

The Edinburgh Star

Journal of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

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The Edinburgh Star

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Front Cover: Front-piece (left), tail-piece (right) and illustration for an article by the Russian-Jewish avant-garde artist El Lissitzky (top) from *Milgroym*, the Yiddish magazine of arts and letters, published in Berlin in 1923. See article by Heather Valencia in this issue.

Typing: Valerie Chuter.

Editorial

As we go to press, question marks hang over the future of the Jewish people, in Israel and in the Diaspora. Not primarily, on this occasion, because of external threats (from an intolerant regime or a hysterical mob) but rather as a result of forces internal to the Jewish community itself.

In Israel, the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the election six months later on Binyamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister has put the future of the peace process into doubt. Netanyahu's rejection of the 'land for peace' formula and the lack of any plausible alternative to it make the prospect of meaningful negotiations between Israel and her Arab neighbours rather unlikely, to say the least. Although the outcome of the election must have been influenced by the series of events which culminated in the recent bombardment of Southern Lebanon, and obviously reflected a widespread lack of trust in the leadership of Shimon Peres, it can also be attributed to the polarisation of Israeli society and the growing influence of religious fundamentalism.

In Britain, and elsewhere in the Diaspora, the future of the Jewish community is at risk for other reasons. While the Jewish population of Israel continues to increase, mainly as a result of immigration, that of Britain continues to decline, partly for demographic reasons but also as a result of inter-marriage and assimilation. Sadly, there are many signs of polarisation here too. Within the Jewish community, the position of the ultra-orthodox on the one hand and of reform and liberal Jews on the other has been strengthened, while that of the United Synagogue, which formerly held the middle ground, has been weakened. While some may welcome the resulting increase in religious pluralism, the infighting and the lack of mutual tolerance and respect between the different religious denominations not only present a rather unedifying spectacle but also make it that much more difficult to develop a common and inclusive religious response to the diminution of the Jewish community.

Although we do not give space to the Israeli conundrum in this issue of the *Edinburgh Star*, we do carry three articles which relate to the future of British Jewry. We carry an article summarising the main findings of a very important, new survey of the social and political attitudes of British Jews which, among other things, points to a 44% inter-marriage rate among Jewish men under the age of 40. We also publish two excerpts from Professor Jerry Cohen's second Gifford Lecture, in which he reflects of the impossibility, outside Israel, of sustaining the secular Jewish identity he inherited from his parents, and an article by Professor David Daiches, in which he bemoans the disappearance of rabbis who were able to combine profound Jewish learning with a broad knowledge of Western culture.

Each of these articles is of particular relevance for the Edinburgh community at the present time as it tries to find a new Rabbi and spiritual leader. The Search Committee clearly have a very difficult task on their hands and *The Edinburgh Star* wishes them well. In a city with only one Jewish congregation and a declining Jewish population, it is particularly important to find a rabbi who will act as the spiritual leader of the entire Jewish community, breathe vigorous new life into the community, and seek to preserve a sense of tolerance and mutual respect between the various groups, interests and traditions which make up the community. This is quite a tall order but the appointment will be crucial for the future well-being of the community.

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*The Board would also like to thank Mr and Mrs Harold Mendelssohn for kindly defraying the cost of sending *The Edinburgh Star* overseas.*

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THE LOWRIE REPORT

CHANUKAH COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR

And when it does the Goldberg Variations are performed - Leila to welcome nearly 100 people to our Communal Dinner and David to light the candles and to bench.

It is always a joy to watch a professional at work and who better than that old trouper, Henry Mann, who sang 'Yiddishe Momma', 'Can't Help Falling in Love with You' and 'Sonny Boy'. An emerging terpsichorean talent, a mixture of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly with all the suave gentlemanliness of Jack Buchanan, in the form of Gershon Mendick, transformed the ladies, or as many as the evening allowed, into Ginger Rogers - 'Putting on the Ritz!'

Leila closed the evening by thanking all who had worked so hard to provide such an excellent meal and to make the evening such a success.

FRIENDSHIP CLUB LAUNCHES PRESIDENT'S CAREER AS A STAND-UP COMEDIAN

Sunday, 10 December 1995, saw the Friendship Club celebrate its 39th Anniversary with a special tea.

Dr Oppenheim, in proposing the Toast to the Club, had the members rolling in the aisles with a well-received joke - so well received that there could be speculation about lifting the 1996 Festival Fringe prize!

Follow that, as they say in Show Business! Well, there is no lack of talent in the Club and one of its resident humorists, David Goldberg, told Yiddish jokes keeping the audience, as is appropriate in his case, in stitches!! Like all the great professionals - from Harry Lauder to James Cagney to Morecambe and Wise - he finished up with a song and had the company join in. Perhaps also a dance next time? Who better to cut the cake on such

an occasion but Betty Gold, wife of Treasurer Michael Gold.

Votes of thanks were given by Henry Mann to Dr Oppenheim and by Sam Latter to the Chair. All the speakers appealed for new members, so please join for they are a great crowd.

ROBERT BURNS 200th ANNIVERSARY SUPPER

The suave, elegant, tartan-trewed figure of The Shein himself compered this Bicentenary celebration. After Simon Gillies of the Prestons Royal British Legion Band had piped in the top table. The Shein gave welcome and made the Selkirk Grace with Adam Street's best guid Scots. Hamotze by another Ian - (Ian Leifer), the soup consumed, The Shein made the toasts to the respective Heads of State of Britain and Israel. The haggis, carried by Harold Abrahams, was then piped in by Simon Gillies.

Himself, who had turned down a Burns Night in Belgium for the extra helping of Brussel Sprouts promised by our MC, managed with his eloquence to cause a spontaneous minute's silence for the passing of Joe Lurie's Haggis of immortal memory! Freddie Lowrie, having ensured his comestibles for the evening then gave the Address to the Haggis; it would be an understatement to say that it was from the heart.

An excellent meal, prepared by the Communal Hall Ladies Committee - under the able leadership of Leila Goldberg - was then taken, after which Ian Leifer made the Grace after Meals.

Jim Manderson, MBE (an honour given for his work on the Ayrshire Committees for Victim Support and for Employment for the Disabled) gave The Immortal Memory. Lucid and erudite, his interpretation of the manipulation and neutralisation of Burns by the Edinburgh Establishment brought the thought that in the art of governance 200 years is quite a short time. Then came songs

from Philip Henderson, an incredibly versatile and talented performer. Trained by Ivor Spencer, he is the only professional Toastmaster in Scotland. He is also an actor of ability, touring with the Rideout Theatre Co. Accompanying himself on the guitar he left his audience hoping for more.

It might be expected that an Applied Physics lecturer could work out that he was being lumbered with most of the work, so it can only be deduced that his namesake, he of the tartan trews, has a very good line in sales chat, for here was Ian Leifer having to do even more work - not so much sing for your supper as give us a chorus a course! His Toast to the Lassies was so well received that it is not inconceivable that those ladies who were responsible for all the cooking and hard work would have happily risen from their seats and started work again immediately!

Appropriately, between the Lassies and Laddies Toasts, Scotland's great war-pipes were played by Simon Gillies in a fine and stirring selection of tunes. Lorna Nicolsby gave the Toast to the Laddies - with rapier wit she gave no quarter but did concede that the Laddies had a point in their favour, more or less, depending on which 'clan' numbered you in their ranks! Earlier hopes were then fulfilled with more excellent songs from Philip Henderson.

At this point in the evening The Immaculate Shein announced that in 20 minutes Willie and Betty

*With
Compliments
from
Mark and
Judith Sischy*

Caplan would be celebrating their 54th Wedding Anniversary, the expectancy of this event being loudly applauded by their supper companions. Leila Goldberg then gave the vote of thanks which was meticulous in including all who had contributed in any way to the evening's great success. The evening concluded with the singing of Auld Lang Syne.

An attendance of 102 brought a contribution of £655 to the Communal Hall Funds.

THE GOOD TIMES ROLL AT KATIE'S WIZO SPEAKEASY

Over 90 Jazz fans gave the password to an evening of Fish and Chips in a basket, the WIZO Gang's bootleg shandy and several hours of superb music on 10 February. Well-known singer Liz McEwan accompanied by Jack Finlay on piano, Linsey Cooper on bass, Dave Swanson on drums and last but not least our own resident-in-the-community musician, Bill Simpson on tenor saxophone and clarinet. Many thanks to Bill for organising the concert and getting these wonderful musicians together.

The total passwords came to £300, all to go to WIZO's good causes. Katie Goodwin and committee, as they say on the Stand when things are really swinging, 'One more time!' (at least)

INTERFAITH PEACE SERVICE

Mrs Rose Orgel was invited to read the Lesson at the Annual Interfaith Peace Service which was held on 10 March at the Nicolson Square Methodist Church. She chose a reading from Micah which she read partly in Hebrew and partly in English to an attentive and appreciative audience of about 150 people of all different faiths.

After the service, all the invited guests partook of an excellent vegetarian lunch and had ample opportunity to exchange views and

further interfaith relationship. Rose Orgel carries out this very essential work all the year round and has done much to promote further understanding of Judaism amongst other faiths.

SHIRLEY BENNETT'S 'DOUBLE DOZEN' STORM : OSWALD ROAD BUFFET

Zero hour was 12.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 March, when the 24 ladies of WIZO company took up positions at Shirley and Peter Bennett's home in Oswald Road and went into action in a valiant attempt to reduce the delicious food awaiting their best endeavours. The afternoon's action went gallantly on until the endless reserves made them concede defeat! Shirley's shock troops had the solace of knowing, as they retired for rest and recuperation, that they had raised, in conjunction with a raffle, a total of £140 to support various WIZO projects in Israel.

Generalissima Katie Goodwin is looking for new battlegrounds, so get fell in you volunteers!

SCOTTISH FRIENDS OF ALYN CONCERT

Mrs Brenda Hirsch, PR Director of the Alyn Hospital, opened the evening held at the Communal Hall on Saturday, 23 March, by giving a detailed illustrated talk on the work of Alyn showing how much the highly specialised treatment has improved the lives of its patients - children who are severely physically handicapped, many from birth.

The evening, with a break for refreshments (excellent home-baking prepared by Valerie Simpson, Judy Gilbert, Dorothe Kaufman, Pearl Shein, Sinora Judah and Vicky Lowrie) was not so much a concert as a festival of music. Opened by the Northwinds Saxophone Quartet, under the direction of Musical Director, Bill Simpson, we heard a wide-ranging presentation of music from composers as diverse as Nestico, Frank and Mozart. It continued with Avital Kaye (violin)

and Mother (piano) playing Shostakovich, an Irish Jig and a traditional Jewish medley. The New Torphin Group, with our own Judy Gilbert on flute, played Beethoven and Handel and the first half was closed by Cecilia Cavaye (piano) and Philip Taylor (violin) with works by Pardis, Dini and Krysler.

The second half was opened by the Wind Quartet playing Fraser and Seiber, followed by Fiona MacColl and Judith Anderson playing Schumann in a piano duet. A welcome reappearance by the New Torphin Group brought music by Papusch and Schubert and the evening ended with a performance by Peter Bennett on guitar and Shirley Bennett (vocals) of 'Sunrise, Sunset', 'Bei Mir Bist Du Shein', 'Summertime' and 'Over the Rainbow'.

An audience of some 120 people saw Mrs Hirsch receive a cheque for £676 - this sum included £100 given by members of the Community at a collection taken after Purim and also some generous donations given to Dorothe Kaufman which were received most gratefully. Thanks are due to all who baked and especially to all those musicians who gave of their time and talent; thanks not only from the Scottish Friends of Alyn, but from all those handicapped bairns at Alyn whose lives will have a wee bit more hope.

A TREASURE OF A TREASURER WHO HAS HIS AIN WEE TREASURE

The members of a Club will usually stand for any office except that of Treasurer and when they find a top class one they are prepared to vote that person into the job for ever. The Friendship Club has just such a Treasure(r) in Michael Gold and if he hasn't yet done the job 'for ever', he has certainly done it for four years. It takes hard work, talent and a winning personality to extract cash from friends and also to secure the best prices and value for outings, both transport and meals - the excellent value of the recent trip to Pitlochry is a case in point.

When pressed as to how he came to be such an excellent Treasurer he put it down to his own wee treasure's training programme!! Not many of us would pass this rigorous course, as it means going for Betty's messages, securing the best bargains and bringing back the right change! Michael and Betty are also prepared to recruit you into the Friendship Club, so join now.

THE LURIE GOLDEN WEDDING KIDDUSH

After David Goldberg made the Kiddush, the President, Dr Nate Oppenheim said:

'And now it is my pleasure, on behalf of the Congregation, to extend to Joe and Sheva our heartiest congratulations on this, their Golden Wedding, when they are hosting a Kiddush for the Congregation to celebrate this most important event in their lives together.

Our congratulations are underlined by the knowledge and appreciation of the fact that the Congregation is very much in their debt! Because over the past 50 years Joe and Sheva have, in their particular and special way, given so much to the Congregation!! Sheva - to the Communal Hall, in her inimitable, enthusiastic exuberant style and Joe, with equal devotion, to the Synagogue Council, The Board of Guardians and currently, as President of the Chevra Kaddisha, bringing quiet solace to the bereaved and lifting burdens at moments of grief and despair.

As a couple, their hospitality to students and visitors is legendary! And they can look back over the past 50 years, bringing up their children - Ann and Michael - having the pleasure of seeing their grandchildren - and being loving companions to each other through the difficult times as well as the good, with quiet satisfaction for a job well done!

We wish them a future of health and happiness in the years to come."

A toast was then drunk to Joe and Sheva.

Sheva, before Joe's reply, said that

she just had to say that looking around the Hall reminded her of Michael Aspel's programme 'This Is Your Life', for she could see her children, grandchildren and also her bridesmaid (and sister) Rena and brother-in-law Michael, together with all her friends and that she had thought 'Sheva - This Is Your Life!'

Joe then replied:

'Sheva and I are delighted you have joined us in our Golden Wedding celebration. These past 50 years have been wonderful years for us both. When Sheva first arrived in

Edinburgh she was a complete stranger - in fact it was her first visit to the UK. Very soon she participated in communal affairs and has continued to do so over the years. I am sure she has endeared herself to the Community by her kindness, compassion and her willingness to give a helping hand whenever it was required. Over the past 50 years much has transpired in the world in terms of change. What has not changed during this time has been Sheva's love and loyalty to me and friends - when you have this



Flying Officer Yehoshua Ben Avraham Lurie and Sheva Lazarovna Kriss on their Wedding Day April 9, 1946, in Bangkok, Thailand.

for as long as 50 years you have truly attained the ultimate in contentment. I really am a fortunate person.

Traditionally, Thailand or Siam has always been referred to as the 'Land of Smiles' and Sheva has truly brought a great smile into my life as well as great joy. We have been blessed with two wonderful children, Ann and Michael, also a wonderful daughter-in-law Sharon and a further dividend of two of the sweetest grandchildren one could hope for.

A 50th celebration is indeed a special occasion and we would like to take the opportunity to thank you, our friends, for your good wishes and lovely gifts. We are delighted that our children, Ann, Michael and Sharon and the grandchildren, Kate and Debra, together with Rena and Mike from Bangkok have joined us in our celebration. We thank you all for sharing it with us and we look forward to seeing you at our 75th. Thank you.'

Ian Leifer led all present in singing *Chosan*, *Calla Mazeltov* and with the cutting of the cake, Sheva and Joe demonstrated that they were nifty dancers yet.

Michael Lurie thanked everyone who had attended his parents' Kiddush and everybody wished the Golden Couple the most heartfelt of 'Mazeltovs'.

A SIGNAL COMMUNIQUE

JOE AND SHEVA HAVE ASKED THAT A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU BE MADE TO EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED THEIR GOLDEN WEDDING KIDDUSH AND MADE IT SUCH A WONDERFUL SIMCHA.

*With Compliments
from Jess Franklin*

205 STENHOUSE STREET
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COMING EVENTS

July 1996

7 Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 p.m.
21 Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 p.m.

August 1996

4 Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 p.m.
25 Sunday	Friendship Club	3.00 p.m.

Junior Maccabi meets every alternate Sunday from 1.00 - 3.00 p.m. For further information, contact Judy Fransman (447 5861).

Senior Maccabi meets on Sunday evenings in members' homes. For further information, contact Jacqueline Bowman (339 7557) or Howard Nicholsby (317 7563).

The Jewish Philosophical Society meets every alternate Saturday afternoon in the Cosgrove Library.

The Luncheon Club meets every Tuesday and Thursday at 12.30 p.m.

The Mother and Baby Group meets on alternate Sunday mornings at 10 a.m.

Meetings are subject to alteration.

The above events, unless otherwise stated, take place in the Community Centre, Salisbury Road.

MACCABI INTERVISIT

by Jacqueline Bowman

After weeks of hard work and preparation, the Edinburgh and Glasgow Junior Maccabi intervisit took place on Sunday, 3 March. When the 31 children between the ages of 5 and 8 from Glasgow and the 10 children from Edinburgh arrived, the fun and games began. The team in the kitchen, to whom we owe a lot of thanks, had been cleaning, pricking and cooking over 60 baked potatoes all that morning and I am sure before the day even began they were exhausted! Once we had sat all the children down to eat, it seemed like only minutes before they all began running around again. To keep 41 children entertained, a programme of games was run, some in connection with Purim which the leaders enjoyed just as much! But that wasn't all. We then took the children to the Commonwealth Swimming Pool where, after trying to keep them all under control, we enjoyed the last stretch of the day. All thanks for this successful event must go to Judy Fransman and all the other leaders for their hard work. We will look forward to another intervisit next year.

BBC Radio Scotland

"THOUGHT FOR THE DAY"

by John Cosgrove

Approx. 7.25 a.m. Tuesdays

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CASTLE TELEVISION**229 7706****14/18 Lady Lawson Street
Edinburgh EH3 9DS****Don't call the plumber
Call Castle Television****24-hour TV & Video Service Repair****CONGRATULATIONS***The Editorial Board offers its congratulations to the following:***Joe and Sheva Lurie** on their Golden Wedding.**Michelle Bowman, Rowan Hendry and Avigal Sperber** on winning the senior event in the Maccabi Youth Quiz held in the Eastwood Theatre in January. They won by 42 points to 37 to take the Flora and Marks Niman Cup.**Rowan Hendry**, the youngest of the 10 British contestants, who (together with a boy from Dorset) will represent Britain in the world final of the 'Jerusalem 3000' youth quiz. This will take place in Jerusalem in December and will be broadcast on Israel television.**Michael Adler, Martin Fransman and Jonathan Seckl**, each of whom has recently been appointed to a Personal Chair at Edinburgh University - Michael Adler in Socio-Legal Studies (*not* in Journalism!), Martin Fransman in Economics and Jonathan Seckl in Endocrinology.**— STOP PRESS —****Sheriff Hazel Aronson, QC**, on her appointment as a Senator of the College of Justice. She is the first woman ever to be made a full-time judge in Scotland.**STAR TREK INTO THE PAST**

In the summer of the European Championship, it is fitting to think back to the time when the Edinburgh Jewish Community fielded its own football team. When and where was this photograph taken, and whom can you recognise in it? All will be revealed in the next issue. Readers who possess snapshots suitable for publication in a future issue are invited to contact Ian Shein (0131 332 2324).



TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ

by David Daiches

When I look round at the Jewish religious scene today I am disturbed by the rarity, perhaps even the vanishing, of the kind of rabbi who combines profound Jewish learning with a broad knowledge of Western culture. I was brought up to think that a rabbi in Western Europe ought to believe in *Torah im derech erez*, the motto of the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin where my father gained his rabbinical diploma (while at the same time studying philosophy at Berlin University. He later went to the University of Leipzig where he gained his doctorate with a thesis on the 18th century Scottish philosopher David Hume). To my father *Torah im derech erez* meant orthodox Judaism combined with a knowledge and appreciation of Western culture - literature, philosophy, music. He could quote Homer in Greek and Virgil in Latin as well as Talmud and Bible in Aramaic and Hebrew.

When he came to Edinburgh in February 1919 to take up his position as rabbi here, he saw his role as simultaneously that of religious leader of his congregation and representative of Jewish culture in Scotland. So on the one hand he preached every *shabbos* in *shul* and advised Jewish inquirers on intricate matters of Talmudic law, and on the other he regularly wrote letters to *The Scotsman* putting the Jewish point of view on any controversial public issue that arose. He became a well-known and respected public figure in Edinburgh, to the extent that he has a street named after him in the city - the only rabbi in Britain, I believe, to achieve that distinction. It is this dual function, as a Jewish spiritual leader of his flock and at the same time a Jewish spokesman before the wider non-Jewish community, that seems to me to be almost wholly lacking among today's orthodox rabbinate. On the hundredth anniversary of Sir Walter Scott's death, in 1932, my father

wrote a piece in *The Scotsman* on 'Sir Walter Scott and the Jews'. He was much in demand as a Burns night speaker. At the same time he would lecture to Jewish student groups on Jewish history and literature and conduct weekly classes for older Jewish children on the Hebrew prophets.

It might be argued that the performing of this dual function represented a difficult balancing act, and in a sense this is true. I called the book I wrote about my childhood in Edinburgh 'Two Worlds', because my father and indeed all our family lived in two worlds simultaneously, and looking back now I can see that the balance could not be counted on to sustain itself indefinitely into the future. Nevertheless, the retreat into ghetto mentality that I find characteristic of so many orthodox Jewish leaders today seems to be deplorable. In a multi-cultural society such as Britain now is, different traditions should be able to encounter each other freely with mutual respect and understanding and not withdraw each into its own enclave.

If the Jewish community cannot survive full and free participation in the secular world around it, it condemns itself as narrow and bigoted -

and frightened. In the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry such participation was the normal state of affairs and the result was a great blossoming of Jewish culture. Is there a flourishing Jewish culture in Britain today? I can see little but increasingly embattled ultra-orthodoxy on the one hand and complete alienation or at least indifference on the other. True, there are in Britain today some Jewish intellectuals - you find them writing in *The Jewish Quarterly* - who combine a rich secular culture with a genuine interest in Jewish thought and Jewish tradition. But they do not seem to be playing any significant part in the life of the Jewish community, where the laity tend to be Philistine (in Matthew Arnold's not the biblical sense of the word) and the rabbinate totally inward-looking (or constantly looking over their shoulder at the Beth Din).

The whole future of Jewish life in the Diaspora is now in doubt. There have been at least two widely circulated pessimistic predictions about it published in recent months. It would be splendid if we could look to the rabbinate to prove such predictions wrong by breathing vigorous new life into British Jewry.

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dling Jewish community, which as I write is still searching for a new rabbi. In my father's time there were about two thousand Jews (four hundred families) in the city - still a small number compared with Glasgow or Manchester, but significant. Now there are many fewer. Yet Edinburgh Jewry has its own traditions. It has the oldest Jewish literary society in the country. And it has **The Edinburgh Star**. Will the small Edinburgh Jewish community find a leader who will revive the old

Torah im derech erez ideal and become a model for larger communities? It may be sentimental nostalgia to speculate in this way. But there is something about this city and its attitude to its Jewish citizens that encourages hope. I recall the moving dedication of the memorial to the holocaust in Princes Street Gardens and other symbolic incidents of that kind. My father used to say that Scotland was the only European country that had never shed Jewish blood. The Jews

in Scotland's capital, however small in number, might be encouraged by this thought to take a lead in demonstrating a new role for Diaspora Jewry.

David Daiches, the second son of Rabbi Salis Daiches, was formerly Professor of English at the University of Sussex and Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh. Two Worlds, first published in 1956, is available in paperback published by Canongate

TO BE OR NOT TO BE JEWISH : THE JPR SURVEY OF BRITISH JEWS

The Institute of Jewish Policy Research (IJPR), formerly the Institute of Jewish Affairs (IJA), recently commissioned a large-scale survey of the social and political attitudes of British Jews. Based on 2,180 self-completion questionnaires obtained from a postal survey carried out between July and October 1995, it is the largest and most representative survey of British Jews ever carried out. It encompasses the whole community, including the substantial proportion who are assimilated, married out or distanced from the community, and provides data on subjects ranging from attitudes to anti-semitism and racism to how Jews see their future in a pluralist and open society and from the dimensions and consequences of marrying out to religious polarisation.

*With the permission of the Institute, we reproduce a summary of the 18 key findings from the JPR Report entitled **Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews** (available, free of charge, from the Institute of Jewish Policy Research, 79 Wimpole Street, London W1M 7DD). We have also invited two people to comment on the report: Charles Raab discusses the findings that relate to political attitudes while John Danzig reviews the findings dealing with social, demographic and denominational trends from the perspective of the Edinburgh community.*

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

1. On party political preferences the key comparison is between Jews and the general population in the same social and occupational groups. This reveals that British Jews fall consistently to the left of those in equivalent occupations. For example, Jewish doctors and health professionals are far less likely to vote Conservative than non-Jewish colleagues in the same professions. The same is true for business people and managers
2. Respondents are significantly more radical on environmental issues than the general population. Older Jews tend to express concern about the environment through 'green' consumer behaviour; younger Jews by supporting 'green' political action. Despite Judaism's emphasis on responsibility to protect the natural environment, Strictly Orthodox or Traditional Jews are less likely to exhibit environmentally-friendly behaviour than Progressive or Secular Jews⁽¹⁾
3. On Europe, a substantial majority of Jews favour continued membership of the Union, but membership is not seen as a safeguard against antisemitism. This view stands opposed to the view of the representative body of British Jewry, the Board of Deputies, which looks to EU institutions to play a central role in combating antisemitism
4. British Jews tend to be tough-minded in their attitudes to social welfare and support for the unemployed, but they are far more liberal than the general population on crime and punishment and sexual conduct; and more radical in their attitudes to authority and social norms
5. Even where Jews have similar attitudes to the general population, their views tend to be far more divergent. For example, on questions of educational policy, attitudes to censorship and ethical issues, Jews are more likely to fall at the two extremes of the attitude scale (strongly agree and strongly disagree) and less likely to have intermediate views
6. More British Jews feel that racism in general has worsened in the last five years than feel that antisemitism has worsened. Close to one-third say there was more antisemitism, but almost two-fifths say there was more racism
7. While 42% of respondents report a strong attachment to Israel, many of the indicators show a distancing from institutionalised, practical support for Israel, and from traditional ideological attitudes

8. 60% of respondents favour the Israeli government's approach to the Arab-Israeli peace process (compared to 68% of American Jews) and 69% agree that Israel should give up some territory in exchange for peace. 62% would give up most of the West Bank in order to achieve peace, compared with 8% of American Jews.
9. The survey provides clear evidence of communal divisions between Secular and Progressive Jews on the one hand and more Orthodox Jews on the other - not only on matters of religious dogma, but also on perceptions of the moral and social character of the Jewish community. Orthodox Jews tend to see the community as being distinguished by its high moral

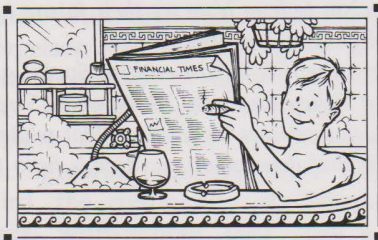
standards (for example, in relation to sexual behaviour, racial tolerance and ethical business practices), while Secular and Progressive respondents regard Jews as similar to the rest of society in these respects. These divisions are also underpinned by distinct differences in the general political and social attitudes of the two groups, resulting in two very diverse sub-populations within the community as a whole

10. Jews vary widely in the strength of their religious beliefs, ritual practice and ethnic identity. But unlike other religious groups, in the Jewish community levels of ritual observance are far more closely related to ethnic identity than to strength of belief. For most Jews, religious observance is a means of identifying with the Jewish community, rather than an expression of religious faith. The failure to construe observance as a religiously prescribed act leaves the way open for many Jews, particularly the young, to redefine the core elements of 'ethnic observance' so as to exclude conventional requirements like Jewish marriage and affiliation to a synagogue

strongly conscious', compared with 84% of single and Jewishly-married respondents

13. 1 in 3 British Jews between the ages of 20 and 49 are not living with a partner, and 1 in 5 of this age group - equivalent to approximately 25,000 people - are either seeking a partner or are positively disposed towards meeting someone. However, only half of those seeking a partner care whether their future partner is Jewish
14. 1 in 3 Jews choose not to associate formally with a synagogue. Moreover, while some Jews have moved out of formal association with their parents' synagogue and joined less religiously Orthodox synagogues, a much larger proportion of those who have moved have simply not affiliated. The JPR survey reveals for the first time the scale of this development and the fact that it has been happening over some decades. Many Jews appear to be leapfrogging the religious institutions which claim to act as bulwarks against erosion. JPR survey data therefore show clearly a developing gulf between members and non-members
15. The social and religious dynamics of the family emerge very clearly as the major determinants of Jewish life choices. Jewish education appears to play very little part in determining whether an individual maintains his or her Jewish identity, once religious background is allowed for
16. Despite the emphasis placed on moral standards by traditional Jewish teaching, Jews do not appear to have developed unusually demanding or censorious moral standards in comparison with the rest of society. A clear tendency towards liberalism on matters of personal/sexual morality can be discerned among a majority of respondents. The strict approach of the very Orthodox to these matters,

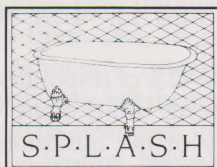
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Nigel stags a bull

It had been a long day. The money market was up but Nigel's mood was anything but. He closed the bathroom door and turned the tap, noticing the satisfying touch of antique gold plated fittings. He lay back, the water gently lapping round the beautiful porcelain bath. It felt like a very expensive haven, designed with utmost style and taste. Life looked better already. And to think Nirvana could be gained just by visiting Scotland's premier bathroom specialist. Upwardly mobile? Right now Nigel felt wonderfully horizontal - and with his complete suite costing a mere trifle who could question his watertight business position?

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11. The results throw much light on the crisis of Jewish continuity. The survey data suggest that the rate at which Jewish men are marrying non-Jewish women in the crucial younger age-groups (less than 40) is 44%. This is not far short of the 52% inter-marriage rate of US Jews, which, when it was announced in 1990, caused widespread shock throughout the community and fuelled debate on the Jewish future. Overall, more than half of the adult Jewish population has, at some time, had a steady relationship with a non-Jew
12. Many of those who have married non-Jews are actively involved in Jewish life and strongly identify as Jews: 55% rate themselves 'extremely conscious of being Jewish' or 'quite

which reflects the strong prohibitions in Orthodox Jewish teaching, would be recast by some as representing intolerant or even unethical behaviour

17. The data clearly disprove the common assumption that inter-married, or uninvolvement, or Secular Jews display negative attitudes towards Jewishness and the Jewish community. The uninvolvement express strong support for Jewish survival, 60% feel influenced by their Jewish background, nearly always positively, they have relatively positive attitudes to Israel and 17% of them express a desire to become more involved
 18. The data show a growing sector of British Jews who feel firmly and securely rooted in British society, have no sense of living in dispersion or 'exile', do not see the Bible as the actual word of God, do not believe that Jews are more moral and tolerant and less racist than others, do not believe that Jews behave in such a way as to cause hostility towards themselves, and do not feel an imperative to find a Jewish partner.
- (1) Respondents were asked to define themselves subjectively in terms of their religious practice as Secular, Just Jewish, Progressive, Traditional or Strictly Orthodox. Secular and Just Jewish indicate low levels of observance of a core range of practices, while Strictly Orthodox shows complete adherence. Progressive and Traditional take intermediate positions.

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COMMENTARY ON FINDINGS RELATING TO POLITICAL ATTITUDES

by Charles Raab

Understanding the attitudes of contemporary British Jews towards politics and their views on domestic and international issues is a complex matter. Generalisations must be qualified by the recognition both of diversity amongst Jews and of apparent inconsistencies in their opinions, at least when seen in terms of a conventional association between voting intention and position on issues that are normally associated with party support.

The JPR survey confirms that British Jews as a whole are on the right of the party-political spectrum despite their historical left-wing tendency. In terms of their voting intentions, they split fairly evenly between Labour and Conservative, whereas the British population as a whole currently divides roughly two-to-one between the two main parties. On the other hand, if one takes into account the higher proportion of Jews in professional and middle-class occupations, the difference disappears; the survey shows that Jews in those social categories are more disposed to vote Labour than are non-Jews.

Yet if one looks at Jews' position on particular issues, the picture is mixed. Like the rest of the population, Jews want government to spend more on education, pensions, health and law enforcement, but are less keen on defence expenditure and want to see more spent on the arts than do the population as a whole. If the latter two categories suggest a tilt to the left, Jews, however, are rather less enthusiastic about spending more on unemployment benefit than is the rest of British society. The survey finds that, compared with the general population, Jews are 'far less authoritarian' (p.4), being less severe on crime, punishment and sexual conduct: for example, only one-third support the death penalty (as against two-thirds of the population as a whole). Whereas slightly fewer

than half of all Jews think homosexual relations are wrong (as against two-thirds of the whole population), the variation within the Jewish community is great. Some of this variation is not surprising: for example, only about one-quarter of secular Jews think this way. But some of it is unexpected, and might perhaps indicate a historic shift of attitude on this issue: one in ten of the strictly orthodox, and four in ten of traditional Jews, do not condemn these sexual practices.

Other findings in the survey show that British Jews do not think there is a wave of antisemitism in the country, although they tend to sense an increase in racial prejudice generally in British society. While they may be strong supporters of Israel, only one in four gives to Israeli-linked charities, but this figure varies greatly across the secular to strictly-orthodox spectrum and across age groups. On the whole, British Jews do not see themselves as a Diaspora intending to emigrate to Israel. Whilst they support Israeli policy towards peace in the Middle East, seven in ten think that territory should be traded for peace. In contrast, a survey of American Jews shows more support for the peace policy of the Israeli government, but less willingness to give up land in the Golan Heights and on the West Bank.

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COMMENTARY ON FINDINGS RELATING TO SOCIAL, DEMOGRAPHIC AND DENOMINATIONAL TRENDS

by John Danzig

This fascinating if sobering survey by the JPR has much of relevance to our community. It challenges our complacency regarding Jewish continuity and tells us that time is fast running out. However, there are also glimmers of hope.

Jewish Identity

Whilst we may gain some comfort from the fact that only a quarter of respondents defined themselves as devoid of all religious observance, there appears to be a behavioural link between ritual observance and ethnic identity; or to put it another way, Jewish observance is practised in order to identify as Jews rather than as a measure of religious faith.

The trouble with this is that without the religious faith to underpin our actions, many Jews (particularly the young) will feel comfortable in authorising the arbitrary selection of identifying ritual and this allows them to marginalise the conventional requirements of Jewish marriage and synagogue affiliation.

However, I suspect that Jewish communities like Edinburgh are potentially less vulnerable than, say, London if - and this is a big if - they manage to explore and develop the social norms that can reinforce traditional Jewish values, albeit in a non-elitist way. Our community needs to be more participatory and less threatening, if this is to happen.

Uninvolved

Interestingly, whilst 36% of the sample do not belong to a synagogue, over three-quarters of them do retain social, religious, organisational or cultural ties with other Jews or Jewish events. We can certainly see this in Edinburgh.

Of the remainder of non-members, representing as they do some 8% of the total sample, 26% are single and 62% have intermarried. However, while highly assimilated and weakly identified, 81% of this group believe that it is important that Jews survive as a people and indeed 55% have a moderate or strong attachment to

Israel. Over 50% feel they have been positively influenced by their Jewish heritage.

The fact is that we as individuals cannot be expected to make strategic decisions about 'Jewish Continuity'. It needs vision and planning from core institutions, and these surely must include strategies defined and implemented at local synagogue level.

Disturbingly, background has a low predictive correlation with variations in subsequent Jewish involvement, accounting for about 25% of such variations. For example, such issues as Jewish schooling and synagogue orthodoxy have a marginal influence on later involvement. Parental religiosity is by far the most important factor but even this has only a 20% predictive power.

Intermarriage

The intermarriage rate amongst young Jewish men (under 40 years old) is some 44%. Again, home background is by far the most significant predictor of out-marriage and yet even this only has a 10% predictive capacity.

Once again, the majority of those marrying out identify themselves as 'strongly' or 'quite strongly' Jewish whilst Jewish education (once family background has been excluded) plays an insignificant part in predicting out-marriage.

It would seem that one in five British Jews between 20 and 44 are in the market for a partner (some 25,000) of which 56% express a clear preference for a Jewish partner (64% women; 50% men).

Synagogue Affiliation

Excluding the strictly orthodox, only half of those raised in families belonging to orthodox synagogues remain members of such synagogues compared with 31% for reform and 24% liberal.

None of the main synagogue groups can take comfort from this. Curiously, the majority of 'changers' and 'leavers' are more hopeful about British Jewry's survival than the 'stayers' although their attitudes

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suggest a form of ethnic continuity rather than the survival of a community defined by traditional religious norms. Well over 60% of the 'changers' and 'leavers' want rabbis to be more helpful in welcoming non-Jewish partners in the community compared to the 'stayers' (39%). What seems far more complex is whether or not this welcoming approach in fact encourages intermarriage.

Conclusion

The JPR survey is a fascinating albeit disturbing insight into British Jewry today and begs many questions relevant to our own Edinburgh community.

To what extent do the pervasiveness of higher education and other forms of social and cultural mix represent the key determinants of intermarriage?

- Is the influence of community rabbis diminishing and if so why?
- Why do local synagogue councils have such apparent difficulty in handling change?
- To what extent is synagogue involvement seen as a threatening rather than supportive experience?

What is certainly clear is that definitions of 'continuity' warrant further analysis and so-called 'marginal' Jews may well respond to community initiatives so long as the right buttons are pressed. The challenge is: what are those buttons, and what are the long-term implications?

In a hugely heterogeneous and open society where even family background is of low significance in predicting the religiosity of our offspring, we all need to look afresh at our cultural and religious roots if we are to transmit Jewish meaning and relevance to our children.

Charles Raab is Reader in Politics at Edinburgh University and a Member of Glasgow Reform Synagogue. John Danzig is a Chartered Accountant with an honours degree in Sociology. He is Convener of the Edinburgh Jewish Community's Future Generations Committee.

THE FORMATION OF CONVICTION

by Gerald A Cohen

In this article, we reprint two extracts from the second of Jerry Cohen's Gifford Lectures. In the first of the two extracts with which he began the lecture, he describes the influence of his parents and his school (the left-wing, Yiddish-speaking Morris Winchewsky Primary School) on his early sense of Jewish identity. After Morris Winchewsky, he continued his schooling at two Protestant schools and, in his lecture, he described how he then belonged to two Jewish worlds - the anti-religious, anti-Zionist world of his parents and his family and the mainstream Jewish world of the two Protestant schools (where 90% of his classmates were Jewish) and the B'nai B'rith summer camps he attended. He then went on to describe what made him feel Jewish and in the second extract, with which he concluded the lecture, he describes the sense in which he now regards himself as Jewish and analyses some of the implications of his own position.

I consider myself very Jewish, but I do not believe in the God of the Old Testament. Some people, more especially some gentiles, find that strange. One purpose of what follows is to demonstrate how one might be both very Jewish and yet cut off from the Jewish religion.

HOW MY EARLY CHILDHOOD INFLUENCED MY SENSE OF JEWISH IDENTITY

I was brought up to be both Jewish and anti-religious, and I remain very Jewish and pretty Godless, though not as Godless as my parents intended and expected me to be, not as Godless, indeed, as they took for granted that I would be. My mother influenced my outlook and my development more than my father did, and I will begin by saying something about her. She was born, in Kharkov in the Ukraine, in 1912 to a-religious Jewish parents of ample means: her father was a successful timber merchant. When my mother was precisely five years old, the Bolshevik revolution occurred. My grandfather's business continued to provide well for the family during the 1920s in the period of the New Economic Policy, which was a form of compromise between socialist aspiration and capitalist reality. My mother was consequently quite well-heeled, with plenty to lose, but she nevertheless developed, across the course of the 1920s, in schools and in youth organisations, a full-

hearted commitment to the Bolshevik cause. She took this commitment with her to Canada in 1930, by which time the New Economic Policy had given way to a regime that was less amenable to bourgeois existence, and my mother's parents therefore decided to emigrate. As a result, my mother left the Soviet Union and settled in Montreal, not because she wanted to, certainly not because she had any objection to the Soviet Union, but because she did not want to be separated from her emigrating parents and sister.

In Montreal, my mother, who could not speak English, and without, at eighteen, an advanced education, tumbled down the class ladder to a proletarian position. She took employment as a sewing machine operator in a garment factory. Before long she met my father, a dress cutter, who, like her, had no use for the Jewish religion, but who, unlike her, had an impeccably proletarian pedigree (his father was a poor tailor from Lithuania) and no secondary education.

My parents' courtship unrolled in the context of long hours of factory work, struggles, often in the face of police violence, to build unionism in the garment trade and summer weekends at the country camp some forty miles from town that was set up by and for left-wing Jewish workers. My parents married in 1936 and I appeared, their first-born, in 1941.

My mother was proud to be - to have become - working class and through the 1930s and 1940s and until 1958 she was an active member of the Canadian Communist Party. My father belonged to the United Jewish People's Order, most of whose members were anti-religious, anti-Zionist and strongly pro-Soviet. He did not join the Communist Party itself, not because he had ideological reservations, but because his personality was not conducive to Party membership. Members of the Communist Party were expected to express themselves with confidence and with regularity at branch meetings and my father was an unusually reticent man with little disposition to self-expression.

Because of my parents' convictions, I was raised in a militantly anti-religious home (not just a-religious, or non-religious, but **anti-religious**). As far as I know, my father never had a Bar-Mitzvah, that, in his day, was *de rigueur* even in the majority of atheist Jewish households, and my mother's background was certainly free of belief. And my upbringing was as intensely political as it was anti-religious. My first school, which was run by the United Jewish People's Order and which I entered in 1945, was named after Morris Winchewsky, a Jewish proletarian poet. At Morris Winchewsky we learned standard primary school things in the mornings, from non-communist gentile women teachers; but, in the afternoons, the language of instruction was Yiddish and we were taught Jewish (and other) history and Yiddish language and literature, by left-wing Jews and Jewesses whose first and main language was Yiddish. The education we got from them, even when they narrated Old Testament stories, was suffused with vernacular Marxist seasoning: nothing heavy or pedantic, just good Yiddish revolutionary commonsense. Our report cards were folded down the middle, with English subjects on the left-hand side and Yiddish ones on the right. One of the Yiddish subjects was *Geschichte fun Klassen Kampf* (History

of Class Struggle) at which, I am pleased to note, I scored a straight *aleph* in 1949.

At Morris Winchewsky, and in our homes, we had secular versions of the principal Jewish holidays: our own kind of Chanukah, our own kind of Purim, our own kind of Pesach. The stories attaching to those holidays were generalised without strain into a grand message of resistance to all oppression, so that our Seder was as much about the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising as it was about liberation from Egypt. Our parents and grandparents attended special evenings at which politically scarlet Yiddish themes were celebrated by their *kinder* and *ainiklach* in songs and narrations and plays: we felt proud as we performed, we knew we were the apples of our elders' eyes, and they *shepped nachas* (glowed with satisfaction) as they watched us.

I entered Morris Winchewsky School in April 1945, as the Second World War was coming to a close. It was the sunset after a long day of harmony between Western capitalist democracy and Soviet communism. If you want to know how strong that harmony was, at the popular level as opposed to at the level at which statesmen operate, try to get hold of a copy of the special edition of the American magazine *Life*, which appeared some time in 1943, and which was the best advertisement for the Soviet Union that anyone has ever produced. Shining young faces in well-equipped classrooms, heroic feats of industrialisation, prodigious works of art and music, and so on. *Life* magazine did it better than home-made Soviet propaganda ever could.

In the Morris Winchewsky School we believed profoundly both in democracy and in communism and we did not separate the two - for we knew that communism would be tyranny unless the people controlled how the state steered society and we thought that democracy would be only formal without the full citizen enfranchisement that required communist equality.

As Jewish children growing up in

the shadow of the Holocaust, the Nazi destruction filled us with fury and sorrow. Nazism was a great fierce black cloud in our minds and we thought of anti-Nazism as implying democracy and therefore communism, and we therefore thought of Jewish people as natural communists and the many left-wing Yiddish songs we were taught to sing confirmed those ideological linkages. Nor was it eccentric of us, in that particular time and place, to put *Yiddishkeit* and leftism together. To illustrate that, let me point out that the area of Montreal in which I lived, at whose geographical centre the Morris Winchewsky School stood, returned a Communist Party member, a Polish Jew, to the Parliament of Canada in Ottawa in 1945.

So, in our childhood consciousness, being Jewish, being anti-Nazi, being democratic, and being communist all went together. All tyranny was the same, whether it was the tyranny of Pharaoh or of Antiochus Epiphanes or of Nebuchadnezzar or of Hitler or of J Edgar Hoover. And if the Winchewsky school training had not sufficed to keep that ideological package well wrapped up, there was also in July and August Camp Kinderland, forty miles from Montreal, where Yiddishkeit and leftism flourished together among the fir trees and the mosquitoes.

This ideologically enclosed existence was brought to an end one Friday in the early summer of 1952. It was, I remember, a day of glorious sunshine. On that sunny day, the Anti-Subversive Squad (or, as it was commonly known, the Red Squad) of the Province of Quebec Provincial Police raided the Morris Winchewsky School and turned it inside out in a search for incriminating left-wing literature. We were in the school when the raiders came, but, whatever happened in other classes, the raid was not frightening for those of us who were then in Lehrerin (Mrs) Asher's charge, because, having left the room for a moment in response to the knock on the door, she soon returned, clapped

her hands with simulated exuberance, and announced in English: 'Children, the Board of Health is inspecting the school and you can all go home early'. So we gaily scurried down the stairs, and lurking at the entrance were four men, each of them tall and very fat, all of them eyes down and looking sheepish.

In the event, no compromising materials were found, since the school had been careful to keep itself clean, but a parallel raid on the premises of the school's parent organisation, the United Jewish People's Order, did expose pamphlets and the like. These UJPO premises were consequently padlocked by the police and the organisation was denied access to them, within the terms of a Quebec law, known as the Padlock Law, which was later struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada. And, although Morris Winchewsky was not forbidden to continue, the raids caused enough parents to withdraw their children from the school to make its further full-time operation impractical.

Accordingly, we were cast forth, as far as our formal schooling was concerned, into the big wide non-communist world. But some of us, and I, now eleven, was one of them, departed with a rock-firm attachment to the principles it had been a major purpose of Morris Winchewsky to instil in us, and with full and joyous confidence that the Soviet Union was implementing those principles.

THE SENSE IN WHICH I NOW REGARD MYSELF AS JEWISH

A person who practises the Jewish religion is clearly a Jew: practising the religion is a sufficient condition of being Jewish. But it is not also a necessary condition. I am Jewish not because I practise the religion, but because I descend from the people who practised that religion (and still do). That is clearly one way of being Jewish. But it is being Jewish in a derived or secondary way, even if it is consistent with feeling no less Jewish, no less connected with the

historical people, then an orthodox Jew does.

We learned a lot of true things at Morris Winchewsky, but a lot of false ones too. Setting aside all the false things we learned about Soviet communism, the biggest falsehood was the idea that religion was not central to being Jewish. They made us think that just as some Frenchmen or Italians were religious and some not, so some Jews were religious and some not.

But that, I now know, is not true. Individual Jews, like me, can be irreligious, but we are Jewish only by virtue of connection with a people defined not by place or race but by religion. And the more distant the religion is from the situation of a particular Jew, the less Jewish, other things equal, that Jew is. The a-religious cultural periphery cannot become the core, or even a core, of something new, and when I meet third and fourth generation secular American Jews whom I teach at Oxford, I observe, with regret, that the sense of connection to the Jewish past is decaying and that the special sensibility is disappearing.

So, while I need not tell you that being Jewish means an enormous amount to me, much more, for example, than being Canadian, I no longer have the illusion which Morris Winchewsky nourished, that Jews could go on and on without a religion to carry our identity.

Israel is a different matter. The religion is powerful there, but even if it declines, the people will remain an entity. But, if the religion goes, then, in time, those people will no longer be a Jewish entity, any more than the Italian citizens of Rome are a Roman entity in the classical sense. Judaism would have contributed centrally to their formation, but they will not be Jews (as I understand what Jews are).

Whatever happens to Israel and to Judaism as a religion, the secular *Yiddishkeit* in my identity will not last, except as an object of academic attention, albeit, perhaps, of affectionate academic attention. This way of being Jewish depended on the *shtetl*, on the prohibition on

speaking *loshen koydish*, the holy language, in daily life and on an envioning exclusion from gentile society and institutions. As that context goes, so *Yiddishkeit* as a lived thing will also go.

I find that very sad. It is sad to contemplate the disappearance of one's own identity and it is awkward to acknowledge that *Yiddishkeit* will persist in some lived form only as long as beliefs and practices from which I remain cut off are perpetuated. But that's how it is. History doesn't always go the way you want it to go.

I sometimes imagine myself, as my death crawls up on me, reciting the *Sh'ma Yisroel! Adonoy eloyhéynu, Adonoy ékhod* ('Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, The Lord is one'). I do not know whether that is just an idle fantasy on my part, or something deeper. If it is deeper, then the desire it expresses is not to pay final homage to the God of the Old Testament, whom I find unattractive, but to solidarise with my forebears, from Canaan to Kishinev, from Belsen to Brooklyn.

Gerald Cohen, FBA, is Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford University and Fellow of All Souls College. His Gifford lectures, entitled *The Production of Equality: from History through Politics to Morals* were given in April and May at Edinburgh University

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'BROTHERS AND STRANGERS': YIDDISH CULTURE IN INTER-WAR BERLIN

by Heather Valencia

The typical image of the *Ostjude* to Germans and German Jews was of an alien figure, distinguishable by outlandish clothes, language and gestures; the focus often of derision or embarrassment, but sometimes of fascination. Besides the masses of East European immigrants who furnished these stereotypes, there was, however, another group of *Ostjuden* in Weimar Germany, namely the Yiddish-speaking intellectuals from Poland and the fledgling Soviet Union - writers, artists, journalists, political activists - who made Berlin their headquarters during the 1920s until 1933 and, in some cases, beyond this date. They were different: having lived in the Yiddish literary centres of Warsaw, Kiev or Vilna, often having had a western university education, they were in appearance and culture very unlike the stereotypical *Kaftanjude* from the *shtetl*, and yet their language and literary medium was the despised Yiddish, and they were in no sense assimilated to German Jewish culture. How was the bemused *Westjude* to categorise them and how did they fit in to Weimar Jewish and non-Jewish society? Stephen Ashheim, in his book on Eastern European Jews in Germany, epitomises their ambivalent status by the phrase 'brothers and strangers'.⁽¹⁾

The Weimar Republic was an ideal of democracy which went horribly wrong. Against the background of this fragile political edifice, however, cultural life blossomed as never before, especially in Berlin, which became the artistic centre of Europe during those years. The frenetic artistic life was sharpened by awareness of danger, inflation and poverty, political unrest and, increasingly, a sense of impending catastrophe. And this cultural scene was dominated by Jews in numbers disproportionate to

their numerical representation in the population.

The German census of 1925 showed the Jewish population of Greater Berlin to be almost 5% of the total population. Of these, 25% were foreign Jews, the majority of whom came from Poland, Russia or the Eastern parts of the old Austrian Empire. Thus almost one quarter of the Jews in Berlin were so-called *Ostjuden*, and for most of them, Yiddish was their first language. Many had come before the First World War, fleeing from pogroms in Russia, or in order to study in Germany; large numbers fled from the devastation, persecution and catastrophic economic conditions in Eastern Europe in the wake of the hostilities.

Thus Jewish Berlin can be loosely divided into three broad categories: first, those who were seen and saw themselves as acculturated German Jews; second, the distinctly recognisable *Ostjuden*, the vast majority of whom made their living by crafts and trades; and third, the Yiddish intellectuals and writers, who were, on the whole, a transient group. They did not fit neatly into either of the other categories. Though coming from the same cultural milieu as the masses of East-European workers, they were aware of a broader European culture. Their political activities and interest in western secular writing as well as the vibrant contemporary Yiddish literature flourishing in Eastern Europe and America, had estranged them from their background.

What was the attitude of 'assimilated' Jews towards the newcomers from the East? On the one hand there was resentment and fear on the part of assimilated Jews towards those whom they perceived as a threat to their hard-won Westernised, emancipated status, a phenomenon discussed by Andrew

Barker with respect to Vienna.⁽²⁾ These *Ostjuden* were an unwelcome reminder of a heritage which *Westjuden* had 'overcome' and they were often blamed by German Jews for the antisemitism in Germany which some German Jews even then were afraid of being engulfed by. This distancing from the *Ostjuden* was expressed very succinctly by Dr Max Neumann, who created the '*Verband national-deutscher Juden*' after the First World War:

The *Ostjude* is a stranger to the Jew of German nationality and nothing but a stranger - he is a stranger to him with respect to feelings, intellect and physical make-up. When we hear that in the European East horrible cruelties have been inflicted on these pitiful creatures, the heart of the German Jew is stirred by human sympathy like the heart of any other humane German of different origins. It is the same pity which we feel when we hear of butchery of the Armenians by the Turks or lynchings of Negroes in America.⁽³⁾

These protestations present a somewhat over-simplified, psychologically rather dubious picture; Zygmunt Baumann suggests that such deliberate distancing was a psychological defence mechanism engendered by fear of the kinship which the *Westjuden* felt only too well. His summary of the no-win situation of the *Ostjude* is pithy:

The *Ostjude* was first and foremost a character in the drama of Jewish assimilation, in the specifically Jewish version of the 'civilising process'. In the scenario of Jewish emancipation, he was to perform the vanishing act. His reluctance to follow his lines was blamed when the production was a flop.⁽⁴⁾

Another, apparently contradic-

tory, but in reality complementary emotion in the complex relationship of *Westjude* and *Ostjude* was the awakening of passionate interest in Eastern European Jewish culture among many Western Jewish writers and thinkers. A somewhat romanticised image of the Jewish culture of Eastern Europe promised to satisfy their longing for wholeness and purity which seemed lost in the fragmented life of the West. Martin Buber's rehabilitation of the culture of the Chassidim was the most influential work in bringing this heritage to western readers. A further factor was the Yiddish theatre which had great success both in Vienna and in Berlin in the twenties. Interestingly, these notions of wholeness and harmony with the land in an integrated Jewish society found in Eastern European Jewish culture reflected the romanticised *völkisch* ideas of peasant life which had emerged at the turn of the century. (Ironically, it was the same ideas which Hitler twisted into his perverted 'blood and soil' philosophy.)

This interest in the Jewish culture of Eastern Europe stimulated much activity from Jewish writers in the West: Joseph Roth and Alfred Döblin made journeys to the Jewish *shtetls* of Poland and compared the integrity of that life with what Roth calls 'the tamed bestiality of the West European, who wallows in perversions and creeps round the law, his

polite hat in his timid hand';⁽⁵⁾ Fritz Mordechai Kaufmann learnt Yiddish and founded a periodical, *Die Freistatt*, devoted to East European Jewish culture. Both he and Nathan Birnbaum began the work of rehabilitating Yiddish from its state of base jargon to that of eloquent living Jewish language. Like Kafka, Gershom Scholem turned to Jewish mysticism and back to his ancient Jewish roots partly as a reaction against his assimilated parents' disapproval. The revelatory nature of the rediscovery of the East for Western Jews is very clearly expressed by the writer Robert Jungk - best known as an anti-nuclear journalist - who grew up in Berlin. He writes that the power of Buber's Chassidic writings 'brought me back to Judaism, which I, like my parents' and grandparents' generation, had felt more as a burden until then, but which I now learnt to value as an opportunity, as an unearned privilege'.⁽⁶⁾

It is in the light of all these contradictions and paradoxes that the life and status of the Yiddish intellectuals in Berlin can be considered.

THE BERLIN LITERARY CAFÉ

In the twenties Berlin became the foremost centre of Yiddish culture in Western Europe. The Yiddish writer Daniel Tsharni called Berlin an '*ir ve'am b'Israel*' (city and mother in

Israel), a term reserved for cities of the Diaspora which played vital roles in Jewish history. Cultural and welfare organisations with strong links with Eastern Europe were either founded or established new branches in Berlin: the most important of these for the development of Yiddish culture was YIVO, the *Yidisher visnshaftlekher Institut*, founded in Berlin in 1925. Its headquarters was established in Vilna, but its economic, statistical and historical departments were in Berlin.

As with the German intellectuals and artists, the café, was the centre of intellectual life for the Yiddish speakers. The *Romanische Café*, in the centre of Berlin was not only one of the principal meeting-places of German *literati*, but also the centre of political and literary activities for Yiddish intellectuals in the early twenties. In his memoirs Daniel Tsharni uses the Hebrew term *kibuts-golyes* ('the ingathering of the exiles') to describe the café, emphasising the sense these writers had of being a group within but apart from Berlin society. He goes on to say:

[...] for me personally the *Romanische* was for a whole decade both a sanatorium and a college. There I healed my lungs with nicotine and caffeine and learned the principles of the writer's art; the most important of which was never, *kholile*, to bore the reader. In the *Romanische Café*, one did not dare to be boring. As soon as one of the guests began to bore his companions, his table soon was as empty as a '*lokschn-board*'.⁽⁷⁾

The importance of this and other cafés for the literary life of Berlin cannot be overestimated - one Berlin critic said that there were people who were only capable of reading and doing their writing in the *Romanische Café*, and certainly it was here that relationships developed between the indigenous Jewish intelligentsia and the Eastern European intellectuals. The Yiddish poet Avrom Nokhem Stencl is an interesting example of this East-

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West rapprochement. He is a fairly minor star in the constellation of Yiddish writers, unknown before he came to Germany and later in London honoured by an ever diminishing public. But he blossomed as a poet in the Berlin years: many poems appeared in translation in German Jewish newspapers and journals before they appeared in Yiddish. Ten volumes of poetry in Yiddish, and two in German, appeared between 1924 and 1936. He had close friends and patrons among the German and Jewish literati, including Ludwig Hardt, Julius Bab, Arnold Zweig and, above all, the poet Else Lasker-Schüler. This all led to his poetry achieving much greater recognition in Berlin than it ever did afterwards in London. Considering that Stenzel is one of the minor Yiddish poets, it is remarkable that he captured the interest of German and German-Jewish intellectuals and achieved a greater degree of recognition than many greater Yiddish writers who were active in Berlin at the time. As a naïve, unsophisticated, young man from a religious background in a little Polish *stetl*, who had arrived in Berlin with no possessions but the bundle of poems in his pocket and a deep knowledge of *Torah*, he seems to have epitomised to people like Arnold Zweig and Else Lasker-Schüler their vision of the essential Eastern Jew.

YIDDISH PUBLISHING IN BERLIN

The most important phenomenon which accompanied this East-West rapprochement was the flourishing of Yiddish publishing in 1920s Berlin. The inflation meant that publishers paying in foreign currency could afford to set up in Germany. Some East European publishers moved there while other new Yiddish presses were established. During the twenties there were at least 25 different publishers, the majority in Berlin, but some in Leipzig, Frankfurt-am-Main and Dresden. Between 1921 and 1923, at least 217 books in Yiddish were published in Berlin. Many of the publications were new

works in Yiddish by writers of stature, including Dovid Bergelson and Khaym Nachman Bialik, and textbooks for the burgeoning Yiddish schools in Eastern Europe were an important achievement of these publishers. Political and welfare organisations were able to publish material, some of which would have been inadmissible in Russia or Poland (for example, a report on the pogroms in the Ukraine which appeared in 1920). There were important Yiddish journals such as *Der Mizrah-jud* (The Eastern Jew), the magnificent art journal *Milgroym* (pomegranate), and the double issue 3-4 of *Albatros*, the avant-garde literary journal which had been banned in Warsaw for blasphemy.

Translations of German, English, Russian and other works into Yiddish reveal the wide cultural interests of the Yiddish reading public: between 1920 and 1923 alone there were translations of works by Martin Buber, Karl Marx, Gustav Landauer, Max Brod, Goethe, the Brothers Grimm, Eichendorff, Ricarda Hucy, Chamisso, Gottfried Keller, Kipling, Hans Anderson, Hauptmann, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, and Knut Hamsun.

Ambivalent aspects of the acculturation of Yiddish writers in Germany are also pinpointed by these publications. While they experienced intellectual freedom and cross-fertilisation with German culture, they were writing in a creative limbo: for while they published freely, their main readership was in Poland, Russia, and America.

BERGELSON'S STORY OF EXILE

Works by two writers from Eastern Europe vividly characterise the Yiddish writer in Berlin. Dovid Bergelson was born near Kiev in 1884 and lived in Berlin off and on between 1921 and 1933. His story *Tsvishn emigrantn* (Among exiles) was published in 1928. In this story Bergelson presents the two contrasting worlds of Eastern Europe and Berlin through the eyes of an individual who has lived in both environments but is at home in

neither.

The narrator is a writer living in Berlin who is visited one day by a man describing himself as a Jewish terrorist. The latter has discovered, living in the same lodgings as himself, a notorious *pogromchik* who caused the death of thousands of Ukrainian Jews. In order to make the writer understand his deep desire to kill the murderer, the stranger narrates his life story: his youth in Volhynia, his service in the war, his emigration to Palestine, his coming to Berlin and his decision to kill the *pogromchik*. In Berlin he had met a *landsman* who, on hearing his story, promised to acquire a weapon for him, but in fact delivered him to a group of prominent members of the emigré community, headed by a psychiatrist who tried to persuade him to spend a period in a sanatorium, paid for by his *landslayt* in Berlin, to cure his paranoid delusions. In despair the stranger pleads with the narrator to furnish him with a revolver. In the end the man commits suicide.

The figure of the *pogromchik* is seen only through the eyes of the stranger; it is never clear whether his identity is purely a figment of the obsessed man's imagination. The real focus of interest is on the three categories of Jewish character - the *landslayt*, the writer, and the stranger - who between them convey the spectrum of identity problems of the exile. The fragile position of the emigrés who have gained a foothold in the assimilated Jewish community is exemplified in the anxiety of the group of *landslayt* which interviews the would-be assassin. Their fear that a fanatical *Ostjude* will provoke a scandal with repercussions for their community outweighs any concern to seek the truth of his assertions.

In the figure of the narrator we see a presumably autobiographical depiction of the Yiddish writer in Berlin society. He seems well established there, but the stranger confronts him with a threat to his present existence. Seeking desperately for someone to help him after his rebuff by the psychiatrist and his

friends, the image of the writer occurs to the stranger:

Writers, I thought, are like the conscience of the people. They are its nerves, they represent their people before the world [...] and now that I have related all this to you, you are responsible with me, and even more than I, because you are a writer ...⁽⁸⁾

This is an interesting allusion to the status of the Yiddish writer in East European society: his vocation confers both moral authority and responsibility. Here the writer/narrator faces the moral choice either to align himself with the old world, by acceding to the ideas and demands of the stranger, or with his role in the assimilated Jewish society of Berlin, by rejecting the stranger's plea. Bergelson's solution is not without self-irony in that the suicide-note is the *deus ex machina* which spares him the necessity of making the decision.

In the character-study of the young man, Bergelson's story really makes its point. The young man is the last member of a doomed family. Inwardly and outwardly he is isolated from human society. The assassination of the supposed *pogromchik* becomes his *raison d'être*, his final chance to exist in his own and the world's eyes. In this character Bergelson depicts the disturbed personality in general, but the young man also symbolises Jewish exile. He finally comes to clear perception of his identity: in the suicide note he says 'I understand the whole thing: I am an exile ... among exiles ... I have had enough ...'.⁽⁹⁾

Here the word 'exile' evokes the plight of the modern Eastern European Jew who experiences complete deracination: uprooted from a traditional culture which itself is crumbling, unable to find a true home in the West, he is a stranger wherever he goes.

A YIDDISH CHILDE HAROLD

In Bergelson's story *Tsvishn emigrantn*, Berlin is the symbolic background of the story: in Moyshe Kulbak's long satirical poem *Disner Childe Harold* (Child Harold from

Disna), the city is the centre of interest. Kulbak lived in Berlin from 1920 until 1923 and the poem, written in 1933, is able, in the light of subsequent developments, to turn a critical eye on political developments in 1920s Weimar: his semi-autobiographical central character is a world away from Byron's aristocratic Childe Harold. He is a tailor's son from a small town in White Russia who has come to Berlin to study, arriving with nothing but 'a bundle of wild poems, a packet of cigarettes and a shirt',⁽¹⁰⁾ but with an eager thirst for knowledge. One critic, Sol Liptzin suggests that the central theme of the poem is the humour 'directed against the degenerate German bourgeoisie',⁽¹¹⁾ which appealed Kulbak's Soviet critics. This is indeed one, but not the sole important dimension. By adopting a dual narrative stance - that is, giving an impression of Berlin through the eyes of the naïve young man and interspersing it with commentary by the omniscient, ironic narrator - Kulbak depicts the Berlin panorama in the turbulent early years of the Weimar Republic. We see the affluent bourgeoisie buying girls in the cabarets, the Expressionists, Dadaists and other fashionable and eclectic *literati*, the jazz bands and boxing matches which are the 'bread and circuses' to keep the workers docile. The most trenchant social criticism is levelled at the industrialists who, hand-in-glove with the police and the military, ruthlessly suppress the workers' revolutionary spirit:

Herr Thyssen controls the police.

Herr Thyssen controls the army.
[...]

Who changes the guard in Moabit prison?

Stines, Krupp and Thyssen.
(pp.244 and 246)

In these respects the poem bears comparison with many other works of social satire about the Weimar Republic. It also focuses sharply, however, on the Jewish exile. The initial naïve wonderment of the Childe Harold figure gradually

gives way to a growing scepticism and a critical perception of society and his role in it. At first he is intoxicated with Germany:

O land, where electricity flows through the wires,

And champagne flows through the veins;

Where every worker is a Marxist,

And every shopkeeper a Kantian. (p.232)

We witness his 'corruption' through jazz, drink and women, but also his dawning realisation of social evils, and his own otherness, which becomes apparent to him, comically, in his affair with a blonde German girl. The gulf between the two emerges in her ignorance of his background and culture: she asks if he is a Cossack, and he explains to her (in his 'elegant' German) that his father was 'ein alter Ritter von Eisenscher' (a venerable knight of the scissors). (p.242)

He gradually acquires understanding of his hopeless position in this doomed society:

And I am ill, Mademoiselle,
With a strange illness, like the century,

And yet once, filled with eager expectation,

I boldly leapt away from father's threshold!

O, youthful fervour and audacity,

A bit of Blok, a bit of Schopenhauer,

Kabbala, Peretz and Spinoza -
Uprootedness, and sadness,

sadness, sadness. (p.252)

Here alongside the general malaise familiar from other contemporary writing there is the specific dilemma of the deracinated Eastern Jew whose traditional certainties (symbolised here by his father's threshold), overlaid by a rag-bag of Western culture, lose all reality and amount in the end to *gornisht* (nothing at all). (p.252)

A kind of resolution is achieved at the end of the poem: the voice of the now enlightened hero becomes one with the voices of the oppressed masses. This fusion is expressed in the 'wir' (we) of the final lines:

Down with Beethoven and
Goethe
And with Cologne Cathedral!
The distant skies are darkening
And we are darkening too:
We - the last wolves howling
Among the ruins of a system.
(p.263)

In this rejection of the Western bourgeois culture of the past, however, there is little hope of positive social change: the image of the final lines conveys despairing resignation.

THREE WORLDS

Several Yiddish writers have used the concept of 'two worlds' to express the consciousness of the Jewish writer from Eastern Europe in the early years of the century. It might be more accurate to say that the writers in Germany lived in three worlds: first, the Yiddish-speaking communities of Poland and Russia, to which many returned (often with dreadful results: both Bergelson and Kulbak became victims of the Stalinist regime); second, the Weimar Republic with its frenetic modern life and virulent and growing anti-semitism, and third, the community of German Jews, with whom they had an ambivalent relationship. Their relationship with all these spheres was actually more complex than that of the totally unassimilated *Ostjude* in Germany: they were 'brothers' to the *Ostjude* from the stetl, but at the same time 'strangers' to him, in that their western education, their secular interests in literature, and in most cases their religious scepticism had taken them away from their roots. At the same time, though their cultural interests, and their way of life brought them closer to their western brothers, they could by no means identify with them.

These writers undoubtedly still feel strong ties with the places they had come from, and, to return to Stephen Ashheim's categorisation, they seem to have felt themselves by and large to be 'strangers' in Weimar society. The tension between these two worlds had profound significance for their work. The budding relationship with the third of the

three worlds, namely German Jewry, with its increasing interest in the culture of Eastern European Jewry (the potential 'brother' side of the relationship), was cut off before it had time to bear any fruit. Who knows what might, in other circumstances, have been the result of this cultural rapprochement?

1. Steven E Ashheim, *Brothers and Strangers - The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1933*, Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1982.
2. *Edinburgh Star*, No.23, January 1996, pp.20-21.
3. Max Naumann, *Vom national-deutschen Juden*, Berlin, 1920, quoted in S Adler-Rudel, *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1880-1940*, Tübingen, 1959, p.30. (All translations from German or Yiddish are mine, HV).
4. Zygmunt Bauman, 'The Homecoming of Unwelcome Strangers',

Jewish Quarterly 135, Autumn 1989, pp.14-23 (p.15).

5. Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1985, p.11.
6. Robert Jungk, *Mein Judentum*, Stuttgart, 1978, quoted in *Juden in Berlin 1671-1945. Ein Lesebuch*, Berlin: Nicolai, 1988, p.225.
7. Daniel Tsharni, *Di velt iz kaylekhdik* (The World is Round), Tel Aviv, 1963, p.36.
8. Dovid Bergelson, 'Tsvishn emigranten', in *Shturemteg*, Vilna: Farlag fun B Kletskin, 1928, p.198.
9. Bergelson, *Shturemteg*, p.199.
10. Moyshe Kulbak, *Geklibene verk* (Selected works), New York: Tsiko Bikher-farlag, 1953, p.229.
11. Sol Liptzin, *The Maturing of Yiddish Literature*, New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1970, p.115.

Heather Valencia teaches German at Stirling University. This article is based on a talk she gave to the Literary Society on 11 February 1996



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THE SINGER AS PROPHET

by Stanley Raffel

These remarks originated as a vote of thanks in response to a talk by Elena Lappin, editor of *The Jewish Quarterly*, to the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society about apocalyptic imagery in the work of Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. I am greatly indebted to Elena Lappin for the stimulating presentation that made this reaction possible.

The prospect of a talk on Bob Dylan provides the audience with serious cause for concern. Normally one must just hope that the speaker is thoroughly familiar with the material or, at least, is enough of an expert to make the experience worthwhile. With a talk on Dylan,

one must also worry about, as it were, the opposite problem, that the speaker is going to know *too much* about him and that they are going to be obsessed with him.

There were so many of these Dylan obsessives about, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, that there was even a name for them. They were called Dylanologists. I met probably the most extreme of these, a fellow called Alan Weberman, in 1970. He started off analysing, quite effectively I must admit, Dylan's every word and then, not content with this, moved on to his garbage.

I must confess that the reason I met him was no accident - I was a

fellow Dylanologist. And I suppose I should be grateful because it was in talking to him that it dawned on me that he was actually gaga, and my own cure finally began. Or so I thought.

But am I cured? I am sure there were a few raised eyebrows when people first heard that the editor of such a distinguished literary journal as *The Jewish Quarterly* had chosen such a down-market topic. My concern, on the other hand, was that she should dare to compare the great Dylan to anyone as mundane as Leonard Cohen. Far better, if she had to compare him to anyone (my internal dialogue went on), she should have chosen Socrates, as I had done in a paper published in 1979 which, as you can imagine, has done wonders for my academic reputation.

At any rate, Elena Lappin passed this additional hurdle with flying colours. She is certainly an expert on Dylan and Cohen and is clearly not an obsessive because she managed to discuss them in ways that raised important general issues rather than, as still happens far too often in treatments of pop figures, merely preserved their cult status.

One of these important questions that the talk made cogent concerns Dylan's and Cohen's relation to Jewish tradition. To put it colloquially, how Jewish are they? This talk made me realise that their Jewishness is or at least should be an important question because how, if at all, they relate to their Jewish identity has been highly problematic for them. Early on, Dylan changed his name (it used to be Zimmerman) in what, I suspect, was a blatant attempt to hide his ethnic identity while Cohen often seems to strike a pose that draws more on a somewhat dubious identification with Jesus' martyrdom than anything we would tend to think of as recognisably Jewish.

Indeed, in general, it seems to be difficult for Jewish folk singers in North America to be comfortable about being Jewish. Compare them to Jewish novelists - Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow and



The Prophet as singer in 1971

many others, have been able, in one way or another, to use their Jewishness as not just a matter of public expression but as a prime source of material. It is difficult, however, to think of any North American Jewish folk singer who has managed this unless, of course, one is prepared to count the embarrassing case of Alan Sherman ('My son, the folk singer'). For that matter even Irving Berlin, for his greatest success, had to write 'White Christmas'.

This talk, though, convinced me that there is a clearly Jewish element in Dylan's and Cohen's work, even if it possibly creeps in only unintentionally. The form it assumes is an interest in being prophetic by adopting apocalyptic imagery. For example, the apocalyptic quality is evident in Dylan's 'The Times They Are A-Changing', one of his classic sixties songs, and Cohen's much more recent 'Everybody Knows'.

I suspect that any unbiased observer of what we heard from Elena Lappin would conclude that it is Cohen's apocalyptic imagery, with its strong communal flavour and hopeful notion that there will be no final catastrophe, but rather a new beginning, which may be more worthy of our attention, both for its Jewish interest and in its own right. However, given my history, I found the analysis of Dylan more compelling. What I think it makes clear is that, although people did not realise this at the time, a strong component of Dylan's appeal was the impression he created that he did indeed have prophetic powers. Someone who could sing: 'You better start swimming or you will sink like a stone' seemed to have the ability to foresee the future and, as we can also note, it was a very flattering future vision for those persons who were most likely to be listening to the message. They were the ones who were said to be the future in lines like the following: 'Come mothers and fathers throughout the land and don't criticise what you can't understand, your sons and your daughters are beyond your command, your old road is rapidly

agin'. Here it should perhaps be said that if Dylan was a prophet, he was not really in the best Jewish tradition of prophecy, e.g. that of Amos, in that, instead of taking the harder option of criticising his prospective audience to their faces, he just tended to predict eventual salvation for them at the expense of their supposed enemies, namely, in the quoted passage, their mothers and fathers.⁽¹⁾

Of course, with hindsight, we have to conclude that Dylan was not so much a prophet as a false prophet. Things have certainly not changed to the extent that he led us to expect and, even to the extent that there has been change, it is hardly adequate to say, as Dylan was implying, that it was persons who were young in the sixties who would play the decisive role in transforming things for the better.

That he proved to be a false prophet also raises interesting questions, especially since Dylan is still with us and still performing at least two decades after the heyday of his (false) prophecy. There is a similar issue to the one posed in a famous sociological study called **When Prophecy Fails**.⁽²⁾

The authors looked at what happened, on the morning after, to a religious cult that had confidently been predicting the end of the world. We can analogously look at how Dylan has coped with the limited nature of his prophetic powers being revealed to all. I think he has adopted two strategies, one in the 1970s, the other more recently. In the 1970s his idea was to keep changing his mind. In effect, when one prophecy failed, he thought he could just come up with another one. Clearly this will not do. Prophets are not like the rest of us. They have no right to change their minds. Thus, each succeeding Dylan prophecy seemed slightly less inspiring and slightly less credible than the last one, perhaps because people began to suspect that what was really being revealed was that Dylan cared much more about trying to hang on to his prophet role than he did about what he was

actually prophesying.

More recently, Dylan has not been singing much that is new. Instead he has been doing tours where he recycles his old material, for example 'The Times They Are A-Changing'. But one cannot help but notice that he now sings the same words in an oddly distant and mechanical way, in total contrast with the passion and conviction of the original rendition. It is as if the false prophet is condemned to endlessly repeating what he said, but now in the knowledge of the fact that everyone, even himself, knows it was not true.

1. Here I am drawing on Michael Walzer's analysis of Jewish prophets. See Michael Walzer's Tanner lectures, *Interpretation and Social Criticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp.1-81.
2. Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Shacher, *When Prophecy Fails*, New York: Harper Row, 1964.

Stanley Raffel teaches Sociology at Edinburgh University and, for many years, taught a course on popular culture. Elena Lappin's talk, entitled 'How Jewish is the notion of the apocalypse in the work of Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen' was given to a meeting of the Literary Society on 14 January 1996



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LECTURE ROUND-UP

COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

'Churches in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem'
Dr Denys Pringle

Thursday, 11 January 1996

Dr Pringle's talk, which was accompanied by slides, covered various Crusades commencing at the end of the Eleventh Century with the restoration to Christendom from the Turks to a Kingdom of West European type which was to last for nearly 200 years.

There followed a series of Crusades during which at least 200 churches were built, rebuilt, restored or in use; some were converted into mosques and as such remain to this day and some were destroyed or partly destroyed for their building materials or were simply allowed to fall into ruin. Today, fewer than 25 remain as functioning churches.

'A Jewish View and a Christian View of the Hebrew Scriptures'
Mr Henry Tankel and Rev. Professor J O'Neill

Thursday, 22 February 1996

The first speaker, Professor O'Neill, began by quoting the words of Ruth the Moabite to the mother of her dead husband - 'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me'.

Professor O'Neill has no problem in accepting the Hebrew Scriptures without exception; for some Christians, he said, the key words were Pentecost, the Resurrection, the Cross, Baptism and so on, but for him the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was his God; Moses was the Law giver. The Old Testament provided guidance, all the Prayers and the Ten Commandments.

Mr Henry Tankel, however, recognised that things were not so simple for some Jews. In the Pentateuch we are told that Moses received the Torah from Heaven and to the fundamentalist, strictly orthodox Jews this means that every word was given to Moses by God at Mount Sinai and could not be deviated from in the slightest degree. This they consider is the eternal truth still in existence and could not be improved upon; it is the basis of Halachic structure they say and to depart from it would endanger the continuity of the Jewish people.

For some Jews, however, this is difficult to accept and in recent years much controversy has arisen in the Community by some who question this rigid point of view. Rabbi Dr Louis Jacobs was one of those Orthodox Jews who segregated himself from mainstream orthodoxy by questioning the origins of the Tanach and now has a substantial following of Masorti (traditional) Jews.

Blanche Mundy

BOOK REVIEWS

THE WAY TO HANITA

by Myra Kaye

published by Minerva Press, 1995
187pp. £7.99 (ISBN 1-85863-716-3)

reviewed by Kay Ramsay

James Gillespie's High School for Girls was always a great place for nurturing talent. In 1934 the school magazine contained a short and chilling poem, remarkable for a young girl, by Muriel Camberg (Form 3A) and later to be Muriel Spark; a short story, vivid and funny by Dorothy Halliday, aged 11, who was to become Dorothy Dunnett; and a story by 10 year old Myra Ockrent, who has now, 60 years later, as Myra Kaye published her

first novel.

Myra and her elder sister, Ruby, were the daughters of Lewis and Rachel Ockrent, who lived in Edinburgh at that time. They were both agnostic and socialist Zionists. Lewis Ockrent was born in Scotland, of immigrant parents. He did brilliantly in law at Edinburgh University and won the prestigious Dunlop Prize for his PhD thesis, a history of land registration in Scotland. He never practised law but became a civil servant instead. Rachel Ockrent, who was born in Russia, was a writer, mainly in Yiddish. Her stories and poems were published in the New York Yiddish daily *Das Freie Wort*. In 1939,

she gave the manuscript of her collected works to her editor in Paris for publication, but it and the editor and all her family vanished in the Holocaust, her book was not published and she never wrote again.

Myra went to live in Israel in 1955 and her parents followed her later. In 1958 she married Al Kaye, who became Professor of Molecular Endocrinology at the Weizmann Institute. They had one son, Davey, a brilliant boy, who was killed in an accident during his army service. Myra was trained in physics but writing was always her first love and her professional life was spent in scientific documentation and in

teaching scientific writing. After she retired from work, she began writing fiction in earnest. Her first book to be published, **The Way to Hanita** is the story of two women, one a Holocaust survivor who went to Israel, and the other a social worker who, many years after the war, became involved with her welfare. Hanita is the name of a kibbutz, the dream-goal of the first woman and a very significant symbol in her life. In spite of its stark themes, the book is full of surprises, rich in humour and tells a moving love story. Myra Kaye is a born story-teller and recounts this story with originality, passion and wit.

Incidentally, Myra was a class-mate of Esther Caplan, now Esther Greenberg living in Jerusalem, and went on to be Dux of Gillespie's in 1942.

COMMUNITY OF FAITH

by Jonathan Sacks

published by Peter Halban

Publishers, London, 1995

149pp. £9.99 (ISBN 1-87001-559-2)

reviewed by John Cosgrove

This little book is the Chief Rabbi's tribute to the United Synagogue on the occasion of its 125th Anniversary which he has written as a way of expressing his thanks to the many communities he has come to know since his elevation to that office. It is of interest to the Edinburgh Jewish Community because historically the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation has usually followed the *minhag* or tradition of the United Synagogue, adapting it to the local situation and occasionally improving upon it. When Edinburgh Jews visit a Synagogue on holiday, they probably feel more 'at home' in a United Synagogue type of service because of its similarity with Edinburgh. Rabbi Sacks describes the typical congregation. 'Those who joined it were not necessarily strictly observant, nor did they thereby signal that they had through personal reflection arrived at all thirteen of Maimonides' principles of faith. But they were making a significant declaration nonetheless that they

wished to belong to a congregation which, in its public and collective expressions, remained loyal to the principles by which Jews have always lived, and whose faith they wished to see continued ... it meant that frequently or intermittently they were in touch with the Judaism of the ages ...'

Dr Sacks has gone beyond a conventional history of the organisation because the book is more an 'intellectual journey into what it is to form a Jewish community and to become part of one'. When Professor David Daiches wrote about our community in **Two Worlds**, a book of similar size, he also went beyond a conventional history and showed how his father was able to synthesise Scottish culture and traditional Jewish values to mould and unite the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation into what it is today. Daiches' book was illustrated with pen portraits of the 'machers', the leading lights of the community and their relationship with their Rabbi. What *Community of Faith* lacks is more of the background of the interpersonal relationships which made the United Synagogue what it is. Sir Robert Waley-Cohen's stormy relationship with Dr Hertz as President and Spiritual Leader respectively of the organisation, Dr Hertz's relationship with Haham Gaster and Rabbi Brodie's rejection of Rabbi Dr Louis Jacobs are just three examples which spring to mind of tensions which moulded the organisation. Dr Sacks prefers to describe the ideological differences between Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Chief Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler, both Rabbis of Orthodox German origin, and one is driven to speculate that had Hirsch, a candidate, become Chief Rabbi of Britain, the United Synagogue might have become an orthodox 'cult' like that which Hirsch produced in Frankfurt. I refuse to believe that British Jewry would ever be so dominated by the ideals of one Chief Rabbi, that it would move religiously in his direction in the way that people followed Hirsch

in Germany and beyond. By all accounts Nathan Adler was not charismatic and although he 'brought to his leadership not only the unimpeachable authority of his scholarship but also a robust and far-sighted approach to communal organization' his 1847 'Regulations' smack of teutonic authoritarianism.

The tensions between the lay and the spiritual authorities have had a much greater role in the development of the United Synagogue than Dr Sacks would have us believe. In modern times British Jewry has been blessed with the most charismatic of Chief Rabbis in the persons of Lord Jakobovits and Rabbi Sacks. No Rabbi has been more respected in the field of public relations than Lord Jakobovits, his speeches in the House of Lords (whether you agree with him or not) carry as much weight as those of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and by his writings, broadcasts and the depth of his intellect, Dr Sacks has gained the respect and admiration of the entire religious and academic world. Yet neither they nor their supporters would claim that they had the single-handed influence of a Hirsch in Germany or a Mordechai Kaplan in America. In modern times, the most charismatic Rabbi with the largest following was Menachem Schneerson, the last Lubavicher Rebbe who was based in New York. I would venture that, had he been London-based, his influence would not have been so great.

Dr Sacks describes the American model and the German model in a fascinating chapter called 'Paths Not Taken' and ends the chapter with a triumphant section on the 'Anglo-Jewish Achievement'. To be fair, Rabbi Sacks does list the conflicts and failures of the British system, but his main thrust is that there is a tension between those who regard the Jewish Community as an *Am* a people, and those who regard it as an *Edah*, a Community of Faith. Zionists put a greater emphasis on *Am* as do the followers of Kaplan, the 'Reconstructionists' of the USA. The followers of Hirsch emphasise

the *Edah* and form tightly knit orthodox cliques where outsiders with liberal views are not welcome. [I well remember an experience as a boy of fourteen visiting cousins at the Hendon Adath Synagogue in London. I was wearing a new silk Tallit which in those days was the norm in the United Synagogue, in Edinburgh and in Garnethill Glasgow where even my late father as minister wore a silk Tallit. There was a slight murmuring and after about five minutes, my silk tallit was gently pulled off me and replaced by a woollen one!]

And yet Dr Sacks argues that there is 'no United Synagogue Judaism'. There are Jews, many of them, and there is Judaism, one Judaism and the strength of the United Synagogue is that it is open to all Jews. 'It has sought to create not a philosophy but a community, a living community built on the principles of Torah and potentially inclusive of every Jew'. This is where *Am* and *Edah* can coexist and become *Knesset Yisrael*, the Jewish people standing side by side in the presence of God.

There are numerous brilliant insights in this book but, in case you should think that Dr Sacks has created a fanciful theology for the United Synagogue after managing for 125 years without one, reflect that Kaplan called his institutions *Bet Am* and Hirsch's Synagogues were called *Adath Yisrael* from the word *Edah*. And the logo of the United Synagogue (and of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation bears the words *Knesset Yisrael*!

THE DYBBUK OF DELIGHT: AN ANTHOLOGY OF JEWISH WOMEN'S POETRY

edited by Sonja Lyndon and Sylvia Paskin

published by Five Leaves Publications, Nottingham, 1995
256pp. £9.99 (ISBN : 0-907123-57-0)

reviewed by Ellen Galford

So what makes a poem Jewish? The Jewish genes that produced the hand that holds the pen or taps the keyboard? A bittersweet whiff of

raisins and almonds? The notion that God, whether believed in or not, is looking over the poet's shoulder as she writes? The faint but persistent voices of bossy mothers and even bossier rabbis? The ghosts that float between the lines? Cadences that would suit a klezmer beat? A text that, if rendered into Ladino, Yiddish, or even Aramaic, would, uncannily, lose nothing in translation?

The editors' solution, as good as any, is to subtitle this richly varied collection as 'An Anthology of Jewish Women's Poetry'. Not every poet approached, they tell us in their introduction, jumped at the invitation. Some, including certain well-kent literary names, wanted to stay poets pure and simple, without being corralled into a context of religion, ethnicity, or gender. The writers who did contribute are those unafraid to identify themselves as members of some kind of Jewish community. This doesn't mean that they live and write exclusively inside their Jewishness. Today's nice Jewish girls don't march in lockstep. The poet's biographical notes make illuminating reading, almost as intriguing as the poems themselves. Among them we find well-established professional writers, artists, psychotherapists, cheder teachers, human rights activists, out-of-the-closet lesbian rabbis, journalists, mystics, academics, refugee grandmothers, Holocaust orphans, sometime kibbutzniks, students just out of their teens, Scots and Welshwomen, dyed-in-the-wool North Londoners, new and native Israelis, Australians and Americans who have perpetuated that venerable Jewish practice of 'moving somewhere else'.

Whatever else their Jewish poetry is, it is not bland. There are shrieks of laughter, howls of rage, spicy aromas from that culturally inescapable Ur-kitchen situated somewhere in the corridors of every Jewish soul. There is new, and sometimes uncomfortable, light shed on old familiar stories. Micheline Wandor's 'Lilith's Dance', for instance, comes flying off the page

with fierce and ecstatic energy, while Joyce Herbert's 'Jewish cemetery, Merthyr' crept up very quietly, and stayed to haunt me. So did Gerda Mayer's desperate communique to the father who escaped from a concentration camp in 1939 only to be swallowed up in the depths of Russia one year later, who may, somehow and somewhere, be miraculously alive:

That is why at sixty
when some publisher asks me
for biographical details
I still carefully give
the year of my birth,
the name of my hometown:
Gerda Mayer born '27, in
Karlsbad,
Czechoslovakia ... write to me,
father.

As in any anthology with so wide a reach, not every poem works wonders or makes an equal impact. But those that do are, indeed, as the title proposes, 'dybbuks of delight'. Once they've claimed your attention, they won't be shaken off.

With compliments
from

**M. L. Cowan
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May Brown with David Goldberg

MAY BROWN

The Edinburgh Jewish community was greatly saddened by the death of May Brown after a long illness. May was born and lived all her life in the city. She was brought up on the South Side where her family formed part of the close-knit, if small, Jewish community, rich in character and tradition. She completed her education at James Clark Secondary School thereafter securing employment as a book-keeper, a position she held all her working life. Showing great commitment to the community, she was one of the founder members of the Luncheon Club, an assistant secretary of the Friendship Club and a committee member of the Community Centre. She was married to Morris who sadly died four years ago. May's enthusiasm for life was infectious. Caring and sympathetic, she exuded happiness, warmth and friendliness. Even when very ill, her thoughts were for others. She showed great courage during her illness, sustaining comfort and support from her many close friends. In particular, she formed a special relationship with David Goldberg, an old friend whose wife Ray had died a few months after Morris. Their happy association enhanced many an occasion, sadly to be terminated so prematurely. She will be greatly missed by her brother Philip (Pinky), with whom she was very close, by David and by her many friends.

Ian Shein

MICHAEL CAPLAN

Michael Caplan took up the art of hairdressing, obtained premises at the bottom of Leith Walk and there he remained until he retired. He was as well known in the Leith area as he was in the Jewish community. As a very young man, he took a great interest in the Communal Hall, and fought many a battle to support and maintain it, calling on people's homes until the late hours of the evening to convince them that the Hall and all the services it provided were for their benefit and not for his. He saw to it that all aspects of the club were used and maintained and for that alone we owe him a great debt. Among the many offices he held he was finally made Chairman and served as a committee member from its inception until well into the 1980s.

Michael served with the British Forces during the war, enlisting in 1941 with the Royal Army Medical Corps. After training, he was posted to the 78th Battleaxe Division attached to the American 1st Army. In 1942 he was with the invading armies during the landing on occupied North Africa. Thereafter he fought in campaigns in Sicily and in Italy and was badly wounded in the leg, from which he never fully recovered. He remained with his Unit until he was demobbed in 1945.

On returning home, Michael once again took up from where he had left off - supporting and work-



Michael Caplan

ing with old and new committee members of the Communal Hall. He joined the British Legion, Jewish Branch, took an executive post and helped to revive the Branch. He was also a founder member of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen (AJEX) and became, I believe, their first Chairman. In both these organisations he worked extremely hard. He was so involved, that I have often wondered when he found the time to have a home life. I suppose that, as his dear wife Nan was also heavily involved with Communal affairs, they must have sat up many nights together planning functions for the Communal Hall or for the British Legion New Year Balls.

As well as these organisations, he joined the Freemasons, Lodge Solomon 1209. He was a very proud Member and through the years rose to the high office of Substitute Master. However, nothing gave him so much pleasure as seeing his son, Sidney, made the Right Worshipful Master of Lodge Solomon. He was appointed by his son to be his Depute Master for two years from 1993-94.

Michael was always one of the most regular attenders at meetings, arriving early and not leaving until the very end. Talking of attendance, he was also a very regular attender in the Synagogue and was usually one of the first three people to be seated at the commencement of all services. He was most generous with his donations to charitable and other organisations. He always had a cheery word and smile and had a great interest in everyone's well-being.

I am sure I speak for all who knew him when I say that we have lost a great friend. Our thoughts go out to Nana, Sidney, Sandra, Andrew and Ian. Speaking personally, I will miss him greatly.

Alec Rubenstein

An interview with Michael Caplan, by his grandson Ian and entitled 'I ask my Grandfather the how comes and where to fors' appeared in Issue No.17 (January 1994)

JACK COWEN

Dr John (Jack) Cowen died tragically and suddenly, aged 82, on 7 February 1996 in a car accident. He was born in Edinburgh and attended George Watson's College and Edinburgh University where he obtained a medical degree. On qualifying in 1936 he went into general practice in Nelson, Lancashire, and in 1938, in anticipation of the war, he volunteered for the Royal Army Medical Corps. There, he specialised in psychiatry, achieving the rank of Major and, on demobilisation when the war ended, obtained posts in mental hospitals in England. In 1952 he emigrated to the USA and from 1953 practised as a psychiatrist in Chicago, retiring in 1982. He was an active member of the Ezras Israel Shul there for more than 35 years. He leaves a widow and two daughters and is also mourned by a brother in Yorkshire who is indebted to him for considerable support in advancing his career.

*P N Cowen
Leeds*

HENRY (Heini) PRAIS

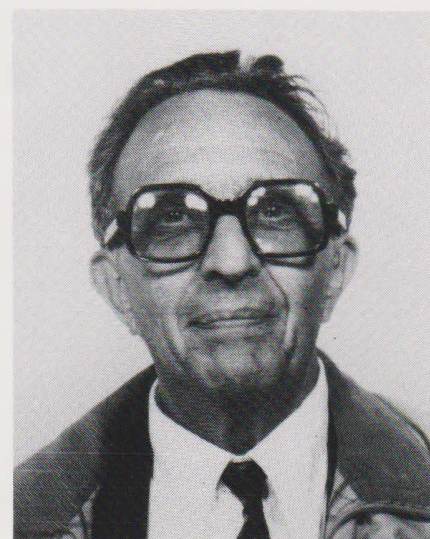
I met Henry when I came from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to write my doctoral thesis in Edinburgh in 1970. Our friendship grew over the years and our relationship

was cemented when he and Edith moved to Israel in 1979.

In my memory he shines so colourful, so many-faceted, and yet all his many sides make one harmonious whole. Heini had in him the traits of a scholar and a rebel; he had the face of a pedagogue and of a jester. The more I knew him the more fascinating faces were unravelled. He was fluent and rich in German, his mother tongue; in English, which he adopted; in French, his scholarly language; and in Hebrew, which he turned from the holy language of lore into a working tool. In the same way that his many facets made one wonderful unity, so the languages that he knew and loved so well contributed to one splendid whole.

Heini was a formidable debater, but there was little spite in his discourse. Even when his partner to a debate was completely disarmed for lack of a good argument, he did not feel defeated. His debating art was a great spiritual exercise in epistemology.

In many years of friendship he was always warm and charming even when, latterly, his body was tormented. He was not smitten by physical pain, he was broken when his spirit could not function any more. I saw him in his last years when the light in his face turned into a painful grimace, when he could still move his lips but could



Henry (Heini) Prais

not utter an intelligible word. Of all the ladders he climbed to reach the peaks of understanding, to challenge the conventional wisdom, he reached at long last the ladder which leads only one way.

Adieu a man of wisdom.

*Amnon Sella
Jerusalem*

Heini Prais was President of the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society from 1968-1970 and again from 1977-1979. Obituaries appeared in The Scotsman on 16th February, 1996, by Stewart Paton, and in The Herald on 15th February, 1996, by Janey Buchan.

PHILIP GOLDBERG

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Philip Goldberg. An obituary will appear in the next issue.

