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[Zvi Avneri]

**OPPENHEIMER, J. ROBERT** (1904–1967), U.S. physicist. Oppenheimer was in charge of the construction of the first atomic bomb as director of the laboratories at Los Alamos, New Mexico. Born in New York City, Oppenheimer was the son of a cultured and successful businessman, who had immigrated to the U.S. from Germany. His mother, a painter and teacher, died when he was nine years old. He was a child prodigy and at the age of five was collecting geological specimens. At Harvard University, he studied physics and chemistry, Greek and Latin. He worked under the world-famous scientist Ernest Rutherford at Cambridge, England (1925–26), and went to Goettingen at the invitation of Max \*Born in 1927. On his return to America he became professor simultaneously at the California Institute of Technology at Pasadena and at the University of California at Berkeley (1929–47). He was a brilliant teacher, intense and dedicated – reading no newspaper, owning no radio, and learning Sanskrit as a diversion. He became director at Los Alamos in 1943 and during World War II was hailed as a world figure for the creation of “the bomb.” In October 1945 he resigned as director at Los Alamos, and in 1947 became director of the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton (1947–66). As chairman of the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission he continued to influence policy. He was greatly concerned with international control of atomic weapons. He was involved in the great debate with scientist Edward \*Teller and the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission Lewis \*Strauss on the construction of the thermonuclear bomb. In 1954, his security clearance was cancelled because of his early association with communists in the late 1930s and his opposition to the H-Bomb (the subject of a play *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* based on the documents by H. Kipphardt, and translated by R. Speirs, 1954). After a hearing before a special board he was declared “a loyal citizen but not a good security risk.” In 1963, as a sign of restored confidence, he was given the Fermi Award for his contribution to nuclear research by the Atomic Energy Commission.

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[J. Edwin Holmstrom]

**OPPENHEIMER, KARL** (1864–1926), pioneer of infant and child welfare in Germany. Born in Bruchsal in Baden,

he settled in Munich in 1890 and became a leading pediatrician. During more than 30 years of practice, he personally financed an extremely successful child welfare clinic. Oppenheimer considered the main purpose of this extensive free advisory service to be an attempt to achieve a decrease in the infant mortality rate, by educating and instructing indigent mothers. Largely on his initiative, the payment of maternity benefits and the training and recruitment of welfare workers were introduced. Oppenheimer was also responsible for the realization of a school meal service and the founding of the Jewish Country Home in Wolfratshausen. Oppenheimer published numerous articles on infant feeding; his proposals and improvements in regard to the composition and preparation of artificial infant food were vigorously contested at first but met with increasing acceptance.

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**OPPENHEIMER, SAMUEL** (1630–1703), Austrian \*Court Jew and military contractor. He began his career in Heidelberg as purveyor to the elector, Karl Ludwig, and tax collector of \*Palatinate Jewry. Subsequently he moved to \*Vienna where he received the right of unlimited residence and extraordinary trade privileges. Like other Jews, he was affected by the 1670 expulsion from Vienna but from 1672 he was in the business of supplying the Austrian army. Officially allowed to settle in 1676, he was the first Jew to be granted such a privilege after the 1670 expulsion, and his entourage became the core of the reestablished Jewish community. Although his request to open a synagogue was turned down by the authorities, services were held in his home. At the time of his resettlement he was given the title of Imperial War Purveyor. During the 1673–79 war against France he organized a consortium to supply Austrian armies in the west. After the Peace of Nijmegen (1679), the treasury refused to honor a 200,000 florin debt to him, and it was only through a personal appeal to the emperor that he even received partial payment. Shortly thereafter, he and his entourage were imprisoned for allegedly defrauding the state, although a subsequent investigation proved the accusations to be groundless. The outbreak of the Austrian-Turkish War (1682), however, forced the state to release him and to come to terms with his pecuniary demands, which were surprisingly lenient, and it further decided to put to the test his boast of being able to supply the Austrian armies single-handedly. The emperor approved the contract just before he fled Vienna to escape from the advancing Turkish armies; nevertheless, he declared that it was dangerous to give so important a position to a Jew. Oppenheimer fulfilled the contract during the desperate siege of Vienna in 1683 and, thereafter, took on all the logistic problems raised by the war: the supply of uniforms, food, and salaries for the troops, livestock for the cavalry and artillery and fodder for the beasts, as well as seeing to supplies for hospitals for the wounded. Conducting business throughout the empire, his coup was building the Danube fleet of rafts for the relief of besieged Ofen (see \*Budapest).

Oppenheimer's success may be attributed to his business acumen and persistence despite the many difficulties which beset his enterprises, and especially to his organizational talents. He set up a network of contractors and subcontractors throughout central Europe, many of whom were Court Jews in their own right and some of whom established themselves by their business connections with him. A good part of his success was due to his family and its far-flung business connections. His wife, Sandela Carcassone, daughter of a Sephardi Jew of Mannheim, bore him nine children. His son Wolf married a daughter of Leffmann \*Behrens, a business associate. Oppenheimer also had an entourage of secretaries and agents whom he placed in all the financial and commercial centers of Europe. One of them was his nephew and future competitor, Samson \*Wertheimer. Oppenheimer raised money from many sources, not only from his fellow Jews but also from Christian merchants and bankers.

The Turkish menace was barely repulsed when \*Louis XIV invaded the Palatinate in 1688 and Oppenheimer was at once called upon for assistance. Although the field commanders, Eugen of Savoy and Margrave Louis of Baden, both praised his efficiency and contributions in the country's dilemma, the court in Vienna, and particularly Bishop \*Kollonitsch, viewed his monopolistic position with misgivings, pointing out that not only was he Austria's sole military purveyor but that a disproportionate part of the state income was being earmarked solely for him as payment for his services. All attempts to dispose of his services failed, however, for few others were in possession of sufficient capital to assume his place, and none was prepared to extend credit to the state with its chronically empty treasury. The state's debts to Oppenheimer grew from 52,600 florins in 1685 to 700,000 in 1692, and to 3,000,000 in 1694, at which point it remained stable for a few years until it increased during the War of the Spanish Succession.

Bishop Kollonitsch, appointed head of the treasury in 1692, frustrated by his unsuccessful attempts to dispense with Oppenheimer's services, tried to undermine Oppenheimer by falsely accusing him of attempting to murder Samson Wertheimer. As a consequence, Oppenheimer was forced to buy his freedom and establish his innocence with the sum of 500,000 florins. In 1700 when his sumptuous home was stormed and plundered by a mob, order was reluctantly restored by the authorities and the two instigators hanged. It has been suggested that the cause of the attack was Oppenheimer's intervention in suppressing an anti-Jewish book of \*Eisenmenger.

When Oppenheimer died, the state refused to honor its debts to his heir Emanuel and had his firm declared bankrupt. His death brought deep financial crisis to the state; it experienced great difficulty in securing the credit necessary to meet its needs. Emanuel appealed to European rulers to whom the state owed money and who intervened on his behalf. After deliberate procrastination, the state refused Emanuel's demand for 6 million florins and instead demanded 4

million florins from him. This amount was based on a sum which (with compound interest), according to the state, Oppenheimer had allegedly obtained by fraud at the beginning of his career. Emanuel died in 1721 and the Oppenheimer estate was auctioned in 1763.

Although Oppenheimer was not himself learned, he was a benefactor on a scale hitherto unknown, building many synagogues and yeshivot and supporting their scholars. He also paid ransom for the return of Jews captured during the Turkish wars and supported as well R. Judah he-Hasid's voyage to Erez Israel in 1700. Known as "Judenkaiser" by his contemporaries, he was a man whose complex personality, a mixture of pride and reserve, defied historical analysis. Twenty years after his death it was estimated that more than 100 persons held residence in Vienna by virtue of their being included in Oppenheimer's privileges.

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[Henry Wasserman]

**OPPENHEJM, RALPH GERSON** (1924– ), Danish author. During the Nazi occupation, Oppenheim was deported to Theresienstadt but, together with his family and many other Danish Jews, was eventually sent home as a result of the \*Bernadotte rescue operation. Oppenheim's experiences are recorded in the form of a girl's diary entitled *Det skulle så være: Marianne Petits dagbok fra Theresienstadt* (1945; *The Door of Death*, 1948). In *Alt dette – og Bevin med. ABC for Englandssesende* (1948) he attacked Britain's Palestine policy. He also wrote travel books about Europe and Asia.

**OPPER, FREDERICK BURR** (1857–1937), U.S. political cartoonist; an originator of the comic strip. Opper left Madison, Ohio, for New York, where he worked for 18 years on the weekly *Puck*. He joined Hearst's *New York Journal* in 1899, and his work was then syndicated through the *International News*. Opper depicted suburban types which became familiar to almost every American household. He also became Hearst's leading political caricaturist, lampooning the eccentricities of public figures, particularly during election campaigns.

A volume of his political drawings, *Willie and his Papa*, was published in 1901. His cartoons on England, *John Bull*, appeared in 1903. Other collections were *Alphabet of Joyous Trusts* (1902), *Our Antediluvian Ancestors* (1903), two volumes of his character *Happy Hooligan* (1902–07) and *Maud and the Matchless* (1907). Opper also illustrated the work of some of his contemporary humorists, including Mark Twain, Peter Finley Dunne, Bill Nye, and George V. Hobart.

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**OPPERT, GUSTAV SALOMON** (1836–1908), German Orientalist and Indologist. Born in Hamburg, younger brother of