting scholarly research, its writer contends that Shakespeare befriended the Bassano family of Jewish-Venetian court musicians whom Henry VIII had brought to England. He makes the point that Elizabethan audiences would have recognised the play's 'hero' Bassanio as well as its 'villain' Shylock as being

Jewish — and that this fact has serious implications for our understanding of the play.

## JEWS AND ART

Our member Herbert Révész, who in 1985 brought out a useful reference book entitled *Jews and Music: A Dictionary of Jewish Composers and Musicians*, has now produced a companion volume about Jewish painters and sculptors. Though the dictionary, by the author's own admission, lacks completeness its value is considerably enhanced by about 50 black-and-white reproductions. *A Dictionary of Jewish Painters and Sculptors* (170 pp.), is available, at £12, from

Herber Révész, Flat 5, Milton Lodge, 60 Station Road, Winchmore Hill, London N21 3NG.

## TOPS-OF-THE-THIRTIES'-POPS

*Die Comedian Harmonists, Sechs Lebensläufe* (Quadrige, Berlin, 1988) by Eberhard Fechner traces the formation, triumphs and Nazi-decreed dissolution of the sextet, half of whom were Jews. The sole survivor of the six, 88-year old Roman Cycowski, is cantor at Palm Springs, U.S.A.

*Watch out for:* BBC2's *Children in Flight*, a programme about the Kindertransporte, on Bank holiday Sunday, 27 August, at 8.10 pm.

## FOR YOUR DIARY

### PAUL BALINT AJR DAY CENTRE

#### AUGUST

- Monday 7 'Peru — In The Land Of the Incas' — Illustrated Slide Show by Martha Tausz
- Tuesday 8 'A Woman's Life & Love' — Music by Heather Exley & Myra Alexander
- Wednesday 9 General Quiz — Senta Friedlander
- Thursday 10 Members Of Irma Mayer's Keep-Fit Class From Sobel House Will Give A Demonstration
- Monday 14 A Welcome Return Of The London Ladies' Choir
- Tuesday 15 Talk & Demonstration by 'Kwik-Link' (Emergency Medical Alarms)
- Wednesday 16 (a) Outing to Theatre  
(b) Talk & Demonstration by 'Aid-Call' — (Emergency Medical Alarms)
- Thursday 17 'Memory — A New Concept In Services For The Elderly' — Lynette Scott
- Monday 21 Talk & Demonstration by 'Lifeline' — (Emergency Medical Alarms)
- Tuesday 22 'Roving Around Indonesia' — Illustrated Slide Show by Ernst Flesch
- Wednesday 23 'An Englishman looks At Viennese Operetta' — Denis Snowman
- Thursday 24 Talk & Demonstration by 'Life-line' — (Emergency Medical Alarms)
- Monday 28 CLOSED
- Tuesday 29 'Plain & Pearl Entertain' — Larry Barnes and Maggie Stables
- Wednesday 30 'The History of Music Hall with Full Audience Participation' — Carolyn James
- Thursday 31 Anne Holmes & Thea Fry — Cello & Piano Pot Pourri

#### SEPTEMBER

- Monday 4 'Wembley Follies'
- Tuesday 5 'Art During The Weimar Republic' — Illustrated Slide Show by Ralph Blumenau
- Wednesday 6 'The Dulcet Tones' — Betty Thrower & Anna Partridge
- Thursday 7 'International Medley Of Songs With Guitar' — Sandra Berzon
- Monday 11 'The Sunshine Singers'
- Tuesday 12 'Wembley Follies'
- Wednesday 13 'Two Harps Are Better Than One' — Sarah-Jane Norris & Angi Britton
- Thursday 14 Shirley & Rose Entertain You All

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## JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH AND THE JEWS

'Anyone who works as hard as I do can do as well as I do' — it might have been said by any successful businessman in the Britain of Margaret Thatcher. But when we learn that, in fact, it comes from the pen of one of the greatest geniuses born in what is now known as East Germany, we can only marvel, in the entirely vain hope that he may have been right.

Johann Sebastian Bach, born in Eisenach just over three hundred years ago, devoted his life to his work (and to raising a score of children). After being employed in Weimar first as court organist, then as concert master, he moved to Cöthen in 1717 to spend a few years as *Capellmeister* and director of chamber music. This was the period of the Brandenburg Concertos. In 1723 he was appointed to the post of cantor at St Thomas', Leipzig (although he was only the fourth choice for the position, after Fasch, Telemann and Graupner), and continued to work prodigiously, not even allowing his eventual blindness to hold up his composition.

1723 was also the year in which he wrote the St. John Passion: it was to be his first major musical creation to be heard by the Leipzig public, and was composed in some haste. It is a concise, dramatic work, which contrasts greatly with Bach's other great Passion, that according to St. Matthew, written in 1729. The latter is on a more epic scale, but includes also wonderfully lyrical, reflective arias, and shorter, less intense choruses. In both, an Evangelist tells the New Testament story, the crowd scenes are represented by the chorus, and Jesus' words are sung by a bass soloist, with, in the St. Matthew, a halo of string sound surrounding his every utterance.

### Negative stereotype

The Jews, of course, feature prominently in both works, and not only in terms of the narrative. Bach's idea of the Jews and the Pharisees as rigidly rooted in an obsolete Law is reflected in his use of strict musical forms. In the later Passion, there is, as Stanley Webb points out, an 'elaborately contrapuntal chorus addressed by the chief priests and Pharisees to Pilate, (in which) the priests argue themselves from the opening key of E flat major to a final cadence in D minor, a very unusual procedure for Bach'. The Jews in fact come out of these two works pretty badly. Bach, in common with both the Gospels and the Lutheran tradition, blurs the distinction between the various groups of Jews involved with the life and death of Jesus, giving rise to the widely held but erroneous view that all the Jews voted, as it were, for the Crucifixion. There was, in fact, much disagreement between the sensitive, scholarly Pharisees, and the Temple-based, high-minded Saducees, but this the Gospel writers chose to ignore. In the Passions, 'the Jews' come across as mocking, cynical, self-righteous, baying for the blood of Jesus, 'gottlose Leut'. 'Weg, weg mit dem, kreuzige ihn' they scream, in one of the most dramatic choruses of the St. John Passion, before affirming (strangely enough) that they had no king but the (Roman) Emperor. Such loyalty to a tyrannical regime was certainly found among

the priests and their entourage, but hardly among the persecuted common people, the mass of the Jews.

And so the damning picture of the Jews is remorselessly built up, and the already one-sided Gospels have been enhanced by some of the most moving, most beautiful, and finest music ever written.

### Dilemma

I have sung in many performances of both Passions, beginning with the St. John while I was a young alto at school and understood very little. At University, with the same work, I began to be asked by friends, 'How can you sing this, you know, being Jewish?' Most recently, in 1987, I took part in four superb and thrilling performances of the work in Holland, under the brilliant conductor Hartmut Haenchen: the music gripped me as never before, but, as the other Jewish member of the choir said to me of the work 'Isn't it glorious? If only the whole thing weren't so antisemitic!' And he was right.

For the Holland concerts, I found myself actually coaching the choir in German, and often had occasion to consider the, well, odd situation that meant a Jew was helping a choir of, I suppose, mostly Christians to sing one of the most anti-Jewish stories in history, in the best German (of all languages) they could manage. The music, of course, remained exquisitely untouched by these reflections.

It is a dilemma. As a Jew with a keen interest in music, brought up within the Western cultural tradition, does one have a duty to ignore such masterpieces as the St. John Passion? Is it a betrayal of one's Judaism to take part in performances? On the other hand, has one the right to diminish one's life and experience by excluding such miracles of creation as if they did not exist?

I would like to feel that I can be moved by the music, while rejecting absolutely the message of the Gospels, but undoubtedly there will be some who call this attitude self-indulgent, or even hypocritical. I am not sure what the answer to the dilemma is.

It would be of great interest to me to hear other views on this subject. But until an overwhelmingly convincing argument is put to me, I will find myself drawn again and again, in ever increasing wonder, to the miraculous music of Bach. It is remarkable that it took a composer of Jewish descent, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (grandson of the great Moses Mendelssohn), to revive the long-forgotten St. Matthew Passion in 1829, just 100 years after its first performance in Leipzig. It is also rather comforting!

J. D.

## APPORTIONING GUILT

*Cecil Genese: THE HOLOCAUST: Who Are the Guilty? (The Book Guild, £14.95)*

Cecil Genese's book *The Holocaust: Who are the guilty?* is not an historical study; it is rather an attempt to assign moral responsibility and guilt for the destruction of European Jewry. Responsibility begins, of course, with the Nazi elite who evolved, disseminated and carried into practice a virulent, irrational ideology of lethal potential.

The Leader principle ensured the subordination of the Army, Civil Service and Judiciary, and gave over the formulation of foreign policy and legislation to the will of the Führer. Moreover, the deliberate construction of the Hitler myth by Goebbels's propaganda machine — Hitler the prescient leader, lover of children and God-fearing believer — effectively welded the German people to his purposes.

Anti-Semitism was the nub of Hitler's ideology of National Socialism. Discrimination against, persecution and, finally, extermination of the Jews involved virtually the whole society. Millions had to prove their non-Jewish ancestry; an army of officials had to administer the complexities of the Nuremberg Law (1935); institutions were purged of Jewish personnel, towns and districts vied with each other to create Jew-free zones. The ambit of responsibility embraced the nation. As Karl Bracher wrote in *The German Dictatorship*, 'Consequently, the co-responsibility of all Germans in the anti-Jewish policies cannot be erased by any reference to "not knowing" and to having been deceived. The fact of the political, legal and moral discrimination against the Jews was constantly present, and its final consequence — deportation and extermination — was merely a matter of time and opportunity'.

Genese documents the case against the Nazis and their accomplices in the first part of this book. More controversially, he then extends the range of guilt for the perpetuation of the Nazi extermination policy to the British and French governments of the 1930s, and the House of Commons (who condoned the Munich Agreement). Deemed no less guilty are the Labour and Democratic administrations in Britain and the U.S.A. who, during the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, refused to, or failed to, bring known Nazi war criminals to trial.

Nazi ideology and race policy have in recent years received massive documentation. One may mention Bracher's *The German Dictatorship*, Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, and Martin Gilbert's *The Holocaust*. Genese's study does not add to these, but might serve as an introduction to the horrendous history of race madness in the 20th century.

H. F.

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