

A Day to Remember

—headlines for a young friend



Well, Ester, there's a newspaper here for you,
it's dated the 26th of April, 1982 —
a day to remember with heart and voice,
the day the prime minister said 'Rejoice!'
Though alas the celebratory cause she had in mind
wasn't really all that good or kind:
SOUTH GEORGIA SEIZED we read. The paper then says,
quoting one Nicolar Costa Mendez,
and sounding calmly subdued, not fierce or frantic.
that BRITAIN IS AT WAR IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.

A day for rejoicing, we do all here agree,
but not for the reason Mrs. now Baroness, T.
proclaimed (for since when was the short fuse
of Her Majesty's Government good news?)
but because the event which really blessed her,
and the whole world too, was you Ester.

You were the event for which rejoicing was due
on the twenty sixth of the fourth, nineteen eighty two.
(We ought to register, by the way,

that also peace was front page news that day,
but rather sadly, almost mournful, moping
ISRAEL RESIGNS ITSELF TO HOPING.

Inside the paper, I seek signs to see
if someone saw cause for fess-tiv-it-tee
for what really mattered, on two six April, eighty two.

And well. Er. No, everything's pretty dire,
there 's awfully little to enthuse or inspire —
BRITAIN SOON TO BE A THIRD WORLD NATION
unless it puts an end to progressive education.

That is the view and the voice on
page 3 of Mr, now Sir, Rhodes Boyson.

On a later page, by the way, this day
there's a job advert from the ILEA —
three posts vacant for a TV director
presumably to make politically incorrecter
programmes, progressive yes and proud,
than nowadays, Ester, would be allowed.

There's a choice, though, to cheer our kin and kith
with a TV review by Nancy Banks Smith,
though it's not the Falklands showing right from wrong
but the Eurovision contest for a Eurosong.
The Royaume Ubi did well, more or less—*plus ou moins*
but Finland, poor old Finland: *nul points*.
They used to be musically gifted but now, we see,
Finns ain't what they used to be.

(You may think I'm now ending, so it says here
and blow me kisses, or clap and cheer,
or may fearfully suspect, apropos of this verse,
that it won't get better before it gets worse.
In which case, I daresay, you'll throw me a bomb,

since there could be more, where that came from.)

I turn to moral issues, here's Jill Tweedie, er,
she writes about discussion programmes on the media,
complains, um, about 'balanced' presentations of views.
saying, er, you can't have balance about all of the news.
She seems, um, er, to be making in those distant days
a prophetic critique of *The Moral Maze*.

As for the rest of the paper, mainly let's skip it,
I'll give you only an occasional snippet —
I'll have to be partial, I cannot be thorough.
I note MARXIST MENACE IN A LONDON BOROUGH
and there's PEACETIME TUMBLES, it's about a horse,
and MESSIAH DEADLINE RECALLED, about an ass, of course.

And we're told that SLOUGH FINDS CONSOLATION —
it's about a game of hockey, not the dark night of a nation.
And since basketball is what it's about
ENGLAND BOUNCES BACK inspires no shout.

As for TV this evening, on the whole,
There's nothing here to gladden the soul.
We need bounce and shout and serenity too
but BARRY MANILOW IN BRITAIN will scarcely do.
Nor will it help us to feel much calmer
to watch the prime minister on Panorama.

But anyway, anyway, anyway, anyway
We do rejoice as we remember that day.

All praise soars, now and for ever
Over words like *anyway, but, however—*
hopefulness, peace, serenity, light
grow amongst *all the same, yet, despite*.

There's murk and murder, madness and mess,
we choose life, nevertheless.

We sing and we bless, we do, we do,
let's hear it for the twenty sixth of April, 1982.

For Ester with love, on another day you're especially alive, 6 May 1995.

Source: speech at the occasion when Ester Gluck celebrated becoming Bat Mitzvah at the West London Synagogue on the Saturday following her thirteenth birthday in the Hebrew calendar. The speech introduced and referred throughout to a copy of the Guardian newspaper published on the day when Ester was born, 26 April 1982. It was subsequently published In *Fortunes and Fables: education for hope in troubled times*, Trentham Books 1996, pages 211-214.

