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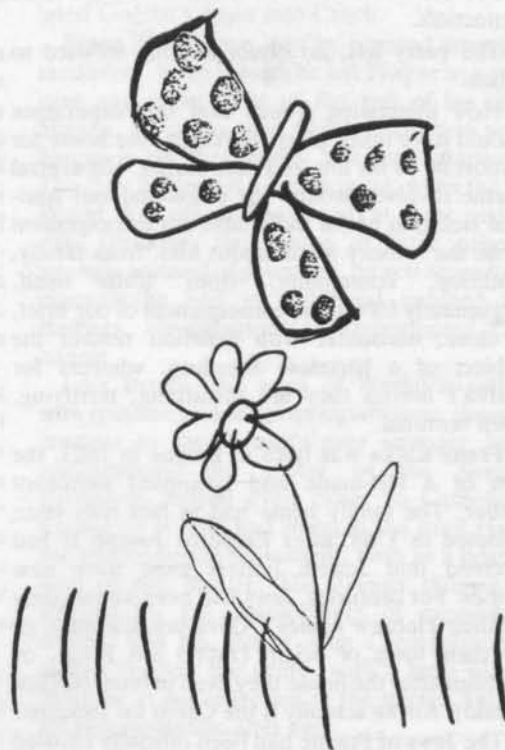
MUSEUM OF A DEFUNCT PEOPLE

Exactly 50 years ago, in March 1939, the Germans occupied the rump of Czechoslovakia left behind after the amputation at Munich. The Fall of Prague had a significance beyond completing the encirclement of Poland and crushing the last democracy East of the Rhine. It spelt *finis* to a Jewish presence at the crossroads of the continent stretching back an entire millenium. (Evidence of Jewish settlement in Bohemia can be found in the chronicles of the tenth century traveller Ibrahim Ibn Jacob.) By the mid-13th century Prague Jewry had secured a charter from King Premysl Otakar denying the blood libel, and were building the *Alt-Neu-Schul*. Though this early efflorescence had been preceded by Crusader massacres, and was eventually succeeded by Hussite pogroms, there followed an even greater efflorescence under Emperor Rudolph II, in whose reign Prague was a centre of Hebrew printing and the astronomy-minded chronicler David Gans consorted with Tycho de Brahe and Kepler.

From the very beginning Czech-Jewish history thus represented a chiaroscuro of alternating light and shade, of rustred gore and the gold of achievement. Gold in the literal sense, too, played its part. Rudolph's quest for the 'philosopher's stone' (to transmute base metal into gold) prompted his famous meeting with Rabbi Loew, and the Imperial need for cash elevated the financier Mordecai Meisl, a great communal benefactor, into the first 'court Jew' of Europe.

Hereafter the situation deteriorated — through war, intolerance and economic decay — until the 1782 Edict of Toleration, issued by Joseph II, proved a new watershed. Under it the Jews secured certain rights in commerce and education, though at the price of Germanisation. This Germanisation made them targets of Czech nationalist outrage in the 1848 Revolution; however, the post-1848 abolition of marriage and residence restrictions changed things very much for the better. Hereafter Jews increasingly left the

villages for Prague (or Vienna) and contributed significantly to the industrialisation that put Bohemia and Moravia ahead of other parts of the Habsburg Empire. In mining and metallurgy the names Petschek and Guttman became bywords,



From . . . *I never saw another butterfly . . . Children's Drawings and Poems from Theresienstadt Concentration Camp 1942-1944* Publ. London: Spearman, 1965

and in textiles the Jewish role was probably even more significant. (By strange coincidence textile manufacturers with names like Hofmannsthal, Zweig and Broch begot highly literate progeny: *von Textil zu Virgil*, so to speak.)

This literary second generation — Kafka's confreres — made turn-of-the-century Prague a forcing house of talent. But, as ever, light was edged with shade: Czech nationalists revived the blood libel — which Thomas Masaryk risked his political influence to refute — while Germans in the Sudeten area founded the literal forerunner of the Nazi Party. Some of Prague's young Jewish literati, like Max Brod, exposed to the escalating crossfire of Czech and German nationalism, in consequence became receptive to Martin Buber's appeal for a return to Zion. (Brod, author and custodian of Kafka's estate, deserves likewise to be remembered as spokesman for *Zidovska strana*, the country's Jewish Party.)

With Masaryk's creation of independent Czechoslovakia in 1918 the country, and Czech Jewry, entered a last halcyon period. The new state — one of the most democratic in the world — let Jews enjoy clearly defined national minority rights. The community at this time presented a rich mix of attitudes and life styles: coffeehouse habitués in Prague, businessmen in Brno, *Yeshiva* students in Bratislava and Yiddish-speaking peasants in Ruthenia. It also still teemed with cultural luminaries, e.g. the author Frantisek Langer, the composer Jaromir Weinberger and the journalist Egon Erwin Kisch.

By the Thirties the shadows were closing in. Despite the best efforts of people of good will —

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Thomas and Jan Masaryk, Karel Capek, Milena Jesenska — Czech Judeophobia increased (as did its Slovak-Catholic variant), while Nazism spread like the plague through Sudetenland.

This was the backdrop to Munich and, six months later, to the Fall of Prague. For the Jews flight now only became the only alternative to impending annihilation — but time was short, and opportunity tragically limited. At most a fifth of the 350,000 strong community managed to leave (some via the military underground) before the onset of the Final Solution. Under Nazi rule the Czechs evinced no markedly greater sympathy for the Jews than did their German and Austrian occupiers (though Slovaks intermittently proved amenable to bribes). Amid the general destruction quirks of the Nazi mind produced two 'special features': Terezin (Theresienstadt) as a disguised staging post to Auschwitz — useful for propaganda — and Prague's preserved synagogues, furnished with pillaged cult objects from all over Europe, which were to serve as a postwar 'Museum of the Defunct Jewish Race'.

After Liberation there were 44,000 Jews — survivors, demobbed soldiers, returnees — in Czechoslovakia. They represented a tragically shrunken communal remnant, but Italian Jewry, for instance, had never exceeded that number. Here, however, no real revival took place — due primarily to the Communist takeover in 1948. Many Jews left then, and others in 1968. Even so various local communities re-established themselves, memorials were erected and outstanding books and films evoking the Holocaust — *The Terezin Requiem*, *The Shop in the High Street* — produced. In the long term, though, Czech Stalinism bids fair to complete the process of turning Jewish Prague into a museum for a — locally — defunct people which the Nazis had so largely accomplished.

As a limb of the Jewish people not doomed to atrophy it behoves us to keep the memory of the uniquely diverse and talented Czech community — which gave rise to Rabbi Loew and Mordecai Meisl in the Sixteenth Century, and to Freud, Mahler and Kafka in the Nineteenth — ever-green. The present issue in part subserves this aim.

JEWISH BOOK WEEK 1989

The Programme

Monday 6 March, 8.15 pm, Professor Robert Alter: The Literary Aspects of the Bible; Tuesday 7 March, 6 pm, playwright Nissim Aloni in English — 8.30 pm in Hebrew; Wednesday 8, 8 pm, Michael Freedland in Conversation, Thursday 9, 8 pm, Professor Irving L. Horowitz: Social Science and the Holocaust; Monday 13, 8 pm, Professor Edward Ullendorf: Reminiscences of Jerusalem and Ethiopia. (All these events take place at Woburn House, Upper Woburn Square, WC1 — entrance in Tavistock Square.) On Sunday 12, at 8.15 pm, Charles Spencer speaks on The Jewishness of Jewish Art at the West End Great Synagogue, 21 Dean Street, W1.

KAFKA AND PRAGUE

'Ja, was is'n des überhaupt, 'ne Synagoge?' We stood to one side, our backs against the wall, as a group of large and ill-prepared pupils on a visit from nearby East Germany brushed past us and down the steps.

The steps led into the Altneuschul in Prague, the oldest synagogue in Central Europe.

Later on, we came across the school party again, this time in the Klausen Synagogue, which backs on to the famous Jewish Cemetery. This splendid baroque building has now been restored as part of the State Jewish Museum in Prague, and here the young East Germans, not yet, or so it seemed, quite captivated by their visit, were given a talk by the Czech guide. We listened. We heard what the Nazis had done to Socialists, and Czechs, and Jews. We learned how the history of the Jewish community was understood as that of one of the religious groups comprising the population of the Czech Lands, and not as the history of members of the so-called 'Jewish nation of the world, artificially constructed by the ideologists of Zionism'. And so it went on, as we came to feel ever more like unseen exhibits of an extinct species during visiting time.

It was a strange sensation. If only, we thought, we could talk to these young people for just a few moments, tell them a little about the Jews and their history and beliefs. But just as strong was the sense of dislocation, of knowing we were there, yet unable to make our presence felt as living proof that the Jews had, after all, survived extinction.

The party left, no doubt looking forward to lunch.

How interesting it was that this experience should have taken place in Prague, the home for almost all of his life, of Franz Kafka. His central theme revolves around the emotional and spiritual isolation of the individual, his estrangement from the sensory world about him, from family, tradition, community, from truth itself. Fortunately for us, the consequences of our brief, if close, encounter with isolation remain the subject of a harmless anecdote, whereas for Kafka's heroes they are disturbing, terrifying, even terminal.

Franz Kafka was born in Prague in 1883, the son of a self-made and tyrannical merchant father. The family name had in fact only been adopted in 1788, after Emperor Joseph II had decreed that Jewish fathers must have new names. For centuries, Jews had been known only by their Hebrew names (Akiva ben Eleasar), or by their town of origin (Jakob aus Prag), or perhaps after the house they lived in (zum Rothen Schild). *Kavka* actually is the Czech for jackdaw.

The Jews of Prague had been officially allowed to live outside the ghetto following Joseph II's *Toleranzpatent* of 1782. By the first half of the 19th century, they were making a substantial economic contribution. As pedlars (or *Pinkeljuden*) they had an unequalled network of contacts. Hebrew and Yiddish were forbidden in commercial use, and this encouraged the adoption of German among the emancipated Jews, and they quickly established themselves

especially in fields of intellectual and artistic activity.

Yet they could not feel completely at home. Germans saw them as Jews, Czechs saw them as Germans, and thus they were at the same time members of two minorities, and criticised on both counts. Where precisely did the young Franz Kafka belong? Certainly not in the world of his Yiddish-speaking grandfather Jakob, the village community *shochet* (ritual slaughterer). But nor in the contemporary world of fragile assimilation. He resembled perhaps that unusual animal in the tale *Eine Kreuzung*, half cat and half lamb which 'may have had numberless in-laws on earth, but perhaps not a single close blood relation'. Elsewhere he wrote of a man — perhaps himself — as being 'outside our nation, outside our human kind'.

There seems a sort of retrospective irony in the fact that for 14 years, until he had to retire in 1922, Kafka, whose characters are tormented by uncertainty and insecurity, should have been an official of the Workers Accident Insurance at Prague. For it was not only through his Jewish background that he was an outsider (it is notable that none of his characters is identified as a Jew), but also in his emotional life. He was twice engaged to be married to a girl from Berlin, writing to her in 1916: *Ich kann nicht glauben, dass in irgendeinem Märchen um irgendeine Frau mehr und verzweifelter gekämpft worden ist als um dich in mir*. Towards the end of his life, while suffering from tuberculosis he was cared for by a Jewish girl from Poland, Dora Dymant. At this period he also studied Hebrew and Talmud at the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin, having at other times become quite involved with Zionism, through his close friend Max Brod, and interested in Chassidism, under the influence of the writer Jiri Langer.

The searching that this may represent, the spiritual longing of man for God, are reflected in Kafka's stories. Their unreal, nightmarish quality, their siting in surroundings that are at the same time familiar and eerie, beckoning and frightening, their characters who are driven on towards some unidentified promise of future safety, all this as well as his gift for transmitting it in images and prose of timeless appeal, make him an author whose value goes far beyond the plight of Jewish isolation with which he is often associated. There may be 'Jewish' touches — not least the humour which comes out of the most grim situations — but the dilemma of Kafka's heroes is the dilemma of everyman in his quest for reality, for truth.

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THE LETTERS IN THE MOUTH OF THE GOLEM

The Jewish contribution to Czech literature

According to legend, Rabbi Loew's Golem, made of clay in the shape of a human figure, came to life when a piece of parchment inscribed with sacred letters was placed in its mouth.

In the middle of the 19th century the average Jewish family in Bohemia and Moravia had been so poor that youngsters customarily left the parental home after reaching the age of *bar mitzvah* to fend for themselves elsewhere. Within one or two generations the progeny of the lads whom poverty had forced to leave their village homes at an early age had become a sizeable academic and commercial stratum in Prague society. Particularly the young Jews that went up to the Charles University during the Edwardian sunset of the Habsburgs formed an intellectually tremendously alive generation — a spiritually troubled *jeunesse dorée* with fathers whose ambitions oscillated between achieving the titles of *Kommerzialrat* for themselves and that of *Herr Doktor* for their sons.

Social radicalism

It was a society in which bourgeois values coexisted uneasily with bohemian ones. Both Kafka and Werfel Senior strongly disapproved of sons who failed to take their assigned business careers seriously. Orlik, Prague's leading bespoke tailor, would refer to his painter brother Emile's studio as a *workshop* and to his own workroom as an *atelier*.

Traditional Jewish family affection coexisted as ludicrously with social radicalism. Egon Erwin Kisch, the satirical leftist writer who had scored a journalistic coup in the Colonel Redl espionage affair, at the end of the war headed a self-styled Red Guard unit which briefly seized the editorial offices of Vienna's *Neue Freie Presse* on behalf of the Revolution. The first of the bourgeois journalists dislodged at bayonet point was Paul Kisch who, on catching sight of his Bolshie brother, shouted menacingly, 'You wait till *Mamma* in Prague hears of this!'

Jewish literary Prague had no paucity of disparate brothers. The highly assimilated Frantisek Langer (who eventually reached the rank of General in the Czech Army) was a sophisticated playwright with international successes to his credit. His brother, Jiri, moved to Galicia, became a Chassid, and achieved a different kind of fame as author of *The Nine Gates*, a distillation of the chassidic spirit, fit to stand comparison with the best of Buber's work.

Though Jiri Langer's espousal of Chassidism was rather unique, no member of the so-called 'Prague Circle' remained entirely unaffected by his Jewish heritage. It could not be otherwise in a city which had been steeped in Jewish history even before it had been contested by Czechs and Germans. Jewish settlement in Prague goes back a thousand years; the architecture of the *Alt-Neu-Schul* founded 700 years ago, shows the influence of High Gothic; the clock on the venerable Jewish Town Hall has a Hebrew dial on which the hands move anti-clockwise; and the

Maharal's statue stands in front of the New Town Hall.

This accretion of deposits from the Jewish past was transposed into literature in a number of ways: in Oskar Wiener's *Rabbi Loew Ballads*; in Egon Erwin Kisch's *Tales from Seven Ghettos*; in Max Brod's *Reubeni Prince of the Jews* and *The Redemption of Tycho de Brahe*, both historical novels conceived on a grand scale. Max Brod, novelist, critic, composer, philosopher, dramatist, and statesman (he negotiated Jewish minority rights in inter-war Czechoslovakia with President Masaryk), was of course, in addition, the mentor and literary executor of Kafka. And there can be no doubt that his sponsorship of the composer Leo Janacek and his translation of Jaroslav Hasek's *Good Soldier Schwejk* launched these exemplars of Czech culture on their path towards world-wide acclaim.

Brod was but one of a whole host of Jewish mediators who helped to introduce Czech art and thought to the rest of Europe. Friedrich Adler made the classic Czech authors of the 19th century accessible in German, Pavel Eisner did the same for their successors, Camille Hoffman translated Masaryk, whilst Ottokar Fischer translated Goethe's *Faust* into Czech.

Franz Werfel, too, can be counted among the mediators. Even though he left Prague as a young man and spent most of the rest of his life in Vienna, he often used Czech characters as key figures in his later works. The novel *Barbara* or *The Pure in Heart* is a case in point: when the First World War officer Ferdinand, at great personal risk, condones the escape of three prisoners wrongly accused of desertion, he acts according to precepts he had in childhood imbibed from Barbara, his affectionately remembered Czech nannie.

Like Brod's, the work of Werfel is suffused with spiritual and religious significance, though in contrast to the former's ever stronger Jewish commitment, the author of the *Song of Bernadette* moved even closer to Catholicism. Earlier on Werfel had stood in the front rank of the Expressionist Movement, both as a poet and man of the theatre. His *Troyan Women* was seminal for the development of expressionist drama, and his *Mirror Man* ('*Spiegelmensch*') almost typified the genre, with a hero who, by shooting at his reflection in the mirror, released his megalomaniac alter ego.

Werfel's warning

In 1924, the year in which Mussolini tightened his grip on Italy beyond redemption, Werfel published the novel *Verdi*, depicting the great Italian composer as an antipode to Wagner in whose personality the affinity between romanticism and Fascism became manifest.

Exactly ten years later Werfel published *The 40 Days of Musa Dagh*, taking for his subject the Turks' wartime massacre of the Armenians.

After the outbreak of Hitler's War, Werfel distilled a tragi-comedy from his own personal odyssey as a refugee. In *Jacobovský and the Colonel* he celebrated against an ever darkening background the Jewish gift for survival — a gift compounded of adaptability and infinitely resigned humour. In the second act two minor characters — nicknamed *St. Francis* and *The Wandering Jew* — appear on a tandem with which they try to make good their escape from the advancing Nazis. Seeing the incongruous Christian-Jewish pair Jacobovský says, 'I see two opposites who are getting on quite well together'. To which *The Wandering Jew* replies: 'Just let two opposites grow old enough together and they will meet in infinity like parallel lines!'

Werfel's (somewhat older) schoolmate Kafka is the writer who ventured along lines which converge at infinity.

In *The Castle* and *The Trial* Kafka probed most deeply into the human condition — and therefore the Jewish condition — of guiltless guilt. His short story *In the Penal Settlement* is a heart-chilling premonition of the nightmare world of Nazism.

This story centres on a torture machine, a tattooing 'harrow' shuttled on a bed of steel that inscribes the victim's crime on his skin ever more deeply and thus kills him. The officer in charge of the machine describes it thus:

'How quiet he grows at just about the sixth hour! Enlightenment comes even to the most dull-witted. It begins around the eyes. From there it radiates. A moment that might tempt one to get under the harrow with him. Nothing more happens, after that the man only begins to understand the inscription, he purses his mouth as if he were listening. You have seen how difficult it is to decipher the script with one's eyes; but our man deciphers it with his wounds . . .'

Czech Jewry grew quiet not in the sixth hour, but near the end of the millennium of its existence. Kafka's sisters perished at Auschwitz, Milena Jesenska at Ravensbrueck. Kafka's friend, the writer Ernst Weiss, took his life in Paris when the Germans marched in. The 22 year old Jiri Orten was run down by a Wehrmacht vehicle in the streets of Prague, but his poetry was published under fictitious names during the occupation. Young Pavel Friedmann was martyred at Terezin. His poem, *The Butterfly*, has become a gossamer epitaph on a million children's phantom tomb stones.

From the saving remnant who managed to survive there emerged again a number of talented writers who made their mark in post-war Czech and Slovak literature: the novelists Arnost Lustig, Norbert Fryd, Ladislav Grossmann, Emil F. Knieza, Ivan Klima; the poets Dagmar Hilarova, Ludwik Askenazy, Vladimir Kafka, and others.

The plight of the Jews has inspired (if this is the word) a great many non-Jews among contemporary Czech and Slovak writers, writing on Jewish themes. One of them, Ladislav Fuks, in his remarkable novel, *Mr. Theodore Mundstock*, thus describes the fate of the Jews, quoting

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Yehuda Halevy, the medieval Hebrew poet:

'Israel among the nations is like the heart amid the organs of the body. It is the richest in sickness and the richest in health. . . . The sickness of the other organs cause the heart in its tenderness many painful moments, but this is the very reason why these sicknesses are driven off before they can enter the heart and settle there . . .'

RICHARD GRUNBERGER

JEWIS IN THE CZECH ECONOMY

When the industrial revolution spread to Central Europe, Jewish merchants were well informed about progress made in Western Europe. They were in a position to persuade the aristocracy, which they served, that it could maintain its power and standard of living, only if it cooperated in the establishment of industry — or at least provided a protective shield to the emerging Jewish industrial enterprises.

Jewish industrial activity was an important contributing factor to the national awakening of the Czechs and Slovaks. Industrialisation drew people from the villages to cities; it reduced overpopulation on the farms and thus strengthened the economic basis of the Czech bourgeoisie capable of fighting for national statehood.

Jewish entrepreneurs were the first who realised between the wars that, in order to succeed, Czechoslovakia must integrate herself into world economy. They acted accordingly, and, as a result, the depression in Czechoslovakia was less deep than elsewhere in Central Europe. The new markets, which Jewish executives of export industries found in the distant corners of the world, paid off in terms of welfare and national strength of the constituent peoples of Czechoslovakia.

Individual Examples

A Moravian Jew, David Gutmann, in 1840 took specimens of coal to Vienna with the intent of interesting the Rothschilds in developing the coal resources of the Ostrava district, where they already owned the Vitkovice Iron Works. The result was the foundation of the Vitkovice Mining and Iron Works, of which the Rothschilds owned 51, and the Gutmann Brothers 49 per cent.

In 1919, the Ostrava district had a pit-coal output of 6½ million metric tons, out of a national total of 10 million metric tons.

Earlier in Slovakia, a turning point in industrial development came when Baron Albert Rothschild put Siegmund Kornfeld in charge of the Hungarian General Credit Bank in Budapest. His success was of key significance to the development of industry in Slovakia and Ruthenia: in the food sector, the largest flour mill, sugar refinery, chocolate and starch factories; in the chemical industry, the largest explosives and wood distillation works; in textiles, the greatest number of spindles and looms, and the largest cotton thread manufacturing plant, etc.

Even post-1945, after Nazi rule had deprived the country of this sort of entrepreneurial talent, individual Jews — Eugen Loebel, Ota Sik — played a key role in the state-run economy (before falling victim to Stalinist purges).

JEWISH REFUGEES IN LATIN AMERICA

Patrik von Mühlen: *FLUCHTZIEL LATEINAMERIKA. Die deutsche Emigration 1933-45; politische Aktivitäten und soziokulturelle Integration. Bonn, Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1988, DM68.*

Of the approximately half-a-million people who fled from Nazism, some 80,000, mostly German Jews, found a refuge in Latin America. All but a few arrived there penniless, ignorant of language and customs, unused to the climate and the people. Some left again after the War; a small number returned to Germany; all struggled desperately to survive, to regain normality. Their story is the subject of a new study by a German historian whose painstaking research has been put into a 336-page volume which must rank as an important contribution to the literature of Jewish emigration and resettlement.

This book is one in a series published by the Friedrich Ebert Research Institute in Bonn. As the subtitle indicates, it is concerned with the problems of integration into a social, political and cultural environment with which these refugees were almost totally unfamiliar. As a rule, they had arrived on the subcontinent for temporary or permanent shelter only after other preferred destinations had become even more difficult, or impossible, to reach. The majority of them went to four countries: Argentina, Brasil, Chile and Uruguay; but sizeable groups found themselves also in Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Of the Central American states, only Mexico admitted more than a handful. In general, they were quite well received by the local population, notwithstanding the endemic anti-Semitism in countries like Argentina and, to a lesser extent, Brasil. Only Bolivians were consistently unaccommodating. For all, making a new beginning was extremely difficult. Those of them who had learned a trade found their feet rather sooner than the others. In due course, talent for commercial enterprise opened doors to business and the manufacturing and service industries. Professional careers which required more advanced linguistic attainments — secondary and tertiary teaching, journalism — were considerably more difficult to pursue, as were other intellectual fields, such as music and the arts, for which some degree of cultural integration was the key. Some agricultural projects were undertaken but most of these ended in failure.

The author discusses in particular detail the refugee situation in Argentina, Mexico, Brasil and Bolivia, mainly, it must be said, with reference to the political activities of anti-Nazi émigrés rather than the largely apolitical Jewish immigrants. Argentina took much the greatest number of the latter. While they found some tenuous points of contact in certain sections of the numerically strong German-speaking colony in Buenos Aires, they were, as a group, always more dangerously exposed than others to the country's political storms. Mexico, on the other hand, proved to be a much friendlier haven for a rather smaller number of refugees, especially if they had left-wing political affiliations. Brasil, like

Argentina a target for Nazi propaganda and subversion, suppressed its quasi-Fascist elements and eventually entered the war on the side of the Allies. Bolivia, then one of the poorest and most backward, as well as politically least stable countries of South America, was also the most difficult from the refugees' point of view. Here, too, there was a significant colony of largely pro-Nazi *Auslandsdeutsche* and a ruling clique friendly towards the fascist dictatorships; the attitude of successive governments was at best ambivalent towards the 5,000 to 7,000 refugees in the country, and only the imminent defeat of the Third Reich brought some relief from prejudice and its consequences. As far as other Latin American countries are concerned, it appears that Chile was, at that time, reasonably democratic and hence not inhospitable, although its established German colony tended to be hostile. Uruguay's democratic traditions, its pleasant climate and relatively high living standards made it a much more welcoming place of refuge than its neighbour across the River Plate. Cuba tended to be a kind of 'transit camp' pending admission to other destinations, and Ecuador and Colombia were equitable in their treatment of the immigrants.

The book contains a wealth of material, much of it no doubt new, at any rate to most readers of this journal. Some of the narrative will be evocative of our own experiences. In any event, it is a valuable piece of writing which should, as the author suggest in his preface, lead to further work in the context of what German academics call *'Exilforschung'*, but perhaps with rather less emphasis on documenting the existence in exile of 'another Germany' and more on recording the history of Jewish refugees in Central and South America. In the meantime, a translation into English would ensure a deservedly wider circulation for a scholarly but highly readable book.

DAVID MAIER

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associates

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David Maier reports on Anglo-Jewish institutions

THE STERNBERG CENTRE

Set in its own handsome grounds just off London's North Circular Road, stands The Manor House, a notable landmark in the heartland of much of the capital's Jewish population. Apart from its original 18th century function it has been a convent school. But since 1981 it has been the home of the Sternberg Centre for Judaism, a unique establishment which houses not one but a whole series of community services and a number of independent Jewish organisations, each of importance and influence in its own right. But, as Rabbi Tony Bayfield puts it, 'they dovetail into the totality by their interactions', so that, between them, these 'key institutions' cover a plethora of religious, educational, artistic and social activities.

The idea for such an ambitious project was born at the time of the foundation of Akiva School, the first Progressive Jewish primary school in this country, with a novel approach to the teaching, in combination, of Jewish knowledge and secular subjects to five to eleven year-olds. One of the sponsor organisations, the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, decided to move its administrative base to The Manor House, alongside the school, while the other, the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, although not physically part of the Centre complex, is strongly associated with the school itself, as well as with several other Manor House activities. Among these, at the opposite end of the educational spectrum, is the Leo Baeck College, an institution of higher learning which has become the leading rabbinical training establishment for those British and other English-speaking communities whose needs are best served by a ministry motivated by a high standard of traditional Jewish learning supported by appropriate general academic achievement and up-to-date pastoral skills, along the lines, in many ways, of the former Berlin *Hochschule für Jüdische Wissenschaft*. Unrelated to the other religious bodies operating at Manor House is the independent New North London Synagogue which follows the 'conservative' *Masorti* trend of observance and worship.

Education is, of course, a most important field of endeavour at The Manor House. While its Centre for Jewish Education Trust is primarily intended to serve Progressive Judaism, its resources are available to the community as a whole. Among the services on offer are basic and advanced teacher training for kindergarten and religion classes (certified by Leo Baeck College), the provision and development of up-to-date teaching materials and a fully-fledged educational consultancy. There are two additional resource centres, one in Central London and the other in Manchester, and contact is maintained with synagogues and other user organisations. One of the most significant results of the Centre's work is the recently published *Shoah Programme (Helping Children Learn About the Shoah)*. Devised by the educational psychologist Batsheva Dagan,

herself an Auschwitz survivor, this is a thoughtfully prepared and carefully graduated study course designed to give children of all age groups an insight into the Holocaust by integrating its teaching into the normal syllabus of Jewish schools and treating it, not as a purely historical event, but, in the words of Rabbi Bayfield, 'as part of the eternal present of the Jewish people' to be taught 'as the Exodus and Sinai are taught — at every age, in every year.' The teaching/learning manual and workbook which can be provided is an impressive collection of instruction, essays, original stories (in rhyme and prose), and pictures, with an admirably comprehensive bibliography for both children and adults.

The Holocaust is remembered in other ways, too. There is a memorial in the grounds as a permanent reminder to all who work or study at The Manor House, or who come as visitors. And plans are in hand to continue the *Remembering for the Future* project, initiated in 1988, by the establishment of club facilities for survivors. The names linked with this new task which the Sternberg Centre has undertaken are those of Rabbi Hugo Gryn and Dr. Eugene Heimler, both concentration camp survivors. Dr. Heimler is a Hungarian-born expert in psychiatric social work, who has developed a method of therapeutic counselling designed to help people troubled by employment or relationship problems. A new Jewish Stress Advisory Service is part of the consultancy work performed by the Heimler Foundation at Manor House. The Centre itself offers professional training for counselling skills

to be applied in carrying out caring tasks in the social welfare sector. Its Outreach Programme currently runs one-year group courses and individual short courses, both aimed at volunteers intending to be active in this important field. Private counselling is also offered, in addition to other facilities, by the Students At The Manor House group.

Jewish social history is preserved by the excellent London Museum of Jewish Life. Here memorabilia of the Jewish population in Britain, particularly the East End of London, are on permanent display. There are also temporary exhibitions dealing with specific themes, such as the recent collection of images and text illustrating the refugee experience of Hilde Schindler who reached this country from Germany just two weeks before the outbreak of war. According to Anne Kershen, the Museum's Curator, its activities may, however, suffer unless the withdrawal of some of its public funding can be replaced soon by voluntary contributions from the Jewish community whose cultural needs it endeavours to meet. Similar interests are served by the Manor House Society, a volunteer-run, professionally advised body promoting concerts and recitals, the presentation of poetry readings, dramatic performances, public lectures and debates. It also publishes a quarterly journal, *Manna*, which maintains a high standard of literary competence without being unreasonably highbrow. It is interesting to note that much of the input to the Society has a distinctly Continental flavour, reflecting the background of quite a number of its supporters who were brought up in a tradition of valuing intellectual endeavour for its own sake.

Indeed, Rabbi Bayfield sees the Centre as a whole as a successor to the places of Jewish scholarship and learning which are now no longer in existence, giving them, and the hopes and feelings which inspired them, a rebirth and a new future.

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ANNIVERSARY

Just over 40 years ago Alfred Kerr died at Hamburg while on his first postwar visit to Germany. Between the 1900s and the Nazi takeover Kerr (born Alfred Kempner in Breslau) was probably the most influential critic in Germany, whose judgment could make or mar an actor's career. His experiments with the German language prompted Karl Kraus, a lifelong adversary, to accuse Kerr of writing a form of gobbledygook that merited the designation *Desperanto*.

LIFE SENTENCE

82-year old Wilhelm Wagner, a former Nazi police sergeant, has received a life sentence at Nuremberg for the wartime murder of Polish Jews. Wagner who had assisted in the roundup of the 8000 Jews of Wieliczka was reinstated in the West German police after the war and served in the force until his retirement in 1966. He was first indicted in 1977 but managed to delay the trial by pleading ill-health and making use of the death of several eye-witnesses in the intervening period.

SURVIVAL IN THE SEWERS

So few of the Jews of Europe who fell into the clutches of the Nazis escaped with their lives that the sight of four seemingly well-balanced and well-spoken people at the onset of old age was like a light in the dark. And that — 'Light in the Dark' — served as the title of Robert Marshall's *Timewatch* programme on BBC, 2 January 11.

The four, now in their 60s and 70s were Mundeck and Klara Margulies, Christina Keren and Paulina Chiger. They now live in the British Isles, Israel and the United States . . . i.e. they share the lives led by those of us who got out before the Continental trap closed, but they had a tale to unfold which puts into the shade all legends and tales of escape and deliverance ever told. From the four we heard the story of their escape from the Lvov Ghetto, in simple, almost mundane words. Only once were tears shed . . . when the heroic Mundeck said Kaddish for the slain. The term heroic is not too grandiose, for he had left the hiding place and got himself into Janowska concentration camp (used as a staging post in the extermination process) in order to rescue some friends and relatives. That he failed in that is not to be wondered at; that he got back to his little group to play his further part in their survival would have won him the Victoria Cross in the Forces.

How did they find a hiding place, and how did they survive? When the SS were clearing and torching the ghetto into which the well-assimilated Jewish population of Lvov (Lemberg) had been forced as soon as the German Army occupied it, the inhabitants of one house went down a previously dug tunnel direct into the town's sewers. Practically no other attempt at rescue succeeded; when mothers saw what was done to their children they jumped to their deaths *en masse*.

In the sewers the little group underwent such horrors as would have wrecked the resistance of a trained soldier. But, children included, they — learning 'to cry inwardly' so as not to be heard by the Gestapo hunters — endured fourteen months of stench, disease, constant cramped darkness, rats, cold, thirst and fear of discovery. And above all, hunger.

They would have starved had it not been for a small group of Catholic Polish sewer workers who brought them food. One is glad to be able to report this, for in *Shoah*, that great film epic of the Holocaust, the Polish population near the death camps were shown in a poor light.

The *Timewatch* survivors paid unstinting tribute to a man who deserves to be called a saint: Leopold Socha, who first aided their escape into the sewers, then kept them fed. This was more than difficult. The Poles themselves were under terrible Nazi oppression. Food was scarce and severely rationed. The fugitives initially had some money with which to pay for their food. When money ran out, Leopold Socha paid for it himself. It must be borne in mind that Poles were severely punished, even executed, for giving any help to Jews.

After a little while Socha found a fairly dry, slightly more roomy, corner for his charges. 'It was like Paradise', they said. When the Nazis made him lead them through the sewers in their search for escapers he misled them bravely. The Red Army eventually liberated the fugitives.

In Robert Marshall's film *Mundeck Margulies* traversed the sewers of Lvov once more, this time accoutred in crash helmet and high boots, and went through the traumatic events with astounding agility and good humour. He had praise for the Soviet authorities, adding the criticism that the Janowska concentration camp, still looking its old self, was being used as a prison.

Next day the BBC, laudably, followed up *Timewatch* with an interview with Robert Marshall and Mundeck Margulies on its mid-morning 'Open Air' programme. Marshall was challenged as to the advisability of going on

probing into such traumatic events. His reply: only thus can an authentic and never-to-be-forgotten record of the crime of all times be established. He also provided evidence of how awful even a few hours in the sewers were — even under the relative 'luxury' conditions he experienced.

People phoned in to the programme, movingly expressing feelings of brotherhood for their surviving Jewish fellow humans. A Polish lady inquired into what happened to Leopold Socha and family.

Mundeck was able to tell her that the survivors helped Socha and his family all they could. Unhappily, that man who had a better claim to sainthood than many others, was killed in a traffic accident in 1962. His name is recorded, at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

JOHN ROSSALL

TOWNS REMEMBER 'THEIR JEWS'

A number of German towns are publishing histories of their Jewish communities, among them my birthplace, Offenbach am Main. I have not been back since my forced departure in 1936, and even now I have no wish to return to what was home long ago.

The Municipal Council recently sent me their book *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Offenbach am Main*, written by Klaus Werner (who became so interested in the subject whilst studying that he chose it as his thesis). He had previously asked me, as well as other former residents, if we were willing to answer some questions. My first reaction had been a very definite 'no' — but on consideration, and after talking to various friends, I decided to co-operate.

My immediate impulse on opening the book was curiosity to know what there could possibly be to write about. I leafed through the pages and whenever I saw a familiar name, was jolted into exclaiming, 'Oh him(!), or her (!)' and when I saw names of my fellow pupils from the Jewish school who had not returned from concentration camps, I felt sick.

I was 14 years old when I left with my parents and, as the youngest of 3 children, extremely immature (having been protected carefully from all that had gone on previously). My last two years had been spent at the Jewish School where all I can remember is thoroughly enjoying the lack of

discipline, the inexperience of some of the teachers and not taking learning very seriously. Therefore my personal memories of Offenbach were really happy and surprisingly carefree up to the moment of departure which jolted me into the reality of the situation.

Today, reading in German has become an onerous task. I therefore admit that my perusal of the book was fleeting and incomplete — which may show a lack of interest in the subject.

What is the purpose of this publication? For me, for us, a reminder of what could have been, or what we left behind? A reminder, or realisation that the sort of Judaism we lived as a family was not something of which I can now feel proud — a sort of Judaised Humanism. For the *Mitbuerger* of Offenbach a 'cleansing of their souls', a wiping clean of a slate, or a look in sorrow at what they have lost?

HILDE DAVIS

* * *

The Municipality of Karlsruhe extended a week's invitation to all former Jewish residents in 1988. The response was so great — the Mayor's office received 800 letters of acceptance — that the visit had to be staggered. (One batch of visitors was accommodated in October, and another in November).

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AT THE WIENER LIBRARY, LONDON

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SPEAKING THE UNSPEAKABLE

Anton Gill: *The JOURNEY BACK FROM HELL* (Grafton Books, London, 1988, £14.95).

'Conversations with Concentration Camp Survivors.' The bland subtitle of Anton Gill's book perfectly illustrates its potent mixture of horror and *Sachlichkeit*.

Within the camps . . . numbers were subjected to corporal punishment for theft, usually of mangels or potatoes. Some were hanged for this, and their fellow prisoners compelled to watch the executions. Primitivisation . . . could lead to animalistic fights during the distribution of food and led to prisoners licking the earth . . . cannibalism was not known . . . it was unusual . . . because there was virtually no flesh on the bones of those who died, and no means of cutting and shearing off what there was . . .

Men and women having lived through the unlivable here speak the unspeakable. Mr. Gill is not himself a camp survivor. He is not a refugee. Not even a Jew. Which may have helped him summon up the courage, objectivity and patience to write this indispensable book.

They (the Jewish community in NW London) took the attitude that if you . . . didn't go to *shul*, you weren't one of them at all . . . Nobody lifted a finger. No rabbi even paid us a visit . . . It was probably about 1972 that I went to see my doctor and told her about my problem for the first time. She said 'Oh, I didn't realise', and gave me some Valium. . . .

The Allies Knew

He has not only talked to 120 concentration camp victims scattered all over the world; he has taken the trouble to retell — coldly and objectively — this history of the camps, in which in the course of 5 years, 5,978,000 Jews were systematically and brutally murdered by — and in the name of — a highly civilised people. Nor does Mr. Gill gloss over the suffering of non-Jews, including German dissidents, in the Third Reich's private killing orgy. Nor does he ignore the fact that the Allies knew what was going on, but evidently lacked the imagination to visualise it.

One of my deepest impressions was of the children (in Theresienstadt) who gave a concert of songs from *Carmen*. The day after the performance the children were deported to Auschwitz. They were looking forward to the railway trip and sang a chorus while they marched to the station, not knowing that it was their last song.

Each of Mr. Gill's interviews takes 'the survivors through his or her life, from pre-war days and family background, through the camps to the present. . . . Some former KZ inmates were still returning from behind the Iron Curtain as late as the early sixties. . . .' Mr. Gill here breaks several taboos, among them the 'Don't tell me, it's too horrible, I don't want to hear it' defence, which confronted so many survivors for the rest of their shattered lives.

Whatever you have now will be a bonus — everything you've had since 1945 has been a bonus . . . I feel proud to be a survivor. I have achieved something that not many people have achieved. We are a kind of elite . . . I belong to an exclusive club . . . I would like to see everyone who was involved in running the camps exterminated. They didn't have to follow those orders. . . .

Mr. Gill also managed to get some people to talk who for decades could not bring themselves to relate their experiences, who 'wanted to blend into the crowd, to be unnoticed, to carry on as if nothing had happened'.

Kitty's instinct was to visit Germany after the war and visit it often. It was a bit like forcing yourself to stroke the Alsatian that's just bitten you in order not to get traumatised for life . . . I wanted to go back and show them I was still around: Look, you tried to get rid of me, but here we are, alive and well-fed and with children. That was very satisfying.

Indignities

The author offers us a shortlist of attributes essential for camp survival: 'A sense of humour, adaptability . . . The ability to keep your head down . . . to maintain your own sense of dignity and decency'. But yet another unpalatable truth is not shirked: 'There were also people who survived at any price — at the price of other inmates' lives'. And there are the post-war indignities:

I refused to appear (as a witness) at a West German court after that. Witnesses . . . could be tied in knots by defence counsels . . . One of the worst examples of that kind was at the Majdanek trial, where the witnesses were made to feel like the accused.

This is not a book which can be decently 'criticised'. It speaks for itself. I am proud to be a member of a jury which gave Mr. Gill the 1988 H. H. Wingate award for a book we should all read, or try to read — especially at a time, when, even in this country, which harboured so many of us, many people are currently exploiting tragic events in Israel to sink once again into the apparently liberating embrace of casual anti-semitism.

Every day in the KZ is imprinted on one's mind forever . . . It's indelible. If I live to be 90, I know it won't have faded at all . . . There was a children's block at Flossenbürg . . . there were little children there, three years old. Hearing their cries from outside was bad enough: seeing their condition was something that haunts me still. It's so difficult to communicate what it was like to someone who wasn't there. . . .

'For myself', the author ends his book, 'I mourn those who died, and I do not forget those

who were broken for ever by the experience of the KZ. But I also remember, those ordinary human beings who went through the ice and fire of hell and came out with their souls'.

ROBERT MULLER

Robert Muller is a distinguished critic, writer and adaptor (particularly of classic novels — by Zola, Heinrich Mann, Schnitzler, etc — for TV). He is married to Billie Whitelaw.

P FOR POLITICS — AND PARADOX

Politisch Lied, wrote Goethe, *ist ein garstig Lied*. He was right — but only up to a point. Politics is a nasty business, but it can also produce incidental amusement. There is, for instance, the Maggie-is-the-only-man in British-politics quip, probably re-cycled from the Israeli proto-type regarding Golda Meir.

Of course political sophisticates regale each other with different types of jokes.

Washington table-talk: 'What's the difference between Darnford Quayle and Jane Fonda? 'Jane Fonda has been to Vietnam'.

London table-talk: 'The trouble with political jokes is they sometimes get elected'.

Tel Aviv table-talk: 'Why did Begin love his wife so much? 'Because she looked like Jabotinsky'.

Every so often, though, witticisms pale into insignificance beside the real thing. By the real thing I mean the natural by-product of politics, where the name of the game is paradox.

Consider: During the British debate over the Common Market entry the Labour Left (Anthem: *The Internationale*) rooted for Little England, and the Tories (Anthem: *Rule Britannia*) for Europe.

Consider: The leaders of East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania, themselves post-war Soviet exports to their own countries, won't let the Soviet Union export *Glasnost* to them.

Consider: The Austrian Freedom Party (aim: another Anschluss) wants the German-born Burgtheater director who staged the anti-Nazi play *Heldenplatz* (Heroes' Square), sacked as a 'foreigner'.

Consider: In Israel Likud and ultra-Orthodoxy were engaged in coalition talks. The Likud's 'Fortress Israel' approach necessitates maximum military preparedness in perpetuity. Had the Orthodox — who have secured exemption from military service for *Yeshiva* students — obtained the Education portfolio they would have endeavoured to divert more 18-year olds from the army and into the *Yeshivot*.

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COUNTERFEIT WORDS

Since words are coins used in exchanging ideas any debasement of the coinage of words devalues ideas and plays havoc with the 'mental economy'. A century after Jacob Burckhardt's warnings against *terribles simplificateurs* we are surrounded on all sides by peddlers of false analogies: in the House an Opposition MP shouts *Sieg Heil* during a debate on legally conducted extradition proceedings; a group of anti-Tory intellectuals bestow the name *Samizdat* (the term for publications produced at grave risk in the Soviet underground) on their magazine; a Liverpool theatre company stages *Fear and Terror in the Third Term* — a *Wortspiel* on Brecht's 'Fear and Terror in the Third Reich' aimed at Mrs. Thatcher's third term.

But the debasers of the political vocabulary are not all found on one side of the political divide. William Waldegrave, who inherited the junior ministerial post — and the hackle-raising style — of Mr. Mellor at the Foreign Office, uses the term 'reformed terrorists' about the founders of the State of Israel. David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weitzmann were certainly not 'reformed terrorists'. He likewise lumps Premier Shamir's breeding ground, the Irgun and Stern Gang, together with the PLO as terrorist organisations. Leaving aside the fact that Shamir's terrorism was prompted by the death throes of European Jewry — with which the plight of the Palestinians bears scant comparison — Irgun etc essentially attacked military targets; the PLO, by contrast, did not merely target civilians, but specialised in attacks on children's compounds in kibbutzim and crowded airport lounges. As member of an administration pledged to fight inflation Mr. Waldegrave should attach exact values — i.e. connotations — to such words as 'terrorist', and abstain from debasing the currency of language.

CLERICAL ERROR

(A *ma'asse*)

A small English-speaking community needed a Rabbi. They advertised in the usual way, and in due course received an application. The young Rabbi in question had not held a post before, but he had studied at a Yeshiva where a greatly respected Rav taught, one with whom the chairman of the Synagogue claimed acquaintance. '*Er hat gegessen bei mir teig*' — he used to boast, which simply meant that the learned man had once been a guest at the rich man's table.

The chairman got his secretary, the one he employed in his prosperous business, to trace the Rebbe at his Yeshiva and telephoned to ask him about the applicant. The Rebbe listened carefully to the enquiry and then fell silent. In fact, he took such a long time that the impatient chairman asked him once or twice whether he was still there. 'Yes, yes' he said, 'be patient. I am thinking.' When he had thought sufficiently the Rebbe commented; 'That young man' he said 'could be described as being like Moses, like Shakespeare and like God.' After that the Rebbe excused himself and put down the phone.

The chairman was ecstatic. No candidate had ever had such a recommendation from his

teacher. Haste was made to invite the young man to officiate at a convenient Sabbath service, to preach the sermon and engage in some learned discussion and disputation.

When the candidate finally came amid great expectations and with the strongest recommendation from the chairman, his performance was quite appalling. It was so bad that even people who disliked the chairman, and there were many of those, felt sorry for him in his extreme embarrassment.

As soon as Shabbat was over, the chairman telephoned the Rebbe. He did not even wait for the next morning to reach him in his office at the Yeshiva, but got him at his home in the evening. 'Rebbe,' he demanded, 'did you tell me our candidate was like Moses, like Shakespeare and like God?' 'Yes,' the learned Rebbe said, 'I did say something like that.' 'But,' spluttered the chairman, 'he was terrible, terrible beyond belief! Nu, what do you say, Rebbe?' The Rebbe cleared his throat. 'To tell you the truth,' he said 'I am not surprised.' 'Not surprised!' the chairman shrieked, 'then why did you say he was like Moses, like Shakespeare and like God?'

'Ah,' the Rebbe explained, 'you did not think carefully enough about my statement. You see, Moses could not speak properly, neither can your candidate, Shakespeare knew no Hebrew, neither does he.' The chairman was furious, 'and God, he demanded, what about God?' 'Think about it,' the Rebbe said reasonably, 'God is *nicht kain mensh* and neither is your candidate.'

MANFRED LANDAU

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Thursday 2nd	Sheila & Daphne Entertain With Songs & Duet
Monday 6th	Peter Howard Sings For You
Tuesday 7th	Gerald Benson Entertains At The Piano
Wednesday 8th	'Music For All Tastes' — Geoffrey Whitworth & Amanda van Lob
Thursday 9th	Annette Saville Plays Well-Known Classical Music
Monday 13th	(a) 'Nursing & Caring' — Irene White (b) Outing to Concert
Tuesday 14th	Irene & Lena Entertain With Operetta and Songs From The Shows
Wednesday 15th	'Naughty But Nice — Cooking Demonstration' — Eric Ruschin
Thursday 16th	Wembley Follies
Monday 20th	'Music For A Spring Afternoon' — Maurice Peckman
Tuesday 21st	Rita & Jack — The Singing Duo
Wednesday 22nd	'Plain & Pearl Entertain' — Larry Barnes & Maggie Stables
Thursday 23rd	'A Song For Everyone' — Hazel Thomas
Monday 27th	CLOSED
Tuesday 28th	Musical Entertainment With Helen & Dora
Wednesday 29th	'Your Luck Cycles By The Stars' — Raymond Irons
Thursday 30th	'My Job — Other People's Holiday' — Elsa Behrens

APRIL

Monday 3rd	'Music By The Masters' — Jonathan Cobb — Concert Pianist
Tuesday 4th	Cantor Stephen Robins Entertains With Stephen Glass At The Piano
Wednesday 5th	Shirley & Rose Entertain You All
Thursday 6th	'A Pageant of Costumes & Songs with full Audience Participation' — Carolyn James
Monday 10th	Marion & Max Entertain With Freda At The Piano
Tuesday 11th	Jack Marks, Lilian Green & Rosa Butwith Entertain
Wednesday 12th	'Celia & Eve — Four Hands In Harmony'
Thursday 13th	'Faith Healing' — Jack Donn

KATIA GOULD 70

Katia Gould's slight frame — and unassuming manner — disguise the fact that she is one of the pillars of the AJR edifice. Czech-born, and studying in England when the Nazis occupied Sudetenland, she subsequently married Erich Gould (Ete Goldberg), a popular member of the early refugee community and for many years a member of the AJR Board. Post-war, alongside raising a family, she worked as a literary agent — a calling she still pursues part-time. Since being widowed in the early 1970s she has discharged a whole range of voluntary functions for the Association. Currently she serves on the Executive, deputises for the Administrator, interviews applicants for sheltered accommodation, and chairs the Eleanor Rathbone House Committee; in addition she proof-reads every issue of *AJR Information*. We wish Katia many more years of fruitful activity.

APPEALS DIRECTOR

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TWO SISTER PUBLICATIONS

While *AJR Information* endeavours to appeal to — and elicit contributions from — the entire Association membership, the two extremes of the age range have, to some extent, gone 'solo'.

Some of our most senior members are involved in bringing out the bi-annual *C.B.F. Residents' Magazine*. The December 1988 issue of that quite unique publication has a rich diversity of contents: news from the various Homes, reports of visits — to the Heart of Israel Exhibition, etc. — and other activities, including lectures, the sayings of religious sages and philosophers, poems, health advice, recipes, jokes, etc. While the text is of a consistently high standard, special praise is due to the art work — from the cover design to the various reproductions on the inside pages.

The February issue of the *ACJR Newsletter* appropriately — the acronym stands for Association of Children of Jewish Refugees — sports a more modernistic cover. Since the young are particularly mobile it also carries reports on foreign trips — one to Be'it She'an, Israel, and the other to 'Jewish' Amsterdam. (The illustration for the letter is a skilfully reproduced lithograph of Anne Frank's house.)

We wish both our senior and junior sister publications every success.

SECOND SEDER WITH ARNOLD HORWELL

On Thursday, 20th April, at 6.30 p.m., Dr. Arnold Horwell will again conduct the Second Seder for the AJR Club and the AJR Day Centre. It will be held at 15 Cleve Road, N.W.6. It will finish by 9.45. The charge for dinner, incl. wine, will be £9.50 for members, £10.50 for non-members.

Please book early and not later than 30th March, enclosing cheques payable to the AJR Club. Full refunds will be made for cancellations received by 4th April.

AJR CLUB NEWS

Sunday, 12th March, 3.30 pm

Piano Recital
by Jonathan Cobb
Entrance fee: 50p incl. tea

The AJR Club at 15 Cleve Road is open on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 to 6 pm for members to meet and talk to their friends or play cards, scrabble or chess. Tea and light suppers are served by volunteers (tea only on Sundays). Guests are welcome. The membership fee is £4 p.a.

There is live entertainment one Sunday a month followed by tea. Video films can be Road notice board). On Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2, Club members may attend the Day Centre entertainment.

ART NOTES

The burgeoning prices of good art have been making it more and more difficult for the national art institutions to keep their collections up-to-date. However, to help in the enlargement and improvement of the national collections, the National Art Collections Fund was established early this century. Sothebys, the auctioneers, have recently held an exhibition Monet to Freud to show works by Auerbach, Bomberg, Epstein, Freud, Gertler, Kitaj and Kokoschka.

The superb Leonardo exhibition at the Hayward continues until 16 April: the same gallery simultaneously hosts another exhibition: *La France, Images of Woman and Ideas of Nation 1789-1989*.

At the Goethe Institute (until 20 April) there is an exhibition of work by John Heartfield (1891-1968) which was previously shown at the Deutsche Werkbund Archiv, Berlin. Heartfield (Helmut Franz Josef Herzfeld), brother of Wieland Herzfelde, the Communist publisher who recently died in Berlin aged 93, was himself born in Berlin, son of the Socialist writer Franz Herzfeld. Heartfield — he changed his name in 1916 as a political protest — was a member of KPD and fled to Prague in 1933. He came to England in 1938. Very active in the politico-artistic field during the war, Heartfield was offered a professorship in East Berlin in 1947/8, but was unable to accept because of ill-health. In 1950 he returned to East Germany with his wife and lived in Leipzig, collaborating with his brother on many projects. He died in 1968 after having received an honorary professorship. Heartfield who worked with his brother in founding the Malik Verlag was well-known for his monotypes, some of which are shown in the present exhibition.

Annely Juda is showing the work of a Manchester-born abstract painter Malcolm Hughes (until 4 March), and also paintings and drawings by an Irish artist Ciaran Lennon who has just had a very successful exhibition in Copenhagen.

The Royal Academy's major exhibition *Italian Art in the 20th Century* (until 9 April) should not be missed. Italian art brings to mind the great masters of centuries past, but the present exhibition clearly shows that modern Italy has made an enormous contribution to the artistic heritage of the present century. Incidentally, the exhibition includes works by Modigliani, who is more usually associated with the French *avantgarde* rather than the development of Italian modernism. A superb catalogue, published by the Prestel Verlag, Munich, is available (price £18.90 — £17.00 to Friends of the Royal Academy).

Also at the Royal Academy (until 18 June) is an exhibition of the *Royal Treasures of Sweden 1550-1700*. The exhibition contains some 100 objects including the crown worn by Queen Christina at her coronation in 1650, armour made for King Sigismund August II of Poland and a magnificent collection of French costumes and textiles, including the coronation costume of Charles X first worn at Queen Christina's corona-

tion, as well as the suit worn by King Gustavus Adolphus at his wedding in 1620.

The Saatchi Collection (Boundary Road, NW8) is only open on Fridays and Saturdays (12-6 p.m.), and otherwise by appointment. This enormous bare gallery is now showing the work of four American artists, Jennifer Bartlett, Elizabeth Murray, Eric Fischl and Susan Rothenberg, all living and working in New York.

From painting to pottery and the William De Morgan exhibition at the Victoria and Albert (until 18 June). De Morgan started by designing stained glass for William Morris, but by accident discovered the ancient Islamic technique of producing lustrous metallic glazes. He switched to pottery and established his first factory in Chelsea in 1872, producing decorative tiles, dishes, bowls, vases, etc. In 1907 he retired and embarked on a more lucrative career as a novelist.

The Annual exhibition of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours is at the Mall Galleries (until 4 April). Over 600 paintings will be exhibited (from the 2,000 submitted), ranging from abstracts to representational art and figure studies.

The Ben Uri will be showing a selection from its permanent collection in March, including several works that have been on loan to galleries at home and overseas. Also on show will be a beautiful oil painting by Else Meidner recently donated to the Society. During the course of the exhibition a lecture on Jewish art will be given by Charles Spencer in association with Jewish Book Week.

ALICE SCHWAB



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SB's Column

An Opera 'Grusical'? Of the many operas written by Eugen d'Albert at the beginning of this century, *Tiefland* seems to be the only one still performed. Quite an enterprise therefore that the Stadttheater in Ulm remembered the composers' *Golem* at the occasion of a memorial celebration 50 years after the destruction of the city's synagogue. The well-known story of the legendary monster written by Meyrink (and made into a silent film with Paul Wegener) has thrilled generations, and has become a Jewish classic. The performance was a daring feat by a German opera house; reviewers did not quite know how to respond to a remarkable, if unusual, evening.

Hans Moser exhibition. An exhibition about the life of Hans Moser, the unique comic (1880-1964) reminding visitors of hundreds of parts played by this very Austrian film- and stage actor, is attracting great interest at Arenberg castle, Salzburg. The exhibition will remain open until Mid-June.

Memories of the heyday of Viennese *Kleinkunst* were revived in London when, at the Austrian Cultural Institute, actor Milo Sperber gave a reading from the dramatic works of Jura Soyfer. Soyfer's *Vineta* and *Weltuntergang* showed gloomiest premonition of political things to come, and created a stir at a time when most Austrians were confident 'that things could never happen here'; Soyfer perished in Buchenwald concentration camp at the early age of 27.

Birthdays. The former prima ballerina of the Vienna State Opera, Riki Raab, recently in the news as re-choreographing the Bayer ballet *Puppenfee* celebrated her 90th birthday. Hans Hotter, world-famous bass baritone, called 'the most perfect' Wotan and Hans Sachs, a great singer and indomitable actor, had his 80th birthday. Years at the opera houses in Hamburg and Munich matured this very individualist artist; during his engagement in Vienna (since 1947) and still appearing occasionally, he added Italian and modern parts to his repertoire. Hotter's Lieder recitals, in particular his Schumann-Schubert and Hugo Wolf evenings, are a source of unmitigated pleasure. — Dresden-born Maria Wimmer, one of the great remaining representatives of German classic characters, who was awarded the order *pour le mérite*, has reached the age of 75.

Obituary. The Austrian musical scene is poorer by the death at 84 of Heinrich Schmidt, for over 20 years director of studies at the Salzburg Festival and accompanist of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Julius Patzak and the late lamented Fritz Wunderlich. Julia Drapal who has died aged 71, was a full-blooded theatre personality. She started out in Brno and became a most popular dancer in Vienna, advancing to the rank of prima ballerina in 1949. She lent her typical Austrian characterisations to all important rôles of classical ballet.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AJR (MIS)INFORMATION

Sir — I had hardly digested your article about ex-refugees visiting Austria and dining with Dr. Waldheim, when I read the report about the Heidelberg consortium in your January 1989 issue.

I note that the largest lecture hall was overflowing, but I wonder whether the medical faculty were present, who, according to Government sources, have used the remains of holocaust victims for study purposes for the last 40 years.

It seems to me that you are thoroughly out of touch with reality!

23 Dering Street,
London W1

L. MANDEL

The charge that we are out of touch with reality is quite unfounded. The very heading under which we reported the November commemoration at Heidelberg was A Turning Point? (with the question mark indicating doubt about the representative nature of these commemorations). L. Mandel also, by implication, impugns the judgement of Professor Klibansky, the main speaker at Heidelberg — whereas this distinguished scholar deserves plaudits for attempting to stave off the spread of Ernst Nolte's 'Holocaust revisionism' to Oxford. Ed.

EAST GERMAN COMPENSATION

Sir — My sister and I came to England in December 1938, aged 12 and 13 years old respectively, with a refugee children's transport. Our parents were later 'disposed' of in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Our maternal grandfather died in Schwedt/Oder in 1942. He was the owner of extensive blocks of flats, a tobacco processing plant, asparagus packing stations and 18 km of fields bordering the nearside of the river Oder.

Many of these fields now serve as the base for the terminal of the oil pipe line from the U.S.S.R., and the cracking plant where the oil is converted into useful products.

We have produced all the documents concerning our family connections with this land, often obtained under immense difficulties, allowing for the time lapse of 46 years, as well as our grandfather's will.

Our West German lawyer found an East German lawyer willing to act on our behalf. However, the East German lawyer has been refused access to the local Schwedt/Oder Land Registry on numerous occasions by the Stadtrat (Council) of that town. The reasons given were that it was not in the interests of the State, and this has gone on for the last eight years. His last visit was July 1988.

The head of the East German State (DDR), Erich Honecker, meantime indulges in public relations exercises concerning 'friendship between peoples', recently awarding a medal to Edgar Bronfmann after a meeting on behalf of the W.J.C.

1 Cottenham Place,
London SW20

JOHN J. MARKS

JEWRY JUDGMENT

Sir — I am perturbed by Susan Gold's (Yes and No — November 1988) in which she maintains that 'too often the well-being or otherwise of Jews seems to be the only criterion by which governments are judged in the Jewish press'.

Surely Susan Gold must know that it is precisely the attitude taken by the non-Jewish press (namely that all the degradation, acts of terror etc. were directed *only* at the Jews) that allowed the events from 1933–1945 to happen.

We used to say, didn't we, perhaps somewhat mockingly 'Is this good for the Jews?' without realising that the way a society treats its Jews is an indication of how that society will treat any minority.

There is the famous 'confession' of Pastor Niemoeller which begins 'when they came for the Jews I did not protest' and ends with the words 'when they came for me there was no one left to protest'.

If, as Susan Gold declares in the last paragraph of her letter 'our aim must be freedom from persecution and equality for all minorities everywhere', anything propagated against Jews quae Jews must make alarm bells ring, certainly in the Jewish press, but more importantly in the non-Jewish media while there is still time.

Perceval Avenue,
London NW3

W. GOETZ

NO HOLDS BARRED

Sir — I had thought that you did not publish my remarks about the Bad Gastein affair because it had an anti-Israeli sting in the tail. However, I note that in the last issue you publish a letter from Miss Eisenschitz which is much stronger. I am very glad that you do not censor such views which normally seem to be *verboten* in the Jewish press. New Cavendish St. RUDOLF HELLMANN
London W1

APPRECIATED IN THE ANTIPODES

Sir — I now enjoy AJR Information even more than before, thanks to the able and interesting work of Richard Grunberger.

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HISTORY — OR HIS STORY

Sir — Factual errors in AJR Information articles! Whatever next! As a fairly recent fan of your magazine and admirer of the phenomenal knowledge of Central European culture and history displayed therein, I really cannot let 'The Dawn that Turned to Dusk' (November 1988) pass without comment.

(i) It was not Ludendorff, but Hindenburg, who was 'given command' of the German armies in World War I.

(ii) Surely you should find place for a mention of Rosa Luxemburg among the 'newly prominent politicians' of Jewish origin thrown up by the November Revolution in Germany.

(iii) It is incorrect to say that Rathenau's assassination was due to his policy of fulfilling Germany's obligations under the Treaty of Versailles; the murder was immediately preceded by his signing of the Treaty of Rapallo with Soviet Russia which outraged the extreme right.

(iv) You assert, wrongly, that Kurt Eisner called into being the *Räterepublik* (Council Republic) when he took power in Bavaria in November 1918; Eisner was more cautious, merely proclaiming Bavaria a 'democratic and social republic'.

DR. ANTHONY GRENVILLE

University of Bristol

Dr. Grenville underestimates the difficulties involved in compressing the multiform stuff of history into easily comprehensible copy; he, moreover, sometimes mistakes the letter for the spirit.

(i) Although Hindenburg was named Chief of General Staff, and Ludendorff merely Quartermaster-General, the latter forced the pace on such key issues as unrestricted U-boat warfare, and sidelining Russia (with Lenin's 'assistance') in preparation for the last big push on the Western Front.

(ii) Rosa Luxemburg, alas, only survived the November Revolution by two months! Unlike Landsberg and Preuss — the Jewish politicians I mentioned — she had no influence on the *modus operandi* of the Weimar Republic.

(iii) The main epithet, in addition to *Judensau* (Jewish swine), the ultra Right hurled at Rathenau was *Erfüllungspolitiker* (fulfilment politician).

(iv) By instigating the political landslide of November 1918 in Bavaria Eisner started a development which led directly, if only *faute de mieux*, to the Council Republic. Ed.

A TRIBUTE

Sir — A friend drew my attention to a notice in *The Times*, giving particulars of the estate of Stefanie Delbanco who, amongst others, left a bequest to the AJR.

I only knew Stefanie Delbanco for a few years, when she befriended me and my severely disabled sister. She gave freely of her time regularly visiting sick people in Homes and Hospitals. I have never met anybody whom I admired so much for the unobtrusive way she cared for the people she visited. Stefanie was a very special person for me, and I am sure many others by whom she will be sadly missed.

185 Hampstead Way,
London NW11

S. NATT

NOMEN EST OMEN

Sir — This item (December 1988) linking the West German Communist leader Herbert Mies and Nazi Labour Front boss Robert Ley is a schoolboy 'joke' that insults the intelligence of your readers, and is unworthy of the standards set by your editorship up to now.

Worse, it is an insult to the memory of the 2,000 members of the KPD, both Jewish and non-Jewish, murdered during the first 2 years of Nazi rule. Ley had no little involvement in these.

To mention the above two names together in this way is so nasty that it puts the authority of your editorship in question.

7 Florence Road, **HENRY ADLER**
London W5

Communism — of the Stalinist variety — was, and is, only marginally less reprehensible than Nazism. (Stalin did not exterminate Jews, but he did plan to deport them en masse just before his death.) Admittedly Stalin's was not the variant of Communism on offer after 1917 — Bukharin and Rosa Luxemburg represented more humane alternatives — but, as always in the absence of democracy, 'scum floats to the top'.

I accept that the KPD provided several thousand martyrs, but it was also the dupe of Moscow. Item: in 1929 they adopted the Comintern line that Social Democrats were Social Fascists. Item: in

November 1932 they collaborated with the Nazis in the Berlin transport strike. Item: after the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact the Moscow-based KPD leaders in exile adopted a 'neutral' stance vis-à-vis Hitler, and colluded with the KGB in handing over a hundred German 'Trotskyites' — Margarete Buber-Neumann and Alex Weissberg among them — to the Gestapo. Ed.

REPLY TO SENECTUS

How I do sympathise with you;
For I am quite forgetful too;
Sometimes I put a thing away
But where I put it — who can say?

Where are my keys to car and door?
They were in evidence before
I needed them; but now, O dear —
I realise they are not here.

And yet — my brain seems to suffice
When called upon to organise,
To keep appointments, make things clear —
In short — work in a different sphere.

I call on science to repair
Whatever age made happen there —
And tell the cells that still obey
To work for others in decay.

MARION SMITH

WITNESSES SOUGHT

On the 50th anniversary of the voyage of the ST. LOUIS the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois is preparing a documentary film. Passengers and/or relatives of passengers of the St. Louis are asked to contact

St. Louis Project,
Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois,
4255 W. Main Street,
Skokie, IL., 60093,
U.S.A.

KINDERTRANSPORT REUNION

A. A. Waxman, organiser of the Bradford Hostel reunion on 25th March, would like Kurt (Tom/Kuli) Lindenburg, Aron Redner, John Wayne (Egon Katz), Bob (Robert) Scharff and John (Hans-Werner) Levy to contact him at 'Inglewood', Staveley Road, Nab Wood, Shipley, West Yorkshire; tel. (0274) 581189.

GOLDSCHMIDT SCHULE

Former pupils of the school, or anyone else interested, can obtain copies of Leonore Goldschmidt's book *Passages from Berlin* from R. W. Goldsmith, 6, The Hexagon, Fitzroy Park N6 6HR. The price is £15, plus postage.

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OBITUARIES

ELISABETH GOLDSCHMIDT

Mrs. Elisabeth Goldschmidt, who died in January, aged 91, rendered signal services to our community since the first Home for the Elderly, Otto Schiff House, opened in 1953. It was largely due to her modern approach that the activities of the House Committee started on the right footing. She also joined the House Committees of the other Homes which came into being subsequently. Her liaison work proved most beneficial because it facilitated an exchange of day-to-day experiences. Mrs. Goldschmidt occupied this singular position for many years, retaining her link, especially with Leo Baeck House, up to the end. The way in which she looked after the wellbeing of the residents and established close relations with the staff endeared her to everyone.

Her association with the AJR actually went back to the war, when her husband, the late Paul Goldschmidt, became a member of the Executive.

Elisabeth Goldschmidt was granted a long and full life, blessed by the love of her family and the attachment of friends, unimpaired by any generation gap. She will be remembered with gratitude and affection by all who knew her.

WERNER ROSENSTOCK

CHARLOTTE WITTELSHOEFER

Dr. Charlotte Wittelschoefer, who would have been ninety in February, died after a short illness. The AJR CLUB remembers her with gratitude as a well-loved hostess, always ready with help and advice. She also served as a valued member on the House Committee of Osmond House for a long time.

Her quiet, unassuming manner hid a highly cultivated personality, wide knowledge and many-sided interests. She gave help where help was needed, and will be sadly missed.

D.S.

RELIGION, NOT ETHNICITY

With the ethnic question agitating various East Bloc countries — USSR, Yugoslavia, Romania — the Hungarian authorities have expressed a willingness to grant their Gypsy and Jewish minorities the status of separate nationalities. In response the Jewish community has emphasised that it wants to be considered as merely a religiously differentiated component of the Hungarian nation.

COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET

According to reports from Budapest — which Israeli Prime Minister Shamir visited recently — Hungarian Jews now feel less inhibited about proclaiming their identity. The inclination towards keeping a low profile was not only a consequence of their wartime experience, but also resulted from the fact that the Stalinisation of the country which prompted the popular uprising of 1956 had in the main been the work of universally detested Jews like Rakosi.

SHTETL SCHEHEREZADE

Isaac Bashevis Singer: *THE DEATH OF METHUSELAH AND OTHER STORIES*, Jonathan Cape 1988

Bruno Schulz: *THE FICTIONS OF BRUNO SCHULZ*, Picador Classics 1988

American Jews of Russian or Polish origin, who began to seek their roots, at first had their nostalgic yearnings satisfied by home-grown third-generation writers who never struck quite the right note in attempting to recreate the lost world of the *shtetl* and of that first generation who came to the New World. Childhood memories were revived, of old men who had visited the family home saying: A glass tea, you got? And a cucumber maybe? — or the old women in wigs who never went out, embarrassing the brashly confident second generation.

With the work of Isaac Bashevis Singer came the 'real, right thing' from one who wrote in living Yiddish in a story-telling tradition. In his most recent collection *The Death of Methuselah* we meet again mystics and scholars, beautiful lascivious women (rather too many of these . . .), rando dentists, writers, beggars and — perhaps more disturbing for his American audience — Socialists, Stalinists, Trotskyites; the Jewish intellectuals of 1930s Warsaw. Survivors, too, like himself, making new lives in the U.S. His stories are haunted by the ghosts of those who spoke his language but he does not exclude comedy or fantasy when describing the strangeness of men's lives.

The most touching tale here is *Disguised*. In Arabian Nights' fashion, a deserted young wife, Temerl, wanders far and wide seeking her lost husband only to find him, after many years, dressed as a woman, buying eggs in a small-town market. He is lost indeed, living in a homosexual ménage with a scoffing ex-Yeshiva scholar. They live — wonderful detail — by baking pretzels for the Yeshiva boys. Temerl, as an old woman, long ago re-married, still retains a wistful affection for her Pinchosl. Maybe they will meet in Gehenna?

Singer's language, translated by himself or by others, is a stripped, working English for everyday use; sadly we lose the tang of the original Yiddish.

In the work of Bruno Schulz, whose stories have been newly re-issued in paperback, the

richness and beauty of his prose bursts through the translation from the Polish. Born in Drohobycz his stories celebrate the town, described in the distorting manner of Dickens in which buildings and furniture come to life. In neglected rooms wallpaper sprouts real flowers and wardrobes try to turn back into trees; this is a world of dreams with the fantastic figure of his father, and his mother, aunts and uncles, as the main characters after that of the city itself.

Jews, it has often tiresomely been said, have no gift for describing nature; certainly there is not much place for trees and fields in Singer's stories, but in Schulz's writing, sharp, clear winter nights, burgeoning back gardens and the rank grass, flowers and fruit of summer are described in the excited prose of an expressionist artist who sees with a painter's eye. For he himself was a teacher of art, his own drawings illustrate his work, which was first published in Warsaw in the 1930s, with great success. A solitary man, he never left Drohobycz where in 1942 he met his death, shot in the street, outside the confines of the ghetto. His writings were re-issued in the late 1950s in Poland and translated into French, German and English. (Amongst his many admirers are the Quay Brothers whose clever, rather sinister animated film based on *Street of Crocodiles* was recently shown in London.) One hopes that this new edition will find many new readers for a vivid and highly original Jewish writer.

PAULINE PAUCKER

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The Egyptian Naguib Mahfouz, 1988 recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, has another claim to fame. He played a decisive role in persuading President Sadat to undertake his 1977 peace mission to Israel, which eventually led to the signing of the Camp David accords. The writer's courageous stand for peace has earned him the enmity of hardliners throughout the Arab world.

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FAMILY EVENTS

Entries in this column are free of charge, but voluntary donations would be appreciated. Texts should reach us by the 10th of the preceding month.

Acknowledgement

Gould:—Katia Gould would like to express her thanks for all the good wishes and gifts received on the occasion of her recent birthday.

Birthdays

Bennett:—Mrs. Lynne Bennett will be celebrating her 75th birthday on 18 March and Mr. Michael Bennett will be 79 on 25 March.

Velardo:—Margot Velardo — belated good wishes on your 80th Birthday. From Lore and Brian.

Deaths

Isakowitz:—Hanna Isakowitz passed away peacefully on 3 January 1989, after a long illness suffered with great patience and dignity. Sadly missed by her only sister, two brothers, brother-in-law, nephews, nieces and cousins, and by her closest friend

Miss Senta Friedlander. Buenos Aires, Stockholm, Oxford and London.

Oppenheimer:—Paula Oppenheimer, in her 93rd year. Widow of Sigmund and mother of Eva, Susan and Lisa. Deeply mourned by all her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

CLASSIFIED

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Information Required

HIRSCH, Dr. Med. Edgar. Anyone having information about Dr. E. Hirsch who in 1938/9 emigrated from Berlin, probably to Israel, please contact Dr. Anni Neiger nee Cohn, 7 Pleachway, Heaton Mersey, Stockpot, Cheshire. Phone 061 432 2072.

WEST BERLIN JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR

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DANGER SIGNALS

If a week is a long time in politics — as the phrase has it — two months is an eternity. Such an eternity ago the Bundestag at Bonn solemnly commemorated the November Pogrom of 1938, and dismissed Speaker Jenninger for the insensitivity of his 'keynote' speech.

Since then Chancellor Kohl has displayed gross insensitivity vis-a-vis Israel by apparently condoning German industry's provision of poison gas facilities for Colonel Gadafi. Hard on the heels of the 'Auschwitz-in-the-desert' scandal came German financing of war-plane sales to Israel's potential enemy, Jordan.

Simultaneously diverse alarming developments have taken place inside the Federal Republic. In Berlin monuments to the victims of Nazism have been desecrated. The scandal of the remains of Holocaust victims being used as teaching aids for medical students has not been resolved. Neo-Nazi computer games designed for the youth market are circulating widely. The *Bundespost* has been constitutionally obliged, despite trade union protests, to carry a country-wide 'mail-shot' propagating the ideas of Herr Frey, publisher of the *National und Soldaten-Zeitung*. Most ominously, the *Republikanische Partei* of the SS veteran Franz Schoenhuber, peddling a mix of xenophobia, revanchism and German reunification, have gained representation in the Berlin Senate.

This worrying state of affairs is compounded by developments in Austria. There, too, an 'eternity' ago Kristallnacht was commemorated, a monument to the victims of Fascism unveiled, and the anti-Nazi play *Heldenplatz* premiered. Now, with

the two pillars of the political Establishment, Waldheim's People's Party and the Socialists, mired in corruption of one kind or another, Jörg Haider's ludicrously misnamed Freedom Party can expect to make substantial gains at forthcoming provincial elections. Haider, like Schoenhuber, is an advocate of German reunification. It is to be hoped that the democratic forces in both countries will not allow Nazism to creep back at the very moment when Eastern Europe is awakening from the opposite, but related, form of tyranny.

BURNING ISSUES

The ceremonial burning of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* by militant Muslims at Bradford inevitably calls to mind the Nazi book-burning ceremonies of spring 1933. Although the circumstances surrounding the two *auto-da-fés* differ hugely, reactions to them were, and are, not totally dissimilar. In Bradford both the law enforcement agencies and booksellers concerned took the path of least resistance, i.e. they capitulated to the book-burners.

In newly Nazified Germany the bonfire of books was not merely condoned by the custodians of intellectual life, the universities; gowned academics actually presided over the fiery ceremonies. One such was the Professor of German Literature at Cologne, Ernst Bertram, a poet who had previously been an intimate friend of Thomas Mann.

As against this some anti-Nazi writers showed remarkable courage. Erich Kaestner turned up in person to see his works consigned to the flames even though, if recognised, he might have been

beaten up. Oskar Maria Graf went one step further. Discovering, in exile, that his name had been omitted from the list of anathematised authors, he published an open letter to the Reich authorities complaining of the 'insult' and challenging them to burn his books. (Graf, an *ur-Bavarian*, who, despite many years' emigration in the U.S.A., never learnt English, refused to go back to Germany after the war.)

SYRIAN JEWRY

The Syrian Jewish community, numbering some 5,000 souls, has been trapped in a perilous existence for many years. Whilst all Syrians are subject to arbitrary rule by a government which has scant respect for human rights, the Jews are doubly at risk, since they are regarded as hostile aliens and potential spies. Despite this, the community is not permitted to emigrate.

Since the latter part of 1987 several members of the community have been detained without charge or trial. Those who have been released report the use of torture and grim prison conditions. There are grave fears for the safety of the six men who remain in detention.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews ask everyone to participate in the special Shabbat for Syrian Jewry, *Shabbat Zachor, March 18th 1989*, through their synagogue. Another way of easing the plight of co-religionists caught in a trap with which we are not unfamiliar is to write to our respective Members of Parliament drawing their attention to the situation. In the changed climate of world politics the Syrian government is less impervious to outside pressure than it had been in the past.

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ANOTHER ALIEN PIONEER STORY

Kurt Littner's reminiscences differ from others previously published both in content — as readers will see — and in style. As the result of a hard life he may not write the polished prose of our usual contributors.

Vienna 1939, showdown between Hitler and me — like in a Western — I gave an ultimatum: there isn't room for both of us in this town, one has to go. So I left, but crazily, as all my life (even today), I decided to leave by bicycle and rucksack; it took me 3 days to reach the Swiss border near Schaffhausen. I crossed in pouring rain. What I did not notice was that cycles have number plates under the saddle. A policeman stopped me about the number plate, next the question — since I could not speak the Swiss dialect — *Haste a püssi?* (passport). Anyhow, in Basle the judge in a local court condemned me to 3 days in prison.

24 hours later I crossed in darkness into France. My uncle, who lived in Paris, got me a room in the district of Toulouse-Lautrec, Montmartre. I remember the name of the hotel: Callais, Rue Callais, 200 yards from Place Blanche. Foreigners could not work in France, one good meal in rue Riché near the Folies Bergere was a real lifesaver. My first encounter with a French toilet without a seat mystified me. Luckily I had done a lot of sports, but how can an elderly person manage, whose only sport is Kalooki?

Two months later I was told at Police Headquarters that I had to leave Paris. Asked where I would like to live, I pointed to Monte Carlo and Nice, but they said there was only one area for my future residence: Normandy. I picked Caen. The Paris refugee committee gave me 360 French francs per month. My attic room cost 170 francs a month; my main meal was $\frac{1}{2}$ yard of bread, and sardines. Every day we 40 refugees in Caen met in the market square and told each other good- and bad-luck stories. Declaration of war — all my friends disappeared but I still went swimming every afternoon in the river Orne. One afternoon an acquaintance came to my swimming spot and said 'Didn't you hear that all men must report to the police?' Stupidly I went immediately and my freedom ended right there, till the end of 1945, as it turned out.

Two policemen transported me to an old prison where all my friends (plus over 100 more) stayed under very poor conditions. Then we were transported to a camp in Falaise; after a few days we ourselves converted it into quite a hospitable place, even though we slept on straw on the floor.

Quite a few tried to volunteer for the army, but foreigners could only join the Foreign Legion; when they heard 'minimum 5 years', they lost interest, especially as rumour had it that the war would only last 18 months.

At the beginning of 1940 they changed the rules: you could join the Foreign Legion for the duration. Many enlisted and ended up in Sidi Bel Abbas (North Africa) for training. The rest of us became *Prestataire*, an outfit similar to the Pioneer Corps in England. We were sent to a small French town where we worked in a bomb factory. Six weeks later the German Army entered Paris. We changed our uniform to civilian

clothing and started walking along roads with people fleeing from Belgium, Holland Luxemburg and France. Four of us got a lift on a truck to Bordeaux. We slept wherever there was room. The first bombardment of Bordeaux. The Luftwaffe dropped noisy bombs, not one anti-aircraft gun in existence. Next morning we squeezed into a packed train and arrived in Bayonne, the last port near the Spanish Border. Our plan was simple: either we get on a ship or cross into Spain. In the harbour there were hundreds of cars with starter keys inside for the taking, everybody tried to get on a ship. I remember there were 2 ships — one a passenger ship, the other a cargo boat. Nobody knew where they were going. 128 of us went onto the cargo boat with about 300 fleeing refugees, mostly families with their children. The trip lasted four days; many years later I found out that the big passenger ship went to England.

Our ship eventually landed in Casablanca where we were marched into a Foreign Legion reception camp. We were not allowed to leave camp, so I climbed over a wall and walked into town. Stupidly I climbed back into the camp at midnight. If I had stayed in Casablanca nobody would have missed me. Early morning, 7 a.m., we all entered a cattle train under guard from a police section called *Guarde Mobile*. Many days of sleeping and sitting on the floor; only food: paté, bread and water. A lot of us understandably got diarrhoea, but after a while you get hardened and take misery as part of the daily routine.

After 5 days we arrived in a little town called Blida. From there we drove 6 hours to Boghari, our final destination. This became our regular camp, within a few days we even managed to make ourselves some form of a bed. We got army pay — half a franc per day — but never found out if we were part of the French Army or of the Foreign Legion. Our work, typical of the Foreign Legion, was digging holes in the ground: 2 metres wide, 2 metres long and 2 metres deep (called rabbit holes). When a hole was completed, we filled it up again — a little further on we started all over again, the same rabbit hole. The main idea: to keep us busy. It wasn't all sadness though as I discovered the town of Boghari two miles away from our camp. In its brothel I got friendly with a 'lady', and for 2 tins of sardines I could get my pleasure.

After over one year I broke out of camp and reached the capital Algiers. My luck, arriving at the re-institution identity card check up, I quickly moved out of the crowd, 100 yards away over a wooden plank — no problem. I slept in the belltower of a church for a couple of nights, the bell ringer discovered me, I got friendly with him and he took me home to his family.

The first time after nearly two years I slept in a proper bed and had a meal from a table. I stared for a while at all the food on the table and would

not start eating, they asked 'why don't you start?' With tears in my eyes I said 'It is quite a while since I have eaten with a family'.

I worked in the Casbah, we made gramophone needles out of bamboo wood; next door somebody made soap. (Both in big demand on the black market.) My luck did not last long. After six weeks there was a police raid on the Casbah, as I obviously had no papers I was sentenced to two months' prison for working without a permit. It was a terrible prison; entering we had all our hair cut off, cold shower, although it was November. With 2 blankets I entered my cell, designed to hold 2 prisoners, but the number was seven. They were all sitting with their pants down, killing lice. I said I haven't any. They laughed: it won't be long and you will join our company. True, three days later I joined them. In one corner of our cell there was a big wooden water bucket and the toilet hole; the water was for flushing the toilet, also for washing and drinking — full automation as we call it today.

Our food: 9 a.m. lunch, vegetable soup; 2 p.m. supper, the same soup and a pound of bread. I called it *lotterie nationale*, because to find vegetables in the soup was a 50-50 chance. On Sundays we had camel meat; result: a lot of us got diarrhoea. While I was in prison a typhoid epidemic broke out; 10 per cent of the inmates died.

After 2 months we were transported in handcuffs, but being short of chain handcuffs, they had a brilliant solution: one end 2 hands, the other end for the third prisoner. Three with one set of handcuffs, not so bad; but when someone had to go to the toilet that was quite a performance. I remarked to my fellow pal 'no wonder they lost the war — they had no tanks, no airforce, now we discover they are even short of handcuffs'.

After a 16-hour drive we arrived in Colomb Bechar; after walking a few yards all of us had badly swollen legs. We walked slowly to a camp commanded by a Swiss national called Visiaux. I was one of the lucky ones: I ended up in the coal mining town Kenadsa because they needed various trades. (Others, not so lucky, ended up in a hard labour camp.) I worked as a mechanic on the giant furnaces in the local power station. Life was tolerable, but boring. (*To be continued*)

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