

AJR Information

Volume LIII No. 8
August 1998

£3 (to non-members)

Don't miss ...

AGM report
Ronald Channing p3

**Walter Benjamin
and Judaism**
Jane Edwards p13

Imploding Empire
Trevor Phillips p16

Re-run of 1936?

In Ancient Greece the Olympics provided cherished periods of peace amid warring city states. The modern Olympics were meant to serve the pacific ideal worldwide – yet the 1936 Games boosted the warmonger Hitler.

Football, a sport designed to sublimate aggression, presents the same contradiction. World Cup hooliganism is only one facet of it. Another is the effect of a team's performance on national morale. After England's 1966 victory, for instance, UK emigration figures dropped.

This year's prodigious Croat team viewed football as an extension of war (of which they have considerable experience). To see the arch-xenophobe President Tudjman gloat over their victory could put a politically informed person off football for ever □

Reflections on the link between soccer violence and politics

The Cup and the sword

World Cup football is – to coin a mixed metaphor – a double-edged sword. On one hand it intermingles multitudes in goodnatured rivalry; on the other it provides an outlet for bloodcurdling xenophobia. This year the first discordant note was struck by English soccer hooligans. Drunk, destructive and sporting Cross of St George tattoos, they reminded the French that 'if it wasn't for us English you'd be *krauts*'.

Apart from inculcating history lessons, their main aim, however, was simply to wreak havoc for its own sake.

German soccer thugs are differently motivated. They came to France hellbent on attacking dark skinned *Kanacken* (i.e. North Africans as substitutes for their usual Turkish victims back home). But in addition to hating all non-Whites, they are also viciously anti-French. This Francophobia is a survival of the Nazi mindset. To Hitler France was the *Erbfeind* (hereditary enemy) which had humiliated the Germans from the burning of Heidelberg through the Napoleonic Wars to the Versailles Treaty and the Occupation of the Ruhr.

If vestiges of Hitlerism become manifest among today's Germans, it is – however reprehensible – not totally surprising. But when the same thing happens among Russians, it is not merely bizarre, but absolutely perverse. To Hitler the Slavs were inferior beings, only one degree above the Jews; their very name denoted slaves (which they actually became under Nazi rule).

Yet we find that in today's Russia, which still hasn't

made good its human and material losses from Hitler's war, Nazism holds a marginal attraction. It feeds on the populist desire for a man in uniform whose sword will cut through the Gordian knot of contemporary problems.

Like German Francophobia, Russian power worship has deep historical roots. The Tsar gloried in the title of autocrat – which is a pejorative term in the West – and was venerated as such by the Orthodox Church. (By coincidence, the Russian-Orthodox Church has recently resorted to the Nazi practice of burning books it considers subversive.)

Elsewhere parts of the Slav world are so overshadowed by strong men – Croatia's General Tudjman, Serbia's Milosevic, Slovakia's Moczar – that genuine democracy still struggles to be born. The worst autocrat of all is President Lukashenko, the mini-Stalin of Belarus. The West's withdrawal of ambassadors from Minsk – incidentally, the former site of a Nazi death camp – is as needful a measure as the deployment of police against soccer hooligans □



AJR members attending this year's Annual General Meeting in London. (See report page 3).

A 'mixed' marriage

The thought of "English" Jews as being different to continental Jews comes from Jews themselves. There is nobody imposing definitions from outside.

Those who came to Britain in the thirties caught up with "English" Jews who had come from Poland and Russia one or two generations earlier, and maybe the latter seemed a lot more at home, having carved out their own Jewish niche here. Their grandparents may have travelled through Germany on their migration decades earlier, and as *Ostjuden* were sometimes not made too welcome – by emancipated German Jews. Some years ago, my family were driving west from Czechoslovakia into Germany, and I had a strange experience at a motorway service station. We were parked next to a Moslem family all travelling in a dormobile and a young woman in a headscarf was watching us. I remembered my father saying his family had come to Berlin from the east, probably hundreds of years ago. I suddenly thought, my equivalent then would have looked like this woman, travelling west,

wearing a headscarf, bundled up in something like a shawl.

I'm married to an "English" Jew – there, I've admitted it! We both see some differences between our families, which fascinate us. "Continental" Jews seem to value more worthy leisure pursuits – classical music and art exhibitions are a better way of spending the time than going to the cinema or just eating fish and chips. "You know" said a relative of mine, "they just go out and enjoy themselves!" A discovery – leisure time can be for sheer enjoyment, it need not be to improve the mind!

We've also witnessed some alarmingly thoughtless remarks. When we were engaged, we were invited by my aunt – lovely woman, did a lot of charitable work – who laid on a super tea. "Personally" she said over the smoked salmon sandwiches, apropos of nothing, "I can only take English Jews one at a time". My fiancé mused on this inexplicable remark and decided to say nothing and eat another sandwich, having mentally bracketed her with another relative who had asked us: "Are you getting married on a Saturday or a Sunday?"

On his side of the family, a relative had exclaimed over a discussion of the guest

list: "You've only got a small family!". I just couldn't bring myself to say anything, (such as "have you ever heard of Adolf Hitler?") nor that my paternal grandmother had been one of ten siblings, their families either murdered in concentration camps or scattered to North America, South America, South Africa, Canada, Israel and no doubt other places. I didn't really know where to start.

"English" Jews, having been here a while, have had more generations to establish their particular religious rites. The first shiva I ever attended was for a relative of my fiancé. On hearing where we were off to, my father said he had never been to a shiva. "Does no-one ever die in this town?" asked my fiancé. My father thought that most amusing, but then looked thoughtful – maybe the whole institution of the shiva had passed him by. Or maybe, when one is painfully aware of relatives who were murdered, whose death was unmarked by any sign of respect, it's very difficult to participate in a mourning ritual for anyone else.

We're all English now, aren't we; maybe it just feels good to remember and have pride in one's original culture.

□ Hazel Stein

Profile

A varied career

In the eighteenth century European Jewry numbered barely in excess of a million. Subsequent improvements in hygiene and nutrition greatly boosted numbers; some families thrived and became veritable dynasties.

One such were the Brainins, who went from Byelo-Russia to Vienna and established themselves as furriers and in the textile business. Jussi Brainin was born after the Great War and, having attended a textile trade school, left for Huddersfield in Yorkshire to acquire additional skills. In this way he escaped the Anschluss.

He then switched to marine insurance and moved to London. Here he met and did spare time journalism for Vladimir Jabotinsky, the rightwing Zionist (and 'spiritual father' to Begin and Netanyahu). He also met and married a fellow-refugee, who happened to be the niece of Hans Kelsen, the architect of the Austrian Constitution.

Within days of the wedding he was interned, but speedily joined the Pioneer Corps. Transferring to the Royal Engineers in 1943 he was assigned to Movement Control, where preparations for the Normandy landings were made. The powers that be then seconded him to *Intelligence to do German interpreting and edit a camp newspaper for POWs.*

Postwar he moved his young family to Canada and began to deal in Life Insurance. Being a 'political animal' he also joined the left-of-centre National Democratic Party – a far cry from his *Betar* upbringing – which put him up as their prospective parliamentary candidate against one Pierre Trudeau, who went on to become Canadian Prime Minister. (In compensation Jussi was appointed Austrian Vice-Consul in Montreal).

In the late 1970s the Brainins recrossed the Atlantic and settled not far from Oxford, where their daughter was studying. In England, identifying a gap in the market, Jussi set up a management consultancy for insurance brokers from which he retired only a few years ago.

Journalism has always been a favourite sideline of his. Though published in the *Statesman* and the *Literary Review*, he knows he cannot compete with his daughter Carol Angier, who writes for *The Independent*. She has also produced a life of Jean Rhys and is currently engaged in a biography of Primo Levi.

□ RG

Fidelio at Somerset House

The Austrian Government marked its accession to the Presidency of the European Union in grand style. It transmitted *Fidelio* live from the Vienna State Opera to the capitals of all 15 member states.

In London the transmission was shown on Wednesday 1 July on a 42 sq metre screen in the great court of Somerset House to an audience of over 3,000. Big-screen technology is constantly improving; both the sound and picture quality were amazingly good and the evening was greatly enjoyed by the audience. The performance was part of the London Festival of European Culture.

□ PF

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Closer relationship with Otto Schiff Homes

At the Annual General meeting of the Association of Jewish Refugees, held on 21st June at the AJR Day Centre in Cleve Road, Chairman Andrew Kaufman highlighted developments worthy of particular attention.

During the past year the Association had welcomed 196 new members. At the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre, the Madeleine Brook bridge evenings and the Luncheon Club, with its guest speakers and outstanding catering, had proved great successes. With an ageing membership the AJR's social services were

The sum of £850,000 was being granted (as a non-interest bearing loan) to Otto Schiff for the rebuilding of Osmond House in The Bishop's Avenue.

A sub-committee had been formed to discuss ways to bring together the various 'second generation' groups, perhaps under the umbrella of the AJR. The 'second generation' already constituted a clear majority of the Management Committee.

The Chairman introduced the AJR's newly appointed Chief Executive, Michael Radbil, who in addressing the meeting, looked back on his first 21 days in office with much pleasure as he discovered the various activities of the organisation. He was confident that we can all build on the excellent infrastructure he had seen in order to continue serving the members



AJR Chairman, Andrew Kaufman, highlighted recent developments at the AGM. (Left to right) Eleanor Angel, Secretary, David Rothenberg, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, and Michael Radbil, Chief Executive.

coming under increasing pressure and, in addition, were taking responsibility for a further 80 clients from World Jewish Relief.

The AJR was justifiably proud of the rigorous intellectual standards set by the editor of its monthly journal *AJR Information*. Appreciation was also expressed both for the invaluable contribution made by AJR's 170 volunteers, as well as for the professionalism and devotion of the AJR's staff.

While an excellent relationship existed with the Otto Schiff Housing Association and its Chairman, Alan Blacher, ongoing discussions between the AJR and Otto Schiff were aimed at moving the two organisations even closer together with the common objective of improving the lives of AJR residents in OSHA homes.

of our community for many years to come, and looked forward to his role in leading that process.

In his summary of the Financial Report, Vice-Chairman and Hon. Treasurer David Rothenberg expressed his confidence that the Day Centre's annual subsidy (up to £250,000) was money well spent, as were expenditures on welfare, the fastest growing sector. The AJR would have to budget carefully to meet the anticipated increase in help required by the refugee community in the next few years.

Those members of the present Management Committee standing for re-election were returned to office unopposed.

Judge Dawn Freedman gave a most entertaining and anecdotal talk on 'A view from the bench'

□ Ronald Channing

PARTNER

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Reviews

Singer of the sewing-machine song

Robert Bober, *WHAT NEWS OF THE WAR* trsl. Robin Buss, Hamish Hamilton, £13.99.

In the first half of the century the Paris rag trade was, like London's, largely located to the east of the city. It was also, like London's, largely created and staffed by Jewish immigrants from Poland. The Parisian counterpart to Brick Lane was the inappropriately named Rue de Turenne – inappropriate because the Vicomte de Turenne had been one of the Sun King's marshals.

Immigrant tailors employed around the Rue de Turenne were among the chief victims of wartime roundups by the Vichy police. Astonishingly, even after the war the garment district retained its Jewish character, though among its denizens there were hardly any who did not mourn lost close relatives.

Bober populates his linked stories with workshop owners and garment workers who escaped physical annihilation, but bear deep psychological scars. He manages, none the less, to keep the tone wryly humorous, *pace* the book's Sholem Aleichem-derived title: (We'd rather talk about something pleasant)... what news of the war?

One tale is of grasswidowed workshop owner M Albert who, chancing his arm, asks his attractive non-Jewish employee Mme Andrée out for a meal. To his amazement the seamstress accepts. At dinner *à deux* he is embarrassingly tongue-tied while she grows voluble, relating her younger sister's tale of woe. A Nazi soldier's sweetheart, the sister had her head shorn at the Liberation and is forced to bring up her half-German child in the house of the grandparents who are 'dying of shame'. Would M Albert, please, give her a job? The question startles the workshop owner. He has sufficient work for another seamstress, but, inwardly contrasting the pretty petitioner's metaphorically dying parents with his own literally dead ones, he says 'No' – and forgoes the chance of an extra-marital fling.

I have retold this story in some detail to whet readers' appetites, but the rest of Bober's collection is equally affecting. I urge everyone to order – or at least borrow – this book. (In fairness I must

declare an interest: Robert Bober was a child refugee, spent years in the tailoring trade, switched to teaching and has literary ambitions). *Il est mon semblable, mon frère.*

□ RG

Badly flawed heroes

Isaac Bashevis Singer, *SHADOWS ON THE HUDSON*, Hamish Hamilton, 1998, £16.99.

The action takes place in postwar New York and its environs; the protagonists are nearly all Holocaust survivors or their close friends and relations. But the master, as is his wont, is not overflowing with sympathy for them. Had he not been a Jew to his backbone, one might sometimes mistake him for an antisemite. The story's badly flawed hero Hertz Dovid Grein is involved in serial adultery. While his wife Leah is dying of cancer, he lusts after Anna, the daughter of millionaire businessman Boris Makaver. In the latter's gloomy but hospitable house all the characters assemble to argue and observe Jewish festivals.

Anna, though currently married (for the second time) reciprocates Grein's feelings, while her spouse goes quietly mad and is eventually found dead. Makaver curses his daughter in good old fundamental Jewish fashion, and the lovers elope to Florida where they are socially ostracised. They promptly flee from paradise.

Meanwhile Makaver discovers that his business is going bust for the simple reason that Anna was the brains behind it. He promptly revokes the curse, and she manages to save a good portion of their fortune. Coincidentally, Grein takes up with another mistress, Esther, whose husband is a hyper-active con-man.

La Ronde goes on with the sudden emergence of Yasha Kotik, a comedian who trod the boards from Berlin to Broadway. Kotik also happens to be Anna's divorced first husband, and they remarry.

The twists and turns of the plot and sub-plots of this 548-page novel could stand comparison with Dickens.

Bashevis Singer has a gift for seasoning his mix with what one might call "one-liners" from Scripture in all its various forms. With them he both damns and pities all those aforementioned damaged Jewish lives.

□ John Rossall

Suffer the little ones

Janina Fischler-Martinho, *HAVE YOU SEEN MY LITTLE SISTER?* Vallentine Mitchell, 1998, £14.50.

The literature of Holocaust testimonies is substantial and growing steadily. Janina Fischler-Martinho's volume is a worthy addition to the canon. The prose is taut and lyrical, studded with striking imagery as it recounts the author's experiences in the Cracow Ghetto and her escape with her brother through the city's sewers.

The author skilfully reconstructs a child's view of horrors half-understood and miraculously survived. The claustrophobic world of the ghetto, with its kindnesses and cruelties, its thefts and gifts, its allies and enemies, is powerfully, palpably re-created. The abrupt and merciless attacks of the Germans – which devastated the besieged ghetto community – are heart-breakingly retold. Her honesty in describing what others might have glossed over attests to courage and integrity.

Surprisingly little history has been written about war-time Cracow, capital of the Nazi *Generalgouvernement*. The city – its ghetto, its camp, its enamelware producer – are known primarily through the fictions of Keneally and Spielberg. This book easily matches the intensity of its predecessors but is stamped with the moral authority of lived experience.

Are Holocaust testimonies valuable? Yes, incomparably so. They remind us, amid the welter of statistics and lists, theoretical constructs and interpretations, that it was people – men, women, children – who were harried and tormented and destroyed. These testimonies confront us with the wholly human struggle to rebuild lives and come to terms with the unbearable.

By themselves history books are not enough, can never suffice. We need to hear from those who were there. We need this book. And we need more like it.

□ Ben Barkow

Copies of Peter J Perry's book *An Extraordinary Commission*, £20, can be obtained from T J Gillard Print Services Ltd., Trident Works, Temple Cloud, Bristol BS39 5AZ. Tel: 01761-452530 Fax: 01761-452451 □

50th ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

'Die Fledermaus' by Johann Strauss

This year the AJR celebrates its Golden Jubilee Concert and to mark this special occasion a fully staged and dressed performance of 'Die Fledermaus' by Johann Strauss is being presented at the Queen Elizabeth Hall by Carl Rosa Opera on Sunday 13th September at 2.30pm. The operetta is to be sung in German with a narration in English. The Northern Chamber Orchestra will be conducted by Wyn Davies and a splendid cast has been assembled with Marilyn Hill Smith as Rosalinde and Alan Beck as von Eisenstein in the principal roles.

It was a reluctant Johann Strauss who, by the time he composed this operetta in 1874, had already achieved worldwide fame as the master of music for the dance: galops, polkas and especially the waltz. He had no ambition to write for the stage and it was only the advice of Jacques Offenbach in 1865: "You ought to write operetta, Herr Strauss," followed by the persuasive Max Steiner, who was the Director of the *Theater an der Wien*, and his wife who pleaded with her 'Schanl', which finally persuaded him.

Die Fledermaus is Strauss' third operetta. It is based on a French comedy by Meilhac and Halevy, *Le Reville*, the writers of which had provided Offenbach with the brilliant libretto for *La Belle Hélène*. Strauss found the story interesting, but what must have excited him was the fact that it centred on a ball and once in the ballroom Strauss was in his element. And so in a burst of activity he is said to have produced the score in six weeks.

Die Fledermaus had its première in the *Theater an der Wien* on the 5 April 1874. From the opening notes of the overture the score is packed with unforgettable melodies and arias and, of course, the waltz with its lilting refrain, not to mention the spoken dialogue, a feature of Viennese operetta, with comic use of the Viennese dialect of Frosch the gaoler.

It was not a propitious time because, before Strauss had finished the score, Vienna and all Austria suffered Black Friday when the bottom fell out of the stock market. The audience may not have been in the best of spirits, but who can doubt that at least for the evening they forgot all their troubles and worries, and were readily persuaded to adopt the maxim proposed by Rosalinde, von



Soprano Marilyn Hill Smith, lead singer in 'Die Fledermaus'.

Eisenstein and her admirer Alfred in the first act: "*Glücklich ist, wer vergisst, was doch nicht zu ändern ist*" (Happy is he who can forget what cannot be changed).

After many delightful twists and turns, disguises and deceptions, all is revealed. The erring husband Gabriel asks his wife Rosalinde for forgiveness. He neatly transfers the blame for his misdemeanours to the effects of champagne – an idea that is readily taken up by all the company. They toast champagne as the king of all the wines, leaving the audience in a state of happy intoxication.

□ Dr Kurt Schapira

The *Fledermaus* Box Office is open at the AJR office with seats at £15 and £20. Tel: 0171 431 6161. Credit card bookings can be made direct with the South Bank Centre Box Office. Tel: 0171 960 4242.

Tainted ancestry

The Nazis' obsession with racial purity made *Abnenforschung* (research into ancestry) a major preoccupation during the Third Reich. When, following the Anschluss, researchers turned their attention to the antecedents of the Strausses, Father and Son, they made the unpalatable discovery that the Waltz King was of part-Jewish descent. At that point all further investigation of the matter stopped. Rumour even had it that Nazi officials cut out the 'incriminating' document from the parish register at St Stephen's Church □

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Letters to the Editor

A RABBI SPURNED

Sir - The article which appeared in the June issue is, in my view, a doctrinaire treatise, which fits badly into an otherwise excellent edition.

I do not think that the one-sided propaganda in favour of one rabbi in one of many synagogues in this country is a subject that has any bearing on the problems facing elderly refugees. The belittling attitude shown towards the Chief Rabbi as representing *only* 80% of the Jews in this country shows the writer ignorant of the fact that antisemites do not distinguish between Non-Progressive and the remaining 20%: we are all tarred with the same brush.

It is not the place of the AJR to criticise the conduct of other organisations. In any case Rabbi Winer was democratically elected by 77% of the members of the West London Synagogue, and not simply appointed by the council (a method used by many other institutions).

I do not wish to be associated with the very rude description of the new rabbi; whatever the writer may think of him, he is a learned person and has served communities for many years. To be disrespectful in the way she has done, shows an attitude foreign to most members of the AJR.

Mill Hill, London NW7

HE Reiner

GOLDEN BOWL

Sir - Being a British-born Jew, your journal never used to interest me. For the past few years I have read it with growing interest. Perhaps it is because the authors and readers are no longer refugees. They are now full blooded (not bloody) British citizens. A couple of issues back you referred to your members 'marrying out' when they married Anglo-Jews.

Perhaps the cricketing term 'Not Out' could apply. In the case of our marriage, the only area of total lack of contact is cricket. My wife has never developed the slightest comprehension of the game. Perhaps a series of articles on cricket would complete the anglicising of your readers. Alternatively they may cause a rapid diminution of your readership.

London NW11

John M Davis

SHOCK

Sir - I was shocked to hear that some Jewish religious teaching organisations have made it taboo to talk about the Holocaust or even to mention the word.

I now realise to my dismay that we refugees are regarded as second-class people by Orthodox Jews; they call us cowardly and are ashamed of us. There is also a whisper going around that the Holocaust was punishment for not keeping to the Jewish laws.

I would like to share my feelings with fellow refugees.

Oakhill Park

Herta Reik

London NW3

THE BALKAN AUSCHWITZ

Sir - According to a recent news item Dinko Sakic, the Croat camp commandant of Jasenovac, where tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies were murdered manually - the German *Vorsprung durch Technik* not having reached them yet - lived in Argentina, when he was found by a TV crew. The Government of Croatia claimed him as their own, and he was duly extradited home to end his days in tranquillity.

You may remember Germany pressuring the rest of Europe to recognise her Croatian ally very prematurely at the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Ipswich

Frank Bright

Suffolk

SECOND GENERATION

Sir - I have discussed the effect of the Holocaust on the second generation, and their 'special needs', with my own children (now in their 30s and 40s). They were horrified that this should be thought necessary. All three felt that this was a way of building up a 'Holocaust industry', creating jobs, and diverting money from the people who really suffered.

Mill Hill

Daisy Berger (née Wyscher)

London NW7

'RETURN' TO FRANKFURT

Sir - For the past eleven years the municipality of Frankfurt have been

inviting former Jewish citizens. This year 138, over half of them from the US, accepted the invitation.

I feel that people who won't go back there, even for a visit, are failing to respond to the Oberbürgermeister's attempts to achieve reconciliation. The authorities spared no effort in arranging a suitable programme for us; what matters more is that they have made generous provision for the present-day Jewish community in the town.

I was, however, appalled to find an ultra modern office building on the site of the old Boerneplatz Synagogue, just round the corner from the old cemetery wall bearing the names of murdered Jews.

Netherall Gardens

Harry G May

London NW3

AJR WITHOUT R

Sir - Why not leave out the even more pejorative J as well as the R? The A for Association could then become simply ASS.

Highgate

H Fisher

London N6

Sir - I wholeheartedly agree.

May I suggest replacing the R with S for Survivors - so we become the Association of Jewish Survivors.

Ludlow

Mrs G Chinn

Shropshire

EATING WORDS

Sir - Permit me to offer an alternative version to the Editor's hypothesis about the origin of the 'beigel'. In the aftermath of the Sultan's defeat in 1683 the Viennese *kipfel* (croissant) was originally shaped to reflect the Turkish half-moon, to mock the beaten enemy.

This *kipfel* remained popular with the inhabitants of the old Austrian empire. Eventually some immigrants introduced it to the USA where it soon found general favour. However, the *kipfel*, with its two sharply pointed ends did not lend itself easily to mass production - but American ingenuity soon found a solution. All they had to do was to join the two spikes to produce a torus or ring-form. And so the bagel was born a 'variation on a theme' à l'Americaine...

Richmond

C P Carter

Surrey

CULINARY HERITAGE

Sir - I opened the *Habana* in 1956 as one of the first Espresso bars in London.

From small beginnings I expanded and I created 3-course luncheons for 5/- etc., serving some 250 lunches daily.

In 1978 I finally sold up to spend more time with my family. I felt I had made my contribution to provide good food at competitive prices, and in so doing, provide a home-from-home for many of our people.

New Barnet, Herts

Eric Richmond

Sir - There are two Austrian restaurants left in London, the *Kerzenstüberl* near Bond Street station, and the *Jägerhütte* in Queensway, Bayswater.

Heton Gardens

Mrs A Saville

London NW4

FOOTBALL CRAZY

Sir - For a few years after the war I played football for the Austrian F.C. As our members were mostly Jewish pre-war refugees, we had a very limited number of players to call on, and were often struggling to field a full team.

Imagine our dismay when one of our better players, Erich Eisinger, told us, one Saturday afternoon, that he had just played his last game, as he and his family were emigrating to Australia on the then £10 assisted passage scheme.

Much to our surprise, only about 18 months later, Eric was back. Upon being questioned he confirmed that his job prospects in Australia were excellent, the weather was great and the beaches wonderful; his problem was he just could not stand the poor quality of the football 'down under'. When asked why it took him 18 months to find that out, he replied; "It didn't, but with no £10 return passage on offer it took me 18 months to save enough money for the fare back to England".

Radlett, Herts

Bruno Muller

Sir - I am football crazy - I am football mad!

Here I am in front of the TV shouting advice and directions, but they can't hear me. Perhaps it's in the blood. My father was mad about football, especially as his brother Julius Hirsch (Juller) played for Germany. Born in 1892 Juller joined the KfV *Karlsruher Fussball Verein* when he was ten, became a national player and took part in the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm.

In 1933 he had to leave the club. It broke his heart that he could no longer even watch his beloved KfV. (Apparently a sympathetic gate keeper took pity on

him and let him watch secretly.)

In 1942 my uncle was sent to Auschwitz, never to be heard of again.

P.S. None of my three grandsons play football!

Stock

Ruth Sellers (née Hirsch)

Essex

Sir - Your amusing article "My cup overfloweth" (July issue) brought to mind the identical quotation but in connection with a different team of eleven.

Let me explain: Recently, I went to Israel to attend the brit of my eleventh grandchild, where I prefaced my remarks with this quotation. I was able to speak in Ivrit which I had learned at the Jewish School in Duesseldorf in the 30s "Kossi Revaya" (Ps 23 v 5). I could not resist quoting from the Hagada "*Achad Assar Mi Yodea?* Who knows eleven? I know eleven." Eleven are the stars (in Joseph's dream). In my case, the eleven grandchildren who were all present at the Simcha.

My son named the baby "D'ror" (Freedom) from the verse in Lev Ch 25 v 10 where it is connected with the Jubilee Year which Israel is now celebrating.

Brighton

M Sulzbacher

East Sussex

FAMILY REUNION

Sir - I want to thank you for publicising our search notice for Ernest Neustadter (June issue). Several of your readers made contact, and I am sure you and they will be happy to know that Ernest has now been reunited with his long lost family in Chile.

Archival Researchers

David Lewin

156 Totteridge Lane

London N20 8JJ

EDITOR'S MEMOIRS

Sir - John Rossall's review of C.C. Aronsfeld's autobiography (July issue) does not mention that the latter has written numerous articles on the history of the German community in Bradford from about 1850 until the beginning of the First World War. Many, but not all, members of that community were Jews. Despite being relatively small in number, the German community made a remarkable contribution to the commercial and cultural life of Bradford before 1914.

Mr Aronsfeld is now regarded as a leading authority on this particular topic.

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AJR News

AJR 'KARD KLUB' TO OPEN IN SEPTEMBER

All-day-play a main attraction

Young in spirit AJR members show tremendous enthusiasm for playing cards and other equally enjoyable games. To meet the many requests for more opportunities to play, one day in every week is being set aside at 15 Cleve Road, NW6, exclusively for the benefit of card players – bridge, kalooki, etc – as well as for lovers of chess, scrabble and dominoes. The AJR pledges that any known game will be obtained if a sufficient number of people wish to play it!

All games-playing AJR members, and others eligible for membership, are invited to come and give the new 'Kard Klub' a flying start when it opens for the first time on Monday 7th September at 9.30am. Kard Klub begins the day with a refreshing cup at the members' Morning Coffee Bar before play commences. Play can then continue uninterrupted until 12.30pm, at which time a delicious full buffet lunch with wine will be served, with a choice of main dishes, vegetables,

salads and deserts, followed by tea or coffee. Play recommences after lunch until 3.30pm. When the weather permits, players can transfer their games out into our beautiful garden.

For a day's uninterrupted play, morning coffee and a full buffet lunch with wine, a charge of £8 is made. Due to the limited space, numbers may have to be restricted so, as the demand for places is sure to be keen, both existing and new members are advised to reserve their Kard Klub places as early as possible by telephone on 0171 328 0208. Sylvia, Renée and Susie look forward to warmly welcoming you on Monday 7th September together with all members of their staff and AJR's volunteers.

'Kard Klub' will meet every Monday from 9.30am to 3.30pm, so make it a regular date in your diary, and why not ask a visitor who would be eligible for membership to join you at the tables?

□ RDC

'Flutter of butterflies'

Members were warmly welcomed by Marina Smith and her sons Stephen and James on what has now become AJR's annual visit to the Beth Shalom Holocaust Memorial Centre in Nottinghamshire.

We were seated in a temple-like rotunda built of creamy adobe bricks, with a single stained-glass window showing a mother and her children on the move. Stephen Smith recalled how his family, following a visit to Israel, decided to devote their lives to a study of the Holocaust and an examination of the roots of antisemitism.

After an excellent lunch, we toured a peacefully-designed garden with numerous rose bushes planted in memory of Holocaust victims by survivors and friends. We then went downstairs into the exhibition which featured portraits of Nazis and the many shameful acts perpetrated on their victims in pursuit of the 'Final Solution'. Approaching the first exhibit, I heard the eerie strains of the

Horst Wessel song from the soundtrack of a Nazi propaganda film. The atmosphere was both sombre and claustrophobic, creating an aura of incarceration.

Back in the rotunda, in his response to questions from the floor, Stephen Smith displayed a knowledge and pronunciation of Hebrew and Yiddish words that was astonishing. For the most part, his answers reflected his experiences over recent years.

As the coach pulled away for our journey back to London, Marina Smith gave us a farewell wave. Even on this rainy Sunday it had been a bright day. I had attended a union of sanity and tolerance; saw and heard everything with which I could identify; knew that the extra magic came from being reminded of it by a Christian determined to educate the younger generation. I resolved to pray for a thousand Stephen Smiths throughout the world. 'The flutter of a thousand butterflies moved a single wisp of air' - if there were a thousand, would it move more than a single wisp?

□ Eric Donner

Luncheon Club's second successful year

AJR's extremely popular Luncheon Club, which meets on the third Wednesday of the month, has concluded its second season with yet another full house. Guest speaker Issy Gold JP, who presided over the Islington magistrates' bench, regaled members with humorous anecdotes and reminiscences. Any kleptomaniacs in the audience he advised to shop in jewellery stores rather than supermarkets so as not to waste the court's time on trivia!

A sparkling programme has already been arranged by the Luncheon Club committee for its third season, commencing on September 16th with a talk at the keyboard by Henry Roche, pianist to the Royal Ballet, on his ancestor composer-pianist Ignaz Moscheles, a contemporary of Mendelssohn and Brahms. As always, it is advisable to book well in advance to secure a place and avoid the waiting list. (24 hours notice of cancellation is essential to avoid forfeiting a refund).

The Luncheon Club offers AJR members not involved in other activities, as well as prospective members, good companionship and an additional interest. This coming season, to cover the cost of providing an exceptional three-course luncheon with wine, we are charging £8, an absolute bargain. Telephone bookings to Sylvia, Renée or Susie on 0171 328 0208.

□ Anne Marx

AJR 'Drop in' Advice Centre at the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre

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

AJR MIDLANDS GROUP

Military memoir

Herbert Layton, recently recovered from serious injury, took a humorous look at his experiences while he was serving as a soldier in North Africa, Italy and Greece during World War II.

After demobilisation he settled in Gloucester where, in addition to his profession as an entertainment organiser, he was elected a councillor, became an active member of a number of its committees and eventually council leader.

□ EG

A Midlands Group garden party will take place on Sunday 2nd August at 2.30pm, at the home of Mrs Henny Rednall, 70 Holly Lane, Erdington.

AJR NORTHERN GROUP

Anne Frank remembered

Herbert Levy spoke about his work with the Anne Frank Educational Trust whose main purpose, since its establishment in 1991, is to promote and organise a travelling exhibition in Britain on the life of Anne Frank. He was its enthusiastic principal guide. The exhibition, he said, had been launched at Southwark Cathedral last year by Tony Blair, then leader of the Opposition, and was fully booked well into 2001.

The Trust also tackled other racist issues, in an attempt to ensure that genocide will not be re-enacted, and encouraged people of all faiths and ethnic origins to take part in its work.

On what would have been Anne Frank's 69th birthday, a tree-planting project was initiated, supported by leaders of all the main political parties.

□ WL

New computer



Joanne Fresco, receptionist and secretary at the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre, navigates her way through the programmes of the Centre's new Pentium 200 PC computer □

... Viewpoint ...

Terms of engagement

While formal marriage ceremonies appear to be on the decline in the Western world, the purchase of an engagement ring set with a rose-cut diamond remains as popular as ever in Britain. Indeed, the increased sale of diamonds, which was 14 percent last year, continues.

The ritual is initiated with the couple's nervous entry through a jeweller's doors, a necessary preliminary to what signifies the prospective groom's first serious step to convince his bride-to-be, and her anxious family, that his intentions (not necessarily honourable during the courtship) do now culminate in leading her up the aisle or under the chupah, rather than up the garden path.

In common with Eastern and other communities where ostentatious displays of wealth as a bride-price are essential to secure a tryst of the highest status, the size and quality of the stone are of paramount importance. Jewish 'princesses' traditionally require at least two carats of flawless crystallised carbon to wear with pride, guaranteed to evoke the chagrin of their less

fortunate contemporaries.

This is where the De Beers corporation comes to the assistance of our young couple. Thoughtfully, they have managed to control the production, distribution and pricing of some two-thirds of the world's sales of new diamonds, so no time needs to be wasted in shopping around. 'Advising' that a minimum of two months' salary should be expended, from £5-£7,000 (verified by Alan Keller Jewellers) should secure a good show. (It's possible to get by with less and half-convincing promises of eternity rings).

This otherwise totally irrational financial outlay at a time when all other of the couple's resources are devoted to the most practical of priorities, is diluted by the vague notion that diamonds for ever possess a high intrinsic value. Who am I to disturb this myth? But really only stones of the highest quality should be considered as investments.

Good luck, and may the bride wear it during a long and happy life – shared with its donor. Now that's another old-fashioned custom I'd like to keep!

□ Ronald Channing

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Afternoon entertainment programme -

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1998

Sun 2	CLOSED - TISHA B'AV	Tue 18	A medley of music for piano, Stephen Baron
Mon 3	Julie Leyland, soprano and Andrew Wills, piano	Wed 19	Julie Leyland, soprano and Andrew Wills, piano
Tue 4	Freddy Harari & his music	Thur 20	Dorothy Sayers, piano and accordion
Wed 5	David Jedwab & Avril Kaye with piano accompaniment	Sun 23	NO ENTERTAINMENT
Thur 6	Sarah Tyler, mezzo and Angela Rourke-Grayson, piano	Mon 24	The Geoffrey Strum and Helen Blake Duo
Sun 9	NO ENTERTAINMENT	Tue 25	Jack Davidoff entertains
Mon 10	Fenella Humphreys, violin and Gemma Webster, piano	Wed 26	Guyathrie Peiris and William Patrick, piano
Tue 11	Edita Zuravskaitė, soprano and Virginia Zdanype, piano	Thur 27	Armand d'Anjour, cello with Isobel Koprowski, piano
Wed 12	Suzanne Bezkorvany, cello, Sergei Bezkorvany, violin and Hermione Goldsmith, piano	Sun 30	NO ENTERTAINMENT
Thur 13	Jenny Kosew and her accordion	Mon 31	CLOSED - BANK HOLIDAY
Sun 16	Shirley Gurevitz, soprano and Anne Berryman, piano	Tue 1	Katinka Seiner, Laszlo Easton and Peter Gellhorn
Mon 17	The Geoffrey Whitworth Duo	Wed 2	Sue Kennett, soprano and Gordon Weaver, piano
		Thur 3	Judi, Bimbi and Rufus Merri-Frowde and June Moore, piano

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deaths

Bing. Heinz Bing born Berlin 17.1.15. died peacefully 13.6.98 after a long illness. Will be sadly missed by his wife Gabi, his three daughters, sons-in-law and five grandchildren.

Dzialiner. Elsa Dzialiner-Loewenthal, born in Gnesen 7.10.1906, died peacefully on 25 June 1998 in London. She devoted her life to the welfare of others and was greatly loved by her family of nieces and nephews in London, Haifa, Vienna and New York. Henry Kuttner.

Hartman. Tania Hartman who died 30 May will be very sadly missed by her friends Erika, Lilo and Steffi. May she rest in peace.

Lindsay. Edith Lindsay (Herzberg) died age 79. Dearly beloved by family and friends.

ANNIVERSARIES

Diamond Wedding

Benjamin. Hilde and Walter Benjamin celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary at a party at Eleanor Rathbone House last month. They have been closely connected with the AJR for many years. They acted as caretakers at an AJR sheltered bedsitter house from 1977 until their retirement to Eleanor Rathbone House in 1985. Both also did valuable work as volunteers, Hilde helping with meals-on-wheels, and Walter with the printing of address labels for *AJR Information* before these were computerised. We wish them many more years together in happiness and good health.

Golden Wedding

Hacker. Lilli and Sam Hacker celebrated their golden wedding on 6 July. Mazeltov and love. Richard, Sarah and Rebecca.

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Miscellaneous

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Art Notes

The influence of political satire on the course of events during the reigns of James I, Charles I, II and James II, is brought to light in a comprehensive exhibition **The Print in Stuart Britain 1603-1689** at the British Museum until September 20. The print is an art form in which the British have excelled, and it was during the 17th century that the range and scope of printmaking vastly increased. This splendid exhibition of 214 prints gives an overall picture of the production of masters such as Hollar, Vorsterman and Barlow, as well as many other talented artists.

The British Museum also offers a rare opportunity to see **Watercolours by J M W Turner from the R W Lloyd Bequest**, which have never before been put on display together. The collection includes the wonderfully fresh views of the Rhine which Turner painted in 1817, twelve of his dramatic and poetic watercolours of England and Wales and the striking view of Mont Cenis in a snow storm at night.

Venice through Canaletto's Eyes, at the National Gallery until October 11, consists of 23 paintings and drawings exploring how the artist produced the sweeping views of his beautiful native city. Canaletto's views are not simply accurate depictions of buildings and perspectives, but with subtle modifications capture the feeling of the city and the gracious life of the times.

The retrospective exhibition of works by **Patrick Heron** (born 1920) at the Tate Gallery, is a well-deserved, if belated, tribute to one of the leading figures in 20th century British art, who has played an important role in the development of post-war abstract art. Included are some 80 paintings dating from the 1930s to the 1990s, all of which are predominately concerned with colour, which, he once said, is "both the subject and the means, the form and the content, the image and the meaning in my painting." This vibrant, luminous display reflects the work of a mature artist, superbly conveying his personal artistic vision. Until September 6.

The Warhol Look: Glamour Style Fashion, at the Barbican until August 16, illuminates how style and fashion min-

gled with the world of contemporary fine art and film throughout Andy Warhol's life and work. Containing over 500 works, the exhibition also features other



A Drinker, Jostias English, active 1649-1656, etching, at the British Museum.

artists such as David Bailey and Gianni Versace, and includes paintings, clothing, photographs, archival materials, illustrations, reconstructed period window displays, film and video.

□ *Barry Fealdman*

SB's Column

Vienna. The Volksoper, built as a second opera house in 1898 (for the golden jubilee of Franz Joseph's coronation) is one hundred years old. During that period some famous musical directors such as Felix Weingartner guided the house which, in 1929, was temporarily taken over as Neues Wiener Schauspielhaus by Jakob Feldhammer and a very young Otto Preminger; they made a less than successful attempt to create a 'theatre for the people' with a programme ranging from Schiller and Wedekind to modern comedy, and employing stars like Hans Moser and Curt Bois. Reverting to its original name in 1932, it has become home to opera, operetta and musical, and will display its versatility during the jubilee season 1998/99 with contrasting highlights: Wagner's *Meistersinger* and Lerner-Loewe's musical *Gigi*.

The Diary of Anne Frank has become a symbol for all innocent victims of persecution and wrongful incarceration. A melodramatic mono-opera about the short and tragic life of the young diarist, composed by Grigori Frid, the administrator of a Moscow youth club, was performed in Vienna in May this year. Israeli soprano Anat Efraty sang the part of Anne.

Exiled Voices. A number of gifted opera singers left Europe during the Nazi era. Hungarian-born bass-baritone Friedrich Schorr, a Wotan and Sachs of distinction (Covent Garden 1926-1933), emigrated to the United States, where he died in 1953. Ukrainian bass Alexander Kipnis, whose career took him to London (1927 to 1935), Bayreuth and Salzburg, was a brilliant King Philip, Gurnemanz and Ochs. He spent his latter years in Chicago and at the Met in New York, settling there afterwards.

The life and work of Richard Tauber whose lyrical mellow tone was unequalled by any of his contemporaries, are well known. Brilliant as a Mozart tenor and star of Lehar operettas (*Paganini*, *Land of Smiles*) he came to Britain in 1938, where he sang and conducted till his untimely death in 1948 □

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Odyssey

Second and third extracts from the unpublished MS of a Viennese Jewess whose husband obtained work in Estonia after the Anschluss. Within two years the family experienced Soviet occupation and German invasion.

At the height of summer we were ordered to pack up for another transfer. Our men came back from the brick factory. To my consternation Kurt hobbled on crutches. Through an infected wound on the sole of his foot he had got a thrombosis and was not allowed to step on the affected leg. Otherwise he looked well and was in good spirits.

When we were all ready and packed up to move, our departure was postponed by twenty-four hours. It was a balmy summer evening, I did not really want to go to sleep yet, especially on the bare boards that were left. In the yard I met up with a kindred spirit, an engineer from Vienna with whom I had occasionally discussed music. We settled down on a bench and whistled the whole of Beethoven's violin concerto in unison. That truly was an evening to remember.

Next morning we walked to our customary cattle train. It was not really so far to go as it had seemed in the winter when we arrived among all that snow.

This journey was certainly more bearable than the one in winter. We passed stations with beautiful flowers and saw women in cheerful print dresses, mostly in red.

I went on my usual search for water. Once a soldier threatened to shoot me if I turned my head round again; I had only tried to see if my companion was following me. In another station the train stopped far away from the well. That entailed a rather frightening experience. We had to climb either over or under stationary trucks to get to the well. We could not know if a train was suddenly going to move. While the buckets were empty we could be quick but when they were filled with water it was really nerve-racking. After four days we arrived in Karaganda in Kazakhstan.

Frau Faust had been terribly fat when she first came into the camp; we speculated that she might be pregnant. But a year and a half later she was thin

and suffered terribly from hunger. Therefore she chose to work at night in the kitchen peeling potatoes to earn a bit of extra food. One day there was a terrific snow storm. The men had to dig out little paths between the huts and the kitchen. I felt young and strong and offered to accompany Frau Faust to the kitchen because the snow storm was raging again. We wrapped ourselves up well and fought our way through the storm. It was pitch black, the driving snow obscured our view and the wind took our breath away but we made it. Then I turned back, heading for my hut. Suddenly I felt myself sinking deeper and deeper into the loose snow until it reached my waist. I could not move any more. Also I could not see the guiding light in the window of my hut. I was blinded by the snow and the storm took my breath away. In this desperate situation I threw my torso flat on the snow and slowly scrambled my legs free, then started to crawl on all fours to distribute my weight.

Eventually I saw the light in the window and reached home. In the morning, when the wind had abated I examined where I had gone wrong. The men had built a snow wall to protect the path to the kitchen. In the dark I had missed the path and got into the loose drift at the wrong side of the wall. It could have ended in tragedy.

□ Edith Sekules

Exile studies

Each year the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg invites a speaker who has made a contribution to the cultural life of German-Jewish refugees. This year Hans Seelig, Chairman of Club 1943, was the invitee.

The evening began with a projection on to a screen of photographs of the Seelig family prior to emigration. This was followed by a student reading from Hans Seelig's account of his departure from Germany in a Kindertransport. He then spoke in person of childhood experiences of persecution and isolation and the psychological problems of emigration – but mainly about the origin, activities and present state of Club 1943. The 40-strong, predominantly young audience asked questions which revealed a great curiosity about the refugee experience (as well as concern over the survival of Club 1943) □

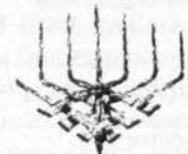
NEWS FROM OTTO SCHIFF HOMES

Happy 100th birthday

Hedwig Rosenthal – one of the AJR's earliest members – enjoyed her 100th birthday party together with her many friends at Heinrich Stahl House where she has been a resident for 20 years. She was born in Oeventrop, Germany, one of seven children.



An independent-minded lady, who until quite recently enjoyed a game of cards, she continues to take a pride in her appearance and enjoy the social scene. □ RDC



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Walter Benjamin and Judaism

In 1915, the 22-year-old literature student Walter Benjamin met the 17-year-old mathematics scholar Gerhard (later Gershom) Scholem. Both were from bourgeois German-Jewish families, neither of which were especially religious. The two young men were, however, to become two of the most important intellectuals of our century – Benjamin a singularly influential literary critic and philosopher, and Scholem the founder of the modern academic study of Jewish mysticism. Their common ground of Judaism, and their growing intellectual ‘anarchy’ within it, had brought the two young men together and was to remain the one constant in their friendship, which was at its apogee from 1915 to 1923 (after which they met only twice, continuing their relationship through letters) and which ended in Benjamin’s suicide, while attempting to flee the Nazis, in 1941. The deep ideological rifts which were to develop in their thinking brought considerable friction to their friendship, but they also brought about some of the most fascinating intellectual correspondence of our time.

Walter Benjamin’s thinking had become so highly idiosyncratic by his mid-twenties that his examiners at Freiburg University claimed not to be able to understand his doctoral dissertation, and failed him. As a result, Benjamin was never able to obtain a university post either within Germany or abroad.

Benjamin’s unique method of literary criticism was profoundly, perhaps incorrigibly philosophical, abandoning all convention in favour of a radically experimental ‘fragmentary’ style, often employing literary collage. He wrote that: “Just as mosaics preserve their majesty despite their fragmentation into capricious particles, so philosophical contemplation is not lacking in momentum ... the value of fragments of thought is all the greater the less direct their relationship to the underlying idea”. For him, truth was only available in fragmentary form, an idea which was later central to his personal understanding of Judaism.

In the realm of language and linguistics, Benjamin’s early work on a ‘pure’ language greatly influenced his friend Scholem during the latter’s famous work on kabbalistic linguistic theory. Benjamin believed that the principal function of

language is not to give information but to gain personal access to a superior knowledge; he saw the ultimate goal of translation as to show that ‘pure’ language and ‘pure’ meaning are, in the end, incommunicable.

Both Benjamin and Scholem were actively involved in Jewish youth movements during their student days, during which time Scholem switched from his mathematics doctorate to study Judaism. At a time of intense European nationalisms, Scholem found refuge in religious Zionism, emigrating to Palestine in 1923, while Benjamin’s concern lay in his conflicting German and Jewish identities. Like Kafka, he found his Jewishness to be revealed mainly negatively through its “impossibilities”.

Benjamin’s principal contribution to twentieth-century Jewish philosophy lies in his startling combination of revolutionary socialism and Jewish messianic thinking. His work, while undeniably related to Judaism, had become increasingly Marxist-orientated from the late 1920’s onwards; he was markedly influenced during those years by both Franz Rosenzweig’s *Star of Redemption* and Georg Lukacs’s *History of Class Consciousness*. However, his socialism increasingly isolated him from Scholem, who profoundly disapproved of Benjamin’s dialectical works, claiming them to be a “self-deception”, and who lamented over Benjamin’s friendship with the likes of Bertolt Brecht.

Even at the height of his Marxist phase in the 1930’s, however, Benjamin wrote that: “My writing relates to theology the way a blotter does to ink – It is soaked through with it”.

Benjamin himself saw little contradiction between his Jewish messianism and Marxist revolutionism. While acknowledging the metaphysical discrepancies he found in communism, he was irresistibly attracted to its call for urgent action: “The concept of progress”, he wrote, “should be grounded on the idea of catastrophe. That things ‘just carry on’ is the catastrophe”. Nor did he attempt to conceal his messianic beliefs, speaking of “every second of time” as “the straight gate through which the Messiah might enter”. For him, messianism was indelibly bound up with social revolution, and he constantly attempted to explain his beliefs to an unimpressed Scholem, writing to him for example in 1926 that: “‘justified’ radical politics will always be serviceable for Judaism and ... will find Judaism service-

able for itself”.

Judaism also provided the foundations of Benjamin’s most important work in linguistic theory. He rejected Martin Buber’s concept of language being unable to express the essence of revelatory experiences, claiming instead that: “The Bible, in regarding itself as a revelation, must necessarily evoke the fundamental linguistic facts”. Benjamin was fascinated by the idea of Adamic language, and in his linguistic analysis of the Book of Genesis offered a socialistic interpretation of the human fall from ‘being’ to ‘having’. More optimistically, he maintained that the seeds of redemption and revelation were also contained within language.

In 1933, Benjamin was still in Berlin, having repeatedly ignored Scholem’s exhortations to join him in Palestine, where he had obtained a stipend for Benjamin at the fledgling Hebrew university. Benjamin described the claustrophobia of Nazi Germany in a letter to Scholem that year: “The air is hardly fit to breathe any more ... which, of course, loses its significance, as one is being strangled anyway”. Subsequently leaving for Paris, Benjamin ultimately found himself trapped in occupied France and was sent to a detention camp in 1940. He committed suicide in 1941 during a difficult attempt to cross the border into Spain at Port-Bou. His collected writings were published by Gershom Scholem and Theodor Adorno in 1955.

That Benjamin’s works, unpublished and practically unread during his lifetime, should now be revived almost sixty years after the extinguishing of his short life brings to mind Benjamin’s own idea that “Knowledge exists only in lightning flashes. The text is the thunder rolling long afterward.” □ Jane Edwards

50 YEARS AGO

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

A correspondent makes the suggestion to adopt a new name for the Association of Jewish Refugees. As a matter of fact, a large number of Board members of the AJR had already proposed an alteration of the name. Whilst at that time it was considered premature to carry out the proposal, the time now seems to be ripe to take up the discussions again.

Although the tasks of the AJR have by no means diminished, they have no doubt been greatly transformed in the course of the last two years. New waves of refugees have wandered over the world since the group for which the Association speaks settled down in this country □

AJR Information, August 1948

Cooking with Gretel Beer



Coffee Brick

No cooking is required for this delicious gâteau, but as the size of boudoir biscuits can vary quite considerably, it is impossible to give the exact numbers of biscuits required. Simply aim for a square-shaped gâteau!

Boudoir biscuits
5oz (140g) unsalted butter
5oz (140g) icing sugar
3 - 4 egg yolks
1 teaspoon vanilla sugar

3 tablespoons very strong black coffee
1 small carton (5 fl oz) single cream
Dash of rum
Whipped cream and finely ground coffee beans for decoration

Cream together butter and icing sugar until very light and fluffy. Gradually beat the egg yolks, vanilla sugar and 2 tablespoons of the coffee.

Tip the single cream into a soup plate and add the remaining tablespoon of black coffee and a dash of rum. Pull some boudoir biscuits quickly through the cream - one by one so that they do not become soggy - and arrange them side by side so they form a square. Spread some butter cream over them and cover with more boudoir biscuits which have also been pulled through the coffee-flavoured single cream, laying them at right angles across the first layer. Continue "building" until all the butter cream has been used up. Cover the resulting "brick" lightly with foil and set to chill in a cold place overnight.

Just before serving, mask the gâteau with whipped, slightly sweetened, cream and sprinkle with very finely-ground coffee beans □

SEARCH NOTICES

Irene Louise Valeska Brann, born 1911 in Dresden, arrived in London 1937, and collected her mother Margarete Valeska Salomon Brann née Blaschke in 1938. Married Aron Coffee in London and later went to Australia. The two ladies lived at 33 Castellain Road, Maida Vale, London W9 until Dec 1941. Relative (believed cousins) were Mr & Mrs Isaac Fine, 57 Dukes Avenue, Muswell Hill, London N10. Other persons connected to this search are **Jaques Simoni**, believed to have gone from Dresden to Casilla Correo 69, Buenos Aires, Argentina, and **Mrs I Fine** of Isalit, Caernarvon, North Wales. Anyone who could help please contact David Lewin, 156 Totteridge Lane, London N20 8JJ. Tel: 0181 446 0404.

Charlie Roberts wishes to hear from anyone who knew or is related to the following persons who were interned in Theresienstadt and corresponded with his family: Schaje and Taube Braunfeld, Pauline and Rudolf Ekstein, Ludwig and Sidonie Grunwald, Marian Moses, Alice Raab, Erich/Ernest Schiller, Armin and Rudolfine Tyroler. Also Anna Fischerova, her daughter Klara Stecklmacherova and grandson Otto. Also Natalie Feilich who was

deported to Litzmannstadt. Tel: 0171 351 4122.

Marietta Louise Moeller, née Weisz, aged about 74, living in USA or Germany, is being sought by her natural daughter Linda (Rubin) of Delaware, Ohio. Marietta arrived on Kindertransport from Vienna, had a daughter Jennifer, lived in a Jewish home for girls in Watford, Hertfordshire, and gave birth to Linda on 8 May 1947 who was adopted. Birth mother married Hans Moeller in 1948 and went to live in Germany; may later have gone to US on music scholarship (piano). Any information please contact Mrs Linda Rubin, 742 Stimmel Court, Delaware, OH 43015. Tel: (614) 363 8074.

Jewish pupils at German Schools, Jewish and non-Jewish, pre- and during Nazi era, are being sought by post-graduate researcher into Jewish education in Germany, at Glasgow University's History Department. Is prepared to travel to interview people living in Scotland, Northern England or London. Please drop a note to Calum Harvie, 18 Cochrane Crescent, Alva, Clackmannanshire FK12 5PA, Scotland.

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Obituaries

John Najmann

Breslau-born John (Isaac) Najmann has died, aged seventy-three. His parents were Polish Jews, for which reason he always felt discriminated against by his German co-religionists.

He arrived in London as a kindertransportee and originally stayed at a hostel near Portobello Road. At the outbreak of war he was evacuated to Wiltshire where he made friends with Manfred Durst; the two were to lead remarkably interlinked lives ever after. They returned to London together and took up the jewellery craft. As a sideline to doing precision work on essential war-related items – bomb-sights, altimeters, etc – they made bracelets out of three-penny bits in their spare time. This was

their way into the costume jewellery business which took off after the war. (It was in this period, too, John Najmann briefly returned to Germany to search for – and find – his mother).

Back in Britain he, and his partner, became leading jewellery manufacturers, but after the uphill climb John Najmann increasingly diverted his attentions from business to Jewish causes. He became a director of the Joint Israel Appeal with special responsibility for the legacy department, endowed a hospital wing in Ashkalon, and co-sponsored the annual 'March of the Living' to Auschwitz. It was somehow fitting that on his last trip to Israel he collapsed at Yad Vashem, dying a few days later. □ RG

All that's jazz

Benny Green, Britain's leading jazz journalist, epitomised a rare breed of well-read and self-educated West End Jewish cockney. He spent his first 34 years living in his parents' basement flat off Tottenham Court Road, crammed it with reference books and records and only left to get married. Benny reluctantly attended Marylebone Grammar School, but with the outbreak of war was evacuated to Hertfordshire's palatial Moor Park. He later recalled the incredulity of the gin-swilling couple who had two working-class Jewish boys billeted on them and soon escaped, favouring the less dangerous option of dodging Hitler's bombs in the inner city.

My own small contribution to his change of career, from that of a leading British saxophonist to a much-loved writer, broadcaster, journalist and national icon, came when I invited him to talk about jazz to a London Jewish graduates' association and later to Marylebone Jewish Society. Relying on copious erudition and humorous anecdote, he explained how he had never gone out to work and managed this privilege (supposedly the preserve of the wealthy at that time) by playing the saxophone his father had taught him in dance bands and at wed-

ding and barmitzvah celebrations.

Benny took his subject and his craft seriously, using his native wit, research skills and encyclopaedic memory to enlighten readers of *New Musical Express*, and later up-market newspapers such as *The Observer*, to glorify in the golden age of Broadway and Hollywood song-writers and jazz musicians of the 1930s and 1940s. To many more he became known through two decades of broadcasting his never-to-be-missed programme on Sunday afternoons, each a gem of information, insight and entertainment – even before a record was played.

The series of concerts he hosted at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on American (usually Jewish) composers and popular music, to full houses (again predominantly Jewish), were immensely enjoyed as pure vintage Benny. The last time I went to hear him talk, at the Sternberg Centre, he was too ill to turn up, but his charming actress wife Toni understudied, even telling his old gags. Benny bravely returned to fill his Sunday spot for the last few months. For me Sunday afternoons, which we shared with the great songwriters and jazz artists of the century, will always be Benny's. See you. □ Ronald Channing

Andrew Balint

Andrew Balint was born in Budapest in 1912, the youngest of three brothers and a sister. He was educated in the Commercial High School in Budapest and became apprenticed to his father, a grain and seed merchant.

The Balint family attempted to emigrate from Hungary before the onset of the war, but only the two younger brothers, Andrew and George were successful. They came to England and established a company, Beno Balint and Sons and also formed a strong partnership with R W Gunson Seeds, which was to become the main vehicle for their later success. The oldest brother, Paul, and their father survived the war in Hungary and joined the other two in England, but their sister Gizi and her son perished in Auschwitz.

The three brothers built up a very successful business. In 1977 they established three Balint Charitable Trusts. These trusts have made many philanthropic donations, in the main associated with the Jewish community and with Israel. There is a Balint Jewish House in Budapest which acts as a centre for Jewish cultural life. There is a Balint Wing in Nightingale House and a Balint House on The Bishop's Avenue, as well as the Paul Balint AJR Day Centre in West Hampstead, all associated with the care of elderly Jewish people. Charitable causes in Israel include colleges in Nazareth, Tel Aviv and the Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem.

The Balint Trusts also support about 200 elderly Hungarian Jews in Hungary.

Much of Andrew Balint's efforts during the last few years were devoted to the management of his and his brothers' trusts.

He was deeply faithful to the old employees of the Balint companies and with his brothers, established a trust to help those of them who fell upon hard times in their old age.

Andrew Balint was a modest, unassuming man. He showed great love to his family and friends. In October 1997 he celebrated his golden wedding with his wife, Agnes, and took great pleasure in his son and grandchildren □

NEWSROUND

German banks sued

Concentration camp victims and their heirs (up to 150,000) are suing Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank in the US to recover proceeds from plundered jewellery, coins, gold fillings and other property alleged to have been 'laundered' by them. Both banks have been researching their WWII dealings with the Nazis.

Less than neutral

The Swiss Government strongly rebutted allegations that its neutrality was severely compromised in favour of Nazi Germany during WWII. Historian Alan Schom, author of the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Centre's report, observed Switzerland's widely held belief that Germany would win the war backed by a large number of extreme right-wing associations, not least the antisemitic and nationalist Swiss Fatherland Association, which lobbied against the admission of Jewish refugees. (27,000 were admitted, but tens of thousands were turned back).

Off message

Spectrum Radio's Jewish community radio programme, which broadcasts two hours each weekday in London, may stop transmission as it is no longer commercially viable or attracting sufficient communal support, according to programme producer Pini Dunner.

Honours

Polish-born nuclear physicist and Nobel prize-winner, Prof. Joseph Rotblat, was knighted in the Birthday Honours List. Prof. Rotblat, who worked on the Hiroshima bomb, became an opponent of the possession of nuclear weapons.

Former British Forces' chaplain and Minister of Hendon Synagogue, the Rev. Leslie Hardman, has been appointed MBE. Rev. Hardman was among the first to enter Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and bring relief to its survivors.

Advanced studies appointee

The US Holocaust Memorial Centre in Washington has appointed Prof. John Roth as director of its new Centre for Advanced Holocaust Studies.

President's prize

President Roman Herzog of Germany has been awarded the Leo Baeck Prize for his promotion of Jewish-Christian understanding. Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck was a Berlin scholar and survivor of Theresienstadt who lived out his life in London. □ RDC

Imploding Empire

Broadcaster, writer and prospective London mayoral candidate Trevor Phillips, the son of Guyanan immigrants, gave the first Hugo Gryn Memorial Lecture under the auspices of the Wiener Library.

"We can hear Hugo Gryn's voice in our heads", said Trevor Phillips as he began his landmark lecture entitled *Can We Learn to Get Along?* Gryn had described this as "the century of the refugee." Even now



Trevor Phillips giving the first Hugo Gryn Memorial Lecture, "Can We Learn to Get Along?"

the tide may be running against the liberal option, said Phillips, but decency and humanity had to be weighed in the balance.

What he had learned during the making of his recent Empire Windrush series on BBC2 – an account of West Indian immigration into Britain from 1948 – had surprised him. The bright hopes of his parents' generation had been quickly soured. Fear of racially motivated attacks was still very real among the Afro-Caribbean community, with a quarter million incidents being recorded in the

last annual statistics.

For them, the Stephen Lawrence case stood as a symbol of bias by the authorities, but the racial climate could be improved, Phillips suggested, if Sir Paul Condon, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, were to make a personal apology to the Lawrence parents. A member of the Royal Household expressing similar, if belated, sympathy for the unacknowledged loss of life in the 1981 Deptford fire would similarly serve to 'include' rather than exclude West Indians living in Britain.

Black and Jew had both been misunderstood for centuries with Shylock (the Jewish usurer) and Othello (the noble savage) taken as stereotypes. Phillips also equated the slave trade with the Holocaust in that the victims of the two European tragedies were subjected to industrialised murder.

While antisemitism and racism may remain, in practice we had to get on with each other and to have hope. Posing the question "Can we change people's minds and hearts?", Phillips counted himself among the optimists, believing that hope was all around us. But to what did we actually belong? The diversity included 'global tribes', like the Scots and the Indians, who had more adherents in parts of the world than on native soil, and parents whose origin from different traditions posed other dilemmas. A non-segregated nation like Britain (having nothing like the ghettos of the USA) nevertheless experienced 'ethnic tilts' such as those observed in his home borough of Stanmore!

Britain's increasing multi-culturalism called for changing definitions of what it meant to be 'British'. However, Phillips warned that there was no inevitability about achieving a successful multi-cultural society, encapsulating his thoughts in: "Race is no longer a simple black and white issue in the modern world."

While just 5% of UK citizens came from ethnic minorities, he stated, this rose to 20% in London, a "city of diverse talents", where immigrants consequently felt comfortable and where, incidentally, Phillips hoped to become London's first directly elected mayor. London could be an example to the world.

Ancestral identities should be matters of pride and not forgotten, but it was not necessary to be imprisoned by them. It was the inevitability of change that should be embraced.

□ Ronald Channing