

AJR Information

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Don't miss ...

Land of promise
Ronald Channing p5

Glimpses of Austria
Jussy Brainin p13

Both pen and sword

The death, within the same week, of Joseph Heller and Alexander Baron was a truly symbolic coincidence. Both men were of humble immigrant origin and served in the war about which they subsequently wrote outstanding novels. The East Ender Baron's *From the City, From the Plough* (1948) was sometimes hailed as a WW2 counterpart to *All Quiet on the Western Front* – while Brooklyn-born Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) actually entered the language.

Both books disproved the lingering Nazi jibe that Jews had no first hand experience of warfare. They also demonstrated the wealth of talent generated within immigrant communities even before university education became widely accessible □

Some reflections on **the word** on everybody's lips

Three meanings of millennium

Given that the word millennium is currently bandied about randomly it may not be amiss to try and tease out the different meanings that attach to the term.

The first is obviously the spiritual Judeo-Christian connotation. In this reading, millennium signifies the thousand year period of Messianic rule which is to precede the Last Judgement and the world to come.

The second is 'chronological': a metric subdivision of time, as the next order of magnitude following on from year, decade and century.

The third is (narrowly) historical. Hitler dubbed his state the *tausendjährige Reich*. By this he not only meant that the Nazi empire would last till all eternity but that it was also the fulfilment of the spiritual aspirations of the German people. In Hitler's monstrous perversion of 'salvation theology' Jews were devils incarnate and their extermination was the victory of Good over Evil.

The evil that men do, wrote Shakespeare, lives after them. Many of today's Germans, vociferously represented by the writer Martin Walser, want a *Schlussstrich* (final line) drawn under their country's guilt.

But guilt has to be expiated – and that has not been done in the true meaning of the term. Many of the companies, which 'employed' slave labour, deny legal culpability with the mendacious plea that they acted under Nazi duress. They squeezed an estimated £40 billion profit out of their wartime slaves, but half a century later it was left to the Schröder government (i.e. the reluctant German taxpayer) to cleanse the Bundesrepublik of a stain that continued to overshadow its postwar achievements. But, standing on the cusp of a new epoch, it ill behoves us merely to look back at the grisly past. There is reasonable ground to hope that the Third Millennium will

resemble the First more than the Second. (To readers who jibe at taking such a long-term view we say that the history of the Jews is arguably longer than anybody else's).

And as we look at the Jewish situation a thousand years ago we find that all the worst horrors – the Crusades, the expulsions, the yellow badge, the blood libel, the Inquisition, etc. were yet to come. One would have to be an inspissated pessimist to fear that, with nearly half the world's Jews currently in their own state and the rest largely resident in the enlightened West, the upcoming millennium will in any way resemble the one we have just survived □



Old comrades on parade

Proudly parading past the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall to a military band, with medals gleaming and banners held high, were 2,000 members of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women at their annual remembrance reunion. Also taking part were veterans from France, Israel and the USA. Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and the force's Jewish chaplain the Rev. Malcolm Wiseman conducted a memorial service for comrades who lost their lives in defence of civilised values and the Jewish people. (See p4) □

Ronald Channing

Profile

Anna Harvey

Anna Harvey was born in Leipzig in 1916 as Anneliese Simoni. She was educated at the Rudolf-Hildebrand-Oberschule from 1935 but as soon as studying became impossible she went to Italy, where she read at the Universities of Turin and Genoa. Due to Mussolini's adoption of Hitler's anti-Semitic policies, Anna had to flee to Britain in 1938, where she was able to continue her studies and reunite with her parents. Anna gained a first class honours degree in Latin and Italian in 1941 at Glasgow University and remained there as a post-graduate to read Greek.

By 1943, due to the relaxing of the enemy alien policy, Anna was able to join the WAAF. She first served as a Flight Mechanic with Training Command and then as a language teacher at various RAF stations. She was demobilised in May 1946.

In 1949, after a brief unsatisfactory period as a teacher, Anna applied for one of the Reconstruction positions at the British Library where she began her career as an Assistant Keeper in the Department of Printed Books (later to be



Anna Harvey

absorbed into the British Library). Soon after Anna was put in charge of the Dutch language section, she was able to raise its profile – partly through her research into books printed illegally during Nazi occupation – building for the British Library the largest collection of Dutch

language books outside of the Netherlands.

Anna wrote numerous articles and several books on Dutch bibliographical and historical subjects, often concentrating on Anglo-Dutch interaction, such as: *Publish and be free*, *Catalogue of Books from the Low Country 1601-1602* and *Printing as Resistance*.

Officially retired in 1981, Anna has not stopped working; she still travels to London once a week from her home in Dorset – where she lives with husband, William – to continue her research at the British Library and she regularly reviews books and translates articles.

In 1999 her colleagues – at home and abroad – honoured her with a volume of essays dedicated to her, published by the British Library and entitled, *Across the Narrow Seas*.

In the last 18 months Anna has received the Order of the Nederlandse Leeuw (Dutch Lion) from Queen Beatrix for her services to Dutch scholarship and for improving Anglo-Dutch relations; last April the city of Genoa awarded her the Mayor's Medal at a ceremony commemorating the persecution of Jews in Italy under Mussolini; and in 2000 she is expected to receive an honorary doctorate from Genoa University in recognition of the injustice she suffered during the war □

Clerical errors

It is a wellknown fact that the year Zero, the designated starting point of the Christian millennia, should really have occurred four years earlier. As a repository of knowledge the Christian Church clearly did not have very auspicious beginnings.

In the fourth century Saint Jerome committed another egregious error with the most far-reaching consequences. While translating the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, the Church father – always depicted as deeply studious on medieval paintings – made a slip that reverberated down the ages. He mistranslated the rays emanating from Moses' forehead on Sinai as horns, or *cornatu*. This clearly influenced Michelangelo when he sculpted his famous and awesome statue of Moses at the church of St Peter in Chains – but what mattered more was that the broad public ever after associated the founder of the Mosaic faith

with horns, i.e. devilish characteristics.

In the thirteenth century the Spaniard Jacobus de Veragine wrote the *Golden Legend*. Also known as *The Legend of the True Cross*, it purported to provide a prequel as well as a sequel to the story of Jesus' life. Due to its 'publication' prior to the invention of printing Veragine's work did not have a very wide circulation – but it was disseminated via the medium of painting (most notably Piero de la Francesca's frescoes in the church at Arezzo).

Already the first 'frame' of the fresco cycle is overtly antisemitic. In it two stern Jewish Elders bar Jesus' grandfather Joachim from entering the synagogue. They do so because they consider Joachim accursed of God on the grounds that his twenty-year old marriage has not been blessed with issue.

The antisemitic motif recurs in the final sequence of the cycle. Here the location of the True Cross – i.e. the instrument of the crucifixion – is only discovered when

the Jew who had hidden it underground in Jerusalem is threatened with death by drowning on the orders of St Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine.

A Jewish malefactor again appears in the (personal) writings of the mid-twentieth century Pope Pius XII who, as Cardinal Pacelli, had been Papal Nuncio in Munich during the 1919 Bavarian Soviet Republic. In the aftermath of the Great War Rome felt acutely threatened by atheistic Bolshevism and in Pacelli's paranoid imaginings Jews became conflated with Bolsheviks. He described the Munich Soviet leader Max Levien as an 'unkempt frenetic Jew' (see December issue p4).

In fact Levien was a non-Jew who, like many Baltic Germans – such as the Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg, or the 1940s screen actor Albert Lieven – bore a Jewish-sounding surname.

To err, as they say, is human – but it can have deeply inhuman consequences.

□ Richard Grunberger

The art or the life

Soon after Ted Hughes' death it was announced that Elaine Feinstein had embarked on his biography. This is bound to be a bestseller even if more punters purchase it out of interest in Hughes' marital tragedy than in his poetry.

Hughes successor as Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion, is less noted for his verse than for his biographies of the poets John Keats and Philip Larkin. The last named is also commemorated in a current play about his complicated love life (for which *Larkin About* would have been an apposite title.)

In fact the British stage has long been awash with dramatised biographies, from *Shadowlands* (C S Lewis and Joy Davidson) and *Taking Sides* (Furtwaengler and Hitler) to *Feasting with Panthers* (Oscar Wilde and Bosie).

Apropos of that *amour fou*, by now the number of people conversant with it probably exceeds the number of playgoers familiar with *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Of course, in the case of some writers exposure to their work is much less enjoyable than reading about their lives. This emphatically does not apply to Oscar Wilde – but it does to Virginia Woolf. Just compare the terminally boring *The Waves* with the drama of her life: the gloomy father, the sexually precocious step-brother, the Jewish mother-in-law deemed unfit to attend the marriage ceremony, fame, depression, insanity and suicide.

Then there was her sister Vanessa Bell who, thanks to her pivotal position in 'Bloomsbury', is somehow perceived as the most important British woman painter. This cachet is belied by portraits that sometimes look unfinished and other work painted in insipidly muted colours. Vanessa bore a daughter by the bisexual Duncan Grant, whose male lover subsequently married the girl. She also had a poetically gifted son who was killed in the Spanish Civil War.

Even so I doubt if a film will be made of her life, because the work will simply not sustain it visually. In total contrast I have seen Michaelangelo, Caravaggio, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Dora Carrington and Francis Bacon on screen and Stanley Spencer on stage.

Painters are, by definition, more colourful characters than writers. Nonetheless I herewith offer the following literary subjects to any would-be confectioners of

biopic screen plays.

- (a) Maya Angelou (teenage hooker, vaudeville dancer, author, academic, orator at presidential inauguration)
- (b) Gabriele D'Annunzio (decadent dramatist, bombastic philanderer, captor of Fiume, rival to Mussolini)
- (c) Robert Graves, the British contender. In the Great War he saw his own death reported in the newspapers. Afterwards, living in a *marriage à quatre* he noticed his Jewish mistress Laura Riding leap from a window and promptly followed her. In the 1950s he wrote the *White Goddess* which deity, he claimed, decreed that a succession of young women act as his muse to enable him to be creative.

And now, having written this I am off to see a show about the troubled marriage of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya. I wonder if it will recreate the scene of their meeting at Georg Kaiser's lakeside villa where Kurt had gone to discuss the music for *Der Silbersee* while Lotte had turned up to audition for a part. When their separate transactions had been completed Kurt chivalrously offered to row Lotte back across the lake. But the cantor's son was such a clumsy oarsman that he dropped his glasses in the water. Then, with his vision drastically impaired, he proposed marriage to his passenger.

□ RG



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Review

The refugee contribution to victory

Peter Leighton-Langer, X STEHT FUER UNBEKANNT, Deutsche und Oestereicher in den Britischen Streitkräften im Zweiten Weltkrieg, Berlin Verlag. Arno Spitz

It was probably a coincidence that the above book reached me roundabout the time of last year's Remembrance Sunday and the AJEX Parade at the Cenotaph.

The author has written a wide-ranging story, starting with the early days of the so-called Auxilary Military Pioneer Corps, now the Royal Pioneer Corps and ending with the problems of peacetime resettlement as well as of assimilation. He draws extensively on the books of Prof. Norman Bentwich (*I Understand the Risks*, Victor Gollancz 1950) and Peter Masters (*Striking Back*, Presido, USA 1997) and provides a very clear picture, backed by numerous quotes from letters, interviews and new material from hith-

erto unavailable archives.

The book is not just about the Great and the Good. Stories of highly decorated officers in both Army and Royal Air Force are mixed with those of very ordinary and mundane ex-soldiers like myself.

It is difficult to pick out the most interesting ones. There was the story of the ex-Austrian army ski instructor, who as Sgt. P. helped train the first British mountain warfare troops. Or the friend I trained with in 1942, Sgt. J.R., who jumped with his Colonel as No.2 at Arnheim and was killed before he hit the ground. Or another friend of later days, S/Sgt. R.B.W., who found himself kitted-out with a glengarry cap when he joined a famous Scottish infantry regiment and whose wife, Ilse, was one of the first 'alien' ATS girls. There was the alien Pioneer back in 1940 who, when posing for a photograph, displayed the Iron Cross gained in the First World War. My own late father-in-law, Pte. S.H., went to France with 69 Coy, in 1940, leaving behind a wife and two small daughters, to find that on returning to the U.K. the company was once again disarmed on arrival.

Another good story, not in this book, however, is of Capt. P., written-up in Peter Perry's *An Extraordinary Commission* (T.J. Gillard, Bristol 1997), who after fighting with the Royal Fusiliers across Europe ended up as Food and Transport Officer for the military government district of his native Berlin-Charlottenburg.

All of us, in the ex-refugee community, can be proud of our contribution during the Second World War. Little is known today – either in Germany or here – about the almost 10,000 men and women refugees, of whom over 90% were Jewish.

I have a criticism, but it is a minor one. I would challenge some of the author's assertions in the last chapter. However, a British domiciled reader needs to make allowances for a writer who looks at it all from the perspective of someone who has apparently settled back well into the new Germany.

All in all, it is a book which should be on the shelf for all of us, as well as for our children and grandchildren. Is it too much to hope that some retired academic will find the time to translate the book into English as a labour of love?

□ Henry L Morland

Slave labour compensation agreement

Negotiations between representatives of German industry and lawyers representing both Jewish and non-Jewish surviving slave labourers who worked for the Third Reich during World War II, are reported to have reached agreement on the payment of an amount of compensation for their unpaid toil. They worked in inhuman conditions in an extensive network of camps, mines and factories supporting Germany's war economy. Half the offer of £3.2 billion is to be contributed by the German Government.

Fifty German companies had already agreed to contribute to the compensation fund, motivated in part by their need to retain untrammelled export markets in the USA whose Government has been extremely firm in supporting compensation claims. They include leading names such as Siemens, Volkswagen, Bosch, Deutsche Bank, Thyssen and Krupp. To increase leverage at the negotiations, the American Jewish Committee published a list of a further 255 firms, said to have employed slave labour during the Nazi

period but who had not agreed to contribute towards the joint compensation fund, which included Deutsche Bahn, MAN AG, Philipp Holzmann and Deutsche Shell.

With an estimated 900,000 surviving slave labourers – among whom the Jews' treatment alone was genocidal – the level of compensation offered to each 'slave worker' would be some £5,000, with a lesser sum for 'forced labourers'. The fund is expected to start paying compensation by the middle of the year. The present German Government was anxious to conclude an agreement before the end of last year and the German President, Johannes Rau is reportedly prepared to make a public apology.

□ Ronald Channing

AJR Information regrets any delay in the distribution of this issue due to the millennium holidays

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Panorama of the Old City of Jerusalem from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, left, to the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock.

Land of promise

After a six-year absence, arrival at Ben Gurion Airport revealed few changes. Downtown Tel Aviv had lost its sparkle; Rehov Allenby was virtually dead by the early evening and even Dizengoff seemed empty. Most people preferred to go home after work and watch television. Paradoxically, despite access to 50 channels, Israeli television is poor; six main political pundits dominate comment and proffer interminable interviews after all-too-short news bulletins. The only fun evident in the streets was the weekend gathering of youngsters in the cafés and bars on the sea front.

Whether on Tel Aviv's main thoroughfares, or walking the length of Rehov Jaffa from the bus station to the Old City in Jerusalem, the multitude of little shops with their poor displays and limited stock were more reminiscent of prewar European than vibrant modern retailing. This contrasted with several massively high office blocks which towered over the centre and outskirts of Tel Aviv, possibly a triumph of optimism over economics, for building work was desultory and several of those completed appeared unoccupied. Large strikingly-designed apartment blocks have marched on to the land abutting every town, no doubt in response to the huge increase in population from Russia and elsewhere which Israel has, by some miracle, managed to accommodate. Rather isolated, with little evidence of communal centres or meeting points, they are served by new shopping malls clearly preferred to the old city centres.

At whatever level of income, everyone seemed to own a car, most being newish and of Japanese manufacture. Israelis drive far and fast and enjoy the freedom only this mode of transport brings because, in the Jewish tradition, visits to family and friends are the foundation of social life. Israeli buses are efficient, comfortable and cheap, though often crowded, taxis generally good value and taxi drivers good company – with daughters in LA and sons-in-law in Edgware.

If the number of mobile phones is anything to go by, Israel's future as a hi-tech centre is assured, confirmed by the 'silicon valley' development of Herzlia with its many new factory/offices designing and marketing the latest electronic computerised gizmos for a waiting world. Electronics now surpasses agriculture in its importance to Israel's economy.

The slaying of Prime Minister Rabin at the hand of a Jewish religious fanatic, following his powerful and unequivocal call for a peace settlement with the Palestinians at a huge rally in Tel Aviv in 1995, still hangs over the people as the young state's nadir. Both the memorial at the renamed Rabin Square in Tel Aviv and the imagery of his black and white marble tombstone on Mount Herzl provide poignant reminders of the vulnerability of all peacemakers, even in this country which has never known peace. Close by is Yad Vashem, the state memorial to all victims of the Holocaust, now turning to educate yet another generation on the consequences of racial hatred and the particular responsibilities of the Jewish

state to the dead and the living.

Viewed from King David's Tower, the Old City of Jerusalem, the centre of the world's great monotheistic faiths, is a very small land-area already divided into its historic quarters. It was possible to avoid the rough and tumble of the Arab quarter by skirting the walls of the Armenian quarter then passing through the Jewish quarter and making for the majesty of the Western Wall of Solomon's Temple.

Following Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's visit to Syria to obtain assurances from President Assad, negotiations between Syria and Israel were resumed under US patronage. Israel, already committed to quitting its security zone in Lebanon this summer, is seeking cast-iron agreements on security and full diplomatic relations before placing the prospect of leaving the Golan Heights to a national referendum. Prime Minister Barak, by imposing a moratorium on further building on the West Bank, is attempting to hasten completion of the final status talks with the Palestinians without alienating the entire body of settlers.

To sum up: the Promised Land today remains a land of unfulfilled promises, the majority of whose citizens still anticipate early delivery of peace, with its corollary of prosperity and normality which are considered birthrights in other western-oriented representative democracies. All sections of the population are now anxious to see progress being made.

□ Ronald Channing



Letters to the Editor

RESCUED FROM OBLIVION

Sir - Reading Prof. Spiro's *Science Notebook* (Nov issue) prompts this reminiscence: In 1937 Elizabeth Hertz, a widow in her early seventies, fled Germany and settled in Girton, near Cambridge. When she died in 1941 she was buried in an unmarked grave at St Andrews churchyard, Girton.

Fifty years later the local church warden, Stanley Briggs, examined old records and discovered that the deceased had been the widow of Heinrich Rudolf Hertz (1857-1894), the first physicist to confirm the existence of electro-magnetic radiation predicted by James Maxwell in 1864. His work, which provided the basis for modern radio, wireless, telegraphy and television, ranks with that of Einstein and is immortalised in the terms kilo- and megahertz. Mr Briggs enlisted a retired Cambridge University librarian and together they researched Elizabeth's past. They then approached the German Government which provided money for a memorial stone. In 1992 I saw a notice about a service of dedication in *The Times* and felt drawn to go back to Girton where I myself had spent the early forties as a landgirl at a research centre.

Doing a bit of research myself I found that Dr Hertz had made his important discoveries in Karlsruhe, my home town. During the Nazi period a street in Karlsruhe named after him was changed to Roentgen Strasse on account of his Jewish ancestry, but subsequently reverted to its old name.

Essex

Ruth Sellers

PROFANE AND SACRED

Sir - The purpose of Holocaust Memorial Day would be to act as a warning and deterrent. Can we co-operate or support it coming from a government which has just pushed through an Asylum and Immigration Act which deliberately - allow me to emphasise: deliberately - provides for the public humiliation of asylum-seekers; whose press offices run misleading publicity campaigns describing all asylum-seekers as "economic migrants" thus exposing them to public hostility, or should we be

sickened by such hypocrisy?

The most recent arrivals here in any number (apart from the very temporary Kosovans) are Romanians, whose ancestors suffered alongside ours and who to-day are battered, assaulted and discriminated against in most Balkan countries, as well as Poland.

Legislating for a memorial day must not be allowed to be a fig-leaf hiding racist legislation and practices.

London NW4

Francis Deutsch

Sir - Your piece on an official Holocaust Day (December issue) makes for interesting reading and raises some points for comment. Not the least of these is that apart from a debatable observance by the majority - but, regrettably, by no means all of the Jewish community - the day will have the same impact as St. George's Day has now for the English public. None!

We already remember and mourn the victims of the Holocaust in every Diaspora synagogue on Yom HaShoah (2nd May 2000) and the majority of non-Jews are just not interested. Unfortunate but true.

Enfield, Middlesex

Gerald Granston

TAY-SACHS SYNDROME

Sir - With reference to your Profile of Eva Trent in the December issue, I would like to challenge your assertion that Tay-Sachs Syndrome is a condition confined to Jews.

I happen to know that this also occurs in Mediterranean people. A friend of mine whose father was Italian, carried it and his daughter inherited it. She was quite unwell and investigations resulted in the diagnosis. Only after it was found her father was tested and diagnosed as Tay-Sachs, although he showed no symptoms.

Northwood, Middx

Marianne Herz

PRE-MILLENNIUM MUSINGS

Sir - Prof. M Spiro (December issue) says that the seasons on earth are caused by the variation of the distance of the earth from the sun throughout the year.

The statement must be disputed, because, while the earth's northern hemisphere has summer, the southern has winter; and yet the distances of both hemispheres to the sun, however they change, are always practically equal.

Surely, the seasons are due to the difference (between summer and winter) of the rise above the horizon of the sun at noon.

Harrow

Rudolf Jaray

BOUQUET

Sir - As editor of the Leo Baeck Year Book, I know how much work goes into your excellent publication. We all appreciate your dedication.

Sutton Coldfield

Prof. John Grenville

EURO COMPLAINT

Sir - Many of your members must be receiving a pension from Germany. What puzzles me is that ever since this pension has been converted from DMark to Euro, the monthly payment is decreasing quite noticeably.

On whose authority is the pension paid out in Euros? Does anybody benefit? We certainly do not. Is there a solution to this problem?

London NW11

Mrs Anneli Kirschen

A NEW TWIST

Sir - Watching Robert Lindsay's portrayal of Fagin in *Oliver Twist* raised a dormant question in my mind. Am I the only person who has noticed that 'Fagin' is an anagram of 'Ganif'? Several (well-read) people to whom I have pointed this out have expressed eye-popping surprise. Does anyone out there know something about Dickens that has not been mentioned before?

London NW2

Jacqueline Goymour

LOOKING BACK ON 1999

Sir - whilst entirely agreeing with your excellent editorial I cannot share your sentiment on the 'last relatively benign decade of this horrible century'. This was after all the decade when nearly a million Tutsis were murdered in cold blood during the Spring of April 1994. This deliberate attempt to exterminate a whole ethnic group - and with the nearly unanimous active participation of the Hutus is, apart from the Holocaust, the most momentous crime of the century.

London N6

Herbert Trent

QUERY

Sir – At the bottom of *Readers' Letters* in *AJR Information*, I noticed that domicile takes precedence over the writer's name – an obvious case of putting the cart before the horse. Why?

Greenford, Middlesex

Ernest Kolman

I am simply continuing my predecessors' practice. Ed.

MISNOMER

Sir – You printed a letter (December issue) above my present name on the assumption of being known to many people before leaving Germany. I stated my former name as well, hoping that somebody would contact me!

Unfortunately, instead of *née Oppenheim* it appeared as *née Oppenheimer*. I am very upset about it, after all, a name is as important as it was in the time of Old Egypt!

49 Chester's Croft Park

Eva E Gillatt

Cheadle Hulme

(née Oppenheim)

Cheshire

KINDERTRANSPORT

Sir – As many of your readers know, Diane Samuel's play *Kindertransport* is a fictionalised account of reality. Of course not all the events depicted happened to one child and the intricate strands following little Eva as she grew up to become Evelyn, not only anglicised but baptized as well, make powerful drama. Weaving back and forth in time and place, with no change of props or costume, characters must be convincing as to who they are.

The play was described by the *New Yorker* as "a powerful contribution to Holocaust literature", but this is not the whole story. It is also generational conflict, exacerbated by separation and a consequent refusal to deal with past events, which applies not only to Holocaust survivors but paradoxically, to grandchildren of Nazi officials, especially those who fled from East to West Germany in divided families. Heaven knows what traumas the children of Kosovo will be facing in five years' time.

London N1

Pat Grosse

"*Kindertransport*" will play at the Tower Theatre, Canonbury Place, Islington, London N1 from 12-19 February (0171 226 3633).

Correspondence about Rebranding the Journal will appear in next month's issue.

SWITZERLAND COMES TO TERMS WITH ITS PAST**COMPLICITY ON THE SWISS-GERMAN BORDER**

An independent inquiry into Switzerland's response to many Jews who sought refuge from Nazi persecution from 1938 onwards, has concluded that Swiss officials "helped the Nazi régime to achieve its goals" by closing the country's borders to thousands of Jewish refugees, sending them back to a near certain death.

The hard-hitting report was produced by a multi-national Commission headed by Swiss historian Jean-François Bergier and took three years to research. While some 300,000 Jews did manage to secure refuge in Switzerland, the Commission found proof that at least a further 24,500 (and in probability far more) were denied access, or were even returned to Germany having already crossed the border. It expressed the opinion that latent Swiss antisemitism helped to fuel this response, but also noted American and European hypocrisy in similarly failing to offer unrestricted asylum to Jewish refugees.

The Commission refuted claims that

the Swiss request for the Germans to stamp 'J' on passports to differentiate the Jews was motivated by pressure or fear of invasion from Germany. It would have been clear to the Swiss authorities at an early stage, from exile and diplomatic evidence, that systematic deportations and mass murder were being carried out.

In accepting the report's findings, the Government admitted to failing to live up to its own "humanitarian tradition", but ruled out any further compensation. Swiss President Ruth Dreifuss, who is Jewish, having perforce to take into account right-wing reluctance to make a formal apology, nevertheless expressed her "immense sadness" at how, at the time, people were able to accept that others were being sent to their deaths.

The Commission found no evidence to support the claim that trains carrying deportees from Italy were granted passage through Switzerland on their way to the concentration camps.

REPORT IDENTIFIES HIDDEN BANK ACCOUNTS

The report of the independent Swiss Banking Commission, set up in 1996 under the chairmanship of Paul Volker, former head of the US Federal Reserve Bank, has revealed the existence of some 54,000 dormant accounts. At least 10,000 of them almost certainly belonged to Jewish victims of the Holocaust or their heirs. Back in 1997 the Swiss banks claimed to have knowledge of fewer than 5,200 accounts of foreign clients of the period.

The names of 25,000 account holders, who at the time believed that they were fully protecting their finances in a neutral country, are being published on the Internet to enable heirs to claim their rightful inheritances. It is probable that compensation payments will be made at a sum ten times the nominal 1945 value of the original holding or asset and drawn from the \$1.2 billion award made by the Swiss banks in last year's settlement with the World Jewish Congress, still to be apportioned among possible

claimants.

The Swiss banks long denied the existence of any such outstanding accounts and, in the main, refused to respond to requests from the children of Holocaust victims, either protesting ignorance of account records or by making impossible demands for the non-existent death certificates of those lost in the camps. The Commission confirmed the banks' duplicitous behaviour, commenting that there was evidence of "questionable and deceitful actions by some individual banks in the handling of accounts of victims, including withholding of information from Holocaust victims or their heirs about their accounts".

However, the report neither supported the allegation that the Swiss banks sought to profit from the genocidal activities of the Nazi régime, nor that they had set out systematically to destroy account records.

□ Ronald Channing

AJR Reports

AJR INFORMATION ON TAPE



Amanda Clark, right, with volunteers, Klaus Neuberg and Hilde Davis, at a recording session

The latest move towards the 21st century sees great changes at *Audio and Braille Resources* at Jewish Care. With the help of Jon Kaye, Head of Resources, and a technical engineer, it now only takes three hours to produce *AJR Information* on tape. Rita Rosenbaum and the volunteer readers, who have had the opportunity to record at this venue in Lordship Road N16, have been very impressed by the technology. The recordings are edited, dubbed and copied at the studio all

within this short space of time and the volunteers are very keen that this process should continue to be used, especially since feedback from listeners has been very positive.

If you know of any AJR member who might benefit from receiving *AJR Information* on tape – or if you have a clear reading voice and would like to join our team of volunteers (German/English speakers preferable) then please contact: Amanda Clark, Volunteer Services Coordinator, on 0171 431 6161.

South London

Members of South London AJR, the first of our very successful groups, were joined by Ronald Channing, Head of Media, Development and Communal Relations, to celebrate the group's fifth birthday.

Invited to speak about the current work of the organisation and to discuss how it could continue to serve in the future, Ronald referred to the ever-increasing calls being made on the social services department, the importance of the day centre and meals-on-wheels, the value of volunteers and befrienders and the continuing role of *AJR Information*. Pointing out that while the future of the organisation was in the hands of its membership, he hoped that the magazine could both maintain its moral authority and encourage younger readers and contributors. Plans for the building of new sheltered accommodation and a day centre were

under way, the annual concerts were to be continued and further outreach groups would be established where there was a sufficient demand. A lively discussion followed consideration for the proposed Holocaust Remembrance Day in the UK.

□ Ruth Leggett

At SLAJR's next meeting Rabbi Neil Kraft will talk about Jewish folklore, magic and superstition, Thursday 13th January at Prentis Road Synagogue, 2pm.

Pinner

At the December Chanukah meeting Robert Lowe, with his fine, rich baritone voice, sang for the members, accompanied at the piano by Robert Marks. The two performed a wonderful selection from Gilbert and Sullivan, Mozart, Flanders and Swan and a German drinking song. AJR member Annette Saville entertained us also on piano. Maoz Tsur followed this with tea,

latkes and doughnuts to finish.

□ Walter Weg

At the next meeting on January 6th, Keith Simons will reveal all on what it's really like going 'inside' as a prison visitor. Pinner Synagogue, 2pm

Surrey

This month, the group decided to draw on the experiences of members, who were invited to talk about subjects of interest, autobiographical or otherwise. Eva Gold, Tony Freud and Robert Miller gave highly illuminating talks and their anecdotes and the discussions they engendered were declared a great success.

□ Ernest H. Simon

Brighton and Hove

At the last Sarid meeting, the group was kept spellbound by AJR member, Madelaine Joyce. She was a Jewish farmer's daughter, who managed to outwit the Nazis in 1940's France and was inducted into the Resistance movement after fleeing to Paris. What caught our imagination were her continuous efforts to avoid detection. The account, which ended with Madeleine's capture by French Security Police – left everyone in anticipation of the sequel to this fascinating story.

□ Frank Goldberg

Doris Levinson, editor of the *Sussex Jewish News*, will be speaking at the next meeting on Monday 17th January at 10.45. Contact Fausta Shelton on 01273 688 226

Leeds

Cecil Bloom gave a general introduction to composers who wrote what is considered to be Jewish music, illustrated his talk with twelve excerpts from well-known compositions and discussed each in brief. It included a song from Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, Klezmer folk music played by Giora Feidman and Itzhak Perlman, and Joseph Achron's *Hebrew Melody*. The talk was followed by questions and discussion.

□ Trudy Silman

The Leeds AGM is being held on Sunday 16th January. Contact Heinz Skyte on 0113 268 7539

The next meeting of Wessex AJR will be Tuesday 18th Jan 2.30-4.30. Contact Mr or Mrs Robert Grant on 01202 765 040.

FUN HAD BY ALL IN BOURNEMOUTH

The recent AJR holiday in Bournemouth has been hailed as a great success not least because of the entertainment arranged by Sylvia and Renée. The Bingo went down very well, as did Judi Dench in the screening of the film, *Mrs Brown*. The group also toured the surrounding Dorset area by coach and took in Poole and its picturesque harbour. This expedition was enhanced by the driver's droll commentary. Music Night was hilarious, the pianist and singer were excellent and the quiz night proved how clever the group members are.

Margot Leighton □

Third Great Season

AJR LUNCHEON CLUB

on Wednesday 19th January 2000
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11.45 for 12.15pm

Guest speaker: **Jeffrey Segal**
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between 10am and 12 noon on the
following dates:

Thursday	6	January
Tuesday	11	January
Thursday	20	January
Wednesday	26	January
Tuesday	1	February

and every Thursday from
10am to 12 noon at:

**AJR, 1 Hampstead Gate, 1a Frognaal,
London NW3 6AL**

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

... Viewpoint ...

The Englishman abroad

Although told from an early age that 'An Englishman's home is his castle', even if that truism still holds good, it has never prevented those with the necessary funds at their disposal from lowering the drawbridge at least once a year and sallying forth to spend vacations in foreign climes. The grand tour was on every aristocrat's and aspiring gentleman's itinerary, while a little plunder of the under-appreciated artefacts of former Mediterranean civilisations was accepted as *de rigueur* and many are still to be viewed with due reverence in the stately homes of England (now themselves open to the generality) as well as in the British Museum.

It naturally follows that it was an Englishman, Thomas Cook, who pioneered the organised holiday by revolutionising the ordering of travel arrangements and taking full advantage of the improvements in transportation by rail and ship. He introduced the middle classes to the improving delights of cultures ancient and modern offering accompanied tours *sur le Continent* at affordable prices.

World Wars' involuntary excursions excepting, it was the breakthrough of

package holidays to Spanish costas by cheap charter air travel to standard hotels in the '50s and '60s which brought sun, sand, sea and companionship within reach of all classes of the population. So much more desirable for both families and singles, they rapidly dumped the traditional two-week factory closure period spent in the seaside rain waiting to get back into a regimented boarding house.

Though France and Spain remain Britons' most popular holiday destinations, today's choice is becoming ever more sophisticated for the 32 million who go abroad annually. With a strong pound, competitive airfares to all parts of the globe and a TV-cultivated sense of adventure, two weeks in Central or South America, South Africa or, would you believe, Yugoslavia (all figures are for 1994-98) are the destinations growing fastest in popularity, not to mention Iceland, Belgium (the Eurostar effect), Sweden, Japan, Australia, the Irish Republic and Iceland! With the stabilisation of the number of those visiting Britain, shall we be able to afford our jaunts in the future?

□ Ronald Channing

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Mon. & Weds. 9.30am-3.30pm. Tues. & Thurs. 9.30am-5.30pm. Suns. 2pm-6.30pm

Afternoon entertainment programme -

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2000

Sun	2	CLOSED	Mon	17	KARD & GAMES KLUB
Mon	3	CLOSED	Tue	18	Caroline Medland, soprano, accompanied by Julian Barber, piano
Tue	4	Noemie de-Gilles, soprano, accompanied by Warwick Hewson, piano	Wed	19	LUNCHEON CLUB
Wed	5	Tricia Dibb, soprano, & Wayland Holford, baritone, accompanied by Michael Hecton, piano	Thur	20	Angela Arratoon accompanied by Anthea Weale, piano
Thur	6	Jenny Kossew entertains on accordion	Sun	23	DAY CENTRE OPEN - NO ENTERTAINMENT
Sun	9	DAY CENTRE OPEN - NO ENTERTAINMENT	Mon	24	KARD & GAMES KLUB
Mon	10	KARD & GAMES KLUB	Tue	25	Jack & Daphne
Tue	11	Robin Brightman, violin, Mary Bergin, cello accompanied by Lewis Lev, piano	Wed	26	The Music Makers
Wed	12	Ronnie Goldberg on guitar	Thur	27	Christine Fisher, soprano, accompanied by Geoffrey Whitworth, piano
Thur	13	Alison Wheeler, soprano, accompanied by Angus Cunningham, piano	Sun	30	DAY CENTRE OPEN - NO ENTERTAINMENT
Sun	16	DAY CENTRE OPEN - NO ENTERTAINMENT	Mon	31	KARD & GAMES KLUB
			Tue	1	Rachel Taite, soprano, & John Taylor, baritone, accompanied by Charlotte Ellis
			Wed	2	The Sing-a-Longers
			Thur	3	The Geoffrey Whitworth duo

FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Birthdays

Rothenberg. The AJR would like to extend their best wishes to Helmut Rothenberg on the occasion of his 85th birthday.

Schuster. Margarete (Grete) Schuster. Congratulations and all good wishes on your 90th birthday from your friends at the AJR.

Deaths

Doctor. Dora Doctor died peacefully and with dignity on 5 December at the Middlesex Hospital, after a long and courageous battle against heart disease. She will be sadly missed, for her friendship, her kindness and her unstinting help to those in need, by her family and her many friends. May God Bless her.

The funeral was at Golders Green Crematorium on Thursday 9 December. Donations to UCLH Intensive Care Fund c/o The Middlesex Hospital, Mortimer Street, London W1N 8AA.

CLASSIFIED

Ursula and Hugo Hutton are thanking Mrs Reichenstein and her devoted ladies for the most excellent Chanukah party and all the good work at the Daleham Centre.

Miscellaneous Services

Manicure & Pedicure in the comfort of your own home. Telephone 0181 343 0976.

Societies

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

AJR MEALS ON WHEELS

Variety of high quality kosher frozen food is available, ready made and delivered to your door via the AJR Meals on Wheels service.

Service available to members in North and North West London.

3-course meals cost £4.50 each plus £1 per delivery.

Phone Susie Kaufman on 0171-328 0208

for details and assessment interview.

Meals can also be collected from 15 Cleve Road, Mondays-Thursdays.

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Please make appointments with
Sylvia Matus, Tel: 0171 328 0208

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AJR GROUP CONTACTS

Leeds HSA: Heinz Skyte 0113 268 5739

West Midlands (Birmingham): Edgar Glaser 0121 777 6537

North (Manchester): Werner Lachs 0161 773 4091

East Midlands (Nottingham): Bob Norton 01159 212 494

Pinner: Vera Gellman (HA Postal District) 0181 866 4833

S. London: Ken Ambrose 0181 852 0262

Surrey: Ernest Simon 01737 643 900

Brighton & Hove (Sussex Region): Fausta Shelton 01273 688 226

Wessex: Ralph Dale (Bournemouth) 01202 762 270

FORTHCOMING EVENTS DECEMBER 1999

- Mon 10 **Dr Charmain Brinson:** *In the political no-man's land of the homeless, stateless, denomination-less, penniless*, Otto Lehmann-Russbuehdt in British Exile (early member of Club '43) Club '43, 7.30pm
- Tue 11 **Three Faiths Forum Programme:** Sarajevo-Jerusalem and Edith Stein: Yehezkiel Landau. Sternberg Centre, 8pm, £2.50/3.50.
- Fri 14 **Anne Frank – Reflections on the Holocaust:** exhibition of oil on canvas by Michael Manas Beeby, until 28th Jan. Sternberg Centre
- Mon 17 **Martin Birken:** Fanny Holtzmann and the UN vote on Israel, 1947. Club '43, 7.30pm
- Tue 18 **John Wells-Thorpe,** Symbolism and Syntax: Berlin's Jewish Museum. University of Sussex, 5.15pm
- Sun 23 **The Jewish Dickens:** Dr Nadia Valman: Anglo-Jewish Literature in late Victorian England. 2.30pm, The Jewish Museum, Camden Town, £3/4
- Mon 24 **Laurie Milner, Imperial War Museum historian:** Operation Market Garden: The Battle for Arnhem, 1944. Club '43, 7.30pm
- Tue 25 **Deniz Gokturk,** *Strangers in Disguise. Performing Ethnicity in Transnational Comedy.* University of Sussex, 5.15pm
- Sun 30 Launch of **'A Voice for the Child'** by Janusz Korczak. Sternberg Centre, 7.30pm. Admission free.
- Mon 31 **AJR's Ronald Channing** discusses *AJR* in the new century. Club '43, 7.30pm
- Tue 1 **Feb Ernst M. Stein,** *The Development of Jewish Communities in Germany, 1945-2000.* Sussex University, 5.15pm
- Current:**
Until March 2000: **The Jewish Dickens:** exhibition at the Jewish Museum, Camden £3/4
- ORGANISATION CONTACTS**
Club '43, Belsize Square Synagogue. Hans Selig. Tel: 01442 254 360
The Jewish Museum, Camden Town, 129-131 Albert Street, NW1 7BN. Tel: 020 7284 1997 or 80 East End Road, Finchley N3 2SY. Tel: 0181 349 1143/381 4721

Art Notes

What is – or isn't – art? The annual controversy over the Turner Prize is well behind us, but its impact on contemporary perceptions will intensify in the new Millennium. After London's *fin de siècle* flourish of classical exhibitions, it was left to the adventurous Tate Gallery, where the Turner contenders were exhibited, to negotiate the minefield of art without boundaries.

Safe it isn't. The principals of classical art – interpreted as form, perspective, colour, expression, elegance, mysticism and completeness – are challenged by the dynamic vision of conceptual artists opposed to the arch mannerism of much of their heritage. These artists open their portfolio of personal chaos to the world, as Francis Bacon did, permitting us a devastating view of private emotion.

Tracey Emin's work goes beyond Bacon's allusiveness to reveal an ocean of childish defiance, blatant courage, tragic squalor and a touching, naked intent. Although her notorious bed failed to win the Turner Prize, her role as the *enfant terrible* of the art world is confirmed by her very spirit – as an ingénue in the eternal process of art. Many would agree that this is the purest way to be an artist: – as an ingénue. The purulence of Emin's bed, her wall scribbblings, the troubled monodrama of her life, reveal a despair common to her naïve watercolour miniatures, (which passed largely unnoticed by the critics) with some of the worldlier work on display at the Mall Galleries' *Discerning Eye* exhibition, Emin's work had a raw and memorable freshness.

Turner prizewinner, Steve MacQueen's Buster Keaton style *trompe l'oeil* film of a barn falling yet not landing on him cleverly blends the robust muscularity of classical art with contemporary issues of space both mental and physical.

The Wilson twins, Jane and Louise, presented a minutely observed video of the Hoover Dam and Las Vegas gambling rooms with an eerie precision. It was a brilliant *son et lumière* show, a virtual reality of sound and presence, less sentimental than Emin's work, less challenging than McQueen's. I can't say that Steven Pippin's complicated looking



Hans Feibusch exhibited at the Denham Gallery, West Hampstead

photographic view from a washing machine particularly grabbed me.

The **Ben Uri's** exhibition and sale of the work of Jewish stage and film designers, selected by Charles Spencer, Daily Telegraph art critic, was a comprehensive and fascinating display of designs ranging from costumes for *Don Quixote*, by Luzzati Emanuel for the London Festival of Ballet, to a Mark Negin gouache of Grandma Zeital for Miriam Karlin in the Scottish Opera's production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. The world of costume design has an inevitable fairy-tale appeal as you can imagine the deceptively simple lines conveying full richness of the costume on stage. You could easily lose yourself wandering past the exhibits which included a limited edition of Chagall's lithograph of *David playing the Harp*, from the Bible Series, Negin's *Aysbet Chayil* impressive watercolour and Leon Bakst's hand coloured plates of designs for the Ballets Russes. The Rhodesian-born artist Yolanda Sonnabend's signed gouaches of three costumes for Schnitzler's *Intermezzo*, at the Greenwich Theatre were impressive.

The work of eight artists at the **John Denham Gallery** in West Hampstead, continues through this month. Else Meidner's often powerful charcoal drawings betray the influence of her main mentor, Käthe Kollwitz, although neither in the work on show nor her extensive

catalogue does she quite connect with the grave and emotive issues that enraptured Kollwitz, resulting in her persecution by the Nazis. There is delicacy and translucency in Walter Nessler's watercolours, great serenity deriving from his geometric approach. There are also shades of Gauguin in Hans Feibusch's wonderful colours, particularly the gouache, *Cottage Garden*, painted in 1955. He adopts a completely different style in his *Rite of Spring* lithographs, with their dancing woodland nymphs. Martin Bloch's *Wintery Park* and his pastel and ink *Vase of Flowers*, are stark and stunning.

□ Gloria Tessler

SB's Column

Professional turned amateur. In 1934, barred from the German stage as a Jew, actor Leo Reuss emigrated to Austria. Here, disguising himself as a bearded Tyrolean peasant, he was taken on by the Josefstadt Theatre and became a minor sensation. Then his cover was blown and after the Anschluss he fled to the States where, comparatively young, he died in 1946. Now Felix Mitterer, the Austrian playwright, has dramatised the Reuss saga for performance at Vienna's Volkstheater before audiences who had never heard of the affair.

German TV visited an old lady. Researching facts about pre-war stars, the elderly son of Liane Haid brought the film diva of the 1930s to the small screen. Now, aged 104 and wheelchair-bound, she appeared lively and full of memories of the past. Elderly movie buffs may remember Liane Haid as a beautiful actress in such films as, *Opernredoute* and *Madame sucht Anschluss*, opposite such leading men as Hermann Thimig and Gustav Froehlich.

Linz. Austria's third largest city tries to compete with other 'cities of culture' by staging long-neglected authors' works such as Zuchmyer's *Fröhlicher Weinberg* and Kästner's *Punktchen und Anton*. It is also serving up musical threats like *Anatevka* (*Fiddler on the Roof*) and Paul Abraham's almost forgotten operetta, *Blume von Hawaii*.

Weill and Lenya. The lives of composer Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya, who were married, divorced and re-married will be restaged at London's New Theatre in Hampstead until 30th January 2000 □

HOUSE DOCTOR

Breast awareness

I have seen a lady in my surgery with a breast lump which had been present for many years. Sadly, at the stage at which she came to see me, it was much more difficult to help her than it might have been had she come when the lump first occurred.

Breast lumps in women of any age occur not infrequently and they are certainly not always a sign of cancer. As people get older the incidence of cancer in breast lumps does increase, but even then the diagnosis of cancer is not the only one. Furthermore, after about the age of 70 years even when breast lumps are being diagnosed as cancerous, non-surgical treatment by tablets alone frequently has good results with patients living their normal life expectancy.

When cancer is diagnosed, even in younger patients, modern treatment is

much less aggressive than that undertaken some ten years ago. Complete removal of the breast is now relatively uncommon and the use of chemotherapy and radiotherapy is much more frequent. Once again these treatments have been improved so that the severe side effects seen in previous years, such as severe nausea, weakness and hair loss, are less common.

Access to specialist doctors trained to deal with cancers has improved and waiting times, even on the National Health Service, are now much shorter than they were before. Many factors have led to significant improvements in life expectancy for patients with breast cancer. Advances in treatment may discourage women from hiding their lumps to a point at which treatment is much more difficult

Dr Max Bayer

Regretfully, personal correspondence cannot be entered into

SEARCH NOTICES

Mr Rymanowski, possible London resident and sole heir of property must be found quickly. Buyer interested in Cracow property left by sister, **Maria Rymanowska**. Contact: Teresa Kielar @ Realsoc, Radcaprawny, Kr. 675; fax 0048-12-632-37-96 or email: realsoc@kki.krakow.pl

Margot Steinweg left Muenster for England, just before the outbreak of war and moved to Holland. In 1942, she was deported from Westerbork to Auschwitz where she died. Why did she leave England? Information sought by researcher - also interested in **Dr Walter Ostwald**, lawyer and his wife, also from Muenster. Contact E.A. Kaufman, 1 Kenington Place, Middlesex, HA3 0DW. Tel: 0181 907 0505

Martin Striem, born 1906, emigrated to England 13/6/39, lived in Köpenickerstr. 71, Berlin and Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg - Danziger Str. 40 post-1934. Relatives/descendants contact: Jennifer Langer (née Striem), 31 Hallswelle Rd, London, NW11 0DH. Tel: 0181 458 1910.

Selma Schiratzki and **Paula Fürst**, both heads of Jewish schools in the 1930s. Biographer seeks information. Contact AJR Box Number 1255

Dr Herbert Lawton (Leubuscher until 1947) worked in Berlin 1937-39 before coming to England via the Pioneer Corps. Also member of the student fraternity, K.C. Information sought by daughter, Irene Peters: 119, Friern Barnet Lane, London, N20 0XZ. Tel: 0181 445 8365

Wilhelm Levinger, born Munich in 1877, practised as a lawyer until his immigration to England, October 1937. Died in New York, 1958. Information sought by historian, Dr Dirk Walter, Ulmenstr.24, 82256 Fürstenfeldbruck, Germany. Email: dwdirk@hotmail.de

Do you have personal experience of the work of **British Consular** officials? Were you a refugee between 1933 and 1940? To what extent did the officials facilitate the safe departure of Jewish refugees, especially when immigration became increasingly difficult? Contact: student researcher Andrew Roberts, 164 Pentre Jane Morgan, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3DY. Tel: 01970 617 133

Helga née Achtentuch, believed to be living in Stanmore, please contact Peter Berger on 0171 723 5434

HOMECARE SERVICE

The AJR is pleased to offer members the benefit of a Homecare Service scheme

The service is intended to help members remain in their own homes

Financial assistance is available where needed.

For further information please apply to the Social Services team on 0171 431 6161 or write to **AJR Social Services, 1 Hampstead Gate, 1a Frognal, London NW3 6AL**

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Glimpses of Austria

Vox Populi

The other night, the Austrian equivalent of the BBC, presented a look at Viennese using public transport. All interviewees were dissatisfied with the service. No one had a good word for an urban transportation system which is the envy of many other cities.

Many of the old were frail, most of the young boorish. All seemed poor. The elderly women were dressed in much worn but painstakingly maintained outfits, their rounded beige hats almost identical. They were either on their way to a medical appointment or returning from one.

A retired civil service type, immaculately dressed in a dark suit shiny from wear was furious at the driver of the bus he just missed. According to him, the door of the bus closed as he was about to board. Merely "to spite me" he shouted. Enraged, he announced for everyone to hear, that he would take his protest to the highest authority, if necessary to the burgomaster himself.

A coarse youth in a sweaty T-shirt and blue jeans, generously peppering his discourse with four letter words, bragged about his talent for avoiding paying fares. A drunk who, abetted by an equally soused pal, chanted popular Viennese melodies with outstretched hands, much to the embarrassment of the nearby upright citizenry. Another interviewee used his moment of unexpected media exposure to voice his dislike of 'Tschuschen', the collective noun for Slavic and Turkish immigrants. A prim looking woman well past her prime pontificated how she managed to avoid sitting next to nasty-smelling guest workers.

An elderly gent, dating back to a generation who should know better, stressed, apropos of nothing, that the proper name of Austria should be Deutsch-Österreich. However, speaking in thick Viennese dialect (as did most of the others), incomprehensible to outsiders, he unwittingly undermined his own argument. For one who vaguely remembers the Vienna of old, it confirms that little has changed. What has changed, however, is that the morose side of inhabitants is no longer concealed.

Loot

The Nazis stole them; now sixty years later, the Austrian Government has finally decided to return the Rothschild art treasures to its rightful owners. Together with plunder from all over Europe, they survived the war in various Austrian salt mines. After the war, they enriched Viennese museums where the descendants of the looters have enjoyed them.

The official reason, or rather the pretext used for hanging on to the pillage was the Export Prohibition law dating back to the First Republic. It was designed, as it is in most countries, to prevent the loss of a nation's heritage to foreign buyers.

Soon after 1945, some of the stolen riches were gradually returned to bona-fide resident claimants. But survivors and successors of Holocaust victims who declined to return to the land which persecuted them – the Austrian branch of the Rothschild family among them – did not qualify.

For years negotiations, i.e. bargaining, went on. Yes, the Rothschilds could have some of their possessions back, subject to the minor proviso that certain specific items would have to be donated to the museum in which they were exhibited.

Only latterly, when Austria joined the European Union and perhaps because of increased sensitivity to adverse international publicity, an embarrassed coalition administration dug up another long neglected law, concerning *Raubkunst* (art robbery). This provided an escape route for the belated release of all the Rothschild treasures stolen by the Third Reich of which Austria was then a compliant part.

According to an editorial in *Die Presse*, Austria's leading centre-right daily, the return of the Rothschild treasures was a "praiseworthy act of generosity". The writer expresses surprise as well as disappointment at the failure of the world at large to appreciate this act of munificence. Instead, he argues that the victors of the last war should learn a moral lesson from Austria and return the ill-gotten gains which (according to him) they still hold, while Austria "gives away untold riches". In subsequent weeks not a single reader wrote to *Die Presse* to query those little words "give away", or to ask: whose riches?

Village idyll

When leaving the restaurant, all diners say aloud "auf Wiedersehen" to those at

nearby tables. Oddly enough, this aspiration is extended to perfect strangers, to people they never spoke to, never met and will never see again, or wish to do so.

The village issues a quarterly journal, which reviews past events and previews future ones. The mayor's report occupies a full page. Additional space is devoted to road improvements, noise control, the request for donations to meet the additional expenses caused by the unusually high snowfall of the previous winter, the blueprint for the new home of the voluntary fire brigade, the cultural events calendar, the latest from local clubs, birthdays, births, weddings and deaths, news about local celebrities, sport results, etc. etc.

The shortest item, all of two lines, stashed away at the bottom of an inside page, concerns a local woman who was awarded the title of 'Righteous Gentile' by Israel's Yad Vashem.

Having noticed the absence of the restaurant owner the previous Friday, I enquired about the reason for his absence. Trying not to act like a snooping customer, I concealed my inquisitiveness by stressing that his wife did a good job standing in for him. A well groomed man, forever dressed in shiny Lederhosen, he stooped down, his mouth close to my ear and in a conspiratorial tone of voice informed me that, being a Jehovah's Witness, he joins them every Friday evening for their weekly service in a nearby village. Stooping down even more, still closer to my ear and lowering his voice, he whispered: "Sabbath, just like in your religion, is holy to us".

□ Jussy Brainin

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Science Notebook

Post-millennium musings

Well, the excitement is now over! We will just have to remember to write 2000 instead of 1999 on cheques, but the year has started with January as usual and will end with December as the 12th month. But hold on, isn't the word December based on the Latin for 10? And November for 9? October for 8? September for 7? Surely all of these numbers are two short of their calendar positions. The reason for this goes back to 752 BCE and the founding of Rome. Its first ruler, Romulus, was such a great advocate of the number 10 that he inaugurated a ten-month calendar. It started with March (after the god Mars), then three months representing minor deities and ended with months named numerically. But this ten-month year (of 304 days) was totally unsuited to the agricultural community and the next ruler, Numa Pompilius, promptly added two more months, Januarius (Janus was the Roman god of gates and beginnings) and Februarius. The names of the other months were simply left as they were and have remained misnomers from September onwards.

Talking of February, why is it that in a normal year it only has 28 days? The original Julian calendar in 45 BCE had months alternating between 30 and 31 days, with February alone having 29 days in a normal year and 30 in a leap year. February's present plight actually goes back much further, to Romulus's ten-month year in which the 5th and 6th months had been called Quintilis and Sextilis. Centuries later the Roman senate renamed the former Julius (July) in honour of Julius Caesar and subsequently Sextilis became Augustus (August) to honour the new emperor. But Augustus resented his own month having only 30 days compared with Julius's 31 days, so a day was stolen from poor old February. The lengths of the following months then had to be rearranged as well to avoid having three months of 31 days in a row. What price political interference!

In early biblical times the Jews also named months numerically, the first month being the one containing Pesach as commanded in Exodus, chapter 12.

However, during the Babylonian exile the Jews adopted Babylonian names for their months and decided to start the year instead with 1 Tishri, the day of Rosh Hashanah. We can also go back to the Bible, to the account of the Creation, for the next subdivision of time – the week. A similar concept of a week of 7 days including a day of recreation formed part of the ancient Sumerian and Babylonian cultures and it was adopted throughout the Roman empire by the first century BCE. The Babylonians named the days of the week after the sun, moon and 5 other planetary bodies. In English and in German, Sunday retains this linguistic origin though elsewhere, through the introduction of Christianity into Rome and its fusion with sun-worship, the name of this day is derived from *dies dominicus* (the Lord's day). Monday, curiously, has kept its moon origin throughout western Europe. The next 4 days are named after Roman gods/planets (Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus) in Latin-based tongues and after gods of Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic mythology (Tiw, Wioden or Odin, Thor or Donar, Frija) in English, German and Scandinavian languages. In English Saturday is also called after a planet/god whereas in several European languages its name (e.g., Sabato, Samedi, Samstag) is derived via the Greek from the Hebrew Shabbat.

While the week has no astronomical basis, day and night certainly have. Most early western and middle eastern civilizations divided each period of daylight into 12 hours which made a daylight hour much longer in summer than in winter. The reverse was true for an hour of darkness since the night was similarly divided into 12 parts. (The choice of twelve has been ascribed to the Egyptians as well as to the Babylonians: the latter were keen astrologers and may have been influenced by the 12 signs of the zodiac.) Not until the advent of mechanical clocks in the 14th century CE could day and night be divided into 24 hours of uniform length throughout the year, a great advance in timekeeping. The ancient Babylonians, with their preference for the number 60, are also believed responsible for our division of each hour into 60 minutes and each minute into 60 seconds.

During the French Revolution a brave attempt was made to sweep away the various arbitrary historical traditions in reckoning time. In 1792 a new ten-based Calendar of Reform was introduced in

which days were divided into 10 hours each consisting of 100 minutes, with every minute containing 100 seconds. The year itself was made up of 12 uniform months of 30 days split into 3 weeks each 10 days long. The remaining 5 days a year (6 in a leap year) were added at the end and devoted to festivals. Although this republican calendar had much merit, it only lasted for 14 years because in 1806 Napoleon reinstated the Gregorian calendar. In contrast, the ten-based metric system for weights and measures, developed in France during the same period, is now accepted everywhere (except in U.S.A.).

In this century timekeeping has been turned on its head by major technological developments. No longer is the primary time unit the stately solar year but the lowly second as expressed in terms of the unvarying properties of atoms. This is because we can now measure with extreme precision the oscillation frequency between specified energy levels in a given atom, analogous to tuning a radio to a particular frequency. As a result, in 1967 the second was redefined as the duration of 9, 192, 631, 770 vibrations of atoms of caesium, a silvery metal. This forms the basis of the so-called atomic clock, which is exact enough for scientists to prove that the earth's rotation is gradually slowing down, by just 0.016 seconds in 1000 years. Though this effect (caused by tidal friction) appears trivial it does mount up: fossil evidence has confirmed that 600 million years ago the Earth day was only 21 hours long.

More about the remarkable story of time and the way we measure it can now be seen in a new exhibition at the Queen's House, Greenwich. It runs until September 2000.

□ Prof. Michael Spiro

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Loot – the bond between leader and led

Last year I visited the Düsseldorf exhibition *Betrifft: Aktion 3 Deutsche verwerten jüdische Nachbarn*. It consisted essentially of photocopies of original documents going back to 1938. The starting point was the property lists Jewish subjects had compiled listing in every detail their goods and chattels, down to the last handkerchief. It then went on to describe how such lists were changed after deduction of such items the victims were allowed to take with them on deportation – or, as it is so poignantly said, resettlement.

The remaining goods and chattels were auctioned, usually within the vicinity of where the deportees lived so that their neighbours were the main beneficiaries. The funds thus realised were handed to the local tax office to pay for financing the war. Immovables such as land and property were not allowed to be auctioned as it was intended to permit the returned 'victorious' soldiers to participate in the benefits of such auctions. Items such as furnishings of Jewish or-

phanages and synagogues were sold at cut prices to other municipal organisations. Thus the furniture of the Jewish Orphanage in Cologne ended up for a fraction of its worth in a municipal one. Party officials became beneficiaries of expensive paintings and *objets d'art* at a fraction of their real value.

The exhibition also showed copies of invoices from transport organisations giving details of where items originated and to whom they were delivered. I ought to point out that the material displayed related to the immediate vicinity of Landkreis Düsseldorf and not even to North-Rhine Westphalia as a whole.

The organisers, *Fachhochschule Düsseldorf – Arbeitsstelle Neonazismus* must be congratulated on their immaculate research even to the extent of establishing some of the proceeds paid in to the tax offices and the meticulousness with which some tax offices were able to show such values in hand, expressed in marks und pfennig, after the war ended. Apparently such funds are still held within the Ger-

man tax system throughout Germany.

In 1948 a law was passed by the then German Government that the funds from *Aktion 3* were not to be divulged or published for 30 years. This period was extended in 1978 for a further 30 years. Unfortunately, it will be 2008 before this is likely to become known – assuming anyone is then interested.

The literature provided illustrates the way the German authorities acted towards survivors who after the war tried to reclaim their property. Apart from putting every obstacle in their way, sums offered were so low as to be barely at subsistence level – yet not even the then Allied occupying forces intervened.

Fifty plus years on one is tempted to ask a number of questions:

1. Has whatever reparation paid to date been paid with the victims' own money?
2. Why has this matter been allowed to remain unmentioned in all this time?
3. Were the appropriate organisations, such as the Claims Commission, aware of this matter and what has been done about it?

□ Herbert Haberg

A healing process of sorts

Immediately after the Anschluss in March 1938 all Jewish medical students in Austria were barred from university premises. Thus none of the final year students were admitted to their final examinations and were in due course forced to leave the country without qualification.

A handful of students from the previous year were eventually permitted to complete their interrupted Finals, provided they could do so within six weeks. They were then handed their doctor diplomas in a humiliating fashion; the diploma carried an endorsement prohibiting them from practising in German territories.

In October 1999 two ex-students barred from taking their finals in Vienna but who had subsequently qualified abroad, namely Dr Zvi Shamir (Hermann Finkelshtein), a retired paediatrician from Jerusalem and Dr Otto Fleming (Fleischner), a retired general practitioner from Yorkshire, were awarded their doctor diplomas in an *Ehrenpromotion* in the

Great Hall of the University of Vienna. At the same time four of the surviving doctors who had been given the shabby diplomas were handed unblemished ones. The ages of the recipients ranged from 85 to 88.

Before presenting the doctors with their diplomas the Dean of the medical faculty gave a brief account of each of their life histories. They had all overcome tremendous difficulties, one even surviving Auschwitz! He reminded the audience that, after the Anschluss, 67% of the medical faculty had been dismissed, most of them because of their Jewish descent.

In his speech the Rector apologized on behalf of the University for the injustice done to these former students. He said how glad he was that this ceremony could take place today "since this may be a unique window of opportunity and who could tell when one would be open again". All those present took this to allude to the results of the Austrian elections which had taken place on the previous day.

In his response, Dr Fleming reflected on how the summarily expelled students had felt at being suddenly ostracized and deprived of their future prospects. He

voiced satisfaction at the University's attempts to overcome this shameful episode in its history and expressed appreciation of the welcome received.

The ceremony which was conducted with all the dignity appropriate to such an occasion left a deep impression on everyone present. □ Dr O Fleming

Dispute over Hitler's bunker

A group of historians is lobbying the German Government to preserve Hitler's bunker, which was recently uncovered, so that it can pass to an independent international authority to serve as a war memorial. Jewish organisations and the German Government fear far-right movements would embrace the dictator's headquarters as a shrine.

Hip fracture prevention

Plastic shields built into the sides of shock absorbing underwear are being developed to reduce the 60,000 hip fractures which affect pensioners each year. The muscle rather than the hipbone would absorb the impact of a fall. The National Lottery is funding the *Safehip* trials.

NEWSROUND

Pork Wars

Fuelled by recent reports that 53% of Israeli-Russian immigrants are not halachically Jewish, the Orthodox community in Israel has begun a campaign to ban the sale of pork in several towns. Israeli-Russian community leaders believe the feud will make it difficult to teach the immigrants to adopt Israeli identities and Jewish values.

Papon stripped of honour

Maurice Papon, the former Vichy official who was given a 10-year sentence in 1998 for Nazi war crimes against Jews, has been stripped of the Légion d'Honneur. The 89-year-old has been forbidden to wear the medal, which he was awarded in 1962.

Legal fees for Holocaust survivors

Holocaust victims have accused American lawyers, who are charging \$13.5 million for negotiating a settlement of \$1.25 billion with Swiss banks, of cashing in on their grief. One lawyer asked for \$2,369 for the 8.6 hours spent reading Tom Bower's *Nazi Gold*. World Jewish Congress lawyers worked on the case free of charge.

Nazis exposed

Sweden's four main newspapers published a joint story naming 62 members of Nazi groups, who, the newspapers said, were threatening journalists, politicians and law enforcement officials. Photographs of those named were also published in a bid to curtail their illegal activities.

Compensation for Mussolini's Jews

Financial assets seized from Jews under Mussolini's racial laws will be repaid by twenty-four of Italy's largest banks in a £328 million settlement. Over 7,000 claims were made to a parliamentary commission that is now investigating insurance companies which did not honour policies taken out by Italian Jews.

Louvre returns Nazi loot

The Paris Louvre has returned six paintings to their rightful owners fifty years after being confiscated by Nazis. One of the paintings, by 18th century master, Tiepolo, is expected to fetch £1 million at auction.

□ NP

Clash of three faiths

Perhaps the greatest paradox in history is that the three peoples of the Book, Jews, Christians and Muslims, have done more damage to each other than was done to any one of the three by non-Jews, non-Christians and non-Muslims. All claim to be descendants of Abraham who have inherited the Promise: 'In you will all the families of the earth be blessed'.

Brothers in Abraham though they may be, Jews, Christians and Muslims become less brotherly the more they emphasize their distinctive identities. The orthodox Jew is so absorbed in maintaining the fences of his cloistered world that he hardly has a thought about Christians and Muslims. The religious Christian is so absorbed by the figure of Jesus Christ the Saviour that he can only think of Jews and Muslims as not having seen the light. The orthodox Muslim will pay lip service to the concept of the peoples of the Book but is more likely to remember the clashes with Christians and Jews.

The synagogue, church and mosque are the outer symbols of the differences between Jews, Christians and Muslims and although over 70% of the prayers contain similar sentiments and aspirations, few Jews feel at home in a church or mosque, few Christians feel at home in a synagogue or mosque and few Muslims feel at home in a synagogue or church. Yet all three share similar beliefs in the One God, in the morality of the Ten Commandments and in Abraham as founding father.

It is surely vital to understand this longstanding paradox if we wish to understand the feelings roused by the recent events in Nazareth when local Muslims wished to build a mosque close to the Church of the Annunciation. The Christians and Muslims of Nazareth could not agree and referred the matter to the State of Israel. Applying modern, non-religious democratic criteria, the State decided in favour of the Muslim request – Muslims are, after all, the majority in Nazareth – with some conditions as to the size of the building and its precise positioning in relation to the Church.

The Vatican, habituated to aeons of assumed spiritual superiority over the Jew, was unaccustomed to having to concede to them on any matter close to its heart and so immediately expressed its grave displeasure at the decision of the State of Israel. Local Christians too attacked the

decision as demonstrating Jewish anti-Christian feeling. The local Muslims were pleased, but others, such as the Palestinian Authority and Saudi Arabia sought to buy off the local Muslims to demonstrate the misjudgement of the State of Israel.

In the pre-modern era when religious grievances were often causes of war, the Nazareth incident might have sparked off a war. Today it is nothing more than a storm in a teacup. Modern man, rather like Abraham, has parted from the clutch of the old gods – in his case extreme positions of his inherited religion – and is looking for a new way ahead based on a respect for basic human rights.

The Christians of Nazareth may feel aggrieved but the Church of the Annunciation is not the centre of their lives. The Muslims of Nazareth may feel pleased but the mosque, although an important part of their lives, is not the centre. For the State of Israel, the irritation of the Vatican is not the biggest of its headaches.

The Church of the Annunciation will remain in Nazareth, although it is by no means certain that there was a Nazareth in Jesus' day. Jesus was certainly a Nazarene but that had nothing to do with a geographical location. The new mosque will emerge in honour of the Saladin family although the Crusaders, his enemies, have long left the Holy Land.

The Pope, who wanted to follow the footsteps of Abraham on a millennial tour of the Middle East, remains free to execute his wish if he can overcome the excessive diplomatic sensitivities of the Vatican bureaucracy. The modern people of Nazareth will welcome him.

□ Jonathan Solomon

50 YEARS AGO**ACCLAIM FOR KORTNER'S FILM PREVIEW**

Crowds of spectators and members of the press waited in front of Frankfurt's West End cinema, 'Luxor', to welcome actor and author, Fritz Kortner at the opening of his film, *Der Ruf* (The Challenge). Its reception was anticipated with much anxiety because of the film's aggressive and shocking language but in fact was acclaimed with enthusiastic applause.

The Challenge is the story of a Jewish professor, who after his return from America, perishes because of the intolerance and antisemitism of his students. Described as a true-life portrait of the post-war epoch, Kortner was presented with the Goethe book by Lord Mayor Kolb at the town hall.

□ AJR Information, January 1950