

# The Edinburgh Star

Journal of the Edinburgh Jewish Community

June 1989

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Sivan 5749

## Soviet Jews not optimistic, says MP

The Labour MP for Edinburgh South, Mr Nigel Griffiths, has recently visited the USSR together with other members of an all-party Parliamentary Committee for the Release of Soviet Jewry. He gave a talk on the trip at the home of Mrs Gillian Raab, the leader of the Edinburgh Campaign for Soviet Jewry. His report highlighted the feeling among Russian Jews that Mr Gorbachev's fate will be similar to that of Mr Ligachev, thus shattering any reform leading to a freer society.

The British delegation included Mrs Sally Griffiths, Mr Andrew Mitchell, Conservative MP for Gedling, and BBC Newsnight producer Mr Phil Woolas. The group had the chance to meet with the Humanitarian Affairs Directorate. Several cases of refuseniks were brought up specifically. Among these were the Uspenskys, who have been refused on

secrecy grounds because of their previous work as entomologists. After listening to these reasons, Mr Griffiths quipped that 'I have heard that the Americans may be training dolphins to carry mines, but I didn't realise that the Russians were working on flies carrying grenades.'

The Labour MP expressed particular concern over Nazi-like symptoms shown by Pamyat, the ultra-nationalist (anti-semitic) organization whose aim is to preserve the Russian language and culture and keep it free from other influences. Mr Griffiths was told of one incident regarding a hall which had been booked several months in advance for a Jewish cultural evening: just before the event was due to take place, Pamyat officials stepped in and managed to get the booking for the hour before for their



Nigel Griffiths, MP

own organisation. When guests turned up for the cultural evening, abuse was hurled at them by Pamyat members.

The underlying message of Mr Griffiths's talk was that, notwithstanding glasnost and perestroika, there is no room for complacency and the West must vigorously continue its campaign for the release of Soviet Jews.

### Over 500 and growing

The Edinburgh Jewish 'diaspora' has turned out to be much larger than we have ever anticipated. Over 500 copies of The

Edinburgh Star have been mailed to the five continents—and Glasgow. Given the interest of our readers, we have increased the number of copies of this second issue. We apologise to all those whose requests we were unable to satisfy.

### Cosgrove Re-elected

The 173rd Annual General Meeting of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation had a dramatic start when a motion that was not even part of the official agenda had to be carried. To shouts of 'no!' from the health-conscious congregants, the smoking lobby no sooner lost a straight vote than they had to put away their puffing elements for the rest of the

(Continued on page 3, col 1)



Opening of the Samuel Robin Spark Exhibition at the Edinburgh University Staff Club. From left to right: the artist, Robin Spark, Lionel Daiches QC, Professor David Daiches and Douglas 'Duggie' Anderson. The exhibition of paintings was organised in association with the Marie Curie Foundation.

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## Any Jewish taxi drivers in Edinburgh?

Searching questions form an inherent element of our Jewish heritage. In a recent letter to the Jewish Chronicle, Mr. Melvyn Miller was quite in character when he asked whether certain quarters had the right to condemn him for being a Reform Jew. He is a London taxi driver and his letter was prompted by his own experience of having 'been asked by Orthodox Jewish gentlemen for the services of women for their pleasure'. London being London and with such a comparatively large concentration of our brethren, Mr. Miller's note is revealing but

not necessarily shocking. Edinburgh is different—in more ways than one.

After three months of the publication of our first issue, it became clear that there are no Jewish taxi drivers in Edinburgh. As yet we have not benefited from the gamut of opinions the readers surely have on our articles and community matters. The excerpts of the published letters, however satisfactory, are the only correspondence that has been received. We would like to think that a more interactive relationship with our readers should be possible.

## At a quick glance

The Edinburgh Festival will soon be with us. Leslie Bennie, who has been involved in the organisation of the Fringe for a number of years, reviews some of the Jewish performances of the eighties. The Holocaust, Jewish Life and Israel, formed the main themes of the productions. Adam Blitz brings to our attention the talents of two Jewish Edinburgh University students. One of them is not only a gifted actress but also a playwright fascinated by the theme of Judaism and feminism. The other one is an actor/entrepreneur who has set up his own theatre company. Both will perform at the Fringe '89.

In sharp contrast with Paul Harper's views (The Edinburgh Star, March 1989) advocating that the time is ripe for a peaceful co-existence between Israel and a Palestinian State, Harold Fisch sees in the 'Arab uprising' the seeds of a very different scenario. He draws a parallel and points out the differences between the Intifada and the uprising of the 1930's only to conclude that the ultimate aim is to bring about the collapse of the State of Israel. His views, although personal, are nonetheless important because they are representative of a large segment of Israeli public opinion.

Clive Sinclair, the author of *Diaspora Blues*, writes an essay on a Jewish Cultural Week he attended in Stockholm. It is not the event itself that matters but the effect the protagonists and the subjects have on the innermost feelings of the

author. Intellect and sexuality appear inextricably interwoven.

Arthur Koestler, whose writings influenced modern political and scientific thinking, is the subject of two closely connected articles. John Beloff, who was an executor of Koestler's Will to create a Chair of Parapsychology at a British University, gives an idiosyncratic view of the man and his works. Jonathan Bard takes up Koestler's book *The Thirteenth Tribe* which sustains that the Jews from Poland and Lithuania are not part of the Diaspora but the descendents of the Khazars. The article is about a genetic study whose conclusions do not go as far as disproving Koestler's theory, but argue strongly against it.

In the last invited article, Mike Adler interviews Joshua 'Joe' Lurie, a man whose name is synonymous with hard work within the Community. Over the years he has seen declining numbers and argues that the future of our youth is not in Edinburgh. If one takes Joe Lurie's words at face value, this is a worrying prospect: a community without youth is a community without a future.

The solution to this problem does not entirely lie in the hands of our leaders who do their best anyway. What strongly comes into all this is the future of Scotland as a whole and that in turn will depend on the readiness of governments to stamp out the North/South divide.

## Long May It Continue

Department of Languages  
Heriot-Watt University  
Edinburgh

...A most interesting and well-produced publication. Long may it continue.

Janet Altman

88 Norham Street  
Glasgow G41 3XL

....It's one helluva first edition, I'll tell you. The Edinburgh Community don't know how lucky they are. Well done. I look forward to seeing No. 2...

Alan Shinwell

46 Alwoodley Lane  
Leeds LS17 7PT

...Your magazine is worthy of your lovely city ...

Maisie Pinkerton

28 Emperor's Gate  
London SW7

.. Best wishes for your brave editorial venture.

Miron Grindea,

Editor, ADAM

22 Church Street  
St. Albans  
Herts AL3 5NG

Many congratulations on the first issue of The Edinburgh Star.

Clive Sinclair

16 Davidson Street  
Jerusalem, Israel

...We found The Edinburgh Star both interesting and absorbing. We read it from cover to cover and agreed that it was an excellent issue....

Henry Prais

## Thank You For The Support

50 Lauder Road  
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My mother, my sister and I wish to convey our grateful thanks to Rabbi and Mrs. Shapira, the Executive and Council, the Chevra Kadisha, the Ladies Guild, other organisations and members of the community for all the sympathy and kindness shown to us following the sad

loss of my dear father. The warm tribute paid him at the funeral service by Rabbi Shapira was much appreciated, and the concern and support of the community was a source of great comfort to us at a very difficult time.

We were very touched by the many messages of condolence we received from both Jewish and non-Jewish people

in Edinburgh, and by the deeply-felt expressions of regard for my father which they contained.

With special thanks to you for all your help and support at this sad time.

Carole Weinberg

### EHC Meeting (cont. from p.1)

evening. A pity for the treasurer who was thus denied a much desired smoke screen before reading out his gloomy statement of the last financial year.

There were fifteen nominations for the membership of Council, but only twelve could be elected. The changes: Mr. I. Brodie and Mr. S. Judah were replaced by Mrs. C. Cowen and Mr. P. Goldberg. Re-elected: Mr. J. Lurie, Mrs. R. Orgel, Mr. J. Sperber, Mr. J. Cosgrove, Mrs. A. Mendelssohn, Dr. P. Mason, Mr. M. Cowan, Dr. N. Oppenheim, Mr. A. Rifkind and Mr. E. Wittenberg.

Towards the end and before the election of

president and treasurer, the meeting took a controversial twist when Mr. Cosgrove raised the issue on the restoration of the Mikvah. He argued that it had reached his ears that orthodox members of our Community were forced to go to Glasgow for a Mikvah, and since funds (£15000) were readily available through donations for repair work, there was a clear case to go ahead with the project.

This proposition met considerable hostility from the floor. The most heard argument was that given the delicate balance of accounts, maintenance would impose a burden on the vast majority who would not make use of the Mikvah anyway. One prominent member of the community held the view that '... if this is going to mean paying, say, an extra £20,

I would rather give it to Israel'. This raised Mr. Cosgrove's temperature to overheating levels. He admitted that although he was not Orthodox himself, 'I have a great respect for those who are'. He then added that 'since we claim to be an Orthodox Congregation, a Mikvah must be available'.

Yet the mood of most congregants present at the AGM did not change. In view of this, Mr. Cosgrove quite shrewdly deferred the decision to a Council meeting and thus avoided the there-is-no-alternative approach. Mr. Cosgrove wriggled out of the controversy completely unscathed: he was re-elected as president and Mr. Cowan was re-elected as treasurer, both by acclaim! ●

## Two minutes only?

by Anita Mendelssohn

There is a popular fallacy that the North British Station Hotel clock has, for the last 100 years, run two minutes fast so that the douce burghers of this Presbyterian Jerusalem, should they be so misguided, aberrant even, to want to leave for even the shortest excursion, may be sure of boarding their train in time. It is all a nonsense, a tourist's tale; the custom is recent, within living memory, in fact June 1948.

What, you may ask, made that June 1948 different from all others? Sweetie rationing, food rationing, clothes rationing, fuel rationing, the Black Market, the comradeship and travel prospects of National Service? Not at all, those thrilling challenges to survival were as nothing compared with the momentous occasion of the public meeting held at the North British for the unusual purpose in Jewish circles of forming a committee to raise funds, in this case to provide a Communal Hall. More importantly that most influential of bodies, the Ladies Committee, came into being.

Six years and a few fund-raising events later, Sir James Miller, the only man to be both Lord Provost of Edinburgh and Lord Mayor of the other 'capital' city, attended with Lady Miller the opening by Reuben Cohen, President of the Hebrew Congregation, of the Community Centre in Salisbury Road. The Ladies Committee rapidly moved into top gear. A world premiere introducing the newest of newcomers to haute Cuisine de la Monde or the first Jewish Burns Supper Mit Haggis Aus Lurie in 1954, followed by fashion shows, dinner dances, film shows and bazaars, raised money for the Hall's running and upkeep. However the Community's number was declining, and with it, the need for such a large synagogue. So in 1980 it was decided to sell the old Communal Hall to provide the

innovative solution we now have.

Seder comes but once a year and it is the most important evening in the Communal Hall calendar. The Ladies Committee are determined that nobody need be alone on this night and the members give the organising of the Seder everything they have; they give completely of their time and energy. Nobody more so than that splendid 'co-opted' member, Mrs. Burns.

Service, time and numbers, that's what it comes down to in the end; the number of the Community declines and many of the Committee have given and are giving more time that they can afford, but they are a generous lot and they are willing to pass on to all you new members the secrets of assuming the various mantles of Financial Genius, Master Interior Decorator, Cordon Bleu Adviser, Entertainment Director and Architectural Constructor, and all for free. Well, not quite free. There are approximately ten meetings a year of the Ladies Committee and the A.G.M. is in May. Do not be shy about all these bright new proposals you could make to the committee, but hurry, phone Anita Mendelssohn, 447-4185, or Vicky Lowrie, 447-8843, otherwise the last Seder attended by all those who otherwise would have been alone, might just be that.

'Yes,' you say, 'where's the 'phone, we'll be there but meanwhile what about the two minutes North British time?' Well, it's obvious isn't it: —'Thank you for the booking — starting time?' 'Well, it's a Yiddisher do — best put the time forward'. That's the real reason for the two minutes. Mind you, come to think of it, 1948 must have been the year of optimism — two minutes only?

## Group Jogging

Have you ever thought of taking up jogging but always found an excuse for not doing so? Many people are mindful of their bodies and realize the importance of exercising but the quantum jump to make a start is too much

A solution to this very common problem is to share the 'burden' with other people. Our sports correspondent, Mike Adelman, is a keen jogger himself and wants to start group jogging. If you wish to join, phone Mike on 664-1910. Beginners are strongly encouraged!

## WIZO Lunch

The annual Edinburgh WIZO lunch was held at the Ettrick Road residence of the local president Mrs. Kate Goodwin. The traditional fund-raising social event was attended by 120 people, among whom were the Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, the President of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation, Mr. John Cosgrove, and Rabbi Shalom Shapira with their respective families. The beautiful weather helped the memorable occasion which raised £700. All in all a rewarding event for the entire WIZO Committee and especially for its tireless leader.

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## CCJ meet Queen

by Rose Orgel

A Reception was held on the 17th May at St. James's Palace for members of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ). The Queen, as Patron, attended as did the Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits and the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Runcie, as well as many other well-known personalities. The Edinburgh Branch was well represented with five members attending: Dr. and Mrs. Walker, Miss Anne MacPherson, Mrs. Myra Cohen and myself.

There were about six hundred people present and we were divided into three rooms. There was also a small room for VIP's. Hospitality was excellent with wines and soft drinks, lots of bits and pieces such as tiny sandwiches with smoked salmon and cream cheese, courgettes and artichokes in a batter which were gorgeous and as I discovered, all kosher. After about half-an-hour, the Chief Rabbi and the Archbishop of Canterbury appeared in the Queen Anne Room and each of them delivered a short speech.

Then came the Queen herself. She was very simply dressed in a pink and green dress with black patent shoes and bag. She passed through each room in turn and everyone had ample opportunity to see her at close quarters. She then returned to the VIP room and the doors to it were closed. The rest of us were now able to go into each of the three rooms furnished in red and gold with walls lined in red silk and some magnificent paintings. On leaving, we were all given a Royal Occasion Commemorative Brochure and all in all it was a most delightful and exciting experience.



Rabbi Shapira introducing Rabbi Philip Greenberg (left) before speaking on his recent visit to Israel at CCJ meeting.



Forbes McGregor, poet, and portrait by Robin Spark

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## Successful Seder rewards Ladies Committee effort

by Judith Sischy

How is it that every year the story of God bringing the people to Israel from bondage takes on new and different meaning? The fundamentals remain unchanged but the relevance and significance of the story takes on new nuances each year. It is said that the Jewish calendar is like a golden ring set with precious jewels that are the festivals, with no two alike: Passover is a superb example.

This year Edinburgh was again privileged to have Rabbi Shapira presiding over a community Seder in the Community Centre, the Rabbi's second such experience. This time he was joined by Mrs. Shapira whose warm and lively contribution added much to the celebrations. The Rabbi presided and moved among us with ease, enjoyment and evident enthusiasm which quickly spread down the tables and soon not only the children but also the adults were joining Shalom and Rachel in the ceremony and in the celebrations after the meal.

As on many occasions in communities in the Diaspora, there is an underlying tension when it is time to make a major Jewish festival, of which most of the local inhabitants are unaware. It is not a holiday for the local community and in Edinburgh most would be unaware that it was time for the Jews to celebrate Passover. It was refreshing therefore to hear Radio Forth wish us a Happy Passover and to spend a few minutes listening to the Rabbi. For those of us at the Seder it was illuminating to hear the Rabbi patiently explain the meaning of each symbol on the Seder dish and of the concepts of Pesach. Seder means order: that of the ceremony was crystal clear; the order in the Hall less so. As each group began explaining to their children their meaning of the Seder, as each group re-opened the discussion of the real meaning of freedom, as each group began to talk louder than their neighbours, the voices of the Rabbi and of Mrs. Shapira still managed to rise above the rest and to lead the singing. No one was allowed to be passive: the children were well rehearsed, several members of

the community were equally well rehearsed, whilst others lead the translation of key passages from the Haggadah. The contributions from around the Hall added to the sense of occasion which we all shared.

To be able to join in a communal Seder is perhaps the best of all worlds. To be able to be a family within a family, a student with a community and a visit among friends, gives a dual sense of satisfaction. Yet a communal seder cannot succeed without hard work and detailed planning; order cannot rise from chaos without careful forethought, and the dignity of the Seder cannot be preserved without firm but warm leadership. On behalf of all who attended the community Seder, our special thanks go to the Ladies Committee for such a magnificent effort and to the others who were responsible for a memorable evening. Our questions may not have been answered; we may still be searching for meanings; but hopefully there will be another such Seder next year.

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## A scientist in the making

by Debbie Donne

Benji Fidler is not only known for his active roles in Jewish Youth Study Group and the Association of Jewish Sixth Formers (AJ6), but also recently making a claim to fame as a young scientist. He became one of seven pupils from the Edinburgh Academy who won the Scottish Schools Space competition, in which entrants were asked to design an experiment which would take advantage of the zero gravity conditions on board an orbiting shuttle.

For this Benji worked a full year which he recalls being 'good experience'. Although the competition appeared to be



Benji Fidler holding prize-winning report.

very demanding, Benji seemed to enjoy the task. As leader of the Biology category he enjoyed his role and found that he also enjoyed the team work and effort in which he could motivate people; as well as himself. He found this excellent experience for what he is aiming to do in the future.

In October of this year Benji will leave Edinburgh to attend Exeter College in Oxford, where he will study a four-year course in Biochemistry. After the course he hopes to go on to some sort of industrial management and hopefully his experience will come into use.

As for AJ6, Benji started the Edinburgh group in November 1988. The group meets once a month on a Saturday and is attended regularly by 8-12 fourth- to sixth-year pupils.

Benji clearly stated that 'AJ6 has serious programmes and was formed to prepare all school leavers for anti-semitism which they may come by'. Even though AJ6 is a newly born group in Edinburgh and the only one of its kind in the North, Benji has become the National Vice-Chairman as well as North Regional Chairman. Although he has a top position he is very worried about the future of the group and would hate to see it die. He also feels it's a shame that 'all potential leaders are committed to other youth groups and their study'. Hopefully someone will take his place and carry on his good work.

## Jewish Youth Study Groups

Jewish Youth Study Groups (JYSG) is a national organisation, based in London, to which provincial groups can nationally affiliate. Edinburgh is one of the several affiliated groups.

Edinburgh JYSG is for youngsters from Bar/Bat Mitzvah age until the age of 19. The group meets once a week on a Sunday evening between 7.30 and 10.00 and has a regular attendance of between 20 and 30 people.

Each meeting has the form of two halves. The first hour and a half is a serious programme, which can vary from discussion to a video or even a speaker. A short break follows and the meeting continues into a more light-hearted half, maybe a quiz or a game.

Each year a new va-ad is elected. The va-ad acts as a committee, of usually four people, and organises their local group. Each va-adnik takes a turn in organising the first half of each meeting and they are also responsible for events; for example, inter-visits or charity events.

JYSG is an excellent way to keep in touch with Jewish teenagers and become aware of problems facing Jews in society and also how to solve them.

If you want to join us or know more about our activities, please contact Debbie Donne at 447-2947.

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Young ambassadors Shai Libson and Noa Hecht visited Edinburgh during Purim to talk to senior pupils at Edinburgh schools about Israel.

# A day to remember all my life

by Jenny Sischy

I woke up excitedly at 7.30a.m. on Saturday morning: the 'BIG DAY' had finally arrived and I couldn't believe it. For weeks, or should I say months, we had been making arrangements for my Bat Mitzvah, planning where all our relations should stay, what the menu would be for our luncheon on Saturday, how many friends I could invite to the disco and so on ... But, I had never actually thought about how I would feel standing in front of the ark, saying my Bat Mitzvah piece before the entire congregation on the actual day. Well, of course, my emotions were mixed, but first I will tell you what I thought of the whole occasion.

I arrived at the synagogue with my mum, dad and sister at about 10.00a.m. clutching my folder which contained all my pieces. When I went in, Yvonne and Wendy, who were the two girls with whom I was sharing my Bat Mitzvah, were already there in their seats. I sat down beside them and before long all our relations and friends arrived. Rabbi Shapira started the service, while Yvonne, Wendy and myself were in our seats trying to 'calm each other's nerves!' All too quickly, we were called upon to go up to the ark, where we nervously performed our Bat Mitzvah pieces. We started with the three of us reading a Bat Mitzvah prayer before going on to the ten

commandments. Next, we performed our main pieces, Eishet Chayil, which was a poem about the woman of the Jewish family and all her duties and devotions around the home. We each read a verse in Hebrew, before giving its English translation.

To finish off, the three of us sang Sim Shalom, hopefully not too out of tune! During the majority of this time my knees were shaking from nerves, but by the time we had sung one verse of Eishet Chayil I was beginning to become accustomed to the idea of standing in front of the congregation. The Rabbi gave the three of us a delightful sermon, following which Mr. Cosgrove presented us each with a beautiful siddur. After that we returned to our seats. The moment I had been thinking about for weeks was over but, funnily enough, I was not glad. Although standing up in front of the ark was very nerve-racking I have to say that I enjoyed every minute of performing our piece.

After a kiddush and several hand shakes saying 'Mazal Tov', Wendy and Yvonne went their separate ways and my family had a delicious luncheon in the Community Hall, for family and close friends, where I said my Bat Mitzvah speech welcoming all my relations who had come so far to be with us for the occasion.

For the rest of the weekend I had the most wonderful time with my relatives catching up on all the 'family gossip'. It was such a super occasion seeing relatives, some of whom I hadn't seen for over a couple of years. Then, on Sunday night, Yvonne, Wendy and myself had a disco in the Community Hall. It was fantastic, and, in my opinion, a great way to finish celebrating the weekend of our Bat Mitzvah. Looking back, I can say that every single bit of it was as good as I had imagined.

To end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following. Rabbi Shapira for spending so much of his time every Sunday afternoon, with Wendy, Yvonne and me preparing us for the occasion,. Wendy and Yvonne for so kindly waiting until I was twelve to share their Bat Mitzvah with me. Mrs. Burns and Harold Abrahams for their spectacular catering and food. Last, but not least, my mum and dad, for not only making the occasion of my Bat Mitzvah possible, but making a day to remember all my life.



Bat Mitzvah girls Wendy Goldberg, Yvonne Berger and Jenny Sischy with Rabbi Shapira.

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Purim celebration with Megilah set in Australia? The oldest class of the Edinburgh Cheder made a parody of the popular television programme Neighbours. The characters of Ramsey Street and Homentashin Street blended in an atmosphere of fun and tradition.

## No Longer a Babysitting Service

by David Kaplan

Edinburgh Maccabi is the only organisation within our community that caters solely for children of all ages, whether they be six or sixteen. In the past, Maccabi has been used by parents as a babysitting service, and by the kids as a perfect time to play their favourite games in an atmosphere that appeals to them. However, these past two years have seen a change in direction as to how Maccabi is run and what is available to its members.

Throughout the Cheder year, meetings are held at fortnightly intervals from 1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. Our average attendance this year has been 15, out of a Cheder total of 25. This appears at first glance to be a good percentage attending, however the leaders find it hard to understand just why more of the children don't come and why parents of these children don't encourage their kids to come. After all, where else are young Jewish children going to meet informally, outside of a Cheder classroom?

At the time of writing, the year 1988/89 appears to be the most progressive Edinburgh Maccabi has encountered. Locally, our programmes have changed in order to base them towards the festivals in the Jewish calendar; three teams were entered into the Glasgow Communal Youth Quiz, unfortunately none of the teams progressed to the semi-final stage despite enthusiastic backing from a large Edinburgh Maccabi contingent in the audience. In May Maccabi visited

Tollcross Fire Station and took part in the annual sponsored event, which this year had the form of a 'Fun Run' through Queen's Park, culminating in a party in the Communal Hall.

At a national level, Edinburgh Maccabi is now well and truly on the map and is flourishing. The present year will see all the Maccabi leaders having participated in National events. In February, Sally Cowen, Sarah Judah and myself went to a Hadracha (Leadership) course in Bushey House, outside London; and on June 4th David Mason, Sally Cowen and Michael Rifkind represented Edinburgh at the National Maccabi A.G.M.

Along with this, Sally Cowen has represented our group frequently in London at various Youth Council meetings, and there can be no doubt that without her drive and commitment, Edinburgh Maccabi would still be regarded as no more than a dot on the British Maccabi landscape. To this end, a Junior weekend for 9-12 year olds has been organised for June in Edinburgh, to which our kids have been invited and our leaders co-hosted; and in January 1990, Edinburgh Maccabi will host a National Hadracha Course, which can only help improve our group as a whole.

In all, Edinburgh Maccabi is a growing concern, and seems to be heading for its best years yet.

## One Year On ... And Going Strong

by Sion Judah

A year ago, 25 June 1988 to be more precise, with teeth chattering and knees knocking, I timidly tiptoed to the Bimah to officiate as the Ba'al Keri'ah for the day. The Sidrah was Chukath more popularly remembered for the 'Red Heifer' episode. The encouraging words of Parnass and Gabbai helped me to overcome my initial nervousness and, as time went by, I became gradually relaxed and more confident. I read the entire Parasha with relative ease and without making a single mistake — at least that was what I was told!!! Emboldened by this performance, when I was called up to the Torah as Bar Mitzvah to read the Maftir and Haftarah, I gave a good account of myself. My father recited the Barukh She-Petarani formula, 'Blessed be He who has now freed me from responsibility for him' (Ge. R 63, 14) and I knew that from now on I was on my own.

Bar Mitzvah is sometimes the 'Leaving' rather than an 'Entrance' period for some youth who are not committed Jews. The Executive and Council of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation have encouraged the youth of the community by inviting them to read Haftarahs as often as possible and periodically have organised Youth Services, but is that enough? If we are not to lapse into becoming 'three times a year Jews' then it is for the Elders of the community to create a conducive environment so that the youth of today can shoulder the responsibility of the community of tomorrow.

My school teachers have said to me that the glorious achievements of the Jewish people can be traced to the opportunity their youth get at the tender age of twelve and thirteen when they get exposed to the public scrutiny as Bat/Bar Mitzvah celebrants.

How true this is, in my personal experience. Prior to my Bar Mitzvah, I was a timid and shy lad, now I am bold and a more confident person. The stage fright has vanished — I now take keen part in class debates, elocution competition and many other activities — all this I attribute to the excellent training I received for my Bar Mitzvah.

# Auschwitz — the compulsion to tell

Jenni Calder's talk on Primo Levi raised many searching questions.  
Report and summary of the Lit. session by Ruth Adler

The second half of the 101st syllabus of the Lit was yet another resounding success. It began with an afternoon showing of an old favourite, 'Hester Street', very well attended, particularly by some of the more senior members who prefer day-time meetings to the usual evening programme. Everyone enjoyed watching this excellent Yiddish film directed by Joan Micklin Silver, about the New York community at the turn of the century.

The third meeting was a talk by a visitor from Israel, Professor Harold Fisch called 'Israel Faces the Future'. Professor Fisch has agreed to submit an account of his views to the Edinburgh Star. Suffice to say



Angus Mackay during question time.

here that he began by attempting to stand back and give an objective analysis of the significance of the recent Israeli elections. He tried to present an impartial overview but at question times it became clear that he did not feel it appropriate for those living in the Diaspora to pass any critical comment on the behaviour of Israelis who had to live with the day to day problems created by their Arab neighbours. A large part of the audience was clearly of the view that at least *some* of the problems were created by the Israelis themselves – a viewpoint the speaker would not even entertain. He preferred to liken Israelis today to children who had left the parental home and are now setting out to make a life on their own, in their own way. That still leaves open the question of whether or not



Harold Fisch: 'Diaspora should not criticize.'

their way is one which will make their parents proud of them or throw them into a fit of depression ....

Professor Angus Mackay gave the last talk of the session and has also agreed to write an article for the Edinburgh Star. His talk entitled 'Jews in Late Mediaeval Spain' was a *tour de force*, a brilliant display of the academic enterprise at its best. The audience of over 50, sat spellbound as he described his research into the writings of the *conversos* or *Marranos* as they are often called. He told of the different clues which he had found, the hidden messages which appeared in apparently trivial short stories, novels and poems making it clear that their authors were deeply committed to a Jewish way of life. I do not wish to do more here than whet your appetite for what is to follow in



Jennie Calder, a light moment before leaving.

the next edition of this magazine! That brings us to the one talk of the session not to be submitted by the speaker herself as an article – the talk on Primo Levi by Jenni Calder entitled 'Troubles Overcome. How Good to Tell'.

## On Primo Levi

It was a particular pleasure to welcome Jenni Calder to the Lit. As many of those present knew, she is the grand-daughter of Rabbi Salis Daiches who for many years gave the opening address to the Lit and the daughter of David Daiches, one of our most distinguished past speakers. It was a daunting act to follow and she did her family proud! She began by explaining how the focus for Levi's writing was one of 'the most unspeakable episodes in human history'. Levi had been a chemist and had he not experienced the horror of Auschwitz he would certainly not have become a writer. 'He felt a



Primo Levi

compulsion to tell'. His first book: *If This is a Man* tells of his time in Auschwitz. Writing it was part of the effort of overcoming. Levi struggled to do so for the rest of his life, but in the speaker's view never fully overcame. His writing has 'a tone of measured calm'. It is both communication and creativity. The narration itself implies that life goes on. Levi's second book, *The Truce*, describes the journey back to Italy after the liberation – a journey which was both nightmarish

and comic. In *Moments of Reprieve*, Levi writes of those individuals who 'stood out against that tragic background ... the few, the different, the ones in whom (if only for a moment) I had recognised the will and capacity to act and hence a rudiment of virtue'. In the Afterward of *If This is a Man*, he writes that his survival was due in large part to luck and in some measure to the fact that he was a chemist and a mountaineer. 'Perhaps I was helped too by my interest, which has never flagged, in the human spirit and by the will not only to survive .... but to survive with a precise purpose of recounting the things we had witnessed and endured'. He asserted that it was his belief in humanity not in God, which kept him going.

Levi has been widely acclaimed for his writing which has been described as 'magical', 'miraculous', 'inspiring' and 'wise' and engendering feelings of 'optimism and gratitude to the author'. She ascribed it in part to the fact that he gives a description of the systematic and total destruction of the individual in the present tense, thereby contributing to the sense of reality and making it clear that the experience is ongoing – the past, she suggested is a luxury which can't be allowed. In addition the language is careful and relaxed, its tone one of gentleness. He writes of the 'Babel of languages all around' in the camp and includes odd words in German, thereby emphasising the disadvantage of not understanding and the deprivation of not being able to communicate, as well as

highlighting the inadequacy of language to deal with the situation. Language 'lacks words'. Levi enlarges on the theme that '... he who loses all often ... loses himself'. 'Extermination' thereby acquires a dual meaning. Levi writes only of what *he* saw and of what *he* experienced.

It is important to note that Levi does not forgive the Germans. He states that the so-called 'German destiny' was not imposed from without, it was chosen.

In his last book, *The Drowned and the Saved*, Levi revised his opinion that Germany had some unique characteristic which brought about such behaviour – he expressed the view that others too were capable of extreme inhumanity. He also writes 'Ne cherchez pas comprendre' yet it is the effort to understand which drove him to write. Levi asserts that one of the key factors contributing to his own survival was the ability to recognise the 'tiniest element of humanity' in, for example, the man who washed himself every day even though it was impossible to get clean; in Ezra who fasted on Yom Kippur; in Lorenzo who exhibited pure altruism. These elements had, according to Levi, the same effect as overt resistance or revolt – he saw spiritual resistance as important as physical resistance.

Jenni Calder briefly mentioned Levi's other works: *If Not Now When* which pays tribute to human resilience in its description of a purposeful struggle by some members of the resistance. *The*

*Wrench* celebrates building and creating – its positive theme revolving round making structures and putting things together and *The Periodic Table*. The speaker pointed out that Levi's life changed once he met his future wife – memories became 'a wealth', 'a seed'. Yet he clung firmly to the belief that nothing we create is an adequate expression of the mysteries of human life, hence we are doomed to fail. Perhaps it is in this assertion that lies the key to understanding Levi's tragic suicide? Jenni Calder's informative and thought-provoking talk gave rise to this and many more searching questions.

## New Office Bearers

The syllabus concluded as always with the Annual General Meeting: well attended and well provided with alcoholic beverage from the outgoing President. The elections were as ever uncontested and by universal acclaim as follows:

President, Gillian Raab

Vice-President, Ian Leifer

Hon. Secretary, Ann Lurie

Hon. Treasurer, Julia Merrick

The next session will start at the end of October.

## A Triumph for the Lit!

by Benji Adler



Communal Quiz winners. From left to right: John Cosgrove, Bill Simpson, Jonny Sperber and Ian Leifer.

The rather young-looking Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation team (David Kaplan, Nicky Cosgrove, Benji Fidler and myself) had fought gallantly to reach the quarter-finals (second round) but not as gallantly as the stalwarts from the Literary Society who had reached the final. Not only had they reached the final but they were within one point of winning the competition with just one question left. Everybody was silent. The question-master was not even half way through the final question, when – 'beep' – or was it 'buzz'? Ian Leifer pounced on his red button. '1936' he said confidently. There was an agonising second before the adjudicators agreed that the answer was indeed 1936. The few remaining fans from Edinburgh who had congregated at the back of the hall went wild. This was what they had been waiting for for so long. The celebrations began and for the first time the Leslie Blass trophy came to Edinburgh. Congratulations to John Cosgrove, Ian Leifer, Bill Simpson and Jonny Sperber!

# The marriage that cannot work

by Tony Gilbert

I was interested to learn recently of a plan by some members of the Jewish Community in various suburbs of North West London to make an *eruv*. My understanding of quite what this entails is rather sketchy, but it seems that the ultimate effect is to create a region in which some of the prohibitions concerning carrying objects on Shabat are relaxed. Now there are various restrictions on what constitutes an allowable region, and in particular, regions defined by Rabbinical ruling as public must be excluded. Normally these restrictions would be such that carrying between private dwellings would not be allowable. It seems, however, that this prohibition may be overcome if the various house-owners in a region make an *eruv*, under which their property becomes commonly owned, thereby ending the separate private status of each dwelling, and additionally, if the whole region is surrounded by a notional wall to separate it from other public ground.

In North West London, the plan appears to be to connect various existing structures such as railways and walls with a wire at a suitable height to complete the enclosure of the desired region with the requisite notional wall. As to making an *eruv*, this seems highly unlikely, so perhaps a Rabbinical dispensation to forego the process of sharing has been sought: so in effect, all that appears necessary to remove the restrictions on carrying on a Shabat within a certain region is to surround that region with a wire.

Now using this final conclusion as a working hypothesis, we can show that in fact it would suffice to erect a wire loop (at a suitable height), as small as we please,

at any point on the earth's surface to remove the restrictions on *all* Jews throughout the World. The argument runs as follows.

Suppose that the inhabitants of North West London succeed in their plan by surrounding the relevant suburbs with a wire. It would then be possible to include all the inhabitants of London by enlarging the wire to enclose all of London. Continuing this process, we could surround the whole of Great Britain with a wire and ultimately the whole Northern hemisphere by running a wire around the Equator. Now this self-same wire around the Equator would also serve to enclose all the Southern Hemisphere as well, either on grounds of symmetry, or alternatively, we could repeat the process described above starting, for example, with a wire surrounding a few suburbs of Adelaide. Now granted that this equatorial wire surrounds *both* hemispheres, it is clear that if we move the wire one inch northward, the new wire continues to act as a boundary both to the nearly hemispherical region north of it and also the slightly greater than hemispherical region south of it. Continuing the northward translation of the wire, we could end up with a wire the size of a curtain ring surrounding the North Pole, and also the rest of the world lying to the south of it, thus acting as an enclosure for the entirety of world Jewry. Lastly, there is nothing special about the North Pole in this argument, so the curtain ring could be placed anywhere. Technical considerations would suggest that the North Pole might prove a little awkward, so why not somewhere in a suburb of North West London, where the whole plan started.



The branch of Mathematics which allows us to shrink and move curves in the fashion described is known as Topology, and the conclusion that we have come to above relies on the topological result that all simple closed loops on the surface of a sphere are homotopic to a point. I doubt that the Rabbinical authorities would have much use for the methods of Topology: they would undoubtedly find a dozen religious objections to the argument I have outlined above. All of which goes to show that if you try to marry Topology to Theology, you are liable to wind up with the absurd conclusion that, if you set up a curtain ring at the North Pole, all world Jewry will be eternally grateful to you!

*Tony Gilbert is a Lecturer and Director of Studies in the Department of Mathematics at Edinburgh University.*

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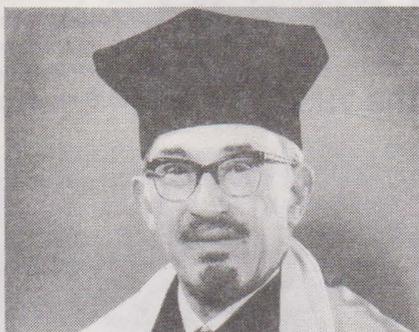
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**Rabbi Dr J. Weinberg**

With the sad passing of Rabbi Dr Weinberg, the Edinburgh Jewish Community has lost a dedicated spiritual leader and outstanding teacher. Born in Vilna in 1910 he came as a small boy to this country when his father was appointed Rabbi of Stepney Orthodox Synagogue, London. He was educated at King's College London and Jews' College. His first ministerial position was during the Second World War with the Oxford Hebrew Congregation. He was fond of recalling how challenging he found this post to be — due not only to the high

intellect of his congregants but to the fact that the community was greatly increased because of the large number of evacuees temporarily residing in Oxford.

In 1948 he received a call to become Minister of the Muizenberg Congregation in South Africa and was a member of the Cape Town Beth Din. He obtained his doctorate of philosophy at Cape Town University for his thesis 'Marriage in the Talmud'.

When he became Minister of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation in 1961 he gave high priority to the fostering of good relations with other Communities and he was instrumental in the founding of an Edinburgh Branch of the Council of Christians and Jews and the Edinburgh Friends of Israel. It is only in recent years that the Glasgow Jewish Community has emulated Edinburgh in having these two important organisations in the west.

He introduced the Bat Mitzvah ceremony to Edinburgh and in this idea of a Shabbat ceremony for girls of 12,

Edinburgh has been in advance of other communities in the UK. Rabbi Weinberg was a superb teacher of adults and his classes in the University Extra Mural Department were always popular.

His co-operation with Dr. Helen Russell, one of his non-Jewish pupils in the translation of three books — two of Maimonides and one of S.Y. Agnon — was absolutely unique and the fact that the Maimonides's books were published by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and republished in the USA is a tribute in itself.

When he retired in 1980 he assumed the title Rabbi Emeritus and for Dr. Weinberg this was no sinecure. He was totally devoted to the well being of the Community and his absolute honest and forthright manner made one respect him even more. I will miss him very much and the Community will be poorer without him. Our condolences go to Mrs. Weinberg, Judith and Carole.

**John A. Cosgrove.**



**Elijah Rifkind**

A son is often the least qualified person to write about his father. He is expected to have an intimate awareness of his character and personality and yet, inevitably, that personal awareness excludes the youth and early manhood of his father's life.

In my case my father was almost forty before I was born and was fifty when I was eleven. My recollections are of a parent already middle-aged and then elderly. If that was all I had to go on I would think of him simply as a happily married man with few personal ambitions, content with a quiet life, proud of his family and deeply attached to his faith.

For those first forty years I need to look to other people's recollections. There I find he was a lively youth, a keen footballer, a well-dressed young man with a good mind

but little disposition to use it for academic pursuits.

My father shared with my paternal grandfather certain qualities. Both were content with what life offered, both got their happiness and their recreation from their family circle and both had a deep and natural affinity with the Jewish identity and with the practice of Judaism. But there, I suspect, the similarity largely ended. For my grandfather, his Judaism was a scholarly pursuit as well as a way of life; for my father it was the latter. He took his Jewishness for granted, he was at home in the synagogue as much as in his own house. Indeed he justified talking in shool on exactly that basis. Only those who came once or twice a year needed to treat it as a place for being on their best behaviour; for those like himself it was somewhere to relax, to pray and be at one with the Almighty.

Although he had a quiet contentment with life he could not, otherwise, be described as a quiet person. He had a healthy enjoyment of a good argument, and liked nothing better than informing his younger son of the weaknesses as well as the strengths of government policy. He expressed his views about people as well as issues in a forceful, colourful and often critical way but there was no malice in him nor did he bear grudges. He lost his temper easily but regained it quickly. He was sentimental and a tear could come

easily to the eye, a tendency that can be found throughout the Rifkind family.

He had strong convictions, great integrity and personal honesty. Throughout his life he was unimpressed by wealth and more interested in achievement. He was stubborn both when he was in the right and, occasionally, when he was in the wrong.

Until the last two years of his long life he was blessed with good health. The manner of his working life must have contributed to that. For over forty years he never owned a car and whenever he was not using public transport he walked; often considerable distances. In adult life he was not attracted to any sport but was not short of physical exercise. He was still walking from the Blackfords to synagogue and back until he approached his 80th birthday.

In brief he was a character, and one who attracted both affection and respect. There were no major achievements in his life to point to, no triumphs nor disasters, few milestones and fewer disappointments. To me he seemed a happy man content with his lot and taking the seasons as they came. For those of us who have a more restless temperament that attitude to life can sometimes be difficult to understand but never difficult to envy.

**Malcom Rifkind.**

# Jewish themes at the Fringe

Leslie Bennie reviews some of the Jewish productions of the 1980's

## Genesis

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe started at the same time as the International Festival in 1947 and its launch was seen as a post-war initiative to reunite Europe through the medium of culture. Many cities in Britain were considered and Edinburgh was successful. The first organisers were so successful with their planning, that they inspired more performers than there was room for. Upset at not being invited to participate in the first festival, six Scottish and two English companies decided to perform in Edinburgh, unasked. Knowing that there would be an audience, and realising that Press attention would be considerable, the six groups found venues in which to perform, and set up independent of any official organisation. They used buildings unoccupied by the International Festival, not all of which were designed as theatres. There was no central ticket selling and each took its chance in attracting audiences. Without organisational support, they all not only survived but received the press coverage they deserved. Referred to originally as 'festival adjuncts', the name was superseded by the phrase 'festival fringe', when a journalist and author Robert Kemp, described a production in Dunfermline cathedral as being '... on the fringes of the festival'.

The first fringe had three defining distinctive features, all of which hold true today. First, none of the performers was invited to take part; second, all used small and unconventional theatre spaces, and third, they all took a financial risk, surviving or sinking consistent with the public's taste and demand.

From these unlikely beginnings, there emerged some of the best dramatists, artists, actors, poets, dancers, and a society to bring together these and other art forms, from every continent in the globe. Beginning with eight companies in 1947, the Fringe at 42, is now regarded as the largest arts festival in the world; now a Fringe comprising 450 groups is seen as an average one, mounting over one thousand shows, over 9,000 performances in some 140 venues and selling some 500,000 tickets.

To many the Fringe has grown too big, is over-bureaucratic and is not capable of



The traditional Scottish pipe band, still one of the most popular sights during the Festival.

recognising its own boundaries; little censorship is applied, no group is refused entry, and no show is promoted over any other. The review which follows, examines over a period of nine years some of the total of forty-seven shows with a special Jewish interest. In the context of the enormous numbers just quoted, forty-seven seems and is fractional, but one must add the host of Jewish authors, artists, and directors, who have contributed to the Fringe since its inception; such vital and continuing support may be the subject of a subsequent article.

An attempt has been made to trace a motif in the several events quoted, and to categorise them, the following table has been compiled. Since 1980, there have never been in any year less than two or more than six shows with a Jewish flavour, although 1989 looks like the first, certainly with no Israeli input.

The Holocaust	11
Jewish Life, History and Revue	18
Israel	5
Israeli Productions (four of which Cameri)	8

Non U.K.	4
Other Middle Eastern	1

## The Holocaust

One third of all productions has been inspired by the Holocaust and its continuing impact on the Jewish way of life, the alleged reason for the creation of Israel, the justification of ever increasing militarism, the understandable bitterness, and the all too frequent aggression. Many expressions are found, the quietest usually being those involved — none of the productions depicting the Holocaust has come from Israel. Several themes dealt with the moral indignation at Nazi atrocities, and even more at the speed at which the crimes were relegated into oblivion. As Doncaster Theatre Arts stated in 1980, such thoughts were not suitable for Germans over sixty, since Erwin Sylvanus's *Dr. Korczak and the Children* is savagely evocative in its narration of the Doctor and his children and how they died because they were Jewish children in Poland. Rob Inglis's one man show in 1982, *The Royal Game* by Stefan Zweig, recounted how a prisoner learned chess to outwit the Gestapo. In 1984 there were three shows on this and related themes, first a departure from war crimes and their

effect on the next generation, was a production by the Cambridge Workshop Theatre Company called *Hannah*, based on the diaries of Hannah Senesh, a member of the only Jewish rescue mission to be parachuted into Nazi occupied Europe in 1944. The play explores the courage, idealism, and confusion that inspired Hannah's short life; she was executed at the age of twenty three.

In 1987 we witnessed the most publicised 'play' on the European tragedies in the form of a reading, hastily put on at the Young Lyceum under the heading *Words beyond Words*. In that year, a climate of fear was created around a banned allegedly anti-Zionist play; although there were no physical threats against the author, Jim Allen, near hysterical scenes were witnessed outside the theatre, where the antagonists had gathered a rather sad collection of ex-camp internees to assist in their opposition to the reading. The play was presented by Tom McGrath who said 'Do not think my opinion or the opinion of anyone is important. It is now a matter of free speech and it is important, that the play is read. If not, people would just believe what had been said about it'. Although it was organised by McGrath, it was produced by Doncaster Art Centre. As a reminder, the play, banned two days before opening at the Royal Court, alleges that Zionist Jews in Hungary conspired with the Nazis before and during the War.

This collaboration was for two reasons: first to safeguard themselves, tenable in the context, and second to secure the State of Israel but only for the 'finest branches' of the decaying root.

In 1988, *Tragic Carpet* put on *Babi Yar* by Freda O'Byrne from the book by Anatoli Kuznetsov. It claimed to depict one of the most frightful exposures of human iniquity; and its message, the first sign of trouble is when books are banned: that act equates with trouble, that power is in the hands of barbarians.

### Jewish Life and History

This second category accounts for some 50% of the total number of productions, and it is in this area, not surprisingly, that the Israeli companies performed. As with the festival, the Jewish State is a product of the second World War, and is about the same age. There the parallel stops, since the second twenty years of the State, or more precisely since 1973, there has not been in evidence the same degree of self-esteem, pride or resourcefulness. Peace with Egypt apart, the last ten years have reverted to the 'laager' mentality, and for a country with so much talent in the arts to export so little, has perhaps been a function of the political and social uncertainty. World sympathy including elements of diaspora Jewry, now lies with those in the occupied lands, and it is likely that sooner rather



Demonstration for the release of the Fagins organised by the Edinburgh Campaign for Soviet Jewry before the performance of the Bolshoi Orchestra in 1987. Sprigs of heather were handed out to be worn in support for the musicians.

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## Edinburgh Festival

than later, a wave of Palestinian theatre will be exported. This winter, for example, the showing of *Wedding in Galilee* focused on the problems of annexation, and from a standpoint, far from hostile. The relationship between those under threat and the Israeli authorities, the fleeting reconciliation highlighted over the plight of the runaway stallion, and the gradual disintegration of harmony made compelling viewing even if one had unqualified sympathy for the authorities.

Following *Hefetz* in 1974, the Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv, returned in 1980 with another of Hanoach Levin's work; *Ya'acobi and Leidental* revolves around the lives of the two men and a woman, Shahash, supposedly a pianist. The vulgarities may have been comic—and in good taste in the original; they became more than tiresome in the translation. At forty, a significant year, biblically, Itamar Ya'acobi realises he was born to live, and on that account, romance on his mind, severs his friendship with David Leidental, goes forth a free man, but becomes enchanted with Shahash. Leidental brings himself as a wedding gift, and the romantic couple have to adapt to it (him).

The year 1981 provided two shows of a different genre, again on the theme of Jewish life; first the Entertainment Machine's *Take off with Mrs. Frumberger*, so called Jewish humour, the likes of which may be heard any day on the streets of Brooklyn or Tel Aviv. 'Sadie it's no big deal this world travelling. You ask for kosher, they look at you like you're meshuga, and the state of the toilets you wouldn't believe. The whole story I'll tell you in Edinburgh, please God I should live that long'. One of the highlights of that year, and indeed earlier ones, was the personal appearance of David Kossoff, a timely replacement for the Community Players. *The Kossoff Storytellings* or Bible stories for children between seven and seventy, certainly restored one's faith after the brashness and tedium of Mrs.

Frumberger.

Undoubtedly, 1982, 1985 and 1987 were the years of the greatest mix, each with five or six shows from which to savour a taste of Jewish life. Algonquin Productions 1982 *Ethel and Julie* by Alec Baron, told a human story based on the death-cell letters of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, alleged atom bomb spies, executed in 1953 despite the greatest worldwide protest ever known against the dubious nature of their trial. Occurring so soon after the revelations from Nazi Europe, this inhuman act had at the time an enormously devastating effect on world Jewry. Totally different and in the same year was the appearance of the Boker Mime Company of Israel with a show by Joram Boker; the company had previously won the first prize in the International Festival of Arezzo for their originality and professionalism. The Cameri redeemed itself in 1985 when, with a cast of 30, Hanoach Levin's *Suitcase Packers* set the scene for eight funerals; a main stage production which vascillated from the tragic, to comedy, to the absurd and the trivial; how the death of a hitherto friend would upset next week's bridge arrangements.

An unfortunate case of funding or more correctly, the lack of it, occurred in 1986, when the State Jewish Theatre of Poland's intended mounting of *Purim* by Icek Menger, appeared only in the programme. The company was invited to Scotland by the irrepressible Richard Demarco, but festival goers were denied the chance to see this musical inspired by Yiddish folk culture in the Polish tradition. Given changing conditions it is hoped that a further invitation may be extended to the company.

Arnold Brown, a Glaswegian stand-up comedy artist won in 1986, the coveted Perrier award for best revue; whether the content was traditional or local is not clear.

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The year 1988 featured an exhibition located in the Community Centre and called 'The Jewish Way of Life Exhibition'. The aim was to inform and stimulate an interest in the Jewish Heritage among adults and children, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The exhibition included some of the traditional culture of Jewish life, the Sabbath, the main Festivals and details of the Jewish year.

### Israel

The third and last category in this overview consists of those shows about Israel itself and its people, their relationship with each other and with their immediate neighbours. Of the five, one is historical, a vision of two late nineteenth-century eminent Jews.

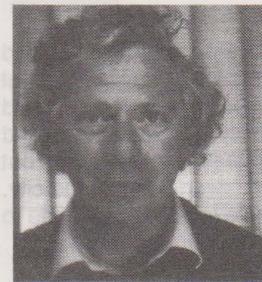
First was Tzavta, the centre for progressive culture, which staged in English, *Like a Bullet in the Head* by Miriam Kainy. The 1983 piece described the metamorphosis of a humanist, liberal professor of Middle Eastern studies, into a fanatical chauvinist. The transformation was occasioned by a series of accidents and incidents, involving himself, his wife,

his status, a young Arab colleague, and in particular, the ever present and pervading Jewish-Arab paranoia.

In 1987 there were three separate productions, involving two Israeli companies. Naomi Sharron's *On the Road to Jerusalem* was provocatively disturbing and powerful. Jerusalem Stage Two examined the complex relationships between Jews and Arabs in contemporary Israel. The play deals with oppression and its impact on both victim and perpetrator, and at the same time reviewing a universal theme — the difference between political conviction and personal behaviour. Returning to Edinburgh, were the actors of the Cameri Theatre which was founded in 1944 as an artists' collective and became in 1971 the Municipal Theatre of Tel Aviv. In 1987 they presented two plays at the International Festival, *Michael Kohlhaas* and *Kiddush*, both in Hebrew. The latter production later moved to the Fringe; taking its title from the traditional Jewish family gathering on the eve of the Sabbath, the play observes conflicts within an ostensibly devout family and inevitably draws a parallel between that domestic crisis and Israel's national and

religious tensions. The usually warm family occasion becomes a battlefield, leading to the break-up of the family itself.

At the moment of writing, 1989 appears devoid of any Jewish involvement.



**Leslie Bennie** was born in Ayr, Scotland. He was educated in Glasgow and later at the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland.

Currently he is a lecturer in the Department of Accountancy and Finance at Heriot-Watt University, in Edinburgh, where he specializes in computer aspects of accounting. Other positions have included Secretary and Vice-Chairman of the Traverse Theatre, Treasurer of Ledbare Nights and Demarco Gallery. Since 1971 he has been Treasurer of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society.

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# Fringe '89 — What two Jewish students have to offer

by Adam Blitz

In a few weeks time, Lisa Gornick and her flatmate Andrew Pulver will have sat their final examinations in History and English respectively. This may be the end of their formal education in Edinburgh but it will not be their 'swan song' to the city. Both students have much to contribute to this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

## Feminism and Judaism

Lisa's success as an actress is a result of her own effort and determination. In a bid to overcome her shyness, Lisa joined a drama club having no previous interest or experience in drama at school. After finding 'a scrunpled-up piece of paper in the library', Lisa started to attend the Guild-Hall School of Drama from the age of thirteen. Here she was taught drama techniques by professional teachers every Saturday until she was eighteen.

In her sixth form year at school, Lisa entered the school Drama Competition in which she acted in a play of her own composition, entitled *Do not feed the animals*. She did not win the acting prize but did win the prize for the best play, which is a very personal one, with remarkable insight for a seventeen year old. The story centres around a young girl struggling against the conditioning in society. This 'stereotyping' is brought to light one day when the girl visits a zoo and identifies with the caged animals.

The play clearly reflects Lisa's philosophy. As a teenager, she was aware and affected by the allocation of roles, particularly those within the family. This is further echoed in her recent play *My daughter carries the gun* which was specially written by Lisa for the 1988 Scottish Student Drama Festival'. It is loosely based on the history of the Vilna ghetto. Once again the protagonist is a young girl aged about twenty-one. When the town is occupied by the Nazis, the heroine faces the dilemma as to whether or not she should conform or resist the invasion. In the end, contrary to her parents, she joins the resistance movement. So the play incorporates two central elements of Lisa's life: feminism and Judaism. 'I am not a radical feminist' she admits but claims that 'everyone, man

and woman, should be feminist'. She does not like to be restricted to particular roles and does not imagine that men do either. In fact she claims to have been 'telling Dad to wash up since the age of four'

In fact you might say that Lisa has had more than her fair share of providence. On her first day at University she went to the auditions at the Edinburgh University Theatre Company or Bedlam and was cast as Lady Anne in *Richard III*. This was truly exceptional. Generally participants must wait six months for even the most minor part. Her prominence in the play, the largest production that year, helped boost the confidence of a young girl anxious about arriving at University. It certainly was a milestone for her long and successful career.

Admired for her versatility, Lisa has been cast in a variety of roles. Her repertoire includes *King Lear*, in which she played the virginal Cordelia. In Carol Churchill's feminist and controversial *Cloud Nine* she performed two roles: in the first act she portrayed a lesbian, in the second act she reverted to heterosexuality only to play one of those new breed of women: old, overly sexual, who employ 'toy boys'.

The Bedlam has often been criticised for its conservative approach to drama. According to Lisa, Shakespeare was approached 'too preciously — not concentrating on the actors as human beings. The human element is lost'. This may be one reason why Lisa is not into Shakespeare yet although she hopes to be. But neither is Lisa at ease with directing. Of her experience at the Bedlam she has directed two plays, *My daughter carries the gun* and *Fear and misery in the Third Reich* by Brecht. She admits to being 'too perfectionist' on one account. On the other she claims to have had difficulty asserting the sternness needed to direct. 'Perhaps I was expecting too much from student drama' she sighs.

Her secret love of cabaret shows in routine she performs her Polish woman act in which she draws upon many eastern influences. The character is 'more like a Marlene Dietrich than a Jewish Momma',



Lisa Gornick

she laughs. Few 'Jewish Mommas' would dare to sing Blue Moon in Polish. Moreover, few 'Jewish Mommas' would appear in the films which Lisa has appeared in: *Sea Dreams Evermore* based on the play by Siobhan D'Avignon and Napier College's horror movie *Sodden*, due to be shown at the Edinburgh Filmhouse. *Sea Dreams Evermore* was filmed at Gullane beach in one day. Despite the hasty production the film received two showings in last year's Fringe Film Festival. I asked Lisa why this film should have been so popular. 'Oh, it was a very silly film, a parody of Mills and Boone love stories'. Lisa played the heroine who 'had about three lines in the whole script', she did a lot of sitting in the wings.

It is still too early to say with certainty which part Lisa will play in this year's Bedlam contribution to the festival. The opportunity to see her act should not be missed. She is a talented actress in her own right and not in relation to student standards of drama.

## A new Golem

The Golem Theatre Company was established earlier this year by Andrew Pulver with the intention of reviving the spirit and tradition of Yiddish and Eastern European theatre.

The myth of Golem, the monster, is predominant in Eastern European folklore



**Andrew Pulver**

as well as re-occurring in the writings of Isaac Bashevis Singer. When the Jews of Prague were being attacked by anti-semites, Rabbi Loeb constructed a huge statue in the form of the monster Golem. After deep meditation in prayer, Rabbi Loeb's wishes were answered. By an act of divine intervention, the statue was infused with life and transfigured into the monster Golem who proceeded to slay the oppressors.

The figure of Golem is analogous to the statue in *Don Giovanni* and the clay figure of Prometheus. Aschylus's *Promethius Bound* was revitalised under Andrew's direction. In a radical attempt at alteration, the chorus was edited by sparing only a third of the original text. The main emphasis now concentrated upon the frustrated protagonist and his 'angst' or agony. The dramatisation was styled after expressionist theatre in which any sense of reality was distorted into a grotesque parody. The bemused Prometheus now found himself engaged in an enormous cube of scaffolding reminiscent of the theme of resurrection. This was further conveyed by the backdrop revealing Bacon's obscene study of Pope Leo X, the screaming Christian head based on Velazquez's portrait. Andrew's ambition and zeal paid off. The play was a success and was sold out during its run at Bedlam. The Christ figure re- occurred in another adaptation, this time in Oscar Wilde's fairy story, *The Young King*. The plot of this play, discarding the trappings of authority, was indicated by mime which was used cautiously but convincingly under Andrew's direction.

His final contribution to the Bedlam, before Golem Theatre Company was founded, was a dramatization of W.H. Auden's short and densely packed poetic drama *Paid on Both Sides*. The scene is set in an ambiguous landscape, fluctuating between the extremes of Chicago in the 20's and the North of

England. In the spirit of the former town, a local band blasted out rhythm and blues to the metre of Auden's poem 'Refugee Blues', an insertion made artificially but with great delight to the audience.

This year *Jew Suss* was rejected by the Bedlam Committee. Despite the initial set-backs, Andrew raised some but not all of the capital needed with help from Edinburgh District Council and a few private sources. At present he is anxious to find a young singer who will portray a chassan, creating a traditional Jewish atmosphere. He is optimistic that a boy in the local community will oblige.

The origins of *Jew Suss* lie in a novel by Leon Feuchtanger written in 1929. Feuchtanger was a member of the German intelligentsia, a select group of novelists and dramatists with left wing sympathies, including Brecht and Frisch who opposed Nazism. Six years later the novel was made into a British film directed by Lothar Mendes and starring the renowned German actor Conrad Veidt. The film was so successful that Veidt was banned from performing in his native Germany. Back in Britain, the story was turned into a play by Ashley Dukes, a German speaking soldier who pioneered German drama in Britain. The original cast included the now veteran of the stage Peggy Ashcroft.

The storyline was controversial enough to merit censoring the British film in Germany. The Nazis made their own version in 1936 distorting any ambiguities that may have been found in the original. This propagandist version was likewise banned but in Britain. The story is set before the emancipation. It revolves around Jew Suss, a Jew living in the ghetto of 18th century Germany as it is now known. In his lust for greed and power he moves out of the ghetto and into the Christian Dukedom of Wirtenburg where he becomes the Privy Treasurer.

Suss still retains many of his doubts about assimilating and keeps his precious daughter far away from his transactions with Christians and in particular the Duke. The beautiful daughter is then sent off to the wilderness where she is found hiding from the Duke. Invariably the evil Duke tries but does not succeed in seducing her. In an effort to save her honour Suss's daughter commits suicide. It is only after this tragedy that Suss contemplates the significance of life and stages a coup in order to act out his vengeance. Without wanting to give too much away, I will say that it ends like all tragedies with a bitter but profound ending.

*Jew Suss* will be staged at The Riddles Court Theatre off the Royal Mile (Lawnmarket) as part of Diverse Attractions, a series of plays supported by Edinburgh District Council. Performances start at 4 pm on August 21st and will run until the 26th of the month. I'm sure it will be an enjoyable and successful run for both the participants and spectators concerned.

Best wishes to both Andrew and Lisa and good luck with your future prospects.

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# The Arab Uprising : Old Aims, New Strategy

The political aim of the Intifada, argues **Harold Fisch**, is fundamentally the same as that of the uprising of the 1930's, albeit method and strategy are radically different

## Comparison with the 1930's

The 'Uprising' which Israel has been attempting to thwart for the past year and a half is not essentially a new phenomenon. In 1933, then again in 1936 and 1937, the Arabs of Palestine led by the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini – the Arafat of those days – mounted a civil revolt in Palestine accompanied by inflammatory addresses by preachers at the Mosques, the systematic murder of other Arabs regarded as traitors and above all attacks on Jewish civilian targets with special emphasis on the 'new settlements' of the time, i.e. kibbutzim and townships which the Yishuv and the Zionist Movement had set up with a view to securing and expanding the Jewish presence in the Land.

So what else is new, we may ask? But of course there is a difference. The 'Intifada' of the 1930's was directed as much against the British as against the Jews – in fact rather more against the British whose policy it sought to change. And the British, though they vacillated a good deal, seeking to appease the Mufti if possible, cracked down hard when things got out of hand. During the first wave of violence 26 Arabs were killed for the loss of one British soldier and in 1927 the British applied even more massive force to quell the Arab rioters, including capital punishment for offenders and collective reprisals against whole villages. Any hesitations about the use of force by the British were not due to moral squeamishness but to the pro-Arab policies of the Foreign Office in London which was out to bury the Balfour Declaration and the British commitments under the League of Nations mandate. And of course from this point of view that 'Uprising', in spite of staggering Arab casualties, achieved its aim. The 1939 White Paper drastically limiting Jewish immigration was the direct result of the disturbances. Britain had in effect retreated from its Zionist policy, repudiating the League of Nations mandate which had charged Britain with the task of developing the country as a

National Home for the Jewish People. Only the extraordinary and unprecedented traumas of the Second World War finally forced Britain out of Palestine and brought about the establishment of a Jewish State.

The Arabs evidently see the 'Intifada' as a repeat of the uprising of the 1930's. The same war is being pursued for similar political ends. Then the aim was to frustrate the British commitment to Zionism and to bring about a total freeze of Jewish settlement activity and immigration. Today the aim is to bring about the collapse of the Jewish State. But this they believe will be achieved primarily by a combination of internal dissension and external moral pressure. So that if the fundamental political aim remains the same, method and strategy have undergone a radical change. A new moral weapon has been discovered, viz., Israel's extreme sensitivity to world 'public opinion'. That is a major difference between the 'Uprising' in 1936 and that in 1989.

## The media and the 'Nazi' label

To take an example: nothing so deeply damages the morale of the Israeli People than the analogy between Israel and the Nazis. First originating some years ago in the Soviet propaganda machine and later taken up on a large scale in reports on the War in Lebanon, it has now become a basic underlying image governing perceptions of the Intifada by friend and foe alike. This same image is then internalised by many Israelis themselves and is a cause of deep distress and agonising internal debates. The Arabs capitalise on this weakness. Whereas in the 30's they used any weapons they could lay their hands on in their warfare against the Jews and Britain, including explosives and firearms, they now deny themselves the use of firearms, limiting themselves on the whole to rocks and petrol bombs. These of course can be lethal also, but that is not the important thing. They do not expect to be able to defeat the Israelis by force of arms. The

important thing is to create an image of 'unarmed Arab youths' facing a brutal Israeli soldiery (BBC report on May 22, 1989). And yet paradoxically, as the Arabs well know, this 'brutal Israeli soldiery' is, through in-built moral constraints, inhibited from employing its full force against this mode of warfare. There is here a kind of insurance policy for the safe continuance of the Intifada. The Israeli command will not send the tanks into Nablus and Hebron in order to quell the rising by sheer force as the Soviets did not so long ago when confronting rioters in Armenia and Georgia, or as the Syrians did a year ago when faced with dissident groups in the North, or as the Government of Morocco did last year, or as the Jordanians did from time to time when they ruled the West Bank or the British when they ruled Palestine. So the rioting continues and Israel treats it as a police operation to be dealt with by tear-gas and rubber bullets. People get killed just the same. And of course Israel gets a bad press.

The bad press is not an accidental feature of the Intifada: it is a major part of the strategy. The hope is that the pressure of public opinion expressed through the printed and electronic media will help to bring about the collapse of Israel. It is difficult to think of any other major international confrontation in which the press is so clearly a party to the conflict. In this sense the present conflict in the Middle East is unique. Nothing like the same press attention accompanies the confrontation between Turkey and Greece in Cyprus, or between the warring parties in Lebanon, or between Protestants and Catholics in Ulster. Even when the Iraqis were recently busy systematically decimating their Kurdish minority with poison-gas, little of it was seen on television. One of the reasons for this was that the Iraqis kept the television cameras out of the way. Israel being an open society run on democratic lines does not exercise this kind of total control over the media, domestic or foreign. The result: no intolerable international pressure was brought to bear on the Iraqis at the time, whereas the Israeli police and Army, reacting to intense provocation by beating

up and sometimes shooting the rock-throwers and petrol-bombers, can be visually presented as Nazi types. If they were Nazis there would be no pictures. They would keep out the Press as the Iraqis do and, indeed, as the British did in the Falklands.

### Sudetenland analogy

Israel's relative openness thus ironically makes it easier for those wishing to portray her as repressive! As a result of this strange feature of the Israeli/Arab conflict, politicians from foreign States permit themselves strange liberties. Mr. Gerald Kaufman MP, for instance, is on record as declaring that 'the intifada is a genuine resistance movement... I support the intifada'. (Speech in London, December 17, 1988). In a later statement he made in Jerusalem he explained this as meaning that of course he doesn't hold with violence but he supports the intifada insofar as it expresses the Palestinian frustration with the Israeli occupation and their wish for self-determination. (*The Jerusalem Post*, December 1988, quoting from a statement made at the American Colony Hotel, December 27, 1988).

Just imagine a visiting Israeli politician in London commenting on the Irish troubles in the same fashion that Mr. Kaufman commented on the Intifada. Let me paraphrase his remarks: 'Because I want talks and because I want peace in Northern Ireland I support the IRA. I don't support violence of course, but we have to understand that the IRA expresses Irish frustration with the British occupation and the wish to a united Ireland'. I think Mr. Kaufman would be the first to say that a leading Israeli politician venturing to come to London as a British guest and expressing himself in this way had stepped seriously out of line! And he would be right.

But what of the substance of Mr. Kaufman's remarks, in particular his argument about the Palestinian-Arab right of self-determination? This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War. We should remind ourselves that the War was triggered off by Hitler's claiming the right of self-determination for the ethnic Germans of the Sudetenland. This claim which the western powers accepted at Munich led to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain evidently believed the German leadership when they said this was their 'last territorial demand'. Our friends in the West today likewise believe that self-determination for the Arabs of Judea and Samaria is the last of Arafat's

territorial demands. Israel does not believe it. On this there is a broad national consensus. It is also the case that the militant groups in Arafat's own PLO do not believe it either. Nor have they repudiated the Palestinian National Covenant or Charter (1964, 1968 and 1974) which calls for the elimination of the Zionist entity.

But perhaps our friends abroad are right and we should assume that Arafat has genuinely renounced his original aims. We would thus have no need to fear what is written in article 15 of the Charter about the planned elimination of Israel. But just suppose for a moment that it is the other way round — that the Czech analogy is accurate and the Arab States such as Syria really mean what they say, that the PLO covenant really means what it says, and that after cutting Israel down to size — by tearing away the provinces of Judea and Samaria in the name of self-determination for their Arab inhabitants — the Arabs will then prepare themselves for the final dismantling of the Jewish State. Then Mr. Kaufman will be found to have made a mistake. Being a gentleman he will no doubt admit his error. After all, politicians make mistakes, and they survive to fight another day. But for Israel this would not be a mistake, it would be the end. She would simply have ceased to exist and there would be a nice obituary in *The Times*.

Israel is understandably unwilling to lend herself to such a scenario. Too much is involved. It is not only a matter of the Israeli government's responsibility for the security of its citizens, it is a matter of the responsibility that we owe to the generations that have gone by and to those still to come. Life itself is involved and — more than that — the tree of life in the midst of the Garden.

*Harold Fisch, author and literary critic, is professor of English and Comparative Literature at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. Born in Birmingham and educated in Sheffield and Oxford, his studies were interrupted by three years service in the Royal Navy during the Second World War. He lectured in English literature at Leeds University from 1947-1957. Immigrating to Israel with his family in 1957, he headed the department of English at Bar-Ilan University and later served as rector of the University. He, his wife Joyce, their five children and their grandchildren all reside in Israel although he has frequently held visiting appointments in Britain and the USA. Professor Fisch has lectured widely in his own field as well as on Jewish and Zionist topics. In 1977 he served as a member of his country's delegation to the UN General Assembly.*

*His published works include books on Milton, Shakespeare and S.Y. Agnon and most recently, on biblical poetics: Poetry with a Purpose. His 1984 study of literary mythology, A Remembered Future, last year appeared in an Italian translation. He is perhaps best known among general readers for The Zionist Revolution which recently appeared in a revised Hebrew edition and is currently being translated into Russian.*

*Professor Fisch is at present on a visit to Edinburgh as a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at Edinburgh University. (photo page 10)*

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# Sweet Water and Bitter Water

by Clive Sinclair

Edinburgh is not, as you may think, on the edge of the Jewish world. Far to the North lies Stockholm.

The Baltic is not salty enough for the *terado navalis*, the maritime mite that devours the hulls of wooden vessels wrecked elsewhere. Thus the flagship of Gustavus Adolphus, the *Wasa*, was raised more or less intact after three centuries on the bottom of Stockholm harbour. Even the air feels unadulterated, too sterile for the appetites of germs that thrive in more Southerly climes. But then you remember Strindberg who, in an alchemical frenzy, tried to transmute his urine into gold, and you realise that the invisible bugs which infect the mind are as prevalent here as anywhere. And you recollect that Stockholm is built on a series of islands, stitched together by bridges, half land and half sea. I am here to lecture on literature and to participate, more generally, in a Jewish Cultural Week.

'And now, my dear Clive,' says the chairman of the opening symposium, 'perhaps you'll begin by explaining why you became a writer'. 'Oh, for the very best of reasons,' I reply, 'Freudian ones. I wanted to attract women, and found I operated better at a distance. My first attempts were therefore letters. Then I surmised that the recipients would be even more impressed if I could get these efforts published. Only much later did it occur to me that my ambitions were somewhat limited. Now I want to seduce the world.' Though I'll settle for the audience this morning, hence my careful preparations on their behalf.

But the thought given to my appearance is as nothing compared to that given to his by Bernard Henri-Lévy, but then he is a philosopher. His clothes doubtless represent his manichean world view, being black and white, though what the upturned shirt collar signifies is beyond me. Bernard Henri-Lévy is French and, like me, was born in the year that Israel was refloated upon history's deep waters. There the resemblance ends. He is about six feet tall and has thick black hair which he habitually combs with his fingers. His features are sharp, the sort that appealed to the late Françoise Truffaut.

Bernard Henri-Lévy is not only a philosopher, he is also an orator. More than that; he is a personification. Thus, when called upon to speak by the chairman, he begins by announcing: 'We were Maoists, we were Leninists, and those of us who were Jews were Sartrean Jews'. 'We' does not indicate some royal delusion, but refers to the generation of '68. A Sartrean Jew is one who is dependent upon antisemitism for his identity. Judaism was therefore regarded by the generation of '68 (as personified by Bernard Henri-Lévy) as a hindrance to genuine self-expression. Or so Bernard Henri-Lévy thought when he sat down to write his first philosophical text. It went swimmingly until he came to the subject of evil. 'That chapter proved impossible to write,' he says. 'Each day I tied it up, and each night it undid itself'. It is a problem he has since solved, not with modern philosophy, but with ancient Hebrew texts. Yes, Bernard Henri-Lévy is a *baltshuve*, a born-again Jew; though, because he is a philosopher, it is his thought process rather than his behaviour that has been altered. He still acts like a Frenchman.

The third member of our panel is Janina Bauman whose book, *Winter in the Morning*, describes her childhood in the Warsaw ghetto. She did not, in fact, leave Poland until 1968. Her English, though fluent, betrays this late arrival. Otherwise she seems a well-adjusted woman, afflicted with nothing worse than nicotine addiction. Although she is here on account of her book she has not adopted the hang-dog appearance of the professional survivor, nor has she adopted the pulpit-patter that usually accompanies it. Her subject is the universal application of the Holocaust experience. Unlike some I could name she does not dwell upon the moral superiority of the Jew. Actually I do name Elie Wiesel, and not to give him compliments.

This enrages Bernard Henri-Lévy, much to my surprise, who looks upon Wiesel as a saint. He says it is our sacred duty to memorialise the dead whom Wiesel (a fellow personification) speaks for. I am accused of wanting to forget about the Holocaust. This, in turn, enrages

me. 'I said I didn't feel inclined to write about the Holocaust,' I reply, 'not that I didn't want to know about it. You are a thinker, you are supposed to know that there is a big difference between fiction and history. The former being lies'.

By now the audience of critics, artists and assorted intellectuals has begun to take sides. I look around and observe that most of the women only have eyes for Bernard Henri-Lévy. What these moist orbs express is not hostility. In fact the cerebral osteopath has both sexes in the palm of his hand. Take that lady, a buxom film-maker, very popular in Sweden, who has been so moved by Bernard Henri-Lévy's confessions that she wants to share her dreams with us. When she was a kid, she reveals, she was very proud of the drawings she did at school. So much so that she showed them to her dad, a stern critic, who told her to put them in the dustbin. 'Since then,' she says, 'I have not touched a pencil'. At least, not in the flesh. In her dream of life, on the other hand, she has a fat portfolio. Sage rabbis encourage her to fill it, paternal disapproval notwithstanding. These are, she has been reliably informed, Jungian archetypes. And it is her duty to follow

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the rabbinic advice, as Bernard Henri-Lévy has done in his own way, to find herself through Judaism. According to her analyst there has been a veritable epidemic of such anti-assimilationist dreams in Stockholm.

The headquarters of the Jewish Community, the Judiska Forsamlingen, and its neighbour, the Great Synagogue, are built, like the rest of Stockholm, on islands. The mud below their particular island is not especially stable, so much so that the building opposite looks as if it is auditioning for the part of *The House of Usher*. To forestall similar occurrences on the Semitic side of the street piles are being driven down to reinforce the foundations of Wahrendorffsgatan 3. It is in the Judiska Forsamlingen's library, a long room lined with dark wood and books, that the Jewish Cultural Week is to be officially inaugurated.

We are all here, of course, the

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controversies of the symposium still as fresh as the salmon we're being offered as an hors d'oeuvre. For some the main course is fish roll in cream sauce, for others – notably the speaker himself – it is Bernard Henri-Lévy's lecture. Accordingly he excuses himself from the table and repairs to a small room, wherein he may prepare himself. When he returns it is in the guise of a romantic hero; his dark hair is swept back, his dazzling white shirt unbuttoned to the pupik. 'Do you know the first question he asked me when I collected him from Arlanda?' whispers one of the Cultural Week's organisers. "How many reporters are coming to my lecture?"

Bernard Henri-Lévy needn't have worried. The hall, which seats 250, is packed. Writers, journalists, artists, starry-eyed women, all quiver with expectation. Outside people are being turned away, 'His bag was filled with 25 kilos of papers, just so that he could carry on with his book in Stockholm,' adds my Swedish informant, anxious to correct any wrong impression he may have created. 'It was so heavy I could hardly lift it.' If those are the volumes he requires for two days in a foreign capital, who can measure the burden of his mind, now in its fourth decade? He must have devoured more books than are housed in this building, library and all. Indeed, he quotes from most of them in his lecture, as erudition pours from his tongue like lava.

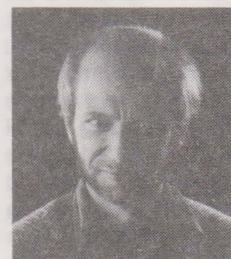
He leans upon the lectern, and speaks in confidential tones of his past mistakes (Mao, Lenin, Sartre), until he knows that his audience forgives him, then he tells of his repentance, of his Jewish renaissance. Finally, with a smile, he concludes that literature itself, by dint of its talmud-like nature, is also Jewish. I join the applause, for it has indisputably been an excellent performance, to have spoken so fluently in a foreign tongue (English being our lingua franca) with only a few notes to guide him. Bernard Henri-Lévy, now leaning Chopin-like against the grand piano, absorbs the adoration. A born performer, without a trace of self-doubt, he will certainly be a hard act to follow.

In his closing remarks the chairman offers the French philosopher's chameleon ability to change his convictions from day to day as proof positive of his genius, but a fierce woman in the row behind me remains unconvinced. 'He is so impressed to have a genius as a friend that he has lost his sense of judgement,' she says of the chairman. 'He is like a lion tamer in a

circus who boasts 'Ladies and gentlemen, here is a wild beast I have pacified for you' and then proceeds to put the animal through its paces. And naturally the genius obliges.'

Stockholm is a watery city, there's no escaping that. Near the parliament building are the locks where the salt licks of the Baltic meet the sweet waters of the local rivers. Here fishermen stand all day in their sou'westers, casting long lines in the hope of landing salmon. I know just how they feel.

My lecture is indebted to Paul Kleem, who wrote: 'To stand despite all possibilities to fall.' This, I explain to my audience of 40 (which does not include the philosopher, who has returned to France), describes not only the Jewish nation, not only this building, but also my position at the lectern. Defying gravity I compare myself to the fishermen of Stockholm, as I try to pull a prize from my swirling inheritance of English culture and Jewish history. Both streams influence my writing; language enables me to pursue each image to its logical conclusion; history, a more physical proposition, forces me to judge this and every act by its most extreme consequence. I do not allow the judgement to circumscribe my prose, but I cannot ignore it either. So I feel guilty and, as a result, punish my alter egos. I do not write about the Holocaust, it is true, but it is ever present. Speaking metaphysically now, I conclude that the Jewish writer is a fallen soul, on account of that unparalleled sin. We are naked piscators, pitched at the locks of life, with one foot in paradise and the other in hell.



*Clive Sinclair was born in London in 1948 and educated at the Universities of East Anglia and California at Santa Cruz. His first collection of stories, Hearts of*

*Gold, won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1981. In 1983 his biographical-critical study, The Brothers Singer, was published and in the same year he was one of the twenty writers included in the Book Marketing Council's 'Best of Young British Novelists' campaign. His highly acclaimed novels Blood Libels and Diaspora Blues were published in 1985 and 1987 respectively. His new novel, Cosmetic Effects, will be published by Andre Deutsch in September. He lives in St. Albans with his wife and child.*

# Remembering Arthur Koestler

by John Beloff

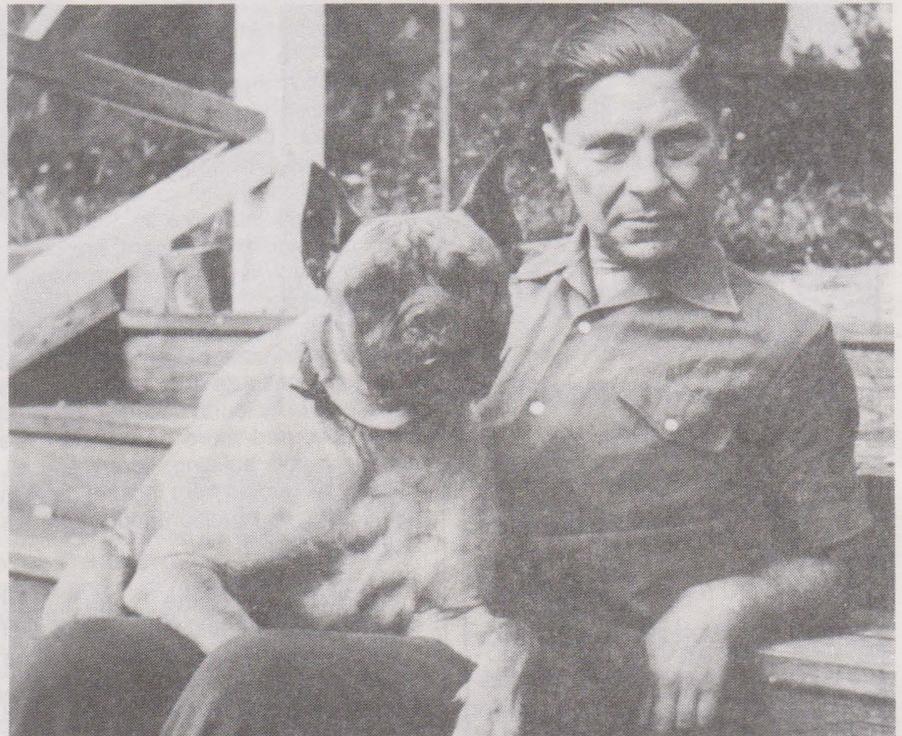
My interest in Koestler goes back a long way. It was, for example, from reading Koestler while the war was still on, that I first learnt the terrible truth about the holocaust. His *Darkness at Noon*, the book which made him famous, had come out at the beginning of the war but, though a devastating exposé of the horrors of Stalinism, it dealt specifically with the destruction of the old-guard Bolsheviks in the show trials. His book of essays, *The Yogi and the Commissar*, which was published during the last year of the war, contained one article, *Soviet Myth and Reality*, which threw down the gauntlet to all those of vaguely left-wing leanings who, while not being exactly pro-Soviet, felt that to be outspokenly anti-Communist was to play into the hands of the reactionaries. Koestler, on the other hand, despised any sort of moral compromises with Communism and, to the dismay of leading French intellectuals and others, he persisted in trying to open our eyes to the threat it posed to the free world.

## A Multi-faceted Intellect

Ever since the British Government intervened on his behalf, to save his life, when he was a prisoner of Franco in a Seville gaol during the Civil War in Spain, Koestler has had a particular fondness for the British, though the relationship was not always without its stresses or its ambivalence. He was often denounced as a scaremonger whose strident tone was unbecoming in a would-be Englishman. However, from our present vantage point, after Khrushchev had spoken, after all that we have learnt from the dissidents, after reading our Solzhenitsyn, can we accuse Koestler of overstating his case? At all events, by 1955, Koestler decided that he had done what he could to put his message across and that there was no point in continuing in the same vein 'Cassandra had gone hoarse and is in need of a change of vocation' as he put it at the time. It was then that, returning to his old interest in science – his first real job had been as science correspondent to the Ullstein Press in Germany – he embarked on an exploration of a variety of topics of scientific, historical and philosophical interest which continued right up to his death. This new Koestler, as it happened, interested me personally, more even than the political Koestler. I was specially fascinated by the many-sidedness of the

man. That someone who had made his name as a novelist and political commentator could go on to establish a reputation in such very different realms of thought was something that struck me as remarkable and admirable in this age of specialisation. At the same time, it is this diversity that makes any overall assessment of Koestler and of his

political passion. He even dropped out of his course at the University of Vienna without taking a degree in order, the sooner, to go and work in Palestine though, in the event, he stayed less than three years. It is significant that it was the extreme wing of the Zionist movement, the party led by Vladimir Jabotinsky which came to be known as the Revisionists,



The man and his dog. Arthur Koestler with Sabby in 1949. Koestler was 43 years old.

importance as a figure of our times so difficult.

Koestler's multi-faceted intellect posed almost insuperable problems for his biographers. Ian Hamilton, formerly editor of the *Spectator*, who was bold enough to attempt a biography while Koestler was still alive, failed to satisfy either Koestler or himself or his admirers. His solution was to dwell on Koestler as a political writer and activist and to compress his scientific contributions into a few final chapters, he makes no secret, for example, of his total lack of sympathy with Koestler interest in the paranormal.

## Judaism and Israel

Zionism was, in fact, Koestler's earliest

that attracted his support. During the long period when he was first a Communist and then an anti-Communist, his Zionism remained dormant but when, after the war, a Jewish state came into existence, Koestler wrote two books in celebration of this event, a novel *Thieves in the Night*, published in 1946 and dedicated to Jabotinsky, and *Promise and Fulfilment*, published in 1949, an historical account of developments from the time of the Balfour Declaration up to the proclamation of independence. Koestler, I may say, who liked to be on the spot when great events were happening managed to be present to report on the setting up of the new state. What is curious, however, about both these books is the extent to which he makes himself an apologist for the Irgun and the fact that Begin rather than Ben Gurion is their real hero. I find this curious

because it was after all his belief that the end cannot justify the means that had made him break so completely with Communism.

It was not, however, this extremism which scandalised the Jews of the Diaspora but rather the conclusions which Koestler wanted us to draw from the triumph of Zionism. In an epilogue he wrote to his *Promise and Fulfilment* he argues that, as from 15 May 1948, there are only two logical options for every Jew outside Israel. Either he or she must decide to remain a Jew and therefore go to Israel and throw in their lot with the nation that had been reborn or else cease to be a Jew and renounce any distinctive Jewish heritage. This dilemma arose, according to Koestler, because the Jewish religion, unlike the other great world religions, was inseparably bound up with the idea of nationhood. Now that, once again, Jews had their own country, it was, he thought, hypocritical to continue to practice the Jewish religion while remaining aloof from Israel. Since he, for one, was not willing to become an Israeli citizen, he was still too much of a European, he accepted this logic for himself. It would not matter, he agreed, if our decision affected only ourselves, people have the right to live as they please even if this means being inconsistent. But what right, he asked, have we to impose the burden of being a people apart on the next generation with all the attendant hazards of anti-semitism which this implies?

Not surprisingly, Koestler's thesis was strongly resented by a great many Jews who had no intention either of emigrating to Israel or of abandoning their Jewishness. His critics pointed out that he had grossly exaggerated the nationalistic element in Judaism which was really a creed of a high moral order with implications for all mankind. The advent of a Jewish state, they argued, in no way absolved the Jews of the Diaspora from continuing to uphold that creed. And I would agree that Koestler is here guilty of trying to be too rational in a situation where sentiment rather than reason is the decisive factor. One critic, Hyam Maccoby, writing in *Encounter*, following Koestler's death, suggested that Koestler had never been at ease with his Jewishness and was searching for a pretext that would allow him to become assimilated with a good conscience. On the other hand, it would seem to me that for the non-religious Jew the problem of assimilation can be left to take care of itself. Whatever stance we may take individually, nothing can stop the drift towards intermarriage in the ensuing



Arthur Koestler in his seventies with wife Cynthia and David at their house on Montpellier Square.

generations. But, unlike Koestler, I see no sign that Judaism is losing its attraction for Jews in general, on the contrary, there is evidence that orthodoxy has gained support in recent years. And why should it disappear? If Jews can still believe that they are God's chosen people even after what happened with the holocaust, clearly nothing is ever likely to disabuse them.

Koestler wrote one more book that again created controversy in Jewish circles. This was his *Thirteenth Tribe* published in 1976. The title was suggested by his friend Harold Harris but the subtitle is: *The Khazar Empire and its Heritage*. There Koestler develops a thesis that had already been put forward by an obscure Israeli historian, Abraham Poliak, to the effect that the Ashkenazim, who are, after all, the major and dominant sector of the world Jewry, are not, as they have always supposed, the descendants of the Ancient Hebrews but rather the descendants of this Turkish people who were converted *en masse* to Judaism in the 8th century A.D. and who were dispersed following the collapse of their empire in the Caucasus around 1100 A.D. Koestler was obviously apprehensive about the uses to which his revelations might be put by anti-Zionists wanting to question the legitimacy of Israel because he added an appendix to his book to point out that nothing short of genocide can now undo the existence of Israel whose legitimacy is both *de facto* and *de jure*. The book which is avowedly speculative was not particularly well received by the critics generally.

## Personal Impression

I was not until the late 1950's that I first met Koestler in person. This came about because my sister Nora, a political journalist then on the staff of the *Observer*, had come to know Koestler quite well through their common interests. Koestler, I may say, belonged to the circle of David Astor and wrote frequently for the *Observer*. One could even go so far as to say that the abolition of the death penalty in Britain owes not a little to the joint efforts of Koestler and Astor for it was the *Observer* which published his influential tract, *Reflections on Hanging* in 1955. When we first met I had as yet no reason to suspect that the problem of the paranormal and of its place in the scheme of things, which was coming increasingly to occupy my attention, would eventually also become a dominant preoccupation of his and that this would result in bringing us together but, when it did come about, I found him most obliging. I was vaguely aware that there was another less attractive side to Koestler which, as a casual acquaintance, I was unlikely ever to see. Moreover the benign Koestler that I knew was the mellower Koestler of the later years when he had settled down in relative peace and calm with his devoted wife Cynthia to a life of mainly scholarly pursuits. I never knew the youthful firebrand, abrasive, irascible, quarrelsome, intolerant, bullying, given to fierce bouts of drinking and an insatiable womaniser. Those characteristics I had to discover by reading the various reminiscences that have found their way

into print, like the short memoir, affectionate but frank, by his old friend and fellow Hungarian, George Mikes. But, for all his faults, everyone who knew him seems to be agreed on two things which are important; he had great courage and he was compassionate and very generous to those who needed his help.

### Scientist or Philosopher?

Koestler is not an easy person to place in academic terms. He was not a research scientist, if by this we mean someone who carries out experiments or, at least, puts forward testable hypotheses, but neither was he a philosopher, if by that we mean someone who proposes solutions to recognisably philosophical problems. His contribution, rather, was to try and make us see old problems in a new way and, where necessary, challenge scientific orthodoxy and prevailing beliefs generally. For this task he was particularly well equipped: while a specialist tends to see a problem in the only context with which he is familiar, a polymath like Koestler is able to approach it from many different angles, if only because his frames of reference are so much more extensive. Thus Koestler succeeds in exemplifying in his own work the very concept which he himself introduced as the key to the creative process, that of 'bisociation'. In routine thinking we pass from one idea to the next according to what was traditionally known as the 'association of ideas'. In creative thinking, on the other hand, what happens is that two quite disparate fields of thought are suddenly made to collide as a result of some idea that unexpectedly unites them. It is this that constitutes what Koestler calls a 'bisociation'.

The point of departure for his discussion of bisociation is the joke. The punchline of a joke or the point of some pun or witticism always involves such a collision between two contexts that have very different emotional charges. The disturbance which this sets up in our cognitive-emotive system finds its outlet in the reflex of laughter. Koestler finds a great deal that is illuminating to say on the topic of humour, a topic about which academic psychologists have had surprisingly little to say, perhaps because it does not easily lend itself to experimentation. But his analysis of laughter represents only the first step in what becomes a massive treatise on creativity in the sciences and the arts. A critical invention, a key discovery, exemplifies the bisociative process as does an original poetic metaphor or some innovation in the visual arts. Both scientists and artists, if they are

to be more than technicians, have, at some point, to break out of the mould of habit and tradition and they do this, according to Koestler, by letting themselves be guided by those unconscious regions of the mind which are at once more primitive and less structured than our waking consciousness but are, at the same time, more favourable to the emergence of new combinations of ideas. What specially angered Koestler about Behaviourism, which had for so long exercised such a hold over academic psychology, and against which he waged a life-long struggle, was that all such stimulus-response psychology ignores or belittles the element of spontaneity and creativity in the human being which, for Koestler, was the glory of our species.

In the event, how influential was he? He certainly enjoyed a wide following with the reading public, his books sold well and were translated into many languages. On the other hand, his relationship with the academic and scientific community was always somewhat strained. No doubt a polymath is bound to be an object of suspicion in such circles; to the hardened professional the shortcomings of such a person is apt to loom larger than their breadth of knowledge. To aggravate matters, Koestler's ideas tended to be sweeping and imprecise and did not lend themselves readily to becoming starting points of theses and research projects which are the stuff of academic life.

### Beyond Ordinary Reality

I come finally to that aspect of Koestler which has had most impact on me personally, namely his fascination with the paranormal. Although, as his two volumes of autobiography reveal, it was an interest that goes back a long way and was stimulated by certain incidents in his own life it was not until very late in his career that he published anything on this topic more ambitious than the occasional essay.

These experiences left their mark and convinced him that behind the commonsense world that we know through the senses, and behind the conceptual world that we know through the intellect and through science, there was yet a 'third order of reality' which somehow gives meaning to all the rest but which we can only occasionally glimpse, either through these mystical intimations or because this order occasionally penetrates the mundane order in the form of some paranormal event. In the past, mystics have usually expressed

themselves through religious language but Koestler was never able to accept religious doctrines whether of the Western or of the Oriental variety. I would surmise that he was drawn to parapsychology, like many others before him, because he was unable to 'find satisfaction' either in the assurances of religion nor yet in the materialistic world view of science.



*John Beloff was born in London in 1920, the son of Russian-Jewish parents. He graduated in psychology from University College, London in 1952 and then taught at Queen's*

*University, Belfast, where he obtained his Ph.D. in 1956. He joined the staff of the Department of Psychology of Edinburgh University in 1963. He retired in 1985 but is now an 'Honorary Fellow' of the Department where he continued to work on matters that interest him. He first became acquainted with Koestler around 1960. They shared an interest in the paranormal. When Koestler died, in 1983, he left instruction that John Beloff was to be an executor of his will. He had bequeathed his entire estate to founding a Chair of Parapsychology at a British University. The Chair was eventually established at Edinburgh University, in 1985, in the Department of Psychology, with Robert Morris, an American, as its first incumbent.*

## PHOTOS

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# Was The Thirteenth Tribe Also Lost?

Jonathan Bard examines genetic evidence which argues against Koestler's assertion about the origins of Polish Jews

In the mid 70's Arthur Koestler created something of a furore when he suggested in his lucid and enjoyable book, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, that the Jews of Poland and the Pale of Settlement were not part of the Diaspora of Jews from ancient Palestine, but the descendants of the Khazars, a group who lived in the Middle East up until the early Middle Ages (see article by John Beloff, this issue). This suggestion was not novel, but Koestler marshalled and publicised the historical and other evidence to an extent that had not previously been done and the work found a receptive audience, particularly outside the Jewish community. The evidence for Koestler's assertion was to a very great extent circumstantial but not easy to disprove using normal methods, as there are few published records from the period which would allow us to accept or reject it. For the historian, therefore, Koestler's view remains a conjecture. What Koestler did not realise, however, was that there might be scientific evidence strong enough to allow one to decide whether he was likely to be right or wrong in his view of the origins of the Polish and

Russian Jews. Here, I want to discuss this evidence and the conclusions to which it drives us, but I shall first summarise Koestler's views.

## Koestler's Argument

The story begins in the eighth century in an area called Khazaria which was to the North of and between the Caspian and Black Seas. There, the Khazars, a small prosperous group, were caught between the Christians and the Muslims of what are now Russia and Iran, adopted Judaism as their state religion. We might like to think that this mass religious conversion was based on the beauty and intellectual strength of Judaism, but it is more likely that the King and his advisors thought that the powers to the North and South would both view a Jewish community as neutral in any power struggles that might take place. The evidence for this conversion is substantial and uncontroversial, being based on a wealth of documentary data.

In the middle of the thirteenth century,

however, two notable events took place. First, the Khazars, who were by then in decline, were overrun by the Mongols and dispersed and, second, the King of Poland opened up his country, allowing free immigration and the promise of freedom from persecution. Koestler argued that the majority of the dispersed Jewish Khazars migrated North West to Poland and intermarried with smaller numbers of Jews who migrated there from Germany and other parts of Europe. Again, there is reason to believe that a number of Khazars did go to Poland: there are documents, linguistic evidence and religious artefacts testifying to this. However, what we do not know is whether these Khazars formed the great majority of the Jewish immigrants and hence of the Ashkenazi Jews, as Koestler asserts, or whether they were a small minority, as Jewish tradition believes.

Until recently, the lack of census evidence about the immigrants to Poland would have left us with yet another historical question that could not be answered. There is however another form of historical record, one reflecting our biological nature, that gives us some insight into what happened: because the Polish Jews were essentially a localised inbreeding group, the genetic complement of the Jews who originally colonised Poland will have been handed down through the generations to those living today, and its analysis should tell us something about their origins. The historical question of whether the Polish Jews were descended from a group who converted to Judaism or from Jews who could, in principle at least, trace their ancestry back to the people of Israel can be transformed to a genetic question: do the Polish Jews have a gene pool comparable to Jews of whose ancestry we can be certain or do they not? If the gene pools are similar, we can reject Koestler's view; if they are different, we cannot.

## The Genetic Approach

Before trying to answer the question, it would probably be sensible to spend a few

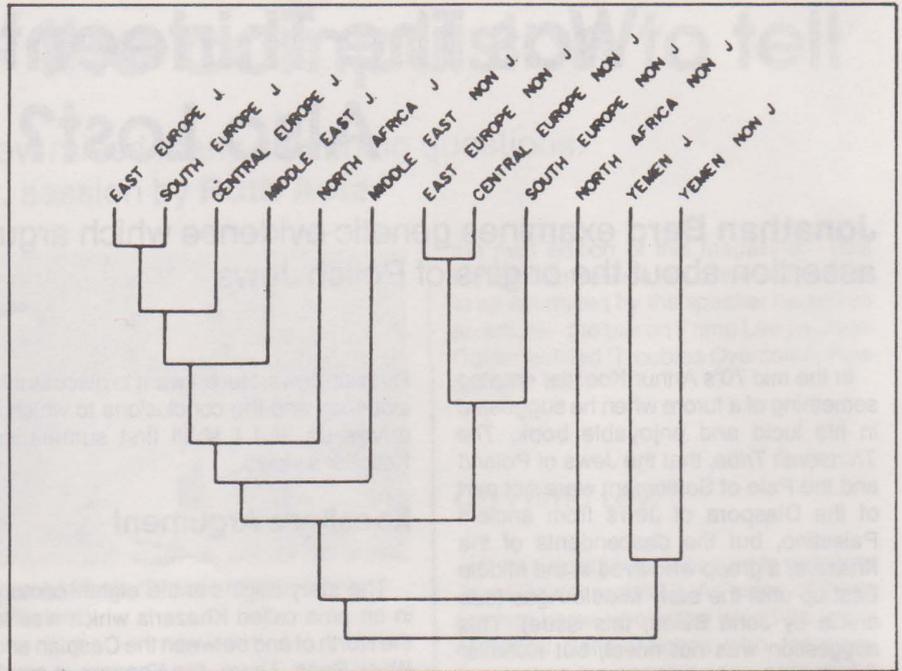


The map shows the area in which the Kazars lived and the direction of migration (arrow) that Koestler assumed they took after their dispersion.

paragraphs discussing what genes and gene pools are and how we can measure them. This is not a simple thing to do, partly because we do not know enough about genes and partly because the measurement techniques depend on very complex mathematics. However, it is not too difficult to get a rough idea of what is going on and the first step is to understand what is meant by genes. These are small pieces of DNA, the material that forms the chromosomes and hence the store of information present in all living cells in two copies, one from the father and the other from the mother. These genes carry the instructions for making organisms, although we do not know the roles of most of the 50,000 or so that are responsible for each of us. However, some are known to make the chemicals that break down the food that we eat, others handle our immune response, a very large number are involved in laying down our anatomy before birth and a further group determine such innate behaviour as reflexes.

In most cases, however, we cannot assign a specific role to an individual gene, partly because we have no general way of doing this, and partly because many genes work together to fulfil a single function. Indeed, we often cannot be certain that what seems to be inherited genetically is actually so. We might, for example, suppose that there should be a gene for a hooked nose, a characteristic generally thought of as Jewish. However, Koestler mentions an analysis of a random population in New York caucasians which showed that this feature was not noticeably more common among Jews than other groups and, indeed, we know nothing of its heritability. Similarly, we might also think that the characteristics normally known as the 'Jewish mother' syndrome (no definition offered!) might be inherited through genes. In fact, there is no evidence that it is and the syndrome, such as it is, is inherited culturally — we behave in ways that we learn from our parents. When we examine any complex facet of human biology, we usually find that our genes and our environment combine together to determine the end result in ways too complex to analyse satisfactorily. The IQ quotient that is a measure of our intelligence provides a clear example: the current and entirely plausible view is that our genetic inheritance provides an upper and lower bound for our potential intelligence, but the environment in which we grow up determines, in ways that remain partly opaque, our actual intelligence.

This brief summary makes it clear that, if we are to distinguish Ashkenazi



The diagram illustrates the genetic distance between Jewish and non-Jewish populations using data from ten blood-group genes.

Jews from Khazars or, indeed, Jews from non-Jews on genetic grounds, the analysis will not be easy, particularly as there are not genes that are specifically Jewish — apart from a few rare genetic disorders such as Tay-Sachs disease (The Edinburgh Star, March 1989, p. 16). Indeed, the enterprise will only be practical if we can analyse in a very large number of people a range of genes responsible for simple, well-defined characteristics that can be measured easily and which are likely to show a range of effects within a population. It is almost too obvious to mention that, although all humans are similar (as compared say to any other animal), there are distinct differences among any particular feature that make an individual unique. These differences occur not only in our external characteristics, but also at the genetic level where they are known as *polymorphisms*. Most of these genetic differences remain obscure, but a few have been very carefully studied for medical reasons and the best known occur in blood. Here, there are specific molecules on the surface of blood cells each of which may exist in one of several forms. There are thus several alternatives for each of the genes responsible for any particular marker and the ones which we have depend on those that our parents had. Everyone has heard about the ABO polymorphism, for example, because of its significance for blood transfusions and we can use this example (in its simplified form) to introduce the idea of a gene pool.

In the USA, 45% of the white population have type A blood, 8% type B, 4% type AB and the remainder blood group O. These figures refer to what is known as the *phenotype* (what we observe), but we need to know about the *genotype* (the genes on the chromosome that are responsible for the effect). With some analysis, we can calculate the likelihood of people having one of these three alternative cell markers on either of their chromosomes and these figures tell us about the gene pool. The blood-marker phenotypes O, A, B and AB are caused by the genotypes OO, AA or AO, BB or BO and AB respectively: we carry two copies of the gene, one on each chromosome. There is, however, nothing sacred about the absolute value of the phenotype frequencies as they can vary from one community to another. Thus, if we examine the oriental population in the USA, we find that the frequencies which blood groups A, B, AB and O are found are 35, 23, 12 and 30%. The relative frequencies of the ABO polymorphism therefore provides a criterion for distinguishing one population from another. Without going into any complex analysis, it is obvious that we could not tell whether an individual was a member of the first or second group on the strength of whether his group is A, B or O. If, however, we analysed the frequencies present in a group of people drawn from a specific community, we could be fairly certain whether its gene pool resembled the first, the second or neither of the populations that we have characterised.

If we are to do such an analysis properly, we would not want to base our view on the evidence of a single blood-group gene (as Koestler seems to have considered adequate), but on a whole batch of them and it turns out that there are about 10 blood groups that one can examine by using a specific mathematical technique called *cluster analysis* that allows us to integrate the data. All we need is adequate numbers of people from distinct populations and the ability to examine the frequencies of the blood groups in each. Such an analysis could not be done today on the various geographically-distinct communities of Jews because there has been a great deal of migration and intermarriage so that the populations are no longer distinct. However, a large amount of blood-group data was collected by Israeli geneticists in the '50s and '60s when Jewish communities from many countries emigrated to Israel. These scientists also obtained directly or from the literature similar information on the non-Jewish people in these countries and so were able to undertake direct comparison on how closely the Jews resembled their non-Jewish compatriots and Jews from other countries, with the most detailed analysis being done in the early '80s, mainly in Tel Aviv by Kobyliansky and his co-workers.

### Conclusions

Thus, after our digression into genetics, we can finally, return to the question that we set out earlier, do the Polish Jews have a genetic compliment that resembles other Jewish communities? The answer is best given in a diagrammatic form of the second figure that shows the genetic closeness between the various communities that have been analysed. The simplest way to understand the diagram is to view it as a sort of family tree which, instead of giving father/son relationships, shows how closely the various groups are related. The diagram shows that the data, with one important exception, follow a simple rule. Although there are differences among the Jewish groups in distinct countries, they are always more closely related to one another than is any Jewish group to its non-Jewish compatriots, with the closest of these being Middle-Eastern non-Jews. Thus, for example, Polish Jews are more similar in their blood-group distribution to Spanish Jews than they are to non-Jewish Poles.

The exception is the Yemenite Jews whose blood-group distribution is almost indistinguishable from that of the Yemenite non-Jews and, incidentally, that of Ethiopian Jews and non-Jews. These four communities have a distribution of blood-group genes that are markedly different from the others, a result that points to the Yemenite and Ethiopian Jews originally being converts. It is also worth noting that there is more genetic data yet to be obtained in this area: the information so far analysed cannot explain how Jews come to resemble physically people from their host communities.

However, such genetic analysis that we have argues strongly against Koestler's conjecture that the Ashkenazi Jews are mainly of Khazar stock and in favour of traditional Jewish opinion that they have an origin similar to that of other Jews. Such a conclusion is politically reassuring as Arabs have not been backward in using Koestler's view as an argument against Jews taking Israel to be their proper homeland (particularly at the United Nations, as Professor Harold Fisch of Bar-Ilan University mentioned in his recent talk to the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society). As there is no evidence to support such a view, we should ask whether Koestler's book should be discarded. I would hope not! *The Thirteenth Tribe* provides a fascinating and well-researched history of an almost forgotten aspect of Jewish history. I believe that, for this reason, it should be widely read and all that we need now do is to take its major conclusion with a substantial grain of salt. The book would therefore benefit from having an up-to-date appendix added to it and a suitable heading might be 'Another Lost Tribe'.



**Jonathan Bard** was born in London in 1943. As an undergraduate he read physics at Cambridge and got his PhD in biophysics from the University of Manchester. He is an embryologist interested in how structures form in the developing foetus. He works for the Medical Research Council and has lived in Edinburgh for the last twenty years. He was president of the Jewish Literary Society during the 1988/89 session.

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An interview with Joshua Lurie

# A Sabra of Edinburgh

by Michael Adler

Joshua 'Joe' Lurie is no ordinary man. He has been and still is a very active member of the Community. For many years he has been the only supplier of Kosher meat in Edinburgh and his butcher's shop was a focal point where people and their stories converged. I went to see him at his home and I started by asking him about his background.

Well, let's start at the beginning Joe. Where did your family come from?

— My family came from Lithuania.

So what brought them to Edinburgh?

— The pogroms, conditions were bad there and they came to this country.

Did both your parents come from Lithuania?

— Yes.

When did your father leave? Towards the end of the 19th century?

— No, it was later, about 1909 or 1910.

But, what brought him to Edinburgh?

— He had a brother here and he came with the proviso that he would only be here for about three or four months and then go on to America because some of his family had gone to Sacramento, but the brother kept on saying, 'Stay another three months'. His brother had already married here and said 'Stay another three months'. Things went on, another three months led to six months, six months led to a year and ...

What about your mother?

— She arrived around the same time, but they didn't meet till later.

They didn't know each other before?

— Oh no, no. She came from Kovno Gavernia which is a shire of Vilna. My mother came with her father and mother and her younger brother and she already had three sisters here. Mrs. Rifkind was the oldest, Mrs. Simonoff and Mrs. Lichtenstein.



Joe Lurie: 'They've got to go on.'

Did your father immediately set up his own butcher's shop?

— No, he started off like all good Jewish immigrants, 'greeners' as they were called, he started travelling and ended up selling furs and jewellery. He went to the North of Scotland and he went across to the Islands. He was away for months at a time.

So he was one of the 'trebblers'.

— Trebblers, that's right, David Daiches wrote about them.

So where were you born?

— I am a 'Sabra' of Edinburgh.

When were you born?

— I was born at the end of the [first world] war.

Were you the oldest in the family?

— I was number 2.

How many children did your parents have?

— There were five of us.

So where did you go to school?

— I went to Sciennes School. All the Jews used to go to Sciennes School and then on to Boroughmuir.

Being a man of extreme modesty, Joe Lurie does not lend himself easily to being in the 'public eye'. Yet by this time he felt more at ease about describing the period of his youth and the community at that time.

Let me take you back to the time when you were growing up. When was that?

— Well, the late Twenties and the Thirties.

And this was at the time when Rabbi Daiches was the Rabbi. What was the community like in those days?

— No different from today.

There were more of them.

— *I would say there were about nearly 3,000 then.*

Would you say that they were more observant or less observant or the same mixture as today?

— *They were really the same mixture as today. You might think that some of the older people were more observant because they still wore beards and what have you, but in actual fact, when you start analysing it, you realise that they weren't.*

But they were only one extreme and there were also more assimilated Jews I suppose.

— *Well put it this way, people were more family minded which is a very important factor. Today it is very different with television and what have you. Ours was actually a rather small family. In those days I would say to have six, seven, eight children was not unusual.*

Were there services in the morning and evening?

— *Oh yes but even in those days they couldn't always get a minyan during the week.*

Would you say it was a more united community in the past than it is today?

— *Possibly, namely because we were all in Sciennes School. There really were a lot of Jewish children at Sciennes School. We got called 'yids'. In these days, it would be called anti-semitism, but*



Joe Lurie (first on left) with wife Sheva in Bangkok at a RAF party in honour of Lord Mountbatten.

*it wasn't, and we could feel secure among ourselves.*

So in your class at Sciennes for example, how many Jewish children were there?

— *Oh there were about four or five Jewish children in my class, maybe eight, nine in another class.*

But what about divisions in the community? Were there divisions?

— *There were the rich and the poor.*

*Don't forget, today you don't notice it so much. I mean people are more affluent today. Not only more affluent, they are also more worldly.*

Did the rich families also send their kids to Sciennes and Boroughmuir?

— *Most Jewish people, I would say about 90 per cent, sent their kids to Sciennes and Boroughmuir.*

Rabbi Daiches sent his children to Watson's. Was that unusual at that time?

— *Well, some Jewish children went to Watson's, but the majority went to corporation schools.*

You have referred to the rich and the poor. What were relations between the established Edinburgh families and the newcomers like?

— *Well there weren't so many newcomers between the wars, but before the 1914 war, as you can imagine, quite a few came here.*

And during the Nineteen Thirties ....

— *Well, there were the refugees. The influx, I would say, started around 1934 and 1935. We even had a club for the German refugees. They had some terrible times. There were some suicides in Edinburgh amongst the German refugees.*

Why was that?

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— There was for example one female, her name was Sabina Diamond, who came from Vienna. Her people had a chain of dairies and she didn't know they were Jewish until Hitler came and they were told they were Jews. She got out of the country, she and her brother. First of all she stayed somewhere in London and then she was sent up to Edinburgh with no choice. The only position she could take was as a domestic. Otherwise she wouldn't have been allowed to stay. This was a very difficult situation for her.

Many of these refugees were very cultured, but they were not necessarily very observant.

— Some were.

Some might have been but most weren't and may have found it very difficult to find anything in common with a traditional Jewish community in a city like Edinburgh.

— I don't know if you are aware of this, but the German Jews always felt German. Even though they had suffered great anti-semitism they managed to be Germans or Austrians and they thought of themselves as such.

Joe Lurie could have ended up training pilots or even perhaps as a high-ranking RAF officer. Fate had it that he followed the family tradition and became a butcher.

So what made your father become a

butcher?

— Well his father had been a butcher in Lithuania. It was in Nevstadt, near the border with Germany. Daiches came from the same place. They supplied contract meat to the Kosher butcher's and to the army. That was my grandfather and my father was in business with him.

So what happened? Did he get fed up with travelling?

— No, when war broke out, he was told that he either had to go back to Russia or join the Army. He went into the army and then was transferred from the Royal Fusiliers to the Jewish Battalion (Number 38/39) and was sent to Palestine and then he came back and he married my mother in 1917. He still went travelling: he was away for six months at a time, not a pleasant situation. He had some money so he bought a shop and that was it.

But when he started as a butcher there were already several other butchers.

— Oh yes, but they were butchers of a kind. There was very bad Kosher meat and in those days 95 per cent bought Kosher meat. The Shul encouraged them. It suited the congregation. The more butchers there were, the more they had to cut their prices.

I see, they wanted to encourage competition to keep prices down.

— Yes, to make them keep the prices

down but then the butchers couldn't make a living at it. You had to be good.

How many were there, say, when the Second World War started?

— There must have been four and they started a co-operative but that went bust after six months.

What did you think of doing when you left school?

— I thought of going to University and my father thought that my brother Phillip and I would both study medicine but when war came along, I joined up.

I see, you joined up before you were called up?

— I registered for military service. I put down the Navy, I didn't fancy marching. I thought I would get a nice uniform. After everyone else was called up and I was still waiting, I thought this might be because I was Jewish. They didn't take many Jewish boys into the Navy in those days. When I was eventually called up I was told that only those with a naval tradition could get into the Navy. I told them my grandfather was an admiral in the Russian fleet. So they gave me the option of going into the Air Force. They said I would have to go for flying duties. Well much to my amazement I was accepted.

What took you to Thailand?

— I was in Burma at the time and ready to invade Bangkok in Thailand, which was called Siam at that time. We were ready to invade Thailand and then the bomb went off in 1945. Well, I was there for 18 months and settled in Bangkok.

So you went there after the Japanese surrendered.

— Yes, by that time, I was in charge of the Flying Control, now it is called Airfield Control. All their procedures were based on RAF procedures. We even had a Flying Control School going there for redundant air crew. At the same time, I got up a school for teaching the Siamese Air Force.

So you were based in Thailand and you made contact with the Jewish Community. Is that how you met your wife, Sheva?

— Yes.

So how did your brother Michael then meet Sheva's sister?

— Well he was going to South America



'Veal meat again...' The Buccleuch Street butcher's shop.

and he suddenly decided to go to Bangkok instead.

And he stayed there?

— Yes, that was in 1948. I came back at the end of 1946.

And then of course you had to decide what to do.

— It was very difficult then because to start a business you had to have permission and get a licence. It was very difficult. So that was it.

What effect did the war have on the Jewish community in Edinburgh? After the war, was it much as it had been before?

— No, things had changed, many people moved away. The youngsters who had been in the services mostly got married and left. In every family, at least one or two left. Edinburgh is not an industrialised city and there was more choice and more competition elsewhere.

So what made you come back?

— Well I had commitments. I was already married.

You could have done what your brother did and gone away?

— Oh I could have stayed in Bangkok. The Siamese Government offered me a contract to be the controller of the airfield there. They would have given me a 5-year contract. I thought 'I have been overseas for quite a while, it is time to go home'. I didn't know what the position was. If I had known then what I know now, it might have been different, I don't know. I might have had second thoughts.

You then had 40 years in your shop in Buccleuch Street. When I came to Edinburgh, it was my first contact with the community. It was in many ways the heart or the centre of the community. Looking back over those 40 years, did you enjoy them?

— Oh yes. First of all there was the social aspect, you met people. Edinburgh is an international city where Jews come from all over and we also did a lot of business with non-Jewish people. So contact was wider. I have made a lot of friends that way. Jews and non-Jews.

So it was fun being there then?

— Yes it was. It was very sociable. My father liked that and I enjoyed it too. I didn't

really have to persuade people to spend their money. It was a meeting place and people would just come in, sometimes not even to see me but to see someone else, for a natter.

It made you a very focal person in the community, because you knew who was coming and who was going.

— I knew all their antecedents as well. I would introduce people, that's a great thing. And this is what I have always maintained, when you come to a community, no matter how unimportant it may seem, you get involved.

A lot of people continued to come to the shop, because you were the person who knew what they were all doing. Was it hard to give it up? Why did you give it up?

— Well I had reached the stage now where financially I didn't need it.

Did you look for someone to take it over?

— No. It must have been a good angel looking after me because we used to have two Shochetim in Edinburgh at one time. Always had two and of course Reverend Breich was the last one and he left in 1969 and I had problems with Glasgow, the Board of Shechita didn't want to send a man although the Shochetim wanted to come. I paid them, I paid them well, but they wanted me to get my meat from a Shochet in Glasgow so that they would earn more.

You bought your meat in Glasgow?

— I bought all my meat in Edinburgh. I knew what I was buying. I knew the suppliers and the suppliers knew me. In Glasgow, I would have been last in line. I was prepared to close the shop in 1969 when Breich left. I was quite happy but my father wasn't so happy. He said that as long as he was alive, he would see that Edinburgh got Kosher meat. For him that was his duty.

Would anything have persuaded you to keep it going?

— I had already thought about it and so, when the last Shochet said he was retiring he could still have come through to Edinburgh. I saw the writing on the wall and I made up my mind that is it, if I am going to do it, I will do it now. Unfortunately he died nine months later or something like that. I am very sorry he died. He was a very good friend of mine .... I always got on well with him. He respected me and I respected him.

When I asked him about the future of the Community, his response reflected a realism about it.

And now the shop is up for sale. What sort of future do you think there is for the Jewish community in Edinburgh?

— For the youngsters, there's no future. They've got to go on.

What do you think it's going to be like when your son Michael gets to your age?

— There will be less of us, no doubt about it.

So you think that the community is on course to decline?

— I think it will be a very slow process. We're still supporting a Rabbi, we still have a very big and expensive Shul and we're very fortunate we've got a good community and each one pulls his weight.

Unfortunately, the fewer there are, the bigger the weight that each one has to pull.

— Yes. At the same time, they enjoy doing it.

Maybe that is all that matters. Or is it?

**Michael Adler** grew up in London and went to University in Oxford and Harvard. After his first Degree he abandoned Chemistry for the Social Sciences. He moved to Edinburgh in 1971 with his wife Ruth and son Jonathan. Benjamin arrived two years later. Michael is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Policy at the University of Edinburgh. His academic interests are primarily in the socio-legal field focussing on policies aimed at the less-advantaged in society. His book on the implementation to the Parents' Charter is to appear shortly and a further book on aspects of decision-making within the prisons is planned for early next year. He was a founder Member of the Edinburgh Citizens Rights Office and has for some years been a Member of the Social Security Tribunal. Michael and Ruth are the first husband and wife each to have been President of the Edinburgh Jewish Literary Society in its 100 year history.



# Active in the Community ?

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The Two Worlds of Mr. Elias H. Fürst

# Ham, Hearts and History

by John A. Cosgrove

Professor David Daiches' vividly written autobiography *Two Worlds* which has recently been re-issued in paperback shows how the Rabbi's son was equally at home in Jewish Culture and the Scottish Edinburgh environment. An earlier example of this is demonstrated in the life of the son of the Rev. Jacob Fürst who was Minister of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation from 1879 until 1918.

A look into our Community's archives shows that Elias Fürst was elected on to the Synagogue Council in 1907, the same year as he became a director of Hearts with special responsibility for finance and ground development.

Two years later he was elected vice-Chairman and was immediately noted for his firm stand on discipline among the players. As he was a jeweller to trade he was also able to supply medals to the club. In January 1910, Mr. Fürst backed the appointment of a new Manager, John McCartney, to replace the unsuccessful James McGhee. March 1912 saw him re-elected to the Board and he was appointed Chairman by his fellow Directors. He led Hearts on the Club's first overseas tour in 1912 to Scandinavia, and accompanied them there again in 1929.

## War Effort

In 1914, Mr. Fürst promoted the building of a new main stand at Tynecastle and this is still in use today. That year he also led the Club on another overseas tour to Denmark. The War was going badly for Britain, so he and the other Directors encouraged the players to become the first football volunteers. This cost Hearts the League Championship but raised the fame of the Club.

Wartime inflation sent the cost of a new stand to over £12,000 and Chairman Fürst had the task of ensuring that this did not bankrupt the Club, bearing in mind the problems of running a sports Club in Wartime. This was probably his major achievement at Tynecastle.

During the War, Hearts helped in



Son and father: Elias H. Fürst and Rev Jacob Fürst

recruitment, collections and entertainment for home workers. By 1918 his work in keeping Hearts going, established him as possibly the game's finest administrator.

## From cups to kashrut

Mr Fürst was the driving force behind the erection of the Hearts War Memorial which was opened before 35,000 people in April 1922. Regretfully, the Chairman was ill and had to watch the ceremony from a nearby house, and in May he gave up the Chairmanship. During Elias's term as Chairman of Hearts, he was elected President of the Edinburgh board of Shechita.

In 1915 there were 3 Synagogues in the city. The Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation was in Graham Street, the New Hebrew Congregation was in Richmond Street and the Central Synagogue was in Marshall Street. There were 6 butchers selling kosher meat and the 3 congregations set up the Board to control the Shochtim, the butchers and the price of kosher meat. The Board employed a Rabbi at a salary of £2 per week to be the 'Ecclesiastical Authority'. Alas for Mr. Fürst, his Chairmanship of the Hearts

must have been like a rest cure compared to his Presidency of the new Shechita Board! In 1916 it was reported that 'The Rabbi had been neglecting his duties the result of him being engaged in business'. Clearly a man of diplomacy Mr. Fürst proposed that the Rabbi be given an increase of £1 per week on condition that he 'does not engage in business of any description'.

However, the community cannot afford £3 per week for the Rabbi's salary. Indeed the Rabbi complains bitterly that some weeks he only received 30 shillings. It then emerges that one of the business interests of the Rabbi is a shop called 'Dows' at 147 Great Junction Street, Leith which sells ham and is open on Sabbaths and Festivals. Letters are sent to the Chief Rabbi in London and Dr. Hertz sends Dayan A. Feldman of the London Beth Din to conduct a Din Torah in Edinburgh.

The Rabbi explains that he was not directly connected with the business, because he had simply lent money to another party for the purpose of buying the businesses and that it was only when he did not receive his payments regularly that he was obliged to associate himself more

directly with the shops in order to safeguard his capital.

Alas Mr. Fürst and his Board were not satisfied with this explanation and it was left to Dayan Feldman to arrange an agreement whereby the Rabbi and the Board should sever their connection with each other on the payment by the community to the Rabbi of the sum of £150.

A meeting was convened on 10 June 1917 to put the above proposal to a 'mass meeting' of the 3 congregations. There must have been a lot of support for the poor Rabbi because Mr. Fürst was forced to accept an amendment that 'steps be taken to improve the Rabbi's position'. Clearly £150 was an impossible amount for the Community to ingather and one week later Mr. Fürst signed the minute dissolving the Edinburgh Board of Shechita.

## Respect and recognition

In spite of this setback, Elias Fürst JP was held in the highest esteem by the Jewish Community. He was a trustee of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and delivered the principal toasts at the celebrations connected with the opening of the New Synagogue in Salisbury Road.

His work for football was lifelong. He involved himself in transfer negotiations and the raising of funds for substantial ground developments during the 1920's when Tynecastle was extended to its present size. Work which was rewarded when in 1930 he was elected President of the Scottish Football League — a great honour for Hearts. The following year he was also elected Chairman of the Inter-League Board.

In 1933 he became Chairman of the club for a second time. However two years later he was in conflict with other members of his Board over the proposed transfer of Tommy Walker. This may have been the reason for his sudden resignation in April 1935. After his departure the Hearts Manager resigned.

In the early months of 1934, he became ill and must have felt that he was over-committed to football. He did not seek re-election to his League jobs in May 1934.

His son Herbert Fürst SSC was Honorary Solicitor to the congregation for many years.

*I am grateful to Mr. Gerald Strump of Glasgow for obtaining information from the historian of the Heart of Midlothian Football Club concerning Elias Fürst's connection with Scottish Football.*

# Sports Talk

by Mike Adelman

A magnificent spell of May sunshine has hopefully encouraged you to look out that tennis racket or clean those tried and trusted golf clubs. The long summer evenings are also an ideal opportunity to get out for a walk or perhaps a jog round the Meadows! 'Certainly good for the system', says Debbie Welken, who I regularly see enjoying her running. She uses the Meadows, which is ideal (no hills), and it also has a measured mile circuit, useful for checking progress. Debbie runs most mornings to work, a distance of three miles and she manages some swimming in the evenings. Like myself, she finds both activities very relaxing.

As the football season draws to a close, David Kaplan was telling me of J.Y.S.G.'s trip to Newcastle where they were beaten 6-3 by the home side. Members of the team that day were Jonathan and David Mason, David Glass, Jonathan Raab, Sion Judah, Richard and Michael Rifkind, Benjamin Adler, Daniel Brodie, David Kaplan and A.N. Other.

Mention cricket, and two things come to mind: Alan Border and his Australian team and Norman Berger and his Maccabi

team. Last season the Maccabi eleven won twelve and lost eleven of their twenty-three matches, improving in the second half of the season. This season has so far seen two wins, against Home and Health Department and Scottish Widows and two defeats, against University Staff and Standard Life, and Norman has been turning out for the team.

I recently got hold of an Edinburgh Maccabi Sports Review 1949-50, courtesy of the Schulberg family. This super compilation was put together by the late Ellis Schulberg (sports director) and the introduction was by the late George Benjamin, Chairman at that time. It contained interesting articles on all the regular Maccabi sports and there was even a recreational training section as it was called, run by Sid Solomon, a qualified physical training instructor. The last sentence about this section stated, 'We herewith extend an invitation to all members of the community to attend these classes and reap the benefit of careful studied training, calculated to adapt a healthy body to a healthy mind'. So then as now the message is loud and clear: nip those love handles in the bud!

## Win a super sports bag



Who do you recognise from this Maccabi team of 1962? Send your entry to The Edinburgh Star, Sports Competition, Synagogue Chambers, 4 Salisbury Road, Edinburgh EH16. First all-correct entry out of the mail will win a super sports bag, compliments of Barnets. Entries close on 20 August 1989. The competition is open to all those not appearing on the photograph!