

# AJR Information

Volume XLVII No. 3  
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Don't miss . . .

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**FDR's**  
message

**L**ike 1992, 1932 was a US election year. It ended with Roosevelt as President. He told the American people they had nothing to fear except fear itself.

It behoves us to remember his words now disillusion has replaced the expectations of two or three years ago. With Eastern Europe in turmoil, the Middle Eastern peace talks half-suspended, and racists active in the West one can easily lose hope. Succumbing to fear is, however, the surest way of bringing about that which is feared. And one other thing: Human Rights, generally paid lip service nowadays, were never spoken of in the Thirties. □

## Religious Fundamentalism

*The third evil to fly out of Pandora's box*

**A**nouihl's *Becket*, currently in the West End, shows King Henry II and his Archbishop turning from friends into murderous enemies. It is a box office draw because it personalises the conflict between Crown and Church. Beyond the footlights, however, the drama had long term constitutional consequences: no Englishman, King or priest, has ever been able to concentrate all power into his own person. Henry VIII tried 'Caesaropapism' and Cromwell the rule of 'The Elect' – but neither succeeded for long.

For most of the Twentieth century lethal outbreaks of secular religion – with witch doctors like Hitler or Stalin tricked out as high priests – have shaken the world to its foundations.

Such fake priests are no longer in fashion in the

1990s. This, alas, will not necessarily lead us into an untroubled future, because real priests can also wreak irreparable damage. Real ordained clerics are responsible for the third twentieth century 'ism' – after Fascism and Communism – to threaten the world, namely Fundamentalism.

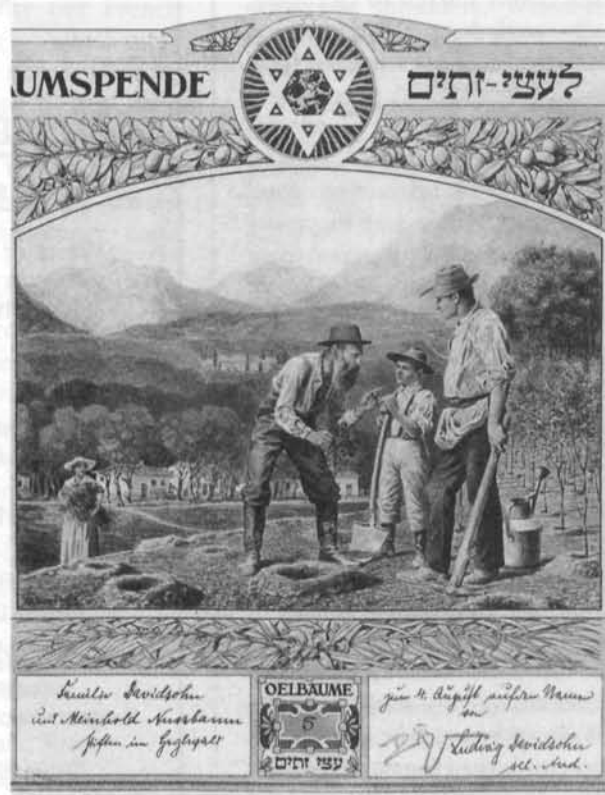
Fundamentalism combines all the characteristics of the first two – paranoid aggression, bigotry, the dehumanisation of non-believers and an itch to control every aspect of life – with the appeal to tradition and the sanction of revealed religion.

This constitutes a heady mix which has a superficial attractiveness for people disoriented by change and uncertainty. For that reason Fundamentalism has cropped up in the First World, albeit none too stridently, as well as in the Third.

Fundamentalism in the Catholic Church is like a river in limestone country; the fact that it is invisible on the surface doesn't tell us whether it exists or not. Upholders of the Latin Mass, Vichyite bishops in France, the Polish Primate Glemp and his fellow prelates, Opus Dei zealots and sundry militant Catholics suspicious of democracy because it gives equal air time, as it were, to Error and revealed Truth, all form part of the dead weight that has prevented the implementation of Vatican Two over the last quarter of a century.

Protestant Fundamentalism makes its less-than-appealing presence felt in Ulster and the US Bible Belt. Jewish Fundamentalism too is a sufficiently obnoxious phenomenon to have prompted a recent *cri-de-coeur* by President Herzog.

But it is, of course, the existence of the Islamic variety that gives Fundamentalism its current topicality and shock appeal. The spectre of a milliard Muslims united by visceral hatred of the West (and of Israel) conjures up a Domsday scenario. Fortunately such unity often proved a mirage – not least in the Iran-Iraq and Gulf Wars. But let us beware of complacency. The Moslem world resembles a row of bubbling cauldrons stretching from Afghanistan to Algiers (and on a lesser scale from Marseilles to Bradford). How to keep the lid on them will tax the ingenuity of Western leaders and voters for years to come.



Early German Zionist poster. Circa 1900.

## Action against amnesia

Since the Fall of the Wall xenophobic violence has been widespread in many East German towns. One is pleased to note, therefore, that the Hanseatic city of Rostock is trying to buck the trend. There the historian Frank Schröder already published newspaper articles about the town's vanished Jewish community in 1986, when officially decreed amnesia was the order of the day. Recently thanks again to Frank Schröder a 'Vereinigung für jüdische Geschichte und Kultur', with over 40 members, has come into being. Their efforts to reclaim a once-integral part of the town's life from oblivion have now been placed on a secure foundation. Dr Herbert Samuel, an AJR member living in Blackburn, Lancs, has donated the house his late father owned in Rostock to the 'Vereinigung', □

## Mi dor l'dor – Communication between survivor parents and their children

Since April 1991, a small group of survivors/refugees and members of the second generation have met at the Belsize Square Synagogue once a month on Sunday afternoon. For the older generation it was an opportunity to talk to the younger generation about their experiences, often for the first time, and to explain why they were not able to do so before. In the past, parents wanted to protect their children and children in turn did not want to hurt their parents by asking questions. For the children, it is important, in establishing their own identity, to learn about their roots.

The next group for first and second generation Holocaust survivors/refugees will start on Sunday, March 8 1992, from 4.00–5.30 pm and, thereafter, will meet monthly for eight sessions.

Numbers are limited, so if you are interested, please apply as soon as possible, to Mrs Henny Levin at the Belsize Square Synagogue, 51 Belsize Square, London NW3 4HX. Telephone 071 794 3949. □

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## Profile

### Shtetl – showbiz – chazzanut



Joseph Dollinger.

Photo: Newman.

The Dollingers reside in North London, in a house filled with Chinese *objets d'art*, her paintings and his Hebrew calligraphy. When, after glancing at the collection, the visitor listens to Josef's story he reflects that the Greeks had a word for it. The word is Protean (after a mythological creature capable of taking on different forms).

Consider this: Josef Dollinger hails from a Galician backwater. His father and grandfather were ritual slaughterers. Raised in the shtetl tradition he wore *peyot* till 13. In that year, 1920, the family moved to Germany, and eventually settled in Düsseldorf. A visiting cantor's praise of his voice led Josef to study singing. After lengthy preparation at the Brussels and Düsseldorf Conservatoires he made his professional concert debut in January 1933, attracting good notices. Within days Hitler was in power and shots were fired at the Dollingers' front door. Acting on a policeman's warning of worse to come, the family emigrated, with Josef first going to Amsterdam. He later joined his parents in Antwerp, where he secured an engagement at the Royal Opera.

In the 1935 season he sang tenor roles in *Salome* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* at performances conducted by Richard Strauss and Hans Knappertsbusch. Alas, when the opera administrators discovered his Jewish origin they did not renew the contract.

For the next few years he eked out a living as cantor at Antwerp's little *Holländische shul*, before obtaining a similar appointment at the Western Synagogue in London. On the Sunday earmarked for the signing of the contract the Second World War broke

out; not long afterwards the synagogue was destroyed in an air raid.

Josef meanwhile appeared in a Russian opera season at the Adelphi Theatre under the baton of Anatol Fistoulari (whose wife Anna Mahler he met). More importantly, he met and married ENSA organiser Stella, his companion for the last 50 years.

1943, reversing the usual showbiz pattern, brought 'triumph and disaster'. Singing in *The Lisbon Story*, a musical about the Free French, he received such critical acclaim that the envious leading lady – and mistress of the impresario – scotched his career prospects. There followed provincial tours of such musicals as *Lilac Time* (where Josef was a more convincing Schubert than his London 'double' Richard Tauber).

By the end of the Forties he exchanged the hazards of showbiz for work first in a handbag factory, and then in a timber import firm. In the mid-1950s he became cantor of Belsize Square synagogue where, under Rabbis Salzberger and Kototek, he served for an impressive 21 years.

A onetime resident in half a dozen countries, Josef Dollinger has followed at least as many careers, and achieved acclaim in three. Truly a Protean personality!

□ R.G.



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## The suitcase

Out of the blur of my school days in Nazi Germany one figure looms up with a strange persistence. It is the gaunt, emaciated figure of our French mistress, Fräulein Karfunkelstein.

As a prelude to each lesson she half opened a small brown suitcase, slowly unfolded a white lace handkerchief and, after cleaning her spectacles, carefully folded it away again.

After that we had dictation: a fable, an anecdote or something – it didn't matter what, for she rarely got to the end of any text, thanks to us children. Scarcely had she begun when one of us asked ever so politely *Plait-il?* (Pardon?), after which we took it in turns to call out *Plait-il?* after every third or fourth phrase, causing her to repeat it. Much tittering from us girls, but Fräulein Karfunkelstein seemed quite unaware of the ploy. Indeed, from the moment she entered the room, carrying the old suitcase, she appeared oblivious to us. Occasionally she even forgot to put down the case, but held it in suspension, as though prepared to be called away at any moment.

### Not normal times

Normally, the suitcase might have contained books and sandwiches. But these were not normal times, even for us youngsters. For one thing, school was no longer what it used to be, since in July 1938 the Nazis had closed down our real school, a gloomy private establishment run by a Jewish woman. That is why our French lessons, as any other lessons for which there were still teachers left, were now held in the bright, spacious apartment of my best friend Eva Jakobowitz – in her playroom, to be precise. No more desks, no blackboard, no podium; best of all, school now started at nine instead of the customary eight o'clock.

The best years of our life? For several of us in that improvised classroom, they were to be the only years: neither Eva nor Miriam, Hilde or Kästel lived to see their 15th birthday. The net was even now closing in ever more tightly, but we jolly little fishes were still having fun, teasing Fräulein Karfunkelstein.

*Le bébé a une robe blanmnche*, she

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## Birthday party



Balint House

Photo: Newman.

Staff and residents of Balint House, the Otto Schiff Housing Association's newest residential care home on The Bishop's Avenue, celebrated the first anniversary of their move to the new building with a tea-party on Friday January 17.

intoned, putting a long finger to her nose to emphasise the nasal. *Le bébé a une robe blanmnche*, we chanted gleefully in response, pinching our noses in mock imitation. Poor Fräulein Karfunkelstein!

If her name – carbuncle stone – suggests lustre and colour, these qualities had long since left her drab, almost skeletal form. Her face and hands had a deathly pallor. There were shadows under the sunken eyes, and a sweet-sour smile seemed to have frozen on her thin lips. Winter and summer she wore the same frock of black silk, through which we could glimpse the bony arms and shoulders. Whenever she came too close, I recoiled instinctively from her unwholesome breath.

Yet she never scolded, never raised her voice, indeed never showed any emotion – not even when, doubling as German mistress, she droned aloud from Goethe's *Egmont*. The imprisoned hero's rousing appeal to Liberty, or his beloved Klärchen's

*Himmelhoch jauchzend,  
Zum Tode betrübt,  
Glücklich allein  
Ist die Seele, die liebt*

– she knew it all by heart, but her heart was evidently not in it.

One day Fräulein Karfunkelstein did not appear, and we were sorry to miss our daily dose of merriment. She is ill, we were told. Ill? in bed? did she wear black in bed, too? The idea that a teacher has a private life was intriguing. Here was our chance: we would pay her a sick visit. What a lark! There were five of us, and armed with the address and a bunch of flowers, we arrived at no. 37 Kleiststrasse, one of those hefty blocks of

The majority of the residents who moved in to Balint House in January 1991 had come from Otto Schiff House, NW3. They appear to be very happy with their new surroundings. The building was constructed as stage one in the planned upgrading and refurbishment of the homes of which the AJR Charitable Trust underwrote the initial costs. The home was named after the Balint family, who contributed generously to the AJR Residential Care Appeal.

The Head of Home, Miss Loni Rieger, and her staff continue to maintain the warm relationship with the residents which they have built up over a period of years.

Visitors to Balint House find that an almost tangible family atmosphere prevails. The pleasant surroundings, modern facilities and well appointed rooms, which all have private amenities, ensure that residents feel very much 'at home'. □ M.N.

high ceilinged flats dating back to the *Gründerjahre*. Whispering excitedly, we mounted the wide polished staircase, scanning each neatly inscribed brass name plate right up to the top floor. Alas! no Karfunkelstein. Attracted by some noisy children turning somersaults on the carpet rail in the dreary courtyard that regularly connected, or rather divided the patrician *Vorderhaus* from the plebeian *Hinterhaus*, we walked through to the latter. Was this where she lived? Yes, on the third floor, scarcely legible in the dingy light, was the name, one of several outside one door: Fräulein Elfriede Karfunkelstein. We looked at each other nervously and rang the bell. A woman, seeing our bouquet, let us in and without a word nodded us in the direction of a half-open door.

### The suitcase

Five pairs of inquisitive eyes peered inside, but what they saw was chastening: a narrow room, meagerly furnished, an empty bed. A small window opened on to a brick wall, but in the dimness I could see a familiar object: the suitcase. The lid was thrown open, and inside lay a black cardigan, a book, a white handkerchief and the kind of sponge bag I took on holiday.

'Was she your teacher then?' the woman enquired. 'They took her away this morning. Wouldn't even let her take her things'.

Silently we trooped back to Eva's bright, well appointed apartment. As we walked into her room, we heard her mother in the bedroom next door crying convulsively. We did not have to be told what had happened. Eva's father had gone.

□ Brigitte E. Hay

## Reviews

## Where shall we go?



Bridging a generation gap.

Photo: Pete Fryer.

'Anybody who says *the Jews, the trade unionists, the gays* is going down Hitler's street'. (Werner Mayer.)

*Where shall we go?* is the title of a video programme for schools made by three teachers – Carrie Supple, Nick Hudson and Viv Schwartzberg. It features four European Jews: Esther Brunstein, Werner Mayer, Harry Nagelsztajn and Liesl Silverstone – each of whom is either a camp survivor or a refugee. The film shows the four being interviewed by a culturally mixed group of

schoolchildren from the North East. The interviews are interspersed with old news-reel clips, photographs and amateur cine-film. The result is subdued, but powerful.

The four interviewees represent a broad cross-section of European Jewry, from Poland, Germany and Czechoslovakia, and from different classes. In the first part of the film the questions allow the four to picture the variety of pre-Holocaust Jewish life in Europe simply by describing their own childhoods. This results in even the most detached viewer being given a chance to

engage with the personalities who are, bravely, reliving their past on the screen.

It is in the second half that the film really impresses. The young interviewees, as they become more involved, ask deeper questions. The answers are often uncomfortable to hear. One of the ladies describes her arrival at Auschwitz. A man reveals the camp number tattooed on his arm. It makes a grim contrast with the earlier anecdotes of happier times. It was Werner Mayer who made the most telling point about this contrast: 'I had a very happy childhood,' he said. 'Then, when I was 12, I was suddenly told I was vermin.'

Also captured on film was the reunion between Harry Nagelsztajn and his sister, whom he had thought dead for 30 years. Nobody could remain unmoved by these scenes.

In the final section of the film the interviewees give their thoughts on what they have heard, and how it has affected them. 'There isn't such a thing as saying it's in the past . . . you cannot forget about it, the pain still lives on . . .' said one.

The video is accompanied by notes and background information about the project and participants. For further information or copies of the video contact: Hugh Kelly, Swingbridge Video, Norden House, 41 Stowell Street, Newcastle NE1 4YB.

□ M.N.

## A family tree with a difference

Wolfgang Nelki: *ZWISCHEN ASSIMILATION UND ASYL*. Revonnah Verlag. D-3000 Hannover, Oeltzenstr. 19. DM 10.

Spiegelberg, the Jewish character in Schiller's *Die Räuber* was not a figment of the imagination. There was indeed a Jewish underworld, though Jewish historiography preferred to focus on positive achievements.

## Strongroom robbery

One example was Louis Nelki, the great-grandfather of the author. He was involved in the robbery of the strongroom of the Berlin University at Christmas 1830, thereby delaying the payment of salaries to professors Hegel, Schleiermacher and Savigny. Some of Louis' accomplices were arrested, but he himself managed to escape to Hungary.

He left behind his wife and seven children. Four of them emigrated to England, and some of their descendants were traced by the author when he came to this country as a refugee.

Among those who stayed at home was the author's grandfather, Jakob Nelki, who made a living as a travelling chiropodist. Together with his wife, Lina Heilbut, he had eight children. Yet like his father, he deserted the family. A relationship with a woman 35 years his junior resulted in four further children. Eventually, he founded a circus which travelled around Europe and North Africa. He died aged 82, when the circus was in Rome; it was taken over by his son Wilhelm, and two of his daughters gave performances as equestriennes. The circus went into liquidation in Mexico in 1928. Up to then, the antecedents of the family had certainly differed from the Jewish norm.

Middle-class status was ultimately achieved by the author's father Hermann, a dentist. Wolfgang, born in 1911, developed an interest in politics while a pupil of the

Mommsen Gymnasium and at 17 became a member of the Communist Youth. To the disappointment of his family, he decided to study law and not dentistry. At university, he gave legal advice under the auspices of *Red Aid*. He was admitted to the courses of the widely reputed coach Dr Siegbert Springer, but had his studies cut short by Hitler's accession to power.

## K. C. Fraternity

Wolfgang's career choice was not the only difference between him and his siblings. Two of his brothers were members of the K.C. Fraternity, which many of the younger generation rejected as too bourgeois with its fencing and drinking rituals. The author does not mention such reservations, but rather stresses the merits of the K.C. as a courageous fighter for Jewish dignity.

On the eve of Boycott Day 1933, the father decided to emigrate, and gradually the members of the family left Germany.

□ Werner Rosenstock

## Lethal nickname

Dietz Bering *KAMPF UM NAMEN. Bernhard Weiss gegen Joseph Goebbels. Klett-Cotta Verlag, Stuttgart. 1991. DM 68.*

For over five years, from March 1927 to July 1932, a Jew stood between the German Nazis on the way to power and the legitimacy of the Weimar Republic. He had the police, the law courts and right on his side: they had the expectation of increasing popular support, a blatant disregard for human decency, and the ability to use the twisted word as a lethal weapon in the battle for men's minds.

As Berlin's Deputy Chief of Police, Dr Bernhard Weiss was the first confessing Jew to rise, by his own merit, to a position of substantial power in the Prussian civil service. Goebbels once remarked 'He who has Berlin, has Prussia and who has Prussia, has Germany.' Weiss was thus uniquely placed among the relatively few determined defenders of the Weimar Republic facing liquidation. He was also the inevitable target of a massive smear campaign by Goebbels, then Gauleiter of the capital.

Goebbels knew only too well how to mobilise the age-old, built-in German prejudice against the Jews.

In 1927, the Nazi Party had still quite a way to go in terms of electoral support. They made up for this 'small' disadvantage by taking to the streets in deliberately aggressive marches and by violent disruptions of their opponents' meetings. These serious breaches of the peace led to a police response and, in May, Weiss ordered the Nazi Party in Berlin to be declared an illegal organisation. Goebbels at once launched a press onslaught on Weiss. In a series of articles in the *'Angriff'* he undermined the standing of the *'Polizeivizepräsident'* by dubbing him 'Isidor'. This apparently harmless expression of witty journalistic sarcasm was, in fact, a brilliantly malevolent stratagem. In the vocabulary of German anti-Semitism 'Isidor' connoted 'Jew', and its bearer could, therefore, be marked for mockery and hatred and, in due course, extinction.

But Dr Weiss was not the weakling Goebbels took him for. The Deputy Chief took legal action for repeated acts of serious criminal libel. The hearings dragged on for several years with diminishing prospects of adequate dispensation of justice; but at least he did achieve a certain measure of success, unlike less well-placed litigants pursuing similar ends.

The unequal struggle between Weiss and

Goebbels is the central 'plot' in this brilliant new book intended as 'an analysis of National Socialism and its language.' In choosing the Weiss-Goebbels conflict as his case study, the author offers a fascinating insight into the two protagonists.

The book brings into focus the life story of a proud and conscious Jew and patriotic German, whose valour on the battlefield earned him unusual distinction, whose courage in adversity stood in contrast to the ambivalent behaviour of many of his colleagues and superiors, who came to England as a refugee and established himself as a jobbing printer, dying in London in 1951.

Brought into similarly sharp focus is Hitler's faithful henchman Goebbels: his childhood poverty, early professional failures, attempts to hide physical deformity and, above all, his knowledge, from personal experience, of how and where to wound an enemy who could be made to carry, as he did, a stigma.

□ David Maier

## Documents of infamy

Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, Volker Riess, *THOSE WERE THE DAYS*, translated from the German by Deborah Burnstone, Hamish Hamilton, 1991, £17.99

This is a horrible book to read, and yet one that should be read — is how Lord Dacre (the historian Hugh Trevor-Roper) starts his introduction. He is right, and horrible here means almost unbearable in the intensity of the work's incontrovertible truth. These pages contain the statements, admissions, boasts, photographs, letters and diaries of the killers and their helpers, their superiors — and occasional opponents from within their own ranks.

The joint authors are a theologian, a special investigator of Nazi crimes, and an historian. The original title, *Schöne Zeiten*, comes from a page in the photo album of Kurt Franz, last commandant of Treblinka extermination camp.

The first part of the book deals with the mobile *Einsatzkommando* squads which followed the Wehrmacht into Russia and executed so-called 'enemies of the Reich' such as Bolsheviks and Jews (who were slaughtered *en masse*). Though the natives often helped, the real Nazis were disappointed with the support they got, sometimes on the grounds of unwillingness but often because of 'inefficiency'. The second part covers the extermination camps.

The book destroys two myths: that nobody outside a charmed circle knew about the sickening murders, and that anyone who refused to take part in them was shot or at least severely punished. The work of the special squads could not be kept secret from ordinary *Wehrmacht* personnel. Some of the latter treated the execution of Jews, including naked women and children, as spectator sport; some even joined in. The C-in-C East, General Blaskowitz, forbade his troops to do so but was overruled.

The authors contend that all policy originated in Hitler's Chancellery. When the killing of handicapped and mentally defective Germans was abandoned at the beginning of the war, the doctors and engineers involved were put to work on the implementation of the Final Solution.

Curiously, sometimes the brutes they commanded found the bloodbath too much for them, and several named men refused to carry out orders. Labelled soft and cowardly, these would be sent back to Germany to 'lighter duties', not to the fighting front. Some officers also caved in, and they were usually recycled into administration. In the camps, where the killing was by remote control and where prisoners did the cleaning-up after the gassings, no one seemed to raise objections.

Where clerics and other professional disseminators of ethics tried to intervene they did so in a curious manner . . . they presented themselves as concerned for the souls of the perpetrators rather than show pity for the victims who were described in one reply from a killer officer to an official who needed workers as 'no great loss'. This despite the fact that all the skilled workers in the area were Jews.

A shining exception was a Lithuanian Catholic priest who preached a sermon against his countrymen and all those who took part in the crimes, and then went to a synagogue where Jews were kept prisoner and tried to give them help and comfort. Despite his open rebellion he was not punished, merely criticised. If there had only been more such people.

The book is deceptively easy to read. The confessions, the letters and the boasts are short. The most outrageous and the most bizarre events are put before the reader in boxes breaking up the texts. There are many pages of the horror photos taken by SS personnel in contravention of the very laws and regulations which gave them the fiat to commit their crimes in the first place. They were produced in evidence by investigators like co-author Willi Dressen when the boastful 'artists' stood their trials.

□ John Rossall

# Letters to the Editor



## NAMING PLACES

Sir – The first *Sturmabteilungen* were equipped with brown shirts because they were very cheap, having originally been intended for the German forces in Africa during WW1.

W. J. Frolic

Sir – May I point out that in your article the word 'Portuguese' was twice misspelt. I hope you don't mind my audacity – it shows you I care.

College Crescent  
London NW3

Mrs M. Stern

## BOUQUET

Sir – Your excellent journal manages to arouse both tears and laughter – as well as conveying practical information.

Canterbury Road  
Ashford, Kent

Ilse E. Seelig

## ANY JOY?

Sir – I have not been very lucky in finding a good translation of Schiller's Ode to Joy. Can any reader assist me in finding English renderings, please? It would be useful now that 1992 is here and we really have it as the European anthem.

118 Highfield Lane  
Southampton SO2 1NP

Peter T. Landsberg

## LAND FOR PEACE

Sir – We of all people have good reason to remember the dark days when emigration to Palestine meant the difference between life and death. David Pryce-Jones in the *Sunday Times* of 24 November, reminded us that every Arab country is a tyranny in which, whoever holds power, does so through strength, and that knowing how ruthlessly they themselves have come to power, violence is the day-to-day government. Is it so difficult to understand that, encircled by such states, Israel shows some reluctance to accede to territorial concessions of land?

Four Oaks  
Sutton Coldfield

W. E. Abraham

## HEINE UNERWÜNSCHT

Sir – There are enough sinister portents of recrudescing antisemitism in Germany without having to create some on the pages of *AJR Information*.

Whatever the motives for reversing a street named after Heine in the erstwhile

DDR to its original designation, Heine is not *unerwünscht* in Germany. I read on the very day I received *AJR Information* that the Heine Society of Germany (Headquarters in Düsseldorf) acquired over a hundred hitherto little or unknown Heine manuscripts and memorabilia, with the financial assistance of the Government. An exhibition will travel to major centres in Germany to show the collection.

Another piece of incidental intelligence: while there were over 60 acts of vandalism against Jewish graves in the Central Cemetery of Vienna during last year, similar acts were also perpetrated in the non-Jewish part of the cemetery.

Temple Fortune Hill  
London NW11

F. Shelton

## A 'DEMO' IN FRANKFURT

Sir – If, as reported in your January issue, Daniel Cohn-Bendit claimed that his parents were *murdered* by the Nazis that statement requires correction.

My wife and I were friends of his mother over many years. She left Germany for Paris, and we were able to resume contact after the war. She died (around 1960?) in London following a heart attack, and I attended her funeral.

I understand that his father returned to Germany after the war, in bad health, and died there.

Statements such as the one you report can only provide fodder for those who claim that the Holocaust never took place.

Fortune Green Road  
London, NW6

Edgar Herzfeld

## NOT GUILTY?

Sir – G. Schmerling states that Nazi intentions of genocide were not visible in 1935 and that the German people had no complicity in the Holocaust. Yet Cardinal Faulhaber wrote to Stresemann already in 1923 about 'blind, raging hatred of our fellow Jewish citizens.' I am German; not to profess guilt would only add to it and insult the victims.

St. Swithun Street  
Winchester

Gertrud Walton

Sir – I am mystified by the assertion that in 1935 the Nazis' criminal intention was not even visible.

I recall very clearly early in 1933 my father coming home with his head cut open,

and my uncle Alfred being chased through the main street in broad daylight.

Netanya 42540, Israel

Ernest J. Sicher

Sir – In our democratic society G. Schmerling is entitled to his views, but I find it extremely offensive to read them in your excellent magazine. In no way do I wish to attack present-day Germany. The many young Germans who realise what was done by the older generation cannot be blamed.

Winchmore Hill

P. Sinclair

London N21

This correspondence is now closed. See page 15. Ed.

## IDOL WORDS

Sir – Many concepts are liable to be interpreted as double-talk. You choose to call Union of Soviet Socialist Republics a four-fold lie. However, there is no reason whatever that 'union' must be voluntary. 'Soviet' means council, elected or not. 'Socialist' denotes common ownership of the means of production. A 'republic' is a state in which an elected or nominated president holds power.

You choose a right-wing interpretation of these ambiguous terms. You do not employ double-talk, but plainly biased talk.

The actions of the Soviet leaders have been deplorable – but the results of their disappearance are as yet equally deplorable. However, as Pope wrote 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast'.

Tresawswen Cottage  
Callestick, Truro

(Dr) D. J. Salfield

The notion that union need not be voluntary, nor a council elected, would have found favour with General Franco. Is it you or I who deserves the epithet right-wing? Ed.

### Notice

Mr Henry Ebner's address (for the Stootley Rough Reunion) is: 605 Kenton Road, Kenton, Middx. The house number was misprinted as 606 in February.

## AJR CLUB

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A talk by Mr R. Stent, M.Phil.

Admission incl tea, members 50p, guests £1

SATURDAY 18th April at 6.00 p.m. for 6.30 p.m.

SECOND SEDER

Conducted by

Arnold Horwell

Dinner, incl. wine:

£10 Club/Day Centre members – £12 Guests

Enquiries: Hilde Baban 071-359 9951

Seder finishes at 9.45 p.m.

## GBS, the dictators and the Jews

**B**ernard Shaw admired dictators. He admired Mussolini, as Winston Churchill did in the 1920s, and Hitler, as Lloyd George did in the thirties, and Stalin. He was greatly taken with the notion of a benevolent autocrat, as shown in *Caesar and Cleopatra*, and *The Applecart*, two of his better-known plays. He believed that the rule of an enlightened few was preferable to that of the ignorant many who take part in democratic elections.

His most controversial play, *Geneva*, a comedy about the League of Nations, was first produced in July 1938 in Warsaw, and is now – happily – almost forgotten. It featured Herr Battler (Hitler) and Signor Bombardine (Mussolini), who was contemptuous of Flanco (Franco). In a speech Herr Battler fully justified everything that had taken place in Nazi Germany; one therefore has to admit that *Geneva*, which played to packed houses in 1938 and 1939 worldwide, was antisemitic.

Having read the play Lawrence Langner of the Theatre Guild of New York wrote to Shaw 'I do not believe that you will want future generations of Jew-baiters to quote you as part authority for a programme of torturing, starving and driving to suicide of Jews all over the world . . . I do most sincerely ask you to reconsider the position of the Jew in this play. Shakespeare, by the character of Shylock, and Dickens by the character of Fagin, have added greatly to the cross of hatred which future generations

of Jews must bear.' *Geneva* received 237 performances in London before going on tour in 1938. Beatrice Webb (an admirer of Stalin and no lover of Jews) commented at the time 'The play has come at the best possible occasion; it relieves the terrible tension that we all feel about foreign affairs by laughing at everyone concerned.'

### The Shavian

As an admirer of Shaw, warts and all, I consider *Geneva* flawed by the fact of dealing with strictly contemporary events; the audience found it difficult to separate the stage events from the reality they were experiencing. In defence of Shaw against the charge of antisemitism I adduce the fact that he was not only a friend of Siegfried Trebitsch, an Austrian Jew, who translated him into German, but developed a close relationship with Dr Fritz Löwenstein, a Jewish refugee who first contacted him from internment on the Isle of Man in 1942. From his home in London Löwenstein subsequently started the Shaw Society, whose objects were to work 'for the creation of a new civilisation based on Shavian principles'. The Society publishes *The Shavian* at least twice a year and, jointly with the National Trust, sponsors annual birthday plays at Shaw's former home at Ayot St. Lawrence.

At the time, Shaw employed the formidable Miss Patch as secretary and the Scottish journalist John Wardrop as editorial assistant. Gradually, he relied more on Wardrop to the chagrin of Miss Patch: at the time when she thought that she had checked Wardrop's progress she complained that Shaw 'inflicts the Jew on me'.

GBS did not welcome the formation of the Shaw Society and did not encourage Löwenstein. He wrote 'My only hope is that nobody will join it, and therefore there will be no proceedings of the Society'. In the same vein, he wrote 'Do not, I beg you, let me see your handwriting, much less yourself.'

But Löwenstein was not to be deterred. By the summer of 1944 he had moved to Harpenden, close to Shaw's home at Ayot St. Lawrence, and called himself Shaw's 'official bibliographer and remembrancer'. The rivalry between Wardrop and Löwenstein became acute. Shaw observed that Wardrop assumed 'not only the position of my literary agent but of my own son and heir . . . while Löwenstein is resolved to be the oldest and dearest friend I have in the world.' As reward for his hard work Löwenstein was charged with the preparation of a complete bibliography, and the Shaw archive, for posthumous presentation to the British Museum and London School of Economics. In 1946 Shaw fully recognised Löwenstein's position. In printed cards he informed correspondents 'that he had no time for any except the most urgent private correspondence . . . the founder of the Shaw Society, Dr. F. E. Löwenstein is better informed on many points than Shaw himself and will be pleased to be of assistance.'

Löwenstein's objective for the Shaw Society – the creation of a new civilisation based on Shavian principles – remains unfulfilled. However, the Shaw Society is thriving and held a 50th anniversary dinner at the Conway Hall in London, in 1991.

□ Henry Toch

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*Afternoon entertainment* –

**MARCH**

- Monday 2* The Ides of March – Geoffrey Strum (Tenor) accompanied by Johnny Walton (Piano)
- Tuesday 3* The World of the Musical Stage – Valerie Hewitt (Soprano) accompanied by Anne Berryman (Piano)
- Wednesday 4* Hans Freund: Spring in the Air
- Thursday 5* Nights Relations – Barbara O'Neil (Mezzo) with Piano Accompaniment
- Monday 9* Sheila Kominsky Entertains on Piano and Piano Accordion
- Tuesday 10* Music in Springtime – Jack Harris accompanied by Happy Branston
- Wednesday 11* Flute Favourites – Heather Brown & Helen Foster
- Thursday 12* A Taste of Ireland – Barbara O'Neil (Mezzo), Gerarda McCann (Dancer), Graham Dinnage (Baritone & Bodhran Player) and Siobhan Fox (Violin)
- Monday 16* Light Musical Entertainment – Shirley Gurevitz accompanied by Sylvia Cohen (Piano)
- Tuesday 17* Jacqui Johnson & Geoffrey Whitworth Entertain on Cello & Piano
- Wednesday 18* A Musical Afternoon with Jane Rosenberg
- Thursday 19* PURIM Entertainment by Lucy White (Violin) and Juliet Davey (Piano)
- Monday 23* Classical Music by Students from the Trinity College of Music
- Tuesday 24* The Violin in Various Ways – Jeremy Birchall (Violin) accompanied by Olga Sitkovetskaya (Piano)
- Wednesday 25* Isabel Beyer & Harvey Dagul at the Piano
- Thursday 26* Romantic Music for Piano & Violin – Stephanie Ede (Violin) & Stephen Baron (Piano)

# The AJR at Work

## Pensions update

### German Old Age Pensions for Victims of Nazi Persecution

Since the notice which appeared in our February issue there has been a further important development.

We have been in direct contact with the Bundesversicherungsanstalt für Angestellte in Berlin who have advised us that persons who were already 65 years or over on January 1, 1992 can still submit applications, provided these are received by the Bundesversicherungsanstalt für Angestellte in Berlin by March 31, 1992.

The wording to be used should be as suggested in the notice in *AJR Information* in January.

As was stated in that notice, persons who

have not reached their 65th birthday on January 1, 1992 must also submit applications by March 31, 1992.

It should be stressed that the financial implications of making voluntary contributions to the social insurance scheme in Germany are still not known and no decisions in this respect have yet been made by the Bundesversicherungsanstalt für Angestellte.

We draw members' attention to the fact that it is up to individuals to make the claims themselves – or with the assistance of a solicitor. (We advise claimants to determine the legal fees involved in advance.)

- Monday 30* Love Duets – Francoise Geller & Gordon Griffin with Piano Accompaniment
- Tuesday 31* The Channing Flutes Entertain with Ruth Newman accompanied by Vickie Weight

- APRIL**
- Wednesday 1* April Fool's Day – Geoffrey Strum (Tenor) accompanied by Johnny Walton (Piano)
  - Thursday 2* The Pleasures of Music – Lynn Hendry (Piano) & David Bartov
  - Monday 6* Singing for Fun – The Longford Singers with Margaret Eaves at the Piano
  - Tuesday 7* Musical Gems from the Past – Bernard Wilcox (Tenor) & Valerie Monese (Soprano) accompanied by Leslie Barnes (Piano)
  - Wednesday 8* Ann Warnes & Geoffrey Whitworth Entertain on Horn & Piano
  - Thursday 9* Israeli & Other Folk Songs – Maz Witriol (Guitar)

**PAUL BALINT AJR**

**DAY CENTRE**

**OPEN DAY**

To all members, volunteers and friends  
**Join us on**

**Sunday 17th May 1992 at 2.30 p.m.**

Entrance £2 to include refreshments

**AJR INFORMATION**

We require experienced volunteer proof-readers to come into the editorial offices on an occasional basis.

If you would like to be placed on our proof-reading rota please send details of your work experience to:

Richard Grunberger, Editor *AJR Information*, Hannah Karminski House, 9 Adamson Road, NW3 3HX.

### Last waltz?

The AJR's Annual Charity Concert has been a high-point in the refugee community's calendar for almost 45 years. Now, however, it seems that this yearly event may be forced to undergo a major change in format.

Rises in the level of fees demanded by quality artists, increased charges for the hire of halls and a falling off in the revenue generated by ticket and souvenir brochure sales have all combined to place the annual concert, which is, above all, a fund raising event, very close to being a financial loss-maker.

It is only the fact that much of the administrative work in organising the concert each year is done by voluntary staff that has kept the concert in the black up to now.

AJR members will be given a chance to put their views on this subject forward later this year when *AJR Information* will carry a returnable questionnaire covering this and other issues.

□ M.N.

### Appeal to drivers

Volunteer drivers are a precious resource for AJR. They enable our frail and disabled members to reach their social lifeline, the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre in West Hampstead. We are making a special appeal now for more to come forward.

Until now Camden Council's taxicard scheme has enabled some members to get to and from the Day Centre relatively cheaply. This scheme is to be suspended from 19 January until 1 April. It will resume then but on a much more limited scale. Also, an article in the Hampstead & Highgate Express, 17 January, states that pensioners in Barnet will have to travel further - to libraries rather than post offices - to obtain their bus passes, and that the number of travel vouchers in that borough for people with mobility allowances will be reduced. In other words, there will be less in the way of cheaper travel for elderly people.

Our present drivers nobly carry many people back and forth. But reinforcements are needed urgently! If you can help, even if it is only one way once a week - to the Day Centre or back to the members' home - please contact the Volunteers' Co-ordinator at the AJR offices, 9 Adamson Road NW3 3HX, telephone 071 483 2536, between 9.30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday to Thursday and 9.30 a.m.-1 p.m. Friday.

□ L.H.

### Camden Plus Bus Service

Camden residents mourning the loss of their taxi-card scheme may like to be reminded of the Camden Plus Bus Service. There are two buses, each with a wheel-chair lift at the back, which serve routes covering hospitals and shops. Reservations should be made a few days in advance. The telephone number is: 071-911 0198. □

### SOCIAL SERVICE DIARY

*This is the first in an occasional series in which Aggie Alexander, Head of the Social Services Department, will update AJR members on the latest news and legislation.*

#### Benefit Claims

Claims for Income Support are continuous, however the DSS office must be informed immediately there is any change of circumstances.

Claims for Housing Benefit and Poll Tax benefit have to be renewed each year otherwise these benefits will be discontinued. A reminder to renew is usually sent out to the claimant in good time - be sure to complete and return the form to your local authority.

#### Poll Tax

During the last few months we have had quite a number of members coming to us for help because they have received a summons for non-payment of Poll Tax. In each case we have been able to deal with the problem without the client having to appear in court. If you have any queries regarding your Poll Tax please telephone us.

#### DSS Relocation

During the past year the process began of relocating the administration of benefits from local London DSS offices to remote Benefit Centres. The new structure is as follows:

*Benefits Centre (BC) based at Glasgow, Belfast or Wigan*

*District Office (DO) covering the area of one to four local offices*

*Branch Office (BO) one for each former local office*

The processing of claims takes place at the Benefits Centre.

Income Support and Retirement Pensions are computerised and district and branch staff should have immediate access to information about any claim.

The Branch Office is the only point of contact for personal callers. BOs are sited at the old local offices but any BO within the district can be used.

Claim forms and other correspondence should be sent direct to the Benefits Centre. □

## PAUL BALINT AJR DAY CENTRE

### PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT

**With the coming of Spring and Summer it is hoped to extend our activities at 15 Cleve Road by keeping it open until 7 p.m. Monday-Thursdays as well as from 2-7 p.m. on Sundays.**

**We look forward to seeing all our members.**

**Full details will appear in the April issue of *AJR Information*.**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain advises Members and Friends that the Annual General Meeting will be held on

**Thursday 11 June 1992**  
at  
**15 Cleve Road, London NW6**

A talk will be given by  
Mr. Richard Grunberger

Full details and Annual Report will appear in the May issue.



## John Denham Gallery

50 Mill Lane, West Hampstead  
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I wish to purchase paintings and drawings by German, Austrian or British Artists, pre-war or earlier, also paintings of Jewish interest.

**FAMILY EVENTS**

**Birth**

**Congratulations** to Geoffrey and Caroline Marx on the birth of their second daughter, from all the staff at Hannah Karminski House.

**Birthday greetings**

**Fabian** Otti Fabian, of 42 Hertford Street, Cambridge, will celebrate her 85th birthday on March 17, 1992.

**Steiner** Kurt Steiner celebrates his 80th birthday on March 23. With love from his wife and all the family. **Steiner** congratulations to Kurt Steiner on the occasion of his 80th birthday. We hope that he will be able to continue his good works in good health and contentment for many years to come. The AJR club.

**Deaths**

**Heimel** Karl Heimel passed away on 6 February 1992 aged 84 after

a long illness bravely borne. Deeply mourned and desperately missed by his wife Lizzy.

**Koch** Berta Koch, former assistant matron at Heinrich Stahl House, died there peacefully on December 29, 1991, aged 82.

**Lee** Magdalene Lee, born in Vienna, died on January 15, 1992, at Eleanore Rathbone House, Highgate, N6. Sadly missed by her sister Dorrit, Vivienne and Nicholas and friends.

**Nelki** Wolf Nelki, of 43 Nighthale Lane, London SW12, died January 10, 1992. Sadly mourned and missed by all her family and many friends.

**Salomon** Margot Salomon has died in her 93rd year. Author, Zionist worker and a grand old lady. Mourned by her cousins Eva and Jack Furmanovsky, Helen (Didi) Robertson and many friends of long standing.

**Companion/carers**

**Live-in** housekeeper required from March for active, elderly

gentleman. Non-smoker. Ability to drive advantageous but not essential. Please telephone 081-204 8850 mornings for further details.

**Lady non-smoker** to help handicapped lady in Hampstead. For further information please phone: 071-586 1963.

**Nurse - SRN**, West Hampstead has vacant large, sunny room, bathroom 'en suite' in friendly atmosphere for senior citizen - long or short stay. Tel: 071-328 6631.

**Full/part-time** companion required for elderly Hungarian lady in Golders Green. Live in/out. Phone: 081-455 0038.

**Miscellaneous**

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**Ladies alteration work** collected and delivered if required. For quick service phone: 081-455 0168.

**Girl - 17**, Strasbourg, seeks exchange visit this summer. Contact Lindsay, 4 Rue Liberte, 57200 Remelfing, France. 010-33-87982849.

**'A Prayer for Peace'** Jewish/Christian discussion on the Holocaust, advertised for Channel 4 on Wednesday, December 8, 1991. At the last moment this programme was re-scheduled, and an AJR volunteer now urgently seeks the loan of a video from any reader who may have recorded it at its actual, unadvertised time. Prompt return guaranteed. Please phone: 081-747 3471.

**Inge Müller** (nee Levi) San Francisco (ex-hostel Belsize Park) would like to meet friends in London. Phone: 081-769 5849.

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## An artist's view of history



Lew Levy - circa 1936. Laura Meyer-Levy 1988.

Among the items displayed on the Judaica stall at last December's Belgrave Square Synagogue Bazaar was a selection of watercolour paintings of 'Jewish' street scenes. Their distinctive quality, choice of subject and sensitive execution drew admiring glances from the casual browser and enquiries from more deeply interested visitors.

A conversation with the artist revealed the details of a fascinating story. Laura Meyer-Levy was born in Berlin in 1934 to a Jewish father and a mother whose background was predominantly Prussian-Protestant. Her father had relatives in England and had acquired British nationality, which stood him in good stead when he decided to leave Berlin for London in 1938.

Laura and her mother stayed behind. When war came, the latter, an employee of the International Red Cross organisation, was posted to Poland and Laura was evacuated to a village in Silesia where she was looked after by the headmaster of the local school. Early in 1945 she was rejoined by her mother and the two of them made their way back to Berlin, first through the German, then the Allied lines. For a time, the family was reunited, but Laura and her mother did not manage to come to this country until 1950. They settled in Nottingham where Laura studied art and took a University degree. She came to London, worked in advertising for ten years, but since then has devoted herself exclusively to her true vocation: creative visual art.

She converted to Judaism when she married Moss Levy; and she became increasingly absorbed in the study of Jewish

costumes and lifestyles through the ages. She set to work, completing picture after picture, in watercolour or pen and wash, or in collages using the same materials as those of which the dresses she reproduced were made in actual fact. Her research led to some astonishing discoveries. Thus she came across an illustration in a mediaeval haggadah, now housed in the British Museum archives, which gave her the idea for a portrait of Süsskind, the Jewish troubadour. Other source material provided the background for pictures of Jews in post-Renaissance Central and Eastern Europe, all illustrating with meticulous accuracy the Jewish dress of the period. For work on more recent themes she frequently relies on sepia photographs and reminiscences, not least those of members of her husband's family who came from Dublin to the East End around the 1860s. Thus one of her most successful paintings is that of an Irish-Jewish fishwife offering her wares (presumably *not* cockles and mussels). The model for this subject was one of her husband's aunts.

Laura Levy's inspiration is her deep interest in British working-class culture coupled with her specialised study of costume history. 'I am fascinated by the life of street vendors, particularly Jewish ones, whose ways contrast so sharply with today's supermarket culture, and I am anxious to ensure that they are not forgotten even if their trades are now extinct.' Whatever other subjects she has tackled, she always comes back to her Petticoat Lane stallholders. She continually adds to her collection, determined to perpetuate, as the

## SB's Column

**'Die Wessely'.** Paula Wessely could be called the most original, prominent and popular among the German-speaking actresses of this century. Now aged 85, retired and shy of publicity, she is remembered for that very quality of withdrawing within the interpretation of every rôle she performed from the 1920's to the Mid-Eighties. Paula Wessely's voice will remain glorious in the memory of anyone who ever heard her.

**Contemporary Austrian female poets** was the theme of a recital evening by Angelica Schütz at the Austrian Institute, London where, in a versatile and beautifully flexible voice, she read poetry by Ilse Aichinger, Alma Johanna Koenig, Stella Rotenberg and Kaethe Braun-Prager.

**Birthdays.** Evelyn Künnecke, who recently celebrated her 70th birthday, is a German actress in her own right. Her father Eduard Künnecke (1885-1953) was one of the best-known German operetta composers from the Twenties to the Forties (not least because after 1933 so many of the others were banned). Much of his work is forgotten today but the catchy 'Ich bin nur ein armer Wandergesell' from the operetta *Vetter aus Dingsda* has remained a classic.

**Obituary.** Curt Bois has died in Berlin aged 91. Older Austrian theatre-goers may recall Bois's extraordinary start to his career in Vienna in 1928 in the role of Schlesinger Effendi in a comedy *Leinen aus Irland*. The Nazis drove him to America where he appeared in the screen classic *Casablanca*. Postwar he failed to achieve true prominence in Germany - as an emigré who had, moreover, acted under Brecht in East Berlin. His last major film role was in Wim Wender's *Der Himmel über Berlin*. The Austrian composer Ernst Krenek, who died aged 91, aroused Nazi ire with his 'decadent' musical *Jonny spielt auf* in 1927. He, too, emigrated to the States, where he remained. Krenek was one of the outstanding representatives of Twentieth century music. □

talented visual artist she is, the knowledge of an Anglo-Jewish working-class culture which is now no more and in remembrance of her husband's forebears, who were so much part of it.

□ David Maier

### NOTICE

Due to unforeseen circumstances Alice Schwab's 'Art notes' column will not appear this month. However it will return in April.

## Where do you put your cross?

With the election campaign gathering pace it may be opportune to consider whether the 1992 poll will have a specific Jewish dimension. On present evidence it looks extremely unlikely. On issues of special concern to Jews – Israel, the Palestinians, minority rights, race relations – the main parties all take a broadly bipartisan approach.

Given that policies are roughly similar, can one say that any party fields significantly more Jews among its top team? Here the Tories are marginally ahead of Labour with Malcolm Rifkind at Transport and Michael Howard at Employment compared to the solitary Gerald Kaufman as Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary. In the Liberal Democrat team, meanwhile, Alex Carlile is

assuming some importance as Economics spokesman.

Overall the 1992 intake will probably produce a smaller Jewish presence at Westminster. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Attlee's postwar Labour government had Shinwell in a senior post, Harold Laski as guru, and about 30 Jews on the back benches, and yet it admitted Baltic war criminals into Britain and manoeuvred to abort the birth of Israel. Hereafter things changed at Westminster, and by the 1970s there were more Jews on the Conservative than Labour benches – front as well as back! The change-over inspired the *bon mot* 'Once half the Tory cabinet were Old Estonians, now they're old Estonians'.

Despite this not all Conservative leaders were tarred with the philosemitic brush. The author of the quip about old Estonians in the cabinet was – reputedly – Harold Macmillan. No one could call the next

(effective) Tory leader, Edward Heath, a friend of Israel. Margaret Thatcher was an improvement on both her predecessors, but her recent hyping of Croatia as a Christian democracy shows amazing indifference to the country's past involvement in genocide.

It can be assumed that when the votes are counted in late spring more Jews will have voted Tory than Labour, and more Jews will occupy the benches behind John Major than behind Neil Kinnock – wherever that may be. *Vive la difference!*

To express an opinion on the rightness, or otherwise, of Jewish voting preferences would be wholly invidious. Even less would I want to sit in judgment on the political coloration of 'our' elected Members. And yet I own to a sense of dissatisfaction. A mere glance across the Channel shows how much more exciting the French-Jewish political scene is than our home-grown one. There the 'whizz kid' Laurent Fabius has just been invested as heir to President Mitterand, the lawyer Robert Badinter formulated the EC's conditions for recognising Slovenia and Croatia, Dr Bernard Kouchner heads the (partly self-created) Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, and Arts Minister Jack Lang has elevated the motto 'When I hear the word culture I reach for my wallet' into official policy. (Would it were so here!)

Compared to this glittering *pleiade* our homegrown Howards, Kaufmans and Lawsons do look dispiritingly grey. Come back Disraeli, brocade waistcoats and all!

□ R.G.

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## The Miller's Tale

'Great genius is to madness near allied.' Profound insight, or a cliché? Probably – if Cambridge is anything to go by – a mixture of both.

Cambridge University boasts of having produced more Nobel Prize winners than any other in Europe, yet its luminaries have not infrequently appeared deranged. Isaac Newton laid the foundations of Modern Physics – and dabbled in alchemy and the occult. Bertrand Russell advocated the 'nuking' of the Soviet Union only a few years before he headed the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The Apostles were a Cambridge-based semi-secret society of seekers after philosophical truth, several members of which eventually joined another secret society dedicated to a different goal known as the KGB.

As can be expected where rarified intellectual activity shades off imperceptibly into

the wilder fringes of lunacy the odd Jew will make his appearance. In the case of the 'Apostles' it was Jack Klugman who acted as liaison man with Soviet Intelligence.

A generation later Cambridge attracted more attention through its cabaret performers – e.g. Beyond the Fringe – than its spies. The Beyond the Fringe team were all multiple talents. Dudley Moore could as easily have become a pianistic prodigy as a screen 'idol' and Alan Bennett a history don as a playwright (though as a historian-cum-playwright he turned in an overly sympathetic portrait of the Cambridge spy Guy Burgess).

Then there is Doctor Jonathan Miller, a veritable Renaissance man: polymath, medical researcher and populariser, comic, operatic innovator and theatre director. Of Miller it can truly be said (as I have said, in verse, of George Steiner) that his brains have gone to his head. When two theatrical productions had been cancelled on grounds of finance he not only severed his link with the Old Vic, but put the Atlantic Ocean

between himself and his native country where such things could happen!

This is not the only part of his background that Johnathan Miller is uneasy about. One of the quips that earned him early fame was 'I'm not a Jew, just Jew-ish.' The gag masked a deeper truth: Miller is none too comfortable in his Jewish skin. A trip to Israel prompted the insensitive and condescending comment that the kibbutz is a bit like a progressive English boarding school, for instance Bedales.

Now his biographer Michael Roamins tells us that any mention of the Jewish community or Judaism affects Miller like the proverbial red rag does a bull. Truly 'genius is to madness near allied'.

But take comfort, reader, all is not lost. Steven Spielberg, the Hollywood prodigy responsible for *ET* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, has just announced his return to traditional Judaism 'with Friday night meals, lit candles and homebaked *chala*'. (Another miller's tale, perhaps!)

□ R.G.

### Search Notices

Information is sought about Hans B. Daniel, born ca 1925 and his sister Ilse Daniel, born ca 1922, formerly of Pfeilshoferweg 24, Hamburg-Wellingsbüttel. Last known address 199 Albemarle Road, Beckenham, Kent. They left Germany in 1937. Mother's maiden name remembered as Meht. Information wanted by Mrs Gisela Jackson (nee Koop) and her sister Hildegard, formerly of Hamburg-Wellingsbüttel. Please contact: G. Jackson, 12 Margate Road, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs. FY8 3EG. Tel: 0253-724384.

**Adolphine Fischer**, Austrian, corset-maker. Last known address 15 Villa Road, Brixton, London SW9 (in 1944) or 35 Ross Road, South Norwood, London. Any information to: C. Chaplin, 130 Victoria Road, Kirkby in Ashfield, Nottingham NG17 8AT.

I wish to trace three former school friends, with whom I attended the Charlottenschule in Breslau from 1928–34. All were born about 1917–19. They are:

**Ruth Perl**, who lived at the Jewish orphanage at Graebtschnerstrasse,

**Steffi Bartenstein**, who lived at Victoria-Strasse,

**Steffi Pukacz**, whose parents were separated. I am hoping that these three have survived somewhere. It would be lovely to meet up again in old age.

Ruth Engemann, Hauzenbergerstr. 26, 8000 Muenchen 21

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## Hitler groupie

He thrives on publicity stoked with controversy, has an academic bloodhound's nose for historical documents, views Hitler as a towering historic figure, and sees himself as an apostle to the present-day Germans. He speaks excellent German and has been described by the late A. J. P. Taylor, as 'a total nuisance to serious historians'.

David Irving belongs to the school of revisionists who seek to controvert evidence about the massacre of the Jews in the extermination camps in Eastern Europe. Curiously, he does not totally deny the Holocaust . . . just its extent and the methods employed. Like all revisionists he

'teaches' that the story has been doctored by Zionists for obvious purposes. Also, he is the firmest, most vocal proponent of Hitler's non-involvement in the slaughter.

Until now. On 12 January *The Observer* broke the news that Irving has obtained from a person in Argentina the memoirs of Adolf Eichmann, which make it clear that the Führer himself gave the orders for total annihilation. Irving, who has always maintained the opposite, was pensive in his comments.

'Ninety per cent certain' that the Eichmann papers are genuine, he has sent them, he states, to the German Federal Archive in Koblenz. In evaluating his attribution it should be remembered that he pronounced the 'Hitler Diaries' a forgery. He now reportedly feels that he may have to admit error in his estimation of Hitler's role in the Holocaust, but he backpedals somewhat by saying that Eichmann 'believed these to be Führer orders'.

### Going public

What of the 'history' of Mr Irving himself? He first 'went public' as a 24-year-old student in 1959, when he tried to introduce racist elements into the Students' Union at Imperial College.

The following year he solicited the Wiener Library for information about the Allied air raids on Dresden in February 1945. Irving's book, *The Destruction of Dresden* appeared in 1963. His figures of the dead in that raid have been widely challenged. Next he was involved in the controversy over Rolf Hochhuth's play *Soldiers* implicating Churchill in the murder of the head of the Polish government-in-exile General Sikorski. Hochhuth had allegedly relied on the historical expertise of Irving, who engaged in a televised altercation with the Argentinian journalist Carlos Thompson (the husband of Lilli Palmer).

In 1970 Captain John Egerton Broome sued David Irving and the publishers of his book *Convoy PQ17* for libel. Capt. Broome was awarded £40,000 damages; an appeal failed.

Though Irving's writings sometimes show ambiguity, his passion for documentation does preserve a measure of logic and reason. But in Germany he delivers harangues from neo-Nazi platforms urging 'the German people' to shed the sense of guilt and responsibility for the past.

Last November he appeared in two TV programmes, Channel 4's *Dispatches* and ITV's *This Week*. Both were sharply criticised in a subsequent *Right to Reply* as being sensational and frightening. He also stage managed the London appearance of American Fred Leuchter and Frenchman Robert Faurisson 'to enlighten people about the largest confidence trick of all time, the 'Holocaust' '.

□ John Rossall

## VERSE AND WORSE

### JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

Up the fast lane to salvation –  
Beatitude, canonisation –  
Floats a soul without compassion  
For our people in its passion.  
Beware lest future ages say  
'Sufficient unto the Opus Dei . . .'

### MELVYN BRÄGG

A walker from the fell, he  
Talks taller on the telly  
What formula could be neater  
Than 'Wordsworth, meet Lolita!'

### DESERT ISLAND DISCS

'Half a century, Sue, howzat!'  
Quipped the PM, in to bat,  
But which dim BBC planner  
Forgot to RSVP Diana.  
Lady Mosley whose apt choice  
Was the 'ennobled' William Joyce?

### LE PEN

Petaïn's refrigerated sperm  
Makes Liberals and *resistants* squirm  
Calls gas chambers a bagatelle  
And conjures up a racist hell

## 40 Years Ago this Month

### THE KING

King George VI who died last month, distinguished himself by simplicity and stringent modesty. As far as his associations with Jewry are concerned, the late King always showed an interest in Jewish charity. He graciously consented to become a patron of the Jewish Orphanage.

In doing so he was following the example of his three predecessors and maintaining a tradition begun by one of the most remarkable of Jewry's royal friends in Britain, the Duke of Sussex. With his two brothers, this uncle of Queen Victoria in 1809 attended a memorable Friday evening service at the Great Synagogue, where it is said the royal party's attention was equally engaged by the splendour of the interior, the admirable singing and the beauty of the ladies gracing the galleries. The Duke of Sussex not only eagerly supported Jewish emancipation; he went so far as to study Hebrew and frequently took the chair at Jewish public dinners. His oldest brother, on the other hand, the later William IV, was rather less broadminded. At the time of the debates on Jewish emancipation, he actually urged the Bishop of Ely "always to vote against the Jews."

*AJR Information March 1952.*

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## Guilt by disassociation

As recent exchanges in our correspondence columns show, the debate about the involvement of the German people in Nazi crimes rages on. Some contend that the secrecy surrounding the Final Solution absolves ordinary Germans of guilt. Their opponents argue that the genocide was on a scale which required the connivance of thousands of soldiers, civil servants, railway workers and others.

When cornered, the proponents of German ignorance-cum-innocence retort that criticism from outside is facile; in a totalitarian state dissenters court martyrdom, and ordinary people are not made of the stuff of martyrs.

### Facts – not opinions

Thus the debate goes on and, fuelled by generalisations and rhetoric, generates more heat than light. What is needed are demonstrable facts, and not reiterated opinions.

Was it a fact, for instance, that the German people were unable to thwart the will of the Führer in any particular? The answer is that it was not! As a race fanatic Hitler subscribed to the 'eugenic' idea that the improvement of German blood stock necessitated the culling of the handicapped and feeble-minded. He therefore ordered a mercy-killing programme which, having claimed thousands of victims, was eventually called off because it affronted the millions related to those victims.

### Popular victories

From this two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, if opposition to a dictator's edict goes with the grain of public opinion, the need for dissenters to sacrifice themselves does not arise. Secondly, the German people broadly approved of whatever else Hitler did. Admittedly, his unleashing of war was not instantly popular, but the victories over Poland, and later France, soon transformed apprehension into triumphal euphoria.

What about genocide? The unvarnished – and uncomfortable – truth is that the 'missing' Jewish neighbours did not upset ordinary Germans to anything like the same degree as the Euthanasia victims. Jews were 'others' – beings from whose fate the German man in the street could emotionally disassociate himself.

Should anyone doubt this, let him ponder the recent statement by Steffen Reiche, the Social Democrat leader in Brandenburg: 'The distress over the mountain of Stasi files is far worse than the reaction to the mountain of corpses from Auschwitz'.

□ R.G.

## Obituaries

### Ernst Krenek

Vienna-born Ernst Krenek, who died in California, was as old as the century. Of Catholic military background, he studied music under Franz Schreker, following his teacher to Berlin in 1920. There he was briefly married to Gustav Mahler's daughter Anna. 1927 saw the premiere of his hugely successful *Jonny spielt auf*, which introduced jazz rhythms into opera several years ahead of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Banned as 'decadent' in Hitler Germany, he returned to Vienna in 1933, only to find rehearsals for his epic opera *Charles V* called off, at Nazi prompting, by Education Minister Schuschnigg. In 1938 Krenek emigrated to the USA, where he lived thereafter as teacher and composer. Visiting his native Vienna occasionally, he attended the premiere of *Charles V* in 1984 – exactly fifty years after it had originally been scheduled. □

### Wolfgang Nelki

Berlin-born Wolfgang Nelki, who died aged 81, was forced by the Nazi takeover to switch from the study of law to that of dentistry. Working as a dental surgeon in South London, he numbered the residents of Nightingale House, the Jewish Home for the Aged, among his clients. Though Jewishness had originally played little part in Wolfgang Nelki's self-perception, his attitude changed subsequently. He carried out thorough researches into the antecedents of his own family, to which the publication *The History of a German-Jewish Family* (reviewed in this issue) bears witness. He repeatedly contributed to this paper and took a lively interest in the efforts of the AJR.

Wolfgang Nelki will be sadly missed in his steadily diminishing circle of friends.

They feel united in their sense of loss with his wife, Erna, and his children. □ W.R.

### E. Leviné adds:

Just after the war Wolf Nelki sent food parcels to former German left-wing friends to help them over hard times. He also made many new friends in Hannover through his talks at the university. To many of these younger Germans Wolf became a father figure. Their parents had belonged to the generation that had supported Hitler, and were therefore the people who had driven Wolf, and so many others, from Germany. Many of the younger Germans – now middle-aged – had broken off all contact with their Nazi parents. It was very important to them to make up for their parents' actions, and to welcome Wolf back to Germany. Wolf and Erna were very moved by these tokens of friendship, and this has been conducive to the process of healing old wounds from the Nazi past. The University of Hanover honoured Wolf and Erna by publishing a part of his family history and also an account of her life by Erna. □

### Edith Vogel

Czernowitz-born Edith Vogel who has died aged 79 came to Vienna as a child. She studied piano under Mme Wally Loew and was just beginning to establish herself when the Anschluss drove her to England.

Only able to resume her concert career after the war, she was eventually appointed Professor of Piano at the Guildhall School of Music, where she became a legend. Her master classes, too, became something of an institution.

In 1950 she had married a polio victim and forever after subordinated her piano playing to her wifely duties. □

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## Premier from Pinsk (Part I)

In an extract from his book *OLD ADAM NEW EVES* (Vision Press, £8.95) Richard Grunberger looks at the life of Golda Meir. Part 2 will appear in April.

The 1960s witnessed a break with a host of traditional attitudes and usages. One innovation little remarked on at the time was the assumption of political power in some countries by women. Mrs Bandaranaike became prime minister of Ceylon in 1960, Indira Gandhi followed suit in India in 1966, and Golda Meir in Israel in 1969. (Mrs Thatcher's premiership, the next in the sequence, commenced in 1979.) Misogynists with a bent for history must have recalled the mid-sixteenth century when a conjunction of several female rulers prompted John Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. The latter were, of course, all crowned heads. Although four centuries had elapsed, two of the afore-mentioned women prime ministers resembled the targets of Knox's trumpet blast in owing high office to inheritance rather than merit: Mrs Bandaranaike was the widow of Solomon Bandaranaike, the previous premier of Ceylon, and Indira Gandhi the daughter of Pandit Nehru.

The only female prime minister of the '60s who owed her elevation entirely to merit was Golda Meir. Even Mrs Thatcher, who entered politics as something of an outsider, enjoyed advantages of background, education and wealth through marriage that Golda Meir could not even dream of. Golda did, however, resemble Maggie in being a grocer's daughter – that is if a woman who peddles loaves of homebaked bread from door to door merits the appellation grocer. Mrs Bluma Mabovitch was obliged to eke out a living in this manner because hers was, temporarily, a one-parent family. Her carpenter husband's skill had once earned them the right to reside in Kiev (where Golda was born). After a few years discrimination and fear of pogroms had driven the father to try his luck in America, and the rest of the family were obliged to return to Bluma's hometown, Pinsk. This was an agglomeration of drab dwellings inhabited by 50,000 souls, a third of them Jews; its main characteristics were muddy, unpaved roads and close proximity to the malarial Pripet Marshes. The conjunction of poverty and unhealthy environment had taken its toll of the Mabovitch progeny.

Five of the eight children having failed to survive infancy, Golda had just two sisters: the eldest Chana, and Zipporah, the 'baby'.

One day when Golda and some of her little playmates were building mud castles in an alleyway, they froze as they heard the neighing of horses and thunder of hooves. Within seconds mounted Cossacks were upon them, slashing at the air with whips and sabres. By a miracle the horses jumped clear of the little huddled bodies; as the murderous cavalcade moved on, the alleyway echoed to cries of 'Death to the Jews'. At this time, the early 1900s, the Czarist authorities deployed Cossacks as readily against striking workers and left-wing demonstrators as against Jews. Not surprisingly, some young Jews espoused the left-wing cause; others subscribed to the Zionist vision of returning to Palestine. Revolution, Socialism, Jewish self-help, Zionism – all these ideas were debated by Chana's teenage friends and became part of little Golda's mental universe early on.

When Golda was eight her father sent for the family. After a strenuous journey they arrived in Milwaukee, only to find no proper accommodation awaiting them. They took a couple of rooms at the back of a dingy store which Mrs Mabovitch, reluctantly assisted by Chana and Golda, turned into a grocery catering for penurious customers in the neighbourhood. The father meanwhile worked as a railway carpenter.

In Milwaukee Golda went to school, but not regularly. Every so often, when Mrs Mabovitch had to go to market or elsewhere, Golda was obliged to play truant and mind the store; the mother's stock reply to the girl's protests would be, 'So you'll be a learned lady a day later!' In other words, the Mabovitch's hardly conformed to prevalent notions of all Jews being education-minded and most immigrants progressing from rags to riches. But for all that her father lacked ambition – a self styled building contractor, he always remained a railway carpenter – and her mother's horizon hardly extended beyond the walls of the grocery, Golda showed a spark from early on. At the age of 10, finding that while schooling was free in America school books were not, she organized a fund-raising drive to purchase books for needy classmates. When she was 12, in addition to working hard at school, in the grocery and at home all week, she put in Saturday stints at a local department store.

The completion of her High School education brought on a crisis. She had set her heart on becoming a teacher, but Mrs Mabovitch, who knew that women teachers had to be single, vehemently opposed the

idea. 'You want to be an old maid?', she screamed, 'Is that what you're studying for?' Golda's father supported his wife and the 14-year-old was given the alternative of going to work or taking a secretarial course. A third possibility was also mooted: matrimony. A 28-year-old estate agent had become attracted to the pubescent girl and approached the parents. When Golda pointed to the suitor's age being twice her own, she received an assurance that he was willing to wait a couple of years.

The 'proposal' compounded her anger over the frustrated teaching ambition and Golda decided to leave home. Helped by a friend she ran away to her married sister Chana in Denver. Here she proved as headstrong as she had done in the parental home. Provoked by Chana's censure for staying out late, she moved into a furnished room and went to work in a laundry.

Around this time she met Morris Myerson, a sign-painter of Russian-Jewish origin, who took her to a concert on their first date. The bespectacled, outwardly unprepossessing Myerson impressed her with, as she put it, his 'beautiful soul'. When her father wrote agreeing that she undertake teacher training, Golda moved back to Milwaukee. She was now secretly engaged and the flood of Myerson's letters aroused her mother's suspicion. But, as it turned out, parental disapproval jeopardized the burgeoning love affair far less than Zionism, which in 1917 – year of the Balfour Declaration adumbrating a Jewish National Home in Palestine – took on overwhelming importance for Golda. Myerson showed himself extremely reluctant to join her in the pioneering existence in Israel in which she had set her heart. □

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