

JEWISH AFFAIRS



Chanukah 2009

**Price R30,00
incl. VAT
Registered at the GPO
as a Newspaper**

ISSN 0021 • 6313



www.macsteel.co.za



Africa's Leading Steel Supplier

For reliable, sustainable service



THE MACSTEEL GROUP

JEWISH AFFAIRS

MISSION

In publishing JEWISH AFFAIRS, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies aims to produce a cultural forum which caters for a wide variety of interests in the community. The journal will be a vehicle for the publication of articles of significant thought and opinion on contemporary Jewish issues, and will aim to encourage constructive debate, in the form of reasoned and researched essays, on all matters of Jewish and general interest.

JEWISH AFFAIRS aims also to publish essays of scholarly research on all subjects of Jewish interest, with special emphasis on aspects of South African Jewish life and thought. Scholarly research papers that make an original contribution to their chosen field of enquiry will be submitted to the normal processes of academic refereeing before being accepted for publication.

JEWISH AFFAIRS will promote Jewish cultural and creative achievement in South Africa, and consider Jewish traditions and heritage within the modern context. It aims to provide future researchers with a window on the community's reaction to societal challenges. In this way the journal hopes critically to explore, and honestly to confront, problems facing the Jewish community both in South Africa and abroad, by examining national and international affairs and their impact on South Africa.

The SA Jewish Board of Deputies is committed to dialogue and free enquiry. It aims to protect human rights and to strive for better relations among peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds in South Africa.

The columns of JEWISH AFFAIRS will therefore be open to all shades of opinion. The views expressed by the contributors will be their own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor, the Editorial Board or the Publishers.

However, in keeping with the provisions of the National Constitution, the freedom of speech exercised in this journal will exclude the dissemination of hate propaganda, personal attacks or invective, or any material which may be regarded as defamatory or malicious. In all such matters, the Editor's decision is final.

EDITORIAL BOARD

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

David Saks *SA Jewish Board of Deputies*

ACADEMIC ADVISORY BOARD

Professor Marcus Arkin	<i>South African Zionist Federation</i>
Dr Ittamar Avin	<i>University of Natal, Durban</i>
Dr Louise Bethlehem	<i>Hebrew University of Jerusalem</i>
Marlene Bethlehem	<i>SA Jewish Board of Deputies</i>
Cedric Ginsberg	<i>University of South Africa</i>
Dr Elaine Katz	<i>University of the Witwatersrand</i>
Professor Marcia Leveson	<i>University of the Witwatersrand</i>
Naomi Musiker	<i>Archivist and Bibliographer</i>
Professor Reuben Musiker	<i>University of the Witwatersrand</i>
Gwynne Schrire	<i>SA Jewish Board of Deputies</i>
Dr Gabriel A Sivan	<i>World Jewish Bible Centre</i>
Professor Gideon Shimoni	<i>Hebrew University of Jerusalem</i>
Professor Milton Shain	<i>University of Cape Town</i>
John Simon	<i>University of Cape Town</i>
The Hon. Mr Justice Ralph Zulman	<i>Appeal Court of South Africa</i>

SECRETARY – Golde Goldsmith

TYPESETTING/PRINTING – Bookpress, Johannesburg

© South African Jewish Board of Deputies 2007

Permission to reprint material from JEWISH AFFAIRS should be applied for from

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies

JEWISH AFFAIRS is published 3 times annually

Annual subscription R180 including VAT and postage

Overseas: Surface Mail US\$30 or BPS25

Air Mail US\$70 or BPS50

Postal Address: PO Box 87557, Houghton 2041

Original, unpublished essays of between 1 000 and 6 000 words on all subjects are invited, and should be sent to:

The Editor, JEWISH AFFAIRS, PO Box 87557, Houghton 2041,
david@beyachad.co.za

The Editorial Board reserves the right to cut the length of articles accepted for publication, and to make any stylistic changes which it may deem necessary.

JEWISH AFFAIRS

VOL. 64 ♦ NO. 3 ♦ CHANUKAH 2009

Editor: David Saks

JEWS IN THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

Jewish Bittereindes in the Anglo-Boer War

David Saks 3

Wartime Letters by British Jewish Servicemen, 1899-1900 10

Harry Spanier: An Untoward Jewish Soldier

Ann Rabinowitz 14

IN MEMORIAM

“A Bright Star in a Chamber of Darkness”: Helen Suzman and Her Legacy

Rhoda Kadalie 17

Recollections of Helen Suzman

Colin Eglin 19

The Ultimate Dreamer: A Lament for Monty Sack

Bernard Levinson 21

FIGHTERS FOR ZION

Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky – Fighter, Visionary, Zionist

John Simon 23

Some Gentile Zionists

Cecil Bloom 29

ESSAYS AND REFLECTIONS

A Brief Journey through Spanish-Jewish History

Bernard Katz 34

The Jews of Harbin

Tony Leon 41

Not Forgotten

Irina Shub 43

Chanukah – The Answer to Eskom

Wolfy Matz 46

BOOK REVIEWS

The Quest for Community: A Short History of Jewish Communal Institutions in South Africa, 1841-1939

David Saks 47

How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End

Gary Selikow 48

NEW POETRY

Ben Krengel, Lewis Levitz, Tamar 50

JEWISH BITTEREINDES IN THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

*

David Saks

For a heady few months after the commencement of the Anglo-Boer War in October 1899, the forces of the two Boer Republics were able, against all expectations, to keep the British Imperial Lion on the back foot. In the beginning, at least, it was the British who were compelled to defend their territory against foreign invaders - in Natal, in the Central and North-West Cape and even in Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia. In the process, several major towns were besieged and in trying to relieve them, British arms suffered numerous stinging defeats.

All this now became a distant memory once the tide turned, as it had to do eventually, in mid-February 1900. From now on, the pursued turned pursuer with a vengeance and by the middle of the year total victory for one side, and defeat for the other, seemed imminent. The Boer capitals had fallen and the Boer armies were being driven steadily eastwards towards the Mozambique border.

Few anticipated that the war still had nearly two years to run. Too outnumbered to wage a conventional war any longer, the Boers decided to decentralise, splitting up into smaller units that roamed the countryside and harried the occupying power at every opportunity.

After the fall of Bloemfontein and Pretoria, most of the Jews in the Boer forces took the Oath of Allegiance and played no further part in the war. A not insignificant number fought on, however, and their names regularly appear in the POW lists amongst those netted in the regular sweeps the British conducted. Several dozen were still in the field when peace was made on 31 May 1902.

Three Jews are recorded as having been killed in the two-year guerrilla phase of the war. They were Isaac Herman, Herman Lindenberg and F Goldman. Herman, who held the rank of Commandant according to Rabinowitz' source, was killed near Colesberg in 1901. He may be the same Commandant Herman who had been in charge of the British POW camp at Waterval, near Pretoria.

Lindenberg was a German Jew from Klerksdorp. He served with the Scandinavians under the famed French General Comte de Villebois-Mareuil (who

was in overall command of all foreign troops) and fell in an attack on a blockhouse outside Kimberley.

Goldman nearly survived the war. It was his bad luck to be on the wrong end of an enemy attack – not British, but Zulu – at Holkrans in Northern Natal, not far from the famous Anglo-Zulu War battlefields of Hlobane and Kambula. He was one of 56 burghers killed that day - 6 May 1902, a mere three weeks before the Treaty of Vereeniging brought the war to a close.

One Goldfain of Johannesburg was an unusual, indeed it would seem a unique, case amongst the Boer Jewish veterans. Arriving in Johannesburg shortly before the war, at the age of seventeen, he was eventually captured, and on his release joined those ultimate *verraiers* [traitors], the National Scouts.

Jewish *bittereindes* were largely spared the ordeal of having wives and children interned in the British concentration camps, mainly because comparatively few of them had been living on farms at the time of the war and because only a handful of them were married (most Jews in the Boers ranks tended to be both young and unattached). Nevertheless, a number of Jewish families were indeed interned and several young Jewish children are recorded as having died in captivity. One of them was the infant daughter of Joseph Horwitz of Klerksdorp.

THE GUERRILLA WAR IN THE TRANSVAAL AND NATAL

Jacob Arnhold and Jacob Leviton could later claim the distinction of being the only Jews to serve continually in the Republican forces from the Jameson Raid right through to the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War. In between, they had taken part in the Malaboch campaign (1896) and the Swaziland expedition and the Mpefu campaign, in the Northern Transvaal, as well (1898). Both participated in all the major battles in Natal before the onset of the guerrilla campaign.

Now with the rank of corporal with some forty men under him, Leviton participated in various guerrilla operations in the Transvaal, first in the hills around Pretoria and subsequently further east. During the bitter winter of 1901, his section moved to the Lowveld to spare their horses as well as find much needed forage. Leviton would seem to have been at Bakenlaagte, a hard-fought Boer victory in which Colonel Benson was killed and his column virtually

David Saks is Associate Director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and Editor of Jewish Affairs. This article has been adapted from the relevant chapters in his recently completed book The Boerejode: Jews in the Boer Armed Forces, 1899-1902, scheduled to appear in early 2010.

wiped out. He finally surrendered on 18 June 1902, three weeks after peace was made.

Leviton's reminiscences of this final period were darkened by his witnessing at first hand the devastation wrought by the British as they went about effectively starving their opponents into submission. On one occasion, he saw Boer children lying on the ground looking for grain at a siding. Reports of the multiple tragedies in the concentration camps were constantly filtering through to the menfolk still in the field, generating lasting bitterness.

Arnhold was one of the very few Jewish career soldiers in the Boer forces. Born in Leipzig in 1871, he was orphaned at an early age and settled as a teenager in the ZAR. In 1894, he joined the Staats-Artillerie, serving under Kommandant Henning Pretorius. His pre-war activities including taking part in the defeat and capture of Dr Jameson and his raiders in 1896, and to the end of his days he relished the memory of the three pom-poms captured that day from those luckless bravos.

Arnhold fought throughout the war, finally surrendering at Wakkerstroom. He took part in most of the important engagements in the Natal theatre, including Dundee, Waschbank, Ladysmith and Spioenkop, and acted as one of President Kruger's bodyguards during the latter's journey to the coast and into final exile in Europe.¹

The Mysterious N D Kaplan

Roland W Schikkerling's journal *Commando Courageous* constitutes one of the most vivid records of the guerrilla campaign in the Eastern Transvaal, a time when long periods of inactivity were punctuated by sudden bursts of intensive action, danger and bloodshed. For much of this time, he served under the renowned General Ben Viljoen, until the latter's capture near Lydenburg. Four Jews are mentioned by name in Schikkerling's journal, [Joel] Duveen, [Nicholas] Kaplan, [Joseph] "Zwarenstein" and one "Lazarus"².

Niklaas David Kaplan, a Russian army veteran according to the Jewish *oudstryder* Sascha Schmahmann, was unquestionably one of the most redoubtable Jewish fighters in the Boer forces, one who was remembered years afterwards by both Jews and Afrikaners who fought alongside him.

The Jewish *oudstryder* Sascha Schmahmann recorded meeting Kaplan, whom he remembered well "because he had one brown and one very blue eye", when he arrived at Slypsteendrift at the end of 1900 or the beginning of 1901 with a report that General Trevor (to whom he had been Adjutant) had been killed. "The Boers said of Kaplan that he was a very brave man. They admired his efficiency in the use of the Pom-Pom, a gun he had learnt to use in Russia," Schmahmann told his interviewer. He added that Kaplan fought in the war to the bitter end, and by its conclusion had been promoted to Commandant.

Kaplan's ungainly appearance belied his considerable abilities. "*Nou ja, hy het wel soos a bondel wasgoed op n perd gesit*" commented F

Zeiler, who fought alongside him, more than half a century later, "*maar waar verstand nodig was om die Engelse te uitoorle, was Kaplan se plan altyd van die bestes. Hy het baie maal vir ons die treinspoor gelaai, en waar hy die skoot geplant het, was die ontploffing ook n seker ding.*"

Zeiler's recollection of how one of Kaplan's specialities was blowing up blockhouses, was later confirmed by Schikkerling, who wrote in *Commando Courageous*: "Kaplan was a Jew and he was no coward [sic! Unlike the rest of his kind, one assumes?]. Among other daring enterprises, he once crept up to a blockhouse with two bombs slung around his neck in a saddle wallet"³.

Kaplan was a favourite of General Ben Viljoen and, as a singer and comedian, was a popular member of his commando. Schikkerling noted that Kaplan, "with the true instinct of his race", acted as a bookmaker when the commando entertained themselves by staging horse – and, for those who had lost their mounts, mule – races on Christmas Day, 1901. This took place in Pilgrim's Rest (which remained largely in Boer hands to the end and which enjoyed a surprisingly tranquil existence compared with the depredations taking place elsewhere in the country). "The spectacle of nine burly, bearded Boers urging their asinine steeds to top speed by shout and spur provoked quite as much honest laughter as any theatrical farce ever excited" was how Viljoen remembered the occasion.

Kaplan obviously stands out as one of the most redoubtable of the 300-odd Jews who fought for the Boers, and one of the very few who was still there at the end. Regrettably, nothing is known about what happened to him thereafter apart from a vague reference to his setting up a business in Springfontein.

The Zwarenstein mentioned by Schikkerling was Joseph, who was later captured at Bloedrivier in the Eastern Transvaal on 29 September 1901 when his commando was ambushed by Walter Kitchener⁴. His brother Jacob had been captured on 12 May and 8 September 1900 respectively and sent to St Helena.

The initials of the Lazarus Schikkerling mentions are unknown, but according to the non-Jewish *Oudstryder* J J Wolf, a Lazarus who was always known as 'Bennie' (after a wealthy Johannesburg businessman) fought in General Ben Viljoen's commando, as did Schikkerling himself⁵. Lazarus is mentioned as one of those dispatched to dynamite some railway tracks, one of the ways the Boers harried their opponents during this hit-and-run phase of the conflict.

Duveen, the Dutch Die-hard

Joel Duveen's gallant conduct during the conventional phase of the war, particularly at the battle of Spioenkop, was long remembered by those who fought alongside him. During the guerrilla stages, he continued to display the reckless gallantry for which he was by now well known.⁶ His feats during this time were communicated to Rabbi Rabinowitz many years later by his old comrade-in-

arms Major Mauritz Domisse (whose mother was Jewish).

"He was a real dare-devil and never satisfied unless he was in some scrap with the enemy" Domisse wrote of Duveen. It was these qualities that brought him to the notice of General Beyers, who selected him for dangerous intelligence work behind the enemy lines. This he usually carried out himself, but sometimes did so in the company of a small patrol, Domisse included.

Duveen's luck ran out in October 1901, during an attack on a fortified camp at Prusen, near Potgietersrus. He charged right up to the first fort and was severely wounded in the stomach. After a heavy fight, the camp was captured, but Duveen's part in the war was over. Sensibly, Domisse ignored his pleas to give him a plate of porridge, which almost certainly would have proved fatal. He was removed to the Potgietersrus Hospital, after which he was sent as a POW to India, spending what was left of the war in the Shajahanpur camp.

Since there were at least 3000 Jews serving in the British forces, there were naturally many occasions when Jewish soldiers on opposing sides would have been firing at one another. One especially noteworthy Jew on Jew encounter took place after the battle of Tweebosch, a famous Boer victory in which General de la Rey captured his old rival Methuen, in March 1902. Captain PH Lazarus, an Intelligence Officer in Methuen's force, was amongst those taken prisoner. The Boers suspected that he was a burgher and would have shot him had it not been for the intervention of Solly Schultz, who informed them that he had been born in England⁷. Schultz served throughout the war on the Boer side, rising to the rank of Veld-Kornet. He was one of those who refused to take the Oath of Allegiance afterwards, instead crossing into German South West Africa where he acted as Intelligence Officer in the Herero War.

THE GUERRILLA WAR IN THE FREE STATE AND CAPE COLONY

General Christiaan Rudolf de Wet was not necessarily the most successful of the Boer commanders during the guerrilla phase of the war – that distinction probably would go to General Koos de la Rey, the Lion of the Western Transvaal – but he was undoubtedly the most renowned. More than anyone, he came to symbolise the stubborn refusal of the Boers to admit defeat, the quintessential *bittereinde* determination not to surrender their independence so long as effective resistance remained possible.

Relentlessly pursued, De Wet could turn lethal pursuer at the slightest opportunity, bloodying his enemies' noses before disappearing once more into the veld. He was as respected by his opponents as he was revered by the men who served under him. "I have never met such a leader and such a soldier as that General" said Joseph 'Jakkals' Segall many years later. Certainly, no Boer leader did more to

spoil the premature British victory celebrations.

De Wet's first great individual feat of the war was his stirring, if ultimately futile, attempt to rescue Cronje at Paardeberg. Had Cronje taken proper advantage of the escape route he managed to open, in the face of gigantic odds, the magnitude of the disaster to Boer arms could at least have been reduced. Taking part in this venture was the young Aaron Pincus who, together with his brother Myer, had been serving in the Winburg Commando since the beginning of the war.

Pincus continued to serve under de Wet after the fall of Bloemfontein. He became renowned for his skilful reconnaissance work, slipping in and out of the British lines on a number of occasions. Once, a British convoy had bivouacked nearby for the night and it was decided that young Aaron should try to relieve the enemy of some of their coffee. He was happy to risk the venture, and subsequently returned in triumph with his mission accomplished. Evading the British had been relatively easy, but he was hard-put to evade the wrath of his General. De Wet had specifically ordered that the British camp not be attacked, and descended on the errant Pincus with a sjambok. Pincus, despite being unable to detach himself from the purloined coffee box in which his finger was inserted, managed to outrun his pursuer.

Unlike de Wet, Pincus eventually did fall into enemy hands, being captured in April 1901. He spent the remainder of the war as a POW in Bermuda, where he was reunited with his fellow Winburger, Solomon Sorsky, who had been captured around the same time.

In addition to Sorsky and the Pincus brothers, there were at least two other Jewish members of the Winburg Commando – F. Goldman (who ultimately fell at Holkrans) and Abraham Myers. The latter had been a miller before the war. After spending several months on the Natal front, inter alia taking part in the battle of Colenso, he was recalled to the Winburg District to fix up some threshing machinery, and went on to establish a mill that provided for the Boer wives who were left behind on the farms. When the British took over, they seized the mill and briefly took him prisoner. Later, however, he was given a pass to Basutholand, where he remained until the war was over.

The Vlaktefontein Segalls

According to Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz, three of the Segall family from the southern Free State town of Vlaktefontein fought on the Boer side – Joseph (the famous 'Jakkals'), his father Abraham and uncle Moses. This was later challenged by Richard Mendelsohn, who believed that only Joseph had in fact been on active service. He based his conclusions on his close study of the claims for compensation for wartime losses submitted by Moses and Abraham after the war, and on the records of the Provost Marshal's office, SA Army Headquarters. According to this, Abraham remained "resolutely neutral" and refused commandeering into the Boer army on four

separate occasions. Moses had likewise claimed to have been “strictly neutral”, was arrested and sent to St. Helena as a POW on suspicion of having aided the Boers by providing them with supplies, not actually fighting for them.

One can only assume that the Segall brothers – certainly in Abraham’s case – suppressed their activities in the earlier part of the war to better their chances of receiving compensation for their extensive wartime losses at the hands of the British. At least two fairly reliable sources, namely the testimony of Joseph Segall’s cousin H.B. Kaplan and a letter from a Free State veteran in the *Sunday Express* (12 December 1937) indicate that Abraham took part in the invasion of the Northern Cape and was present at the battle of Coleskop. He was certainly renowned for his marksmanship, “perhaps the best in the Republic” according to his more famous son, who was not one for over-statements.

Jakkals Segall was only seventeen when he joined the Phillippolis Commando. By this time, Bloemfontein had already fallen and the guerrilla war was underway. General Hertzog was at first reluctant to enlist him, believing him to be too young, but yielded when Segall let him know that he was determined to remain in the field and “defend the freedom of his Afrikaner friends”. Within a short time, Hertzog’s misgivings evaporated as the young recruit’s dedication and abilities became apparent.

Some like to believe that Segall’s famous nickname derived from his skill as a scout and spy, which was undisputed by those who served with him. However, the real reason was the presence in the commando of another Jew, Wolf Jacobson. *Wolf en Jakkals* are, of course, a legendary pairing in Afrikaner folklore.⁸ A correspondent to *Die Volksblad*, Bloemfontein, identified as “Oom Holster of Ladybrand”, wrote (9 September 1948): “*Omdat daar toe ’n ‘wolf’ in die kommando was, het die burgers gedink dat daar ook ’n ‘jakkals’ moet wees en so is Segall toe ‘Jakkals’ genoem*”.⁹ Oom Holster did not say so, but the reason for this particular pairing was that the two men were together a great deal. This made sense as not only were both of them Jews, but they had also come from the same shtetl in Latvia, Pilten.

Segall tended to be reticent in later life when it came to talking of his wartime experiences, but one incident he did like to recount. It took place at the conclusion of General Hertzog’s famous raid into the Cape, which in turn became bound up with the dramatic climax of what came to be called the Second Great De Wet Hunt.

De Wet was also in the Cape, having invaded in the vain hope of provoking a Cape Dutch uprising. Hertzog joined up with him at Sanddrift near Phillipstown, on the southern bank of the rain-swollen Orange River. They were trapped there, unable to find a place to risk a crossing, and the pursuing British columns were closing in from all directions. There was no boat or pontoon in sight. Segall persuaded Hertzog to allow him to try to swim across. Tying his three horses together, took off his

clothes and left them together with his rifle in the veld. “I am going back to the old Free State” he said and dived into the water, “with the help of Almighty G-d” making it – barely – to the other side. He was pulled out the water, more dead than alive, by Adrian Schoeman (Volksraad Member for Phillipolis and an old friend of his) and his black servant. When he revived about an hour later, he saw that they were already starting to fight on the Cape side of the river. The British troops would be seen approaching and shells were bursting all around the commandos. There was nothing further Segall could do – his rifle, horses and even clothes might as well have been on another continent for all the access he had to them. The three set out on foot over the high hills towards the farm of a Mr Boshoff, Segall clothed in nothing but the servant’s blanket. There, Segall was provided with (ill-fitting) clothes and horse, on which he set out the following day to arrive safely at his uncle Moses’ shop in Springfontein.

De Wet and Hertzog made a fighting retreat, eventually finding a usable drift and crossing back into the Free State. Rosenthal remarks in his interview notes that it was “thanks to Segall’s warning that the *Vrystaatse Hoofkwartier* could come to their aid and take them over the Colesberg bridge”. De Wet himself, one should note, makes no such observation in his autobiography, but Rosenthal’s belief, coming as it does from a respected intellectual and the author of an acclaimed biography of De Wet, should not be lightly dismissed.

There were two particular engagements with the enemy that Segall used to recall, Vegtkop near Phillipolis and a second subsequent clash on the Kroonstad-Bethlehem line. His good friend Nicolaas Havenga was wounded beside him on both these occasions. In November 1937, Segall, Havenga (by then Minister of Finance in the Hertzog government) and another veteran, Jac du Toit, attended a commemorative ceremony at the Vegtkop battlefield and spoke of their experiences there.

It was Segall’s turn to be wounded, and in his case captured, towards the end of May 1902, less than two weeks before the war ended. On a pitch-black night, they were cutting their way through barbed wire used to protect the railway line against sabotage when a fusillade broke out and Segall was hit in the leg. It is surely not correct, as was subsequently claimed on his behalf, that he was the last casualty of the Anglo-Boer War, but he was certainly one of them.

After the war, when he was making a living selling photo enlargements, Segall met De Wet again at Edenburg. De Wet bought some of his photographs, then said to him, “*Ou Segal*, if the Boers were all as brave and trustworthy as you, *Ou Jakkals*, the English would never have won”. One of Segall’s most treasured possessions until the end of his life was a handwritten certificate he received from De Wet, dated 21 December 1907. This read (in this writer’s rendering from the Dutch): “This is to certify that the young gentleman Joseph Segall is well known to me, that from my knowledge of him he is honourable and

upstanding, and that during the recent war he carried out his duty as a burgher faithfully and bravely”.

But what of the second half of the Wolf-Jakkals pairing? In contrast to Segall, who lived long enough to be interviewed when people were belatedly starting to take an interest in Jews who fought for the Boers, Woolf Jacobson was never approached to tell his own story of his years on commando. The bare facts of his career at least are known. At the start of the war, he enlisted in the Fauresmith-Phillipolis Commando (which was under one Generalship), serving first under General Hertzog and thereafter, when the latter was chosen as Staff's General for all the Boer forces in South Africa in 1901, under his successor, Chas. Niewoudt. He was on Niewoudt's Staff-Corps and remained in the field until peace was made.

In 1999, the author had the opportunity of meeting Jacobson's daughter and only child, Jenny Leviton. At the time, the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, was seeking information on Jewish participants in the Anglo-Boer War for purposes of a publication and exhibition to mark the centenary. Mrs Leviton donated her father's *Dekorasie vir Troue Diens* medal, a photograph of him and several war-related documents to the Board. Amongst the documents was a handwritten testimonial from General Hertzog, dated 5 July 1905. This confirmed that Jacobson, as a burgher of the old Orange Free State Republic, had served under his leadership until the end of the war, and that he had discharged his duty “faithfully and dutifully” (“*getrouw en gehoorzaam*”). There was also a similarly worded testimonial from General Niewoudt.

Unfortunately, there was little that Mrs Leviton could relate at first hand about her father, since he had died, in May 1921, when she was still very young. One thing she did remember telling her: “Should you find yourself some day in difficulties and can find no other way out, appeal direct to General Hertzog, and no stone will be left unturned for your rights or justice”. In 1939, she had occasion to take up this advice when she required documentary evidence of Jacobson's identity as a South African citizen. She approached Hertzog for assistance in this regard, citing verbatim what her father had told him, and at the same time requesting that she be sent his DTD medal. There is no record of his having replied, but one assumes that the matter was appropriately dealt with since the medal was subsequently issued.

Another Jew who fought with Hertzog throughout the war was Joubert Marks. Previously a young jewellery salesman who was more or less adopted by a rural Free State family, he initially served on the Western front until Cronje's surrender at Paardeberg. Thereafter he fought on mainly in the Northern Free State, reaching the rank of lieutenant adjutant to Commandant George Brand under Hertzog's commando. After the war, Marks settled in Ladybrand, where he made an irregular living as a speculator, and had little to do with the Jewish community. He always asserted that there was ‘never

a better and kindlier man than *Regter*’ (the name by which General Hertzog, a judge in the Orange Free State before the war, was reverently referred to during the war).

Max Goldman of Wepener

Max Goldman's journey to South Africa commenced with his fleeing his native Russia after falling asleep on guard duty and losing his rifle. Still in his teens, he arrived in Port Elizabeth and, typical of East European Jewish immigrants, took up ‘smousing’ (peddling). In the course of his travels, he met and married a Boer farmer's daughter and took to farming himself.

Despite having a non-Jewish wife, Goldman remained committed to his religion. Indeed, he went on to become one of the founders of the Wepener Hebrew Congregation and was elected as its *gabbai*. All his children were brought up in the Jewish faith and ultimately married Jews.

Goldman's religious loyalties nearly cost him his life during the guerrilla campaign in the Free State. He was doing patrol work when he heard that the British were about to attack Bushman's Kop, where he knew a Jew named Michailsky kept a shop in which there was a *Sefer Torah*. Goldman, accompanied by one of his brothers-in-law, made his way to Bushman's Kop to rescue the *Sefer Torah*, which he duly obtained and stowed into a bag on his saddle. On their return home, the two men were accosted by a British Tommy, who accused them of being spies and threatened to shoot them. Even as he had his rifle against Goldman's chest, an officer arrived on the scene. Goldman explained that he was carrying a Scroll of the Law “which the Christians had rejected but the Jews held sacred”, opening his bag to allow the officer to see for himself. They were allowed to continue on their way.

Goldman still had the *Sefer Torah* after the war ended and the nascent Wepener Jewish community held services in his home. He was one of two candidates for the position of *gabbai* when the time came to formally establish the congregation. Prior to the election, which, of course, Goldman won, his wife let it be known that whichever way the voting went, she would not allow the *Sefer Torah* to be taken from her house since it had saved the life of her husband and her brother.

Cohen Confusion in Reitz's Commando

On 17 September 1901, in the early stages of his famous invasion of the Cape, General Jan Smuts led an attack on a British camp at Modderfontein, near Elands River Poort and some fifteen kilometres northwest of Tarkastad in the Eastern Cape. It was manned by some 200 of the 17th Lancers, relatively inexperienced and, as it proved, no match for their battle-hardened opponents. Denys Reitz was in the thick of the fight, and in his classic war memoir *Commando* recorded in detail how it unfolded, including an account of a murderous close-range

duel in the opening stages:

The place we were fighting in was an outcrop of loose rocks, jutting up like a reef, nowhere much higher than a man, although the rear slope fell somewhat more steeply into the English camp. In this narrow space, where we were facing each other almost at handshake, a grim duel began. As the soldiers raised their heads to fire, we brought them down, for they were no match for us in short-range work of this kind, and we killed twelve or thirteen and wounded several more at a distance of a few yards. We did not suffer a single casualty, except for a few men hit as we rode in. Of these, one was a Jew named Cohen with a smashed ankle. These two had been able to crawl through to the firing line and were taking part in the attack.

The British camp was quickly overwhelmed and plundered. A day or two later, however, Cohen had to be left behind as his wound had turned gangrenous. Wrote Reitz, "Besides from being a brave man Cohen must have been a bit of a wag, for I subsequently read in an English newspaper that when he was captured and asked by a British officer why he, a Jew and an Uitlander, was fighting for the Boers he replied that he was fighting for the Franchise".¹⁰

Cohen here was alluding, sardonically no doubt, to how denying voting rights to recent British settlers in the ZAR had been used as a pretext by Britain to provoke the war in the first place. At the same time, he was also speaking the literal truth, since Jews in the ZAR likewise were unenfranchised but were accorded burgher status if they volunteered for armed service.

The official POW list compiled by the British military record that David Lewis Cohen (POW no. 50612), serving at the time under General Smuts, was captured on 21 September 1901 near Cradock and sent as a POW to India. It notes further that he was 26 years old and from Johannesburg. The author's further research has established, however, that the reference to his age was most likely a clerical error.

In 1971, by which time few, if any, of the veterans of the Modderfontein battle were still alive, Human & Rousseau published *Kommandojare*, the war memoirs of J H Meyer who had taken part in Smuts' invasion. It described the Modderfontein engagement in detail, and concluded this with an extended and lively portrayal of the mysterious Cohen dealt with so briefly by Reitz:

Ou Heimie was 'n karakter van sy eie. Hy was nie meer'n jong man nie; naby die sestig, met a groot bleskop, 'n paar tamaai wenkbroue en 'n mankerige linkerbeen. Hy was vir ons 'n gedurige bron van vermaak, altyd opgeruimd en vol grappe en met die hande aan die beduie wanneer hy sy eie soort Engels of Afrikaans praat. Ons was almal baie lief vir hierdie Jood. Hy was 'n goeie vriend en 'n aangename makker. En hy was 'n

*vuurwarm Kruger-man.*¹¹

It is possible – just – to resolve the apparent discrepancy of the POW records according to Cohen the forenames of David Louis while Meyer refers to him as 'Heimie' by suggesting that the latter was a nickname. So far as his age goes, the burial records of the Johannesburg Chevra Kadisha suggest that Meyer was correct. According to these, David Lewis Cohen died on 2 February 1933 at the age of 85 and was buried in the Brixton Cemetery. Since this is the only person by that name on the list for that time period, it can be assumed that this denotes our elusive *Oudstryder*, who would have been around 53 at the time of action Reitz and Meyer describe, and that the British POW records are incorrect.

Cohen was clearly a memorable personality, and a brave and redoubtable fighter as well. Meyer confirms that he was amongst those in the forefront of the attack on the Lancers' camp, despite being wounded. He goes on to relate that during the scramble for booty afterwards, he hurried over to a group of horses to obtain a new mount for himself and there found Heimie Cohen, sitting on the ground with about twenty horses tethered together with a long leather thong.

Clinging as hard as he could to the rope, Cohen called out, "Dese are mine! Dese are mine! Dey're all mine!" When Meyer next looked, he saw a group of burgers descend upon him, and a moment later Cohen was left, sorely protesting, with just the tether in his hand.

Cohen's smart retort to the question why he had joined up with the Boers has its parallel in an exchange between J H Meyers' and his captors (Springs, July, 1900). When his scornfully asked him, "Is this what you call a free country?" he responded, "It is free enough for me! I come from a country of real oppression – from Shadova in Lithuania".

Relations between the opposing sides during lulls in the fighting could be almost friendly at times. Leopold Lewe, a young Russian cavalry officer who decided to take some unauthorised extended leave and enlist with the Boers, testified to this "best of enemies" relationship he experienced:

Frequently we held up English trains and confiscated the ammunition. I still remember how the Tommies climbed out of their trucks and talked with us. The Boers drank coffee with them before they allowed the train – without ammunition – to continue. This kind of fraternisation took place more than once.

Jacob Arnhold remained a *bittereinde* to the end and had little truck with the post-war 'toenadering' approach towards Anglo-Afrikaner relations adopted by such leaders as Louis Botha and Jan Smuts. Rather, he wished that the Boers had fought even better so that they could have "wiped out more of the *rooineks*". Interviewed by Rabbi Rabinowitz towards the end of his life, he poured scorn on the *verraiers* who had '*hensopped*' and spoke with pride about

what the Boers had achieved:

It was a great war. 60 000 Burghers who were not soldiers fought against 400 000 British soldiers and 3000 Indian Lancers [sic]. And still we might have beaten them had not Lord Roberts instituted his pernicious blockhouse system. At every mile they set them up, it was too much for us.

Every 10 August – Kruger Day – until his death, Arnhold's small, dignified figure, resplendent in coat-tails and top hat, would be seen laying a wreath at the foot of Kruger's stature in Pretoria. He left everything – it would not have been very much – to the city's Kruger House for children.

NOTES

- 1 Isaac Goldinger, a close friend of the President, also was engaged in this melancholy task. During the war, Goldinger had been entrusted with funds to furnish supplies and transport for the Boer forces, a task he performed meticulously.
- 2 Schikkerling W R, *Commando Courageous - A Boer's Diary* (Johannesburg, 1964), pp163, 167, 196, 338.
- 3 Schikkerling R W, *Commando Courageous - A Boer's*

Diary (Johannesburg, 1964), p338

- 4 See Schikkerling, pp268-70 for a full description of this incident
- 5 Letter to Rabbi L I Rabinowitz in SAJBD 208 Anglo-Boer War - Correspondence
- 6 For more on Duveen, see Rabinowitz, L I, 'Joel Charles Duveen: Another Jewish Hero of the Boer War' in *Jewish Guild Annual*, Sept 1952
- 7 Letter to Rabbi Rabinowitz, 4/8/49 in SAJBD 208 Boer War
- 8 They were published in a supplement to the *Farmer's Weekly* in 1917.
- 9 "Because there was already a 'wolf' in the commando, the burghers considered that there must also be a 'jakkals', and so Segall was named 'Jakkals'.
- 10 Reitz, D, *Commando, A Boer Journal of the Boer War*, London, Faber 1929 p234.
- 11 Meyer, J H, *Kommandojare*, Human & Rousseau, 1971, pp256-7 ("Old Heimie was a character of note. He was no longer a young man, nearly sixty, with a big, bald head, a pair of enormous eyebrows and a lame left leg. He was an enduring source of comment for us, always cheerful and ready with a joke, gesticulating with his hands when speaking his unique brand of English and Afrikaans. He was a good friend and a pleasant companion. And he was a red-hot Kruger man")



Mustering the Smithfield Commando at the beginning of the war. Isadore Bernitz is in front, immediately to the right of the large OFS Flag. (By courtesy of Joanna Strangways-Booth)

BRITISH JEWISH SOLDIERS' LETTERS FROM THE FRONT, 1899-1900

*

Editor's Note: The *Jewish Chronicle*, organ of UK Jewry, enthusiastically backed the British war effort in South Africa. Its wartime issues regularly carried war news, specifically relating to the Jews on active service. The example of the latter was played up to the hilt, as evidence that Jews were not shirking their duty but indeed "doing their bit" for Queen and Country. Another understated motive was to counter accusations that the war had come about through the machinations of Jewish financiers.

Amongst those items published were letters from Jewish soldiers describing their experiences. The following extracts from such correspondence record how several of the war's most significant military engagements were seen by the Jewish Tommies who participated in them.

Private B. Davis and the Battle of Elandslaagte

Writing from Estcourt, Natal, to his elderly father back in Birmingham on 2 March 1900, Private Benjamin Davis (No. 937, A Company, 1 Section, Imperial Light Infantry) provided a dramatic account of his part in the British victory at Elandslaagte. On 21 October 1899, a Boer commando under General Kock took up a position on the heights overlooking Elandslaagte station, some fifty kilometers north of Ladysmith. A significantly larger British force were dispatched to dislodge them, and succeeded in their aim after several hours of stiff fighting. (Davis' real name, it should be noted, was Berkovich; a number of Jewish volunteers chose to Anglicize their names when they enlisted)

Our first fighting was at the Battle of Elandslaagte, where we acted as reserves. We lay down for about seven and a half hours, and the suspense was horrible. About two miles further up the valley, big guns were booming, musketry rattling, horses screaming and men yelling; while now and again a battery of guns would crash past us on their way up. None of us were hurt, though several shells burst around us. One buried itself quite close to the Major without bursting, and he was as cool as ice; a fine, big chap.

The majority of our fellows are old soldiers, having served in the previous Boer War and some of the Kaffir wars. This is a volunteer corps, all picked men, and, by a stroke of luck, I was put in the picket company of the lot 'A'. After we had lain a good while, orders came for the advance of A, B and C Companies. We advanced almost at the double, so eager were our men to get at the enemy. In about twenty minutes we were halted, and then we knew we were in the line of fire. So far, we had only seen our own men, who were steadily advancing from cover to cover, crouching and crawling towards the hill where the Boers were entrenched. Suddenly, there was a lull. A small band of Boers having been cut off, hoisted the white flag. The General in command thought the Boers were surrendering, and ordered the bugler to sound the "cease fire." He soon found out his mistake, and the fighting was renewed.

In the meantime, as the smoke cleared off, I was

able to obtain a grand view around, my first view of a battlefield. For miles around the veldt was dotted with dead and wounded. Thousands of our men could be seen as they advanced from trench to trench. Close to me lay a wounded Fusilier. He asked me for some water, and I gave him my water-bottle. I was just handing him a cigarette when we were ordered to fall in. We struck off to the right to take up a position on a small kopje, and were within about three hundred yards of it when the bullets started flying around us. When I saw the stern looks of our fellows, I nerved myself for the rush to cover. It soon came, with the shot whistling about us. We had hardly settled down to return the fire when we heard wild yelling and cheering, and, for a moment, as the smoke cleared, we saw the bayonets flashing as our gallant Tommies charged the hills. The cheering continued for a quarter of an hour, when it suddenly increased three-fold, and, as our artillery galloped up the hill, we knew the battle was won and the Boers routed.

Two Views of the Battle of Colenso

The repulse of General Redvers Buller at Colenso on 15 December 1899 was the third, and most humiliating, of the defeats the British suffered during the so-called "Black Week". Strongly entrenched and virtually invisible on the north bank of the Tugela, the Boers under General Louis Botha quickly brought Buller's columns to a standstill, inflicting heavy casualties while suffering minimal losses themselves. Ten artillery field pieces fell into their hands when the British retreated later in the day.

The first extract, taken from a letter written by an unnamed Jewish officer from Pietermaritzburg, appeared in the JC on 26 January 1900.

I am sorry to say I am lying in the hospital, having been wounded in last Friday's engagement at Colenso. The battle was a terrible failure; the Boers held a perfectly unassailable position beyond the River Tugela. They were practically invisible in sheltered trenches, while our poor fellows had to advance over perfectly open ground and attempt to cross the river. The enemy knew all the ranges, and the hail of bullets

was appalling; the pluck shown by our troops was magnificent, but the task was impossible, and after about seven hours' fighting we had to retire.

I was shot through the ankle early in the day, but the wound did not bother me; and it was not until fighting had nearly ceased, that I got a worse wound in the thigh, which bowled me over. My regiment lost very heavily, two officers killed and nine wounded, and about 100 non-coms. and men killed or wounded.

You need not be anxious about me; on the contrary, I thank God that I came out of it alive. I am quite comfortable and well cared for in the hospital; an army nursing sister looks after us, besides the usual orderlies. The enthusiasm and patriotism in the town is enormous. I was carried off the field by civilian stretcher bearers for about two miles who did not funk though under rifle fire, and this Hospital is full of civilian doctors who are assisting the military doctors. Although not badly hurt, I am afraid my convalescence will be slow, as I shall not be able to walk for some time. Thank heaven more troops are coming out from home. Of course, we must win in the long run but it will be a long time; the Boer forces have been absurdly under-estimated, and unfortunately our artillery has not guns of equal range to theirs.

Private Edwin Samuel Lyons (2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers) was deployed in the sector where the British guns were lost. He gave the following account of his experiences in a letter published in the JC on 19 January 1900:

It was one of the most awful experiences by a British soldier. My regiment, with only four Companies engaged, lost six officers and 91 non-commissioned officers killed, wounded and missing. There is another man named Lyons who was wounded in the neck, but always remember my regimental number is 4297, so as to distinguish between the two. Notwithstanding the deadly fire on us we could not see the enemy. We did not retire: we were on an open plain, under a boiling sun, without food and water for 10½ hours, and could not return the fire because we could not see the enemy. I was busy with the wounded, with bullets and shells all round me. Two artillerymen were recommended for the V.C. right next to me. . . .

I told you when you parted with me that I would do my duty like an Englishman and a Jew, and you bet I'll not disgrace my uniform or my race. I am living, that is the main thing, and what is more, I hope to march with the remainder of our troops into Pretoria victorious, and come home again. I am all right; I am too ugly for the Boers to shoot, but I tell you it is not too pleasant carrying our wounded chums to the rear in face of a hot fire of bullets and watch their sufferings and bind up their wounds, and the next day to bury the poor fellows who fell never to rise up again. You will see by the papers that we were well to the front, and have earned a good name. . . .

Buck up, mater. It would have been a bitter disappointment to me had I been left at home while my comrades were fighting out here. I am glad I am here to share the honors and the sufferings of my chums, and to do my little bit for the credit of dear old England and the grandest Queen who ever reigned (God bless her)....

The Central Front

Considerable activity took place in the North-Eastern Cape theatre of operations, centering on Colesberg, during the first five months of the war. Unlike in the Kimberley and Ladysmith theatres, where full-scale engagements involving thousands on either side were common, this largely took the form of numerous smaller actions. The following extract, from a letter by Private Sidney Levy, F.M. Rifles, published in the JC on 23 February 1900, depicts the harshness of daily life on active service.

You cannot imagine how welcome to us volunteers, living as we do and have done for three solid months on the bare veldt, devoid of all comforts, is a letter from home. Letters are so scarce that the few that reach us from outside are looked upon as treasures, and valued accordingly. No doubt, dear mother, you would like to have a long account of myself, but you must remember that time is not my own; that I am liable to be called to duty at any moment.

We have been on active service since November 5th, and we have already had an engagement, and a shell from the enemy dropped but a few yards from me, but luckily did not burst. Twenty-two of our men were engaged in a bigger fight at Dordrecht, and some were killed. I am not mentioning this to make you anxious . . . but it is every man's duty in Africa to fight for his country, and why should I remain idle? Will you not be proud of your son, mother, when he returns home after the war with a medal on his breast! Until then we are all having a rough tune of it, more than you think, and I pray that this terrible war may soon be ended.

Every day mounted patrols, picquets, guards, fatigue parties &c. Then to be woken up at midnight and have to saddle and ride 40 miles without any grub is no joke, I can assure you. Last week I was four days in the saddle, and the heat was almost unbearable. We cook our own food, and think nothing of making soup and drinking it out of the wash-basin. Still I keep up a stout heart. . . . Of course you know we are attached to General Gatacre's column, and that another attack will shortly be made. I wonder where I shall be when your answer to this comes. . . .

The Battle of Spioenkop

Spioenkop, fought on 24 January 1900, was the culmination of Buller's second unsuccessful attempt to breach the Boer's Tugela line and come to the relief of Ladysmith. The British seized the thinly-defended hill in a night raid, but failed to occupy it

properly, leaving them exposed to a strong Boer counter-attack from three directions. The position was abandoned after a ferocious day-long battle. Barring Paardeberg a little under a month later, Spioenkop (called Spion Kop by the British) was the bloodiest single encounter of the war, costing some 80 Boer and over 320 British lives. Three Jews were among the dead - Private H. Dreher (Royal Lancashire Regiment), Private A. Levitt (Middlesex Regiment) and Lieutenant Frederick Melchior Raphael (South Lancashire Regiment). The following obituary for Raphael appeared in the 2 February 1900 issue of the JC.

The announcement of the death of Lieutenant F. M. Raphael South Lancashire Regiment, brings home the stern realities of war to a large number of our readers. He was, we believe, the first Jewish officer in the British Regular Army to be killed on active service. His death was notified at the War Office on Monday last, the 29th inst., as having occurred in action in Natal on the 24th, from which it may be gathered that he took part in General Warren's attack on Spion Kop...

Lieutenant Frederick Melchior Raphael, son of Mr. and Mrs. George C. Raphael, of Portland Place, London, and Castle Hill, Englefield Green, was born in 1870 and educated at Wellington College. Joining the Rifle Brigade-Militia Battalion in 1889, he passed into the Regular Army in 1891, being posted to the 1st Battalion South Lancashire Regiment. He was gazetted first Lieutenant in that regiment in 1893, and two years ago passed the necessary qualifications prior to receiving the rank of Captain.

He had qualified in signaling and military topography as well as having acted Instructor of Musketry and Adjutant to his regiment. He was also Captain of the Regimental Cricket Eleven.

A man of strong physique, ever collected, possessing a perfect equanimity of temper, generous, an all-round sportsman, devoting much of his time to fishing and shooting, he was every inch a soldier. Always popular with those with whom he came into contact, he had the enviable capacity of making friends and keeping them, and it is to be hoped that those dear to him whom he has left behind to mourn his loss will find consolation in the fact that he has died a hero's death, and one which he himself would most have desired.

Private Abraham Sarfaty (Seffarty), of A Company, 2nd Middlesex Regiment, took part in the Spioenkop battle, doing "a great deal for the wounded in his capacity as orderly to the Medical Officer in charge of his Battalion". The JC described him as "one of the Sephardic soldiers in the British Army". He served in India as a bandsman in his regiment, and was previously mentioned in the JC in a paragraph headed "A Jewish Bandsman". The extract that follows was published in the JC on 9 March 1900.

Just a few lines to let you know that I am still alive

and safe. You will by this time have read in the papers that our regiment has been in action, and of the number of men we have lost.

It was a terrible day. The night before, the men were sitting round the camp fires till one o'clock in the morning, when we had the order to advance and help to keep the hill which the other regiments were fast losing. It was a difficult mountain to climb, and we could only get up in single file. I am not sure of the name. It is either "Spitz Kop" or "Spion Kop." Were it not for our regiment coming up and opening fire at once, the Boers would have captured the hill and made us all prisoners. I was not on the hill all the time, as the doctor sent me to the field hospital to get a further supply of brandy. The shells were bursting everywhere. I was busy all day getting water for the wounded and putting on bandages. I shall not attempt to describe some of the terrible sights I witnessed. Out of five Jews in the regiment, one was killed and one wounded. The first was Private Levitt, and the other Color-Sergeant Morris, who was hit in the nose and mouth. . . .

Minyanim in the shadow of Long Tom: The Siege of Kimberley

Kimberley was one of three British towns that were besieged by the Boers in the early stages of the war. Unlike the other two – Mafeking and Ladysmith – it had a significant Jewish civilian population. The following letter was written shortly after the relief of the town on 15 February 1900 by the Rev. Harris Isaacs, Minister of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation, to Chief Rabbi Marcus Adler (published 30 March 1900). Its description of how Jewish communal life was conducted under siege conditions vividly brings to life a unique episode in South African Jewish history.

Rev. Dr. – Knowing full well the interest you take in every Jewish community throughout the British Empire, I am sure you will be pleased to hear from me under present circumstances.

For one hundred and twenty-four days Kimberley has been besieged. At first we looked upon it as huge joke, Boers threatening British territory. But for many weeks towards the end we suffered such agony and such trouble and tribulations that few of us are likely to forget it for the rest of our lives. No food could be obtained without a permit, bread 10 oz. per day, no flour if bread were used; tea, coffee, sugar, the smallest quantity imaginable; potatoes none, vegetables very little, fruit very little, eggs 24s per doz., butter none, fowls 25s. each. Wood to cook the food which was served three pounds per person per week. Meat, nothing but horse flesh. We did not fatten on this fare.

Yes, medical comforts could be obtained, but only by medical certificates. And what medical comforts! A tin of jam, a tin of salmon, sardines, kippered herrings, soap, candles – these were medical comforts. It was one constant struggle from 5.30 a.m. till late in the evening to obtain provisions for the

day. Had it not been for the De Beers Company we could not have held out so long. It supplied us with water, which had been cut off by the Boers, it supplied us with the little vegetables and fruit obtainable, and the relief work, which kept people in employment and in good order. Employment was given to everybody, white, colored, black; no difference was made in nationality creed, or color. What was most important, it manufactured ammunition, and a big gun throwing a projectile of 28 lbs. and named "Long Cecil," after Cecil J. Rhodes. Strange coincidence, the gentleman [George Labram – ed.] who perfected this gun was himself killed by a 100 lb. shell thrown into the heart of the town by the Boers.

The members of our community performed their fair share in the defense of the town. Thirty-seven joined and carried arms in the Town Guard. Considering the Jewish population, this is a fair proportion to other churches. Some joined the Red Cross Ambulance Corps, and assisted the wounded. The military authorities treated our community with the greatest consideration. When the town was rationed on horseflesh, we were given kosher meat. We obtained a very small quantity, two ounces per person per day, but it was meat – beef – and what a luxury it was! People who, sad to say, had forgotten the taste of kosher meat, begged and prayed for a permit to obtain it.

Services continued uninterrupted. Amidst shot and shell, accompanied by a choir of cannon balls,

the *Maariv* was chanted on Friday evening. With 40lb. projectiles bursting all over the town, we read the Law. Read the service and prayed fervently indeed, "May God send peace to us and to all Israel – Amen." Only on one occasion did we fail to obtain a *Minyan*, and that was when we were bombarded with the 100lb. projectiles. This Saturday evening, the 100lb. shells came fast and furiously. Starting at eight p.m, it continued to twelve p.m. to the minute, at intervals of two and three minutes, when the enemy piously stopped, for was it not "The Holy Sunday"? The agonies of this one evening, who can describe?

Besides everything and every trouble and anguish, we lovers of peace, who had looked upon a little sickness as a terrible trouble and upon death under natural circumstances as a grievous blow, now saw wagons flying the red cross with wounded and dead, slowly wending their way to the hospital and mortuary, each day claiming its quota. Our hearts bled for the sorrow that and come upon us. All this time our women and children bore everything with courage and fortitude.

And now we are relieved. The town is gradually resuming its normal appearance. We have already had butter for breakfast and potatoes for dinner, and – tell it not in Gath, it is a secret – I heard that we are going to have fried fish for breakfast to-morrow – Shobbos. What a "Good Shobbos" greeting we will give each other to-morrow when we leave the synagogue...



Happy
Chanukah!

Best wishes over Chanukah to all our Jewish tenants, partners and friends from City Property.

City Property believes urban renewal is transformation in action. In this way we re-invigorate the economic lifeblood of the country and improve the lives of those who live and work in our cities.



CITY PROPERTY
Addressing the Future

PTA (012) 319-8811, JHB (011) 378-3200
www.cityproperty.co.za

KANGRA

*Best Wishes
for
Chanukah
Festival of Lights*

HARRY SPANIER: AN UNTOWARD BOER SOLDIER

*

Ann Rabinowitz



*Harry Spanier
Lancaster, Ohio*

This story ends on 11 December, 1899, with an American killed needlessly on the field of battle of Surprise Hill, South Africa. However, it begins fortuitously enough, with a German Jewish boy, Harry Spanier, coming to America with his siblings, Joseph and Pauline, as part of the mid-19th Century German-Jewish migration to America.

The Spanier siblings were barely teenagers when they arrived and set about striving to integrate into the American melting pot. Joseph and Pauline settled in post-Gold Rush San Francisco, while Harry took to the East Coast, New York, and then Columbus in mid-western Ohio.

According to Harry's passport application, he was the son of Abraham Spanier of Wandsbek, Germany. He had two passports with varying birth dates, one giving 1840 and the other 1853.

Spanier was variously a grocer, fish market owner and speculator. He was someone who looked for the main chance, a good idea, a way to make his mark. He was eager to make his first million, as he had heard it was possible to do in America, the land of opportunity.

To others, he appeared to be a fine figure of a man, attractive with blue eyes and light hair. He

fitted in everywhere. He must have been a persuasive talker as he gained the attention of many a prominent businessman, belonged to civic organizations and lodges, and had many devoted friends.

At some point, he met the ebullient and socially active Frances Emma Vagnier. She was the daughter of Bartholomew and Frances Vagnier, French Catholics and early settlers of Lancaster, a small Ohio town not far from Columbus. It was not known how 'Emma' met Harry Spanier. She was much younger than he was, and eager to see the world, while he was a worldly man intent on making things happen. She was smitten despite the difference in their ages and their religions. However, she took her religion seriously, seriously enough to require that their forthcoming children be brought up Catholic.



*Frances Emma Spanier
Columbus, OH*

They were married in approximately 1884, although no records remain of their joining or whether it was done civilly or in a church. Intermarriage, whilst frowned upon, occurred frequently in those days when Jews were located in areas where there were few other Jews. The fact, too, was that many of these early German Jewish settlers were of the Reform persuasion and may also have become much less observant in the less restrictive confines of America.

The Spaniers had their first child, Joseph, immediately, and two more, Clara Belle and Lewis J., followed. However, Joseph died in 1890, as did Harry's brother, Joseph.

It was difficult trying to make something of oneself and raise a family too. However, Harry was a hustler and always eager to find his niche. He kept up with current affairs and what was going on in the world and eventually concocted the idea that he should become involved in South African-related

Ann Rabinowitz, a frequent contributor to Jewish Affairs and other Jewish publications, is Research Coordinator of the Southern Africa Special Interest Group (SIG), associated with JewishGen on the Internet (<http://www.jewishgen.org/safrica>). In that capacity, she has produced numerous databases and materials related to shipping and immigration, naturalization, community profiles and related matters. She is also involved in Holocaust research.

commerce. South Africa was alive with possibilities, with its abundant natural resources such as diamonds and gold, even if it had little in the way of standardized or commercially mass-produced products such as carriages, railroad cars, mining machinery, explosives, etc.

Harry's first successful South African venture was to represent a combine of New Yorkers in the shipping of mules there. Since mules were not naturally raised in South Africa and were stronger and more long-lasting than horses, there was a great desire for them. They were essential ingredients in the mining industry in particular. In addition, they were most important in military operations, such as carting food, guns, and equipment, as demonstrated in the First Anglo-Boer War (1880-1881).

As it so happened, the major companies in Columbus, the Columbus Buggy Co. Inc., and Kilbourne and Jacobs Manufacturing Co. were intent on providing items related to mining, transportation, and other similar areas. Harry established connections for selling their products in South Africa. A group of the companies then hired him to go there to negotiate contracts with the government for many diverse items. This was his chance at striking it rich. His ambitious plan was to spend a year or two in South Africa, make his fortune and bring his family out to join him.

It was now 1896. He obtained his passport and bid good-bye to his devoted wife and two young children. As he left the coast of America for a daunting and unknown foreign shore, he penned a letter to his wife, only the first page of which remains:

On board ship, Saturday, Oct. 17, 1896

My own dear wife and children,

This is a great moment for me. It almost breaks my heart, but we will trust in God to land us safe and may God keep you and the children until my return. I have set my teeth together to keep from almost breaking down not because I am a coward, but because I miss you so much my darlings. We are just leaving the shore of our country behind and with a heavy heart I am looking at the...

And so, Harry sailed across the seas and arrived in South Africa, immediately setting about making connections so as to consummate some deals. He was widely accepted in the halls of government in Pretoria, where many other speculators competed with him for the lucrative government contracts. His friends were other Americans, who hung out at certain social clubs, but also the Boers officials with whom he had to deal. He was a fresh face who represented companies that had a worldwide reputation, which boded well for his future success.

He began to make progress, and significant quantities of American products from Columbus, Ohio, began flowing to the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek. Despite this, he recognized that the big money was going to come from the provision of

railroad cars and lines for new main and branch rail lines being constructed, as well as of mining machinery.

In 1898, he represented a group of companies in the following undertaking:

Pretoria, 3rd (Central News Agency)

An American syndicate, which has practically secured the contract for the Vryheid-Dundee line, has submitted a proposal to the Government offering to construct all the new branch lines at an average rate of £8,000 per mile, to be paid in State debentures bearing four percent interest. The proposal will have to be submitted to the Volksraad.

This was an important arterial rail line which was scheduled to connect the Richards Bay coal line with the Durban-Transvaal main line. The initial section of eleven km from Glencoe to Talana was built in 1896. Due to the onset of the Second Anglo-Boer War, the line was not extended to Vryheid until 1903.

The South Africa Harry saw was indeed full of possibilities. He continued to write glowing letters to his wife about what he could accomplish, but at the same time recorded his homesickness and how much he missed his family. The time flew by, and by 1899, three years later, Harry had not managed to go home yet. Things were still on the cusp of succeeding for him.

He wrote to his wife that if things did not work out, he would return, but he wanted to stay until he had tried every means of succeeding on a special project he was working on. If he did succeed, he wrote, he would be a millionaire many times over. She wrote back agreeing that he should stay until he reached his goal or until his opportunities ran out.

At some point, Harry became a burgher of the ZAR and joined the Boer commandos. Along with others from Pretoria, he left to join in the siege of Ladysmith. It is quite strange that Harry, a man who by most accounts was nearly sixty years of age, should have done this. It is true that there were older men who joined, but many took non-combatant roles. In addition, he had a wife and two young children who needed his support in America. What prompted him to take this life-changing and subsequently fatal move which risked everything he had or hoped to accomplish?

Did he suddenly become idealistic and join a foreign army, despite the fact that he had only been in the ZAR for only three short years? There is no documentation that has survived of his feelings along these lines. Was he influenced by his friends? American speculators who were in South Africa for the most part supported the British, not the Boers. However, some close American friends did join the Boers, and this may have accounted for his decision.

There is a possibility that Spanier was caught up in something that has not been documented, such as spying for the American government. Many Americans who were in the same position as he was

returned home when the war broke out. Several descriptions of his activities during the war lead one to believe that he was observing the proceedings from the sidelines and not actually participating.

It may be that Harry felt that his participation and support would guarantee his success after the war was over and the Boers had won. This may be the final answer; he had told his wife he was in it for the long haul until he achieved the success he had struggled for.

This is the missing link in Harry's story. There is nothing to tell us either in his correspondence or in other documentation that has since come to light what caused him to end up on a battlefield at Surprise Hill in the dark, early hours of 11 December 1899.

One of the unique bits of necrology following Harry's death was the letter written to his wife by a Catholic priest, the Rev. Father A. Baudry, who had shared a tent with him on the battlefield. The following is an extract:

12.12.1899

Hoofdlager

Madam,

It is my sad duty to —to you news which will grieve you very much. As you know your husband joined the Boers forces here near Ladysmith. For a couple of weeks he shared the tent where I was. We soon became very friendly and he talked much to me of you and your two children, gave me your address and told me that if anything happened to him to inform you. Though not a R. Catholic he attended mass which I celebrated in the camp on Sunday. We parted about a week hence; he was going to join the Pretoria Commando.

Our eyes were full of tears when we last shook hands to see each other no more.

Yesterday morning at about two o'clock his picket was attacked by the English; heavy firing commenced and continued for about an hour.

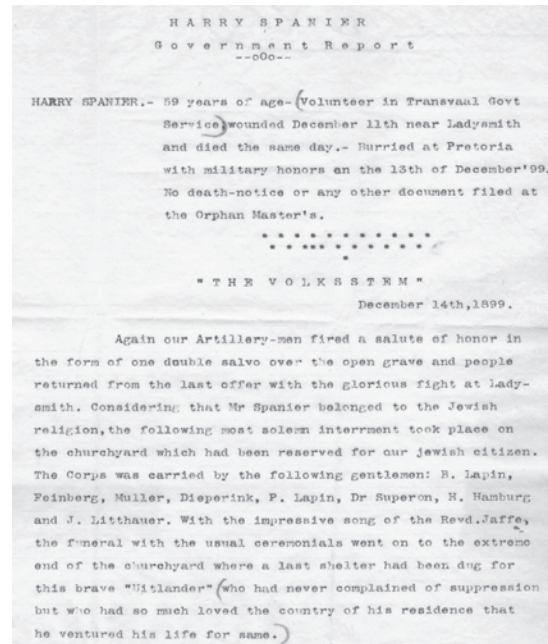
The English were repulsed, but not until they had blown up one gun with a charge of dynamite. On the Boers side there were 2 killed and 14 wounded. Your husband was among the last. He was mortally shot in the stomach. As soon as I heard of it I went to the ambulance, but he had not yet been brought there.

I went again in the afternoon, but to learn that he had succumbed to his wound. He died in the ambulance wagon on his way to the ambulance train, which was to carry him to Johannesburg....

The unusual nature of Harry's passing, whereby he had been shot by his own side, the Boers, and then bayoneted by the other side, the British, and the fact

that he was a foreign soldier (a Jew, at that) and a person well-known in the halls of power in the Boer Republic, caused his funeral to gain a magnitude that might not have been felt for a regular soldier.

The following is a government report of what took place in Pretoria on December 13, 1899, with President Paul Kruger in attendance:



The certified burial certificate for Harry was attested to by S. [Sigmund] Wolfson, of The Pretoria Jewish Helping Hand and Burial Society, on 1 January, 1901. It states that Harry was buried in the Jewish Burial Ground, Block B, Grave #3, Pretoria, SA, on 10 December 1899. Of course, the funeral took place three days later. It appears that poor Harry Spanier not only was killed twice, but according to this document was buried before his death! He had never been able to consummate before his death any of the deals that were in the works and which had kept him in South Africa for three long years away from his beloved family. In the end, he joined the losing side in the war and got himself killed almost as soon as he was deployed in battle.

All one can conclude is that, unlike the popular Yiddish song *Wie Nemt Men A Bissele Mazel*, Harry Spanier, poor fellow, had no *mazel* whatsoever!



"A BRIGHT STAR IN A CHAMBER OF DARKNESS": HELEN SUZMAN AND HER LEGACY

*

Rhoda Kadalie

I wish to thank the SA Jewish Board of Deputies for asking me to speak at this memorial service in honor of the great Helen Suzman. It is indeed a privilege because Helen and I were bosom buddies and we talked a lot. "The reason you and I get on so well," Helen used to say, "is because we are so much alike; you are just worse!" In many ways Helen kept me on the strait and narrow. Whenever my columns were too strident, she would coax me out of it, very wisely. The more I got to know Helen, the more I realized that one comes across someone with such profound wisdom, only once in a lifetime.

We are all familiar with Helen's illustrious life as the country's most famous Member of Parliament, who used the powerful forum of Parliament to fight for the rights of those who were excluded from Parliament. She believed very deeply that Parliament was that space where public representatives transacted the business of citizens in public. She believed in the institutions of Parliament, in the rule of law, in an independent judiciary, and she became one of the world's most famous human rights campaigners, fighting tooth and nail against every bill that violated the rights of people, citizens and non-citizens alike. There are few politicians today who combine these roles, of politician and human rights campaigner, so fantastically well, something aptly acknowledged by Chief Albert Luthuli in a letter he wrote to her in 1968:

In moments of creeping frustration and tiredness, please pick courage and strength in the fact that thousands of South Africans, especially among the oppressed section, thank God for producing Helen, for her manly stand against injustice, regardless of consequences. For ever remember, you are a bright Star in dark Chamber, where lights of liberty of what is left, are going out one by one. This appreciation covers your contribution since you entered Parliament as member of the Progressive Party. This meritorious record has been climaxed by your

fittingly uncompromising stand in the rape of democracy by Parliament in the debate that made law, which was one of the most diabolic bills ever to come before Parliament. Not only ourselves - your contemporaries - but also posterity will hold you in high esteem.

What sets Helen apart for Luthuli was her "uncompromising stand", taking up issues "regardless of the consequences". Often alone, Helen was fearless, politically incorrect, and courageous in fighting for what was so obviously right. She was a liberal when to be liberal was not in fashion. She opposed sanctions when it was politically incorrect to do so, and she may have lost the Nobel Prize because of it. "Posterity will hold you in high esteem" says Luthuli, and that is exactly what happened. When Helen died, the entire world, even the ANC, graciously acknowledged her contribution towards building democracy in this country. In eschewing popularity and populism, she became popular.

In her old age, Helen increasingly despaired about South Africa's double standards on Zimbabwe, and frequently pointed out that Mugabe's tyranny started with his destruction of Parliament and its institutions, the rule of law, the judiciary, the media and its exemplary education and health systems. This enraged Helen, so much that she literally wanted to die. South Africa's consistent support for the rogue states such as Zimbabwe, Sudan, Myanmar, and Iran at the United Nations Security Council destroyed her faith in the current regime and often made her feel that all her work was in vain. She could never understand why our government flirted with dictators and human rights delinquent regimes and why we consistently voted with China and Russia in vetoing Western-instigated resolutions. She despaired over South Africa's schizophrenic approach, which the Democratic Alliance has described as "a courtship with the West on one hand, while giving succour to the West's adversaries on the other, harming our international credibility and all but obliterating the moral high ground we attained through our transition to democracy".

This brings me to the topic that I was asked to speak about tonight - Human Rights in general, the struggle for Human Rights in this country and what it means to be an activist.

In July last year, a group of local activists went on a tour of Israel and the occupied territories to inspect human rights violations in the region, and the Israeli occupation in particular. They visited one side of the

Rhoda Kadalie, a distinguished South African human rights activist and academic, currently serves as Executive Director, Impumelelo Innovations Award Trust and Director: Restitution of Land Rights. This article is adapted from the address she delivered at the Helen Suzman Memorial held at the Green and Sea Point Synagogue, Cape Town, on 8 February 2009.

conflict during their five day visit and came back smugly condemning Israel from a dizzy height. Immediately, others got on the bandwagon, supporting them because it was the politically correct thing to do. They did not for one moment reflect on why it was important to see both sides of the conflict, how they could help both the Israelis and the Palestinians find solutions to it and how we could share some of our experiences to help two related peoples imagine a future together, just as we have done. There was no modesty in their condemnation given what was going on in our country and how ashamed and modest we should be about the beam in our own eye. Intrinsic to human rights investigations is the weighing up of all sides; of weighing up one right against another, as Helen did so adeptly.

Last week we were greeted by a headline: "Top Jews condemn War on Gaza".¹ Can you imagine a headline: "Top Christians condemn Hamas"? President Motlanthe called the war on Gaza 'savagery' in his opening address to Parliament, when Zimbabwe on our doorstep is ravished by an unstoppable barbarism that has rendered 3000 dead from cholera alone, not to speak of all the other human rights abuses he is guilty of. Mugabe, of course, will never be called a savage, because then that would be called racism.

Let me pose a question to SA: if Israel sent a human rights delegation to SA, what would it find?

The HR delegation went to Israel at a time when SA was reeling in the aftermath of the embarrassing outbreak of xenophobic violence, in which hundreds were killed simply because they were foreign and black; in a matter of weeks over 32 Somalis were killed for simply being entrepreneurial. Bishop Paul Verryn's church is overflowing with thousands of Zimbabwean refugees, treated like dirt by the very South African regime that is quick to utter condemnation of others.

On every international index, this country has gone down a notch or two, such as for example the Human Development Index, because of the devastating rates of maternal health and infant mortality rates. We have a HIV/AIDS pandemic which kills a thousand people a day; over 6 million are infected, mostly young women between the ages of 15 and 29; we have a multiple drug resistant TB epidemic that is out of control; and now hundreds of people are infected with cholera.

Recently, I hosted a professor from Holland who is an expert analyst of sexual violence in her country. She could not believe our figures on rape, and child rape in particular. The fact that rape against women is not declining, given our strong representation of women in government, is one of the biggest indictments against women in public office. Given the proportional representation electoral system, our women politicians are beholden to the men in the party who put them there. Party interests override their commitment to gender interests, and once women are catapulted into power they forget their obligations as politicians. Helen was never like that.

She set the tone.

I have yet to find a politician of Helen Suzman's calibre that effectively combines human rights campaigning with their role as politician. She left her comfort zones; she went where angels feared to tread; she challenged and took on the police fearlessly, recently shown in one of the video clips on CNN when she died.

Armed with devastatingly accurate information gleaned from her insistence "on seeing things for herself", she became a "boots-on politician", going where the action was. In 1973 she went to Kliptown to see the unrest at first hand; she visited the squatter camps in Cape Town in the winter of 1981, after shelters had been demolished by government officials; she addressed crowds at a mass funeral of victims of police shootings in Alexandra in 1986; she took statements from Moutse residents who had been assaulted by vigilantes; she visited Oukasie residents who were threatened by forced removals; and she pleaded the fate of the Sharpeville Six in 1988.

Going into these areas were often life-threatening, but Helen knew that people relied on her to get the information out and expose to the world the atrocities of apartheid. Beneath Helen's tough veneer of taking on the apartheid bullies, prime ministers and security police alike, lay a warm compassionate soul, whose mission was driven not only by a deep respect for democracy, equality for all, and human rights, but also by a deep compassion for those who were not represented, the 'Other' and the oppressed, by laws she considered fundamentally inhumane.

I am always sad that Helen died disappointed in our new democracy; disappointed that Parliament had become captive to liberation politics and majoritarianism; that our legislators are implicated in one corruption scandal after another. She detested having to acknowledge that life for her in the apartheid parliament was more tolerable than the post-1994 parliament is today for opposition MPs.

The lesson for us today: we cannot leave the business of Parliament to politicians alone. Helen believed so profoundly that an opposition was crucial because without one there could be no dialogue; and without dialogue, one could not begin to approach the truth. No one person, and no one party, can lay absolute claim to the truth, whatever their credentials. And the person or party that does so is almost certainly going the Mugabe route to fanaticism, fascism, and thuggery.

Let us commit ourselves to continuing Helen's legacy of speaking truth to power as much as we speak power to the truth.

NOTES

1 Mail & Guardian, 30 January 2009

RECOLLECTIONS OF HELEN SUZMAN

*

Colin Eglin

Helen and I first met in June 1954, over lunch in the Oak Room of the Manchester Hotel that once stood at the corner of Strand and Burg Streets, Cape Town. I was about to become a member of the Cape Provincial Council. Helen was completing her second year as MP for Houghton.

The meeting had been arranged by Cape Times parliamentary correspondent Tony Delius, who had phoned me and said, "Colin, there is one MP among the new members I believe you should meet - she is Helen Suzman. She is bright. And, one way or another, she is going to make an impact on the political scene."

How accurate both Tony's assessment and prediction turned out to be! For Helen was bright - very bright. And over the years, she certainly made her impact on the political scene.

I found Helen to be very attractive: physically, politically and intellectually. I realized that behind her sparkling blue eyes, there was a sharp mind and a very tough will. We seemed to be on the same political wavelength, and to share the same judgment of the main political players at that time. That lunch marked the start of a personal friendship and a mutually supportive political relationship that lasted for the next fifty years.

Over those years, I came to appreciate her keen intellect, to understand her commitment to principle, her intolerance of hypocrisy, her scorn for position seekers, her anger at injustice, her concern for people. I also came to realize that she did not suffer fools gladly.

I enjoyed her sense of fun. She was a great mimic - at her best when mimicking John Vorster, or the warder at Roeland Street prison barking at the shivering woman prisoners at an early morning parade.

I appreciated her warm and generous hospitality. Helen loved her home, with its garden and her dogs. Her home was the focal point of her domestic, social and a large part of her political life. It was in her home that she entertained friends or house guests, gave interviews to the media or had discussions with people who had come from afar to meet here. It was here that she issued statements or worked the telephone lines, and attended to the many people who knocked on her door to seek her assistance in

their suffering under the discriminatory laws and regulations of the apartheid government.

A few word pictures from the past will reflect on various aspects of Helen's personality.

Helen gets impatient:

In July 1958, after a stormy congress of the United Party at which the party had gone back on its undertaking to make a significant amount of land available for 'native settlement', nine of us, including Helen, met to consider our course of action. After some debate, we decided we would issue a statement condemning the decision of the congress, realizing that this would lead to our expulsion or resignation from the party.

We had taken some time considering the draft of the statement when we heard of another person who wanted to join us. This meant further discussion and drafting. Helen, who had been showing signs of impatience and wanted to leave for Johannesburg, said, "We know what we have to do. I'll trust you to get it right. I am leaving now. I'll sign at the bottom of a blank sheet of paper." This she did, and off she went.

Helen the team player:

When, in the 1960s, Helen was on her own in parliament and I was the only member of the old Progressive Party caucus still active in politics and living in Cape Town, Helen would phone me, usually at about seven in the morning, to consult with me on new policy issues that had arisen. She outlined the issue and gave me her personal position on it, but I sensed that she was not sure that this would find favor with the party.

At times, I said that I felt that her policy position was fine; at others we modified her position statement to some extent. After a couple of years of this procedure, I suggested to Helen that in future she, taking all the factors into account, should do just what she thought was right, adding that should there be any problems with the party, I would back her. This worked without a hitch, for in spite of her unique position and her strong personality, Helen was a great team player.

Helen on the ball:

When I came back to parliament and shared a front bench with Helen, I realized that she had learnt some useful skills during the thirteen years that she was on her own. One of these was to be able to study a document and draft a question or prepare a speech

Colin Eglin is a veteran Parliamentarian and liberal anti-apartheid campaigner who served as Leader of the Opposition (Progressive Federal Party) in the House of Assembly from 1977-9. This article has been adapted from his address at the Helen Suzman Memorial, held at the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation on 8 February 2009.

while a debate was droning on and yet at the same time keep an ear tuned to the proceedings.

On one occasion P W Botha, in the course of a speech in Afrikaans, referred to Helen as a *tannie*. Quick as a flash, Helen raised her head and responded, "Don't you *tannie* me, or I'll *oomie* you."

Helen triumphs at last: On 19 June 1986, the National Assembly finally passed a Bill scrapping the Pass Laws that Helen had fought against year after year since she first came to parliament in 1953. After the Speaker had announced the result, our caucus members crowded around her to congratulate her. A moment later, two young National Party members left their benches and walked across the carpeted floor to shake Helen's hand and thank her for what she had done. Helen the fighter had won at last.

Helen becomes speechless:

On 7 November 1987, Helen and I were in Shanghai on a visit to China as the guests of the Chinese Association for International Understanding. After breakfast, the host accompanying us told me that he had seen in Madame Suzman's CV that that day was her seventieth birthday. They had decided to have a birthday dinner for her, at which a special guest would be present. He asked me not to tell Madame as they wanted this to be a surprise.

That evening, to Helen's astonishment, there was a festive looking round table at which we were seated, together with a number of high ranking guests. The real surprise was to come when a man dressed in a Mau-type suit and wearing a clerical collar arrived to take the last unoccupied seat. He turned out to be the Communist Catholic Church Bishop of Shanghai! Our host, having seen in Helen's CV that she had gone to Parktown Convent Catholic Girls School, had decided to give her a surprise by having the Bishop of Shanghai present to bless her special birthday occasion.

It certainly was a surprise for this Jewish girl from Germiston!

Helen keeps on at it:

After Helen had retired from parliament, she continued to speak out on or take up issues that she believed were unjust or wrong. In spite of the deep bond of respect and affection that there was between Nelson Mandela and herself, she criticized him quite sharply when at times she thought that, as President, he had acted incorrectly.

I can recall a day in 1997 when a number of us gathered at the Presidential residence in Pretoria to witness President Mandela awarding the Order of Merit (Gold) to Walter Sisulu, Beyers Naude, Dick van der Ross and Helen Suzman.

President Mandela, in his warm genial way, said:

I am honored to bestow this significant award on these four distinguished citizens of our country. In deciding on three of them I have followed my

head. In the case of the other person I followed my heart. I shan't tell you who that other person is – but she gives me a lot of trouble!

Helen Suzman was a hands-on politician and a tenacious fighter who never gave up. She was a liberal. But she was no political ideologue. To her people, not dogma, came first.

She had a straightforward political creed: "I hate bullies. I stand for simple justice, equal opportunity and human rights. These are the indispensable elements in a democratic society and are well worth fighting for."

She confronted the government bullies head on. She fought relentlessly for simple justice, equal opportunity and human rights.

Helen was a great parliamentarian, but one of a special kind. Unlike so many MPs, she did not allow parliament determine her agenda. Nor did she allow the ritual nature or ambiance of parliament to dilute her message.

In fact, she was more than a parliamentarian. She was a political activist who, with consummate courage, tenacity and skill, used parliament as a platform to get her message across. In the dark days of apartheid, she was a beacon of light.

But what does the memory of Helen mean for us today? What is her legacy?

I believe that for public representatives and for people in public service, Helen's legacy is the standard of excellence she set; a standard anchored on integrity and reinforced with courage, commitment and compassion. For all of us as citizens, her legacy is that she showed that "one person can make a difference".

On occasions when we are considering our own actions, let us keep before us the fact that Helen's greatness was founded not on any grand design, great speech or momentous event, but on a multitude of single acts of courage and caring.

The words spoken by Senator Robert Kennedy in his address to the young people of South Africa at the University of Cape Town on 6 June 1966 are very appropriate as we remember Helen today:

Few of us will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each one of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.

Each time a man stands for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. And crossing each other from a million centres of energy and daring, those ripples can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

As we remember Helen, we thank her for sending forth those ripples of hope.

Helen is no longer with us, but her legacy lives on as an inspiration to us and to generations yet to come.

THE ULTIMATE DREAMER: A LAMENT FOR MONTY SACK

*

Bernard Levinson

Group 4. It sounds like a high powered enclave of politicians meeting in the Swiss Alps, deciding the fate of the world...

At the end of the Nineteenth Century, certain like-minded Impressionists met at the same café, at the same table each day. They not only had similar techniques, but shared a philosophical belief system for their art and for all of life. They attracted writers and poets to assist with the transportation of painting into words.

The marriage of poetry and painting goes back many centuries. The Japanese were doing it thirteen hundred years ago. They called it 'Shigajila'.

So, this marriage was not entirely alien. In keeping with this tradition, Group 4 was created. Four astounding young artists. And I became the official poet.

I had never seen such energy and enthusiasm. Such electrifying concern for one another's work. Such excitement and joy in the weekly sharing of new work. Fresh, new, wet-on-the-canvas dreams. I could not keep up with this wild, youthful, seemingly endless stream of creativity.

Group 4. They are all established painters. All over the age of eighty! Hannatjie van der Wat. A long established icon of South African painting. A celebrated international reputation. About to host a retrospective of her work. Sidney Abramowitz, the distinguished leading architect. Exhibiting his astounding Turner-esque watercolours in America at the moment. Sheila Jarzin, the baby of the group. An Everard Reed exhibitor, with her massive ecstatic oils burning the canvas frame.

And finally, Monty Sack. He photographed autumnal leaves on the pavement. Flattened cold drink tins on the road. He transferred these images onto paper and canvas. Small studies were blown up, revealing hidden grain and shade. He successfully merged the world of spontaneous form and colour with the formidable high tech computers, manipulating his dreams into giant pictures. He was the ultimate dreamer. He had a world experience of space and colour harmony. He knew the balance of forms and the magic of disparate materials placed side by side.

Bernard Levinson is a distinguished South African poet whose work has appeared in numerous scholarly publications and anthologies, including Jewish Affairs. Professionally, he is a psychiatrist based in Johannesburg.

Gather clouds
and the air between
The essence of trees,
the autumnal pain,
and the dark curling
green
at the earth's core.
Add a whisper
of man.
The volume
and silence of stones -
Let the glee seep
its magic
distillation.
The white
universe
comes to life
and sings!

Group 4 are meeting. One of their homes. An easel is set up. They all have pictures to share. The excitement is palpable. There is a painting on the easel. Silence.

"Does it work?"

"Is it finished?"

Monty steps forward. His grey beard barely conceals the tight fineness of his cheeks. He is thin and angular. A mixture of fragility and steel. He has an overwhelming intensity. As he stands in front of the painting, he becomes the essence of the painting. He misses nothing. His eyes search every swoop of the brush. He speaks softly. Wonderfully articulate. He has picked up every nuance of the painting. The negative spaces leaping into new forms, the breathing of colour and finally where the painting wants to go...

He exhibited with Sidney Abramowitz. Two old colleagues. Their paintings and translucent manipulations waiting comfortably on adjacent walls.

Walk softly.
The paintings
are deep in meditation
Even the air is still.
A dialogue
of coloured mist.
I tiptoe
into the museum
of the soul.
Walk slowly.
A kaleidoscope
of singing light -

Transparent glass
transposed on green
on blue
on glass
on air -
a spiral of song.

The meetings of Group 4 have continued. They still call themselves Group 4... Monty is still there. Still urging, still praising, still pointing a fragile finger at the quintessential core of the entire composition.

Monty believed in love. The philosophy of the Group was love. A deep love for their art, a love for each other, a powerful intimate love for so many in their lives. Monty infused his work with a humanity and a joyous sense of being alive in this amazing world.

P.D. James says it all:

The world is a beautiful and terrible place. Deeds of horror are committed every minute and in the end those we love die. But we have LOVE. It may seem a frail defense against the horrors of the world, but we must hold fast and believe in it, for it is all that we have.



*LA Group Limited
wishes all its Jewish
customers a Happy
Chanukah.*

Success House
99 Conrad Drive
Blairgowrie
Randburg, 2194

**Success is an attitude
Caring is our attitude - We care !**

P.O. Box 781
Pinegowrie
2123

CHANUKAH COMES ROUND ONCE A YEAR



SUCCESS BROKERS ARE THERE FOR YOU ALL YEAR ROUND

Success Brokers (Pty) Ltd are a division of the **Success Financial Services Group**

Over 35 years of experience and outstanding service
Insurance Brokers, Assurance and Healthcare Consultants.

Tel: 011 449-4444
Fax: 011 449-4300

Geff & Simon Geffroy

E-mail: success@successbrokers.co.za
Website: www.successbrokers.co.za

VLADIMIR ZE'EV JABOTINSKY – FIGHTER, VISIONARY, ZIONIST

*

John Simon

After the Biblical hero Samson had been defeated and blinded by the Philistines, he lived in captivity in the humblest quarter of Gaza, and despite repeated requests by his comrades from Judaea, he constantly refused to return. One day, he was visited by one of his close followers and admirers, Hermesh, who on receiving the same refusal then asked whether he had a message for his people. This was Samson's message:

Tell them two things in my name – two words. The first word is 'iron'. They must get iron. They must give everything they have for iron – their silver and wheat, oil and wine and flocks, even their wives and daughters. All for iron! There is nothing in the world more valuable than iron ... The second word is: "A king". Say to all the tribes: "A king!" A man will give them the signal and of a sudden thousand will lift up their hands.... Say it from Zorah to Hebron and Shechem and further even to Endor and Laish: "A king".

The above is a quote from Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky's novel *Samson the Nazirite* (1926). As I hope to demonstrate, Jabotinsky was putting into the mouth of his hero his own passionate belief – the belief in strength, discipline and authority. There were indeed not wanting amongst his opponents those who argued that these beliefs closely approximated, where they did not indeed amount, to a form of fascism. I will illustrate this argument and some of the grounds that were advanced in its support. At the very least, I think that the record shows that Jabotinsky and his followers carried militarism to an advanced degree. Together, we will explore whether he was indeed, as he has been described, "the most charismatic, fascinating and controversial figure in the history of Zionism".

Jabotinsky was born in Odessa on 5 October 1880, the third child and second son of Yevgenni (Yona) and Khava Jabotinsky. He was named Vladimir, Hebrew name Ze'ev. Throughout his life, the two names were used interchangeably and often together.

Odessa had a vibrant and creative Jewish environment. It was one of the main centres of the Jewish enlightenment (Haskalah), and many powerful and creative personages, including Jabotinsky and

Achad Ha'am, derived their origins and education there. It was also in a region where antisemitic activities arose with increasing frequency and virulence in the latter part of the 19th Century; perhaps because of that it, became a centre of Jewish defense action.

The family knew poverty and early struggles as a result of Yevgenni's early death in 1886. Like every Jewish boy, Jabotinsky studied Hebrew before his Barmitzvah, but according to his own autobiography he "had no inner contact with Judaism" and "never breathed the atmosphere of Jewish cultural tradition." It is noteworthy that he became fluent in Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, English, French and German, but strangely was never at home with the Hebrew alphabet and often wrote Hebrew or Yiddish in Latin characters.

In April 1898, he went to Berne in Switzerland, where he made contact with the Russian colony. However, he was not happy there because he felt intellectually unstimulated. He moved to Rome, where he attended university and for the first time put his hand to journalism. Here, as a student and as a journalist, he was happy. It is interesting to note that he wrote under the pen name Altalena – a name that, as we now know, would figure largely in the story of his political heirs. It seems that he was so happy and fulfilled during his stay in Rome that he was able to set aside both his Jewish and Russian identities and become completely Italianized. He wrote much in Italian and even ventured into poetry. Whilst at university, he was exposed to, but immediately rejected, Marxism, and although he toyed briefly with the ideas of Socialism, this too he later totally rejected.

In July 1901, Jabotinsky became liable for military service and so left Italy and returned to Odessa. It seems, however, that his Italian experience remained a deep and lasting influence on his spiritual development.

Resumed life in journalism, he joined the staff of the journal *Odesskiya Novosti*. His journalism was fairly wide ranging but he became noted particularly for his feuilletons. These were light, essay-type articles dealing largely with matters of literature, theatre, art and local affairs rather than politics. This type of journalism was much admired by the Russian intelligentsia. When he did venture certain political observations, which must have been of a fairly forward-looking nature, he ran into trouble, given the oppressive Czarist regime of the time. On one occasion, he was confined to prison for seven weeks

John Simon is a veteran contributor to Jewish Affairs and a long-serving member of its Editorial Board.

while his writings were assessed for possible anti-Czarist material. He was released after investigation, but was stimulated and excited by the experience and particularly by having met in prison members of the revolutionary underground, many of whose type he had not previously encountered.

Jabotinsky was nevertheless undergoing a further extension of his interests at this time, which would identify and define him for the rest of his life. As noted, Odessa was then was rife with violent antisemitic activities. His interest was aroused; he began to consider to what extent the nascent Zionist movement could provide a long term answer to this; but in the short term, he was obsessed with the need to encourage Jews to take up attitudes of self defense in answer to Russian attacks. He helped to initiate a Jewish self-defense group in Odessa of a type that soon spread throughout Russia, particularly in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom later in 1903. Insofar as it promoted Jewish self-defense, Jabotinsky was becoming closer and closer to his people. He became known for his writing and resistance activities; he was sent as a delegate to the sixth Zionist Congress and met several of the early Zionist leaders.

By this time, there had already emerged a sort of semi-official group in opposition to Herzl. It included Weizmann (with whom Jabotinsky's earliest contacts were unfriendly). He had no contact with Herzl at all, other than to hear the great man, as Chairman of the Congress, declare in his address: "*Ihre zeit ist um!*" At this time, the so-called Uganda project - the notion that in view of the political obstacles to establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine, the possibility of doing so in British-held Uganda - was occupying a fair amount of attention. Although Herzl did not then or later positively favor the scheme, he was anxious at this time to establish a commission to investigate the proposals and report back; but by and large, the Congress was totally opposed, and 177 delegates, including Jabotinsky, left the hall in protest.

Despite these somewhat unfavourable beginnings, Jabotinsky was much influenced by Herzl and became irrevocably committed to Zionism. He attended the 7th Congress in 1905 and played a more prominent part; his speech advancing the theory and practice of politics as power made a certain impact and can be seen as a sign of things to come. From this time on until the outbreak of war, he was the foremost Zionist lecturer and journalist in Russia.

In 1907, he married Ania (Johanna) Galperin and they had an only child, a son Eri. Eri followed notably in his father's footsteps. He headed the Betar movement in Palestine and initiated its aeronautic section, being himself a trained glider pilot. He was very active in organizing 'illegal' immigration from Europe on a mass scale. He was several times arrested by the British authorities and learned of his father's death in 1940 whilst imprisoned in a detention camp. It was Eri Jabotinsky who, in 1948, was instrumental in the dispatch from France to Israel of the so-called illegal arms ship that bore his father's journalistic pen name - Altalena. He was a distinguished mathematician and became Professor of Mathematics

at the Haifa Technion.

In 1909, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) sent Jabotinsky on a journalistic assignment to Turkey, where he served as editor of four publications in different languages. The experience was of great value to him, more particularly because, as will be discussed, of the ideas he developed concerning Turkey at the beginning of World War One. His appointment was terminated when he fell into controversy with David Wolffsohn, then President of the WZO.

Jabotinsky left Odessa for a short period in 1912 to pursue wider political ambitions in St. Petersburg. He tried hard, but without success, to be elected to the Duma. Thereafter, all his political interests and ambitions were channeled through the Zionist movement, either in office or in opposition.

At the beginning of World War One, Jabotinsky had a roving assignment as a journalist in Western Europe representing the liberal Moscow daily *Russkiya Vedomosti*. When Turkey declared war on the allied powers, he was convinced that the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire was imminent and that the Zionist movement should abandon its neutral stand between the warring nations in order to achieve its aims in Palestine at the end of the war. Together with Joseph Trumpeldor, he conceived the idea of raising a Jewish legion to join the allies in the liberation of Palestine.

There were conflicting views in the Jewish world, and particularly the Zionist movement, as to how Jews could and should be involved in the war. Palestine was then ruled by the Ottoman Turks, who supported Germany. Should Zionists then make common cause with them in the hope that they would be sympathetic towards Zionist aspirations in Palestine, or should they rather throw their weight behind the allies in the hope of a favorable outcome that would end Turkish rule in Palestine? A further factor was that there were many Jews fighting in the German and Austrian armies, and the prospect of Jew fighting Jew was distasteful to many. David ben Gurion and Isaac Ben Zvi were in the forefront of those who wished to attach Jewish units to the Turkish army, but they were rebuffed and the Turks deported many Jews from Palestine. Jabotinsky and Trumpeldor worked hard to establish a Jewish legion to fight for their allied powers, and not surprisingly most of the deportees agreed with them. The result was the formation of the famous Zion Mule Corps, which did good service in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign led by Trumpeldor but with a non-Jewish and most supportive overall Commander, Colonel J.H.M. Patterson.

After the evacuation from Gallipoli, Jabotinsky worked very hard in London to establish a fully-fledged Jewish legion to fight with the British army. He encountered many setbacks and much opposition, particularly from anti-Zionist elements in British Jewry who were most concerned about the so-called 'dual loyalty' issue and who lambasted Jabotinsky for his "legionist" propaganda". On 23 August 1917, the *London Gazette* announced the formation under

Colonel Patterson of a Jewish Legion. Its official name was the 38th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, the anti-Zionist Jews having succeeded to the extent of preventing the adoption of a Jewish name, Jewish character and Jewish emblems. Notwithstanding, Lieutenant Jabotinsky was very proud when he marched through the Jewish quarter of London on 2 February 1918 at the head of the Legion which he had worked so hard to establish. By this time, about half of it comprised Jews born or naturalized in Britain while the balance was made up of former Zion Mule Corps members and Jews from Russia and other European countries. Space and time do not permit a full description of the Legion's activities in Egypt and the Jordan Valley, but they did well and were commended by the army Commander. However, attempts to keep the Legion in being and expanded into a brigade after the war for Jewish defense purposes would prove unsuccessful.

What we see here is the commencement of the military aspect of Jabotinsky's career. The seeds were undoubtedly sown in the Jewish self-defense activities of the Odessa period, but it was the opportunity of the First World War that brought Jabotinsky to what may have been the flowering of military ambition. He was certainly a changed man thereafter – whether for the better or the worse is still an open question debated in the Jewish world, albeit with ever reducing frequency, alas, as his memory fades and other issues prevail.

After the war, Jabotinsky insisted on the need to maintain the Jewish Legion in Palestine as a guarantee against the outbreak of Arab hostility. Arab disaffection was encouraged by the generally anti-Zionist policy of the British military administration. Other Zionist leaders, however, took a lighter view of the situation and did not oppose the demobilization of the Jewish Legion. Jabotinsky's response was to organize units of Haganah in Jerusalem in 1920 and openly leading it to confront the Arab masses during the Passover riots of that year. This led to his arrest by the British authorities, together with other members of Haganah, and a sentence of fifteen years hard labor by a military court. Following upon the huge outbreak of protest amongst Jews and Gentiles worldwide, the newly appointed first High Commissioner for Palestine Sir Herbert Samuel, in an attempt to be even handed, granted amnesty to Jews and Arabs who had been imprisoned in connection with the Jerusalem riots. Because he was incensed at the Jews having been treated the same way as the Arabs, Jabotinsky refused to accept the amnesty; but in the result, his conviction was set aside on appeal.

On his release, Jabotinsky experienced what was perhaps his first exposure to something like hero worship. Back in London, he joined first the Board of Directors of Keren Hayesod and thereafter the Zionist Executive. By the time of the 12th Zionist Congress in 1921, he was almost part of 'the establishment', and he defended Weizmann and his colleagues against opposition from the Brandeis Group. Having being re-elected to the Zionist Executive, he shared with

Weizmann the responsibility of acquiescing in Churchill's 1922 White Paper on Palestine, which excluded trans-Jordan from the purview of the Balfour Declaration. Weizmann was to speak very positively of Jabotinsky's role in this matter.

After the 12th Congress, however, Jabotinsky became involved in two controversies in the Zionist movement. The Zionist socialists opposed Jabotinsky's contacts with Petlyura's Ukrainian government in exile, which was preparing military action against the Bolshevik-held Ukraine. It was argued that this would endanger Zionists and Soviet Russia. An interesting local note is that Petlyura became a focus of fierce Jewish feeling and was eventually assassinated by a young Jew called Shalom Schwartzbard.¹

A further source of conflict was that Jabotinsky became impatient with Weizmann's contacts with Britain, whom Jabotinsky still viewed as an unsympathetic occupying imperialist power. In January 1923, he resigned from the executive and left the official Zionist organization, in protest at "the superfine docility of its leadership". He resolved to form a new political organization, thus commencing a new and important chapter in the story of Zionism.

During a lecture tour in the Baltic States in 1923, Jabotinsky was greatly encouraged by the support he received from large and enthusiastic audiences, who knew him from his already well-known public persona and also from his journalism as editor of the weekly journal *Razsvet*.² The movement became known as Revisionism because, said Jabotinsky, it would work to revise existing Zionist policies.

It is necessary at this point to make some reference to the various strands of thought which occupied the earliest Zionist leaders from Herzl onwards. Herzl saw Zionism as essentially a political movement; his aim was to achieve a Jewish State, secured by public law and recognized as a political entity by the nations of the world many of them who would have to co-operate to a greater or lesser degree in achieving it. There was another strand of thought which viewed the problem as essentially a practical challenge to the Jews. It was necessary, so the argument ran, for Jewish idealists to settle in the land, to build it up by their own efforts, to establish settlements, plant trees and do all that was necessary to use the poetic phrase which was and remains of practical application, to "make the desert bloom".

This inter-play between the arguments of 'political Zionism' and the arguments of 'practical Zionism' was an important part of the dynamics of the first three decades of the 20th Century. Weizmann, using vocabulary drawn from his work in chemistry, coined the phrase 'synthetic Zionism', implying not something impure but a combination between the two strands of thought. The antagonism – no lesser word can be used and sometimes it was very bitter indeed – between the Revisionists who argued for political Zionism and others, principally the Zionist socialists, who argued for practical Zionism, would inform the whole movement up, to and indeed in some respects beyond, the establishment of the State.

Jabotinsky's view was neatly set out when he wrote "ninety percent of Zionism may consist of tangible settlement work and only ten percent of politics; but those ten percent are the precondition of success." From the beginning, Revisionism was a maximalist political movement which would come to serve as the principal opposition to Weizmann and the WZO and elected Jewish leadership generally. The organization proclaimed that the required 'revision' of Zionist policies consisted principally of: a return to Herzl's concept of the Jewish State; the restoration of the Jewish Legion; and a wide political offensive for the achievement of a radical change in British policy which should have as its avowed aim the facilitating of a Jewish majority in Palestine (including trans-Jordan) by means of rapid mass immigration. This, of course, represented a much wider concept than postulated in the Balfour Declaration and cut right across Churchill's initiative in establishing the kingdom of trans-Jordan.

Later, the party's demands were extended to include an entire reform of the land system, local industries and fiscal system in Palestine and the fostering of mass immigration and settlement. Revisionism opposed the establishment of little self contained settlements on a small scale in favor wide and general economic and social methods, hoping to bring (on both sides of the Jordan) "the largest number of Jews within the shortest period of time". Essentially, this was a movement for private initiative and capital, which involved the proposed outlawing of strikes and lock-outs and which thus brought it into conflict with Zionist socialism. It also argued that constructive Anglo-Jewish co-operation could be brought about only through determined political pressure on the British government on an international scale.

A sign of the growth of the movement is that there were four delegates to the 14th Zionist Congress in 1925 and 52 to the 17th Congress in 1931. The movement was first named The Union of Zionist Revisionists (the Hebrew acronym Ha'Zohar) and later changed to the New Zionist Organization. Generally, however, the term Revisionism was used in reference to it. Jabotinsky was elected President at the Founding Convention in Paris in 1925. Its headquarters remained in Paris until 1936, where Jabotinsky himself lived except for a brief period in 1928/29 when he lived in Jerusalem as Director of the Judaea Insurance Company and Editor of the daily *Da'ar ha-Yom*.

The story of Jabotinsky's life from now onwards is largely a story of the Revisionist movement. Bitter were the feuds between the various factions, and fascism was a term frequently used of the Revisionists by their opponents. Issue after issue arose. In 1929, for example, Jabotinsky vehemently opposed the action of the Jewish Agency in allocating 50% of its controlling body to non-Zionists. For this and other reasons, he sought, through the Revisionist movement, to take independent political action, which led to accusations of in-discipline.

Issues heightening tensions between revisionism

and its opponents were never lacking. For example, in 1933 the Mayor of Tel Aviv, Chaim Arlosoroff, was murdered in very mysterious circumstances on the Tel Aviv beachfront. Suspicion fell on two young Revisionists, whom it was thought had committed this crime for political motives (Arlosoroff was a socialist). At the end of the trial, the young men were acquitted, but the bitterness aroused by the case never really disappeared.

The difference in attitudes and beliefs between the 'capitalist' Revisionists and the organized Jewish labor movements became unbearably bitter and led to the Revisionists withdrawing from the Histadrut in 1934. By the following year, allegations of indiscipline and counter allegations of lack of commitment had become so unendurable that the Zionist Executive endeavored to introduce into the Constitution as clause designed to discipline and control all member bodies. The Revisionists promptly seceded from the WZO and the New Zionist Organization took form under Jabotinsky's Presidency. The NZO proclaimed its objectives as:

...the redemption of the Jewish people and its land, the revival of its State and language, and the implanting of the sacred treasures of Jewish tradition in Jewish life. These objectives to be attained by the creation of a Jewish majority in Palestine on both sides of the Jordan; the up building of a Jewish State on the basis of civil liberty and social justice in the spirit of Jewish tradition, the return to Zion of all who seek Zion, and the liquidation of the Jewish dispersion. This aim transcends the interests of individuals, groups or classes.

The NZO ceaselessly attacked Weizmann and the Zionist establishment for what it perceived as "Fabian tactics" and generally insufficient energy and enterprise. Jabotinsky was justly criticized for his mean-spirited criticism of many of Weizmann's statesman like attitudes; for example he called the opening ceremony of the Hebrew University, which was by any standards an epochal event in modern Jewish history, "a tawdry performance – throwing dust in the eyes of the public".

It is convenient at this point to discuss a project which engaged Jabotinsky's emotions most fully, that is to say the Betar Youth Movement. It derived its name as an acronym of B'rit Yosef Trumpeldor, after the above-mentioned military companion of Jabotinsky. Trumpeldor was a legendary hero, who was decorated and commissioned in the Russian army and thereafter devoted his life to the defence of the Holy Land. He died in battle in 1920 during the defence of the settlement of Tel Hai.

Only three years later after the death of Trumpeldor, Betar was founded in Riga. Its members in the first instance devoted themselves mainly to preparing for immigration to Palestine, whether legal or illegal as far as the British mandatory rules were concerned. They combined in their ideology the so-called 'legionism' of Jabotinsky and the pioneering

and defence theories of Trumpeldor. The first immigrants of Betar in the latter 1920s joined the Histadrut and the Haganah, but the constant and ongoing confrontation between the Revisionists and the Zionist socialists in the World Zionist Organisation would eventually lead Betar to split from both bodies and go their own way both in the field of labour relations and defence. Betar became an important part of the Revisionist movement and subsequently the New Zionist Organisation and, later, with its military arm, the Irgun Zvi Leumi. They held their first World Conference in 1931, elected Jabotinsky as Rosh Betar and adopted the slogan: "I devote my life to the rebirth of the Jewish State with a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan". This slogan now belongs to a distant memory in terms of Zionism and later Israeli realities. It was common in Revisionist ideology to illustrate in map form this ideal of an Israel extending far to the East of the Jordan. Today's battles deal with the West side of the Jordan only.

Following on, and as a result of, the Arab riots of 1936, the Betar movement spread throughout Palestine and to the Diaspora. From some 22 300 members in 1931, it had grown to nearly 90 000 by 1938.

Weizmann called Jabotinsky 'the boy wonder'. His journalism and literary work, he said, had attracted the attention of such great literary figures as Maxim Gorki and Leo Tolstoy. He was a gifted orator, but always provocative in tone. Weizmann gives a vivid pen picture of the young man he knew, which must be carefully measured against other opinions more extravagantly laudatory on the one hand, and critical on the other:

We came to know him as rather ugly, immensely attractive, well spoken, warm hearted, generous, always ready to help a comrade in distress; all of these qualities were, however, overlaid by a certain touch of the rather theatrically chivalresque, a certain queer and irrelevant knightliness which was not at all Jewish.

In contrasting Jabotinsky with Achad Ha'am, Weizmann viewed the former as "utterly un-Jewish in manner, approach and deportment", whereas Achad Ha'am was mild, persuasive and willing to compromise and settle for what he could get. Jabotinsky was at all times demanding and intransigent.

Weizmann is informative and instructive about the tremendous difficulties which Jabotinsky experienced, and partly overcame, in struggling for the establishment of the Jewish Legion. It is noteworthy that the disputes in the Zionist movement which led to Weizmann's loss of the WZO Presidency in July 1931 turned very largely on the political work/practical work controversies which marked much of Jabotinsky's ethos. Weizmann argued that "in a movement like ours, the centre of gravity is not an exaggerated political programme but work – colonization, education, immigration and the maintenance of decent relations with the mandatory

power". This was, of course, the antithesis of Jabotinsky's stress on the importance of political work.³

After the vote against Weizmann, Jabotinsky generously sent him a note of condolence saying, "I am proud of my friends". Perhaps he thought that this was magnanimity in victory – he really thought that he would become President in succession to Weizmann, and was bitterly disappointed when the choice fell on Nahum Sokolow.

Jabotinsky's first visit to South Africa, when he visited Johannesburg, Cape Town and other centres, was in 1929. He was present at the First Conference of the SA Revisionist Party in May 1930, was warmly welcomed by the SA Zionist Federation and received enthusiastic applause at every meeting he addressed. Although separate party lists were established for organizational purposes, party support was always luke-warm in SA Zionism. In surveying this entry of the enfant terrible of the Zionist movement onto the local scene, Marcia Gitlin, SA Zionism's first historian, comments, "there was in Jabotinsky's oratory criticism of the Zionist leadership, there was denunciation, there was bitterness and pugnacity. Removed from the stimulus of his presence, Jews asked themselves what it was specifically he was urging them to do". Jabotinsky stated that he wanted to disturb "the blessed state of harmony" that prevailed in SA Jewry. He wanted "parties, and a fight, and one side to win".

Whether in the sphere of religion or Zionism or communal organization, the confrontational, pugnacious and uncompromising stance of Jabotinsky was not the South African Jewish way. When he came on his third visit in 1937, he was bitterly attacked and denied platforms by the official Zionist Organisation, to the extent that Rabbi M. C. Weiler felt impelled to write to the *SA Jewish Times* to protest against the treatment he received.

But this is not to say that if Jabotinsky's way was not the South African way, it was necessarily the wrong way. Several prominent South African Jews were enthusiastic revisionists, including Chief Rabbi L I Rabinowitz, Joseph Daleski, Jededia Blumenthal and, most notably, Harry Hurwitz, later editor of the *Jewish Herald* and Begin's biographer, and a pallbearer at Jabotinsky's interment on Mount Herzl.

To sum up, what constituted Jabotinsky's make-up, how were his personal characteristics communicated and what were his achievements?

Jabotinsky, who is to this very day called by Betarim "Rosh Betar forever", instilled into the movement an ideal described by the Hebrew word *Hadar* (variously translated as beauty, respect, self-esteem, politeness, discipline and faithfulness). This brings us to face the point of view often advanced by his opponents in the Zionist movement, namely that Jabotinsky's beliefs and activities, and particularly those of his beloved Betarim, came close, if they did not amount, to fascism.

Every generation has its own favourite swear word with which to berate or belittle one's political opponents. Within living memory, we have had

'commie bastard', 'capitalist pig', 'fascist swine', 'lily livered liberal', 'bleeding heart democrat' and, most recently and most long lasting, 'obscene racist'. We have seen how much emphasis was placed by Jabotinsky on militarism. There are many photographs of him in military uniform. Betarim were and still are serious about their smart turn out and appearance, a reflection of Hadar. There is a particular photograph which, I have to say, I find distasteful and un-Jewish. It depicts Jabotinsky lying dead, covered by the Zionist flag but with his head showing, and guarded by two Betarim in full uniform with Sam Browne belts etc.

If one studies Jabotinsky's public utterances, not at one time or on one occasion but over a period of many years, one is struck by the vigour of his imagery and the pitch of his tone. Thus, on 22 October 1919 we find him writing, "internationally, we will announce that those Jews who do not remove the rust of the exile from themselves and refuse to shave their beards and side locks will be second class citizens. They will not be given the right to vote". On the subject of policy towards the Arabs, he wrote in 1923, "the native population, civilised or uncivilised, have always stubbornly resisted the colonists, and it made no difference whether the colonists behaved decently or not. It is therefore utterly impossible to obtain the voluntary consent of the Palestine Arabs and the Zionists must be ready to use physical force to secure their base and protect it with the iron wall" (we remember the advice of Samson). The "Iron Wall" became a metaphor, particularly in the controversies between the modern Israeli historians (one of whom, Avi Shlaim, called his book *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*). A final example, written in 1937, reads: "eliminate the Diaspora or the Diaspora will surely eliminate you".

Are these the words of a would-be fascist leader or merely the inflamed rhetoric of a politician? At the very least, they gave his opponents opportunities to smear him with that brush, particular in the so-called megaphone war which was waged bitterly between Mapai and Herut, the forerunner of Likud. Much was made of the fact that Betar was granted training facilities in fascist Italy. Mussolini is reported to have said: "for Zionism to succeed you need to have a Jewish state with a Jewish flag and a Jewish language. The person who really understands this is your fascist, Jabotinsky". Weizmann said that the more extreme revisionists "displayed Hitlerism all over in its worst possible form". Ben Gurion famously sneered at "Vladimir Hitler". The temperature was not eased when Betarim deliberately sought to disrupt the memorial service for Yitzchak Rabin and publicly recited prayers for his assassin.

One could, of course, balance these comments by his political opponents by a host of adulatory and admiring observations from other quarters. To his followers, he was and will always be an iconic figure of towering stature cruelly treated by lesser men. Begin said, "above all, Ze'ev Jabotinsky was the bearer of the vision of the state in our generation. After Herzl, there was none but him to carry on high

the vision of redemption – even in the face of renegades". To Colonel Patterson, the non-Jewish leader of the Jewish Legion, he was "Jewry's Churchill". To this day, Likud leaders like to be called "Jabotinsky's Princes". And many are happy to accept and proclaim that he was "the most charismatic, fascinating and controversial figure in the history of Zionism".

Jabotinsky died in New York on 3 August 1940, shortly after his last public appearance which, fittingly, was the inspection of a Betar parade. In his will he directed, "when I die, bury me where I die and do not take my remains to Eretz Israel except at the command of the Hebrew Government of a free Eretz Israel". Many people consider it a permanent stain on the memory of David Ben Gurion that, despite repeated calls from many different quarters, it was left to the third Prime Minister of Israel, Levi Eshkol, to give these commands. On 9 July 1964, the remains of Jabotinsky and Johanna were laid to rest of Mount Herzl under a basalt rock tombstone.

For many, even in this generation, the spirit of Zion rested upon Herzl, Bialik and Jabotinsky. For better or worse, he was a great man.

NOTES

- 1 For Shwartzbard, see previous *Jewish Affairs* articles by Veronica Belling (Vol. 64, No. 1, Pesach 2009) and Michael Schmidt (Vol. 59, No. 4, Chanukah 2004).
- 2 Published in Berlin between 1921 and 1933 and in Paris between 1933 and 1934.
- 3 Weizmann's point of view is so well set out in his book *Trial and Error* that it is worth quoting a relevant passage in full: "It was the conflict between those who believed that Palestine can be built up only the hard way, by meticulous attention to every object, who believed that in this slow and difficult struggle with the marshes and rocks of Palestine lies the great challenge to the creative forces of the Jewish people, its redemption from the abnormalities of exile, and those who yielded to those very abnormalities, seeking to live by a sort of continuous miracle, snatching at occasions as they presented themselves, and believed that these accidental smiles of fortune constitute a real way of life. I felt that all these political formulae, even if granted to us by the powers that were, would be no use to us, might possibly even be harmful as long as they were not the product of hard work put into the soil of Palestine. Nahala, Deganiah, the University, the Rutenberg electrical works, the Dead Sea Concession, meant much more to me politically than all the promises of great governments or great political parties. It was not lack of respect for governments and parties, nor an understanding of the value of political pronouncements. But to me a pronouncement is real only if it is matched by performance in Palestine. The pronouncement depends on others, the performance is entirely our own in the fundamental difference between the two views of Zionism [i.e. the essentially political and essentially practical approach] impatience and lack of faith were constantly pulling the movement towards the abyss".

SOME GENTILE ZIONISTS (Part 1)

*

Cecil Bloom

The Jewish people have had many Gentile sympathizers in history, men and women with sincere attachments to the Jewish struggle for a National Home in *Eretz Israel*. Long before the Balfour Declaration of 1917, there were various personalities who favoured the return of Jews to the Land of Israel. Most of them were of British stock. However, the first person who looked upon the Return from a secular, not a religious standpoint was probably Holger Paulli from Denmark. In 1696, Paulli submitted a detailed plan to King William III of England for the conquest of Palestine and the reestablishment of the Jewish state there.

In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte was said to have issued a manifesto promising to allow the Jews to return to Palestine whilst campaigning in the Middle East, although this is now questioned by some historians. Another Frenchman, the writer Ernest Laharanne, who was Napoleon III's private secretary, wrote a pamphlet in 1860 proposing the acquisition of Palestine from the Turks in order to establish a Jewish state there.

Primarily, though, it was British Christians who became very much involved in and concerned with life in Palestine; a number visited the country and they declared support for Jewish colonization in one way or another. George Gawler (1796-1860), who went with Sir Moses Montefiore on one of the latter's trips to Palestine, established the Association for Promoting Jewish Settlement in Palestine and put forward a plan to encourage Jews to engage in agricultural work. Sir Charles Cazalet (1827-1883) was a British industrialist who proposed settling Jews, under British protection, in Syria as well as Palestine. Sir Charles Warren (1840-1927), an archaeologist who founded the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1865 and excavated sections of Jerusalem in 1867-70, advocated Jewish settlement in a book entitled *The Land of Promise*. Another surveyor of the Holy Land, Claude Conder (1848-1910), was also in favour of Jewish resettlement in Palestine.

One major figure advocating a Jewish return to Israel in the early 19th Century was Anthony Ashley Cooper (1801-1885), who became the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury in 1851. He displayed great interest in the repatriation of Jews in the late 1830s and it was his initiative that led to the opening of a British

Consulate in Jerusalem in 1838. As a consequence, the welfare of Jews in the country was kept under constant watch. Other notable gentile Zionists in the 19th Century were the eccentric Laurence Oliphant (1829-1888), who believed he had a mission to personally to lead the Chosen People back to the Promised Land, and authoress George Eliot (1819-1880). The latter's classic novel *Daniel Deronda* deals primarily with the Jewish problem and the restoration of the Jewish people to Palestine. Of significance, too, were the *Hebrew Melodies* of Lord Byron (1788-1824), which described with great feeling the agony of the Jews in exile.

The emergence of the modern Zionist movement, as conceived and promoted by Theodor Herzl, aroused the interest of many gentiles, with a number of non-Jews active in British political and social life becoming attracted to the idea of restoring the Holy Land to the Jews. During the subsequent Great War of 1914-1918, prominent politicians and others showed their sympathy both in speech and actions. There were varied reasons for their individual decisions to support Zionism. Some were religious and others political or strategic, and the Zionist leaders, especially those in the United Kingdom and in Palestine itself, had a difficult task ensuring that the objectives of the Zionist movement were not compromised.

This article will deal with several of those non-Jewish personalities considered to be of significance in the events that led to the Balfour Declaration and beyond.

Arthur James Balfour

A.J. Balfour (1848-1930) goes down in history as the author of the famous 1917 Declaration that transformed Zionist politics and led eventually to the establishment of the State of Israel. He himself became a keen supporter of a National Home for Jews in Palestine. Initially, he knew little about Zionism and took no interest in the subject until relatively late in life as a result of his first meeting with Chaim Weizmann in 1906.

Balfour had little further contact with the subject for another eight years and then his interest was primarily based on strategic considerations. But as time went on, he became anxious to establish his Zionist credentials, with his speeches suggesting that he had been a Zionist for many years. Although he put his name to the Declaration (Lloyd George could just as well have done so, in which case it would have been known to posterity as 'The Lloyd George Declaration'), there were many other

Cecil Bloom, a veteran contributor to Jewish Affairs, is a former technical director of a multinational pharmaceutical firm and lives in Leeds. His essays on Jewish themes relating to music, literature, history and Bible have also appeared in Midstream and Jewish Quarterly.

politicians by that time fully committed to Zionism.

Balfour's interest in the subject increased substantially after the end of the War, and he became a full-blooded Zionist supporter. He did understand why Jews wanted to have their rightful place in the world accepting that "a great nation without a home is not right". His niece and official biographer, Blanche Dugdale, has written that as a child she had got from him the idea that Christianity and civilization owed Judaism an immeasurable debt that had shamefully been ill repaid. In his earlier days he had, however, exhibited the classic anti-Jewish prejudices of upper-class British society and it was when he was Prime Minister that the 1905 Aliens Act that restricted Jewish immigration into Britain became law. He was careful to dissociate himself from the antisemitism that was a prime motivator of the legislation, declaring in the House of Commons debate that the treatment of Jews had been a disgrace to Christendom.

Balfour had supported Chamberlain's offer of Uganda as a home for Jews and was puzzled by the Zionist rejection of this. It was not until Weizmann, in their 1906 meeting, explained the reasons for this rejection that he began to understand that Palestine was the only possible home for Jews. In 1917, he told a colleague that the Jews were the most gifted race that mankind had seen since the Greeks of the Fifth Century and that an asylum should be found for them. A year later, he expressed the hope that they would eventually found a state in the Holy Land. Weizmann refers a great deal to him in his autobiography *Trial and Error*.

Their second meeting between Balfour and Weizmann took place in December 1914. Balfour was impressed, and even moved to the point of tears, by Weizmann's description of the Jewish problem and especially of the treatment Jews received in Russia. In April 1917, he met Judge Louis Brandeis, one of the leading American Zionists, in Washington. The latter was impressed with his understanding of the Jewish problem, especially when Balfour told him "I am a Zionist". Not long before he died, Balfour remarked that what he had done for the Jewish people was the thing he looked back upon as his most worthwhile achievement. Lord Vansittart, one-time senior civil servant at the Foreign Office, once observed that he had never known Balfour to care for anything but Zionism.

There has been much ambiguity on how the famous Balfour Declaration came to be written. Balfour was certainly involved in the negotiations leading to it, but his involvement at that stage was not particularly significant, notwithstanding that he was by then a Zionist sympathizer. Dugdale, herself one of the most committed non-Jewish Zionists and a close friend of Chaim and Vera Weizmann, wrote that the Declaration was decided by the whole of the British Cabinet after very careful consideration and emphasises that it was important not to overestimate her uncle's influence relating to the document issued in his name. Balfour himself once stated that he happened to be the mouthpiece of his colleagues in making the Declaration, although Lloyd George has

put on record that Balfour himself proposed its words. It is generally accepted now that Balfour's deep commitment to Zionism came after the Declaration was announced and other hands, especially those of Sir Mark Sykes and Leopold Amery (both members of the War Secretariat) must be given much credit for the historic statement. This statement took weeks to draft, with every word being scrutinized with the greatest thought and forethought.

Balfour began speaking on Zionism in some depth following the end of the War. At a 1920 gathering aimed at thanking the British government for the Declaration, he claimed to have been a committed Zionist for many years. That same year, he expressed the hope that the Arabs would not grudge Jews a piece of land from which they had been separated for hundreds of years. He was anxious for Jews and Arabs to work together, since "in the darkest ages, when Western civilization appeared almost extinct, smothered under barbaric influences, it was the Jews and Arabs in combination working together who greatly aided the first sparks which illuminated that gloomy period".

In his maiden speech in the House of Lords, Balfour spoke emphatically in favour of Jewish immigration into Palestine. The country could maintain a population far greater than they had under Turkish rule, he said, denying that Arabs would suffer from Jewish immigration. Giving Palestine to the Jews was an act of restoration because it had been stolen from them in the early days of Christianity. Balfour was especially enthusiastic about the establishment of the Hebrew University at Mount Scopus. At its opening in April 1925, appearing in the scarlet robes of Chancellor of Cambridge University, he proclaimed that a "new era had opened in the history of the scattered people", and emphasized that the University must be a Hebrew one with Hebrew as its language.

Lt-Colonel J.H. Patterson

John Henry Patterson (1867-1947), an Irish Protestant from Dublin, served with distinction in the Anglo-Boer War, thereafter becoming a big-game hunter of some note (his 1907 book *The Man-eaters of Tsavo* was a huge best-seller). His approach to Zionism was quite different from that of Balfour. He was not a political figure and his religious commitment seems to have been irrelevant. His involvement with Zionism began in April 1915, when he was appointed commander of the Zion Mule Corps that served in Gallipoli, carrying supplies and ammunition to the front line. Of this time he later wrote: "When as a small boy, I eagerly devoured the records of the glorious deeds of Jewish military captains such as Joshua, Joab, Gideon and Judas Maccabeus. I little dreamt that one day I myself would be in a small way a captain of a host of the Children of Israel".

Vladimir Jabotinsky's efforts to get a Jewish fighting force as part of the British Army were successful, resulting in the formation of the 38th

(Jewish) Battalion of the London Royal Fusiliers with Patterson as its Commanding Officer. Jabotinsky himself joined the battalion as a lieutenant, and thus began a relationship between the two men that lasted until Jabotinsky's death in 1940. Patterson was overwhelmed by Jabotinsky's personality and drive and he became a passionate and militant Zionist. He insisted that *Hatikvah* should be played whenever appropriate and was a strong supporter of Jabotinsky's view that the *Yishuv* had to defend itself by its own efforts, a concept that received little support from mainstream Zionism. After serious riots in Palestine in April 1920, he pleaded unsuccessfully with the War Office for a Jewish defence force. He was against a joint Jew-Arab defence force on the grounds that "every Jew trained to arms is so much to the good of our side whilst every Arab so trained may be a menace".

Patterson visited Palestine on a number of occasions, writing on one occasion that the country could support a population of some five to six million at a time when many were sceptical about large-scale immigration. He was critical of some Jewish leaders. Weizmann, for example, was thought to be obsessed with wanting to be too moderate. In November 1921, he joined Jabotinsky as part of a *Keren Hayesod* delegation to the United States, where one newspaper reported that they represented "the aggressive and militant aspects of Jewish national restoration".

In 1933 Chaim Arlosoroff, a leading Labour politician, was murdered, and a young Revisionist supporter was later convicted of the crime. Patterson went to Palestine on behalf of the Revisionist movement and was instrumental in having the conviction set aside. After Arab riots in April 1936, he addressed a meeting in London's East End in these words: "What has happened in Palestine is only symptomatic of the general weakness and uncertainty of British policy...it must be made clear that what was promised to the Jews must be given to them".

March 1940 saw Patterson in the United States with Jabotinsky protesting against the 1939 White Paper. He also wrote a series of articles entitled *Behind the Palestine Betrayal*, a bitter indictment of British policy. He also said that he understood why Jews in Palestine were embarking on terrorism. Menachem Begin, in his autobiography, quotes him as telling *Irgun Zvei Leumi* officers, "Remember, the English don't like to be killed". He made many radio broadcasts in the United States, defending the actions of the Stern gang and other terrorist organisations.

Patterson's influence on matters Zionist lessened as a result of his strong support of Jabotinsky and use of language that was seen as extremely inflammatory by mainstream Zionism. Nevertheless, one finds streets still named after him in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv today. At his request, his ashes were buried in Israel.

Sir Wyndham Deedes

Wyndham Deedes (1883-1956) was the most deeply Christian of all the gentile supporters of

Zionism (although Orde Wingate came close). He was a man of profound religious feeling and a deep social conscience, "a man conscious of the inhumanity which the professed Christian states of Europe had shown to the Jews for centuries". He was convinced that Christians should make retribution for the injustices suffered by Jews by helping to establish a National Home for them in the land of the Bible. Deedes believed profoundly in the Jewish people and in its moral heritage and he was certain that Zionism would triumph. "A home [must] be found not only for the dispossessed and persecuted Jews but for the Jewish national spirit" he once wrote.

To Herbert Samuel's son Edwin, who worked in the Palestine Administration from 1920 to 1948, he was a saintly figure and most remarkable man, a devout Christian who left his post as Chief Secretary because he could not stand the "bickering over the Holy Places". Richard Meinertzhagen (of whom more later) described him as "a man of complete integrity... [whose] essential character was saintliness", with a concern for Jewry "based on a profound compassion for their sufferings" and who regarded "the establishment of a sovereign Israel as their just reward". Norman Bentwich, who served as Attorney General in the Palestine Administration, saw him as "the most noble of Christian Zionists". For him, Zionism was a religious faith. Vera Weizmann wrote affectionately about his "deep and abiding friendship" with herself and her husband, with their conversations constantly touching on the future of Palestine.

Deedes was a professional soldier who fought in the Anglo-Boer War and was later an officer in the Turkish Gendamerie. His father had been a close friend of Colonel Albert Goldsmid, an early English Zionist. In 1915, he joined the Arab Bureau in Cairo, subsequently becoming General Allenby's Middle Eastern Chief Intelligence Officer and playing a key role in the conquest of Palestine. He was unique among British Army officers in Palestine, who were generally anti-Zionist.

There is no evidence to show that Deedes himself was a Zionist before 1917, although he had had some association with Aaron Aaronsohn and his NILI espionage group that supplied intelligence information to the British in the conflict with Turkey. In fact, he had initially shown some hostility to Zionism, but subsequently he came to regard it as a fulfilment of biblical prophecy. This was due in some measure to Chaim Weizmann, with whom he established an immediate friendship when Weizmann went to Palestine as head of the Zionist Commission.

From 1920-3, Deedes was Palestine High Commissioner Herbert Samuel's Chief Secretary. Thereafter, he returned to England, spending the rest of his life engaged in social work in London's East End's Bethnal Green. In Palestine, he unofficially recognised the *Haganah* and was responsible for introducing Jews into the Palestine Police Force. He was further instrumental in saving the Jewish settlement in Rehovot from destruction by a huge Arab mob in 1921. As a result of his efforts on behalf

of the *Yishuv* he was accorded the title *Hassidei Ummot Ha'Olam* (The Pious of the Gentiles). Deedes was one of the few who understood what Weizmann was trying to achieve and he made it clear to him what antisemitism there was in the British military mission.

Deedes did support, however reluctantly, some of his government's policies that were antagonistic to the *Yishuv*, and for this he did become somewhat estranged from Weizmann. He admired the efforts of the *chalutzim*, describing them to Samuel as men who were "battling with nature...turning stones into bread" and expressing the wish that the country as a whole was full of such types. A measure of the way in which he was perceived by Arabs is illustrated by *Falastin*, the leading Arab newspaper, that declared: "nobody regrets his leaving except 'the society of the national home', for he preferred the hymn *Hatikvah* to *God Save the King*". On the other hand, the Hebrew journal *Doar Hayom* reported that residents of Rishon le Zion who heard his farewell speech felt that it had "flowed from a feeling heart, true to our nation, was like fresh water to the tired soul and left a deep impression on all".

Deedes is honoured more for his sentiments than his real achievements in Palestine, but after leaving there, he continued to support Zionism, becoming a champion of Youth *Aliyah*, supporting efforts to help German Jewry and travelling widely on behalf of *Keren Hayesod*. Prior to outbreak of war in 1939, he established the British Association for the Jewish National Home to keep the Jewish cause before the British public and in 1948 founded the Anglo-Israel Association to revive and cement Britain's friendship with world Jewry. Shortly before he died, he said that Israel's restoration was not only an event of great historic importance but one that before all else was a sign and symbol of God's righteousness and justice. Can history point anywhere to his equivalent as an exceptional and faithful supporter of all that modern Zionism has stood for?

Josiah Wedgwood

Josiah Wedgwood (1872 -1943) was the great-grandson of the man of the same name who founded the world-famous pottery organisation. A comparatively important political figure in Britain, he became a passionate supporter of Zionism and spoke vigorously in Parliament and elsewhere against his Government's policies on Palestine. Norman Bentwich regarded Wedgwood as "the most intrepid fighter in Parliament for the Jews and Jewish National Home". Wedgwood's entry into Zionist politics really came after 1918, with his criticisms largely being devoted to attacks on the Palestine Administration. In his memoirs, he wrote that his first real involvement with Zionism came in December 1916, when he first met Weizmann at one of Lloyd George's famous breakfast parties. From that time on until his death, he was a tireless, if controversial, Zionist supporter.

Wedgwood eventually became a stringent critic

both of the Mandatory Government and the Colonial Office. One leading Zionist described him as a "romantic nationalist who was unable to regard in apathy the possibility of reviving the Jewish nation on a revitalized Jewish soil". A parliamentary colleague of his, the non-Jewish pro-Zionist J.M. Kenworthy, gave him the highest praise when he wrote in 1933 that Wedgwood "may yet be entrusted like Moses with the task of leading the Children of Israel out of Egypt. [He] may go further than Moses and complete the task by emulating his near namesake Joshua".

Wedgwood was described as the "most resolute and militant Christian champion of the Zionist cause" by Israel Cohen, one of the leading Zionist historians. Cohen further commented:

No debate on Palestine in the House of Commons ever took place in which he did not deliver a striking and provocative speech, and there was no searching or critical question in regard to the Jewish National Home that he was not prepared to put either to the Prime minister or to the Colonial Secretary...No Jewish MP ever ventured to indulge in such scathing attacks upon anti-Zionist or antisemitic officials in the Palestine administration with such courage and candour.

Wedgwood went on many trips abroad for the Zionist movement. In 1926, he made speeches to Jewish audiences in four American cities following a trip to Palestine and drew attention to the achievement in the *Yishuv* both in manufacturing and agriculture. His Palestine visit gave him insight into the problems faced by the Jews living there and, whilst full of praise for the Jewish agricultural settlements, he was critical of the Administration. This visit was a turning point in his thinking because it convinced him that "the best Jews in the whole world" lived in a country that had the worst Administration in the whole of the British Empire. In time, however, Wedgwood's independent opinions started to border on eccentricity. The Zionist leadership began to realise this and became more wary of him. Weizmann and Wedgwood were nevertheless on more than cordial terms, but the former was always cautious about the other's approach and language.

As a consequence of his Palestine visit, Wedgwood proceeded to develop a plan to change the situation in the country proposing that it, together with Transjordan, become a land with a Jewish majority leading to its becoming a Crown Colony and thereafter a fully-fledged (seventh) dominion within the British Empire. These views were aired in his book *The Seventh Dominion*, published early in 1928. The book saw this seventh dominion as being a re-affirmation of an alliance with Jewish people but it would differ from other British colonies where local population were dominated by the Home Country. He believed that a Jewish majority capable of achieving independence within the British Commonwealth was the only meaningful solution to

Palestinian problems.

Wedgwood founded the Seventh Dominion League in March 1929, with its main objective being to have a friendly people in Palestine who “by their peaceful presence would be a sufficient safeguard”. Palestine would become part of the British Commonwealth of Nations, with the British Government facilitating the absorption into Palestine of great numbers of Jews to transform the country into a real Jewish National Home.

The Seventh Dominion League did help crystallize thinking about Palestine’s future, and British public opinion at first showed some sympathy to the scheme in that it was a way of retaining a strong British presence in the Middle East. However, attitudes later changed towards the idea. One Zionist group – Jabotinsky’s Revisionist Party - was favourably inclined to the League, and its support for it marked the start of an enduring friendship between Jabotinsky and Wedgwood. Weizmann and his associates, by contrast, were against Wedgwood’s ideas.

From 1929 onwards, Wedgwood became an obsessive critic of the Mandatory Government, frequently accusing its officials there of being “ordinary, narrow- minded, half-bred Englishmen who feel about Jews just as their counterpart Herr Hitler does”. Once, he accused the Government of antisemitism and of being a “disgrace to England”. 1929, a significant year in the emerging Arab-Jew conflict, saw Wedgwood continuously pleading for a Jewish police force to protect the Jewish population. So strong were his views that he once said that if he had been in charge of Palestine in 1929, he would have hanged the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem outside the Damascus Gate. At a huge protest meeting in London following the massacres in August 1929, he asserted that British honour was at stake in light of the official reaction to this and that only a Jewish police force, together with a Jewish Palestine defence force officered by the British, could provide a reliable safeguard for the Jewish settlers.

In evidence to the 1937 Peel Royal Commission, Wedgwood said that the British officials in Palestine had become anti-Jew and pro-Arab and begged Peel “not to sound the death-knell of Jewry” in his report. He also spoke against partition when Peel’s report was debated in the House of Commons, saying that it was unfair because of the restrictions it placed on the territory to be awarded to the Jewish population. He got into deep trouble following Peel’s report when, asked by a Palestinian organisation linked to the Revisionist Party for his views on it, he responded that Jews were entitled to defend themselves even if this meant going to prison and advised on several forms of resistance that would help the cause. His letter caused a political storm, and was described as an ‘outrage’ by the Foreign Office. Moderate Zionists were none too pleased either, although the Revisionists were ecstatic. When a new Commission, the Woodhead, led to a new partition plan, Wedgwood was again scathing in his criticisms. He attacked the government after the 1938 disturbances, accusing it

of failing to give the military the authority or power to quell them.

Wedgwood refused to alter his stance in the face of all the criticisms levelled against him and his attacks on government policy continued. After the publication of the 1939 White Paper restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine, he warned that the next step would be a demand for the disarmament of the Jews so that “they may be handed over, bound hand and foot, to the new Arab state”. He went on to say that he had heard of some “excellent ideas”, such as blowing up pipelines and bridges and bombing along IRA lines, and seemed to favour such action. He recommended that the best way to smash the Jerusalem government that “was in the hands of Arabs” was by refusing to pay taxes.

Wedgwood was involved in the controversies surrounding the tragedies of the two vessels *Patria* and *Struma*, which were blown up and sunk with the loss of hundreds of passengers in November 1941 and February 1942 respectively. Both ships contained refugees from Nazi Europe and had been refused admission to Palestine. Shortly after the *Struma* disaster, Wedgwood made a broadcast to the United States saying that what should have been co-operation for twenty-five years had instead been years of jealousy, malice and uncharitableness that ended in the *Struma* mass massacre. He accused the Administration of being hostile to the half a million Jews in the country and was in favour of America taking over the Mandate. Another storm followed this broadcast; Weizmann believed that Wedgwood here had gone “fairly beyond the permissible”. The BBC, in fact, was forced to apologise for allowing the broadcast.

Josiah Clement Wedgwood’s unequivocal support for a Jewish National Home in Palestine was, unlike that of most other pro-Zionist upper-class Gentile Britishers, very radical and sometimes bordering on the extreme. Of his contemporaries, only Patterson and Wingate can be said to have had similar attitudes to Zionism. Despite all the controversies surrounding him, however, all factions of Jewry mourned his passing. His life was commemorated in a number of ways, including the naming of streets after him in both Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

A BRIEF JOURNEY THROUGH SPANISH JEWISH HISTORY

*

Bernard Katz

The history of Spanish Jewry has been characterised by periods of extreme oppression and hardship, but also by periods of significant growth, creativity and genius. The 19th Century Spanish historian Jose-Amador de los Rios wrote that it was “hard to address the history of the Iberian Peninsula in any realm – political, social, religious, scientific or literary – without encountering on every page some important act or famous name that does not relate to the Hebrew nation”. He added that the Jews were pivotal to the development of Spanish culture because “they played a part in the awakening of the Christian nations and their creative spirit from their coma”.¹

According to legend, Jews were living in Spain during the time of King Solomon, although no proof exists to support this.² Most likely, Jews settled in Spain during Roman times after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and the ensuing deportation of Jews to Europe.³ Many of the latter would have been banished to Spain.⁴ In the early 5th Century, the Visigoths captured the Iberian Peninsula from the weakening Roman Empire and initially treated the Jews well. This all changed after 589 CE, when they converted to Christianity. A hundred years of persecution followed, during which synagogues were burned and Judaism was outlawed.⁵ Faced with the choice between death and conversion, many Jews chose conversion. The term Marrano was not then in use, but the concept had been born.

The origins of the Kol Nidre prayer may date back to this period. When Visigothic rule ended, many Jews felt that their ancestors had perjured themselves before God; the Kol Nidre prayer released them from these vows.⁶

In 711, a Muslim force from North Africa under the command of Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and conquered the Visigoths. Muslim settlement occurred mainly in the southern half of Spain in the province of Al Andalus, today Andalusia, and especially in the cities of Cordoba, Seville and Granada. At the time of the Muslim invasion, there were no openly practising Jews, but the secret Jews welcomed the newcomers. According to Arabic sources, the Muslim invaders made it their custom to hand towns they had captured to the Jews to garrison and mention that this happened at Toledo, Seville, Cordoba and Granada.⁷

The Umayyad kingdom was established by Abd

al – Rachman I in 755, with its capital at Cordoba. Abd al – Rachman III, regarded by some as the greatest of all the Spanish kings,⁸ ruled in Cordoba for fifty years (912-962). It was during this period that Cordoba became the centre of both Arab and Jewish culture, with Jews contributing to commerce, government, science, medicine, poetry and philosophy. Although Jews were regarded as dhimmis, i.e. subject, second class citizens, under Islamic law, the Umayyad Caliphate was preoccupied less with religious orthodoxy than with economic prosperity and scientific advancement.⁹

The towering Jewish personality during this period was Chasdai ibn Shaprut (900 – 970). He served as court physician, laid the foundations in Spain for a “Jewish cultural flowering”¹⁰ and was the first example of a Jewish statesman, communal leader and intellectual.¹¹ Chasdai ibn Shaprut is famous for his correspondence with King Joseph, the last of the Khazar kings. He was an accomplished Torah scholar and encouraged the development of Torah study in Cordoba.

There is a legend that the Babylonian academies sent four Torah scholars to collect funds and that while crossing the Mediterranean these were captured and ransomed. Each ultimately set up a Torah academy. One, Rav Moshe ben Chanoch (d. c965), became the Rosh Yeshiva in Cordoba. With the assistance of Chasdai ibn Shaprut, he was responsible for the revival of Talmudic studies in Spain, and Cordoba came to possess a yeshiva on a par with and ultimately exceeding that of Babylon.

Further advancements in Torah scholarship came about through the efforts of Rabbeinu Yitzchak ben Yaakov Alfasi, known as the Rif (1013 – 1103), who fled Morocco for Spain at the age of 75. He became spiritual leader and Rosh Yeshiva of Lucena, seventy kilometres south of Cordoba. The Rif began the process of codifying the Talmud, omitting discussions and deviating opinions and stating only the halachah, or final outcome. After his death, the Ri Migash (1077 – 1141) became the Rosh Yeshiva at Lucena. One of his students was Rabbi Maimon, father of the Rambam.

With the Berber conquest of Cordoba in 1013 and the demise of the Umayyad dynasty in 1030, Cordoba’s prominence was lost forever. The Cordoba Caliphate fractured into a number of smaller and competing principalities, including Cordoba, Seville and Granada, the latter emerging as the most durable.

Samuel ibn Nagrela (993 – 1056) was a refugee after the Berber conquest, landing up in Granada

Bernard Katz, a frequent contributor to Jewish Affairs, is a Chartered Accountant who works for an investment bank in Johannesburg.

where he became the vizier. He was the chief rabbi of Granada, commanded the Muslim army and was the first of the famous Jewish poets of Spain. After his death his son, Joseph ibn Nagrela, became vizier. He is reported to have displayed tactlessness in opposing the king on a minor political issue, as a result of which, on the Saturday of 30 December 1066, he was murdered on his way to synagogue. This in turn set off an orgy of violence, resulting in the murders of about 4000 Jews, the first persecution of Jews in Muslim Spain.¹²

The Golden Age of Jewish culture in Spain refers to a period of history in Spain under Muslim rule during which Jewish religious, cultural and economic life flourished. Considerable debate exists as to the nature and length of this Golden Age. At its longest, it commenced in 711 with the Muslim conquest and lasted until 1146, with the Almohade invasion. Other scholars consider that it commenced around 912 with the rule of Abd - al Rachman III and ended in 1030 (when the Caliphate of Cordoba ended), in 1066 (when the Granada massacres occurred) or in 1086 (when the Almoravides invaded).¹³

Peter Dole, an American poet living in Jerusalem, has written an anthology of the seven great Hebrew poets of Spain, namely Samuel ibn Nagrela, Shlomo ibn Gabirol, Moshe ibn Ezra and Yehuda HaLevi from Muslim Spain (c950 – 1140) and Abraham ibn Ezra, Yehuda Alharizi and Todros Abulafia from Christian Spain (c1140 – 1452). Cole describes the Muslim period as a Golden Age of Hebrew poetry and the Christian era as a Silver Age. While Cole has few illusions about 'tolerance' in either society, Christian Spain produced no tradition of tolerance of other faiths whereas under Islam other religions enjoyed protected status as *dhimmis*, being required to surrender only secular power to Muslims.¹⁴

The parents of Shlomo ibn Gabirol (1020 - 1070) were refugees from Cordoba. At one time, he received a stipend from Shmuel ibn Nagrela but later, when false rumours of disloyalty were spread against him, his stipend was cut and he returned to a life of wandering and destitution. He lived a tragic life and was desperately tormented by a skin ailment - a mantle of pus-filled lesions that kept him in pain almost all his life - and this reflected in his poetry.¹⁵

The father of Moshe ibn Ezra (c1055 – after 1135) was a prominent merchant in Granada. His life, in contrast to ibn Gabirol's, was hence initially one of luxury, and this too was reflected in his poetry. He was, however, an indifferent businessman, lost the bulk of his inheritance and was reduced to employment as a clerk. His misfortune was compounded when he fell in love with a woman he was forbidden to marry.¹⁶

Yehudah HaLevi (c1075 – 1141) was the most famous of the Jewish poets of Spain and has been described as the poet laureate of the Jewish people.¹⁷ He was born in Toledo and moved to Granada in 1095. Over 800 of his poems survived, including love poems, eulogies and lament, piyyutim and songs of Zion.¹⁸ Much of his poetry has been incorporated into Jewish liturgy.¹⁹ He is remembered for his

classic work on Jewish philosophy, *Kuzari*, which he worked on for twenty years.²⁰ The *Kuzari* presents a defence of Judaism. It takes the form of a debate between the king of Khazaria and representatives of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths which resulted in the king and many of his subjects converting to Judaism.

Yehudah HaLevi was a passionate Zionist and his most famous and most quoted line is "My heart is in the East, and I in the uttermost West". He eventually decided to go to Eretz Israel, and although there is little evidence that he got further than Egypt, legend has it that he died at the hands of an Arab horseman in Jerusalem.²¹

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides and the Rambam (1135 – 1204), was forced to flee Cordoba and Spain in 1148 with the Almohade invasion and spent the major part of his life in Fustat (Old Cairo). The Rambam is nevertheless associated with the Golden Age of Spain and he never relinquished his identification with or admiration for Spain.²²

The Rambam produced three major works, the first of which was a *Commentary on the Mishnah*. His best known work, *Mishnei Torah*, was the first serious attempt to codify all the halachah of the entire Talmud in topical order and this book became the standard reference of Jewish law. His third major work, *The Guide to the Perplexed*, was the single most important philosophic work ever produced by a Jew. The Rambam's writings became the last significant Jewish contribution produced in the Arabic language.²³

The Rambam's works were subject to controversy both during and after his life. The substance of the controversy included his attempt to synthesize Jewish faith with Aristotelian philosophy utilising rationalist as opposed to mystic religious belief,²⁴ and his extreme allegoristic explanations of Talmudic and Biblical expressions and tales as opposed to ideological literalism.²⁵

The Rambam was one of the few Jewish thinkers to influence the non-Jewish world. In 1985, the 850th anniversary of his birth, Pakistan and Cuba, which do not recognize Israel, were amongst the co-sponsors of a UNESCO conference on him in Paris.²⁶

After the Moorish conquest, Christians were confined to the inaccessible mountainous regions in the north. They slowly regained their strength, and in the 11th Century their reconquest of Spain began in earnest. At the same time as the kingdoms of Leon and Castille were united, the Caliphate of Cordoba disintegrated. In 1085, the Christians reconquered Toledo. Moorish Spain was in danger, and the small divided kingdoms in the south were unable to defend themselves. Assistance from North Africa was sought, coming firstly in the form of the fanatical Almoravid sect in 1086 and later from the even more fanatical Almohades in 1146. The age of tolerance was over; Jews were compelled to embrace Islam or leave. Many fled to the Christian kingdoms of the north, where tolerance prevailed.²⁷ Later on, the Christian armies made further advances. Cordoba was

reconquered in 1236 and Seville in 1248, leaving only Granada under Muslim control.

The Christian kings in the north welcomed the Jews and tens of thousands moved there.²⁸ Initially, it was a promising, albeit short-lived, new "Golden Age". As more Jews arrived, their advantage to the Christian kings became apparent. By 1284, Jews were contributing 22% of all taxes in Aragon-Catalonia and possibly even more in Castile-Leon. More than any other vocation it was tax-farming – the purchase for cash of tax collecting rights – that established the fortunes of Jewish families such as the Abravanel, Abulafia, Seneor etc.²⁹ No financial arrangement was guarded by the kings more jealously than their revenues by their mainly Jewish tax farmers.³⁰ As a result, the Spanish kings did try to protect Jews against agitation by the church and merchants. Protection and patronage was effective in Castile from 1080-1370, and until 1412 in Aragon.³¹ Although Christian tolerance was limited and temporary, it did provide a conducive environment and certainly safer conditions than existed for Jews in the rest of Europe.³²

Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164) was probably the best known of the Jewish poets in Christian Spain. He was a close friend of Yehudah HaLevi, and according to legend his son-in-law as well. He was a Talmudic scholar and poet. Although he came from a wealthy family, he struggled to earn a living, expressing his frustration in the line:

If candles were my business, the sun would never set;
If I were dealing in shrouds, no one would ever die.

Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, was better known as Nachmanides or the Ramban (1194 – 1270). The last name accorded to him as a gesture of his near equivalence to the Rambam. He was the latter's successor as Judaism's leading Torah authority.

The Ramban took part in the most famous of the debates defending Judaism against Christianity – the Barcelona Disputation of 1263. For four days, the Ramban engaged in debate with the apostate Pablo Christiani in the presence of King Jaime I, who granted him the rare permission to debate freely without censorship or retribution. Three main questions were addressed. Firstly, had the Messiah not already appeared? The Ramban argued that Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah as he had not fulfilled the messianic prophecies and particularly that of universal peace. Worse still, the followers of Jesus were often the greatest spillers of blood. Next, was the Messiah Divine? The Ramban argued that there was no basis in Judaism for believing in the Divinity of the Messiah, or indeed of any man, and attacked the Trinitarian doctrine as an affront to human intelligence. Finally, the continued validity of Judaism was questioned, and here the Ramban argued that nothing had changed in the world to make the Torah's laws superfluous.

On the Sabbath after the disputation, Jaime spoke

in the synagogue and afterwards informed the congregants "I have never seen a man defend a wrong cause so well".³³ The historian and playwright Hyam Maccoby, in his book *The Disputation, 1263*, reconstructs the debate in theatrical form (based on historical records of the disputation).³⁴

Three years later, Jaime revoked his previous policy of tolerance and exiled the Ramban for two years. The Ramban decided to make *aliyah* to *Eretz Yisrael*, where he died after founding a yeshiva and a synagogue. The synagogue he founded in Jerusalem still bears his name. The Ramban's most widely read writing is his commentary on the *Chumash*. He was also involved in the development of the Kabbalistic movement (the *Zohar* was written in Spain by Moshe de Leon between 1280-1286).³⁵

The year 1391 marked a major shift in Jewish-Christian relations. Dominican fanaticism was on the rise, led by Archdeacon Ferrant Martinez. A particularly venomous sermon from his pulpit in Seville set off a killing spree in which 4000 Jews were murdered on a single day.³⁶ These massacres spread across Spain, resulted in upwards of 70 000 deaths.³⁷ The pogroms greatly undermined Jewish morale. Cecil Roth estimates that the number of conversions to Christianity in Castile and Aragon alone could have been as high as 200 000.³⁸ These Jews became known in history as New Christians, conversos, crypto-Jews or Marranos, the latter being a derogatory Spanish word for swine.

Jewish historians have on the whole accepted the proposition that the Marranos, or at least the overwhelming majority of them, were Jewish. Benzion Netanyahu quotes Professor Bauer opinion that "the majority of the conversos were real Jews" and Professor Baron's that they were "Jews at heart".³⁹ Netanyahu arrived at a different conclusion and derived his proofs from contemporary Jewish sources. He writes that almost all the Marranos descended from the mass conversions of Jews to Christianity during the persecutions of 1391 and 1412⁴⁰ and argues that over the three generations until 1481, when the Inquisition was established, the number of Christianized Marranos was rising while the number of clandestine Jews was falling to "vanishing point". Judaism in the Marrano camp was, therefore, a marginal phenomenon.⁴¹ New Christians, he writes, were "not Jews, in practice or in spirit, but assimilated to the core, Christianized and anti-Jewish".⁴²

Queen Isabella of Castile was initially a protector of her Jewish subjects. Isabella married Ferdinand of Aragon in 1469, resulting in the unification of their kingdoms ten years later, and she owed her throne and her marriage largely to the support and counsel of Rabbi Abraham Seneor.⁴³ Seneor was the chief tax farmer of Castile, and in 1484 Don Isaac Abravanel became the tax farmer for Castile's central and southern provinces. The Abravanel's were one of Spain's eminent Jewish families. Don Isaac's grandfather had been a tax-farmer in Seville but had been forced to convert in 1391. He fled to Portugal, where he had reverted to Judaism. In 1484, the war against Granada was in its fourth year and Ferdinand

and Isabella needed all the financial help they could get.

The Inquisition was established by Ferdinand and Isabella under pressure from the Dominican monk Tomas de Torquemada, said to be of Jewish extraction, and the first Tribunals were held in Seville in 1481. The Inquisition was directed against former Jews who had converted to Christianity, mostly under duress, who were suspected of practising Judaism in secret. It was not concerned about professing Jews practicing their own religion. Between 1481 and 1492, it is estimated that 13,000 Marranos were condemned.⁴⁴ The Inquisition continued into the 19th century and was only finally abolished in 1834. Its last victim perished in 1826.⁴⁵

Balthazar Lopez was brought before the *auto de fe* in 1654 and condemned to be burned at the stake, but managed to retain his sense of humour to the end. He was persuaded to avoid the worst agonies by repentance, which he did. As he approached the *quemadero*, the priest exhorted him to rejoice, since as a result of his contrition the gates of Paradise were opening for him freely. "Freely, Do you say, father?" retorted Lopez, "The confiscation of my property has cost me 200,000 ducats. Do you infer that I have been swindled?"

Waiting in line for his turn, he witnessed the executioner clumsily garrotting a couple of his fellow victims. "Pedro," he said "if you can strangle me no better than you are doing those poor souls, I had rather be burned alive".

In its whole existence, the Inquisition's victims numbered 341 000. Of these more than 32 000 were killed by burning, 18 000 burned after execution and 291 000 given lesser punishments.⁴⁶

Discrimination against New Christians persisted for over 350 years, and marriage between Old and New Christians was frowned on. It was only in 1860 that the official distinction between Old and New Christians was finally abolished.

Roth discusses the impact of the Inquisition on Spain. He argues that while many historians have noted that Spain's great age came about after the establishment of the Inquisition, that institution "was pressing slowly on the vital arteries of Spanish intellectual life, and the cumulative effect was felt at last...by the middle of the Eighteenth Century, it was possible to see the result: a country drained of its inspiration, of its genius, of its wealth—of everything, in fact, but its orthodoxy and its pride".⁴⁷

A good proportion of Spaniards had Jewish blood and didn't like to be reminded of it. The incident is told of the Spanish Ambassador in London who once wished Sir Frances Bacon "A Happy Easter". Retorted Bacon, "A Happy Passover to you".⁴⁸

A well known but probably apocryphal story recounts how King Manoel I of Portugal was not satisfied with the Minister in his government, Pombal, who had instituted policies in the late 18th Century to render the Inquisition almost powerless. He intimated that if he had his own way he would make all descendants of New Christians wear yellow hats, like their unconverted ancestors. The following day,

Pombal arrived at Court with three yellow hats, one for His Majesty, one for himself and one for the Inquisitor General.⁴⁹

Documents establishing the Inquisition explicitly state that its purpose was to put an end to the Jewish heresy that had infected the camp of the conversos.⁵⁰ The Inquisition was instituted to punish converts from Judaism who transgressed against Christianity by secretly adhering to Jewish beliefs and performing rites and ceremonies of the Jews.⁵¹ This view is supported by most Jewish historians, who would accept that this would give rise to a moral basis to the Inquisition. Netanyahu takes a contrary view, given his previous conclusion that the New Christians were Christians in spirit and intent; thus, the aim of the Inquisition could not have been to excise a Jewish heresy from the Marrano ranks.⁵²

Rather, he argues that the factor that put strain on the relationship between the Old Christians and the New was the growth in converso economic power. This hatred had nothing to do with the New Christians' religious conduct and was basically an extension of Christian hatred of Jews – which could not be prevented by a mere change of religion.⁵³

Netanyahu concludes that it was not the religion of the Marranos that the Inquisition was concerned about but the bearers of that religion. Its purpose was to degrade, impoverish and ruin the influence of the Marranos in all spheres of life, so to make it impossible for them to rise again and be a factor of any consequence in Spain. "The aim of the Inquisition...was not to eradicate a Jewish heresy from the midst of the Marrano group, but to eradicate the Marrano group from the midst of the Spanish people".⁵⁴

Torquemada argued that as long as Jews remained in Spain, they would influence the New Christians to practice Judaism and thus should be expelled. Ferdinand and Isabella initially resisted this until January 1492, when the Christian army defeated Muslim Granada and thus restored the whole of Spain to Christian control. So long as the war against Granada was not won, the Jews were needed. Without Jewish money victory was not possible. The edict of expulsion was signed on 30 March 1492 and gave the Jews four months to leave Spain.

Accurate Jewish population figures for the time are difficult to obtain, and estimates vary significantly. Netanyahu believes that Spain's Marrano population by the 1480s, which included the natural population increase over three generations, was over 600 000⁵⁵ and the Jewish population around 300 000. At that time, the population of Castille and Aragon amounted to just over nine million, hence Marranos constituted just over 7% of the Spanish population and around 10% once the Jewish community is included.⁵⁶

It is estimated that in 1492, about half the Jewish population chose conversion over exile. The majority of the exiles, numbering around 100 000, moved to Portugal, from where they were expelled in 1497.⁵⁷ Martin Gilbert estimates that of the 160 000 Jews were ultimately forced to leave, 25 000 went to Holland, 20 000 to Morocco, 10 000 to France,

10,000 to Italy, 5000 to the Dutch possessions in South America and 90 000 to the Ottoman Empire, including Rhodes, Crete, Salonika and Constantinople.⁵⁸

Christopher Columbus (1451-1500) is thought by some to be of Marrano extraction, but this is impossible to exclude or confirm.⁵⁹ His diary begins strangely as follows:

In the same month in which their Majesties [Ferdinand and Isabella] issued the edict that all Jews should be driven out of the kingdom and its territories, in the same month they gave me the order to undertake with sufficient men my expedition of discovery to the Indies.

Cecil Roth has raised three points about Columbus's supposed Jewish origins which he considered "remarkable and inexplicable":

- His mystical signature, which he instructed his heirs to use, contained the three letters AAA, the Marrano abbreviation for A-do-noi.
- Columbus set sail for America on 3 August 1492. No-one has ever been able to explain why he postponed the date of departure from the previous day, when the tides were favourable and everything was ready. 2 August was Tisha B'Av, and according to rabbinic law, setting out on a journey is discouraged on that day of ill omen.
- In one passage Columbus says, "Up to the present Year of Our Lord 1468, there have elapsed 1400 years since the destruction of the Second House". Why, Roth asks, would a non-Jew have used what is essentially a Jewish phrase?

Roth concludes that there is an increasing weight of evidence supporting the hypothesis of Columbus's Jewish origins and the probability is that Columbus was indeed of Marrano birth.⁶⁰ What is indisputable is that without the financial support of Luis de Santangel, a Marrano, Columbus's trip to America would not have happened.⁶¹

Toledo, sixty kilometres south of Madrid, was the Visigoths capital prior to the Muslim conquest of Spain in 711. According to Jewish tradition, the Jewish settlement in Toledo was the most ancient in the Iberian Peninsula, and it has been claimed that no other town during the exile made the Jews feel so much at home. The name Toledo supposedly derives from the Hebrew word '*Toledoth*', meaning generations, or the town of generations.⁶² Toledo was re-conquered by the Christians in 1085 and served as the capital until 1561, when Madrid replaced it in this regard.

Only four pre-Expulsion synagogues survive in Spain. The two finest can be found in the Jewish Quarter of Toledo. The Santa Maria la Blanca Synagogue (1203) strongly resembles a mosque, with its four rows of eight Moorish horseshoe arches. One expert is of the view that this was "the most beautiful and magnificent synagogue" ever owned

by Jews in Spain.⁶³ The El Transito Synagogue (1357) was built by Samuel HaLevi Abulafia, the finance minister and advisor to Pedro the Cruel. He had a tunnel dug from his house to the Tagus River as an escape route in case of trouble, but this did not help him. In the end he was tortured and murdered by Pedro. This synagogue has been well preserved and many Hebrew inscriptions sculptured on its walls have survived. Of great historical importance is the presence of a gallery for women, the only known one in a medieval synagogue.⁶⁴

Santa Maria la Blanca and El Transito were clearly not the original names of these synagogues. The former means Mary the White, i.e. the immaculate virgin, and the latter refers to the ascension of the Virgin Mary.⁶⁵ The two names tell us about the fate of these synagogues, which were both converted into churches. By plastering the walls, the original Hebrew inscriptions were preserved.⁶⁶ Today, the El Transito synagogue serves as a Sephardi Museum.

Seville today is the capital of Andalusia. Its Cathedral, which houses the tomb of Columbus, is its defining landmark. The Cathedral's treasury exhibits a symbolic key presented by the Jews of Seville to King Ferdinand III after the Christian reconquest in 1248. It is engraved with the Hebrew words, "The King will open, the King of the Lord shall enter".

The Jewish Quarter of Seville is known as the Barrio de Santa Cruz or Juderia, despite the absence of Jews for over 500 years. According to legend, a young woman called Susona inadvertently betrayed her Marrano father by mentioning an armed attack he was plotting on the Inquisition to her Christian boyfriend. On her deathbed, she asked that her skull be placed outside the house she had betrayed as a testament to her shame.⁶⁷ Today, outside this house in the street Calle Susona, there is a plaque with a picture of a skull. There is also a plaque commemorating the street's former name - Calle Muerte (Street of Death), but this was changed, as residents were not happy living in a street bearing such a name.

The Mezquita, or Great Mosque is said to define the heritage of **Cordoba**, the capital of Andalusia during the Umayyad dynasty and the intellectual centre of the Golden Age. Cordoba was the home of Chasdai ibn Shaprut, Judah HaLevi lived there for a while and the Rambam was born there.

In the Jewish Quarter, a synagogue (1315) can be found on the square named Plaza Tiberias, so named to perpetuate the link between the Rambam's Spanish birthplace and Tiberias, where he is buried. This synagogue has some beautifully decorated panels as well as Hebrew inscriptions. A cross on the wall testifies that it served as a church. In 1964, a statue of the Rambam was erected near the synagogue on Calle de los Judios.

"Casa de Sefarad", a recently opened museum in Cordoba, commemorates the Jewish history and tradition of Spain. The museum was once a Jewish house, as there is a tunnel connecting it to the synagogue. Exhibits include a room housing a synagogue exhibition (it has a kosher Torah and

doubles as a synagogue) while the museum's library contains over a thousand books on Jewish subjects.

The Moors thought that the Jews had founded **Granada** and it was once called "Gharnata' al-Yahud" - Granada of the Jews.⁶⁸ The Alhambra, "Palace of Paradise", has been described as the "Apex of Moorish design extravagance".⁶⁹ It was in the palace's Ambassadors Hall that both the document expelling the Jews from Spain and the agreement allowing Columbus to embark on his trip to America were signed by Ferdinand and Isabella. It was also in this hall that Don Isaac Abravanel and Abraham Seneor tried to persuade the latter to revoke the expulsion decree by offering a significant financial incentive. Legend has it that in the midst of these negotiations, Torquemada burst into the room holding a crucifix and asked whether they, like Judas, would betray their Lord for money. Seneor converted whereas Abravanel went into exile.

From the 11th to the 13th Century, Jews dominated **Barcelona's** commerce and culture. The Jewish Quarter is situated in the centre of what is today known as the Old Town. The Sinagoga Mayor, claimed to be the oldest synagogue in Europe, has a 14th Century Hebrew tablet embedded in its wall. The restored glass floor allows one to see the remains of Roman walls, which the official booklet claims formed part of a synagogue in the Roman period. Two niches chiselled into brick doorposts, which used to contain mezuzahs, can be inspected. Also nearby is a building with Hebrew writing from fragments of gravestones taken from the Jewish cemetery on Mountjuic - Mountain of the Jews - one of Barcelona's main landmarks.

The well preserved Jewish Quarter of **Gerona**, 100 kilometres north of Barcelona, is regarded by some the most representative after that of Prague. In the 1970s, this was a rundown area, but thereafter a number of artists moved in followed by restaurateurs and shopkeepers. One of the latter became convinced that a group of buildings he had purchased had previously been the site of Gerona's Jewish Quarter.⁷⁰ An indentation chiselled into a brick doorpost once housing a mezuzah is visible.

Gerona has a "Jewish History Museum", named in honour of its most famous Jewish citizen, the Ramban. One of its more interesting exhibits is a gravestone cover, found in 2005 in a private residence where it was being used as a fishpond. Gerona's History Archives houses over 1000 Jewish documents, in Hebrew and Latin. These survived by being used as book covers.⁷¹

Besalu is half an hour's drive from Gerona. In 1964, a mikveh was discovered here, built in 1264 and one of only three from this period that survive in Europe.⁷² Jewish women would walk down its 36 steps to use it.

The Plaza Mayor is the main square in **Madrid**. Today, it is filled with cafes and craft shops but in days past it hosted trials by the Inquisition. The most famous was the auto de fe held in 1680, which lasted fourteen hours and was attended by 50 000 spectators.

Spain is well known for its culinary excellence,

and pork is one of its main dishes. The popularity of pork dates back to the Inquisition period, when Spaniards went out of their way to show they were not secret Jews, and this tradition has endured.⁷³

Small numbers of Jews began to return to Spain after the Constitution of 1869 guaranteed freedom for all religions. In 1924, Prime Minister Primo de Rivera granted all Jewish descendants of the Expulsion the right to Spanish citizenship. At the time of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), about 4000 Jews lived in Spain. The overwhelming majority supported the Republicans (Socialists and Communists) against the ultimately victorious Nationalists (Fascists under General Franco). Of the 40 000 foreign volunteers who fought on the Republican side, an estimated 10% were Jewish.⁷⁴

Franco displayed a contradictory policy towards the Jews. On the one hand, he saw them to be in the same category as Communists and Freemasons, yet many Jews found refuge in Spain during the Holocaust. There is no indication that any Jew who reached Spanish soil was turned over to the Germans. During the first part of the war, about 30 000 Jews received safe passage through Spain. A further 7500 may have passed through between 1942 and 1944, while over 3200 Jewish refugees were granted Spanish citizenship.⁷⁵ Speculation exists that Franco had Jewish ancestry on the basis of his appearance and because both Franco and Bahamonde (his mother's maiden name) were common Jewish names in Spain.⁷⁶

Shmuel Hadas, Israel's first ambassador to Spain, has traced the evolution of Israeli-Spanish relations. In 1947, Spain was keen to establish diplomatic relations but this was rejected by Israel due to the relationship between Spain and Nazi Germany. Later, when Israel was keen, Spain stalled as it was concerned over potential harm to its relations with Arab countries. The move towards establishing diplomatic relations between Israel and Spain gained impetus with the death of Franco, the election of a socialist government and Spain's admission to the European Community, as well as pressure from King Juan Carlos and the press.

Diplomatic relations were finally established in 1986.⁷⁷ Since then, according to Hadas, Israeli-Spanish relations have developed "gradually in a most satisfactory manner in areas such as cultural exchanges, science, technology and commerce". However, the political arena and the hostility of the press have been disappointing and are being "held hostage" to the Israel Palestine conflict.⁷⁸

Jewish life has begun to stir again in Spain. The community numbers around 14000,⁷⁹ with 5000 living in Madrid and another 5000 in Barcelona. The orthodox synagogues in both cities are attended by over 100 congregants on Friday nights.

Ladino, the Spanish equivalent of Yiddish and which is also written in Hebrew characters, derives mainly from Old Castilian. Since the expulsion, it has mainly been influenced by Greek and Turkish. Ladino is in danger of extinction, as most of its speakers are elderly. Speakers include 100 000 in

Israel, 8000 in Turkey and 1000 in Greece.

More than 500 years after the expulsion of 1492, the history of Spanish Jewry is still remembered with great nostalgia, in particular by Jews of Sephardi origin. In the words of Allan Levine:

In that treasured, though admittedly selective, memory, the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry lived on, in their folklore, poetry, literature and collective imagination.⁸⁰

NOTES

- 1 Hadas, Shmuel, 'In the Shadow of Franco's Legacy: The Evolution of Israeli – Spanish Relations', *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* III:2(2009), translated by Yvette Shumacher, pp75-76
- 2 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1972, 15:220, hereafter cited as "EJ"
- 3 EJ 15:220
- 4 Borchsenius, Poul, *The Three Rings, The History of Spanish Jews*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1963, p23
- 5 Fast, Howard, *The Jews*, Cassel & Company Ltd, 1968, p182
- 6 Gilbert, Martin, *Letters to Auntie Fori*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002, pp 278-279
- 7 EJ 15: 222
- 8 Borchsenius, op cit, p41
- 9 Sachar, Howard, *Farewell Espana, The World of the Sephardim Remembered*, Vintage Books, 1994, p4
- 10 Eban, Abba, *Heritage, Civilization and the Jews*, Steinmatzky, 1984, p140
- 11 EJ 15:223
- 12 EJ 15:225
- 13 Wikipedia, 'Golden age of Jewish culture in Spain', www.wikipedia.org
- 14 Cole, Peter, *The Lost Jewish Culture, The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain, 950 – 1492*, Princeton University Press, 2007
- 15 Sachar, op cit, p12
- 16 Ibid, p14
- 17 Rabbi Berel Wein, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi tape series
- 18 EJ 10:358-360
- 19 Sachar, op cit, p16
- 20 EJ 10:363
- 21 Sachar, op cit, p17
- 22 Pollack, Louis, *No Ordinary Genius, Moses Maimonides*, Destiny Foundation, 2003, pg 8
- 23 Sachar, op cit, p25, 28
- 24 EJ 11:747
- 25 EJ 11:749
- 26 Telushkin, Rabbi Joseph, *Jewish Literacy*, William Morrow and Company Inc, 1991, p 177
- 27 EJ 15:225
- 28 Fast, op cit, p183
- 29 Sachar, op cit, pp30-1
- 30 Levine, Allan, *Scattered Among the Peoples, The Jewish Diaspora in Twelve Portraits*, The Overlook Press, 2003, p23 quoting Netanyahu
- 31 Gilbert, pp118-119
- 32 Borchsenius, op cit, p93
- 33 Sachar, op cit, p40
- 34 Maccoby, Hyam, *The Disputation, 1263*, Calder Publications, 2001
- 35 EJ 15:243
- 36 Sachar, op cit, p44
- 37 Roth, Cecil, *History of the Jewish People*, East and West Library, 1959, p238
- 38 Roth, Cecil, *The Spanish Inquisition*, W W Norton & Company, 1964, p25, hereafter cited as "Roth, Inquisition"
- 39 Netanyahu, Benzion, *The Marranos of Spain*, Cornell University Press, Third Edition, 1992, Marranos, p2, 280 (hereafter cited as "Netanyahu, Marranos")
- 40 Netanyahu, Benzion, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*, New York Review of Books, Second Edition, 2001, pp xv-xvi, hereafter cited as "Netanyahu, Inquisition"
- 41 Ibid, ppix, xxi
- 42 Netanyahu, *Marranos*, op cit, pp204-205
- 43 Aguilar, Manuel and Robertson, Ian, *Jewish Spain, A Guide*, Altalena Editors SA, 1984, p12
- 44 EJ 15:242
- 45 Roth, *The Spanish Inquisition*, op cit, 1964, p266
- 46 Ibid, p123
- 47 Ibid, p274
- 48 Ibid, p139
- 49 Ibid, p249-250
- 50 Netanyahu, *Inquisition*, op cit, pxvi
- 51 Ibid, p3
- 52 Ibid, pxxi
- 53 Ibid, pp1045, 1041
- 54 Netanyahu, *Marrano*, op cit, p4
- 55 Netanyahu, *Inquisition*, op cit, p1102
- 56 Netanyahu, *Marrano*, op cit, p245
- 57 EJ 15:241
- 58 Gilbert, op cit, p132
- 59 EJ 15:755
- 60 Interview with Rabbi William Berkowitz, Why Cecil Roth Believed Columbus was Jewish, www.algemeiner.com
- 61 Frank, Ben, *A Travel Guide to Jewish Europe*, Pelican Publishing Co., 3rd Edition, 2001, p205, quoting Cecil Roth
- 62 Borchsenius, op cit, p20
- 63 Pelaez, Jesus, *The Synagogue*, Ediciones el Almendro, 2003, p120
- 64 Jarrasse, Dominique, *Synagogues*, Vilo International, 2001, p52
- 65 Borchsenius, op cit, p20
- 66 Carmen Cavallero, Department of Semitic Studies, University of Granada
- 67 Sachar, op cit, p68
- 68 EJ 7:852
- 69 Frank, op cit, p218
- 70 Astaire, Libi, 'In the Footsteps of the Ramban', *Mishpacha*, 19 September 2007, p36
- 71 Carmen Cavallero, Department of Semitic Studies, University of Granada
- 72 Eyewitness Travel Spain, Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2007, p213
- 73 Beevor, Antony, *The Battle for Spain*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006, p96
- 74 Frank, op cit, p200
- 75 Ibid, quoting Stanley Payne, *The Franco Regime, 1936-1975*.
- 76 Preston, Paul, *Franco*, Fontana Press, 1995, p1
- 77 Hadas, op cit
- 78 Ibid, pp86-87
- 79 Frank, op cit, p201
- 80 Levine, op cit, p50

THE JEWS OF HARBIN

*

Tony Leon

The Jews of Harbin existed for only 82 of the 6000-plus years of Chinese history recorded since the advent of the Xian Dynasty founded in 2100 BCE. Yet, in many ways, like the Jewish community of South Africa, the origins of the Harbin community in Northern Manchuria – in its time the largest settled Jewish population in the Far East – drew its provenance and origins from similar arcs of history to those which are embedded into the community DNA in our own country.

Like many of our own community founders, the Harbin Jews originated from Russia, and the community's growth to nearly 20 000 in the early 1930s was also occasioned by the gloomy and brutal trajectory which explains the provenance of the South African Jewry: namely, escaping pogroms, warfare and oppression. But the ground of Northern Manchuria proved to be infertile for Jewish community longevity: by the 1930s, for example, the Japanese occupation of Manchuria and its puppet regime subjected Jews and other groups, particularly minorities, to doses of terror and oppression.

A distinguishing characteristic which differentiates the Harbin Jews from the South African branch was that the footprint in China was to prove relatively ephemeral. It lasted for barely eight decades; 1962 marked the end of the community in a formal sense and the last Jew left the precincts of Harbin in 1985.

I had the great honour in May 2008 of launching the outstanding and rich scholarly work of Richard Mendelsohn and Milton Shain, *The Jews in South Africa*. The authors record that at all times the Jews in South Africa constituted “a significant minority in terms of achievement, not numbers”. The same might be said of the much briefer sojourn of our Harbin counterparts. For example, Harbin's development as the capital of Heilung Kiang province in Northern Manchuria gained traction when construction commenced on the Chinese Eastern railway. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the chief engineer of the building board was born into a Jewish family, although one which converted to orthodox Christianity. Nor was he the only prominent transplanted citizen who lifted that small community to prominence.

The Jewish community in Harbin sharply

increased in number due to the influx of Jewish refugees during World War I and as a consequence of the Russian Revolution and subsequent Civil War. Yet, among their number, they created a Jewish national bank, modern hotels, shops, cafés, newspapers and public houses. Each of these centres of entrepreneurship was initiated by members of the Jewish community. They created cultural centres and the full paraphernalia of communal life, secular and religious. It also threw up some outsize personalities, one of whom was to spawn one of the most distinctive, and controversial, figures in modern Israeli politics.

Mordechai Olmert's great-grandfather was kidnapped as a young child by the Tsar's army, and forced to serve in it for 25 years. When finally released, he settled in the city of Samara on the River Volga, and when asked for his name gave it as Olmert (possibly remembering it in a distorted way from his childhood, since there is no trace of the original name). Mordechai Olmert himself was born in 1911. Following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the unleashing of all the antisemitic forces on both the Red and the White side, the Jews of Samara became classic scapegoats. According to the family history, it fled “what had become a madhouse” to Manchuria in North Eastern China, where they had business connections and where Jews and Russian Christian communities were emerging as part of the Russian drive towards Manchuria.

The Olmerts settled near Harbin, where from an early age the 16 year-old Mordechai was drawn to Zionist activity. As described in the family history:

Convincing a group of other young people, he established a local chapter of the Betar Youth Movement, an involvement that became the



View of Harbin Jewish cemetery (acknowledgements: www.bjreview.com.cn/.../node_18781.htm)

Tony Leon is a former Leader of the Opposition in the House of Assembly and currently serves as South African Ambassador to Argentina. This article is based on his address at the opening of the exhibition “The History and Culture Exhibition of Harbin” at the SA Jewish Museum, Cape Town, 22 March 2009.

focus of his life. There, at that time, he met his life-long partner and companion, Bella, herself a dedicated member of the Betar Movement. Betar became the dominant movement in Harbin, and Mordechai was forever proud of the fact that many Jewish members of other movements, including communists, joined Betar. Unlike many other Jews, Mordechai insisted on studying at a Chinese rather than a Russian high school. He never in his life forgot the Chinese language.

By 1930, he began his long road to Palestine and, after an extraordinarily circuitous route, arrived in Israel in 1933. For fourteen years, he and his wife Bella were active in missions for the Irgun of the Revisionist Movement. After his activities in the underground, he became a member of the Knesset and headed the Settlement Department of the Herut Movement. His son, Ehud, became the Prime Minister of the State of Israel in May 2006, serving for three, tumultuous and controversial years.

The platform on which Harbin Jewry stood proved to be much less durable than for other communities such as our own, yet, in many ways in terms of their achievements, their accomplishments and their contribution, they left behind monuments which had been preserved up to the present time: old Jewish schools, streets and houses that are still intact or which have been renovated to perfection. The legacy includes two synagogues, a rabbinical school and the largest Jewish cemetery in the Far East, in which there are 700 gravestones with Hebrew inscriptions.

But if, in fact, the Jews of Harbin were more noted for their golden past than their present or future, it is perhaps worth reflecting on the words of the masterful Russian writer Yuri Slezkine, who in his book *The Jewish Century* said the following:

The modern age is a Jewish age, and the 20th Century, in particular is the Jewish century. Modernisation is about everyone becoming urban, mobile, literate, articulate, intellectually intricate, physically fastidious and occupationally flexible. It is about pursuing wealth for the sake of learning, learning for the sake of wealth, and both wealth and learning for their own sake. It is about transforming peasants and princes into merchants and priests, replacing inherited privilege with acquired prestige, and dismantling social estates for the benefit of individuals, nuclear families and book-reading tribes (nations). Modernisation, in other words, is about everyone becoming Jewish.

Those words are worth reflecting upon, and are indeed apposite, because when you think of the history of modern China after the Jews of Harbin had left, you will see basically that nearly half a century of madness followed World War II. The brutality of the Japanese gave way to the tyranny of Chairman Mao, foreign oppression thus making way for domestic tyranny, and the results were equally calamitous. After Mao conquered China in 1949, his

secret goal was to dominate the world. In chasing a dream, he caused the deaths of 38 million people and the greatest famine in history. In all, according to the authors Jung Chang and John Halliday (*Mao, the unknown Story*, 2006) well over 70 million Chinese perished under Mao's rule – in peacetime. The enormity of one man's misrule which held China in its grip and created an entire fetish of ideology across much of the world only ended in the late 1970s, when Deng Xiao-Ping reformed China, opened its markets and kicked over the last traces of the Cultural Revolution. This put China on the path to economic modernity and growth, if not political freedom.

I do not want to overstretch the analogy between our own community and the short-lived but deeply impressive Jews of Harbin. Indeed, it was the late Abba Eban who made the point in his masterful final work, *Diplomacy for the Next Century*:

I see no role for analogy except its exclusion from serious diplomatic historiography. Some American historians have got it right: 'History smiles at all attempts to force its flow into theoretical patterns or local grooves; it plays havoc with our generalisations. It breaks all our rules. History is Baroque.'

But in the Baroque and complex history of the Harbin community, we can see many communal strands which have inspired and informed our own growth. Our challenge as a South African Jewish community is to make sure that we don't just leave historical monuments and museums for the next generation. What we must strive for is to leave a living testament of achievement, accomplishment and active citizenry to inspire the next generation of Jewish South Africans.



The former Jewish high school and old synagogue in Tongjian Street, Harbin (acknowledgements: www.bjreview.com.cn/.../node_18781.htm)

NOT FORGOTTEN

*

Irina Shub

One day, a print-out from a local newspaper appeared on my desk. One of the articles was entitled 'Lieut. Albert Isaacs' and reported on the funeral of that individual, describing him as a "victim of the Old Brompton tragedy". The funeral had taken place at the cemetery of the "Jewish Synagogue, High Street, Rochester". The article had neither a date nor the name of the newspaper in which it had appeared. My professional curiosity was aroused – I was at the time collecting material on the Jewish community in Medway, which includes Rochester. Thus began the unravelling of this intriguing story.

One clue to the period when the article was published was the name of the Rabbi officiating at the funeral, Rev. Fenton. He was the resident rabbi in the area in the years 1903-1919. Further, the presence of the Middlesex Regiment at the funeral pointed to the 1914-1918 period, when the Medway Towns served as a base for various regiments during the Great War. However, Lieutenant Isaacs wasn't mentioned in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database for casualties, nor did he have a Medal Index card (National Archives website); he was not commemorated in the *Roll of Honour* in the *British Jewry Book of Honour*,¹ nor was he mentioned in the list of officers who died in the Great War (HMSO 1917). Indeed, his name seemed to have been obliterated from most of the primary sources of the Great War, and my visit to the National Archives likewise produced a negative result - there seems to be no information on Isaacs' war records.

Notwithstanding this I was, in conjunction with Martin Sugarman, Harold Pollins and Saul Issroff,² able to piece the story, a sad one of an intelligent man who was eager to help the country yet ultimately felt only a deep sense of hurt and rejection. This feeling played so much on his mind that the only way he saw of redeeming himself was to sacrifice his life, ending it with his own hands by shooting himself. The purpose of this article is to commemorate Lt. Albert Isaacs, whose name and life have been forgotten for 90 years despite his having served in several British military campaigns and becoming, in a very real sense, a victim of the Great War.

The death certificate disclosed that Albert Isaacs, 37 years old, from the 5th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment, died on 2 September 1917. A burial register for the Jewish cemetery states that his burial, attended by his relatives, members of the Middlesex

Regiment and several South African officers, took place on 6 September. There is no extant headstone on Isaacs' grave in the synagogue cemetery.

I checked the local newspapers, and found that the *Chatham Observer* and *Chatham News* featured a full report, both dated 8 September, of the inquest into the death of the Lieutenant.

Albert Isaacs was born in 1880 to Pauline, 27, a German national, and Samuel Isaacs. The family lived in the agricultural town of Vryburg, situated in the North West Province of South Africa halfway between Kimberley (now capital of the Northern Province) and Mafikeng (capital of the North West Province). There was no Jewish community in Vryburg at the time, so in order to perform a circumcision according to Jewish custom, the family would either have travelled to Kimberley or brought out a *mohel* to Vryburg. Unfortunately, Pauline died the following year when Albert was just a year old. His father soon remarried, and the boy was brought up in the Jewish tradition by his father and step-mother. Later, Albert became a member of the Johannesburg Stock exchange, and went on to become their chief book-keeper. As a young man, he took part in the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, both the South African and British governments were aware of the importance of South Africa's border with adjoining German South West Africa, and accordingly decided to invade that territory. The invasion was delayed, however, as there was a considerable degree of sympathy for the German cause among the Afrikaner population due to German support for their national independence during the 1899-1902 war. Lieutenant-Colonel Manie Maritz, together with several other high ranking officers, rapidly raised about 12000 rebels ready to fight for a "Free and Independent South Africa, free from British control". The government, under the command of Generals Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, declared martial law in October 1914 and the rebellion was successfully suppressed by early 1915.

In January 1915, several forces were raised and made ready to attack German South-West Africa. The Eastern Force, under the command of Col. Berrange, was concentrated in Vryburg. Isaacs joined one of its units, Cullinan's Horse.³ It is unclear whether he joined as a lieutenant, or subsequently gained promotion to that rank. He participated in the invasion of South West Africa. It was intended that Cullinan's Horse surprise the Germans by advancing from the east, setting out from Vryburg, crossing the

Irina Shub is Local Studies Librarian at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, England.

Kalahari Desert and advancing through Rietfontein on the way up through Keetmanshoop and Windhuk to Luderitz.

According to the memoirs of one of the soldiers who took part in this operation, the physical conditions of the troops were challenging. The heat during most hours of the day was well nigh unbearable, while water supplies were scarce:

“...a wash is a luxury, and washing clothes an impossibility. . . . Another trying thing is fine sand and dust. The hot wind that blows from about noon till 7 or 8 sends it in clouds so thick that tents only 20 or 30 yards away are blotted out of sight. This sand gets into the tents and smothers everything, including the food and water. . . . During the afternoon winds the dirt gets caked thick on you, and anyone with an ounce or two of water left for a wash is considered a lucky dog. We’re quite in a desert, and as far as one can see right to the distant hills, there is nothing but sand and stones.”

The South West Africa operation ended on 9 July 1915 with the capitulation of the last commander of the *Schutztruppe*, Lieutenant-Colonel Erich Franke. It was the only campaign in the First World War that which was entirely planned, executed and successfully completed by a British dominion.

During the action, Isaacs established himself as a translator, having cooperated with the Intelligence Staff, and rendered most valuable assistance, using his first language to translate captured German papers into English. In 1917, he applied to the War Office for a position as an interpreter, and was commissioned to join the army with the rank of Lieutenant.

According to the *Supplement to the London Gazette* for 27 August 1917 and the *Army List for September 1917*, Lt. Albert Isaacs, together with a group of another six officers from the South African Defence Force, joined the 12th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment on 24 June 1917.⁴ Isaacs arrived to England on 27 July, and was drafted into the regiment on 23 August. On a temporary basis, he was attached to the 5th Reserve Battalion of the same regiment, which was stationed in Gillingham, one of the Medway Towns in Kent.

At the beginning of the war, the Middlesex Regiment was stationed in the Barnsole Road School, but very soon compulsory billeting was introduced, and the men were distributed among the local population. Members of the regiment were billeted in the same neighbourhood, so that each morning after breakfast they could assemble for drills in the nearby streets.

During those last days of August Isaacs took drills, which he found awful. He attended two or three interviews in London, but was turned down due (in his own mind at least, and perhaps in fact) to his family origins. The war created many local spy scares, and Medway was known for its important naval and military bases. Quite frequently, those scares involved innocent people, whose foreign-

sounding names or known foreign descent put them under suspicion. Isaacs clearly fell within the second category: his mother was German, and he spoke German better than he did English.

Isaacs brooded over his rejections. He tried to resolve the situation by speaking to one of the training instructors of the officer’s class, stating that he felt himself to be in a false position since, despite being an interpreter and knowing German so well, he was repeatedly being turned down because of his German mother. He further pointed out that he knew nothing about infantry work, feeling himself to be more inefficient in this area than even the rawest recruit.

Isaacs was then offered a job as a miner, listening out for German miners and tunnellers in the trenches, but that position did not attract him since he wanted to be an interpreter. The instructor suggested persevering, which did not ease the situation. Every day, Isaacs became more and more agitated and complained frequently about not being able to get away from infantry life. The army clearly wasn’t interested in utilising his best skills. On 1 September he wrote several letters, which he stamped but did not post. In one, addressed to his father, he wrote that things “turned out so differently to my expectations”.

At 13h45 on Sunday, 2 September, Isaacs arrived at the Queen’s Head Hotel for his lunch. It was his third visit to the hotel - their cooking was definitely better than in many other places. He quickly had his meal and left before 14h30. At 18h30, he returned for his dinner. In the bar, he had half a bitter and dry ginger and then proceeded to a private room, where he ate his meal in solitude while reading. At five minutes to nine Isaacs asked the manageress of the Hotel whether he could have a wash and was shown to the bathroom on the first floor.

To everyone who saw Isaacs that evening, he seemed normal, though rather quiet. It was not evident that under this pretended calmness he was suffering deeply from immense stress and a combination of turbulent emotions: frustration at being rejected and wasted in the army, a sense of hurt at the perception that he was under suspicion on account of his German background and language skills, his detestation of infantry work and a general sense of total helplessness in the situation in which he found himself. Unable to find a solution to his predicament, Isaacs fired three shots into his chest through an opening in the front of his tunic. The time was 21h30. He was found, still conscious, by an officer from a neighbouring regiment. As the latter rushed out to call for a doctor, yet another black thought might have descended upon Isaacs – that he was a failure, incapable even of killing himself. The officer had not seen the revolver, and Isaacs fired two more shots through the same wound. The death certificate states the cause of death as “shooting himself during temporary insanity”; the inquest verdict was “suicide during temporary insanity”.

I was unable to find any statistical data on cases like this among soldiers in general and among Jewish soldiers in particular. The reason is that according to the Army Act 1881, s38, an attempt to commit

suicide was regarded as a criminal act. As a result, suicides were covered up by the officials – the deceased were declared “temporarily insane”, thus automatically excluded them from official, mainstream statistics. An interesting fact is that records of this and similar cases did not survive. Were they destroyed deliberately or did it just happen that way? Whatever the reason, these cases need special attention – people do not take their lives on a casual whim.

From my research into two such stories, the people concerned endured intense stress and personal trauma, to the extent that suicide appeared to be the only way out. We celebrate heroes and remember them, but forget those unusual victims whom circumstances drove to take their own lives and who hence were also casualties of the war. They, too, should be remembered.

I am very pleased that we can claim to have at last obtained closure in one more case – that of Lt. Albert Isaacs. 2008 saw the commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Armistice that ended the Great War, and on 19 May that year, I received an e-mail from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission advising that Isaacs had been added to the list of Great War casualties. In the cemetery of the Chatham Memorial Synagogue, Rochester, Kent, a new headstone will be erected over his grave.

Bibliography

- 1 In the *British Jewry Book of Honour* list of those who served in the Middlesex Regiment is a mention of Lt. A. Isaacs, as a survivor. It is impossible to establish conclusively whether this is the same person.
- 2 This article would have not been written without the indispensable help of Martin Sugarman, Archivist of Jewish Military Museum of AJEX; Dr. Saul Issroff, Hon. Vice President of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Great Britain, and Harold Pollins, retired Senior Tutor of Ruskin College, Oxford.
- 3 This unit was originally raised on 8 January 1901 during the Anglo-Boer War, with the authority of the military Governor Lord Methuen. It was employed in the Warrenton-Vryburg-Kuruman district and in the south-western Transvaal during the last 16 months of the war. The unit saw much hard work and a lot of fighting. It is quite possible that Isaacs served with this unit during his service in the Boer War as well, as it was active in the area of his native town of Vryburg.
- 4 12th (Service) Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment was formed in Mill Hill, London in August 1914 as part of the Second Kitchener's army. In September 1914 it was attached to the 54th Brigade of the 18th Eastern Division, which served on the Western Front from spring 1915, taking part in most of the significant actions in France. In total, the Division suffered more than 46,500 casualties during the Great War, of whom 13,727 died. The 12th Battalion was disbanded in France on 13 February 1918.



Brompton street scene, circa. 1900

CHANUKAH - THE ANSWER TO ESKOM

*

Wolfy Matz

Chanukah, commonly known as the Festival of Lights, instead of being a once a year event could be the answer to Eskom's power outages. With the price of electricity soaring ever higher, candles are the solution. Instead of only the eight day festival, candles will be used more and more throughout the year. Not really great to read by, but certainly, if you are that way inclined, romantic.

I bought one of those rechargeable four-hour lamps. It lit up for three and a half hours the first time I tested it, but the second time, it only managed an hour. We therefore used candles to light up the rooms we were using, and used the lamp when we needed it, to read by or do something important. Luckily we didn't need it for a third time, as by that then Eskom had announced a price hike, and the outages ceased.

So, during power outages, when we light our candles, we will remember Chanukah, the Festival of Lights.

What I like most about Chanukah is the tradition of eating fried foods, namely latkes. Those delicious potato pancakes. I adore latkes. It really gives my cholesterol a boost. I mean, what's the use of taking all those cholesterol tablets if you don't give them something to work on?

I was invited during one Chanukah to have dinner at my Aunt Rochelle's house. Present were my Uncle Harold, their daughter Valerie and her new boyfriend Philip, who was meeting her family for the first time. Philip seemed a bit shy, but quite pleasant. Came the end of the meal, a plate of latkes was presented to me. I speared one with my fork and took a bite.

"Careful," warned my aunt. "They're a bit hot." Her warning came too late. Eating a piece of hot coal can best describe the sensation I felt as I clamped down on the latke. Throwing discretion and good manners out of the window, I discharged the piece of latke from my mouth with a speed that would have made a Ferrari driver green with envy.

Unfortunately, the latke piece flew with unerring accuracy into a cup of tea in front of Philip. The shock of seeing the latke plummeting into his teacup, caused Philip and his chair to fall backwards, where the back of Philip's head made an unwelcome contact with a hard parquet floor.

"Help me get him to the couch," shouted my uncle. We lifted Philip up and carried him to the couch, where we laid him down gently. My aunt quickly made a cold compress which she gently

placed on the back of his head where a large lump was rising.

"Gevalt," whispered my aunt in an aside to my uncle. "What a terrible thing to happen on his first visit. What will he think of us?"

"Don't worry," said my uncle. "I'll talk to him. I'll smooth things over." He walked over to the couch and sat down next to Philip.

Solicitously he asked, "Are you comfortable?"

"Well," answered Philip. "I make a living."

with compliments

Tel: (011) 417 6600

Fax: (011) 622-5561

Prestige



Noritake

WITH COMPLIMENTS FROM



PROTEA DIAMONDS
(Pty) Ltd.

3rd Floor
West Tower
27 Ridge Road
Parktown, 2193
South Africa

P.O. Box 2415
Houghton, 2041
Tel: 484-7205
Fax: 484-3055

e-mail: prodiam@global.co.za

Wolfy Matz is a veteran writer of humorous columns for South African Jewish publications.



THE QUEST FOR COMMUNITY

*

David Saks

How exactly does an organised Jewish community – that is, one whose members are served by and brought together under formal communal institutions – come into being? Those born into a society where such institutions are already in place can all too easily take it for granted that Jewish communal needs – be these religious, welfare, cultural, educational, Zionist or civil rights-related – have always been and will always be automatically catered for. Forgotten is the visionary work of those who pioneered such institutions at a time when literally nothing existed. Also disregarded are the formidable obstacles, which very much included the intra-communal controversies that continually occurred, that militated against the growth, and even survival, of those institutions.

Rabbi Dr. Gerald Mazabow's latest book, *The Quest for Community: A Short History of Jewish Communal Institutions in South Africa, 1841-1939*, is a scholarly exploration of the origin and evolution of South African Jewry's impressive communal infrastructure, from the earliest times to just before World War II. For many people, such a subject might be off-putting, and that is understandable. Institutional histories, after all, tend to be dire affairs – dry, self-congratulatory, careful to play down or omit altogether controversy and dreadfully inclusive of everyone who made a moderate contribution (so as to avoid fariebels and probably also to ensure that at least some people will purchase, if perhaps not actually read, the book). However, *The Quest for Community* is of a very different order.

As a respected scholar with a lifetime of experience of working within local Jewish communal structures, Rabbi Mazabow is well positioned to bring alive the warts-and-all internal dynamics that characterised the establishment, evolution of and sometimes eventual demise of the organisations most Jews now take for granted. One soon realises from reading his account that there was nothing at all inevitable about the emergence of such important bodies as the Union of Orthodox Synagogues, SA Jewish Board of Deputies, Chevra Kadisha, SA

Zionist Federation and SA Board of Jewish Education, to name just a few. It also becomes apparent that the story of how the Jewish communal infrastructure unfolded was not an uninterrupted linear progression from small achievements to large ones; there were many false starts, failures and disappointments as well. Progress towards creating such crucial bodies as a central, authoritative Beth Din for both Johannesburg and Cape Town was slow, often painfully so.

As we now know from other more recent work's dealing with the community's history, the traditional view of SA Jewry as being a predominantly of Lithuanian origin, deeply Zionist and religiously tradition (if not usually strictly Orthodox) is an oversimplification. There were other constituencies who came from other backgrounds and saw things differently. These controversies, almost entirely omitted from the earlier historical accounts, are conscientiously addressed by the author.

When, for example, large numbers of East European Jews began arriving towards the end of the 19th Century, the Anglo-Jewish establishment was decidedly underwhelmed. Themselves comfortably assimilated, generally well heeled economically and accepted amongst their gentile peers, they had little in common with the Yiddish-speaking, impoverished, more religious and ardently Zionist newcomers. The latter, for their part, were scornful of the assimilationist pretensions of the Anglo-Jews, in particular their watered down practice of Judaism that made them appear to be little more than Anglicans of the Mosaic persuasion.

Remarkably, the bonds of Jewish peoplehood proved strong enough to bring about a synthesis of these two very different constituencies (vide Gus Saron's well-known aphorism that South African Judaism was the result of pouring Litvak wine into Anglo-Jewish bottles). Taken as a whole, South African Jews have achieved a remarkable degree of unity, in fact, this despite the often sharp ideological differences that threatened at various times to bring about fragmentation.

Various communal organisation, since regarded as more or less indispensable, were initially strongly opposed in certain influential quarters when their

David Saks is Associate Director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies and Editor of Jewish Affairs.

establishment was first mooted. Thus, the SA Zionist Federation was at first largely hostile to the creation of a Jewish Board of Deputies, seeing it as a deviation from the community's Zionist mission and a potential threat to its own hegemony. Within the nascent Jewish education movement, considerable tensions existed between proponents of Zionist and religious education (in time resulting in a compromise encapsulated by the official "National-Traditional" ethos that governs the King David and Herzlia school systems to this day).

The author accords ample space to allow the role players from those days to speak for themselves. From the direct quotations he has culled from a wide array of original sources, one gets a vivid sense of the burning issues of the day and the different approaches suggested for addressing them.

While officially commencing its narrative in 1841, the year when the country's first Jewish institution, the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, was launched, the book also includes an interesting preliminary section sketching the Jewish presence in the country prior to that date. We learn that the establishment of a Sephardi Jewish presence was not necessarily prevented because of the official Dutch

East India Company policy of religious discrimination against non-Calvinists maintained in the Cape. These might have been overcome, as happened in the then New Amsterdam (New York) across the ocean, had the influential and prosperous Sephardi community in the Netherlands desired it. Rather, it was a reluctance to relocate to what was little more than a colonial backwater that delayed the establishment of an organised Jewish community for nearly two centuries.

The Quest for Community delves thoughtfully and with commendable thoroughness into the intricacies of community building that went hand in hand with creating the Jewish South Africa we have inherited. As such, it is a valuable contribution to Jewish historical research that fills in many significant gaps in our understanding of SA Jewry's origins and development.

The Quest for Community: A Short History of Jewish Communal Institutions in South Africa, 1841-1939 by Gerald Mazabow, 2008, ISBN 978-0-620-40124-1, 213pp, index, photographs. Copies are available from the author through Mrs. G. Mazabow at the Kollel Library, 011 728 1308/ info@kollel.org.za

HOW THE JEWISH PEOPLE CAN WIN A WAR THAT MAY NEVER END

*

Gary Selikow

In this pivotal contribution to the discussion about Israel's fight for survival and about that country's essential nature, Daniel Gordis takes the bull by the horns, grappling both with the seemingly insurmountable challenges facing Israel today as well as how Israel can win what seems to be an unwinnable struggle.

In essence, Gordis argues, Israel needs to rediscover its Jewish roots and values while reconnecting faith with nationhood.

The last decade has made it painfully clear that "Palestinian nationalism" has no interest in working towards statehood and a better life for the Palestinian people but is aimed solely at the destruction of Israel. This glaring reality destroys the illusion that territorial compromise can bring the conflict to an end. The issue is not achieving Palestinian statehood but the continuation of Israeli statehood.

Gordis points out that the so-called 'Intifada' of 2000-2005 was not at all a "popular uprising" that the international media had fooled the world into believing but rather a terror war launched and directed by terror chief Yasser Arafat and the PLO leadership

in opposition to Israel's very right to exist. (These realities can be further explored in such excellent works as *Right to Exist* by Yaakov Lozowick, *Myths and Facts* by Mitchell Geoffrey Bard, *History upside Down* by David Meir-Levi, *The Rape of Palestine* by Lionel Casper and *Israel: Life in the Shadow of Terror* by Rabbis Shraga Simmons and Nehemiah Coopersmith).

Every time Israel withdraws from land, this has the polar opposite result to the peace it is intended as bringing about. Israel's Arab enemies see this as a sign of weakness and respond with further aggression. Thus, the comprehensive peace offer by Ehud Barak of Judea, Samaria, Gaza and East Jerusalem at Camp David in mid-2000 resulted in the 2000-2005 Palestinian terror war. Likewise, that year's withdrawal from Southern Lebanon led not to peace but raids and continual missile fire into Israel. The 2005 withdrawal from Gaza, accompanied by the forced removal of Gaza's 8 000 Jewish residents, led to the election of the extremist Hamas movement, the pounding of Israel by thousands of Kassam rockets and the killing or kidnapping of Israeli soldiers in cross-border raids. Israel was finally forced to retaliate, through the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War and the 2008-2009 war against Hamas.

Israel has become the victim of venomous, and

Gary Selikow is a researcher and media activist. His reviews of books of Jewish and Middle East interest appear regularly online and elsewhere.

bottomless, hatred the world over, which has been compounded by its abandonment by many Diaspora Jews. A recent survey revealed that a full 50% of American Jews under the age of 35 said that they would *not* regard Israel's destruction (and the accompanying annihilation of its Jewish population) as a personal tragedy.

Added to this must be the overwhelming support of American Jews for Barack Obama, whose attitude to the Jewish state verges on open hostility and who is exerting relentless pressure on Israel to act against her own interests. This goes hand in hand with a determination to ingratiate the USA with the Islamic world, including its most radical elements, such as Iran and Syria. This is already leading the world (including the Obama administration) to refuse to take action to prevent Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons, even in the face of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's stated intention to "wipe Israel off the map".

The denial of Israel's right to exist, not only by Islamic extremists, but also by a myriad of left-wing opinion makers such as Tony Judt and Noam Chomsky, puts the existence of Israel in very real danger. This is because delegitimization and demonization paves the way for physical annihilation, as the Holocaust testifies.

Gordis examines the injustice of the bizarre questioning of Israel's right to exist:

Through the years of this gradual but relentless examining of Israel's right to exist, it has never been lost on Israelis that the only country subjected to this question in respectable circles was Israel. North Korea, in violation of widespread international demands, attained and tested a nuclear weapon. There is strong evidence of widespread human rights violations in North Korea and it is well known that it starves its own population, but no one has suggested even for a minute that North Korea ought to be dismembered.

When Russia committed genocide against the Chechnyans, no one raised the issue of Russia's right to exist. When Turkey denies the genocide against Armenians, no one asks whether Turkey should be dismantled. When China threatens to overrun Taiwan, or puts down the Tiananmen Square uprisings, the only questions raised are how to respond. Nor did the Chinese repression of Tibet, repeated again in 2008, arouse calls for China's dismantling. The question of whether China, or Argentina under Peron, or Cuba under Castro, or Iran under Ahmadinejad, has a right to exist is never raised".

Many Diaspora Jews (and even some Israelis) are comfortable with the idea of Jews as defenceless victims, rather than as a strong nation ready to fight back whenever the need may arise. Gordis puts forward the premise that for Israel to survive its people need to rebuild their will to survive. Secular

Jews must rebuild some kind of connection to their faith and traditions, and religious Jews to the Nation of Israel as a whole.

Jewish and Zionist values must be imbibed and Jews need to realize that warfare in defence of survival of the Jewish people is not in contradiction to Jewish values but rather a necessity according to those very values, given that the alternative would mean national suicide and a second Holocaust.

Israel is the embodiment of the Jewish people's survival, recovery, identity and future. Jews in Israel and the Diaspora need to embrace this and rediscover a sense of people-hood for Israel and world Jewry to survive. Israel cannot simply be the recreation of a mini-America, but must be governed according to Jewish norms and values. This could have been explored further by the author.

During the 1960s and 1970s, no child in Israel went hungry or without shoes. Binyamin Netanyahu's dismantling of Israel's welfare state, in an effort to imitate a US-style laissez faire economy, has widened the gap between rich and poor and created much poverty in Israeli society. What Israel needs is not a Thatcherite free market economy but a social market economy that combines the best of Jewish innovation and entrepreneurship combined with Torah precepts of social justice and kindness.

This book is vital reading for all concerned about Jewish survival, which can *never* be divorced from the survival of Israel.

How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End by Daniel Gordis, Wiley, 2009, 272pp

JEWISH AFFAIRS

**AFRICA'S ONLY
JEWISH CULTURAL
JOURNAL
MAKES A
WONDERFUL GIFT
FOR ALL OCCASIONS.**

**WHY NOT TAKE OUT
A GIFT
SUBSCRIPTION?**

new
POETRY

The interned Intern in SA
(or, Why are there so many SA doctors in Australia?)

Its 4 am in the morning
the sun peeps up behind the towers,
Soweto slowly stirs,
The police dogs circle in their *hokkies*
anticipating the day ahead.
The lights go on in Hospital kitchens,
the night matron ticks off the dead.
The van draws up inside the morgue,
unloads the bodies wrapped in linen,
Attendants place them on the slabs;
the beaten women and burned children.
The intern falls asleep at last,
(on the desk he lays his head;
puts his pager on the table)
falls asleep to meet his dead.
Pizza boxes in the doctor's room
No-one left inside to mourn,
She takes another cigarette out,
and walks outside to greet the dawn.
The waiting room is empty now,
except for fear still sitting there,
it sticks like blood to the door handles
encompassing each plastic chair.
In Alex clinic, the 'squeezer' cleans out the
sluice room.
The unborn babies are in their bags,
the lab staff will soon collect them,
no names appear on their name tags.
Someone unlocks the doors to theatre,
puts new scrub suits on the floor,
'finds' a phone to fill his pocket,
he couldn't really ask for more.
Doctor forgets to use the local,
the patient screams aloud in pain,
It doesn't really seem to matter,
another chest, another drain

In triumph, I 'tubed' the ambulance patient,
I thought I'd bring him back from dead,
I bagged, then lifted up his torso,
to find him missing half his head.
On the 6th floor up in Hillbrow,
her baby's fast asleep at last.
She had hoped this one would be different,
could maybe take her from her past.
The paper rustles in the window,
doesn't keep away the cold
the nurse will visit in the morning
"Feed him better" she'll be told.
A wrapped-up ice-cream from a brother,
the prostates cells have spread to bone,
the ward-round skips his bed this morning;
no-one's left to write to, no-one's left to phone.
The shots rang out outside the Res,
when they shot him, and drove away,
We rushed him back to meet his friends,
please let him live; let his soul stay.
But God was out, and though we tried,
it was no use: The doctor died.
Another doctor killed that year
No place was safe, no place to hide.
She's young and sits still on my bench,
Occasionally she sobs and cries
He raped her, then cut out her eyes.
For twenty years these thoughts have festered,
like a cancer in my mind.
In freezing London and windy Melbourne
I cannot leave my past behind.

Lewis Levitz

Illumination

A Viennese picture
 In a Tel Aviv museum.
 A sunset scene
 Of human beings
 Who once lived there
 Its golden paint
 Drizzles light.
 Men in raincoats
 Cross the street
 Where tarmac yellows
 Reflect the glow
 Of lamps above
 An electric tram
 Turns and stops
 At lit up shops
 The painting's glow
 Haunts the images
 At the museum show
 The Reich's collection
 Of confiscated art
 Portraying the taste
 And times of Rathenau
 Where was its home?
 Who was the owner?
 What was his name?
 No data remains.
 Yet its lightening
 Flashes in the rain.
 The downpour
 Men scurrying
 Into night.
 A dazzling city
 Dotted with light.

*Ben Krengel***Crossing Louis Botha Avenue**

I walk among the blacks
 across Louis Botha Avenue.
 Once I saw a vagabond
 lying, stoned.
 I passed a hungry beggar
 with apathetic eyes,
 Troupes of home-bound teenagers
 singing lustily.
 I've done all this a dozen times
 and haven't once
 been followed, mugged, murdered, shot at,
 groped, beaten, knifed, coshed, raped.
 In fact, the worst I've had
 are horrified looks
 from Jews driving past
 in their safely locked cars.

Tamar

**Thank you to all
 advertisers who
 identified themselves
 with this
 Chanukah Issue**

The **only** foreign affairs journal
coming to you **directly** from Jerusalem



Published by the Israel Council on Foreign Relations
icfr@wjc.co.il



THIS CHANUKAH INVEST IN OIL!

Wishing all our clients, staff and loved ones
a happy Chanukah

0861-sasfin(727346) • info@sasfin.com • www.sasfin.com

sasfin
UNLIMITED FINANCIAL HORIZONS