OBITUARIES

Sydney Gruson

American foreign correspondent who broke news of Khrushchev's secret speech against Stalin, but liked to return to the social whirl of London

SYDNEY GRUSON, the former *New York Times* correspondent who has died aged 81, was one of the first Western journalists to report Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing Stalin at the 20th Communist party conference in Moscow in 1956.

The denunciation, which also came into the hands of the *Observer* and *Le Monde*, was given to Gruson in Warsaw by Stefan Staszewski, First Secretary of the Warsaw Committee of the Polish Workers Party.

Later that year, in the aftermath of the Hungarian uprising the Polish-speaking Gruson charted the response of local communists to growing Russian threats. Giving almost hour-by-hour detail of a kind never before achieved by a foreign correspondent inside the Soviet bloc, he reported what the party leader Gomulka was doing and what the Polish military were planning.

He revealed what Gomulka told the Russians, and what the Russians replied, until the crisis reached a climax when Khrushchev flew in to be warned that if Soviet tanks appeared, Polish troops would leave their garrisons to oppose them.

Although Gruson's final despatch from Poland, published in *The Daily Telegraph* when he left Warsaw in 1958, declared that there was no chance of the Russians losing their influence, he had revealed the Polish spirit that was to re-emerge with devastating effects in the 1980s.

Sydney Gruson, the son of a Lithuanian scrap metal dealer and his Irish wife, was born in Dublin on December 16 1916 and went to St Elizabeth School before the family moved to Toronto, where he completed his limited education at Lansdowne School.

Gruson (left) about to deliver a pessimistic verdict at a *Sunday Telegraph* round-table discussion on the consequences of President Kennedy's assassination with (from left) Vladimir Ossipov, Denis Healey, Melvin Lasky and Peregrine Worsthorne, 1964

Syd and his younger brother Wilf went to work as bellboys at the Royal York Hotel, where Syd impressed Gil Purcell, the Canadian Press news agency executive, by finding him a bottle of gin despite the tight constraints of local liquor laws.

Next day he received a call from Purcell asking if he intended to be a bellboy all his life; the brothers duly took a drop in income from $40 to $7 a week to join Canadian Press as copy boys, before becoming reporters.

Gruson was posted to New York before moving to London during the Second World War, where his career with the agency ended when he knocked out a superior in a fight at a party. He then moved to the *New York Times*, for which he covered the invasion of Europe.

Buoyed up by a profitable bet that Attlee would win the British general election, and by marriage to the journalist Flora Lewis, Gruson covered the Arab-Israeli war and the Berlin airlift before being sent to Prague.

In the early 1950s he was posted to Mexico, where his assignment was said to have ended after he told his visiting boss that they could either go through the pretence of his working week or enjoy the reality, which consisted of party-going, betting on his string of racehorses and playing golf.

But it was later revealed, to the paper's embarrassment, that the State Department had sought Gruson's removal lest he uncover the CIA's attempt to engineer a coup in Guatemala.

After his stint in Warsaw, Gruson went to Bonn, where he upset President Kennedy by criticising the administration's policy of distancing itself from the elderly Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. The President was overheard saying that he could not understand a Jew being a spokesman for the Germans, and hoping that another *Times* man was "not like that bastard Gruson."

The hostility was not helped by Gruson's suspicion that Kennedy was blocking a Bill in Congress waiving the residency requirements for him to become an American citizen, though eventually the delay turned out to have been technical.

When Gruson returned to his beloved London, with its restaurants and theatres, he attracted attention by starting work during a strike in New York. Fleet Street was also fascinated by the spectacle of a correspondent whose wife was also his rival, since Flora was working for the then much smaller *Washington Post*.

They had two sets of all the London papers delivered every day; he read his downstairs while she studied hers in bed. The *Times* traditionally disliked female correspondents and refused to countenance employing a husband and wife team, but it could not fail to notice that Flora's silent editing greatly improved her husband's prose, and she was permitted to use the *Times* office.

In the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Gruson was one of several political thinkers, including Melvin Lasky, the co-editor of *Encounter*, Denis Healey, then in the shadow Cabinet, and Vladimir Ossipov, a Soviet journalist, assembled by Peregrine Worsthorne to take part in a *Sunday Telegraph* round-table discussion of the likely consequences.

While mindful of the risk that the surge of emotion after the assassination might fuel a crisis within the Western alliance, Gruson saw little point in an early meeting between Khrushchev and the new president, Lyndon Johnson. "I think the sea of tears will recede," he concluded, "leaving us with the same old problems, with the same maze of paths barring any straight or easy advance to peace and security."

Gruson was next made foreign editor in New York, where he enlivened the office by bursting into song. He was then sent to edit the paper's international edition in Paris.

He raised the circulation from 40,000 to 47,000, but it remained in the red until the *Times* decided to close it down to buy into the *International Herald Tribune*, along with the *Washington Post*.

Gruson proved a suspicious member of the merged paper's board, declaring there was "a squalid rumour" that he measured each column of *Times* material used. "I measure inch by inch," he protested.

In 1968, Gruson left the *Times* to be assistant publisher of the Long Island *Newsday* but soon returned as assistant to his friend Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, the *Times*'s publisher.

From then on his career was in management. He retired as vice-president of the *Times* in 1986 to work for Rothschilds, on whose behalf he had the task of negotiating with the American ambitions of Robert Maxwell.

Gruson was one of a diminishing breed of foreign correspondent; he entertained lavishly, knew everyone and once boasted that his ambition was to become "the perfect weekend guest". But he always remained an aggressive reporter beneath the easy-going style.

He and Flora Lewis, who had three children, were divorced in 1972, and two years later he married Marit Bersen Gentele.

Hideo Shima

Japanese designer of the bullet train

Shima with his trains at a Tokyo station in 1994

HIDEO SHIMA, who has died aged 96, was the chief designer of the *shinkansen*, the Japanese bullet train, the world's first high-speed passenger train service.

The project, timed to coincide with the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, was intended to symbolise Japan's transformation from defeated nation into a powerhouse of economic strength and modern technology.

After much argument, the Japanese government was lent $80 million by the World Bank, and in 1958 construction began on the 350-mile route between Japan's largest cities, Tokyo and Osaka.

Shima, who was chief engineer of the state-run railway, insisted that his trains should have a track laid for their use alone, to allow them to run with maximum speed and frequency. The new line — or *shinkansen* — would avoid built-up areas other than the cities it served. There were no sharp bends or steep slopes, so that a great speed could be maintained, making possible day trips between the cities.

Every aspect of the railway was designed by Shima himself, from the track layout to the distinctive bullet-nosed trains themselves. He introduced air suspension and air-conditioning, motorised axles and regenerative braking, all of which were then unknown in Japan, whose railways largely relied on steam locomotion.

The triumphant result was a service capable of reaching 138 mph and offering unparalleled standards of punctuality. It was two decades before other railways, notably France's TGV, could rival the bullet trains, and the image of the *shinkansen* speeding past Fuji contributed greatly to the regeneration of Japan's image.

Shima, however, was not present at the unveiling of his work. The project was dogged by budgetary problems, and by 1964 spending on the trains had doubled to 380 billion yen. Together with the president of the national railway, Shinji Sogo, Shima took responsibility for the overspend and resigned his post in 1963.

Hideo Shima was born in Osaka in 1901, the son of an pioneer of Japanese railway-building. He was educated at Tokyo Imperial University, where he read engineering, and in 1925 joined the railway ministry.

Later he moved to work at Japanese National Railways, where he designed steam locomotives, such as the D-51 series, to cope with the demands of the country's long-distance network.

He nurtured hopes of electrifying the lines, but during the War was forced instead to make economies, which often caused accidents. When Japan was occupied, he obtained permission from the Allied forces to change for steel all 3,000 wooden carriages then in use.

Shima became director-general of JNR's rolling stock department in 1948, but resigned to take responsibility for a fire at Yokohama station which killed more than 100 people in 1951. He then worked briefly for Sumimoto Metal Industries, before rejoining JNR as its chief engineer.

After he had resigned in 1963, he became, in 1969, head of Japan's National Space Development Agency. He rejected a programme to develop commercial rockets, favouring instead the building of hydrogen engines, a technology in advance of that being devised by Nasa. He retired in 1977.

Hideo Shima was awarded the James Watt International Medal by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in 1969 to mark his work on the *shinkansen*. In 1994, he was awarded the Order of Cultural Merit by the Japanese government.

He is survived by two sons and a daughter.

Nat Sherwood

Horseman, farmer and Master of the East Essex Foxhounds who fed his first beagles on school porridge

NAT SHERWOOD, the colourful Essex horseman who has died aged 73, was for 14 years joint master of the East Essex Foxhounds.

Sherwood later trained his own steeplechasers and hurdlers, and was in demand internationally as a judge of show hunters.

Nathaniel Edward Carwardine Sherwood was born on February 20 1924 and educated at Radley. Nat's father died when the boy was 15, leaving him the Prested Hall estate, near Colchester.

The same year Nat was found to have a weak heart, and was taken off energetic sports. In 1941, however, he and two friends started the Radley Beagles, kennelling their first four couple in an old shed and feeding them on left-over porridge.

On leaving school, Sherwood joined the RAF, and lasted six months before his heart problem was discovered. He went up to Cambridge to read Agriculture, but spent his time as Master of the re-formed Cambridge University Draghounds — and buying and selling horses.

In 1947, he returned to Prested to farm and soon took on the joint mastership of the East Essex Foxhounds, which at that time hunted three days a week. Sherwood hunted the bitches. He was an elegant horseman and tremendously enthusiastic in the chase — something which rubbed off on the rest of the field.

In 1952 he created the East Essex point-to-point course on his undulating land at Marks Tey. Sherwood was an ardent point-to-pointer, and competed all over the country, riding more than 50 winners.

During the 1970s he took out a permit to train his own chasers and hurdlers. He had some 30 winners under Rules, including Billy Larkin, which won six chases in a row. In 1976 he bought Venture to Cognac, which his son Oliver rode to win the Sun Alliance Novice Hurdle in 1979, and the Cheltenham Foxhunters' in 1984.

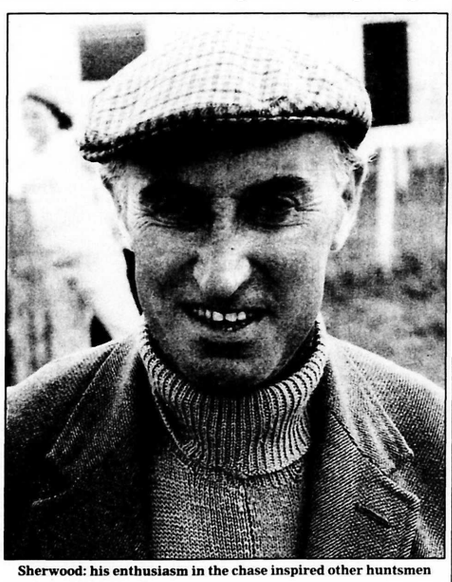
Sherwood was a good judge of a horse, and friends would often ask his advice before buying a hunter. He was much sought after as a judge of show hunters and ponies in Britain, Ireland and Kenya, even though at times he had to be reminded by his fellow judges that it was the horse that mattered, not the lady in the saddle.

As District Commissioner and President of the Witham Branch of the East Essex Pony Club, he infected countless young riders with his enthusiasm and sense of fun.

He was a good shot and ran a partridge and pheasant shoot at Prested, but was keener on fishing, particularly on the Tweed and the Spey.

Five foot nine inches tall, with a ruddy complexion, he moved briskly and always with purpose. He was never without his pipe. He looked after his 3,000-acre estate with a firm sense of duty, and a combination of love, and attention to detail.

Sherwood was twice married and twice divorced. From his first marriage, in 1953, to Heather Carolin, he had two sons, the trainers Oliver and Simon, both of them former amateur champion National Hunt jockeys (Simon rode Desert Orchid to many wins including the Cheltenham Gold Cup). From his marriage, in 1959, to Diana Barry, he had a son, who now runs the farm at Prested.



Sherwood: his enthusiasm in the chase inspired other huntsmen

Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani

Yemeni who narrowly escaped beheading and became President only to end up an exile

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-IRYANI, who has died aged 89, was a moderate in the turbulent politics of Yemen; he narrowly escaped beheading and became the country's first civilian president, before fleeing to exile.

Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani was born in 1909 in Ibb district to a family that originated in Iraq. He had a traditional Islamic education in Sanaa, the capital. His family by custom produced judges in Islamic law, and so al-Iryani bore the title *qadi*.

In his thirties he joined the political movement al-Ahrar, an organisation of the country's religious and intellectual elite dedicated to ending the isolation of Yemen fostered by the octogenarian Imam Yahya, the hereditary theocratic ruler.

Members of al-Ahrar (Arabic for "the free men") at first invested their hopes for reform in Yahya's son Ahmad, but once Ahmad's authoritarian tendencies became clear, the group's leaders fled to Aden to organise a coup against Yahya. They had their own candidate for the Imamate, Abdallah al-Wazir.

In February 1948, Yahya was machine-gunned in an ambush by tribesmen aligned to al-Ahrar. According to one story, Abdallah al-Wazir observed the ambush through binoculars before seizing the royal palace.

Though he proclaimed himself Imam, Abdallah's power was short-lived. Within four weeks, Yahya's son Ahmad had mobilised an army which took Sanaa. Ahmad was proclaimed Imam by the religious establishment. The coup leaders were executed, and al-Iryani spent the next six years in prison.

Al-Iryani on the dodgems during a trip abroad, 1964

In 1955, he was sentenced to death for his part in the attempt. Minutes before he was to be beheaded, Imam Ahmad pardoned him.

In 1962, during Yemen's civil war, the Imamate was defeated, and in the newly formed republic of North Yemen, al-Iryani was appointed minister of religious endowments, and later vice premier. The country was still occupied by an Egyptian army, introduced by Nasser to back the republican side.

The Egyptian army controlled the new government, and unrest persisted as long as it remained. The following year al-Iryani and two other veterans of al-Ahrar resigned in protest against "corrupt, impotent and bankrupt government" and called for a new constitution.

In November 1967, al-Iryani headed a triumvirate that overthrew North Yemen's President Sallal in a coup that was, for a change, bloodless. Al-Iryani was chosen to lead the government as president because he had links with both the republicans and the royalists.

Under him, in 1970, the country adopted a constitution heavily influenced by the conservative religious establishment. In 1971 al-Iryani introduced elections to representative councils.

In 1968 a separate Yemeni state had been formed in South Yemen, comprising Aden and the mountainous Hadramaut region. Throughout his presidency, al-Iryani promoted union between the two states as a way of securing a peaceful resolution of the country's persistent civil conflict.

South Yemen had obtained political and military support from the Soviet bloc, while Saudi Arabia continued to back the dwindling royalist opposition. Al-Iryani sought a path between these two extremes.

In 1972, for a short time, al-Iryani's aspiration of uniting the two Yemens seemed to have a fair chance of succeeding; indeed in October of that year the two countries signed an agreement pledging unity.

But al-Iryani's conciliatory nature was unable to contain the political and military intrigue that the agreement set in train, as tribal and political interests sought to force the course of unity their way. The last straw was an Iraqi plot to overthrow his government. Al-Iryani resigned, and was replaced by the minister of defence, Abdallah al-Ahmar.

After the failure of his attempt to unify the Yemens, al-Iryani went into exile in Damascus, where he spent the rest of his life, only returning briefly to North Yemen in 1980 at the invitation of president Ali Abdallah Salah.

Al-Iryani was married, and had four sons and two daughters.

Terence Cole

Quick shooting from a blazing tank

MAJOR TERENCE COLE, who has died aged 78, was awarded an MC in Burma.

Cole was serving with the 7th Light Cavalry in March 1945, when the Japanese were making suicidal attempts to delay the Allied advance on Rangoon until the monsoon. Japanese soldiers would strap explosives to their bodies and dive under tank tracks.

On March 22, Cole's troop supported 10th Gurkha Rifles in action in the area known as Fir Tree Hill. Cole's tank was struck by a 4 in mortar bomb which blew in the plating and started a fire. Pulling the main extinguisher, Cole carried on with the action until a Japanese carrying a firebomb tried to clamber aboard. Cole shot him dead through the pistol port, but the tank was by then on fire for a second time.

Ordering his crew out, he covered them with a Browning until they were safe, and then jumped clear himself.

Terence Osmond Cole was born on June 29 1919 and educated at Cirencester Grammar School. He joined the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, TA, in the 1930s. From 1942 he was with the 7th Light Cavalry, and took part in the battles of Kohima and Imphal.

Later he transferred to the Royal Engineers and served in Singapore and West Africa. After leaving the Army he joined Barclays Bank.

He is survived by his wife Marion and their two daughters.

CHESS

Sadler stays in front

By Malcolm Pein

THE England No 2, Matthew Sadler, retained the lead in the rapid chess section of the 7th Amber tournament at Monaco with a fifth round draw against Vladimir Kramnik, who remains in second place.

Sadler has an unbeaten 4/5 at rapid chess, but has lost his first four blindfold games. Kramnik has won all his blindfold games and plays Sadler next.

Kramnik remains well in front of the field in the combined tournament with 7·5 points from nine games.

The participants play one rapid game and one blindfold game with reversed colours against the same opponent in each of the 11 rounds. The prize fund of $137,250 (about £84,000) is apportioned according to performances in each discipline and the best combined performance.

The time control is 25 minutes a game plus 10 seconds a move in rapid chess and 20 seconds a move in blindfold.

Larry Christiansen, of the USA, is annihilating the field at the **VISA Open** at Reykjavik, Iceland, after winning in rounds six and seven aided by the advantage of the white pieces.

Christiansen defeated Joe Gallagher and then played a very nice game, given below to despatch the Danish No 1, Curt Hansen, and take his score to 6·5/7.

Another American, Nick de Firmian, is in clear second place, but he is a point behind Christiansen. The rest of the field is a further half a point adrift.

Tony Miles lost to Jesper Hall, of Sweden, and has just four points. Nigel Davies and Chris Ward are the top Englishmen, two points off the pace on 4·5/7.

A fine game with much original play. 8.c3!? seems to make a nonsense of 6.b3 after which one would expect a plan based around pawns c2-c4 and d2-d4. With hindsight it is clear that black should have played 15...Nxd2 but he missed the shot 15.Ne5!! which leads to the creation of a strong passed pawn that prevents black from co-ordinating his forces. White softens up the kingside with 26.h4 then attacks the weak spots elsewhere. If 31...gxf5 32.Qe5+ and in the final position 35...Kg5 36.Qd8+ Kg4 37.Rf4+ or 37.f3+ and 38.Qc7+ wins:

L Christiansen — C Hansen
VISA Open Reykjavik (7)
Sicilian Defence

1 e4	c5	2 Nf3	d6
3 Bb5+	Bd7	4 Bxd7+	Qxd7
5 0-0	Nc6	6 b3	Nf6
7 Re1	g6	8 c3!?	Bg7
9 d4	cxd4	10 cxd4	d5
11 e5	Ne4	12 Bb2	0-0
13 Nbd2	f5	14 exf6	Nxd2
15 Ne5!!	Nxe5	16 dxe5	exf6
17 e6!	Qd6	18 Qxd2	Rfe8
19 Qe3	a5	20 Rad1	Re7
21 Bd4	Rc8	22 Re2	Rc6
23 Rde1	f5	24 Bg7	Kxg7
25 Qd4+	Kg8	26 h4	h5
27 Re5	Qb4	28 Qxd5	Rd6
29 Qxa5	Qxh4	30 Rb5	Kg7
31 Rxf5!	Rexe6	32 Rxe6	Rxe6
33 Qc3+	Kh7	34 Rf7+	Kh6
35 Qh8+	1-0		

Hansen

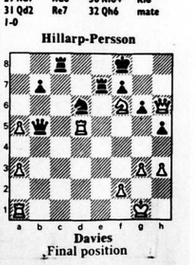
Christiansen
Final position

Nigel Davies successfully copes with the wild man of Scandinavian chess, Tiger Hillarp Persson. Davies plays as solidly as possible and waits for his opponent to make an unsound attempt to complicate. He is rewarded with 15...a4 and 21.a3! with the point 21...Qxc4 22.Rd4 trapping the queen gives white a big advantage:

N Davies — T Hillarp-Persson
VISA Open (3) Reykjavik
King's Indian Defence

1 Nf3	Nf6	2 g3	g6
3 Bg2	Bg7	4 0-0	0-0
5 d4	d6	6 c4	Nbd7
7 Nc3	e5	8 b3	Re8
9 h3	exd4	10 Nxd4	Nc5
11 Bb2	c6	12 Qc2	Qb6
13 e3	a5	14 Rfd1	h5
15 Rd2	a4	16 Nxa4	Nxa4
17 bxa4	Nd7	18 Nb3	Bxb2
19 Qxb2	Ne5	20 a5	Qb4
21 a3!	Qa4	22 Rd4	Nxc4
23 Qc3	d5	24 e4	Be6
25 exd5	cxd5	26 Bxd5	Bxd5
27 Rxd5	Rac8	28 Nc5	Qb5
29 Nd7	Nd6	30 Nf6+	Kf8
31 Qd2	Re7	32 Qh6	mate
1-0			

Hillarp-Persson



Davies
Final position

"Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani." Daily Telegraph, 19 Mar. 1998, p. 31. The Telegraph Historical Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/IO0700518136/TGRH?u=tou&sid=bookmark-TGRH. Accessed 9 July 2024.