FOREWORD

Reinhold Baer (1902–1979) came to the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign in 1938. He had left Germany in 1933 and spent the intervening years first in Manchester, England, and then at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. He was then offered an associate professorship by Arthur B. Coble, who was Head of Department at Illinois. Baer remained in Urbana until 1956, when he returned to Germany to take up a chair at Frankfurt.

Baer's time in Illinois was very productive and led to much important work in both commutative and non-commutative group theory. He had no less than 20 Ph.D. students here, including such well-known names as R.A. Beaumont, P.F. Conrad, D.G. Higman and P. Dembowski. Baer also had a very positive effect on the development of the Mathematics Department: in particular he was responsible for Michio Suzuki coming to Illinois—a crucial event that led to the Department becoming a center of research in finite simple group theory.

Baer was a founding editor of the Illinois Journal of Mathematics when it first appeared in 1957—the other editors were J.L. Doob, A.H. Taub, G.E. Whitehead and O. Zariski. Thus it is appropriate that the Journal has chosen to mark the centenary of Baer's birth with this special issue.

The essays contained herein show very clearly the wide range of Baer's interests and they also attest to the lasting influence of his ideas. At the recent centenary conference in Hattingen, Germany, Baer's legacy to many branches of algebra was apparent to the participants.

We are grateful to those who contributed to this volume and helped to make the enterprise a success: also we acknowledge Rüdiger Göbel's part, as it was he who made the original suggestion. We are very grateful to K.W. Gruenberg for permission to reprint his Obituary of Baer, which was originally published in the Bulletin of the London Mathematical Society. We thank the Illinois Journal for their cooperation, and in particular the Managing Editor, A.J. Hildebrand, for much valuable advice.

Finally, a personal note. Both of us benefited from contact with Reinhold Baer at early and crucial stages of our careers. We are glad to have this opportunity to acknowledge his unfailing generosity and kindness.

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Philip Griffith and Derek Robinson
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