

AJR Information

Volume LII No. 10
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Don't miss...

**Special feature
on Poland**

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The next generation

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**Our right to
the land**

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New Year 5758

The *Yomim naraim* are a period both of joyful affirmation and of atonement leading to spiritual renewal. The current issue of *AJR Information* attempts to reflect this dual aspect of the High Holydays. A special edition of twenty pages and accompanying photographs, it demonstrates the viability of the journal – now in its 53rd(!) year – but all additional copy focuses on the *Shoah* in Poland, heartland of European Jewry. We hope readers will perceive this as an earnest example of our commitment to discharging obligations to our people's tragic past, while simultaneously building for a brighter future. *Leshanah tovah tikotevu* □

The changing attitudes of Capital and Labour

Left-right confusion

Over the last few months a small-scale political drama – with implications for the wider world – has been played out in Australia. A new party was founded which, harking back to the days of the 'White Australia policy', targeted Aborigines and Oriental immigrants as hate objects (Jews were not in their immediate line of fire – but nor are they in Le Pen's or Haider's gunsights). For a while the racist demagogues attracted growing support, with anti-Fascist protests, paradoxically, giving them valuable publicity. What finally routed the racists was the realisation by Big Business that Australia depended too heavily on trade with South East Asia to allow hatemongers free rein.

In the past, alas, Big Business has often been on the side of satanic forces. This was demonstrated not only by the industrial giants Krupp, IG Farben and Flick in Germany, and collaborationist firms like Renault and Philips in Occupied Europe; in the inter-war years Henry Ford ran the *Dearborne Independent* as an adjunct to *Der Stürmer* and Lord Rothermere eulogised Mosley in the *Daily Mail*.

It is the globalisation of trade which, together with the spreading liberal, multi-ethnic consensus, inclines today's businessmen towards a mindset totally different from that of their predecessors. This could already be seen in 1980s South Africa when De Beers stood notably aloof from the apartheid regime.

Panta rhei – everything flows – said the Ancient Greeks, and if Capital has lately drifted leftwards in Australia and South Africa, Labour has moved to the right in Eastern Europe. Polish *Solidarnosc* – in essence a liberating force – had, sad to relate, an antisemitic wing. In Russia the situation appears even more puzzling: defenders of the workers – ie old style Communists and trade unionists – march, and vote, alongside devotees of 'Holy Russia' and the Romanov dynasty.

But there is a certain bizarre logic behind this phe-

nomenon. For all that the Jews appeared to many on the Right as begetters of Communism – *pace* the catch phrase *zhidekomunista* – they also incarnated the spirit of capitalism in the eyes of such left luminaries as Pierre Proudhon of 'property is theft' fame, and the anarchist Michael Bakunin.

During the street fighting that took place at Dresden in 1849 Bakunin mounted the barricades alongside Richard Wagner, a revolutionary wanted by the police. Wagner's self-designated heir, Hitler, validated his claim to be leading a 'Socialist Workers' Party by constantly inveighing against 'plutocrats'. [Nazi mythology postulated a sharp distinction between *raffendes* or rapacious, and *schaffendes* or creative *Kapital* – with the Jews representing the former, and IG Farben, Krupp *et al* the latter].

All of which demonstrates the wisdom of the Ancient Greeks, as well as the aptness of the Latin translation of left as *sinister* □



Memorial stones at Treblinka stand for 15,000 lost Polish-Jewish communities.

Profile

Ben Helfgott

Ben Helfgott, born in Poland in 1929, spent all his childhood in the town of Piotrkow Tryb. where his father was a partner in the flour mill. Both he and his two sisters enjoyed the warmth and protection of a large extended family.

Although aware of antisemitism – they lived side-by-side with the Polish Catholic community – he recalls just how vibrant the Jewish community was: “There was life everywhere”. Like many of their contemporaries, his parents were active in the Zionist movement and by 1935 were giving emigration to Palestine serious thought.

Antisemitism increased in 1936 under the right-wing Polish Government, yet in the main life continued normally. In 1937 and 1938, however, Jews anxiously read their papers for news about the persecution and murder of co-religionists in Germany and the continual ‘disturbances’ and loss of life in Palestine.

The Germans bombed Piotrkow on the first day of the war and by 1st November had established Poland’s first ghetto there. Ben avoided deportation because, although only 12, he met a need for slave labour in the town’s glass and timber factories. Later he was deported to Buchenwald and Schlieben, and subsequently was liberated in Theresienstadt

by the Russians on 9th May 1945. Out of his class of 32, only two survived the war.

Having sought out the remnants of his family, he returned to Theresienstadt and joined the first group of 300 child survi-



Ben Helfgott

vors flown to England in August 1945 for rehabilitation and resettlement. A further 432 followed.

In London Ben stayed in a hostel, joined Zionist youth organisations and only a benign teacher’s intervention prevented his joining Israel’s War of Independence in 1948. So he matriculated, studied economics at Southampton University and began a commercial career in the City.

Always an all-round sportsman, after a chance encounter with weightlifting, and encouragement from Yogi Mayer, leader of

the Primrose Club, Ben entered the 1950 Macabbiah and won his first competition! He became British lightweight champion, recordholder and representative in the 1956 and 1960 Olympics. His days as an athlete (and knowledge of languages) introduced him to a life-long international family of friends.

Sport played an important part in his integration into British society, and he obtained British nationality in 1951. “I never felt that I was a foreigner in all the years I have lived in this country.”

As regards the country of his birth, Ben states that the record of the Poles during WWII left a lot to be desired. “But we must understand the abnormal conditions and dangers that Poles faced when harbouring Jews. It is not appreciated that 40-60,000 Jews were hidden by Poles, many of whom lost their lives as a result of betrayal by their own compatriots. More Jews would have survived if Poles had turned a blind eye, making it much harder for the Germans to identify them. However, today’s government supports Jewish life in Poland and enjoys excellent relations with Israel. Jews in the Diaspora can’t simply live with the past, but must learn from the past. One should not stereotype any nation.”

□ Ronald Channing

Ben Helfgott, who accompanied Beth Shalom’s study group to Poland earlier this year (see p.ii), is Chairman of the Yad Vashem Committee of the Board of Deputies and the 45 Aid Society.

The romance of Jewish surnames

I am, as acquaintances will testify, both an Italophile and a bit of an art nut. Occasionally, when autumnal rain clouds drain London of all colour I recite a mantra-like list of painters named after their birth places: Bassano, Caravaggio, Correggio, Parmagianino, Perugino, Pisanello, Pontormo, Veneziano and Veronese.

And, since my own surname derives from a town in Silesia the Italians call Verdimonte, I am compiling a second list of Jewish surnames linked to places on the map. Here goes: Bamber(ger), Berlin(er), Bresslaw or Breslauer, Danziger, Frankfurter, Fulda, Grunberg(er), Hamburger, Heilbronn, Kassel, Kissin-

(ger), Koenigsberg, Luxemburg, Metz, Mosco, Oppenheim(er), Prager, Worms, Wiener and Willner – to name but a few. Then there is Kisch (originally Chiesch) Lipschitz (orig Libusice) and S(ha)pipo (orig Speyer) – not to mention Engländer, Franzos, Österreicher or Oistrakh, Pollak, Spanier and Ungar. Apropos the aforementioned Koenigsberg, what on earth possessed a borsht belt comedian nicknamed Woody to drop the Prussian coronation capital in favour of the non-descript Allen? And what a contrast between two Jewish Finance ministers: the British one blandly called Lawson, and a Frenchman glorying in Strauss-Kahn, alias ostrich punt (shades of Lohengrin’s swan-powered boat!)? And if Bernet Hecht had to become Howard, why didn’t he, at least, call his son Castle instead of Michael. Talking of Hecht(pike),

Jewish ichthyological surnames – Goldfisch aka Goldwyn, Karpf(en), Wallfisch (whale) – could populate a whole aquarium.

Grey’s Elegy refers to gems in the ocean’s dark unfathomed caves. The Jewish *nomenklatura* (literally a register of surnames) is such an ocean. Look at the gems: Brilliant, Diamant, Finkelstein (glitterstone), Rubin (ruby) and Safir (sapphire). Or the rich fabrics suggested by Samet (velvet) Seidner and Seidensticker, Could the last possibly mean silk embroiderer? I don’t know – but am certain of my concluding quartet: Pulvermacher (powder maker) Segelbaum (raft sailing mast) Knöpfelmacher (button moulder) and Streysand (grit spread on snow-covered streets). Sheer poetry, don’t you agree?

□ Richard Grunberger

In the midst of death

The death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in an horrific motor car crash in the prime of her life, has brought forth a wave of public grief which aggregates the sense of personal loss felt by so many people in the United Kingdom and beyond.

She was admired for the compassion and comfort she brought to ordinary people facing illness and distress, for her support for unlikely causes such as AIDS and banning landmines, but not least for her independence of spirit, vivacity, charm, style and beauty without which none of her activities would have much mattered.

The daughter of an Earl, plucked from the obscurity of an upmarket nursery school to be chosen as consort to the heir to the throne, apparently to love, but only to receive in return what passes for husbandly affection in the House of Windsor. She dutifully delivered an eagerly-sought son and heir and a second son to the union before it became public knowledge that the marriage was in disrepair – again something common in both her husband's and her own family.

Her growing alienation from the family into which she had married, leading to her separation, eventual divorce and loss of status as a future Queen consort, failed to diminish her as an international icon of youth, beauty and pleasure as played out in front of the camera lenses of the world's media. Though she turned this to advantage when required, she stood no

chance of calling the media men off without the backing of the Palace, its courtiers and resources. Quite simply, it led to her death.

Diana's rebellious spirit did not permit her to take the Windsors' ways lying down. Attempts by the Palace to excommunicate her and reduce her status failed because of the huge media attention she continued to command. Her interview on Panorama was then probably the most damaging attack on the British monarchy in modern times, for without the support and respect of the populace, they command little other than outdated ceremonial and pseudo-governing functions.

Her life, and in many senses her untimely death, has placed a challenge before the Royal Family and their traditional advisers it appears they were ill equipped to face; a tardy response to join or lead widespread shows of public mourning hardly helped. Indeed, the degree of their expressions of appreciation for her success, and response to her death, may well fix the attitudes to them of their subjects for a generation. Prime Minister Tony Blair called her "the People's Princess".

The Jewish Refugee Community, which has extra special reasons for gratitude and respect for the institution and Monarch of the country of their adoption, joins in expressing its heartfelt condolences to the Princess of Wales' sons, mother, brother, sisters, The Queen and Prince Philip, the Prince of Wales and the Queen Mother.

□ Ronald Channing

Days of Awe

When I was a little girl, I looked up to my father, who was a handsome man. On Yomtov, in his best suit, I was so proud of him. He taught me our religion, not the ultra-orthodox kind, but respect and reverence.

What terror I felt when I learnt that God sat in front of a huge desk, with ledgers before Him. During the Days of Awe He decided who would be entered into the Book of Life or Death. Asking for forgiveness and promising to try harder could influence the decision. My father blessed me every Friday night. During the Hitler years it seemed to me that his hands grew ever heavier on my head.

Eventually we split up as a family. I came to England and my parents managed to reach Shanghai, where the

Japanese confined them to a ghetto. After the war, they were allowed entry into America. They were broken people but glad we had survived.

I have Yahrzeit for my father now, he died two days before Kol Nidre. I was told God looks favourably upon the person he calls to His eternal rest during the Days of Awe. In California, where my father died, his coffin was left open during the service before the burial. By a process making a person look well and younger again, the father of my childhood had been restored to me

□ Marion Gross

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Management Committee,
Director & Staff wish all
AJR members a Happy and
Healthy New Year*

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Reviews

Contentious issue

The book reviewed below is so controversial that we are publishing two critiques – as we did in the case of Diana Samuel's play *Kindertransport* (see June issue 1993)

William D Rubinstein, *THE MYTH OF RESCUE: Why the Democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, £18.99.

Recent studies of Jewish refugees from Hitler mostly take the view that before September 1939 Britain did its best to keep them out; that those who were admitted were badly treated; and that Britain was effectively complicit in the Holocaust by refusing entry to its territories after 1941 to any of the millions of Jews subsequently murdered.

Rubinstein's book sets out to demolish this conventional wisdom about Britain (and America). His statistics are unambiguous: the great majority of the Jews of Germany found refuge abroad, including over 80% of those under 25, meaning that those who stayed were predominantly the old and immobile. Two thirds of Austria's 185,000 Jews escaped in the short period between the *Anschluss* and

the outbreak of war, of whom 30,850 came here as their first destination. Britain alone took one in six of Austria's Jews, one in four of those saved. In proportion to its size and absorptive capacity, Britain arguably took more Jewish refugees than anywhere else bar Palestine. The Jews of the Reich were not left to Hitler's mercy: the statistics prove that when they were desperate to leave, after the *Anschluss* and *Kristallnacht*, the Western democracies, Britain in the van, did eventually grant them refuge.

Rubinstein adduces a raft of evidence to prove that the British emphatically rejected antisemitism. In a Gallup poll in July 1939, 70% assented to the proposition that refugees should be allowed to enter Britain, 26% dissenting. As for claims that the 'conservative Establishment' was honeycombed with antisemitism, he points out that there were more Jewish Conservative MPs than there were Conservative MPs who were members of the Anglo-German Fellowship and 'The Link', the fringe organisations often seen as orchestrating anti-Jewish activities in high places.

Rubinstein argues cogently that those Jews who were under Nazi rule after September 1939 were in a quite different situation from those who had been able to

flee before the outbreak of war: the latter were refugees, but the former were the prisoners of a genocidal psychopath who was determined to kill them. It was the Nazis who prevented Jews from leaving after 1939, contrary to what has been claimed by critics of the Western Allies: the obvious route out of Western Europe after the fall of France was over the Pyrenees to Spain, but this border was immediately sealed, with two German divisions stationed in South-West France. Even in the case of Palestine, the British never sent illegal immigrants back to Nazi-held territory, only to camps in Cyprus or Mauritius – a very different matter.

Rubinstein believes that, given Hitler's decision for extermination, there was almost nothing that the Allies could have done to rescue or ransom Jews during the Holocaust. He demonstrates convincingly that neither British night-time bombers nor Mosquito fighter-bombers had the capacity to launch a raid on Auschwitz with realistic chances of success – his exculpation of the Americans is less persuasive. This book, though occasionally too polemical by half, provides a valuable corrective to the current unjustified incrimination of Western wartime policy.

□ Anthony Grenville

Much has been written about Foreign Office antisemitism and Allied indifference to the sufferings of the 'wailing' Jews. In seeking to prove the falseness of these views William Rubinstein falls into the opposite error of exaggerating what was done to help, and claiming that nothing more could have been done.

He dismisses out of hand the argument that pressure from an important person like Roosevelt or the Pope might have had some effect, yet external pressure did prompt Horthy to halt the deportation of Hungarian Jews.

The author's contention that the pinpoint bombing of the Polish railway-lines and concentration camps was logistically impossible is countered by the evidence of camp survivors who witnessed the pinpoint bombing of military installations nearby. (However, what would have happened to the prisoners who might have escaped in the confusion is a matter for speculation).

Rubinstein's claim "the statistics prove that when they were desperate to leave... the Western democracies did... grant them – the German, Austrian and Czech Jews – refuge" is manifestly untrue, as the ex-

perience of my parents, and many others who perished because no-one would grant them asylum, prove. Also the claim that British Consuls in Berlin and Vienna were giving out visas to Britain *ad lib* is absurd, or the many desperate people of my acquaintance in Vienna would surely have availed themselves of these. That Britain comes out of this situation with more credit than some deserves to be acknowledged. What of huge countries like the U.S. Canada and Australia? They could surely have absorbed many more refugees.

One point in the Allies' favour that Rubinstein actually omits – and which is difficult for camp-survivors, in their understandable bitterness, to appreciate – is how close this country came to suffering the fate of its Continental neighbours, and how much blood and effort went into winning the war, ultimately the only sure way of stopping Hitler.

The subject is a painful one and more complex than either the detractors of, or the apologists for, the Allies would have us believe. Nevertheless, it is salutary to be reminded that it was the Germans, and not the Allies who killed Jews.

□ Martha Blend

1956 prefigured 1989

Alison Macleod *THE DEATH OF UNCLE JOE*, Merlin Press £9.95.

'Mere oblivion/ Sans eyes, sans teeth, sans everything' – Shakespeare's Seventh Age of Man – aptly summarises the situation of the British Communist Party by the end of 1956. Nothing exemplified the Party's moribund state better than the fact that on one and the same October day the
(continued on page 5)

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Daily Worker headlined its first edition 'Poznan rioters were drilled' (by foreign agents) – and its second 'Poznan strikers express grievances'.

With Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin, Polish riots and the Hungarian uprising, 1956 had indeed seen the death of Uncle Joe.

Alison Macleod was a *Daily Worker* journalist before and during those eventful days; shortly afterwards she resigned both from her job and the Communist Party. Now she has given an engrossing account (based on her diary entries) of how the CP with 50,000 card carriers and two Members of Parliament in 1946, had dwindled to far smaller numbers and no MPs within ten years.

One of two constituencies which returned a Communist MP after the war was Stepney, then largely populated by working-class Jews. In those far-off days the East End's red colouring might also have been observed in the tenth arrondissement of Paris and in New York's Lower East Side Garment District.

The cuckoo clock Machiavellis

Tom Bower, *BLOOD MONEY, The Swiss, The Nazis and The Looted Billions*, Macmillan, £16.99 (1997)

Adam Lebor, *HITLER'S SECRET BANKERS, How Switzerland Profited From Nazi Genocide*, Simon & Schuster, £7.99 (1997)

These two books try to throw light on what is probably the greatest – and for long the most successful – robbery in history.

The good name of Switzerland, hitherto thought of as the friend of the world, the neutral *par excellence*, was destroyed. The nefarious deeds of its bankers, its officials, its very government have, as of this day, not yet been rectified. Moves to do so are said to be afoot, but then they have been afoot since about 1946.

Dead secrecy envelops the business practices of Helvetian gnomes who have used trickery and chicanery all the way to retain monies and valuables handed to them because of their reputation as honest brokers.

Figures of the mega-theft vary; the best available estimate is £2.9 billion. From time to time the Swiss have offered derisory amounts in mock compensation; on top of it all, any settlement offer is to be subject to a referendum. It must be noted

This was unsurprising: people working in sweatshops and living in near-slums thought Marx pointed the way to a brighter future.

But the Jewish attraction to Communism transcended class; our co-religionists comprised all the members of the British Communist Party's Businessmen's Group and over half of Hollywood's ten jailed victims of McCarthyism.

How to explain this fatal attraction? Apart from poverty there was the outsider status of immigrants, the raw experience of racism (Mosley in Cable Street) and the apparent suppression of antisemitism in Soviet Russia. But there was an additional factor: Messianism. Not only has the yearning for deliverance permeated the last two millennia of Jewish existence; the notion of the eventual arrival of the Messiah is built into the fabric of Judaism. Shaking Marx's family tree would yield a large crop of rabbis, both in the literal and metaphorical sense.

□ RG

that the referendum is *the* instrument of Swiss democracy.

Figures are necessarily the pointers of the story, but the kernel of both books is the tragedy of survivors and heirs unable to pry loose what their kin tried to save.

With ridiculous bureaucratic cruelty the bank officials demand certification of ownership. What this means, in fact, is that a Jewish petitioner would have to supply a document from a concentration camp official of the death of the original owner. The Swiss also reveal an ugly streak of antisemitism when they accuse Jewish heirs of being swindlers. Nor should one forget that Swiss police chief, Dr Heinrich Rothmund, caused the Nazis to put the infamous J into the passports of Jews. He and his like were responsible for the expulsion of possibly 50,000 refugees.

The Swiss rationalisation for all this is that they feared a Nazi invasion – and when all is said and done, they have a point. But it is no excuse for hanging on to their loot since the end of the war. Whatever limited restitution offers they have made were in respect of countries and institutions; heirs can whistle for their money.

Both authors have their merits. Bower employs a fine journalistic flow, whereas Lebor has a somewhat more historical approach. Both have produced guide books to the land of cuckoo clock Machiavellis.

□ John Rossall

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Letters to the Editor



A YEAR'S SILENCE

Sir - As an avid reader of *AJR Information* I am somewhat astounded that as yet we have not been informed about what happened to the proceeds of the Mauerbach Benefit Sale which took place in Vienna on the 29th October 1996. You may be aware that this sale raised moneys much in excess of what had been anticipated, and yet so far nothing seems to have been published as to who benefited. I would be grateful if the *AJR* were able to find out this information.

Cheltenham
Gloucestershire

Mrs S I Bollen

MAY DAY CALL BY XENOPHOBES

Sir - Steven Schrier, like most Euro-enthusiasts, mixes up the Treaty of Maastricht with that of Rome. Those two thousand container lorries that stream daily to the Continent would do so even if Britain had not signed at Maastricht. The non-signatory countries, Denmark and Norway, have a thriving trade with the EU.

Mr Schrier advocates that Britain should surrender to Europe so much of her sovereignty that it would even have pacified Adolf Hitler.

As the Australian Prime Minister prophesied when Britain began to dismantle the Commonwealth and the Preference Sterling Area: "You will be clobbered!". We are!

Harrow
Middlesex

Rudolf Jaray

Sir - May I ride to the rescue of the editor who was taken to task (August issue) for writing political editorials.

We have been subject to political decisions by others ever since the Babylonian Exile, whether in the shape of pogroms by the Crusaders or Ukrainians, the invitation to settle in Poland and the expulsion from Spain, to the Wannsee Conference. What was politics yesterday is history today.

The decisions not to let emigrants land

in Cuba, not to fill US quotas, to stick rigidly to the White Paper were political decisions. Are they not fit subjects for discussion?

Present-day Germany has decided that slave labour rules out compensation. The US Government did obtain DM3 million for such sufferers now living in the USA. The court in Kassel found in favour of plaintiffs who had been paid for work in the Lodz Ghetto, but because of arbitrary German rules only those living in Israel and the USA will benefit. Those governments negotiated exemptions with Bonn. For political reasons British governments of the day did nothing of the sort. A taboo subject?

As to loss of sovereignty, any shopper will see that the means of production have slipped into non-UK hands. One doesn't have to be an unreconstructed Marxist to conclude that as economic power, and therefore political power, have slipped from the UK so inexorably has her sovereignty been eroded.

Martlesham Heath
Ipswich

Frank Bright

Sir - The European issue is deeply political. It has nothing to do with morality. At best it could be considered an economic issue, because, under the Treaty, any country which joins the single currency must join the economic union and thus lose its independence.

I strongly object to Mr Conrad saying that the words independence and sovereignty are being 'bandied about in an ill-informed and ignorant way'. At the age of 76, having dealt with Europe for most of my life and having studied the Treaties of Rome, Maastricht and Amsterdam in detail, I can hardly be called ignorant.

Mr Conrad is also offensive in calling Michael Portillo and Michael Howard 'fanatical little Englanders' - interestingly enough an expression only used by Germans. I respect both gentlemen for their integrity and their genuine defence of British interests.

I should dig deeper into history? I am part of that history - since I was born in

Berlin, escaped, and, like most of my contemporaries, lost members of my family. I know every country in Europe, especially Germany. Maybe it is Mr Conrad who should look at history and at the present and the future, if ever the Maastricht Treaty should come to full fruition.

My thanks to *AJR Information* for being so patient with this exchange of correspondence. Irrespective of religious practice, we Jews are linked by a common past and a common destiny like no other people. We must learn to approach issues where we disagree with integrity and calm.

Limpsfield Common
Surrey

Peter Frankel

CULPABLE NEUTRALITY

Sir - I would like to congratulate you on your excellent August editorial.

Peregrine Worsthorne, whom you mention, was the reason I abandoned reading the otherwise excellent *Daily Telegraph*. He is only one of a legion who equate the evil of Nazism with that of Communism (and even Socialism). Alan Clark, who even now maintains that we should have made peace with Hitler in 1941, is one of thousands of Worsthorne's soulmates.

The sad fact remains that in the years 1933 to 1939 Chamberlain, Halifax and Co. considered Nazism the far lesser of two evils. Had they had Churchill's vision, the Holocaust and the loss of forty million other human lives could and would have been avoided.

Carisbrooke Road
Leicester

Henry Mortimer

WAR'S AFTERMATH IN ACADEME

Sir - Prof. Erich Hobsbawm did not have to obtain a British visa when Hitler took power in Germany - he had British nationality (probably because he was born in Alexandria) and therefore held a British passport.

I happen to know this as Hobsbawm went to my school in Berlin during his relatively brief stay there. He was in the class above me and was always referred to as "der Engländer".

We later met again during army service, when he was a sergeant in the Army Education Corps. After my transfer from the Pioneer Corps to the Intelligence Corps in 1943 I asked him whether he would like me to put his name forward (he had fluent German). But he replied that it would be

useless as he had already tried and been refused a transfer, ostensibly because of his left-wing political views.

I realise that none of this affects your condemnation of his anti-Zionist stance.

Southcote Lane
Reading

F Lustig

IF MUSIC BE THE LOVE OF FOOD

Sir - Another case of *reim dich oder ich fress dich*. Poetic licence aside, it's incorrect to say "lasagne verde", the plural of "verde" being "verdi" both in the masculine and in the feminine gender, like all adjectives ending in "e".

College Crescent
London NW3

Mrs M Stern

Given that this has been the only reaction to my poem, I am beginning to have an inkling of what motivated such of my colleagues as Thomas Chatterton, Heinrich von Kleist, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Sylvia Plath. Ed.

MISNOMER

Sir - May I point out that Paul Hamlyn's brother is Michael Hamburger, the outstanding poet and excellent verse translator honoured by the German Government.

I think you need to correct the name with an apology; it would be a pity if such a blot remained on your otherwise so erudite copybook.

South Hill Park
London NW3

Klaus Meyer

BRICKBAT

Sir - You must have some sleepless nights before you can discover some information to insult the ordinary people of Austria.

You have now discovered a monthly journal "Wiener", which no one has ever heard of, to quote a list of allegations against the *Israelische Kultus Gemeinde* in Vienna. To repeat these allegations in your paper shows very poor taste, since they have been strenuously denied by the IKG and can only alarm our people in this country.

The Paddocks
Wembley

Sam Hacker

BOUQUETS

Sir - I find it difficult to explain why I have never written to you before to

congratulate you on the range and excellence of your paper.

Its emotional impact upon me is sometimes quite shattering. Please accept my thanks and my congratulations. You are, perhaps, one of the most vital Holocaust memorials this country has to offer.

Carlton Drive
Putney

Martin Landau

Sir - The September issue of AJR Information is as interesting as ever.

The Burroughs
Hendon

Charlotte Fraenkel

Sir - I want to thank you for putting me in touch with Mr Walters (Profile, May issue).

Sherwood Rise
Nottingham

Mrs G Rank

SWISS SPECIAL FUND FOR NEEDY VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

The Swiss Government has set up a Special Fund to provide support for people in need who have been subject to persecution on racial, religious, political, or other grounds, or who have in other ways been victims of the Holocaust, as well as their descendants who may be in need. At this stage there are no guidelines on the definition of "need".

However, a Fund Secretariat started its work in September 1997 and the AJR is authorised to receive requests and pass them to the World Jewish Restitution Organisation which will act as the central collection point for all requests from Jewish survivors.

However, at this stage the Fund Secretariat have not yet devised a formal procedure for making applications, nor laid down what supporting documentation may be required.

Please note that as soon as we get more information, we shall publish it, but at this stage we do not know, what, if anything, will be available for UK residents, or what criteria will be applied.

Hopefully, the Fund may help people who do not meet the criteria of the German Article 2 Fund. We do not know what the tax position on any payments is likely to be, but it is likely that payments would affect entitlement to, or the amount of, Income Support, Housing Benefit and other similar benefits □

DIARY DATES 1997-98

AJR Luncheon Club

- 15 Oct: Ralph Blumenau:
The Value of History
- 19 Nov: Geoffrey Perry:
'Germany Calling'
- 17 Dec: Rabbi W Wolff:
Friendly Face of Judaism
- 21 Jan: Bernard Pearl:
Work of a Coroner
- 18 Feb: Joy Puritz:
Elizabeth Schumann
- 18 Mar: Rabbi M Leigh:
Jews of America
- 22 Apr: Maurice Soffa:
University of the Third
Age
- 20 May: Abigail Morris:
Running a Theatre
- 17 Jun: Issi Gold:
Magistrate's Experience
- 5 Nov: Wine Tasting
- 26 Nov: Bridge Evening
- 11 Feb: Music Quiz
- 1 Apr: Bridge Evening

All events subject to alteration if unavoidable



BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

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We offer a traditional style of
religious service with Cantor,
Choir and organ

Further details can be obtained
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Telephone 0171-794 3949

Minister: Rabbi Rodney J. Mariner
Cantor: Rev Lawrence H. Fine

Regular services: Friday evenings at 6.30 pm,
Saturday mornings at 10 am
Religion school: Sundays at 10 am to 1 pm

Space donated by Pafra Limited

To save one life

Harry Lowit owes his life to the courage and humanity of a fellow boy-inmate of Auschwitz-Birkenau 53 years ago. Harry, who is a member of the AJR, survived to make a new life for himself as an engineer and businessman in England, but only recently was he reunited with his friend and saviour Helmuth Szprycer after a gap of half a century.

Born in Prague in 1930, Harry enjoyed the benefits of his parents' comfortable lifestyle, in contrast to Helmutt, a year older, whose boyhood in Berlin was far less affluent. Both families, however, were taken to Theresienstadt in 1942. In December 1943 the surviving members were transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, enduring a terrible three-day ordeal in which many died.

At Auschwitz life and death were in the hands of Dr Josef Mengele, the Nazi 'Angel of Death'. On 14th July 1944 Mengele ordered inmates to pass naked in front of him. Those he waved to the right were to continue as slave labourers; those to the left were sent for almost immediate death in the gas chambers. All the boys were waved to the left.

Helmuth remembered his grandmother's injunction to 'stay alive at all costs'. From somewhere he found the courage quickly to march up to Mengele before the guards could shoot him, click his heels (he'd seen films of Hitler Youth) and look into his eyes, saying in German: "I want to work for you. I will do anything - clean your shoes, your motorcycle. Don't put me in the gas chamber." Mengele asked where he came from and on hearing Berlin ordered Helmutt to work.

Helmutt clicked his heels and rejoined the other boys, when Harry asked him to save his life too. Incredibly, he returned to Mengele and pleaded on behalf of Harry. Mengele was running out of patience; he held out two matches, the shorter one leading to death. Helmuth drew the longer, Harry the shorter. Harry begged Helmuth to make a further plea for his life. This he did, calling on inexplicable reserves of bravery for his own life was continually at risk. Astoundingly, Mengele relented.

Both boys were made messengers in different parts of the camp, wearing blue blazers with riding breeches while on duty. In a surreal twist of fate, Harry was later transferred to Auschwitz I where he



Harry Lowit, left, reunited with Helmuth Szprycer whose courage saved his life in Auschwitz.

raised and lowered the barrier at the entrance gate which bore the notorious slogan *Arbeit macht frei*.

Both managed to escape from death marches in the winter of 1944-45. Harry and another Jewish prisoner in a camp near Salzburg daringly stole a coal truck and drove into the mountains to await liberation by the Americans.

Harry and Helmuth last met in 1950, then lost contact. Despite his wish to wipe these memories from his mind, Harry consented to be interviewed for the Survivors of the Shoah Memorial Foundation which put him in touch with Helmuth once again. Their reunion in London earlier this year could not have been more poignant and emotional.

□ RDC

Franconia's Jerusalem

Just back from a visit to my birthplace, Fuerth, I want to report an impressive ceremony which took place in the 'new' Jewish cemetery. Memorial tablets to the Holocaust victims of the town were unveiled in the presence of many local dignitaries, both county and state, as well as Ignatz Bubis, the President of the Jewish Communities of Germany. The tablets contain 887 names, including those of my grandparents and other relatives. They also prepared a *Memorbuch* where the life

story of everyone is described in detail. Over forty former Fuerth Jews from Israel, USA, Britain, France, Sweden and other places attended.

Whilst there we learned of a remarkable occurrence, which is well worth recording: For about ten years or so the town has invited former Jewish inhabitants to visit and be the guests of Fuerth for about 8-10 days. We were in a group which visited in 1992 and made many friends amongst the present citizens. Another group was due to visit this September, but owing to the financial problems German towns and cities experience now (in common with many in this country) the City Council decided in February, with the smallest possible majority of one vote, not to invite former Jewish citizens this year, thus saving DM60,000 (£20,000). This caused an almighty protest, widely reported in, and supported by the local press. Some prominent people instigated spontaneous action in opening a special bank account and inviting contributions from the people of Fuerth. Within a very short time over DM40,000 (£13,000) was raised from a considerable number of citizens and organisations, including the Catholic and Protestant Churches and even the local Turkish-Islamic Centre. As a result the visits will be reinstated.

This proved to us that many present-day Germans do not just pay lip service in their protestations of friendship with Jews, but are prepared to put their hands in their pockets in support.

□ Heinz Skyte

Holocaust proceedings instituted against Anker

Anker Insurance have instructed attorneys in Vienna and New York to deal with the law suit now instituted in respect of Holocaust survivors' insurance claims. This information was given by Anker chairman Louis Norman-Audenhove at a press conference.

However, the billion dollar suit lodged in the USA against several European insurance companies, according to which a number of claimants had failed to receive insurance sums due to them after the Second World War, had not yet detailed the precise amounts claimed from each individual company. Herr Norman-Audenhove was accordingly unable to quantify the claim against Anker □

SPECIAL
4-PAGE FEATURE

HEARTLAND OF EUROPEAN JEWRY

Impressions and photographs of a visit to Poland

by Ronald Channing



Memorial over the ashes of 125,000 Jewish victims at Majdanek.

Majdanek concentration and extermination camp

Majdanek, standing cheek-by-jowl to the town of Lublin, was a concentration and extermination camp whose fabric is maintained largely intact. Barbed wire and watch towers demarcate the camp's perimeter; near the entrance, three huts contain gas chambers; the ominous silhouette of a crematorium chimney rises against the skyline. A huge menorah now stands guard at the entrance.

Lining the roadway are archetypal concentration camp huts (originally designed to stable horses) used either as workshops – tailors, shoemakers, etc – or for rudimentary living and sleeping accommodation. A single hut took up to 1,200 people in bunks three tiers high and packed like sardines, with no sanitation and little if any light. It represented total human degradation.

On the parade ground, as late March's snowflakes fell, it was extremely cold; last January the temperature fell to 28 degrees below zero. At most, prisoners wore a shirt, trousers and, the fortunate few, sandals. Kept standing in the mud (in winter) and in the dust (in summer) for anything up to five hours to be counted, many

failed to survive the ordeal.

On a hilltop overlooking the camp, on 3rd November 1943 Ukrainian guards cold-bloodedly machine-gunned to death 18,000 Jews. On that day altogether 42,000 Jews were massacred in Lublin's array of camps, the greatest single day's loss to Jewry ever.

Close by, a large memorial stands starkly against the skyline like a huge inverted dish. It protects a vast mound of ashes, the remains of 125,000 victims.

Paradoxically, Lublin, which was not destroyed by either invading or retreating armies, maintains its continental atmosphere, old and renovated buildings, even up-market shops and people out for an evening stroll. The town's impressively large yeshiva, opened in 1937, still proudly stands in its own grounds, serving now as a college of pharmacy with its synagogue decently preserved as a lecture hall. We were told that today's Lublin has a new rabbinic centre and a rising Jewish population. Lublin's old town is still surrounded by the stone houses of its former ghetto though its old wooden houses have been lost □

Treblinka – a memorial to Poland's lost Jewish communities

Treblinka – a name that strikes fear into all Jewish hearts. Set deep in the forest and at the end of a railway line, Treblinka today is entirely a memorial site.

A huge 'Ark' stands as a monument in what was the centre of the extermination camp, the whole area being surprisingly small. A mock station and medical post deceived arriving Polish Jews from the surrounding countryside, up to 7,000 a day, who were rapidly 'processed' then led the short distance to the gas chambers. Some 850,000 of our co-religionists



perished here in a twelve-month period from 1942 to 1943.

The 15,000 centuries-old Polish Jewish communities which were annihilated are commemorated by an equal number of memorial stones of varying sizes covering a large area surrounding the Ark. It is impossible not to be moved by the site and the Israeli flags and memorial candles burning at the base of the monument. As we left, a group of grim-faced Israeli schoolchildren were listening to Treblinka's history relayed over loud-speakers at the small museum by the camp's entrance □

Piotrkow, Ben Helfgott's home town

Piotrkow lies in the Polish plain, 16 miles south of Lodz. We pass through village after village which, before the war, had thriving Jewish populations, synagogues, burial grounds, homes, places of work and land to cultivate, the small wooden houses evoking shtetl life in a peasant economy. Not one Jew lives there now and soon no-one will even remember Jews.

Jews first settled in Piotrkow Trybunalski in the sixteenth century. By 1939 a vibrant community of 18,000 represented one-third of the town's population. Piotrkow was Ben Helfgott's 'home town'. He led us through the streets and squares of Piotrkow's ghetto where the marks of *mezzuzot* remaining

woods. The Helfgotts joined many others attempting to escape to the east away from the advancing army, with a few possessions on a horse and cart. But only ten kilometres down the road they were bombed again, literally thousands more people were killed, so the family decided to return home.

Piotrkow was occupied on 5th September and anti-Jewish brutality, kidnapping for forced labour and killings began immediately. Jewish valuables and household goods were plundered and the Germans robbed the main synagogue of its sacred objects and beat its worshippers.

Numbers burgeoned as refugees from neighbouring towns poured in, though 2,000 Jews managed to escape. The first

Having falsely proclaimed an end to deportations and killings, on 20th December 1942 the Germans rounded up 520 of those who had come out of hiding, including Ben's 37-year-old mother and his eight-year-old sister Lusia. They were imprisoned in the synagogue, from where an assassin took 50 able-bodied men to dig five pits in the Rakow Forest just outside



The synagogue.

town, then shot them. Those remaining in the synagogue were then taken to the pits and slaughtered. This left Ben's father, sister Mala, a five-year-old cousin and himself alive.

In August 1943 the ghetto was liquidated. Because of his work in a factory Ben was one of the few allowed to stay. His sister, cousin and father were already on a lorry to be deported when she jumped down and implored the captain in charge to let them stay. Unbelievably, he agreed that they could! Ben's sister was eventually sent to Ravensbrueck, he and his father to quarry stones at Buchenwald. Later his father was killed attempting escape from a forced march.

On 9th May Ben was liberated by the Russians. On returning to Piotrkow with his cousin Geirek, they were robbed by two Polish policemen who just stopped short of murdering them, the method they had adopted for dealing with most Jewish returnees trying to reclaim their former homes. He learned that Mala was still alive in Belsen, and eventually they were reunited in England.

After the war the remains of those buried in the mass graves outside Piotrkow were exhumed and reburied in the town's Jewish cemetery which still stands. We accompanied him when he said Kaddish over the final resting place of his mother, sister and the town's many other martyrs □



The central square of Piotrkow's former ghetto.

on many a doorpost betrayed the religious tradition of their former occupants. We see the apartment where his family lived and hid from round-ups in the roofspace, where he slipped out of the ghetto at great personal risk and, once caught by a German soldier, till today cannot understand why the two bullying antisemitic sons of the local priest did not give him away.

We stood together in the entrance hall of the town's synagogue, now a library, as Ben related his family's fate.

When the Germans invaded Poland on 1st September 1939, bombers attacked Piotrkow without warning, killing indiscriminately, forcing people to shelter in basements and scattering them into the

of Poland's many ghettos was set up here on 28th October by the conquering Germans. Jews living outside its confines were ordered to leave all their possessions behind and move into the ghetto, taking only bedding. Ben's father bribed his way into trading in rabbit fur (used for Wehrmacht uniforms on the Russian front) which allowed him to smuggle in food.

By October 1942, 25,000 Jews were crammed into the ghetto. In one fateful week that month 22,000 of them, including Ben's grandfather, were deported to the Treblinka death camp until only 2,400 were left in a more confined area. The other members of his immediate family remained hidden.

Auschwitz, humanity's 20th century nadir



'Arbeit macht frei' still stands over Auschwitz' gateway.

The former Austrian military barracks at Oswiecim, a town with a sizeable Jewish population before the war, on the orders of SS head Heinrich Himmler were converted into a concentration camp by 300 local Jewish forced labourers in June 1940.

The most cruel forms of torture were carried out here on prisoners including bestial medical 'experiments' in Block 10. Especially notorious was Block 11 where I went down to the basement cells in which the first experiments with Zyklon B gas took the lives of Russian prisoners of war, and from where regular executions took place in the grim yard outside after the victims had appeared before a mock court. A gas chamber and crematorium completed the camp's array of facilities.

Several other blocks now house informative exhibitions provided by the country of origin of the victims. Israel's is the most extensive and emotionally demanding; a memorial stone stands outside its entrance dedicated by the late President Chaim Herzog. The Yugoslav exhibition shows brutal pictures of hostages being hanged in the streets of Belgrade. I recalled, while a patient in a Belgrade hospital many years ago, Vuki Popovic relating how his father had protested to the occupying Germans at the execution of hostages, so without compunction, they added him to their victims.

I stood alone in the late afternoon sun under the gateway entrance to Auschwitz,

not one other person to be seen or heard. Above me the most infamous sign in the world proclaimed in all its blatant cynicism that 'Arbeit macht frei'. I was conscious that this place could lay claim to being the most notorious on earth, especially for the Jewish people, and more: that I, though then a child, was a contemporary of co-religionists who were terrorised, tortured and murdered here.

Auschwitz-Birkenau, the anonymity of the victims

In March 1941 a much larger camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, was established two kilometres away from Auschwitz I in which, at any one time, up to 60,000 people were kept for slave labour in crowded wooden huts and brutal and

appalling conditions.

The sinister silhouette of its gateway is an indelible symbol of mass death for my generation. The incoming railway lines still run under the guardhouse, terminating at a ramp.

Here parched, starving and confused Jews from all parts of Europe, often at night under bright lights, were quickly forced out of their cattle-wagon transport and into line. An SS officer with the power of life and death selected those for work, to live a little longer in inhumane conditions, and those who were to be murdered in the gas chambers almost immediately. We walked through the remaining huts built of brick and stone, with their notorious three-tiered bunks, ten or more people to each, 1,000 or more to a block. Primitive latrines occupied another block.

Furthest from the entrance gate were four gas chambers. The retreating Germans dynamited them, but undressing and 'shower' rooms were clear to see – just a few paces from where victims' lives were taken and the crematoria in which their bodies were burned. Up to 10,000 people a day (most women, the elderly and children) were 'processed' within two hours of arrival – industrialised killing at a pace and on a scale never before even contemplated. When the system could not cope, the victims queued under the trees where now a memorial stands, the men reciting *Kaddish*. The jagged concrete remains serve as their memorial stones.

Auschwitz was the Nazis' largest death camp and has become the symbol of the Holocaust. At least 1,600,000 people were murdered here or worked to death in its camps, more than 95% of them Jews. Though this is Jewry's largest cemetery – there is not one marked grave, not one name □





Tarnow's Jewish cemetery.

Tarnow, a history preserved

Tarnow, a bustling market town with a noble town square, reveals clear evidence of a once large and thriving Jewish population. A century ago, more than 40% of the townspeople were Jews, the majority Chasidim, most engaged in garment manufacture, but Zionism too was finding support from the younger generation.

When the German army occupied Tarnow on 8th September 1939, terrorisation of the Jewish community of 25,000 began almost immediately. In June 1942 Jews from the surrounding towns were concentrated in Tarnow ghetto, then deportations to Belzec death camp began, and later to Auschwitz and Plaskow; many died of disease and hunger, others were shot and buried in mass graves hidden in woodland.

From the town museum emerged a striking-looking man dressed in a trilby and long black coat. The museum's director, Adam Bartosz, though a non-Jew, has made great efforts to document the history of the Jewish ghetto. He has also established a museum recording the history of European gypsies who lived locally.

On a tour of the former ghetto, Adam pointed out street names, places of business, the extent and sophistication of Jewish life here which centred on its four synagogues and 80 shtiebls! By some quirk of fate, the high-canopied *almemar* of the main synagogue, destroyed by the German invaders, had survived under the rubble and now stands witness to its lost congregation.

The town's Jewish cemetery is quite exceptional as having not only survived National Socialism, use of gravestones for building materials and vandalism; but, thanks to Adam's persistence and researches, the restoration of the cemetery has revealed a long and honourable history, including the last resting place of distinguished Chasidic rabbis □

Krakow and its 'Jewish town' Kazimierz

Krakow, Poland's third city, rivals Prague in its history, architecture and significance. King Kazimir the Great gave Krakow University its charter 600 years ago, leading to its eminence as a place of enlightened learning, much to the anguish of the Catholic Church.

In 1495 its Jews were expelled to the suburb of Kazimierz which grew into one of the few 'Jewish' towns in Europe, an outstanding centre of Jewish learning and culture. In 1939 its community of 60,000 represented 25% of Krakow's total population.

The German invaders made Krakow capital of the General Government area of Poland, and persecution, confiscation of property and other restrictions on Jews were quickly implemented. Between May 1940 and March 1941, 40,000 Jews were expelled, leaving 18,000 imprisoned in a very restricted area, most of whom were subsequently deported to Belzec and Auschwitz.

Several factories were established in the ghetto, among them one owned by Oskar Schindler who has been honoured for saving the lives of his Jewish employees. My visit to his factory near the Plaskow concentration camp, and which is in use today, was quite thrilling in its reality. Its steep staircase echoed with the voices of



Klezmer musicians in Kazimierz.

its wartime workers re-created in the film *Schindler's List*.

Several synagogues remain in Kazimierz – two or three in use for prayers, but most remaining delapidated through lack of restoration funds – but alas only a handful of Jews. However, with the lifting of the Iron Curtain and the emergence of democratic regimes, Western tourism and the interest of Jews – especially those of Polish origin – has meant a renewed influx. Kazimierz boasts a new Jewish cultural centre built out of the ruins of an old synagogue. It would not disgrace any capital city with its recital room, library,

coffee bar and meeting places and video presentation equipment. Its *éminence grise*, director and our host, Dr Joachim Russek, expressed interest in my proposal to turn some of the other synagogues into conference centres which would appeal to American Jewry who are always conferencing somewhere abroad, and where better than in the heartland of European Jewry whence many of them derived?

The group's final night's dinner was celebrated in jolly style, no doubt as a reaction to the cruel subject matter we had studied at first hand, in a 'Jewish' restaurant in the heart of Kazimierz with traditional melodies being played by a non-Jewish Klezmer band.

The group expressed its appreciation to Ben Helfgott for his courage in returning to Poland with us. Surprisingly, despite all the persecution he had survived, some at the hands of his fellow Poles, Ben remains a Polish patriot, asking us not to see Poles as "antisemitic demons, but as human beings too."

Director of the Beth Shalom Holocaust Memorial Centre, Stephen Smith, who organised and led the study mission, revealed himself as having an exceptionally detailed knowledge of the subject, as well as an appreciation of its gravity. In



The town square.

every town and camp museum he is known and respected by the intelligentsia, a measure of the influence he has brought to bear in the short time Beth Shalom has been in operation.

For me, an English Jew, it was a surreal experience; today's sanitised sites protect us from the human degradation and bestiality these places represented. It is almost impossible to comprehend the enormity of the crimes and totally impossible to understand why they were initiated. It was only appropriate to pay homage at places where the worst persecutions in the history of the Jewish people occurred □

The next generation

"To have been a European Jew in the first half of the twentieth century was to pass sentence on one's own children, to force upon them a condition almost beyond rational understanding. Perhaps we Jews walk closer to our children than other men; try as they may they cannot leap out of our shadow." **George Steiner**

It is time for the generation of Holocaust survivors to understand that such destruction has left a legacy behind. It is time to recognise that subsequent generations have been affected by the violence and trauma of the immediate past. It is time for the first generation to listen to their offspring and not hear this as a criticism of parenting skills or an accusation.

The impact of the Holocaust cannot be integrated by one generation alone: the psychological and other consequences reach through the generations and must gradually be understood and worked through. For if we fail to do this we run the risk – in Santayana's words – of having to repeat what we do not want to remember.

From our perspective, awareness of the issues concerning how we, the descendants, have been affected, has been developed and written about since the late seventies. In spite of the considerable international research, discussion and highlighting of the issues, the response in this country, particularly from the first generation, has been slow and unhelpful. Indeed, until quite recently it has been characterised by dismissal and lack of support. Given the scale of the Holocaust, it is extraordinary that to date no organisation finances even one worker to promote lectures, talks and meetings, for the offspring of the 75,000 refugees who came to this country between 1933-1946.

For anyone seriously interested in the Holocaust and its effects, there needs to be commitment in the form of solid, financial support – now. Conferences, meetings and lectures in the past five years have clearly established the issues and interest. We need to develop an educative, conscious and imaginative programme. We seek a firm financial foundation to develop a view and vision of the future that adequately responds to the enormity of what happened. It is a way of working with the past, in the present, in order to create a future.

For the descendants who have the courage and interest to develop important

work in this field, there is a unique contribution to be made. We are the direct link between first generation victims, and the third and subsequent generations. If we, the living bridge between three generations, are not encouraged and supported to reflect on our role, then something essential is lost. We are not, by definition, neurotic and disturbed individuals. Nor do we expect help for nothing. The Holocaust was serious; the after-effects are serious: we are not taken seriously.

And importantly, we must reflect on the wider implications of what happened. We must think about the post-Holocaust silence and the complex communication within the family, and reflect on its meaning. We should appreciate how rich a source of information we have for others who have been persecuted. No previous genocide has been studied, researched and documented as thoroughly as the Holocaust. Nowhere is there such a body of information about after-effects and living with parents who have been severely traumatised. Let us use this information for other victims who face persecution, torture, racism, exile, loss of country and language. As Jews in Europe in the thirties, we were the main targeted victims, but we do not have a monopoly claim to genocide and persecution.

The history of the AJR is unique and impressive: do not let it become 'history' as its members pass away. I believe we are the natural inheritors of the AJR. Do you not wish to know that what you have built up will be continued, differently, in the future, and respond to the needs of your descendants? We know the sort of informed and educated future there could be – but need your practical support now to build such a future. If you choose not to support us, or if you prefer to wait, my question is – why?

□ Katherine Klinger
(Second Generation Trust)

SEARCH NOTICES

Mme Rose Lombarde, née Chana Ruchla Berliner, now living in France, who emigrated as a child in 1937 from Tomaszow-Masowiecki in Poland, wishes to hear from any survivors of the **Berliner or Rosensweig** (her mother's) families from that town. Please communicate with her direct by Fax on 0033 4 6891 3945 or write care of Richard B Tait,

(continued)

Ham Glebe, Church Road, Ham, Richmond, Surrey TW10 5HG.

Mrs Helen Falik, now aged 96 and living in London, came to the UK from Austria prior to WWII with her two sisters. **Edith and Paul Singer**, her niece and nephew, children of her sister Freda (Rischawy) Singer, survived the camps, lived in Israel after the war, then migrated to the USA. Mrs Falik is anxious to be reunited with her only living relatives whose whereabouts she does not know. Please write to Mrs H Falik, Heinrich Stahl House, The Bishops Avenue, London N2 0BV.

Dr Stefan Mayer, Vienna, 13th District (Hietzing) Stekhorengasse No 1. Passionate chessplayer. I would be grateful to receive any information. Eric Walters, 61 Holders Hill Drive, London NW4 INN. Tel: 0181 203 1510.

Lieberg – Messinghof – Kassel Bettenhausen. Lieberg & Co was forcibly sold in 1938. Hertha, Wilhelm and Rolf Michael Lieberg were deported to Majdanek concentration camp in Poland and disappeared. Any survivors or other members of the Lieberg family are being sought, in particular Mrs Erna Sander (née Lieberg) whose husband was eye specialist Dr Emil Sander, Stuttgart 1922-37, and Margarethe Garte (née Lieberg) who married Dr Otto Garther of Wickersdorf & Stuttgart. Known in London in 1952 at 186 Adelaide Road, NW3. Please contact Heidi Sieker, Fuldatalstr. 228, D-34125 Kassel, Germany. Tel: 0561 870 9186.

50 YEARS AGO

COUNT BERNADOTTE

Count Folke Bernadotte, who was assassinated in Jerusalem, had merited the respect and gratefulness of the Jewish people long before he took up his thankless task as a mediator in the Palestine conflict.

As President of the Swedish Red Cross, he rescued in 1943 and 1944 large numbers of Danish and Hungarian Jews from concentration camps of the Nazis in Germany. He undertook these missions with no consideration to his own safety as a humanitarian who believed in the sanctity of human life and in the solution of problems by negotiation and not by force.

It was this belief which made him accept the office of mediator in Palestine. Not for the first time in history have men who have dedicated themselves against violence, fallen victim to that which they fought □

AJR Information, October 1947

The AJR at Work

LEEDS HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

The Leeds group of former refugees and Holocaust survivors who live in Yorkshire has affiliated to the AJR. The group presents a programme of talks and social activities throughout the year to meet the members' preferences.

At LHSFA's next meeting on Sunday 2nd November at 2.30pm, Joyce and Sydney Frazer will describe their recent visit to Lithuania at Queenshill Centre, Leeds. An AGM and social have already been planned for 11th January 1998. Please call Heinz Skyte (0113 268 5739) or Trude Silman (0113 225 1628) for further information.

□ HS

New Year resolutions

Jewish New Year is a time for reflection, for thinking about our achievements in the past year and hopes for the next. At *Rosh Hashana* it is traditional for Jews in all parts of the world to seek ways of enhancing the quality of their own and other people's lives.

AJR members are no exception. Their needs are growing daily, particularly some of our older and frailer members, and there is a great deal of loneliness. Since May this year the AJR has had 42 referrals for volunteer visitors – a number of requests that is almost impossible to meet.

Consequently, at this appropriate time of year, we appeal to you as an AJR member, to consider whether you can offer a little time to help meet the needs of others. If you can spare an hour or two on either a weekly or fortnightly basis, then please phone Debbie Picker, Volunteers Coordinator, on 0171 431 6161.

Wishing you all a very happy and healthy New Year.

□ Debbie Picker

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Tel: 0171-794 3949

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Enjoy

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- * Stimulating talk
- * Enlivening discussion
- * Meeting new friends

at the

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

on Wednesday 15th October 1997
at 15 Cleve Road, NW6 3RL
11.45 for 12.15pm

Guest speaker: **Ralph Blumenau**
'The Value of History'

Reservations (£7)
from Sylvia, Renée and Susie
Tel: 0171 328 0208

Madeleine Brook

BRIDGE EVENING

Wednesday 26th November 1997
Supper 6.30 Rubber Bridge 7.30

Paul Balint AJR Day Centre
15 Cleve Road, NW6 3RL

Tickets at £15 including supper
must be purchased in advance

Telephone Sylvia, Renée or Susie
0171 328 0208

AJR 'Drop in' Advice Centre at the

Paul Balint AJR Day Centre

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

Tuesday	7 October
Wednesday	22 October
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It occurs to me...

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree.

Ignoring for the purposes of this argument whether the year 2000 is really the millennium or whether it is, in fact, the last year of the current millennium, the question arises why the nation should spend hundreds of millions of pounds on celebrating it.

I could understand the reasoning behind the 1951 Festival of Britain as marking the transition from the wartime and immediate postwar gloom to a new era of growth, and much later, prosperity. The year too, was worth remembering as the Centenary of the 1851 Crystal Palace exhibition.

But what is the objective of celebrating the year 2000 with a dome and a 'Riesenrad'? Technological advances have progressed mightily in the 1900s and no doubt the powers of computers will carry on increasing in the 2000s. Millions of people were killed and murdered in the 1900s; hopefully there will be no similar cataclysms in the 2000s. The population, particularly in those parts of the world that can ill afford it, is growing exponentially. Roads are daily becoming more congested, and politicians struggle to reconcile the need to reduce the use of the car, with both the employment it brings in its construction, and the sense of freedom it gives to the user.

By the turn of the century we will know whether or not we have a common European currency, but we shall not know, if we have one, how long it will last. We may or may not know when the next stage in European political union will take place, since a common currency must in all good sense be followed by a federal parliament and president, with common defence and foreign policies and, of course, a common language (which?).

These are just some of the things that will be exercising our minds on that magic date, but what will the Millennium Exhibition do to resolve such questions? Two thousand years ago, the Romans used to lay on bread and circuses to divert the mind of the common man from thinking thoughts that might query the wisdom of his rulers. How strange that this Conservative waste of public money will be implemented by a Labour government that is strapped for cash.

Leshanah tovah tikatevu.

□ Ernest David

Theme and variations

What, I hear you ask, led to the Mandelson variation on the Mendelssohn/Mendelson theme? Received wisdom has it that HM officials at Dover, or other ports of entry, routinely misspelt immigrants' names, but I discern quite a different scenario. I see the first generation Mandelson as someone endowed with a foresight that bordered on the prophetic.

If you are going to be Herbert Morrison's *machuten* via siring the advertising manager of the *Jewish Chronicle* (who in turn begat the advertising manager of Tony Blair) then you're far more likely to present yourself to immigration officials as Mandelson, rather than Mendelson. After all, Mandelson is *sui generis*, whereas Mendelssohn/Mendelson is heavily oversubscribed.

Look at the long list of namesakes from whom you'd have to work hard to stand

out: Moses of translation-of-the-Pentateuch-into-German fame, Felix (Bartholdy) of *Fingal's Cave* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* fame, the architect Erich of Einsteinurm observatory at Potsdam fame, the band-leader Felix of 'Hawaian Serenaders' fame, the banker Franz von, the actress and Max Reinhardt groupie Eleanore, the Tribunate Labour MP Leo, and so on, and so forth.

Even abbreviated versions of Mendelson exist in abundance. Too few of us alas, remember the Hebrew/Yiddish writer Mendele Mokher Sefarim of *Fishke-der-Krumer* fame. Somewhat better known are the three Mendels: one the Moravian geneticist and monk (unsurprisingly, a non-Jew), another the literature-obsessed unwordly *Buch-Mendel* of Stefan Zweig's novella, and the third the alias Dennis Cannan gave the painter Mark Gertler when he wrote a 'factual novel' about him.

On the other hand the Mandelson spelling gives the family a clear run of the

name. This does not, however, hold true of the abbreviated version: Mandel. Herewith two examples: George Mandel was a French right-of-centre politician commemorated by a street near the *Etoile*. A much feared Chef de Cabinet to Clemenceau, he became Minister of the Interior in the interwar years and was done to death by the Nazis during the Occupation.

His egregious namesake, Fritz Mandel, was an Austrian munitions manufacturer who subsidised Prince Starhemberg's proto-Fascist militia; after the Anschluss the two 'brothers in arms' fetched up in Argentina. Happily no Vienna street bears his name – but Mandel is remembered by film buffs. He married Hedy Kiesler – better known by her Hollywood *nom-de-plume* Hedy Lamarr – and became a footnote in cinema history. He tried to buy up all the copies of *Exstase*, the film in which his wife swam in the nude.

□ RG

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Afternoon entertainment – OCTOBER 1997

- | | | |
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| Tuesday | 7 | A MOVABLE FEAST – Melanie Reid (Soprano) accompanied by Rianka Bouwmeester (Piano) |
| Wednesday | 8 | JOIN US IN MUSIC – Sara Meadows accompanied by John Feild |
| Thursday | 9 | EDITA's & PIERO's |

- | | | |
|-----------|----|---|
| | | RECITAL – Edita Zuravskaitė (Mezzo) accompanied by Piero Mattei (Piano) |
| Sunday | 12 | DAY CENTRE OPEN - NO ENTERTAINMENT |
| Monday | 13 | MELODY HOUR – David Jedwab & Avril Kaye accompanied by Mabel Witztum (Piano) |
| Tuesday | 14 | MUSIC TO CHARM YOU – Fiona Tanner (Soprano) accompanied by Geoffrey Whitworth (Piano) |
| Wednesday | 15 | DAY CENTRE OPEN – LUNCHEON CLUB |
| Thursday | 16 | C L O S E D – Sukkoth |
| Sunday | 19 | DAY CENTRE OPEN - NO ENTERTAINMENT |
| Monday | 20 | THE BLOOMSBURY SONG SPINNERS – Maria-Neus Devesa & Julia Kogan |
| Tuesday | 21 | SHOWTIME AT THE AJR – Amanda Palmer |
| Wednesday | 22 | PRE-SIMCHAT TORAH CONCERT – The Jack Davidoff Trio |
| Thursday | 23 | C L O S E D – YOMTOV |
| Sunday | 27 | SONGS FROM THE HEART – Shirley Gurevitz accompanied by Anne Berryman (Piano) |

- | | | |
|-----------|----|--|
| Tuesday | 28 | MUSICAL DELIGHT – Ansi Boothroyd (Soprano) accompanied by Ruth Leber (Piano) |
| Wednesday | 29 | MUSIC FOR YOUR PLEASURE – Abigail Gorton (Soprano) accompanied by Piano |
| Thursday | 30 | TWO VOICES & A PIANO – Eddy Simmons & Helen Blake |

NOVEMBER

- | | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| Sunday | 2 | THE KENTERTAINERS |
| Monday | 3 | MARY-JANE's DEBUT – Mary-Jane de Havas (Soprano) accompanied by Geoffrey Whitworth (Piano) |
| Tuesday | 4 | A CONCERT BY THE TRINITY COLLEGE OF MUSIC |
| Wednesday | 5 | VOCAL FIREWORKS – Jean Aird (Soprano) & David Rose (Baritone) accompanied by Margaret Gibbs (Piano) |
| Thursday | 6 | THE VALERIE HEWITT SHOW – Valerie Hewitt (Soprano) – Guitar & Piano) accompanied by Anne Berryman (Piano) |

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deaths

Green. Eugene Green passed away suddenly on 12 August 1997. Deeply mourned by his loving wife Etta, sons Ronny and Anthony, daughters-in-law, sister Milly, grandchildren, niece Yvonne, family and friends.

CLASSIFIED Miscellaneous

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Societies

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

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Art Notes

Mondrian: Nature to Abstraction, at the Tate Gallery until November 30, provides the first opportunity for several decades to see a selection of paintings and drawings by Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). This important exhibition is an eye-opener, tracing Mondrian's early career as a painter of natural forms, through the period when he abstracted the essential lines and proportions from trees, still lifes and seascapes, leading to a fully abstract style in which he sought to create an ideal world of balance and harmony. The exhibition places him firmly among the great pioneers of non-objective art.

More than 140 paintings, drawings and prints by James Ensor (1860-1949) are on view at the Barbican Art Gallery until December 14. There are early seascapes, still lifes, portraits, biblical themes, satirical works and the masked carnival paintings for which he is best known. Born in Ostend, Ensor had a very unhappy childhood, which partly explains the disturbing nature of much of his work.

His grotesque, wry humour is seen in works which satirised the social and political forces of his day. A most extraordinary show.

Also at the Barbican is *Sleeping with Ghosts*, an exhibition by the eminent photo-journalist Don McCullin.

SB's Column

Sixty years ago: French cinema. 'Talkies' originated around 1927. Ten years later, French producers achieved mastery in this previously unknown field with works that starred the most popular French actors of that period: Sacha Guitry scripted, directed and played the lead in *Roman d'un tricheur* and *Perles de la couronne*. Jean Gabin earned plaudits for *Pépé le Moko*, *La belle équipe* and the pacifistic classic *La grande illusion*. Later on, French comedies provided another period of classics with Fernandel and Jacques Tati becoming household names.



Chasidic Jew by Ruth Light, *The Art of Prayer* Exhibition at the Etz Chaim Gallery.

Paintings and drawings from the Ben Uri Art Society's Permanent Collection, featuring rabbis, scholars, scribes and synagogues, are shown in the exhibition *The Art of Prayer* at the Etz Chaim Gallery, Northwood and Pinner Liberal synagogue until November 2. Details: 01923 822592.

The Blinding of Samson, one of Rembrandt's most powerful masterpieces, never before shown in London, is on loan from the Städtisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt, to the National Gallery, where it is on display alongside the Gallery's own paintings by Rembrandt, including the magnificent *Belshazzar's Feast*. Until November 16.

□ Barry Fealdman

The works of Friedrich Torberg, Prague-born Austrian novelist, translator and theatre critic, are once more on sale in bookshops in Vienna and Munich. Torberg who later called himself 'the last Jewish author writing in German', shot to fame when, at 22, he published the best-seller *Der Schüler Gerber*. Among his other books, partly written as an emigré in the States (where he befriended Franz Molnar) is the story *Auch das war Wien*, dealing with the terrors of the Anschluss; the book makes uncomfortable reading. In contrast, Torberg's two *Tante Jolesch* books have amused generations of readers.

A belated honour. A square in Vienna's third district (Landstrasse) has been named after Joseph Schmidt, a tenor with a brilliant voice who appeared in several

1930s films, and is particularly remembered for *Ein Lied geht um die Welt*. Schmidt died aged 38, a victim of medical neglect, in a Swiss internment camp.

Obituary. The German bass Karl Ridderbusch died, aged 65, during the summer. At his peak during the sixties and seventies, he appeared in New York, Paris and Bayreuth, also visiting London in 1971 and 1973. His roles included Boris Godunov and Ochs, Hunding and Hagen in Wagner's *Ring*; his powerful Sachs in *Meistersinger* earned him an international reputation □

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oil for frying

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Make a batter with the eggs, salt and grated Parmesan cheese. Drain the courgettes and pat dry with kitchen paper. Dip the slices first into flour, shake off surplus and then dip them into the batter. Fry in plenty of hot oil. Drain on kitchen paper and serve at once □

Genealogical records

London's Beth Din (Court of the Chief Rabbi) holds valuable genealogical records at their premises in North London of births, deaths and orthodox marriages in Anglo-Jewry. This information is available to assist any personal enquiries, both legal and non-legal, and the information sought can be provided free of charge where a relevant date is known. In addition, extended investigations or research carried out for legal or genealogical purposes, is undertaken for a charge of £12 an hour plus any costs incurred. Copies of the relevant documents are made at a charge of £5 each. Free estimates are available on request and fees are required in advance.

For further information please contact Charles Tucker, Research Unit, London Beth Din, Adler House, 735 High Road, North Finchley, London N12 0US. Tel: 0181 343 6270 □

RoK Reunion News

There has been an enthusiastic response from *Kinder* wishing to participate in our 1999 reunion. Those who are RoK members receive regular news directly; AJR members will be kept up-to-date via AJR Information.

Basic information on the reunion is as follows:

Date: 15 & 16 June 1999
(and informally on 17 June).

Venue: The Logan Halls and the Royal National Hotel, Bloomsbury, London.

Estimated Cost: £95 per person to cover conference, accommodation, two kosher meals per day and a kosher picnic lunch for the third day.

Enrolment Fee: £20 per person (non-returnable but transferable to other family members till end '98) will be the first instalment of the conference fee. Charges are being kept to an absolute minimum, but RoK is required to pay advance deposits.

Please make cheques out to RoK Reunion 1999 and send to:

RoK, 1 Hampstead Gate, 1a Frognal, London NW3 6AL.

Please provide the following details: Full name of Kind(er), former name, present address and telephone number, town and country of birth, hostel (if applicable), dates of army service, spouse's and second generation name if attending □

Sheriff David

During the war, in a little village in Czechoslovakia, a group of ten-to twelve-year-old boys played all kinds of games together - 'Highway robbers', 'Cowboys and Indians', 'Gangsters and sheriffs'. One day a boy in the group called David arrived with a yellow sheriff's star on his chest. (All Jews had been ordered to wear one). The boys all envied him, they all wanted one, but he would not part with it and he became the sheriff.

One day all the Jews were ordered to leave their homes and were sent East to work until the end of the war, or so they were told. Before leaving David came to say goodbye to his friends. He gave his yellow star to his best friend Duro and said "now you will be sheriff until I return. When I come back I will be the sheriff again". But David never returned.

□ A Danon

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Obituaries

Viktor Frankl

Viktor Frankl, who has died at the age of ninety-two, established the 'third' Viennese school of psychotherapy – his predecessors having been Freud and Alfred Adler (he himself first collaborated and then quarrelled with Adler).

Frankl's approach to psychic healing – to which he gave the name logotherapy – traced suffering to the individual's failure to find meaning and a sense of responsibility in life.

In fact Frankl's own life was deeply marked both by an intense search of meaningful activity – as well as by intense suffering. Determined from early childhood to become a doctor he fixed on psychotherapy as his chosen profession while still at high school.

He was still in his mid-twenties when he took degrees both in medicine and philosophy. By his early thirties he had set up a private psychiatric practice and been appointed chief of neurology at the Rothschild Spital.

The Anschluss brought a period of ever greater suffering. Frankl's young wife had to abort their unborn child on Nazi orders, and the couple were deported to Terezin. (Viktor had let his own visa to the US lapse so as not to desert his aged parents.) From Terezin his wife – waiving her own exemption – accompanied him to Auschwitz where she perished, while he survived.

After the war Frankl returned to Vienna, remarried, served for 25 years as head of the neurology department of the Polyklinik, and wrote a series of influential books. One of the latter contained this logotherapeutic maxim: *"Live as if you were already living for the second time, and as if you had made the mistakes you are about to make"* □

Sir Rudolf Bing

Vienna-born Sir Rudolf Bing, who has died aged ninety-five, was one of the greatest operatic impresarios of the century. Of upper middle-class origin, Bing moved, via concert agency work, into artistic administration in the 1920s. The famed opera producer Carl Ebert recognised his potential and called him first to Darmstadt, and subsequently to Berlin. The Nazi takeover compelled Bing to return to Vienna without any job prospects,

but in 1934 Ebert asked him to help launch the Glyndebourne Festival. The fact that Glyndebourne became an established institution owed much to Bing's organisational gifts.

Immediately after the war Bing was involved in setting up the Edinburgh Festival, but his true glory days dawned when, in 1949, he became manager of the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Here he achieved almost full houses for years on end, and greatly expanded the repertoire. One of Bing's other great achievements was his breaching of the colour bar: in 1954 Marion Anderson became the first black singer ever to appear at the Met.

Bing also showed flair for publicity, attracting banner headlines when he sacked Maria Callas, and during a bitter three months' struggle with the unions. Sadly the last ten years were overshadowed by rather more lurid publicity relating to the Alzheimer-ridden Bing's second marriage □

Sir George Solti

Sir George Solti, who died aged eighty-four, was a conductor endowed with prodigious energy almost to the very end of his life. Born in pre-WWI Hungary he witnessed the last flowering of central Europe's civilisation – with its characteristic Jewish component – before the onset of barbarism. At the Budapest conservatoire he studied piano with Bartok and Dohnanyi, and composition with Kodaly, before becoming *repetiteur* at the Opera House. His remark that he was the first Jew employed there since Mahler reflected the political atmosphere of the early thirties. An assistant to Toscanini at the last Salzburg Festivals of independent Austria, he survived the war in Switzerland. (His mother, who was to perish in the Holocaust, had warned him not to return to Hungary).

Postwar the same Jewishness which had hitherto hampered his career became an advantage, when the US occupation authorities in Germany purged musical life of Nazi conductors. This created career opportunities brilliantly taken by Solti, first in Munich, and then Frankfurt. As director of Covent Garden in the 1960s he raised standards, in a manner reminiscent of Mahler's reform of the Vienna opera, and placed London among the world's leading cities of music. For the last quarter of a century Solti was one of the most sought after conductors on the international circuit □

FORTHCOMING EVENTS – OCTOBER 1997

- | | | |
|-----------|-------|---|
| Mon | 6 | Fritz Beer: Warum lügen wir über unsere Vergangenheit? (in German). Club 43, 8pm |
| Tue | 7 | Marek Dabrowske: Piano Concert. JACS, 2pm |
| Mon | 13 | Dr Margot Zutschi: Kafka's 'In the Penal Colony'. Club 43, 8pm |
| Tue | 14 | Rolf Weinberg's Open Discussion. Suggest topics on 0181 205 9003. JACS, 2pm |
| | 17-19 | Festival of Reform Judaism: Sternberg Centre. |
| Sat | 18 | Debbie Friedmann: Jewish singer/songwriter, Sternberg Centre, 8pm, £12 & concs. |
| Mon | 20 | Herbert Malinow MA: Napoleon & his family, Club 43, 8pm |
| Tue | 21 | A Reading of Thomas Bernhard: Johanna Lonsky, Theater der Josefstadt, Vienna, (conj. Austrian Cultural Institute). Sussex University, 5pm |
| Mon | 27 | Martha Blend BA: Reads from her book 'A Child Alone' and discusses Austria's attitude. Club 43, 8pm |
| Tue | 28 | Jews of Sweden during WWII: Walter Goddard. JACS, 2pm |
| Tue | 28 | Philosophy in Austria & USA since 1945: Kurt Rudolf Fischer, University of Vienna. Sussex University, 5pm |
| November: | | |
| Sun | 2 | Leeds HSFA: Journey to Lithuania, Joyce & Sydney Frazer. Queenshill Day Centre, 2.30pm |
| Mon | 3 | Dr Jonathan Katz: Sophocles & Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Club 43, 8pm |

ORGANISATION CONTACTS

JACS at Belsize Square Synagogue, NW3 4HX. Tel: 0171 794 3949
 Club '43, at Belsize Square Synagogue. Hans Seelig 01442 254 360
 Sternberg Centre for Judaism, 80 East End Road, Finchley, N3 2SY. Tel: 0181 346 2288
 University of Sussex Centre for German-Jewish Studies. Diana Franklin 0181 455 4785 or 01273 678 495

NEWSROUND

Pensions and payments

The Jewish Material Claims Conference, represented by World Jewish Congress secretary-general Israel Singer and six Holocaust survivors, persuaded the German Government to reconsider pensions payments and the criteria used by the Article Two Hardship Fund set up after re-unification. WJC are also launching investigations into looted art and neutral countries' wartime gold policies.

Bullion laundering

Portugal regularly bought gold from the Germans held in the Swiss National Bank during World War II, according to recent World Jewish Congress researches. The Swiss then instructed the Bank of Canada or the US Federal Reserve Bank to transfer an equivalent amount into a Bank of Portugal account, obviating any need for a physical transfer and completing a classic money-laundering scheme.

Bullion smelting

Degussa, Germany's largest smelter of precious metals, has admitted that the company processed coins, jewellery and other valuables belonging to European Jews during the war. Declassified documents in America, Russia and Eastern Europe are also revealing the degree of complicity of other leading German companies in their keenness to use slave labour.

Eichmann's captor

Hermann Arndt, known in his Israel Mossad secret service days as Zvi Aharoni, claims in his new book *Operation Eichmann* to have tracked and abducted the mastermind of the 'final solution' from Argentina to stand trial in Israel. Arndt now lives the modest life of a country gentleman in rural Devon.

London conference

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced an international conference on the origins and disposal of Nazi gold to take place in London in December. Lord Janner, Chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, worked determinedly to secure the conference, to which all governments holding, or who held, such gold are invited.

Europe's greatest

Leading academics in 24 countries nominated Winston Churchill as the greatest European of the century. Albert Einstein was placed second.

□ RDC

Our right to the Land?

The architects of Oslo, in their wisdom, stipulated that the status quo should be maintained in Jerusalem till the very final stage of the peace-process because any attempt to solve the problem of Jerusalem earlier, in the climate of "all mine" fanaticism, would lead to the total breakdown of the negotiations. Only after accumulating smaller agreements, with the concomitant thawing out of relations and confidence building could the chances for compromise on the explosive Jerusalem issue become real.

Plans for developing Har Homa had already been prepared by the former government (ditto for the opening of the 'tunnel') but were held in abeyance until agreement for their implementation could be reached. After all, for building sites there are alternatives, but for building peace there are none. Seen in this light, the action of the Government is no longer mere brinkmanship, but another act of deliberate provocation.

The longer answer involves the question of our right to the Land. There is almost complete consensus across Israeli society that this is the cradle of our people.

But is Holy Script a title-deed? Would we accept the scriptures of others as such? The 20th century has seen the establishment of dozens of states, without divine promise. Is it not demeaning the centre piece of our cultural heritage when we use it as a legal document for a land claim in contradiction to so much else of universal value it contains? (For example, in Genesis 13 Abraham says to Lot, in a dispute over grazing lands: If you take the left, I will go to the right; or if you take the right, I will go to the left. But let there be no strife between us for we are brothers. Also, the original promise of the Land to Abraham says "for your sons" – including Ishmael).

Even for lily-white doves, security is an overriding consideration. The question is how best to achieve it. In Moshe Dayan's phrase the Suez Canal was "the best anti-tank barrier in the world" – and we saw how ineffective that was in 1973!

For centuries Europe was torn by wars, with 'vital' strategic vantage points exchanged, replaced and finally made redundant. In the end, it transpires, the condition for security – essential but not always sufficient – is peace. Peace is not instead of security arrangements: we shall

continue to need a well trained, highly motivated army. Peace does not guarantee friendship or prosperity but, slowly yet surely, these do increase with every year that peace holds.

Our political right has another arrow in its quiver: you just cannot trust the Arabs, they are not like Europeans! Leaving aside the racism and the memories when similar things were said about the Jews, the case here is about the mightiest military power in the Middle East opposite the tiniest, puniest entity on our borders, demilitarised by agreement, posing, as it were, a threat to our very existence. With healthy Yiddish humour, P.M. Levy Eshkol used to refer to this as '*der nebbechdike Shimshon*' argument. It is time to recognise that we have more than little David's pebbles in our arsenal and that it is illogical and hypocritical to represent a neighbouring Palestinian State as an existential threat to Israel.

Terrorism is a problem which cannot be solved by name-calling. Before independence, when our boys fought the British, we rightly called them heroes. When young Palestinians risk career, family and often life itself to win a sovereign home for their people, we call them terrorist scum. Every punitive measure of ours swells the numbers of idealistic recruits who misguidedly do not realise – just like so many of our people – that complex problems cannot today be solved by military but only by political means.

At its foundation in 1927, the Kibbutz Artzi Federation inscribed on its banner: "This is the common Homeland of two peoples – the returning Jews and the Palestinian Arabs who live here". According to Amos Oz, the survivor of a shipwreck parable is justified in climbing (or forcing his way) on to somebody else's raft, but if he proceeds to throw the other into the water he is a blackguard.

□ Avraham Shomroni, Tel Aviv

Holocaust denial on Internet

Antisemitism disguised as pseudo-academic debate in the form of Holocaust denial and anti-Zionism, is increasingly published on the Internet international computer communications network, reports Jewish Policy Research, as a means of avoiding legal and moral objections to overt racism. However, neo-Nazi material is counterbalanced by the large anti-racist output.

□ RDC