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# JEWISH AFFAIRS

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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.

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# JEWISH AFFAIRS

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Editor: David Saks

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# OBITUARY



## HAROLD RUDOLPH

\*

Suzanne Belling

Harold Rudolph, who passed away in Johannesburg on 16 November at the age of 64, rubbed shoulders with kings and world leaders. He had honours bestowed on him before and after he became mayor during Johannesburg's centenary in 1986. At the age of 38, he was the youngest ever first citizen of the city. Despite this, he remained a 'mensch' – the most frequent description of Alderman Professor Harold Rudolph by his family, friends and those who worked with him in the civic, legal, academic and communal sphere.

Although beset by Parkinson's disease in his final years, Harold and his wife, Reva, were about to fulfil their dream of aliyah and were packing their lift to complete the process when he had a tragic fall after which he suffered a brain haemorrhage. He passed away on November 16, and was buried in Ra'anana, Israel, where he was to have made his home, two days later.

Harold was fond of recalling that he and Reva attended approximately 1400 functions and that he delivered 800 speeches during his term as mayor. On completion of his mayoral term, he turned down the offer of a diplomatic post in the United States from the Department of Foreign

Affairs with terms allowing him, as a member of an opposition party, complete freedom of speech and the right to criticise apartheid. Tempting though the offer was, he eventually turned it down for family reasons. As he told me in an interview last year, "I realised that my family came first and their lives were paramount in my decision to turn down the offer. I know our children would always be my top priority – and now, with the grandchildren, they still are and always will be".

Harold was first elected to the City Council in March 1972, at a time coinciding with his admission as an attorney and his upcoming wedding. "We had originally planned a February wedding but my election campaign took over. Instead of Reva becoming my bride, she became my election agent, with the help of Annette Schwarz, wife of the late MP Harry Schwarz ("as he had been my friend and mentor," he said at the time). His mayoral theme was "Together the Future", in which he declared in a statement still pertinent today:

I believe that if there is one single precious commodity that we are in dire need of at this important time, it is the commodity of togetherness, friendship, trust and tolerance...

It is so true to say, especially in the South African context, that united together in a common love of our country and of all our people we will stand – divided in bitterness and hatred, we shall fall.

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*Suzanne Belling is a veteran editor, journalist and Jewish communal professional and a member of the editorial board of Jewish Affairs. She is a past editor of the Johannesburg Jewish Voice and the SA Jewish Report and former executive director of the Cape Council, SA Jewish Board of Deputies.*



Harold's mayoral year saw many highlights - being invited to Taiwan on a reciprocal visit by the mayor of Taipei and attending the inauguration of King Mswati III as King of Swaziland, where he and his wife were given a VIP welcome and enjoyed traditional Swazi hospitality.

Two years later, Harold was asked by the Israeli authorities to lead the first SA delegation to participate in the March of the Living in Poland, an experience he related frequently and one he said he would never forget. The Rudolphs subsequently went to Lithuania to research their roots.

Harold was elected as a Johannesburg city councillor for several terms, serving a total of 22 years and nine months on the Council. He was awarded the title of Alderman in 1987.

Born in Johannesburg, he matriculated from Roosevelt High and received his BA, LLB and LLM degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand.

In 1984 he was appointed Associate Professor at Wits Law School. This followed on his previous year's sabbatical with his family in Israel, where he did research for his thesis, published as a book, *Security, Terrorism and Torture* - a comparative legal analysis of the rights of political detainees in SA, Northern Ireland and Israel. Later, he was also presented with an award for writing the first legislation for the control of smoking in the former Bophuthatswana.

Harold was also well-known in Jewish

communal affairs, having served on the SA Jewish Board of Deputies for 12 years, including as chairman of the then Transvaal Council, as a national vice-chairman and country communities chairman. He was on the editorial boards of *Jewish Affairs* and the former *Johannesburg Jewish Voice*, of which he was vice-chairman and acting chairman. He always upheld the values of independent journalism and abhorred self-censorship.

In 1993, he chaired the Board of Governors of Southern Africa's first Jewish television channel, dubbing the initiative "a statement of our confidence in the future" and "a message of hope".

He lived for many years in Emmarentia and, as a devout Jew, served on the council of the Emmarentia Hebrew Congregation, including a term as chairman.

In his mid-fifties, Harold survived a heart attack. He said at the time: "As I was lying in hospital, I thought of Elton John's song at Princess Diana's funeral - *Candle in the Wind* - and that life could be snuffed out in a few seconds. I prayed to Hashem to spare me as I hadn't finished what I had set out to do and still had so much to give. I realised the fragility of life and resolved to live it to the full." This he did every day, in spite of his debilitating illness.

In recent years he ran a small legal practice - Harold Rudolph and Associates - from his home in Athol and had business interests in Fochville, North West Province.

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# UTOPIA, THE LIBERAL LEFT AND ISRAEL

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Chuck Volpe

## Introduction

The political Left is a broad church, so it follows that any discussion of its views and tendencies apply to some of its constituent groups and not to others. The groups to which I will be referring are those on the political Left who, in their support for the Palestinian cause, seek to delegitimise Israel. While they represent a mere sub-group of the Left, they are nevertheless a product of its history, its thought processes, and in particular, its quasi-religious utopian sentiments.

My argument in this paper will follow a fairly circuitous route, beginning with utopian thinking and its dangers and how these unfold in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I will touch on the contradictions inherent in Leftist policy today and on why the Jewish anti-Zionist contributes, sometimes unwittingly, to the campaign to delegitimise Israel. Finally, I will suggest that Jewish history provides the one reliable guide to the future. Throughout I will use this terms Left, Liberal Left, and Leftist interchangeably.

## Contradictions

While their roots lie in conceptions of social democracy and justice, it is evident that for some time the political Left have been in the grip of an identity crisis. During the Cold War, they never seemed to know whose side they were on and now that it is over, they are once again identifying with causes which seem directly opposed to their core values and principles. This is especially evident in their support for Hamas and Hezbollah, two openly totalitarian movements with blatantly antisemitic programmes. In fact, they go beyond just playing the role of fellow-traveller in the manner of those who once supported the Soviet Union; they actively pursue a programme to delegitimise the Jewish state in the West by means similar to those used to delegitimise Jews in the 1930s. It takes only a short excursion into socialist

history to reveal that the contradictions inherent in the present-day Leftist position have their precedents in earlier times.

The Left are the heirs to the socialist tradition, whose values probably go back to Moses, but which in more recent times were forged in the French Revolution and developed to maturity by Marx, Lenin and others. For 200 years, the socialist idea was the focus of man's brightest hopes and the inspiration to large segments of mankind. Its promise was an imagined "brotherhood of man" that would bring about an end to human strife and give Man the freedom to become his perfect natural self.

In the end, all these hopes came to nothing and left in their wake a trail of destruction so great it is almost impossible to measure: in the Soviet Union and Communist China alone, one hundred million dead and millions more buried in despondency and poverty. In the process, whole cultures were desecrated, civilisations destroyed and generations deprived of the barest essentials of a tolerable life.

One might imagine that such wretched failure would have consigned the socialist dream directly to the dustbin of history, but this is not the case. Despite all the evidence of failure after failure, there is still no shortage of recruits willing to man the barricades in support of this elusive utopia. Today, these groups include trade unionists, pacifists, Christian humanitarians, anti-globalists, anti-capitalists, human rights activists, gay and lesbian groups, environmentalists, sections of the Leftist press, humanities departments in academia, and other groups calling themselves 'progressive'.

Even if it were the case that the majority in these groups had never studied socialist history, they still could not plead ignorance of its disastrous outcomes, for this is widely known. Furthermore, it is clear that the socialist idea - that the end justifies the means or the future promise justifies present sacrifice - has for too long functioned as a blank check for appalling violence and injustice. Even if the original intentions of the movement may have been just and noble, historical hindsight imposes on us a moral obligation to condemn the socialist project, not only in its outcome but in its conception as well. One wonders whether it is the Left's wish to sidestep this obligation that has resulted in its present warped thinking and self-deception.

An example of such thinking was evident

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*Chuck Volpe is a Port Elizabeth-based businessman and Jewish communal leader. He is currently chairman of the Eastern Cape Council of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. This article is based on his paper delivered at the 2011 Johannesburg Limmud conference.*

when Leftists in Europe marched alongside Islamists in Gaza in support of Hamas during Operation Cast Lead. Banners reading “Gays and lesbians for a free Palestine” and “Pacifists for Peace” were seen alongside banners showing the Star of David intertwined with the swastika. Now we all know that Hamas is the elected government of the Palestinians and we also know that human rights are not their strong suit, especially when it comes to the rights of women and gays. In addition to being impeccable religious bigots, their well-publicised Charter enjoins them to re-establish the Islamic caliphate by violent means.

The question is: How can Liberal Leftists who in the past campaigned for the rights of women, homosexuals and ethnic minorities and promoted secularism and pacifism, make common cause with theocratic fascists? How gays and lesbians explain this to themselves is a mystery.

Furthermore, by pointing out human rights abuses committed by Israel while overlooking far more egregious abuses committed by Hamas and the Palestinians, the Left display a double standard which immediately raises a question mark alongside their commitment to justice and other social values. They have only to consult the Freedom House 2010 report - a report which rates human rights abuses around the world - to see that Israel is the only country in the Middle East deemed to be free and that quite a number of Arab countries appear on the Freedom House ‘Worst of the Worst’ list.

How have the Left got themselves into this mess?

### **Hope - a double edged sword**

If anyone believes that human beings can’t act irrationally, not just individually but collectively, they should read *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* by Charles Mackay. Mackay lists some of the most extraordinary instances of mass lunacy in history; for instance, the tulip craze in Holland in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, when a rush on tulips pushed the price higher than gold; and the South Sea Bubble, when investors managed to convince themselves they were going to make hundreds of millions and in the end lost everything. The tale of Shabtai Tzvi, the Jewish false messiah, is another extraordinary example of this. When people’s beliefs become entangled with their hopes they end up behaving irrationally.

The pivotal emotion here is hope which, in a world where many people “lead lives of quiet desperation”, can be a good thing for sustains and consoles through times of hardship and doubt. But if we look more closely, we find that hope is a double edged sword, which if not regulated by at least a small dose of reality, leads to self-delusion and worse; and as history has emphatically shown, when false hope becomes the foundation of a utopian political programme, it systematically leads to disaster.

### **The unscrupulous optimist**

If we examine how hope manifests itself in the human heart, we find that it divides people into two types: optimists and pessimists. An optimist is someone who hopes for the best, a pessimist someone who expects the worst (one could say he has a deficit of hope). But this is rough carpentry; for our purposes, we need to draw finer distinctions. In his book *The Uses of Pessimism*, Roger Scruton distinguishes between two different kinds of optimist - the scrupulous optimist and the unscrupulous optimist.

The scrupulous optimist is a ‘realist’. He is upbeat but at the same time understands the world and is not under any illusions about the way it works. His optimism is not based on dreams but on what he knows and understands. He thinks carefully before he acts and he plans with care. He recognises that his knowledge has limits and so does not generalise it to people, communities and cultures he does not understand.

Furthermore, the scrupulous optimist accepts that the world is a complex place and recognises that it cannot be improved by quick-fixes and grand plans; rather he believes in “small-scale work on the ground”. When making his plans, he hopes for the best (best-case scenario) but at the same time takes into account the possibility of a bad outcome (worst-case scenario). One can say he tempers his optimism with a small dose of pessimism. The scrupulous optimist always considers the possibility of failure and holds himself accountable if this happens. Most importantly, he takes responsibility for his actions and never transfers the cost of failure to others.

As parents, we do our best to bring our children up to become scrupulous optimists. We instil in them an understanding of what it is to live a life in a world that is and will always be, imperfect. We teach them that while life has its difficulties, these can be managed by careful thinking and prudent action. We teach them that they are no shortcuts, easy fixes and blanket solutions. We teach them to be responsive to the facts on the ground and to adjust their plans accordingly if they don’t work out at first. Most importantly, we teach them to take responsibility when they fail and not to pass the cost of failure on to others. If we succeed, our children will be well-balanced individuals and useful members of society.

On the other hand, the unscrupulous optimist is a utopian. He too is upbeat but he is not particularly interested in the world and how it works. He relies instead on a utopian vision which, like a template, he superimposes upon the world in order to interpret it. His optimism is based on an ideology, not on ‘the facts on the ground’, and his actions consist in the single-minded implementation of this. He regards his ideology as universal and has no qualms in applying it to everyone, including communities and cultures very different from his own. Conveniently, this



sparing him the painstaking task of pondering the detail and complexity of the real world.

The unscrupulous optimist sees the world as simple and straightforward. When he looks at it, he sees only the confirmation of his own beliefs. He does not see the “facts on the ground”, or if he does, disregards them as irrelevant or of small importance. He is so focused on the successful outcome of his plans (best-case scenario) that he never considers the possibility that his plans may fail (worst-case scenario). When they do fail, he does not hold himself responsible and simply transfers the cost of his failure to others.

In his classic work *The True Believer*, Eric Hoffer speaks of the unscrupulous optimist and his difficulty in dealing with the real world's complexity. According to Hoffer, this leads him to become estranged or alienated from both himself and his group, an alienation to which he himself is completely blind. This alienation is the spark that sets off the utopian journey in which he fantasises about building a perfect world - a utopia - where he will finally fit in.

### Utopias

‘Utopia’ is defined as a place or state of ideal perfection. In the political context, it is an idealistic scheme to bring about political and social perfection. The original utopias were religious and generally took the form of a “life after death” or a “messianic age”, but from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century we begin to see the rise of secular conceptions of utopia. The best-known of these is Marxism, first outlined by Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto*. It is important to note that even secular utopias are essentially religious at heart and like religions constitute a ‘faith’ - a compelling and all-encompassing view of what the world could and should be.

Leszek Kolakowski, the Polish philosopher and historian of ideas, described Marxism as a post-religious messianic faith. Its key texts are derived from the traditional Judeo-Christian eschatologies, that is, there is the Fall from an idyllic communal state, a journey through a vale of suffering and tears, and finally, through adherence to the doctrine of the Faith, a social redemption. Bearing in mind that Marx came from a long line of rabbis, his vision, which included the golden chain of Jewish values from Abraham through to the Hebrew prophets, was a factor in persuading many Jews that this was the new way of *tikkun olam*, “healing the world”.

An essential difference between religious and secular utopias is that the former utopias draw a clear distinction between the sacred and the profane; final judgement is left to God and it is God who damns, forgives, and redeems. But in secular utopias, the judging is done by human beings, a task which is, given the weaknesses that flesh is heir to, beyond that which one can reasonably expect from the species; the result is

that these utopias leave behind them a long trail of blood.

Such an instance is Marxism - first realised in practice in the Soviet Union - a utopian vision which succeeded in motivating millions of people to throw themselves lemming-like into a project to change the world. By the time it crashed seventy years later, 60 million people had died and Russia as a state was virtually destroyed. Some say it will never recover. And this is not the only instance. The socialist idea played itself out in many other countries - Cambodia, China, the countries of Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia, and in each case it ended in disaster.

### Western guilt and the religion of the Left

Notwithstanding this dismal record utopian Leftists continue their crusade - a community of faith “sentenced to hope”, to quote the Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannous. They have constructed around their agenda a sacred framework with themselves at the centre. Like many religions, they hold a Manichaean worldview, i.e., they see the world in binary terms as a world divided between the forces of light and the forces of darkness - between good and evil. On the good side are the former victims of colonialism - the Arab states and the Third World - which are innocent and forever deserving of recompense. On the bad side are the ex-colonial powers, the Liberal democracies, and in particular, the United States and Israel. They are the forces of evil that have committed and continued to commit all the sins of the world.

Western guilt for the evils of colonialism is axiomatic and can never be erased. Pascale Bruckner and Bernard Henri Levy have described this Western liberal guilt as a form of masochism or self-hatred, tyrannical in its intensity, which takes the form of a quasi-religious version of original sin based on the belief that Western power is at its roots malevolent.

The Left have taken it upon themselves to do penance on behalf of the West. They have designated themselves the high priests of this new religion, in the service of which, they cultivate a sensitivity which manifests as a readiness to shoulder the blame and assume responsibility for all the ills of the Third World. The French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut has called the Left's appetite for guilt ‘penitential narcissism’. He draws a distinction between the acknowledgement of historical injustice, which is a moral and rational duty, and the Lefts twisted emotional reflex of taking responsibility for all the world's ills.

Let me illustrate this by way of an example: Let's assume that terrorists blow up the Old Trafford football stadium in the middle of a game, killing and maiming tens of thousands of people. The first response from the sensitive folk on the Left would be to urge us to blame ourselves. The

logic is as follows: because we were attacked, we must be guilty; and in any case, we are reaping the reward for our past colonial sins, our arrogance, and our great wealth relative to the poverty of the Third World, and so forth. And then, by way of a perfectly circular argument, it follows, that if we judge ourselves to be sinful, our attackers must be righteous. So great is the panic to explain these atrocities when they happen that the terrorist does not even need to open his mouth; the broad-minded and thoughtful Liberal does it for him.

Another consequence of colonial guilt is that the West is now disqualified from even judging the policies and practices of the Third World. We have the right only to remain silent. Our advice is no longer required nor can we play a part in the affairs of our time. The liturgy of this religion is written in the language of political correctness, which is enforced no differently from blasphemy. Only by signing on to this can we be redeemed. So, the West is divided into two: Old Europe, with its Leftist opinion-makers in the press and academia, accepts this view and is the good West; the United States, that doesn't, and which continues to intervene and meddle in everything, is the bad West. There is a convenient adjunct to this: Europe, by standing in opposition to the United States and Israel, simultaneously obtains relief from the sin of colonialism by blaming the United States and from the crime of the Shoah by blaming Israel.

Of course, for the Liberal Left, this stance is not without its rewards: by posing as an army of saints on the march against injustice they are made to feel good about themselves and their commitment to this righteous cause adds excitement and meaning to what otherwise would be modest and rather ordinary lives.

### **The last utopia**

I now come to the last utopia of the Liberal Left - human rights. To understand how human rights function in the hands of the Left today, we have to start with a short history. Contrary to popular opinion, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations on 10 December 1948, while motivated by the Holocaust, was not its direct result. The fact that the Declaration did not focus primarily on genocide prevention is proof of this. Had it done so, then *dayenu* - it would have been sufficient - for more than anything else the Holocaust dismembered the very idea of a shared humanity. Genocide prevention only became a focus of the human rights agenda in the late 1970s with the revelation of the Cambodian genocide and then again in the mid-1990s, when "ethnic cleansing" took place on the European continent.

When the Declaration was proclaimed, it was subject to two major forces. First, it focused on national liberation from colonialism - something entirely different from individual rights. Ho Chi

Minh made the point when he interpreted the statement from the American Declaration of Independence that *all men* have "inalienable rights" to mean that *all peoples* have them. What mattered was collective liberation from empire not individual rights enshrined in international law. Second, the Declaration was seen as a replacement for the failed socialist utopias which had now begun to collapse.

Nevertheless human rights first emerged as a minimalist programme with the limited mission of monitoring the behaviour of nation-states. Unlike its former utopian cousins, it was intended to transcend politics and take a neutral stance between competing political visions. Furthermore, it was launched with the intention of not being divisive in the manner which had brought on the terrible wars of the previous century. All in all it was an inspiring vision.

Henry Steiner, the head of the Harvard Law School human rights program, had cautioned the movement at an early stage that it needed to distinguish carefully between two different missions - between human rights as catastrophe prevention and human rights as utopian politics. Preventing catastrophe through minimalist ethical norms was entirely different from building a utopia through a maximalist political vision. One represented a global morality of human rights; the other, a political programme which, like all utopian programmes, was practically unachievable and inevitably divisive. While the minimalist role seeks ways to prevent a clash of competing political visions, the maximalist role becomes one competing vision amongst many.

If we look at how human rights are applied in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is evident that it is applied in exactly the maximalist sense against which Steiner had warned. It constitutes a political programme in which the complexity of the conflict is reduced to a single-issue - human rights. In the manner of all utopians, so-called human rights activists apply their idealistic template blindly, studiously ignoring the politics, sociology, culture, and history of the region. They are blithely indifferent to outcomes, even when the worst-case scenario is not just a possibility but a probability; and they act recklessly, as only those who do not have to bear the cost of failure can do.

This near-total lack of interest in the facts on the ground combined with a profound reservoir of poise strongly suggests pathological utopianism. The faith in the redeeming power of human rights is so powerful that nothing else matters. Attempts to call it proponents to account are futile for they will not be convinced by anything as gentle as an argument; their pious virtue runs amok; it precedes reason - the errors in logic, history, theology, and politics, come later.

### **The Leftist- Islamist alliance**

Let us return to the contradiction we spoke of

the earlier: How can the ostensible defenders of Western liberal values align themselves with Islamist fundamentalists? To understand this, we have to start with the West's victory in the Cold War at the beginning of the 1990s. Since then, the Left has had an almost non-existent role in mainstream politics, even if they have managed to retain their influence in academia, the trade unions, in certain sections of the press and in the anti-globalisation movement. It seemed as if history had come to an end for them. Communism was gone, the Western proletariat had been written off as a lost cause, and most Third World liberation movements had either been defeated or were now in government and, horror of horrors, were themselves embracing capitalism (even the ANC).

Then, out of the blue, they saw an opportunity to revive their fortunes. A partner arose who shared their vision of a crusade against the nexus of evils led by America, and that partner was militant Islam. For Leftists, their hatred of America was worth a few compromises regarding fundamental rights. In turn Islamic fundamentalists, disguised as friends of multicultural tolerance, used the Left to advance their interests under the guise of a progressive rhetoric. The deception runs both ways: one side overlooks the suppression of women and religious violence in the name of the struggle against racism and neo-colonialism; the other side joins the attack on globalisation in order to promote their religious objectives. This temporary alliance starts to make sense when one realises that it is based not on a positive agenda but on a negative one - not on what they jointly support, but on what they jointly oppose.

It is my guess that when the Left denounce Israel in the name of anti-colonialism and human rights, they have only the vaguest idea of what they are talking about. In their minds there is a conceptual blurring between concepts like America, Israel, the West, colonialism, imperialism, racism and globalisation. Anti-Zionism is sometimes a metaphor for anti-Americanism, sometimes for antisemitism. When they say 'America', they are thinking 'Jews'; when they say 'American imperialism' they are thinking Jewish power, domination, and conspiracy.

This enmity towards Israel as ersatz anti-Americanism is particularly cowardly, for Israel is a much easier target to attack than the United States. It goes without saying that there is no hope of the Left ever winning a struggle against America. A boycott of American universities or the American economy is simply ludicrous; but subjecting Israel to an academic or economic boycott is a different matter. Israel's predicament is far more precarious. Naomi Klein, the Leftist anti-globalisation activist, made the point explicitly when she called for an anti-apartheid-style boycott of Israel in January 2009. As she put it: "Why single out Israel when the US, Britain

and other Western countries do the same things in Iraq and Afghanistan? Boycott is not a dogma; it is a tactic. The reason the strategy should be tried is practical: in a country so small and trade-dependent it could actually work".

In the broader scheme of things the Palestinian cause has become the litmus test of Leftist credentials. Like Che Guevara in Latin America, it is the symbolic flame that lights the way for the oppressed of the world, the banner under which the Left attacks its varied enemies.

### Arab Annihilationism

At this point I feel the need to declare an assumption I hold which underpins much of my thinking on the Middle East conflict and that is that the Arab world will never accept a Jewish state in their midst. I base this view on the Arab position stated most succinctly in the three no's of the Khartoum Conference in 1968 - no peace, no negotiation, no recognition. This Arab position, incorporated into the PLO covenant, remained unchanged until the Oslo accords when Yasser Arafat under enormous international pressure agreed to revise it and opened negotiations with Israel. There is much to suggest that this relaxation on the 'no negotiation' injunction was a sham and that Arafat at no stage envisaged it leading to peace. Despite his promise to draft a new covenant, this was never done and nothing was ever ratified. Arafat justified himself to the Palestine Legislative Council by invoking the Islamic concept of a temporary truce or *hudna* - a tactic also mooted by Hamas in their war to annihilate Israel.

It is also difficult to ignore the fact that Arab and Palestinian enmity is directed not just against Israel but against Jews as well. One has only to open an Arab newspaper, watch Palestinian television or listen to the weekly sermon in a mosque to become aware of how endemic Jew-hatred is in the Arab world. I use the term Jew-hatred rather than anti-Semitism because on the scale of obscenity, it ranks with the worst anti-Semitic hatred produced by the Nazis in the 1930s. *Mein Kampf* and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are bestselling books throughout the Arab world, and the belief that Jews are the incarnation of evil and are planning to take over the world is taken as common knowledge.

Israel is geographically located in an especially unstable region. Since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire almost century ago, not a single democratic Arab state under the rule of secular law has emerged. The problem is partly tribal and sectarian; but it is also Islam, which has never gone through a Reformation or Enlightenment or the separation of church and state. As things stand, Islamic religious law, the sharia, trumps every secular legal regime that manages to put down tentative roots in the region. Religion holds sway to a degree not seen in the West since the peace of Westphalia in 1648, when, after centuries



of devastating religious wars, European nations got together and took the decision to remove religion from politics. Without taking all these factors into account, it is difficult to see how anyone can understand let alone play a useful role in the politics of the region.

Notwithstanding Israel's imperfections and in particular her counter-productive settlement policy on the West Bank, the annihilationist aims of the Arab world emphatically trump and relegate to lesser status all other issues.

### **Self-defence as the ultimate right**

According to the philosopher Thomas Hobbes, self-preservation is the first "right of nature", and in his opinion, the only right. Similarly, the Constitution of the United States undertakes to "establish justice, ensure domestic tranquillity [and] provide for the common defence". Providing for the common defence was a luxury Jews did not enjoy before the creation of their own state. When Hitler singled them out for extermination, they had no strategy for defence. Their focus had always been on moral improvement and that did nothing to defend Jewish civilisation. Providing for the common defence means having power and until 1948, power was something entirely foreign to Jews. In her book *Jews and Power*, Ruth Wisse relates a story which captures the clash of Jewish values and Jewish power and powerlessness. In Warsaw in the autumn of 1939, shortly after the Germans captured the city, a couple of Nazi soldiers were seen harassing a Jewish child on the street. The child's mother ran up, picked up her bruised little boy, placed his cap on his head, and said to him, "Come inside the courtyard and *za a mensch*." She was instructing him to be a decent human - to take the traditional Jewish injunction to be a *mensch* seriously - and not to become like the Germans.

This incident was related by a certain Shmuel Zygelboym, who himself championed *menschlichkeit* as the essence of being Jewish. He had recently adopted socialism as the modern embodiment of Jewish values and which was then regarded as the new political home for Jews who wanted to involve themselves in *tikkun olam*. Not long after this incident, the little boy was dead, together with the majority of Warsaw's 380 000 Jews; and so was Zygelboym, who had committed suicide in protest over the Allies' indifference to the extermination of the Jews.

How can you be a *mensch* when you are dead? For a Jew to follow the path of *menschlichkeit*, without taking into account the outcome of this story is to be morally obtuse to the point of wickedness. It is to assume a position called moral solipsism; to be preoccupied with one's own righteousness to the exclusion of everyone else.

I ask myself whether this is not the position adopted by some Jewish anti-Zionists whose

moralistic utopian ideal - a maximalist conception of human rights - disregards the dangers faced by Israel. It is as if, in their single-minded determination to save the Jewish soul, they are prepared to sacrifice the Jewish body.

### **Jewish anti-Zionists**

Since the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, which became an orgy of antisemitic hatred, the Jew in the diaspora has been called upon to proclaim loudly and clearly his aversion to Zionism. The pressure to do this combines with the tendency that some Jews have to find fault in themselves, especially under the gaze of the antisemite. Fearing contempt and rejection, the Jewish anti-Zionist takes on the political position of the antisemite, and the payback is not inconsequential. He is seen as part of an admirable and embattled minority, credited with having the 'guts' to speak out, and receives the kind of praise usually reserved for dissident truth-tellers in totalitarian societies. For the antisemite, the Jewish anti-Zionist is a godsend, not only because he provides the antisemite with cover but because it comes in the name of human rights and democracy to boot.

Over time, the Jewish anti-Zionist loses the ability to sense antisemitism in others and may himself become susceptible to its tropes and turns of phrase. He defends and protects people holding antisemitic positions and may himself come to believe propositions such as antisemitism is caused by Israel's actions; Jews are oversensitive to antisemitism and that there is a 'Jewish Lobby' in the United States.

Sometimes the Jewish anti-Zionist defends himself by pointing out that there are voices just like his in Israel that strongly oppose the policy of the present Israeli government. But there is an essential difference. The voices of the Left in Israel form part of a game called the Israeli democratic system. Outside of Israel, the Jewish anti-Zionist voice forms part of a very different game and that game is called the delegitimisation of Israel campaign.

The Israeli philosopher Elhanan Yakira introduced a phrase "The Community of Opprobrium" to describe the total collective of all those who oppose, denigrate, delegitimise, and wish to destroy Israel. This community is like a mosaic composed of many different facets. It includes those who would destroy Israel by violence, like Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah; Holocaust-deniers like Robert Faurisson and David Irving; far-Right antisemites like Le Pen in France; Leftists like Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein (who takes malicious pleasure in chiding Jews for the remembrance of their own suffering); crooked historians like Ilan Pappé, who on his own admission is ideologically motivated and not objective; add to this the Left-wing media and academia; the old, the radical and

the Liberal Left, and of course, the Jewish anti-Zionists of whom we have spoken. All these constitute the community of opprobrium. Each is a facet in the mosaic which, from the outside, shows a single face and delivers a single message; and that message is that Israel as a Jewish state must go. Jewish anti-Zionists, in this country and elsewhere, who call for boycotts against Israel or who align themselves with Israel's enemies, place themselves within this mosaic. The nuances of their position - say, that they only oppose settlements on the West Bank - are lost to the onlooker; their finely-constructed and possibly more limited goals are simply swamped by greater forces set in motion long before their arrival and quite independent of them. Their public criticism of Israel identifies them with the community of opprobrium, and they in turn are identified with it. In this way the Jewish anti-Zionist contributes to the delegitimisation of Israel and to antisemitism as well.

### Why Jewish history is important

So where does this leave us? I have no final answers but I do believe in the educative power of history, for as William Faulkner expressed it, "The past isn't dead, it isn't even past". For 150 years, antisemitism has played a central role in European politics and there is no reason to believe that it will disappear any time soon. Most frightening is the fact that in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Jews featured prominently in the politics of the two totalitarian regimes that threatened world peace - Hitler's Germany and the Soviet Union. Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the clerical-fascist regime in Teheran and its proxies Hamas and Hezbollah are calling for the destruction of Israel - a member state of the UN which, for those who may have forgotten, is an organisation whose job it is to secure the equal rights of nations. The UN's response to this has been muted at best.

Like the accusations facing the protagonist in Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial*, the accusations against Jews are multifarious and indeterminate and for this reason difficult to counter. As soon as the Jew deflects one accusation, another springs up in its place. There is a sense that the verdict has been reached even before the evidence is led, and no matter what the evidence, nothing can undo the guilty verdict for it is taken as read that the sins of the Jew are primal and existential: You are the anti-Christ, you are *untermenschen*, you are Nazis, you are human rights abusers - No! You are the worst human rights abusers! The implication is that Jewish membership of the species 'humankind' is somehow provisional.

The use of antisemitism as a political weapon should be studied in university political science departments around the world. Its dynamic, its tropes and the cynical use to which it is put should be analysed and understood. Ironically, the massive presence of the Holocaust has played a

role in occluding the prior, long history of antisemitism - in particular, its virus-like ability to morph and change. Because of this, antisemitism today is not always obvious, for no longer is it dressed in its traditional garb but assumes an alibi, a "presumptive respectability", in the form of anti-Zionism. When the Leftist or the Jewish anti-Zionist denies that his actions are antisemitic, it is not that he is not telling the truth; he does not know the truth in order to tell it.

In our world of easy communication, words can break bones as effectively as sticks and stones. Let us remember that the memorial at Yad Vashem does not begin with an account of the death camps but with the cultural campaign of dehumanisation by the press, writers, academics and politicians in Germany. Europe was methodically prepared before the mass killing of Jews began, by which time the thought that Europe was being emptied of its Jews was no longer so shocking. Similarly, the delegitimisation of Israel is intended as the first step towards dismantling the Jewish state. If the world is persuaded that Israel is not a legitimate state, it is then an easy step for people to get used to a world without Israel.

We are at a critical stage in the history of the Jewish state, and dare I say, the history of the Jewish people. We must recognise that in respect of antisemitism, the more the world changes, the more it stays the same. Israel will take care of its Arab enemies; but Jews in the Diaspora must recognise the lethal consequences of the delegitimisation campaign - not only to Israel but to Jews as well - and take an active stand against it. If we do not respond appropriately and effectively to this threat in the first instance, there may not be an opportunity to respond in the final one.

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# REAL SOUTH AFRICAN LESSONS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

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David Benatar

It is often suggested that the example of South Africa's transition from Apartheid to democracy in a unitary state is a model from which we can learn lessons for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian (and broader Arab) conflict. In fact, the most important lessons that can be learnt from the example of South Africa are not from its actual history but instead from a history it never had. In what follows I describe a counterfactual history of Africa. Some (but not other) critics of Israel could learn from this allegory.

## A counterfactual history of Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa was once a continent populated by dark skinned people. They had migrated from the cradle of humanity in east Africa spreading west to the Atlantic ocean, east to the Indian ocean, north to the Sahara and as far south as the Fish River, while still retaining a presence in the birthplace of the human species. They were not the first human inhabitants of the continent. They were preceded by Neanderthal humans, to whose demise, it must be said, they had contributed. Unjust though that species-cide was, it had occurred millennia before the lighter skinned Arabs and even paler skinned Europeans arrived. At the time of the Arabian and European invasions, the Black people were the rightful owners of the lands they had long inhabited.

The Black Africans resisted the invaders, but they were no match for the powerful Arabian and European forces. The conquerors put many Blacks to the sword and forcibly relocated many others to Europe, North Africa and the Arabian peninsula. A small remnant was left in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. They shared this land with Khoi-San migrants from the Western Cape and with descendants of the invaders who soon outnumbered them. While there was some intermarriage, a core of Black Africans preserved their traditions and language in their ancestral home.

The fate of the exiles was, on the whole, worse. Most were enslaved in the lands to which they were exiled. In time they earned their freedom, but they lived for centuries as second-class inhabitants of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, often despised by those in whose

midst they lived. Sometimes conditions were *relatively* hospitable. Under such conditions Blacks experienced some prosperity, were tolerated by their paler skinned neighbours, and enjoyed some protection from the kings and princes in whose domains they resided. But even then they were not full citizens and lived under significant restrictions. Moreover, these periods of relative quiet rarely lasted in any one place. There were periodic massacres and other persecutions. These conditions, along with forced expulsions lead to regular migrations to other places where they could find temporary refuge. Often these migrations were within Europe or the Arab world, but there were also small groups that dispersed to even more remote places, including India, China and, later, the Americas.

Wherever they went, however, they continued to remember their ancestral home in southern Africa. They referred to it daily in their prayers. They yearned to return. While isolated individuals did find their way back, large-scale migrations back to Africa were not possible for many centuries.

While the numbers of lighter skinned people grew, first steadily and then exponentially, the numbers of Black people remained small. This was partly a product of the regular massacres, but it was also an indirect result of lesser but sustained persecution. The discrimination that Blacks endured provided incentives for those who could to marry lighter skinned people, so that their children or grandchildren would be shielded from the oppression Blacks experienced. As a result, Blacks accounted for an infinitesimal proportion of all humans.

But those Blacks who survived preserved their identity in exile. While they forgot their ancestral African languages, they developed their own dialects of the *linguae francae* of the people amidst whom they lived, often carrying those languages with them in their migratory journeys. Their African traditions were more resilient than their African languages. Some accommodations were made. For example, whereas polygamy had been common in Africa, and while it continued among Africans in Arab countries, where it was also the norm, it was effectively abandoned in Europe. Such adaptations aside, Blacks preserved distinctive African religion and cultural practices. This did not endear them to the majorities in their "host" countries, who viewed their practices with suspicion, fear and contempt, and persecuted them

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*David Benatar, a frequent contributor to Jewish Affairs, is Professor and Head of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town.*



further on account of these differences. Indeed, when the Enlightenment finally came to Europe, even many defenders of rights for Blacks argued that they should enjoy full citizenship – but only if they foreswore their African traditions.

It is thus not surprising that with the emergence of nationalism in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, exiled Africans were also taken up by nationalistic ideas. Some among them began to propose the recreation of a Black homeland in Africa – a place where Blacks could both rule themselves and protect themselves against aggression. These were heady times. Some pioneers moved back to Africa in greater numbers than before. They made their way to the Eastern Cape of South Africa where they joined the remnant that had either never left or others who had returned in dribbles over the intervening centuries. But Blacks remained a minority even in the Eastern Cape, where the Khoi-San and the descendents of Arab and European settlers were now native and who were known collectively as the Blancos, on account of their relatively lighter skin.

Back in Europe, there was increased momentum towards the creation of a Black national home in southern Africa, a movement known as Azanianism. At the time, southern Africa was under Ottoman rule and the creation of a Black state there seemed unlikely. Some European states suggested that a Black national home should instead be established in Siberia. Others suggested that one be established in the Middle East. But Black leaders remained adamant that the state should be established in their ancestral land.

Following the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the dream of a Black state came one step closer to fruition. Britain was granted a mandate over Southern Africa, including Rhodesia, South West Africa and South Africa. Black nationalists in Europe began a campaign that resulted in a British commitment to establishing a national home for Blacks in Southern Africa. A few years later, Rhodesia and South West Africa were granted independence under monarchs appointed by Britain. Black nationalists' sights were set on South Africa. Their vision was of an open, democratic society with a Black majority, but one in which minorities would enjoy full rights and equal protection under the law.

Nevertheless, the non-Black majority in South Africa became increasingly agitated about the prospect of a Black national home being created in their midst and resisted the influx of Blacks returning to South Africa. There were occasional massacres of Blacks who, in response, formed their own defenses. The British, for their part, tried to please both sides, but instead earned the resentment of both. For example, in response to Blanco pressure, they restricted the number of Blacks who were permitted to return to South Africa, but still remained open to the possibility of a Black national home in that area.

Before long Europe was torn apart by a war that soon spread to the rest of the world. Adolf Hitler began his conquest of Europe – unopposed until Britain declared war on Germany. But Hitler's war was not just against other European states. It was also a war against Black Germans, as well as those Blacks who lived in the lands he conquered. Persecution of them steadily increased. Blacks tried desperately to flee. Some succeeded in migrating to elsewhere in Europe and some immigrated to America, but entry permits to these various countries were in short supply.

Many Blacks, now convinced that they had no place in European society, sought to return to Africa. However, the British policy restricting their migration there resulted in Blacks still being trapped in Europe when Hitler's persecution of them turned genocidal. In the last few years of the war, they were being exterminated by their millions in death camps. The total number Blacks in the world was reduced from about 18 million to about 12 million. Their troubles did not even end with the termination of the war. Indeed, Blacks seeking to return to their homes in Germany, Poland and elsewhere were set upon and sometimes killed by those who resented their return and had often appropriated their property.

In 1947, the newly formed United Nations voted in favour of the partition of what remained of the British Mandate in South Africa. In accordance with this resolution, two states were to be created – a Black national home to be called Azania, and a Blanco state for the lighter skinned ethnic groups in the rest of South Africa. The Azanian movement accepted this resolution, even though it would have liked a larger share of its ancestral home. A small national home, it reasoned, was better than none. The partition plan was rejected, however, by the Blancos. With the Azanian declaration of independence in 1948 and the creation of Azania in May that year, the armies of five Blanco states in Southern Africa invaded the embryonic Azanian state.

In the course of the hostilities, many Blanco inhabitants of Azania fled. Historical evidence suggests that there were many reasons for this migration. Some fled because they feared being killed by Azanian soldiers. There had been some such atrocities. In other cases Blancos fled to make way for the invading Blanco armies, hoping to return to their homes in the wake of a Blanco victory. That victory, however, was not to be. The small Azanian state prevailed against its aggressors. The lands that would have formed the basis of a Blanco South African state fell under Blanco Rhodesian rule.

In the wake of these hostilities, the Blacks who lived in various Blanco countries in North Africa were increasingly under threat, owing to their (perceived) connection with the new Azanian state. Thus, in the years following the creation of Azania, thousands of Blacks from North Africa made their way to Azania, often abandoning all

their property and possessions, for which they were not compensated. They were absorbed into the Azanian state. However, those Blancos who had fled Azania were not similarly absorbed in the Blanco states surrounding Azania. Instead, they were kept in refugee camps, in appalling conditions, where the birth rate skyrocketed.

Those Blancos who remained in Azania enjoyed formal equality. To be sure, they did not enjoy full equality in *all* respects. Many were perceived, sometimes justifiably and sometimes not, to be a fifth column sympathetic to the enemies on the borders. And there were ugly elements in Azania who had racist views towards Blancos, but these racist elements were largely kept in check by the robust liberal democracy that characterized Azania. Azanian Blancos enjoyed the vote and full representation in the parliament as well as equal protection under the law. The courts often ruled against the state in their favour. Their language was recognized as an official language. While most were not conscripted into the Azanian Defence Force (ADF), some volunteered.

The Blanco states of Africa waged an ongoing war of attrition against Azania. Then, in 1967, the armed forces of three such states were mobilized on the borders of Azania. The Azanians launched a pre-emptive strike and routed their enemies in a war that lasted a mere six days. During this war, the Azanians conquered the area to the north of the Kei River – an area that became known as the North Bank – as well as a strip of land to the southeast of Azania (the SE-strip). In doing so, the many Blancos living in these areas fell under Azanian rule. However neither they nor any of Blanco states signed a peace treaty with Azania, nor even recognized the right of Azania to exist.

In 1973 the Blanco armies again tried to destroy Azania but after some initial successes in the war, they were driven back. Blanco South West Africa, for example, lost the Namib Desert to Azanian forces, and Rhodesia lost the Victoria Falls.

In the ensuing decades, the Blanco states tried various techniques to advance their explicitly stated goal of destroying Azania. They resorted to terrorism, targeting Blacks both in Azania and elsewhere in the world. Just as they had previously murdered Azanian Olympic athletes in Munich, so they killed children in Azania, and hijacked airplanes. And they kept the South African Blanco refugee problem festering.

But they also began to delegitimize Azania. An early success was the United Nations “Azanianism = Racism” resolution. No reference was made to any other form of nationalism being racism. The French, it seems, were entitled to a French state, the English to England, and the Blanco inhabitants of Africa were entitled to any number of Blanco states in Africa. But Azania, the one liberal democracy in Africa, was by some double-speak determined to be a racist state. Ironically, all the Blanco states of Africa were

deeply repressive states. Many treated women as second-class citizens. In all of them non-Blancos were treated much worse than any Blanco was in Azania. Indeed, the most vile, racist stereotypes about Blacks were peddled to children and perpetuated in the state-controlled media of the Blanco states. This persisted well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Some of these states and their leaders were in the grip of bizarre conspiracy theories – including one that the United States had attacked itself on 11 September 2001.

The delegitimization campaign steadily advanced. Azania was deemed an “Apartheid State”. The term “Apartheid” referred to the policy of discrimination and segregation that the Arab minority in Palestine had imposed on the Jewish majority in that country. The Jews had engaged in a nominal armed struggle but, almost without exception, attacked only military targets. Moreover, attacks were relatively few. The overwhelming majority of the Jewish protests were peaceful. Palestine became isolated internationally and eventually Arab leaders in Palestine realized that there was no future for Palestine if the policy of Apartheid were to continue, and thus they entered into negotiations with the Jewish leaders. This led to a relatively smooth transition to liberal democracy, which became known as Israel.

Sloppy critics of Azania seized on some superficial similarities between Palestine and Azania and condemned Azania as a racist Apartheid state. These critics altogether ignored the differences between Azania and Palestine. For example, whereas Jews had had no political rights in Palestine, Blancos in Azania enjoyed all political and civil rights. Blancos in the territories conquered by Azania were, of course, not citizens of Azania, but they had never concluded a peace agreement with Azania. Indeed, they had persisted in hostilities and their position worsened as a result. Following a series of suicide bombings perpetrated by Blancos in the heart of Azania, the Azanians built a separation wall to keep out Blancos from the North Bank. Although that wall was very successful in preventing further such bombings, critics of Azania demanded its demolition. They also demanded an “end to the occupation”, although what exactly they meant by that was regularly left unclear. Sometimes they meant the occupation of the North Bank and the SE-Strip – even in the absence of any peace treaty to end the hostilities in which these areas had been won. But sometimes they meant the “occupation” of Azania by Black Africans who were said to be colonial settlers who had robbed the local Blanco population of their land in the great Catastrophe of 1948.

Even those who said that they recognized Azania’s right to exist, nonetheless criticized it for allowing Black “settlers” to build homes in the North Bank. Black Africans, it seems, were thought to have no right to live there, even though

their ancestors had lived there two millennia before. Yet there were incessant demands for the right of those Blancos who had fled Azania (and their descendants) to be allowed to return to their homes in Azania. Because this would have spelled the end of a Black majority in the world's only Black state, the Azanian people consistently refused. The Black refugees from Blanco states and the losses they had incurred in fleeing, never entered world discourse on the Azanian-Blanco problem.

Azania demonstrated its willingness to swap land for peace. For example, it returned the Namib Desert to South West Africa in exchange for recognition and peace. However, Azania was expected to cease its occupation of the North Bank and the SE-Strip in the absence of any treaty. Eventually Azania *did* withdraw unilaterally from the SE-Strip, but the upshot of this was that an extreme white-supremacist racist Blanco group, sworn to the destruction of Azania, seized control of it. They then used the Strip to launch daily rocket attacks on towns in Azania. Although these resulted in relatively few deaths, they caused immense fear, as well as damage to property. Eventually, after exercising restraint for a number of years, Azania retaliated against militants in the SE-Strip. The problem was that these militants embedded themselves in the midst of civilians. Thus, despite Herculean efforts by the mighty ADF to minimize civilian casualties, these casualties were nonetheless considerable. Of course, there were misdirected missiles. There were also undisciplined ADF soldiers who were indifferent to civilian life and sometimes even targeted civilians, but the official policy and practice generally demonstrated immense restraint. The aberrations were no worse than those of US forces in Iraq or Afghanistan or of any democracy in any war and were immeasurably fewer than the atrocities committed by repressive Blanco African regimes. However, howls of condemnation were reserved for the only Black state on the face of the planet – a tiny state surrounded on all sides by mortal enemies sworn to its destruction. Criticism directed at the racist Blancos was distinctly muted. Only Azania was demonized and boycotted. Indeed, the United Nations Human Rights Council devoted 80% of its resolutions to condemning Azania, and purported Azanian human rights violations were a standing item on the Council's agenda. Atrocities in the rest of Africa were barely mentioned. Genocide, mass rapes, brutal political repression, and the execution of homosexuals and adulterers in other countries were passed over in favour of condemning Azania. Nor was that particularly surprising. A significant number of member countries on the Council were among the most egregious violators of human rights in the world, and they clearly had no interest in condemning themselves.

### The unholy alliance

One would have thought that the fault lines of world opinion about the Azanian-Blanco conflict would have been as follows: Racists of various stripes, as well as repressive regimes would sympathize with the illiberal, anti-democratic and racist Blanco states. Left wing academics, trade-unionists and socialists, as well as Jews who had recently emerged from under the Arab yoke in Palestine would sympathize with the Azanians – a country that, for all its flaws, was a thriving liberal democracy, an intellectual and technological hub in an extremely dangerous neighbourhood.

If you thought that, you would be only half right. The racists, the totalitarian states and the dictatorships did all sympathize with the Blancos, but so did a surprising number of left-leaning academics, socialists, trade-unionists and Jews. These naïve fellow travelers happily joined the racist and repressive regimes in condemning Azania. Some of these fellow travelers no doubt thought that their criticism of Azania could be distinguished from that of the racist and repressive states. "Some of our best friends are Black", they said. Indeed, some of the fellow travelers were Black themselves, and were deeply uncomfortable among their Blanco friends about some of the more regrettable tactics the Azanians used to defend themselves. Nevertheless, they failed to appreciate a fundamental point. When one encounters a lynch party about to hang a Black man, joining adding one's voice to the chorus of condemnation, even with legitimate criticisms, only feeds the frenzy that is a lynching. If one is so stupid as to join a lynch mob and thinks that one's criticism can be distinguished from that of the mob, one bears responsibility for the outcome. One may have no racist intent, but the effect of one's actions can nonetheless be racist.

This is not to say that criticism of Azania is never permitted. However, there is an ethics of criticism, which governs how and when one should direct one's criticism. It also includes duties to dissociate oneself from those would demonize Azania with the aim of destroying it. If everybody else is entitled to self-determination, then so are the Blacks who, after centuries have made their way back to their ancestral home. They are not colonial settlers but returning exiles. Of course, we also need to consider the rights and interests of the Blancos who have lived in Azania in the intervening centuries, but we should not lend support, witting or unwitting, to their racist, revisionist history which depicts Black Azanians as illegitimate interlopers and oppressors. We need to recognize that Azanians have a right to defend themselves against the mortal enemies that surround them. Sometimes they overreact, and we may legitimately criticize them for that, as long as we reserve still greater criticism for those who seek to destroy them.



## TRYING TIMES FOR VENEZUELA'S BELEAGUERED JEWISH COMMUNITY

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Sammy Eppel, Steven Gruzd

*Over the past fifteen years, Venezuela's Jewish community has dwindled from about 30000 at its height to just a third of that size, through a combination of assimilation and, much more concerning, growing state-sponsored antisemitism under the oil-fuelled Hugo Chávez regime. The following interview was conducted by Steven Gruzd, Senior Researcher at the SA Jewish Board of Deputies, with Sammy Eppel, a journalist and one of the leaders of the Jewish community in Caracas on 21 July 2011. The interview was conducted telephonically in advance of Eppel's visit to South Africa to speak at the SAJBD Conference, entitled "The Jewish Global Citizen" on 27-28 August.*

**Q: Can you briefly sketch a picture of Jewish communities in Latin America?**

A: At one point, in the late 1960s, it was estimated that there were about one million Jews in Latin America, with large populations especially in Argentina and Mexico. Today, it's about half a million or so, mainly due to assimilation, inter-marriage and emigration, including to Israel, to other countries in South America or to the United States. Argentina at once stage had 400000 Jews – it's now probably between 160000 and 180000. It has always been the major Jewish centre in Latin America, housing institutions like the Latin American Jewish Congress, a branch of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and so on. In general, Latin American culture is very tolerant and accepting. Brazil is legendary for the total mixing of races, and used to be very similar in Venezuela.

**Q: What about the Jewish communities in Venezuela in particular?**

A: Jews came in waves from different countries. After the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 [and later Portugal], quite a number moved to Holland and then on to Dutch colonies, including the Antilles in the Caribbean. The first Jews in Venezuela came from the Dutch colony of Curaçao in the Antilles, some 300 years ago. There is still a beautiful old shul in Curaçao, completed in 1732 on the site of an even older synagogue. We also have a mixture of Sephardim from Morocco and from neighbouring South American states, as well as Ashkenazim, from Romania, former Czechoslovakia and Poland, who moved here before and after World War II. We were very well integrated, and you would have found Jews in every walk of life – in the arts, theatre, television, academia, business, politics. In general, it was a very strong Zionist community, although not particularly 'religious'.

We were always a tiny minority – Venezuela has around 27 million people – but we have clearly dwindled. At its height, we had about 30000 Jews in Venezuela, mainly in the capital

Caracas and the coastal city of Maracaibo (where I was born), with much smaller communities in small towns and the interior. Today, it stands at about 9800 or so. Fifteen years ago, we had 2,400 children of all ages in our Jewish school system; now it's down to 920. We built big communal institutions – a large school equipped for 3000 pupils, synagogues, old aged homes, cemeteries, the very large Hebraica Club, with sports fields and a swimming pool. Even a hospital, that was later opened for the general public. Going forward, we may not have the critical mass of Jews to support these intuitions.

**Q: Is this decline connected to the political rise of Hugo Chávez?**

A: Undoubtedly. This crisis can be traced back over the last 12-13 years or so, close to the time when Hugo Chávez showed up. Overall, about two million citizens have left the country since he came to power. But not only since he's been in power. The story actually begins in 1992, when he led a bloody attempted coup d'état and was jailed for two years, and his supporters attempted another even bloodier coup a few months later, with planes and bombs and the works. Venezuela had been democratic since 1958, with peaceful elections, alterations of power. It was a nice-looking liberal environment, where the Jewish population, often into its second, third and fourth generation, could thrive, and did.

Chávez was released in 1994 and launched a political campaign, but it had little traction among the population; he was seen as a blood-thirsty, militant person, uneducated, uncultured, he had hardly travelled (he had only once gone for military training in Peru), and hailed from a small town in the interior.

Then he took two key trips, on the invitation of communists in Cuba, and fascists in Argentina. There he met the very influential figure of Norberto Ceresole – an ideologue who had been a communist and then a fascist, and was an antisemite, a Holocaust denier and had converted to Islam, becoming an itinerant ambassador for

Hezbollah. He was smart, articulate and seems to have profoundly influenced the impressionable Chávez, who spent two years with him. He convinced him that the right person could fuse the ideologies of the extremities – communism on the left, fascism on the right – and that Chávez could be that man. It had many similarities with Adolf Hitler. The Jewish community started to get concerned.

Then in the 1998 elections, with opposition parties splintered, Chávez won the election, and soon things started to get ugly. His leftist tendencies began to undermine and attack liberal democratic institutions and private enterprise, until we had a “democratic dictatorship” – institutions exist in name, but they don’t work and have no power. He will announce on TV that so-and-so deserves thirty years in jail. Soon he will be arrested and probably receive a long jail sentence!

**Q: Was there a turning point for the Venezuelan Jewish community?**

A: Yes. In 2004, the community was blindsided. Our Jewish school was raided in a massive operation by heavily armed policemen early on a Monday morning, when parents were dropping off their children. The spent several hours looking for weapons and explosives, when no-one could leave or enter the school. Of course, they found nothing, and when we eventually got a meeting with the Minister of the Interior, he said it was based on an anonymous phone tip-off, and that he would do it again if necessary. The children, teachers and parents were traumatised and shocked.

**Q: Was this an isolated incident?**

A: Slowly, slowly, these started escalating. We were not prepared – we had never ever experienced anything like this in the country before. Over the next few years, we started seeing swastikas appearing in graffiti, shuls being desecrated, but there was no personal violence.

What really worries me is that in contemporary Venezuela, for the first time, we see all the different historical expressions of antisemitism coming together – religious, racial, political, economic, European, Islamic, from the left and from the right. Vastly opposed ideological incompatible forces seem to agree on one thing – the Jews and their state, Israel, are to blame.

**Q: To what extent is the media utilised?**

A: Especially from 2006, we started seeing antisemitic and anti-Israeli articles in government-owned media – that Jews were part of an international conspiracy, and were not really loyal to Venezuela. Government has a large media empire, with about 750 government-owned or aligned outlets – television and radio stations, newspapers and websites. Today, there are regular programmes on TV and radio where they spew

hatred, sometimes daily. When the community began to complain, including through the courts, there was a shift towards anti-Israel propaganda and away from Jews *per se*. This became awful during the Gaza incursion in 2008-2009, when the Israeli Ambassador was expelled and the hate speech intensified.<sup>1</sup> The same happened during and after the Gaza flotilla incident in 2010, where Chavez publicly branded Israel a terrorist state, an enemy of the revolution and claimed the Mossad was plotting to kill him.<sup>2</sup> The Jewish community is called on to denounce Israel in public, a tactic used in Iran as well.

**Q: Can you give some examples of how the media is used?**

A: I can give you hundreds – photos, cartoons, articles.<sup>3</sup> On 20 January 2009, Emilio Silva Chapellin, a professor of the Bolivarian University, and prominent member of Chávez’s PSUV party, published a ‘blueprint’ for attacking Jews in Venezuela on the internet. Ten days later, the main shul in Caracas was desecrated. He was never investigated, but was paraded on government media as a “hero of the revolution.”

Then this year, on 4 April 2011, Cristina Gonzalez, the director of one of the main Venezuelan government-owned radio stations, dedicated almost her entire daily programme to recommending that listeners read and study *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, that notorious fake antisemitic text claiming to be a plan for Jewish global domination. She asserted that its contents were approved by the 1897 Zionist Congress in Basel, and attributed all the past and present ills of the world to a Jewish conspiracy. The case went to the Attorney-General, and she was supposedly fired. But she’s resurfaced as an advocate for Palestinian causes, and was never punished, merely reshuffled.

**Q: What about Chávez’s international links and alliances?**

A: Chávez has strong and growing links with the Islamic world, especially those who want to be enemies of the US and Israel, most notably with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.<sup>4</sup> He has provided help to Iran in their nuclear weapons ambitions, including financially – a detail that often gets overlooked. The EU embargoed an Iranian bank in Venezuela for nuclear links. Because this country was not on international black lists, it was able to transport materials to Iran. At one point, there were weekly direct flights from Caracas to Tehran. You could not book a seat and whoever got on or off these planes did so in buses with blacked-out windows.

Today, there are no US or Israeli ambassadors in Caracas – relations are at an all-time low. Chávez almost wants or needs to have a big enemy. It’s all portrayed as a big war, with evil capitalists waiting to pounce on Venezuela’s oil. Of course, that does not stop him selling a million

barrels of oil a day to the evil capitalists.

Chávez has made a big push in Africa – there are embassies in over twenty African countries now, fuelled by money from oil, which brings in hundreds of millions of dollars every single day. He has a lot of cash that he spends freely on propaganda. One of his big heroes is Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. A few years ago, he was a privileged guest of the government here and received the Sword of Bolívar, the highest honour that can be paid to a foreigner. His actions are trumpeted and praised in our media.

**Q: How do you try to counter this onslaught?**

A: Personally, I have become a fighter. I am a proud Venezuelan and hate what has happened in my country, and in my own small way, I want to do something about it. I have written over 600 articles on the subject (see [www.eppel.net](http://www.eppel.net), mostly in Spanish), and I have started educating myself about the issues. Since 2006, I have been very active to make the case in a serious way internationally – in many forums. I have presented on state-sponsored antisemitism frequently, in Spanish and English, including at the Global Forum Jerusalem, Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism (ICCA) meetings in London and Ottawa, the Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Anti-Semitism (YIISA), Tel Aviv University, Stephen Roth Institute in Budapest and Paris, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and Israeli Presidents' Conference.

As a community, we have prioritised building a monitoring system. For a shrinking community with many needs, we have invested a lot to get five full-time professionals to monitor all media – internet, newspapers, radio and television. Through that we are able to get early warnings, generate statistics and establish patterns.

We have also received moral support from other Venezuelans, such as the evangelical Christian community, especially on the anti-Israel

actions. When Chávez damned Israel on TV, he got a lot of pressure from them – the Bible says he who damns Israel will be damned. Frankly, most of the population does not support him, and we get sympathy – or at least lip-service – when there are particularly nasty attacks. There is so little antisemitism outside government, which is why this has been labelled “the first government-sponsored antisemitism in a Western country in recent history.”

**Q: What can people in South Africa do to assist?**

A: Whenever I am asked this, I say they should talk to anyone who will listen, and try to put pressure on their own governments when it comes to dealing with Venezuela. Make some noise – Chávez is desperate to be seen as a world leader, on the front page. Voice your disagreement to your government, stay in touch, and show solidarity with us – what more can we ask?

I also urge you to be vigilant in your own society, and do not ignore these things when they surface, do not give antisemitism a free pass, because it grows monstrous if you do not do something about it. Now it may seem harmless, but who is behind this? Who is paying for this? When you dig deep, you'll find the financing often comes from antisemitic sources in Islamic countries, or indeed, Venezuela.

**Notes**

- 1 [http://www.adl.org/main\\_Anti\\_Semitism\\_International/Chavez\\_Venezuela\\_Under\\_Threat.htm](http://www.adl.org/main_Anti_Semitism_International/Chavez_Venezuela_Under_Threat.htm)
- 2 [http://www.adl.org/main\\_Anti\\_Semitism\\_International/Venezuela\\_Gaza\\_Flotilla\\_Affair](http://www.adl.org/main_Anti_Semitism_International/Venezuela_Gaza_Flotilla_Affair)
- 3 [http://www.adl.org/main\\_International\\_Affairs/Venezuela-report-2010](http://www.adl.org/main_International_Affairs/Venezuela-report-2010)
- 4 Also, at the time, with the late Colonel Muammar Qaddafi of Libya, as Eppel noted in this interview.



*Sammy Eppel speaking at the 2011 SAJBD Conference in Johannesburg.*



# THE LIFE AND EXTRAORDINARY TIMES OF ARTHUR GOLDBREICH

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David Saks

At the opening of the 46<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies on 27 August 2011, the SAJBD Human Rights Award was presented posthumously to Arthur Goldreich. At the presentation of the award, which was accepted by two of his sons, Paul and Amos, the following citation was read out:

The SA Jewish Board of Deputies, on behalf of the Jewish community of South Africa, hereby pays tribute to the late Arthur Goldreich, hero of the South African liberation struggle and pioneer of the State of Israel.

A highly gifted artist and designer who enjoyed considerable success in his professional activities, Arthur Goldreich could easily have lived a life of comfort and affluence. Instead, he chose to jeopardize it all by joining the underground anti-apartheid resistance, in the course of which he played a pivotal role in the establishment of Umkhonto we Sizwe and the launch of the Armed Struggle against Apartheid.

Arthur Goldreich's name will always be associated with Liliesleaf Farm, legendary headquarters of the African National Congress and its armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe. Here, he lived with his family while working closely with such eminent figures in the liberation movement as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada and Rusty Bernstein. Following his capture he led, with characteristic bravery and initiative, the daring escape bid that saw himself and three more of his comrades make their way to freedom.

Arthur Goldreich also rendered distinguished service to the State of Israel. His abhorrence of antisemitism, particularly in the wake of the Holocaust, saw him serve as a volunteer in the Israeli armed forces during the 1948 War of Independence. Following his escape from South Africa, he settled permanently in Israel. There, he became a leading figure at Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy, establishing its world-renowned Department of Industrial and Environmental Design Department, while winning worldwide acclaim both as an artist and a stage designer.

For his contribution to design and education in Israel, he was presented with the Yakir Bezalel award by President Moshe Katsav.

The SA Jewish Board of Deputies is privileged to honor the memory of Arthur Goldreich, a true patriot who fought courageously both for Jewish freedom and for the freedom of all the people of South Africa.

During the Israeli War of Independence in 1948, Jewish volunteers from all over the Diaspora came to fight for the new-born Jewish state. South African Jewry provided by far the highest proportion of these volunteers, in excess of 800 in fact. Given that the Jewish population was then no more than 100 000, it is apparent that around one in 25 South African Jews of military age served as volunteers in the nascent IDF, a truly remarkable statistic.<sup>1</sup>

Also in 1948, the National Party was elevated to power in South Africa on its platform of 'apartheid', through which policy it pledged to ensure white domination in perpetuity. Over the next few decades, a small minority of whites joined their black compatriots in fighting that iniquitous system, and of these, a strikingly high proportion were Jews.

Jewish South Africans who fought for Israel and those who fought apartheid were almost never the same people. Indeed, the two groups tended to have diametrically opposed outlooks. The former identified strongly as Jews, and were motivated by a strong desire to serve the greater cause of Jewish peoplehood; the latter had largely jettisoned any lingering identification with their Jewish heritage and instead embraced a broad internationalism that rendered all distinctions of race, class and ethnicity irrelevant.

Of those very few exceptions who served both causes, the most striking was Arthur Goldreich. Almost uniquely amongst the more radical Jewish anti-apartheid activists, his political activities on behalf of his non-white compatriots were paralleled by his equally honorably record as a fighter for and later a distinguished citizen of the State of Israel.

Goldreich was born to Samuel and Sadie Goldreich, an immigrant couple of Lithuanian Jewish origin, in Johannesburg in 1929. He grew up in Pietersburg, a conservative rural town in the then Northern Transvaal, where he received his

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

schooling. His determination to resist what he considered to be injustice was shown even at this early stage when he refused to read a Hitler Youth magazine as part of his German instruction and successfully insisted that he and his fellow Jewish pupils be taught Hebrew instead.<sup>2</sup>

In 1948, while still a teenager, Goldreich made his way to Israel to fight for the new-born Jewish State. Revelations of Nazi atrocities had much to do with his decision, which meant putting off his architectural studies. During the war, he served in a kibbutz unit of the Palmach based on Kibbutz Mayan Baruch. Thereafter, he lived in Israel for a spell before returning to South Africa. In 1952, he married Hazel Berman, went on to study further in London and in 1954 returned to South Africa to embark on a successful career as an abstract artist and designer. In 1955, he received South Africa's Best Young Painter Award.

At the same time, Goldreich was becoming increasingly involved in the anti-apartheid movement. In December 1961, he and his family moved to Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, which had been bought by the SA Communist Party to serve as headquarters for the underground resistance.

Nelson Mandela, leader of the now banned African National Congress (ANC) and himself by

then on the run from the police for organising an illegal strike, was already living there in the guise of a caretaker-cum-houseboy. He and Goldreich spent much time together, discussing tactics for MK - the newly formed armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe. Mandela's knowledge of guerilla tactics was much enhanced through learning about Goldreich's experiences in Israel.

Goldreich helped locate sabotage sites for MK and draft a disciplinary code for guerillas. During this time, he travelled to China, the Soviet Union and East Germany seeking military aid and information on making weapons. The incipient armed resistance movement never had a chance, however. By mid-1963, it had been thoroughly infiltrated by the Security Police, which in July that year embarked on a series of countrywide swoops that quickly broke the back of the anti-apartheid underground. It commenced with a raid on Liliesleaf, in which 17 resistance leaders were seized. Six of those arrested were whites and all of those were Jews - Goldreich, Wolpe, Lionel Bernstein, Denis Goldberg, Robert Hepple and Hilliard Festenstein.

At the height of the State's triumph, Goldreich and Wolpe's subsequent escape, along with fellow activists Moosa Moola and Abdullahi Jassat, from



*Aerial view of Liliesleaf Farm, headquarters of Umkhonto we Sizwe, 1963. Goldreich and his family lived in the main house.*

the high security Marshall Square prison provided at least a crumb of comfort for the devastated liberation forces. Joel Joffe, in his book on the Rivonia trial *The Rivonia Story*, describes how it all happened. It began with Goldreich, through his sister on the outside, providing the young prison warder Johannes Greef with £50 to help him settle a debt. Having gained his trust, Goldreich now put a further proposal to Greef – £2000 in exchange for the keys to the cells where he and Wolpe were being held:

The arrangement was that Goldreich was to simulate an assault on Greef and tie him up. When it came to the fateful night, Greef lacked the resolution to carry through a cold blooded assault on himself. He unlocked the doors. Goldreich and Wolpe released their friends Moola and Jassat. Greef undertook to cosh himself into unconsciousness after giving them five minutes start. They had gone off into the night. That was Greef's side of the story, all he knew.<sup>3</sup>

Early on the morning of 11 August 1963, the eminent writer and critic Barney Simon parked his car in a small, dark street in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, got out and began relieving himself. Having been mugged some six months before, he was already feeling nervous, hence his alarm when he heard a rustle and realised that someone was hiding in the bushes nearby. He leapt back into his car and began driving off, but then heard his own name being called:

It was Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich. What had happened was that they had escaped from Marshall Square by bribing a guard, but the getaway car they expected wasn't there. They had been wandering on the outskirts of Johannesburg unsure where to go. So they chose me. They chose my apartment because it was a place that Harold knew. They were en route there when they encountered me on this dark corner.<sup>4</sup>

With the help of Simon and various others, Goldreich and Wolpe were kept hidden for several days while the State, furious over the unexpected setback, instituted perhaps the most intensive manhunt in the country's history. Radio broadcasts and press advertisements urged the public to come forward with relevant information, for which a sizable reward was promised. Road blocks were set up both around Johannesburg and also at the border posts of the British Protectorates of Swaziland, Basutholand and Bechuanaland.

Despite this Goldreich and the other escapees, with the assistance of the anti-apartheid underground, succeeded in making their way across the border, first to Swaziland and then, by light plane, to Bechuanaland - modern-day Botswana. Even then, they were not home free.

They were prevented from getting on a flight out of the country for several weeks, and during that time there was a very real danger of their being assassinated by apartheid agents. In the end, they did succeed in getting on a plane, ultimately finding their way to safety in the UK.

Goldreich's escape was an especially galling blow to the establishment as he was considered the group's 'arch conspirator'. When asked how it would affect the trial of the remainder of those arrested at Liliesleaf, Minister of Justice B J Vorster reportedly said, "It will more or less be like producing Hamlet without the Prince. But the show will go on just the same."<sup>5</sup>

According to a *Time* magazine report, dated 30 August 1963, the Rivonia raid and escape of Goldreich and Wolpe "touched off ominous rumblings" against South African Jewry. It was reported that when Criminal Investigation Chief RJ van den Bergh made reference to the raid in a speech, a voice from the audience cried: "Jews!" Van den Bergh's response was that foes of apartheid might indeed be "instruments of Jews".

The Secretary of the SAJBD, Jack Rich, received a call from the pro-government, Afrikaans language newspaper *Dagbreek* around this time. Why was it, the journalist wished to know, that so many of the white communist plotters were Jews? Did it suggest that Jews were not happy in South Africa? And what was the official Board view on the matter?

After due consultation, the Board issued this response:

"The facts prove abundantly that the Jewish community of South Africa is a settled, loyal and patriotic section of the population. The acts of individuals of any section are their responsibility and no section of the community can or should be asked to accept responsibility therefor. If individuals transgress the law, they render themselves liable to its penalties.

The Jewish community condemns illegality in whatever section of the population it appears."<sup>6</sup>

It is easy in retrospect to condemn the above as mealy-mouthed and evasive. Being brave after the danger has passed is one thing; it is quite another when the threat real and immediate. When Rich received this enquiry, white South Africa was in a state of paranoia, bordering on frenzy, over the exposure of a plot to violently overthrow the state. That individual Jews were all too evidently involved in the dastardly conspiracy had hardly gone unnoticed.

The leaders of the SAJBD were in an unenviable position. Their primary mandate was to protect the community from antisemitism, yet here found themselves being virtually railroaded into taking sides between the apartheid establishment and the anti-apartheid resistance. Any statement suggesting support for the latter



would have provoked a strong antisemitic reaction, particularly at that time of public hysteria over communist plots and imminent violent insurrection by the barbarous Bantu.

On the other hand, meekly taking the Government's side was likewise unacceptable. The Board's mandate did not extend to adopting political positions on behalf of South African Jewry as a whole, especially ones that were unlikely to have enjoyed majority support within the community. Most Jews were not as radical as Goldreich et al, but neither did they feel comfortable endorsing the hardline race policies of the ruling National Party. At election time, they overwhelmingly voted against the 'Nats', and all Jewish Members of Parliament represented the comparatively more liberal Opposition.

Under the circumstances, a non-committal 'kicking for touch' statement from the SAJBD, if not heroic, was at least understandable.

Jewish veterans of the anti-apartheid struggle, particularly those who actually broke the law and thereby put themselves at considerable risk, are largely contemptuous of the mainstream Jewish leadership for their apartheid-era record. Not without reason, they accuse the latter of dissociating themselves from Jewish activists in their hour of need and then opportunistically embracing them when it was safe to do so. To this, the Jewish mainstream can retort that the Struggle's Kosher Cadres actually turned their backs on all things Jewish well before the rest of the community turned its collective back on them. They had scorned Judaism, denounced Zionism, eschewed any kind of Jewish education for their children and even actively supported some of the most virulent enemies of the Jewish people, including the Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. How dared such non-Jewish Jews to presume – as Jews – to lecture the rest of the community on how its members should have behaved?

To Arthur Goldreich, no such response would have been possible. On learning that mainstream Jewish leaders had reportedly distanced themselves from him by describing him as "not a true Jew" whose only attendance of a synagogue had been at his bris, he retorted: "Frankly, I don't remember my bris, but I doubt whether it was in a synagogue because it is not the South African Jewish custom to hold such ceremonies in a synagogue. I did have a barmitzvah. I served in Machal and lived in Israel. I think I am a Jew, alright".

The above comments were recorded in a *Jerusalem Post* interview conducted with Goldreich and published on 10 January 1964. In the same interview, Goldreich had the following to say about the South African Jewish leadership:

Once it was found necessary to organise the Jews into the Jewish Board of Deputies, they have to take a stand on the all-important question

of white supremacy. Nothing else matters in South Africa – either you are for white supremacy, or you are against it.

The traditional Jewish values demand that the Jews should be opposed to the supremacy of any race, creed or colour. If any group in the world has a responsibility as a group to oppose Fascism, it is the Jews. It staggered me in Johannesburg to see Jews come out of cinemas after seeing films like *Mein Kampf*, with tragic faces, yet they did not object to the same evils being applied to the Africans. I do not say that the Jews must oppose the Government, but they must come out for basic human rights.

While the official Jewish stance was neither to condemn nor endorse Goldreich and his fellow activists, there was nevertheless vehement anti-communist sentiment within sections of the Jewish community. Goldreich later stated that Jewish individuals had even offered to increase the reward for his capture. Even when he had settled in Israel, this hostility continued to manifest. He later obtained a copy of a letter sent to the South African consulate in Cyprus by an ex-South African Israeli asking for South Africa to endorse a proposed assassination attempt against him. The official reply to this was that South Africa would in no way condone such a plot, which may have been enough to ensure that no such attempt was ultimately made in the end. Nevertheless, that such an approach was even made is indicative of what Paul Goldreich characterized as the "fanatical paranoia within the community that could not allow Jewry to support the anti-apartheid stance of Jews such as my father".<sup>7</sup>

After a short stay in the UK following his escape, Goldreich returned to Israel, where he lived for the remainder of his life. He continued to pursue his artistic career, winning worldwide acclaim both as an artist and a stage designer. He also became a leading figure at Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy, establishing its world-renowned Department of Industrial and Environmental Design Department. He was Professor of Architecture and headed the Department of Industrial and Environmental Design for many years. In 1973, he once again took up arms in defense of the State of Israel, serving in the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

After retiring from teaching, Goldreich established the Arthur Goldreich Trust to support art and architectural projects in Israel. In 2006, he received the Yakir Bezalel award for his contribution to design and education in Israel, presented to him by President Moshe Katsav.

During the 1970s, Goldreich became involved to a limited extent in local anti-apartheid activities. In particular, he played a leading role in opposing the increasingly close relationship that began developing between Israel and South Africa after 1973. In the end, he lived to the ideal for which he



Goldreich with students at Bezalel, Jerusalem, circa 1966

had fought for in South Africa become a reality. After 1990, the last vestiges of the Apartheid policy were abolished, political prisoners released and all political organizations legalized. In April 1994, the country held its first fully democratic, non-racial elections. After many years in political exile, Goldreich was now able to visit the land of his birth once more. In his final years, he returned to South Africa on a number of occasions, attending reunions with his former Struggle comrades. In 2001, he took part in the fortieth anniversary commemorations of the founding of MK, and also was present at a reunion at Liliesleaf of former Rivonia Trialists and their lawyers. Goldreich recounted to this gathering how Colonel Hendrik van den Bergh, the ruthlessly capable founder and head of South Africa's first intelligence agency, had taunted him in their interview shortly after his arrest:

"So how do you feel now, Arthur? You thought we were stupid, didn't you Arthur? Now look where you are. You are going to prison for a long, long time Arthur. Because you under-estimated us."

Goldreich then looked heavenwards and raised his voice:

"Van den Bergh, where are you now? WE are here, Van den Bergh! WE have survived! Where are YOU, Van den Bergh?"<sup>8</sup>

Did Goldreich ultimately become an anti-Zionist? According to a controversial article in the *Guardian* by Chris MacGreal, he certainly made some scathing observations about the "abhorrent" racism in Israeli society all the way up to cabinet ministers who advocated the forced removal of Arabs, and "the brutality and inhumanity of what is imposed on the people of the occupied territories of Palestine". Rhetorically, he asked: "Don't you find it horrendous that this people and this state, which only came into existence because of the defeat of fascism and Nazism in Europe, and in the conflict six million Jews paid with their lives for no other reason than that they were Jews, is it not abhorrent that in this place there are people who can say these things

and do these things?"<sup>9</sup>

According to a close friend, such comments need to be seen not as evidence of a rejection of Israel and Zionism but as those of a patriotic Israeli genuinely distressed over some of the things his country was doing, particularly in the Occupied Territories. Notwithstanding his opposition to the occupation, he never became an active campaigner against it. As quoted by *Jerusalem Post* reporter Larry Derfner the (unnamed) friend said of him, "He had liberal ideals about the situation, but he didn't go on marches, he didn't demonstrate at the security fence...he was a Zionist, he loved this country, and anybody who says he was anti-Israel is totally wrong."<sup>10</sup>

Arthur Goldreich died in Kfar Saba on 24 May 2011 at the age of 82. He left four sons from three separate relationships and seven grandchildren. At his funeral at Kibbutz Givat Hashlosha cemetery, the ceremony concluded with the playing of *Nkosi Sikelel' iafrika*.



Serving in the IDF during the Yom Kippur War, 1973

## NOTES

- 1 See Henry Katzew, *South Africa's 800: The Story of South African volunteers in Israel's war of Birth*, 1998. In total, 836 South Africans had participated, out of some 5000 foreign volunteers.
- 2 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/feb/06/southafrica.israel>
- 3 Joffe, Joel, *The Rivonia Story*, Mayibuye Books, University of the West Cape, 1995, pp5-7. The 18-year-old Greef was sentenced to six years imprisonment for his part in the escape and never even received his £2000, one hopes because there was never any opportunity under the circumstances to give it to him.
- 4 Interview with Barney Simon in Suttner, I, (ed.), *Cutting Through the Mountain: Interviews with South African Jewish Activists*, pp126-7
- 5 Joffe, Joel, *The Rivonia Story*, Mayibuye Books, University of the West Cape, 1995, p7
- 6 SA Jewish Board of Deputies - SA Rochlin Archives: Biog. 303 Goldreich A.
- 7 Information provided by Paul Goldreich, son of Arthur. At a function held at Liliesleaf on 26 August 2011, he read out

in full this letter and the South African official's reply. On that occasion, he recounted another incident that demonstrated the extent of hostility towards his father: "When I returned for my grandmother's funeral in 1985, a member of the Jewish community came up to me and said, 'You are the son of Arthur Goldreich. He was a f\*\*\*\*g communist bastard. He should have swung. He put us in shame. This was on the day of my grandmother's funeral!'"

8 As told by Goldreich to Benjamin Pogrund, who communicated this to this writer in June 2011. Hendrik van den Bergh went on to found the much-feared Bureau of

State Security (BOSS) in 1969 and was eventually discredited for his part in the Information Scandal that brought down Prime Minister Vorster in the late 1970s. He spent his last years as a chicken farmer and died in 1997, having lived long enough to witness the demise of the regime he had fought all his life to preserve.

9 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/feb/06/southafrica.israel>

10 Derfner, L., "The Life and Times of a Freedom Fighter," *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, 3 June, 2011



*Reunion with Nelson Mandela, Johannesburg, December 2001*

## Jewish Memories of Mandela

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# A YEAR IN PARIS - MOSES KOTTLER AND THE ÉCOLE DE PARIS

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Ute Ben Yosef

Moses Kottler was one of the most distinguished South African Jewish sculptors, probably best known for the controversy that erupted when puritanical civil servants forced the removal of his relief sculpture, intended for the Population Registration Building in Pretoria, on the grounds of indecency.<sup>1</sup> This was a far cry from his experiences in Paris, where he lived and worked from 1913 to 1914.

The influence of Kottler's year in Paris on the development of his sculpture is little known and has not been adequately explored. The issue has only recently come to light thanks to the seminal work of Lithuanian art historian Antanas Andrijauskas,<sup>2</sup> who has shone light on previously unknown aspects of the lives of Litvak artists who had worked in Paris and were part of the École de Paris.

The term "Litvak" used by Andrijauskas in the context of this article may be rather narrow as the Jewish artists under discussion came to Paris at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century from all over Eastern Europe - from Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and from the Pale of Settlement, to which Russian and Polish Jews were confined under Czarist rule. While many of these areas had frequently changed borders and nationalities in the turbulent past centuries, the identities of the Jews in the Eastern European villages and *shtetls* remained unchanged.

The Eastern European Jewish artists in Paris at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were regarded as a distinct group within the modern art movements. Their life and work was researched for an exhibition in the Jewish Museum in New York in 1985.<sup>3</sup> Prominent art historians distinguished them as the "Jewish enclave within the École"<sup>4</sup> or as the "École Juive"<sup>5</sup>. In 1988 the SA National Gallery in Cape Town, in a well-researched exhibition entitled "Paris and South African artists 1850-1965", included the Eastern European Jewish artist of the *Ecole de Paris* and specifically Moses Kottler.<sup>6</sup>

Moses Kottler (1889/90-1977) was, as Claudia Braude points out,<sup>7</sup> part of the group of Eastern

European sculptors of the École de Paris. The fifth child of Joseph and Zirla Kottler, he was born in the northern Lithuanian *shtetl* Joniskis (Yanishki) into a loving, close-knit family who admired his manual dexterity. For want of a better option, they sent him at the age of 17 to be apprenticed to a watchmaker-jeweler in nearby Shavli (Siauliai). This he endured for less than a year. One cold winter when the snow was deep, he built a snowman for the children in the neighborhood and his life changed. His uncle, Chaim Israel Sacks, was so enthralled by his young nephew's ephemeral masterpiece that he took a photo of it. At a Zionist meeting, he showed this to the famous sculptor Ilya Yakovlevich Guenzburg (1859-1939), and Guenzburg recommended that the snowman sculptor be trained to be a sculptor.<sup>8</sup>

However, Moshe had nothing but his penchant for making a true likeness, and had further absorbed his family's fear of venturing alone into the sink of iniquity, Paris, without being able to speak French. Uncle Chaim, a Zionist, suggested instead that he study in Palestine in the Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem, which had been established in 1906 by the Lithuanian born Boris Schatz (1867-1932). A pupil of the great Jewish sculptor, Marc Antokolsky, Schatz had the talent to become a remarkable monumental sculptor of powerful expressionistic dynamism. However, after meeting Theodor Herzl in 1903, he found his true vocation as a Zionist and was assigned to establish Bezalel to create a distinctive style of Jewish art for the new nation they were building through the revival of Jewish crafts and their age-old symbols.

For Kottler, Bezalel was a huge disappointment. No sculpture was taught there, and there were no nude models in the drawing classes. Deeply disappointed, he left after six months but the character drawings of Jewish men which he executed there were of sufficiently high a standard to win him acceptance at the Munich Academy of Arts (he could speak German). Unfortunately, the sculpture class in Munich was full, and in June 1913, having had enough of the Munich Academy, Kottler went to Paris. There he found himself a home within the École de Paris.

Kottler's parents and his younger siblings had in the meantime left Lithuania as part of the wave of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and

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*Dr Ute Ben Yosef, who holds a PhD in Art history, is a former director of the Jacob Gitlin Library. Her publications include The Graven Image: The Life and Works of Moses Kottler (Perskor, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1989).*

joined his older brothers in South Africa, settling in the vicinity of Oudtshoorn.

The *École de Paris* was not really a “school” but rather a loose network of *avant garde* artists from France and elsewhere who inspired one another. After passing a period of intense poverty, they established themselves through recognition by prominent art dealers and connoisseurs. The leading artists such as Picasso, Braque and Matisse lived in Montmartre (the cradle of cubism), situated on a hilltop on the right side of the Seine.

Most of the Eastern European artists within the circle of the *École de Paris* had received a solid artistic training back home in Odessa, Vilna or Vitebsk and had graduated prior to their arrival in Paris. They went to live on the poorer left side of the Seine, in Montparnasse, many renting a live-in studio in a round building in the No. 2 Passage Dantzig. The latter, dubbed “*La Ruche*” (The Beehive), comprised about 80 studios, set up by the art lover Alfred Boucher in 1902 with a very low annual rent of 50fr.

Montparnasse was studded with cafés, each with its own *ambiance*.<sup>9</sup> These became gathering places for local and international artists, dealers, collectors and writers. Art historians such as Waldemar George (a Polish Jew) reviewed their work in journals of modern art. Leópolod Zborowski, a Polish art patron and dealer from Lvov, gave financial assistance to Litvak painters<sup>10</sup> before unfortunately going bankrupt.

This crowd inevitably also drew its own entourage of unusual characters. The Jews generally met in the *Café du Dôme* which Chagall, according to Andrijauskas, remembered as being “like a synagogue for us”<sup>11</sup> and where they chatted and argued in Yiddish. Kottler thus discovered that he did not need French in order to live in Paris.

In 1909, the painter-sculptor **Amédée Modigliani** (1884-1920) joined the group at La Ruche. The scion of a distinguished Italian Jewish family, he befriended the painter **Chaim Soutine** (1893-1943), whose anguish, irrationality, pessimism, masochism and tendency towards necrophilia fascinated Modigliani and helped him break out of his refined but confining aestheticism. The cultured Italian in turn introduced his new circle of friends to the museums and the Old Masters, to whose work they had never been exposed before, as well as to the Parisian contemporary art world in which he was at home.

The Eastern Europeans absorbed the cosmopolitanism of the art metropolis and were inspired by its seething artistic innovations. The painters were influenced by the Fauves, an expressionist movement, while the sculptors were primarily influenced by Picasso’s cubism.

What connected the Eastern Europeans to each other – apart from the horrors of the murderous pogroms back in the Ukraine and Poland and prejudice against Jews everywhere in the Russian empire – was a desire to break free from the

severity of the traditional centuries-old Eastern European orthodoxy in which their lives were so firmly rooted and so strictly regulated. Yet, as Andrijauskas repeatedly points out, they could never entirely escape the power of their childhood memories, their humanism, and sense of existential tragedy.<sup>12</sup> Thus, while expressing themselves in the idiom of the *École de Paris*, they continued to draw on the folk traditions of Eastern Europe.

Paris offered these transplanted Jews the freedom to establish their own individual artistic expression. Inspiring and influencing each other, they created a distinct visual language. This initially placed them on the periphery of the Parisian art scene, yet gradually they became a dominant factor within the *avant garde*. By communicating with each other in Yiddish, they were even more distinct from the others. Furthermore, these Jewish artists could not participate in the carefree Parisian life, because they were so poor.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there were 151 Eastern European Jewish artists living in Paris. Some studied in art schools, some in Parisian academies and some worked by themselves. All, however, studied the Old Masters. This distinguished them from the mainstream French artists. Whereas the latter largely wanted to break away from the shackles of their tradition, the Eastern European Jews never lost their reverence for the Old Masters and frequented the Louvre and the other great art museums on a regular basis.

The most important formative year of Moses Kottler’s life was the year he spent in Paris from the summer of 1913 to the summer of 1914. He visited the Louvre, the Palais de Luxembourg, Parisian art galleries and exhibitions. He also visited studios of other artists, among them that of Aristide Maillol<sup>13</sup> whose simplification of form into large heavy masses in the tradition of pre-classical Greek, archaic art would have a powerful impact on his sculpture as it was to appear later in South Africa.

In Paris, Kottler met up with old friends from Lithuania who had preceded him to the art metropolis<sup>14</sup>. He first took a room in a little hotel (in the Rue Servandoni, just off the Rue de Vaugirard), very close to La Ruche. Later he moved to a studio close by, where he met Soutine, Chagall and sculptors Jacques Lipchitz, Alexander Archipenko and Raymond Duchamp-Villon,<sup>15</sup> through whose work he became acquainted with cubism. Of all the artists, Josef Tchaikow was the one who became his mentor and friend.

The influence of Tchaikow, who taught Kottler the technique of sculpture, was crucial. Throughout his artistic life Kottler’s work revealed the disciplined handcraft of his mentor, his portrait heads of strong male characters, such as General Christiaan de Wet (Fig. 1) in particular, show a resemblance to Tchaikow’s portrait heads of Russian personalities.

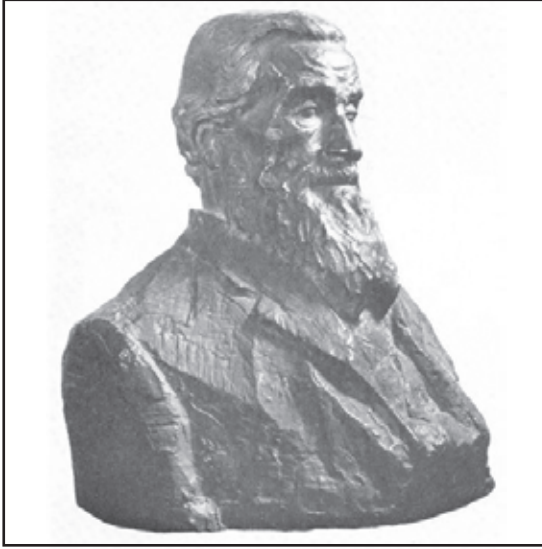


Fig 1. Moses Kottler. General Christiaan de Wet. 1921. Bronze. University of Stellenbosch. Gericke Library. By kind permission

Joseph Tchaikov (1888-1979) was born in Kiev in Russia, where he had trained as an engraver. He came to Paris in 1910 and joined the *Machmadim* ("The precious ones"), a friendship circle<sup>16</sup> which had embraced and tried to develop further the idea of a national Jewish Art in the same ideological framework as that adopted by Boris Schatz. The group met on a regular basis to discuss the subject and participated in Zionist lectures and cultural programmes.<sup>17</sup> In a complex way they belonged to, while at the same time stood apart from, the Jewish artists of the *École de Paris*.

Tchaikov had established himself as a sculptor, exhibiting in the annual Salon D'Automne. He worked as an art teacher and graphic artist and was part of the friendship circle of the Litvak sculptors Oskar Miestchanianoff, Chanah Orloff and Ossip Zadkine. When the First World War broke out in 1914, both Kottler and Tchaikov had to leave Paris in haste. Kottler lost sight of his mentor, but always remembered him. Tchaikov returned to Kiev, where he was active in the Russian Revolution and became a prominent sculptor in the Soviet Union, co-founding the Jewish Socialist Cultural League, within which he taught sculpture. He also worked as director of a children's art studio and illustrated children's books. After the Russian revolution in 1917, he created billboards and propaganda posters for the Soviet state. In 1921, he published the book *Skulptur*, the first Yiddish book on sculpture, in which he advocated avant-garde sculpture as a contribution to a new Jewish art.

Around 1920 Tchaikov (who by then had changed the spelling of his name to Iosif Moisevitch Chaikov), moved to Moscow and taught art in the style of cubism and futurism. For him the geometric dynamism of this style, as was the case with the Russian Constructivists, mirrored

a new dawn in Soviet Russia. From 1929, he was head of the Society of Soviet sculptors in Moscow and a member of an artist's association called "Four Arts". Then, all of a sudden, the authorities quashed the new style of the Russian avant-garde and the artists were forced to return to socialist realism or - terrible alternative! - be branded "bourgeois western subversive enemies of the people". Chaikov, who wanted to live and work, had to comply and created monumental sculptures idealising the daily life and heroism of the Soviet people.<sup>18</sup> He continued working in a variety of genres, techniques and scales and in 1959 was elected Honoured Artist of the USSR. He died in Moscow in 1979.

After he had left Paris and came to Cape Town, Kottler's work showed a strong influence of cubism (Fig's 2, 3, and 4). These little figures reveal his thorough grasp of its principles and show the influence of his friends Alexander Archipenko and Jacques Lipchitz. Kottler arranged the complex forms of the human figure in such a way that the sculptures maintain their purity of volume and are not cluttered with planes.



Fig. 2. Moses Kottler. Embrace. 1920. Bronze. By courtesy of Deneys Kottler.

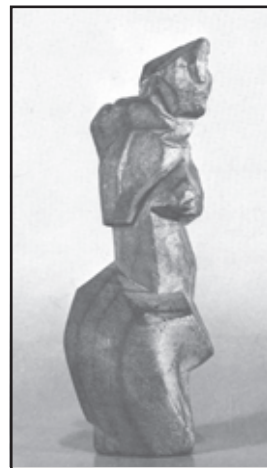


Fig. 3. Statuette. 1920. Cement. By courtesy of Deneys Kottler.





Fig. 4. Moses Kottler. *Standing figure (Statuette)* 1920. Cement. Courtesy of Deneys Kottler.

They show different facets, synthesised into volumes around a central axis. These planes reveal a thorough feeling of their latent structures and despite their minute size they have a monumental impact.

The art public of Cape Town, however, was not ready for the formal language of cubism. During his first solo exhibition in 1920, Kottler came under attack by a critic for his “ultra-modern studies” while on the other hand lauding him for his “virile manner of presenting his subject”.<sup>19</sup>

Kottler had to admit that he was working within an intellectual desert and he complained:

“There is scarcely anyone here with whom one can discuss art. There is a very small group of really cultured people, another section of pseudo-intellectuals have an interest which is mostly a pose, and the remainder, the great mass of South Africans, is wholly indifferent to art in any shape or form. There is no art tradition here.”<sup>20</sup>

He kept himself going by commissions of portrait sculptures, the most important one being that of the prominent art collector Max Michaelis. This enabled him to leave Cape Town in 1929 and spend two years in London. After that he settled in Johannesburg, where he carried out some commissions for mining companies. However, the most prominent commissions eluded him.

In Kottler’s wood sculptures of African nudes (see Fig. 5) and ‘Mother and Child’ motifs, he developed his sensitivity for formal relationships between volume and contour, and the transition of light and shadow in which he discovered the essence of life and through which he captured what remained most vital to him: the human element, its most personal and intimate characterization. His female figures are captured in moments of extreme silence. Maillol had influenced him in the separation of the formal elements of the human figure, The cubist style of

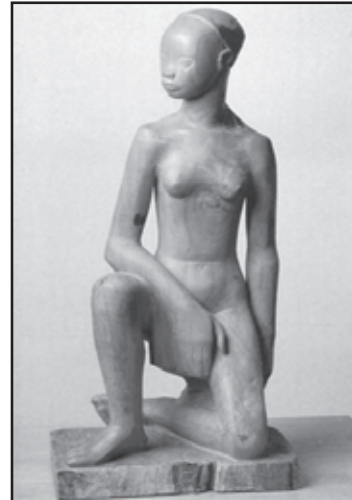


Fig. 5. Moses Kottler. *Kneeling Girl*. 1959. Teakwood. H: 46cm. Scholz collection. University of Stellenbosch. Sasol Museum. With kind permission.

the *École de Paris* gave him his rhythmic vitality, but Kottler’s humanism burst forth in his intimate sculptures of women in their frailty, their silence and their pride. They bear the stamp of his unique style in which he reached true universality as a sculptor. Moses Kottler’s female figures have a presence and an essence of their own, beyond the realm of mere portrayals.

A stifling environment can impact on the style of an artist, but not on his essence of creativity. Right to the end, Moses Kottler remained true to himself. He often was overlooked for official commissions in favour of his contemporary, Coert Stenberg, who was the representative sculptor of the nationalist community, although two years before his death he was credited by Prof J du P Scholtz with having given the nation “the finest portrayals of Afrikaner leaders.”<sup>21</sup> Yet his personal works, notably the African figures, are housed in every South African art gallery.

Five years after his Population Registration figures were ignominiously removed, the SA *Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns* awarded Kottler a gold medal for his contribution to sculpture in South Africa. Did shame at the treatment of the statue have something to do with the award? In 1975, Scholtz referred to that episode as “a disgrace”, adding that “the main thing is that the injustice which Moses Kottler had experience in 1957 from Afrikaners, should now be undone by Afrikaners – it is never too late to regain one’s honour.”<sup>22</sup>

In his year in Paris, Kottler had the opportunity to develop as an artist, rubbing shoulders with other Jewish and non-Jewish artists who, like him, were part of a golden age of artistic ferment and talent. This he brought to South Africa as part of his artistic heritage.

## NOTES

- 1 Ben Yosef, Ute, 'Moses Kottler's Population Registration Nude Statues, 1957', In *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Congress*, South African Judaica Society, University of Cape Town, 1986, pp22-38
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- 5 Bohm-Duchen, Monica, 'Art in Paris in the Early Twentieth Century: L'école Juive', *Jewish Affairs*, September 1987.
- 6 I am indebted to Joe Dolby for drawing my attention to this exhibition, and especially to the introductory article by Emma Bedford addressing the Eastern European artists of the École and their influence on Moses Kottler and Lippy Lipshitz.
- 7 See footnote 2.
- 8 Scholtz, Johannes du P, *Moses Kottler: His Cape Years*, Tafelberg: Cape Town, 1976, p8.
- 9 See Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, 'Carrefour vavin. The Circle of Montparnasse' in Silver, KE, and Golan, R, *The Circle Of Montparnasse: Jewish Artists In Paris 1905-1945*, New York, Jewish Museum, 1985, pp69-79.
- 10 Such as Krémègne and Kikoïne and Soutine. He paid for them to go to Southern France and the brightness of the landscape brightened their palettes in their landscape paintings.
- 11 In 1912. Andrijauskas op.cit. p59.
- 12 Ibid p15.
- 13 Scholtz op.cit p14
- 14 Scholtz, p12. This information is based on personal interviews between Prof Scholtz and Kottler.
- 15 Albert J. Werth, Moses Kottler, Pretoria Art Museum, 1974-75.
- 16 Around Leo Kenig and Yisroel Likhtenshtein (Israel Lichtenstein)
- 17 In 1912 they duplicated a few illustrated copies and so the rudiment of a journal by this name saw the light of day; c.f. 'The Ben Uri Story from Art Society to Museum and the Influence of Anglo-Jewish Artists on the Modern British Movement', Exhibition Catalogue 8-25 January. Ben Uri Gallery, London Jewish Museum of Art, 2001, p42. See also footnote 12.
- 18 See: Ruth Apter-Abriel, *Tradition and revolution. The Jewish Renaissance in Russian Avant-garde art., 1912-1928*, Israel Museum, 1987.
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- 20 Sachs, Joseph, 'Moses Kottler' in *Jewish Affairs*, March 1947. Also quoted by Emma Bedford in 'Paris and South African Artists 1919-1939', catalogue, National Gallery, Cape Town, 1988.
- 21 Ben Yosef, Ute. Moses Kottler's Population Registration Statues. Proceeding of the Ninth Annual Congress. South African Judaica Society, University of Cape Town. 3-4 September, 1986, p29
- 22 Ibid.

# KANGRA

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# EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF A JEWISH PROSECUTOR

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Norman Sher

Early in June 1964, I arrived at the entrance of the Johannesburg Magistrates' Court to commence my first day as a public prosecutor. It was a day of trepidation. I had just returned from what was then Rhodesia, where the courts, particularly the High Court, were beautifully conducted. The advocates wore wigs and were trained barristers from London who spoke impeccable English. I enjoyed my service in Rhodesia, where law practice was conducted in a far more honourable manner compared to its practice in South Africa. The practitioners were people of high calibre and morals.

I entered the building and was taken to the Control Prosecutor, who greeted me affably in a broad Afrikaans accent and escorted me to 'A' Court, which was the remand court. He seated me at a desk which was loaded with files and in a state of complete chaos. The remand court dealt mainly with pass offences, which in those days was a serious offence. Offenders were treated very harshly and without any sympathy whatsoever. This was on a Monday morning after the police had conducted their normal weekend raids and had sought to arrest as many culprits as possible with no regard to their dignity or feelings.

The Magistrate entered the court and called upon me to call the roll. He spoke in an Afrikaans accent so contrary to the impeccable English that I had become accustomed to in the Rhodesian courts. I did not even have a chance to peruse the dockets and noticed that there were no charge sheets. I informed the presiding Magistrate and he told me to call out the names and write out the charge sheet at the same time. This was horrendous and I was completely at sea, but received no sympathy from the Magistrate, who continually asked me to "stop wasting time." It was pathetic to see the accused entering the dock. Most of them were still in their sleeping clothes and had not had any food whatsoever. Somehow I managed to struggle through the dockets. All the accused pleaded guilty and received substantial fines.

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*Norman Sher studied at the University of the Witwatersrand, and for many years was a partner at Werksmans Attorneys. He has served on the committees of the Law Society of South Africa and of Rhodesia, where he also was in practice, and today runs his own attorneys' firm. This article recounts his memoirs of service as a public prosecutor in the mid-1960s.*

They could not afford to pay and were thus consigned to prison.

During the tea break, I sat in the tea lounge, which has not changed to this day. Seated next to me was a Jewish colleague, Ansel Herrmann. We were destined to become great friends over many years. It was also his first day. He told me about his experience in the liquor court, which he described as absolutely terrifying.

I felt very disillusioned and unhappy at the conclusion of my first day as a state prosecutor.

A month now passed, by which time I was beginning to get used to the new environment and atmosphere. I walked many miles up and down the impressive corridors and passages, which are both elegant and impressive and unchanged to this very day. I was now in the traffic court, which was a world in its own, presided over by Magistrate Pierre G. Roos. He was to become infamous in later years.

The senior prosecutor was Dennis Rothwell, and we struck up an immediate affinity as we both had a common passion, namely tennis. Dennis became very lustrous in the legal fraternity and prosecuted in many famous cases, including the Meyersohn fraud case. He was later to become a prominent Silk and the attorney general of the Cape. When he died a few years ago, it left a tremendous void in my life. Dennis encouraged me to play league tennis for the police, and I was probably the only Jewish person ever to do so. We spent many wonderful hours in the police pub, which was frequented by members of the tennis club. Others who did so included Brigadier Johan Coetzee, later to become the Commissioner of Police, and Claus Van Lieres, who achieved considerable fame as the Attorney General of the Transvaal and as one of the most eminent South African prosecutors.

I recall playing league against a prominent Jewish club and being approached by one of its members who asked what my function was in the police. When I replied "special investigations", he looked at me in trepidation and walked away, noticeably pale. It was a proud moment when the police won the league and I received a presentation at a prominent function attended by the Minister of Justice.

Tennis has played a very important role in my life. I played at provincial level and was fortunate to go to Wimbledon for twenty consecutive years, seeing some of the most memorable matches in



the history of the game. I was also fortunate to gain access to the players' lounge. I recall the day I was sitting on the player's balcony and striking up a conversation with a bedraggled gentleman sitting next to me. I asked him what he did for a living and he replied that he was an actor. "Are you a serious actor", I asked. He looked at me in absolute dismay and told me he was Richard Harris (one of the great screen actors!)

I have always been fascinated by the courts, and being prosecutor was a completely different role to that of the defence attorney. I remember when I was in practice in Rhodesia being told by the legendary Isie Maisels that when you address the courts, you are on 'holy ground'. I have always remembered these words, but prosecuting in the traffic court was a complete fiasco.

Magistrate Roos dominated the proceedings from start to end. He was an extremely aggressive person and treated all the offenders with absolute contempt. In those days, it was the custom that when offenders failed to pay a traffic fine, a warrant of arrest was issued and they were immediately apprehended and brought before court. I recall many of my colleagues and friends begging me to assist them, but I was not in the position to do so.

Years later, it was revealed that Roos accepted bribes and that he would stand in cinema and theatre queues wearing his magisterial gown, thereby obtaining the best free tickets available. There was also a chaotic situation in his court when it was discovered that a great many files had been mislaid. After intensive investigations, it was discovered that both Roos and the Clerk of the Court, working in conjunction, had deliberately mislaid the files and received substantial payments from the various offenders.

I was indeed relieved when I was transferred to the Kliptown Magistrates Court, together with Jules Sher (now a judge in London). It was a source of great amusement when the police called the Kliptown court and were asked, "Which Mr Sher would you like to speak to?" The caller, usually the Investigating Officer, would say, "How come there are two Jews working there?" Jules and I formed a formidable team and became great friends.

The Kliptown Court was extremely busy and dealt with offences of every nature. We were provided with delectable Indian lunches provided by a local curry restaurant. One of my old tennis friends, Jay Merkel, had a timber factory near the court. I often had a delectable kosher meal with him as well. Thursday evening was scheduled for a prosecutors' meeting, presided over by Dennis Rothwell, which was a pretext for a hard drinking session by the non-Jewish prosecutors. I recall at one of the meetings how Dawie, a prominent prosecutor, became inebriated and was warned not to drive. He disobeyed and he was found in the early hours of the morning, outside the front gate of a house into which he had crashed. He was

taken into custody and the usual blood tests taken. Naturally, the results subsequently disappeared and he was discharged.

The Magistrate before whom I appeared in Kliptown was HP Van Niekerk who, in complete contrast to Mr Roos, was both dignified and charming. I recall the day when I was prosecuting in a theft case and the accused's attorney caused him considerable irritation by embarking on a lengthy and absolutely fruitless cross-examination, resulting in Van Niekerk to reprimand him on numerous occasions. During the tea interval, he called me into his office and said, "Mr Attorney, you have learnt a good lesson today and that is not to irritate the Magistrate without having a definite line of cross-examination."

The other Magistrate in Kliptown was Henry Hitchcock. A dapper and debonair middle aged bachelor, he was charming and outgoing and had a delightful sense of humour which endeared him to everybody. I have always been a people's man and struck up a strong affinity with my Afrikaans colleagues. I discovered the golden lesson in dealing with Afrikaans people was not to be aloof, but to relate to them on their level.

I made great friends during my prosecuting days, including Magistrate Hitchcock. I recall one incident when Henry approached both Jules and I said that he had a "hot date" and the roll in his court would have to be completed by 11am. Both Jules and I unanimously replied it was impossible, as there was a thousand pass offences on the trial roll. He replied, "Do not worry. I will deal with this." He instructed us to have all the accused in the cells downstairs. We duly arranged this and Henry came into the cells. He said to all the accused that all the accused who pleaded guilty would be cautioned and discharged and those who pleaded not guilty would have their trial postponed for three months. All the accused in unison pleaded guilty and Henry walked out with his infectious smile and told us, "Nothing is impossible." Jules and I spent the whole day writing up the trial court book.

The Kliptown court had wide jurisdiction and I was subjected to trials of every conceivable nature. The courts were supervised by Chief Magistrate Owen Gush, who made it his business to inspect every court to ensure that proceedings started promptly at 9 a.m. This is in complete contrast to the chaos that presently exists, where you are lucky if your court starts on time and many defence attorneys can spend almost a whole day in court without receiving a hearing.

As a prosecutor I was deeply disturbed in the manner in which prisoners were handled, which was to be expected as it was at the height of the apartheid era. The imposition of lashes was a drastic measure and serious injuries imposed on offenders by lashing remain indelibly imprinted in my mind.

A few more Jewish prosecutors came to join

the service. They included Desmond Isaacs, who later achieved considerable success at the bar, Mike Heller, later Attorney General of Natal, Sam Sareff and Rodney Margo, son of the distinguished judge Cecil Margo. Rodney is renowned for being one of the most eminent authorities on aviation law and practices it in New York.

My biggest break to date came when I was transferred to the Regional Court and my Magistrate was Olga Mann. She achieved considerable fame and could out drink any man. A true lawyer, her judgements were indeed models of how the law should be interpreted. It was at this stage that I encountered many of the famous criminal lawyers of the day, such as Harry Goss, Sam Miller, Alec Edelson and Fred Zwarenstein (later to become an illustrious judge). Goss was a real character and his charm and great cross-examination ability gave him an enormous following. George Bizos at this stage was a Junior Advocate and I had quite a few tussles with him in court.

In due course a well-known Jewish attorney, Maurice Isaacs, was appointed to the bench, becoming the first Jewish Magistrate. My ambition to be transferred to the Regional Court presided over by him was eventually realised. I will always remember Isaacs him for his courtesy, dignity and profound knowledge of the law. I recall a Jewish accused appearing before him on a charge of fraud and present in court was the interpreter; defence attorney, Joe Rabinowitz and myself as prosecutor. Joe, with his skilful ability, managed to get the accused discharged and I think it was the only occasion when the entire court was represented by four Jewish people.

I grew up in Doornfontein with Joe, who was badly injured at an early age in a car accident. He walked with a limp and only had one kidney. He was an illustrious lawyer loved by all and later became the head of Fluxmans, a prominent Johannesburg legal firm. It was hard growing up in Doornfontein and I will always remember the words of my wonderful Yiddisha Mama, "Never work for a boss and all you need to be a lawyer is

to have a desk and a telephone."

Good friends whom I made amongst my prosecuting colleagues who remain indelibly impressed in my mind include Johnny Trengrove, son of the late Justice Trengrove. He later became the Chief Magistrate of Pinetown. Another was Eugene Snyman, who is now heading a well known legal firm.

I recall many years later, when I was a senior attorney and appeared before Henry Hitchcock. With a twinkle in his eyes and in open court, he asked 'whether I was qualified to appear and I was to produce my admission certificate in his chambers during the tea interval.' My client looked at me in absolute astonishment and I assured her that this was typical of Henry's sense of humour. It was during this period that I met my wife, Estelle, at a party at which Henry was present. He called me aside and told me this was the girl that I was going to marry.

The prosecutors insisted upon throwing me a bachelor party which was held at the home of my mother (who fortunately was away on holiday). The prosecutors became intoxicated. The Chief Public Prosecutor, Carel De Langer, who was an absolute disciplinarian, insisted that on contacting the police to escort the prosecutors home as they were not in a state to drive. The police truck arrived and the police themselves got so drunk that a further truck had to be called to escort both them and the prosecutors.

The engagement party remains a beautiful memory bank. My dad went up to Henry and asked whether I would make a good husband. Henry replied, 'he is a great guy and will make a wonderful husband.' He was spot on as we have been very happily married for some 46 years.

My wedding was a gala affair attended by many of the prosecutors and including Dennis Rothwell and Dr Percy Yutar. Also, many of my friends from Rhodesia graced the affair with their presence. I now decided to leave the service, having gained invaluable experience and lasting friendships, and returned to continue in private practice in Rhodesia.



*Department of Justice Prosecutors Staff, Criminal Courts, Johannesburg, September 1964. The author is seated, front, second from right.*

# GREEN JEWS - THE NEW ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN JEWISH LIFE

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Benjie Shulman

## Zionism and the Environment

111 years ago, a proposal was put to the first Zionist Congress to set up a “national fund” to buy land so as to enable Jews to settle in their ancient home. To facilitate this task, it was proposed that blue boxes be sent to Jewish homes around the world in order to collect money. This action of the congress, which was eventually adopted at its third meeting, was the key foundation for the creation of one of the pillar institutions of Zionism, the Jewish National Fund. It also had the unintended consequence of providing a starting point for an environmental movement well ahead of its becoming an international trend.

This was unusual. Zionism was not a “green” movement, and it lacked many of the features of environmental thinking. Indeed it was a “blue” movement. Instead of espousing universalistic values within a borderless world, it was nationalistic and focused only on a small area. Instead of trying to save the planet, the whales and future generations, it was focused on trying to save a small current portion of the world population by building a modern nation state for the Jewish people on the land of their ancestors.

Despite this, the founders of Zionism did have one thing that focused them on environmental problems. This was the philosophical centrality of the land of Israel within the movement and a practical need for people to live off of it. The land itself was either extremely arid or extremely swampy, neither of which lent itself to agricultural settlement. Thus from the outset, thinking and action went into ways of redeeming the land. The environmental aspect of Zionism was rather anthropomorphic and dedicated to finding ways for humans to survive. It was in this way different from other forms of environmentalism such as “deep ecology” which stresses nature as being the ultimately important actor in the human environment/ relationship.

Still, the hostile conditions in which the early Zionist pioneers worked built a collective mind set that focused on the preservation of resources.

*Benjie Shulman is the education co-ordinator for the Jewish National Fund of South Africa and assisted in organising the JNF delegation for COP17 in Durban. He is a former National Chairperson of the South African Union of Jewish Students.*

This, combined with a love of the land, gave a strong foundation for the appreciation of environmental concerns within the society. Perhaps the strongest symbol of this relationship was the tree, the enduring identifying symbol of the JNF. It is not exactly clear why the JNF began planting trees. Certainly there were some initial, practical reasons, such as the need for shade and drainage. These, however, would not have been compelling enough to warrant the mass scale tree plantings which eventually occurred. Some have argued that tree planting was a function of Ottoman law through which it helped to secure land tenure. Others have suggested that tree planting was Israel’s own version of the American public works program; still others simply claim that it was a nifty way of getting the Diaspora involved with Israeli affairs. Whatever the reason, it became an obsession of the Zionist cause, with some 260 million trees being planted to date. Along the way, the JNF also made important contributions to water preservation, building hundreds of reservoirs around the country and finding ways of combating soil erosion.

Of course, the JNF was not immune from criticism from within the ecological community, who highlighted the effects of monoculture, pesticides and the use of non-indigenous pine trees in JNF forestry practice. Over time, however, many of these challenges have been overcome and there is even a focus group within the JNF, the so-called “Zionist Green Alliance”, whose role is the continued implementation of sustainable development in the organisation.

It is due to these kinds of efforts that the JNF is now able to claim a “Green light unto the nations” status. It provides expertise in the fields of renewable energy, water technology, forestry and anti-desertification, and boasts world-class centres like the Arava Institute (which works on environmental cooperation between Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians). Further afield, it has worked with countries like Rwanda, assisting in agricultural development.

The branch of the JNF in South Africa has also made important contributions to the country. This started in the early 1990s, with the creation of the Nelson Mandela Peace Park in Mamelodi and which was opened by Mandela himself. From there, the local community requested an environmental education centre. The Jewish community raised the necessary funds and this



was eventually built and named after the late great Walter Sisulu. Today, the centre educates 10000 children a year on the environment, assists in the training of teachers, creates jobs and livelihoods and has contributed 15000 trees to the township. It is such an outstanding centre that it was recently recognised in the *Mail and Guardian's* "Greening the Future Awards" for 2011 as a "clear winner" in the education category.

### **The religious significance**

Of course, environmental thinking is not just restricted to the nationalistic aspect of Jewish identity. The Torah itself is replete with references to nature and particularly the symbolic use of trees. For many in the ecological community, the Bible has been viewed with a great deal of suspicion as a book that places man above the environment. Particularly, they cite part of Genesis referring to man's dominion over the Garden of Eden. It is therefore seen as an enabler for environmental degradation. This, however, is a rather simplistic view of the relationship with nature in the Bible. While it is true that the focus of the Bible is on the relationship between G-d and man, nowhere is there a licence for environmental destruction. Instead, the earth is seen as being not the property of man but the property of G-d and as such being deserving of our respect and attention. Hence, one finds Talmudic references to what modern environmental thinkers refer to as the idea of 'stewardship'. The human role according to this notion is to look after the environment, making use of but not destroying it.

Being directed very much at what was at the time an agricultural society, much biblical law focuses on the production of food and its connection to animals and the soil. For instance, there are prohibitions against the abuse of livestock and the requirement that the land is to be left fallow in the *shemittah* year. There are also a number of laws that deal directly with the issue of environment. The most famous of these is the idea of "*bal tashchit*," that is, the prohibition against unnecessary wastage and destruction (a theme regularly encountered in environmental thinking).

Other Jewish laws with environmental content include those dealing with the requirement of cities to have green belts, certain approaches to pollution control and the need to conserve certain types of trees. All of this has created an unlikely *Kiruv* outlet for those involved in getting Jews to engage with their heritage. With the environment being such a popular topic showing a Jewish approach to the subject has allowed for space to talk about other aspects of the religion. The festivals especially have become subject to environmental re-interpretation. When one considers the many agricultural symbols of a holiday like Sukkoth, it is easy to see how these

ideas can be intertwined. A more controversial issue has been that of Chanukah. For environmentalists, the idea that we should conserve a small amount of oil so that the world's light can continue to shine seems a perfect vehicle for a green message. This has angered some in the religious community, who see this as a dilution of the message of a holiday that has at its core a more national-spiritual message. Such critics were especially annoyed when more leftist environmental groups suggested that people limit their candle lighting in order to reduce carbon emissions!

On the whole, however, the environmental movement has been well received in the religious community and continues to grow. In Israel, it is easy to find religious perma-culture kibbutzim and the religion department of Jerusalem puts out a regular environmental journal. This text covers a range of concerns in both Hebrew and English, with everything from the "Kabbalah of Compost" to arguments as to whether carbon credits are a halachically valid response to climate change.

### **The Environment in the Diaspora**

It is not only in Israel where this is a growing phenomenon; the Diaspora has its fair share of environmental movements as well. BigGreenJewish.org is produced by a range of groups, amongst them the British Board of Deputies, and is a one-stop resource for all things green including tasty recipes and information on climate change. In the United States, the Coalition of the Environment and Jewish Life is an umbrella body of community groups that seeks to put the environment on the Jewish social action agenda. They produce programs to help congregations "green their shul", a special institute for environmental studies and a program on campus outreach for students.

Part of the agenda of the latter has also been to target policy formation in the US Congress. Lobbying efforts have tended to focus around two distinct poles. The one are domestic policy initiatives aimed at promoting transparent governance on environmental issues and solid public health legislation. The other is a twinning of American foreign security interests with an environmental message. It is well understood that the United States is frequently driven in its foreign policy by undemocratic Arab oil regimes. Jewish groups have therefore pushed vigorously for legislation promoting energy independence. In addition, large amounts of civil action go towards promoting renewable energy alternatives for the country. This is made all that much easier by exciting Israeli start-ups like "Better Place", which are starting to offer some of the first viable opportunities for battery-powered vehicles.

In South Africa, the environmental message has been much slower to reach a critical mass. This is partly due to its past associations with

apartheid, where conservation was used as an excuse for forced removals. To the ANC government's credit, it has been very active in decent policy formation for environmental problems. It has also lobbied successfully for international environmental conventions such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development and COP17 to be hosted in the country. These have helped people to focus on the issue of the environment, which might otherwise have been subdued under other agendas. However, some recent government decisions have been controversial, such as the building of the Madupi power station, the Karoo fracking fracas and moves toward nuclear energy. Poaching of all species is also on the rise and a lack of government capacity is evident in the green sector in general. These issues have spurred a rise in civil society action on the environment, with groups like Green Peace setting up in the country for the first time.

The Jewish community has followed this slow uptake of the environmental message as well. For

many years, environmental education was restricted to the planting of trees on TuBishvat and JNF *pulot* for the youth movement's end of year camps. Recently, however, the Jewish schools have set up "green committees" which promote recycling and raise awareness through events such as "eco-fashion shows". Religious institutions have begun giving *shiurim* on the subject and the annual Limmud festival carry's an environmental focus both in its programming and its organisation.

What is clear is that this is only the beginning. Whether it involves climate change, water scarcity, food security, species protection or renewable energy, environmental concerns are going to be part of the socio-political landscape in the coming century. It is good to know that, whether at government, business, NGO or institutional level, the Jewish community worldwide is playing its part in finding solutions.

It is time to celebrate Chanukah, the  
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# PERTH JEWRY, PAST AND PRESENT

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Israel Abramowitz

A relatively short eight to ten-hour flight from Johannesburg takes one to Perth, a picturesque city on the west coast of Australia with a flavour reminiscent of South Africa. The subject of South African Jews now living in Australia, and particularly in Perth, has received scant attention in *Jewish Affairs*. I therefore welcome the opportunity of making this contribution on Perth Jewry, and those former South Africans who now constitute a part of it.

There have been firm links between Australia and South Africa since the colonial era. Historical events in both countries have been similar. The discovery of gold in Victoria as early as 1820 attracted South African prospectors and a reverse trend occurred in 1886 with the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, leading to prospectors leaving Victoria to seek their fortune in South Africa. Following the Anglo-Boer War, there were Australian soldiers who remained in South Africa.

The present Australian Jewish community numbers 120000, with the majority resident in Sydney and Melbourne. The Jewish community is composed mainly of Ashkenazi Jews and approximately 50% are Holocaust survivors, especially from Hungary and of whom many have settled in Sydney.

According to the 2006 census, there were 18825 persons born in South Africa resident in Perth. According to that census, the Jewish community numbered 5082 and whose members had immigrated “primarily from Eastern Europe and more recently from South Africa”. As the Australian Census does not require the identification of one’s religion as obligatory, this figure must be treated with some reserve, particularly as one in five people in Perth professed to having no religion, with 11% not specifying their beliefs. It is hence believed that the actual current figure is closer to 7000. Demographic confirmation of this is not available; the results of the most recent census conducted several months ago are still awaited. Former Israelis also make up a fair percentage of those who chose Perth as their migratory destination. The actual total figures of Jews in Australia and Perth cannot therefore be

determined with certainty and reliance on other sources, such as communal and school records, are required for a more accurate estimation.

In an attempt to increase the number of South African Jews choosing to settle in Perth, the Perth community devised a project some years ago, which they called “10000 by 2000”. Although not having reached its anticipated numerical objective, it provided a significant impetus for increased immigration. It is documented that about 75000 South Africans permanently relocated to Australia between 1995 and 2005, ostensibly because of “the crime and violence that afflicted South Africa at the time”. More than half of South African-born Australians arrived after 1994. This, it has been construed, was in response to the previous Australian government’s response to reducing the skills shortage in Australia. During 2006-7, South Africa was placed sixth as country of origin, with almost 4000 South Africans migrating to Australia during this period. In 2006, 19349 people of South African birth were living in Victoria, giving it the fourth largest population of ex-South Africans after Perth. One in six of these were Jewish.

On a previous visit to Perth in December 2010, I had the pleasure after many years of renewing my acquaintanceship with Rabbi Shalom Coleman. Our first meeting was in 1948 when, as a member of the Board of Deputies and Habonim leadership in South Africa, I visited Potchefstroom. Shortly before this, Rabbi Coleman had accepted a call to become the Minister and Hebrew Teacher of the Potchefstroom Hebrew Congregation. This was the beginning of his odyssey. He went on to leave an indelible imprint on the Jewish communities of Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein in South Africa, and subsequently Sydney and Perth in Australia. In February 1966, he was invited to Perth to accept the position of Chief Rabbi of the Perth Hebrew Congregation. Although he officially retired in 1985, his presence is still actively felt and he continues to give his services on a voluntary basis in a consultative capacity, particularly in *halachic* matters. In the 1990 Australia Day Queen’s honours, Rabbi Coleman was awarded Membership of the Order of Australia and is the only rabbi to have received Imperial and Australian Honours.

In his autobiography *Life is a Corridor*, Rabbi Coleman describes Perth as follow:” I have

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*Dr Israel Abramowitz, a longstanding contributor to Jewish Affairs, is a former Chairman and President of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and now temporarily resident in Perth, Australia.*



travelled far and wide, and I have found no city in the world to compare with its climate, ecology, pace; it is so full of the advantages of living and raising children.”



*The author (right) with Rabbi Shalom Coleman.*

Perth was founded in 1829 following the arrival of Sir James Stirling on the Swan River and the founding of the of the Swan River Colony on the west coast of what was then known as New Holland. (Jewish involvement and participation in early Dutch exploration is recorded in the area even before 1829). Queen Victoria proclaimed city status for Perth in 1856. Both Perth and Fremantle a half hour's drive away developed in relation to the picturesque Swan River, which flows into the Indian Ocean at Fremantle. The river was so named by a Dutch explorer Willem de Vlamingh in 1697 after the black swans in the area. The discovery of gold in the Kimberley and Kalgoorlie areas around 1890 led to a population influx and Perth became established as an important port and trading centre.

Perth remained the capital city of the State of Western Australia, geographically the largest of the states which united in 1901 to form the Federation of Australia. In recent years, Western Australia has undergone considerable development. Its vast mineral resources, and in particular iron ore, have been in global demand. The mining extraction and processing of these commodities have boosted economic development and Western Australia has become the world's third largest iron-ore producer. Mining exploration companies, insurance and financial corporates have located their headquarters and offices in the central business district, where glistening skyscrapers tower into the sky and are visible from afar.

Perth is a picturesque and well-manicured city. Its street trees and vegetation in particular are carefully protected, to avoid anything which could mar their pristine appearance. Dumping of household waste and junk is illegal and members of the public are encouraged to report any evidence of such practices.

Western Australia has become home to a vast variety of the arts, including the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, the West Australian Symphony Orchestra based at the Perth Concert Hall, concert hall venues such as the His

Majesty's Theatre and the Perth Arena, which is set to open in 2012 to host concerts and indoor sporting events.

In 1892, the Perth Hebrew Congregation was founded. It will be celebrating its 120th anniversary in January 2012, and a series of events have been planned for this, including a visit by Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. There are four other Orthodox synagogues in Perth, as well as a Progressive Congregation. All the synagogues are well attended and have active congregational following. The current Chief Rabbi of the Perth Hebrew Congregation is Rabbi David Freilich, who succeeded Rabbi Coleman in 1988.

The provision of kosher facilities is adequate at present, although not on par with that of Melbourne and Sydney. There are several food outlets where kosher food may be obtained. Regrettably, no kosher restaurants have managed to survive. The Maurice Zeffert Home provides a wide selection of pre-packed kosher food for its own residents, as well as on sale to the general public at reasonable prices. There is a well-stocked independent kosher food shop providing a variety of products as well as another independent kosher food outlet. One of the major supermarkets recently commenced making kosher meat from Melbourne available, in a special kosher section of one of its main Perth outlets. They have also a variety of kosher delicacies such as cheeses and pates on sale, and in addition stock a considerable number of kosher food products produced in Israel.

The Carmel Jewish day school is an important feature of Jewish life in Perth. Attended by the majority Jewish children, it enjoys the reputation of providing a high standard of education, on par with that of the Yavneh and Mount Scopus schools in Melbourne, and the Moriah and Masada Jewish day schools in Sydney. All these schools are not 'Yeshivah' schools, but are more akin to the King David schools in Johannesburg and the Herzliya schools in Cape Town. There are five Universities. Many Carmel graduates attend these, although some have looked further afield to Melbourne, Sydney and elsewhere, to pursue their studies and professions. This, in addition to the fact many younger people have relocated to Melbourne, Sydney or gone on *aliyah*, has resulted in some diminution of local population numbers.

Perth is a very Zionist-orientated community and both the Bnei Akiva and Habonim youth movements have large and enthusiastic followings. Their programmes and activities are very similar to their counterparts in South Africa. Camps, seminars and *shabbatonim* are important features of their activities.

Perth offers many attractions to the would-be migrant, particularly in the recreational and communal benefits it provides. It is surrounded by a variety of attractive beaches literally a stone's throw from the residential areas, which provide a welcome escape and relief during the hot summer months.

Perth has many scenic retreats, where one may escape to, for relaxation from the austere central business district and suburban areas. To name a few, there is the Swan Valley, famous for its award winning wines and often referred to as Perth's Valley of Taste, the historic King's Park with its Jewish War Memorial, and neighbouring Fremantle, whose streets have remained unchanged since the last century and where the colonial architecture of its historic buildings have been meticulously preserved and restored. A sports centre was recently completed for the Maccabi organisation of Western Australia, which provides a variety of sporting activities, including soccer, indoor tennis, basketball, table tennis, cricket and karate. The soccer team features prominently among Maccabi activities and participates in a Sunday afternoon league which enjoys an enthusiastic communal following.



*Jewish war memorial, King's Park.*

The Jewish community of Perth is a very friendly and gregarious one and we have been made to feel very welcome since our arrival. There is an abundance of former South Africans and their familiar South African accents readily make one feel at home. Many ex-South Africans with school-going children have settled in suburbs such as Dianella, Yokine, Norunda, Menora and Mount Lawley, in close proximity to the Carmel school.


South African Jewish immigrants tend to maintain an affinity with South Africa. I noted that the Jewish Historical & Genealogical Society of Western Australia recently hosted a presentation on the History of SA Jewry. Surprisingly, there is a paucity of reference to South African political and other matters in the media. The availability of on line editions of South African newspapers has remedied this to an extent. There has been considerable interest in the Tri-Nations rugby tournament, which includes Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and which is played alternately in each of these countries. This is fully covered and featured on Australian TV. The recent World Rugby Cup competition held in New Zealand also evoked considerable interest. It is interesting that South Africans have maintained their support of touring

South African rugby and cricket teams.

The formidable ex-South African presence in Perth has and will continue to have an impact on the city and Australia as a whole. South Africans have infiltrated many aspects of life in Perth and the presence of many South African food brands on the supermarket shelves, and the existence of well known South African food outlets is evidence of this. There are many former South African medical practitioners in practice here. South Africans have found their way into all walks of life, including business education and the rabbinate. Many relocated South Africans are retirees.


A Jewish newspaper called the *Maccabean*, ably edited by former South African Debbie Myerson, appears weekly and finds its way into most Jewish homes. It is of a high standard and is well produced and edited. There is frequent reference in its columns to South African matters. I was recently invited to contribute articles of South African interest and have since had one such article published in its columns.

It is more than likely that Perth will continue to attract South Africans as visitors and potential migrants. The fact that English is the medium of communication and that motor vehicles are driven on the left side of the street will continue to be a plus factor in this regard. The Mediterranean climate in particular is familiar to former Capetonians. These similarities make the transition an almost painless one.



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# 'DEAR MRS STEIN'

\*

Annette Dubovsky

That illustrious family STEIN!

There's a GERT, and there's EP and there's EIN.....

GERT wrote the Books,  
EP worked on Looks,  
And who hasn't heard about EIN?

There MUST be somebody somewhere who remembers Mrs. Stein...THE Mrs. Stein who was caterer par excellence for many a 'simcha' when I was a wide-eyed child. Greatly in demand was Mrs. Stein for her services, the most prestigious of the time – outdoing the Crown-bearing Ginsbergs no less.

Mrs. Stein would actually come and stay from Thursday to Sunday to complete her task. The glittering occasion I remember, with waves of overwhelming nostalgia, is the barmitzva of my cousin Cecil (called by his greatly-loved Hebrew-teacher 'Siessel'). Why do I tell you all this? You'll get the tie-up later.

Most of the activity took place at my grandmothers', especially because of her accommodatingly huge kitchen but also because of the pantry, with shelves literally from floor to ceiling – not to mention drawers – and a cellar with steps descending to the bowels of the earth: CHILDREN STRICTLY PROHIBITED!

Weeks beforehand, as directed by LIST: MRS STEIN (did she have a forename?), supplies were crammed so that there was no accommodation for even a sliver of gelatin ...which reminds me of the Aspic-Jelly: the first set-up must have been a unique miracle of gastronomic engineering. How else would one describe a kitchen-chair with its seat removed, a 'siessel' (there-you-go!) – 'basin' to you – in its place to contain the clear liquid dripping from a chicken-from-who-knows-where....

My details may be somewhat confused, but you'll be relieved to know that the Result was ood and ah-ed as the *chef d'oeuvre* of the occasion.

The lady herself, in a spotless starched white coat (as I remember she arrived, ate, slept and left thus attired) swamped almost out of view with

MANY a mysterious parcel. I never cease to wonder how we coped with our ice-chests of the time, supplemented with the galvanized iron washing-tubs filled with giant ice-blocks, containing the cold-drinks, and puddings of intriguing shapes and shapes and sizes which turned up at the touch of Mrs. Stein's magic wand.

Did I mentioned that it was mid-December – REAL Summer weather (before the Global-Warming gloom descending) – and NOTHING MELTED?

I'd like to believe that there are many of us who remember you fondly, dear Mrs. Stein – they don't make them like you anymore! Thank you for your gracious presence – I'll love you forever.

My apologies for the 'License' in the title! I tried – to no avail – to source the original.

## JEWISH AFFAIRS

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*Annette Dubovsky is a graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand, and qualified as a teacher in Senior English and Afrikaans. She is known for her long-running 'Aunt Betty' column in the Farmers Weekly, and is the author of a cook book entitled Even my best friends have told me.*



# CHANUKAH, 1898

\*

Gita Gordon

My dear wife,

It is two years since we parted. I thought that the time we were apart would be short. People spoke of fortunes to be made as by Sammy Marks, who left a poor youth, the son of an itinerant tailor and who returned when not too many years had passed, in rich clothing, giving away vast sums of money to charity, before leaving again for South Africa.

*Hamelitz* newspaper wrote of the wonderful conditions in a land where there is no discrimination. I left so full of hope that our parting would be a short one. Yet here I am, two years have passed, and in that time I managed to save only half the fare needed to bring you here. Not only that, but each night my thoughts have been, 'What am I bringing her to?'

You see, I share one room with four others. Yet we are scarcely in that room many hours, for every week after Shabbos we set out for the farms to sell our wares. This you already know. What I have not told you before is the bitterness of the life of a peddler. I carry my pack on my back. It is heavy. It must be so or else I would not the goods to sell. Often I cannot sell for money but must barter, taking such things as dried animal skins, making the pack even heavier.

The area I work in is called the Karoo. It is nearly a desert. It has little rain, and when that does come it is on a hot day in summer, and it is unexpected, and it as if the heavens are opening up and sending down the flood of Noah. Sometimes rivers appear, where moments before there was only dry land, and these are so powerful that a man can be swept off his feet and drown.

The distance between the farmhouses is great. It can take more than a day to walk from one farm to another, and this through an area teeming with wildlife and poisonous snakes.

Then at the end of the week, by the time I return to the town for Shabbos, I must get more goods, and get money for the bartered goods, and each week I keep sufficient for my food and rent

and the rest I save for your ticket.

So that is how it goes with me. Then this week I decided I would go to the town in time for Chanukah. Perhaps if I was with other Jews, and I lit in their presence, and we sang *Ma oz Tzur* together, then a miracle would occur and I would have sufficient money to bring you over now, for the burden of waiting is not easy for either of us.

With that in mind, when I finished at the farm, midweek, I thanked them for their hospitality, for truly they are kind these *goyim*, they give me a place to sleep, and fruit and vegetables to eat, and I decided to make my way to the town.

Now I have never done this journey before. Each week I have followed a set route, going to farms in an unvarying order, and then from the last farm to the town. However, I felt that by following the direction of the sun, I would come to the town, in time to wash and change and light the first flame for Chanukah.

On every day here the sun shines bright. On this day it was hidden by clouds. Clouds in this land, all day. I could not believe it, heavy clouds obscuring the sun and no great deluge of rain.

I walked in the direction I felt to be correct but by midday I saw no familiar landmarks and by that time I should have been on the outskirts of the town. I sat down and ate some bread and drank some water, and after bensching very quickly I started walking again.

Then the darkness that was not due to cloud, but the onset of the night, came upon the land. On a few occasions I have spent the night alone on the veldt, but it is not pleasant. So even when the dusk was replaced by darkness I continued walking. Clearly I would not reach the town, or the Jewish community there, but at least I wanted to find a farmhouse and kindle the Chanukah light among people, even if not my people.

Just when I was giving up hope I began to say *tehillim*, and forced myself to walk a bit further. Then it was that I saw a light flickering in the distance. Though I was weary I made my way quickly before it should be extinguished and within less than an hour I was at a farmhouse. Just as I knocked at the door, I looked up and saw a *mezuzah*. I thought I must have come to harm in the veldt, and was suffering from delirium. But the door was opened, and a man peered out at me, and his head was covered with a *yarmulke*, and he saw I was kissing the *mezuzah* and he said "*Shalom Aleichem Reb Yid*".

Now inside the house there was light from

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*Gita Gordon's articles and stories have appeared in Jewish newspapers and publications throughout the world. Her books include: South African Journeys (Judaica Press - Hebrew translation, Temurot, Jerusalem Publications), Flashback (Shaar Press), Mystery in the Amazon (Jerusalem Publications) and Scattered Blossoms (Hamodia Publications).*

lanterns, but thick curtains kept the house warm, and the light within. Only the one light for Chanukah gave off light to the outside. So you can see that finding this house was a Chanukah miracle of the first order.

But more was to follow. Once I had cleaned myself of the dust of the journey, and kindled my light, and eaten my fill of good kosher food, we spoke.

Now here is the amazing thing. This family fled from Tjeldag in Litta, not many years before, when good neighbours told them of a pogrom that the government was causing the next day. They did not wish to harm the Jews among whom they had lived in peace, but they could not go against government orders, so they warned the Jews to leave, helped them to pack their goods, and took them in carts to the nearby port city. Then, when all the Jews were safe, these people took part in the pogrom as ordered. An empty burned house has much the same appearance as a house burned when filled with goods, and so no one in power would know of their deeds.

So there, in the middle of the veldt, I found the Rosh Yeshiva of Tjeldag, and his *Seforim* and Torah, and all that was necessary for life and for study. His wife and children helped in the running of the farm, since by this method of earning a living they could keep the laws of *Shabbos*, whereas a storekeeper in town is unable to do this.

When he heard of my plight, he lent me the money I needed so that now I can buy you a ticket, this ticket that you find with this letter.

Not only that but he will help me purchase a farm near to his. The people there want to leave the Cape and go further north to an Afrikaner republic called the Orange Free State. Their family went ahead, cousins of the wife, and wrote that life is good there, and so they are packing up to leave and wish to sell the farm. I can pay for the purchase of this land to the Rabbi over the next years. He is agreeable to that. He will teach me all I need to know about farming with great flocks of sheep. We will sit together and learn together the laws pertaining to agriculture, to the laws for the care of animals, and the laws pertaining to employing others, for here this business of farming cannot be done without others.

So that is the Miracle that happened this Chanukah. I will meet you when the ship arrives in Cape Town. I will bring you to a home, a fine home, with two rooms and a kitchen. You will have Jewish neighbours. We will lack for nothing

Travel well, and in good spirits.

Your husband

Moshe



Plaque outside Graaff-Reinet, erected in 1989 in honour of the Jewish smouse (pedlars)



## JEWISH MEMORIES OF MANDELA

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Reuben Musiker

The world of the printed book continues to grow exponentially even in a digital age, which is itself peaking. A printed book continues to be born every thirty seconds, while well over a million titles are published annually. Electronic e-books have overtaken hard-covered printed books, yet neither format shows any sign of diminishing in number. South Africa is no exception: books continue to be published at a phenomenal rate and literary festivals are flourishing in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Franschhoek and elsewhere.

Books by and about South Africa's struggle icons, and in particular Nelson Mandela, have mushroomed. With regard to Mandela, the field has been spearheaded by Mandela's own *Long Walk to Freedom* and variants such as the *Illustrated Long Walk to Freedom*. The most recent book by Mandela himself is the authorised book of his quotations. In the feverish literary output surrounding Mandela, a work which is fully in the same spirit as *Long Walk to Freedom* is *Nelson Mandela: Conversations with Myself* published in 2010. This book succeeds most admirably in giving readers access to the private man behind the public figure from letters written in the darkest hours of Mandela's twenty seven years of imprisonment to the draft of an unfinished sequel to *Long Walk to Freedom* as well as his written journals while on the run during the anti-apartheid struggles of the early 1960s. In the pages of this unique biographical and historical volume, Mandela is seen to be neither an icon nor a saint. Here is an intimate journey, brilliantly crafted by the distinguished history scholar, Professor Tim Couzens, covering Mandela's life from the initial stirrings of his political conscience to his galvanising role on the world stage confirming that true greatness is indeed inborn.

Books about Mandela have proliferated since the advent of South Africa's democracy in 1994.

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*Reuben Musiker is Professor Emeritus of Librarianship and Bibliography, University of the Witwatersrand. He has published widely on issues of Jewish and general interest, is Library Consultant, SA Jewish Board of Deputies, and has served for over thirty years on the editorial board of Jewish Affairs.*

The definitive authorised biography is by Anthony Sampson. Also well researched is Martin Meredith's biography of Mandela. David Jones Smith's *The Young Madiba* covers Mandela's life before his imprisonment in 1964. A stirring photographic monograph is *Nelson Mandela: a Life in Photographs* by the renowned New York Times photographer, David Elliot Cohen. An inspiring well illustrated book about Mandela is *Mandela: a Force for Freedom*, written by a gifted science educator, Christina Scott, who tragically lost her life in a car related accident in October 2011. Anna Trapido's *Hunger for Freedom*, the story of food in the life of Nelson Mandela, deals with a more specialised aspect of Mandela's life. *Mandela: The Authorized Portrait* by Mike Nicol, published in 2006, includes numerous excellent contributions by those who were associated with him, such as Helen Suzman.

In the year 2006, there appeared a major work of broad parameters: *The World that Made Nelson Mandela: A Heritage Trail - 70 Sites of Significance*. This book was crafted by the eminent South African historian, Luli Callinicos. The distinguished South African Nobel Prize Laureate, Nadine Gordimer, described the publication as a stunningly fascinating book. It is a documentary blend of social, geographic and historical importance. Using a thousand images from past and present, it takes the reader through the real South Africa of rural areas, poor locations and affluent city areas linked in the anti-apartheid struggle.

*Jewish Memories of Mandela*, even within its narrower focus, is likewise richly deserving of the highest praise. Here credit is due principally to David Saks, himself a professional history scholar who has served the South African Jewish Board of Deputies for many years, initially as Senior Researcher and subsequently as Associate Director. Concurrently, for the past twelve years, he has served as Executive Editor of the Board's journal, *Jewish Affairs*, which has been published continuously since 1941, making it the oldest and certainly the most important journal of Jewish studies in the African diaspora. *Jewish Memories of Mandela* is arguably Saks' magnum opus, a remarkable achievement in the field of South African Jewish historical studies.



For the reviewer, the real highlight and unique aspect of the book, is the painstaking and skilful assemblage of over a hundred profiles interwoven into the historical narrative of the book. These profiles include personalities from every walk of life; Rabbis, including Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris and Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein; Jewish communal leaders; political activists such as Ruth First, Joe Slovo, Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe; legal luminaries such as Isie Maisels, Sydney Kentridge, Richard Goldstone, Arthur Chaskalson and Albie Sachs; business leaders including Mendel Kaplan, Eric Samson and Bertie Lubner; Parliamentarians such as Helen Suzman and Tony Leon; medical specialists like Jack Kussel and Michael Plit; journalists like Benjamin Pogrund and sports personalities like Ali Bacher and Joel Stransky.

In many cases, these personalities have related their interactions with Mandela in their own words, providing a unique insight into Mandela's ability to connect with all, young and old.

*Jewish Memories of Mandela* is not the first publication to deal with Mandela's Jewish connections. It was preceded by Hilly Golombick's *Madiba*, published in 2008 in association with the SA Jewish Board of Deputies as a Jewish celebration of Mandela's ninetieth birthday, and as a brief tribute to him by the South African Jewish community. *Jewish Memories of Mandela* is by far the more comprehensive and formidable volume, a lasting tribute to the bond between Madiba and South African Jewry.

The photographs in the book complement the text in providing, in many cases, unique historical significance to the events of Mandela's life and to the accounts of those associated with him throughout his career. Many of these photographs have never been published before and credit should be given to the research team who identified them and provided captions for publication. The absence in some instances of specific sources and acknowledgements of reproduction permission is regrettable, as is the absence of page numbering in the middle section of the book.

The reviewer has certain reservations about the physical format of *Jewish Memories of Mandela*. It is a somewhat massive volume, which places severe pressure on the book's binding with a suggestion of cover warping. This is a drawback in an age when readers are faced with limited living space and are increasingly turning to e-books as a solution. The book's weightiness is partly due to the inclusion in the final section of glossy portrait photographs on a thicker paper than that used in the rest of the text. Many of these photographs have been greatly enlarged, not always with a successful outcome, as blurring and distortion have resulted. It would have been better to have confined enlargements to landscapes, group photographs and street views. In the middle section of the book, there is a series of unnumbered pages containing photographs of

political unrest riots from the 1976 Soweto Uprising onwards. The reviewer feels that these, though historically important in themselves, did not need to be included in such quantity as they are of lesser relevance for the specific focus of the book.

The omission of a formal title page, as distinct from the preceding half-title page, is most unfortunate in a book of such importance. A publisher's logo, in this case of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, would have been an enhancement. The great majority of published books do bear this feature.

Despite these blemishes, *Jewish Memories of Mandela* is a book which will surely be treasured world-wide and will take its rightful place in the annals of South African Jewish history. It will enjoy pride of place in its accurate portrayal of the significant contribution of the Jewish community to the democratization of South Africa, and serve as a role model for other parts of the world.

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## THE ROUTLEDGE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF JEWISH WRITERS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY [2010]

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Roy Robins

*The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century (2010)* is an enormous and informative compendium of capsule biographies and concise critical essays on notable novelists, essayists, playwrights and poets. In the book's foreword, editor Sorrel Kerbel abdicates herself from the admittedly impossible task of defining the Jewish writer. Indeed, to condense Jewish literature into a cluster of ideas and ideals is reductive, even offensive. And yet to deny the humanity, originality, intelligence and restless re-invention of so much of Jewish writing is equally short-sighted.

*Jewish Writers* is prefaced by five introductory essays: 'American-Jewish Literature' by Mark Shechner; 'British-Jewish Literature' by Bryan H. Cheyette; 'Hebrew Literature in the 20th Century' by Leon I. Yudkin; 'Holocaust Writing' by Sue Vice; and 'Yiddish Writing in the 20th Century' by Joel Berkowitz.

Shechner's self-consciously idiomatic prose is appropriately muscular and rewardingly robust: 'The children and grandchildren of butchers, grocers, peddlers, junk dealers, garment workers, even rabbis and scholars, came of age all at once in a kind of Jewish baby-boom and elbowed their way into the cultural arena by the force of their ambitions and the keenness of their intellects.' The sentence echoes, in tone as well as theme, the opening line of Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), one of the most influential Jewish-American novels of the last century: 'I am an American, Chicago born – Chicago, that sombre city – and go at things as I have taught myself, freestyle, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent.' Shechner praises the pre-*Augie March* Bellow as a stylist – he admires the 'rhythmic and melodic tonalities' of the author's first two novels – while I would argue that he was anything but. Shechner argues that Bellow was 'at his best as a writer when desperate and uncertain.' But cannot the same be said of all artists?

In his essay, Cheyette looks at the limitations of Jews writing in, and about, Britain, and notes

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**Roy Robins** was a 2010-11 Gordon Institute of Performing and Creative Arts fellow. He was formerly the online editor for *Granta* magazine. He holds an MA degree in English Literature.

that 'Jews have had to fight Britishness throughout their careers, and sometimes Britishness wins.' He counsels writers to 'transcend' their 'Britishness', and to 'use their Jewishness to extend the range of the novel in England well beyond its more parochial concerns.' He asks, 'What is it about Britishness that is so deforming?' – a question answered recently and thoroughly by Anthony Julius, in *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (2010).

Yudkin's essay examines modern Hebrew literature, from early experiments with stream-of-consciousness to the innovative narrative techniques employed by contemporary writers such as A.B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz. The surveys by Vice (which takes note of everyone from Anne Frank to Aharon Appelfeld) and Berkowitz are equally incisive.

The book's more than three hundred and thirty author essays vary in quality greatly. Several of the entries on British and North American writers are – to use *Augie March*'s word – a little too 'freestyle'. Stephen Wade's essay on Woody Allen shifts between easy sentiment and poststructuralist claptrap. Wade claims that Allen 'textualizes the Representative Jew', an assertion that is likely to make sense to no one. He writes that 'Allen's concerns with Jewishness in his major work are always difficult to access as his dominant methods are the application of parody and irony.' But parody and irony, one could argue, are as valid and accessible entry points into critical analysis as any. Wade unintentionally demonstrates how difficult it is to give critical attention to comic writing, to place the ridiculous under the microscope of the serious (or, in this instance, self-serious).

Richard Tuerk's entry on Saul Bellow eschews analysis in favour of endless synopsis. One feels as if one is being buried under a mountain of crib notes. 'Summarizing the plots of Bellow's work,' Tuerk writes, 'hardly does them justice.' Quite.

In her entry on Steven Berkoff, Sally Whyte describes her subject as a 'mesmerizing actor/director', as though she is writing a profile for her high school newspaper. In other words, there are instances when these essays are too academic, and instances when one wishes them to be more so.

Contributor Richard Crownshaw views the novelist Paul Auster's work exclusively through

the lens of Holocaust fiction (I suspect this entry began life as an essay on that subject, but it is injudicious to include it here), which is hardly representative of Auster's oeuvre. There exists, then, an imbalance: Crownshaw's thesis is narrow, while the book's intention is broad. The result is to marginalize and misrepresent Auster, a writer who has many significant influences, themes and techniques.

Fortunately, the majority of these entries are lucid, rigorous and insightful. For contributor Gerald de Groot, E.L. Doctorow is 'a master stylist without an individual voice', an accurate assessment, which functions as both praise and rebuke. Edward A. Abramson is refreshingly critical of Bernard Malamud, whose 'best writing focuses on Jews. When he turns to other groups – Italians, African Americans, WASPS [sic] – a certain edge is missing'. For contributor Louise Sylvester, Howard Jacobson (last year's winner of the Man Booker Prize) 'epitomizes the Anglo-Jewish writer who holds both parts of this identity in equally unhappy juxtaposition.' Linda Grant (herself an acclaimed novelist) assesses Andrea Dworkin with admirable sensitivity, while Alex Gordon's entry on David Mamet is as compelling as one of his subject's plays.

Kerbel (whose own entries on Marcel Proust and Isaac Babel are especially astute) should be commended on taking risks with some of her

selections. For example, Norman Ravitch's essay on Leonard Cohen is one of the best in the book. For Ravitch, the young Cohen was 'an odder Bob Dylan, a less soulful Van Morrison, a more street savvy Nick Drake, forcing his love of popular forms into the most serious of artistic shapes.' Ravitch's entry works so well because his prose is elastic and imaginative, appropriately hip and inarguably informed, at once compact and somehow expansive.

*Jewish Writers* includes strong entries on French, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese and Russian writers. Kerbel is a native South African, and the book includes essays on Sydney Clouts (by his wife, Marge Clouts), Nadine Gordimer (by Marcia Leveson), Ronald Harwood, Dan Jacobson and Sarah Gertrude Millin.

What, then – if anything – constitutes Jewish writing? Shechner comes perhaps the closest to an answer, when he notes that '[i]t would be a wonder if the trials of history were not reflected in literature and were not indeed the very heart and soul of it, not only in its themes but in its very character as a form of expression – its nervousness, its vividness, its fluxions of emotions.' Literature is integral to Jews (the People of the Book), and Jews in turn are integral to literature, past and present, as this valuable and often vibrant volume attests.

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## THE OTHER BOOKER PRIZE

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Hilda Sandak-Lewin

Doctor Azila Talit Reisenberger, Head of the Hebrew Studies Department at the University of Cape Town and author of a number of well-known poetry books and plays in both English and Hebrew, has produced a most entertaining book with the audacious title: *The Other Booker Prize*.

If her poetry is in the main deeply personal, this book (described on the cover as a *Memoir of a Fictitious Character*), is a roller coaster of adventures and misadventures with amazing, sometimes life altering co-incidences, derived both from her own experiences as well as those of various friends and woven into a fabric of frolic stories in which autobiography, biography and

imagination are intertwined.

Reisenberger writes with sparkling honesty and unabashedly sends herself up, as when she describes her lack of linguistic skills and teenage lack of discipline. The only sentence she recalls of her French lessons at school are from her exasperated teacher who would tell her to "*sortie de la classe*". With a simple twist of phrase, she turns the mundane into merriment: "After the Israeli army had survived my two years' service..."

The author's accounts of her escapades in Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy ("far enough from her home to do her own thing, but close enough to drop off her laundry") once again thoroughly amuse. Instructed to design something which will benefit the community, she designs a toilet! She justifies her design but impresses not her lecturer, at which point she throws in the towel and decides to go travelling.

Again with total honesty, Reisenberger reveals another side of her personality - her vulnerability.

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*Hilda Sandak-Lewin sang for CAPAB (Cape Performing Arts Board) for over thirty years before her retirement. She studied Hebrew under Azila Reisenberger at the University of Cape Town.*



No longer the impudent imp at school or in the army, she is faced with weeks of loneliness in countries where she cannot communicate with anyone as she speaks only Hebrew. How she deals with this loneliness and how misfortune turns into good fortune through her tenacity, resourcefulness and courage, makes fascinating reading.

Reisenberger's later entry into Cape Town as an invisible unknown, struggling to find her feet as a new immigrant who can barely speak English, and how she arrived step by step where she is today - a well-known, much loved personality - likewise makes compelling reading (always with a touch of humour thrown in!)

Underlying all lie the thread of morality ingrained in the author by her mother since

childhood: "What is right is right - and what is wrong is wrong", something she fiercely adhered to as shown in the various incidents recounted. Her father's influence to be nice to people and not to embarrass them is another lesson that she has carried with her through life - though she proves again and again that she is no sissy and when called for will "get even" for the sake of justice.

This is a good, easy read in colloquial language - but reader, beware! Do not fall into the trap of believing that everything you read really happened. It is after all *The Memoir of a Fictitious Character*.

*The Other Booker Prize* by Azila Talit Reisenberger. Published by Pretext in association with GreenSea Publishers. Cape Town, 2011.

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## THE FARHUD: ROOTS OF THE ARAB-NAZI ALLIANCE IN THE HOLOCAUST

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Gary Selikow

Edwin Black's *The Farhud: Roots of the Arab-Nazi Alliance in the Holocaust* is a penetrating and insightful look into the Islamic-Nazi alliance of World War II, the bloody pogrom of Jews by Arab mobs in Baghdad in June, 1941, the background to these events and the relevance of oil, ideology and Islam to them.

Islam had a long history of contempt for and subjugation of the Jews, who in Islamic countries were reduced to the status of humiliated and subjugated second class citizens. Their position is summed up by the term dhimmitude, defined by Wikipedia as "denoting an attitude of concession, surrender and appeasement towards Islamic demands".

Dhimmi were barred from building any structure higher than a Muslim's, could not ride horses but only donkeys without saddles, could not build any new houses of worship or repair existing ones and were forbidden from making any noises that would attract attention to their worship or the burial of their dead. They had to wear distinctive clothes to identify them. Jews had to wear yellow, and the mandatory yellow patch which was forced upon the Jews by the Nazis had its origins in Baghdad, and not in Medieval Europe as is commonly believed.

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

The idea of Jews in the Middle East being sovereign in an independent State, and not subjugated to Muslim rule and humiliated under Dhimmi status is what was intolerable to the Arabs. These are the roots of the violent Arab rejection of the state of Israel, and before that of migration of Jews into the Land of Israel.

From 1920, attacks against Jews spread like wildfire in the Land of Israel, instigated by the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al Hussein, a rabid Jew-hater. The bloody 1929 pogroms and massacres of Jews that spread throughout Israel were sparked in September the previous year by Jews at the Western Wall contravening the dhimmi laws by erecting benches to sit on and partitions to separate men from women. Killings of Jews began first in Jerusalem, and in due course led to the horrific pogrom against the ancient Jewish community of Hebron:

House to house they went bursting into every room looking for hiding Jews. Religious scrolls or books were burned or torn to shreds. The defenceless Jews were variously beheaded, castrated, their breasts and fingers sliced off, and in some cases their eyes plucked from their sockets. Infants and adults, men and women, it mattered not. The carnage went on for hours, with the Arab policemen standing down. Blood ran in streamlets down the narrow stone staircases outside the buildings house by house, room by room the savagery was repeated.

This was followed by the Arab pogroms of 1936, the emergence of an Arab-Nazi Alliance and the spread of the Holocaust to Iraq, where Jews were massacred in Baghdad by pro-Nazi Arab mobs. This last is an event which the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has refused to acknowledge, perhaps out of a politically correct determination not to blacken the names of the Arabs or create an association of the Arab radicals with the Nazis.

The book goes on to highlight how traditional Islamic anti-Jewish attitudes found a willing ally in Nazi Germany, with the instrumental role played by Husseini. The latter met with Hitler, worked closely with Eichmann, and wrote letters to Axis governments preventing the transportations of thousands of Jewish children from Bulgaria and Hungary to safety in the Holy Land. Hungarian Jewry instead was sent in large numbers to the death camps.

Iraq gained independence in 1932, and Nazi infiltration followed within a year. The Christian owned daily *al Aram-al-Arabi* (The Arab World) published daily extracts from the Arabic edition of *Mein Kampf*.

As German influence strengthened a pro-Nazi society, *al Muthana*, was set up in Basra and Mosul in 1935. It was led by a well-known Jew-hater Dr Saib Shawkat, director of the Royal hospital in Baghdad and whose brother, fellow medical doctor Sami Shawkat, founded the anti-British and anti-Jewish Futuwa youth brigades.

Hitler's ambassador to Baghdad, Fritz Grobba, played the lead role in Iraq in disseminating anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist propaganda, and his provocations were covered in newspapers of the day from Palestine to Great Britain. He claimed that 85% of commerce in Iraq was in Jewish hands and that Jews were not true Iraqis but a foul species apart. Dozens of Iraqi Jews were killed in attacks by pro-Nazi Iraqis. In a report to Berlin on 6 June, 1939, Grobba railed: "The Jews are the source of propaganda against the Italians and Germans in Iraq". He threatened a bloody massacre of Jews in Iraq: "If the Jews continue to make it difficult for Iraq with their deeds, a day will come when the anger of the masses erupts and the result will be a massacre of Jews. When an oriental people's feelings erupt, all restraint disappears: They want to see blood".

The central event referred to in the book is the Farhud, the orgy of violence on 1-2 June 1941 - the Jewish holiday of Shavuot - in which Arab Nazi sympathisers went on a rampage of murder, rape and pillaging against the 2600 year-old Jewish community. The riots occurred in a power vacuum following the collapse of the pro-Nazi government of Rashid Ali, when the city was in a state of instability. Before British and Transjordanian forces intervened, over 600 Jews had been killed and thousands injured, and thousands of Jewish homes had been destroyed.

Harrowing eye-witness testimonies are recounted by the author:

Infants were viciously bashed to death against the pavement and were thrown lifeless into the Tigris. Jewish women - hundreds of them - were mercilessly and openly raped in front of their husbands, in front of their parents, in front of their children, in front of wild Muslim mobs. If the woman was pregnant, sometimes she was first raped, and then sliced open to destroy the unborn baby; only then was she killed. Men who defended their women and children were killed and their homes plundered.

The original plans for the 1941 anti-Jewish terror on 1-2 June had been to mimic Nazi extermination camps in Europe. Lists of Jews were compiled using the familiar approach the Nazis and their allies had employed.

It is important to realize that the Farhud was a mass movement, not the actions of a gang or a few errand officers. By 1951 110 000 Jews - 80% of Iraqi Jewry - had emigrated from the country, mostly to Israel. The Farhud has been called the "forgotten pogrom of the Holocaust" and "the beginning of the end of the Jewish community of Iraq".

One common denominator characterizing the Nazi-Arab confluence was the joint conviction that Jews constituted a menace by their very existence, and had to be exterminated. The book covers the SS and Wehrmacht units of Bosnian Muslims that worked with the bloodthirsty Croatian Ustasha in killing millions of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies in Yugoslavia. It goes on to document the spreading of the Holocaust to North Africa, where local Arabs, sponsored by the Nazis, murdered thousands of North African Jews. The Arab-Nazi collaboration puts the lie to the Islamic claim that the Arabs had nothing to do with the Holocaust and therefore should not suffer the indignity of tolerating a Jewish entity in their midst.

In the last chapter, the author also describes the continuation of the Arab support for Nazi ideology after the Holocaust, and the refuge given by Egypt to such Nazi war criminals as Aribert Heim, Alfred Zingler and Johan Von Leers.

The Farhud is essential reading for those seeking to understand the roots of Arab hatred for Israel and Jews. It has particular resonance today, at a time when the Jews of the Middle East are threatened with another Holocaust, and when the ideologies of the mufti, the Farhud and the Arab-Nazi alliance live again in the ideologies of Hamas, Hezbollah, the Islamic Brotherhood, Al Qaeda and the Kahamenei-Ahmadinejad regime in Iran.

*The Farhud: Roots of the Arab-Nazi Alliance in the Holocaust* by Edwin Black, Dialog Press, 2010, 464pp.

## new POETRY

### Confidences

I had to confide in someone  
So I confided in paper  
Paper is silent  
It can take anything  
I could pour out my anger  
I could weep ...  
I could rejoice ...

For me, poems are what  
Friends are to other people  
They are what I cannot tell anyone  
I wrote them so that they could  
Only be understood  
By someone with similar experiences  
Someone who was somewhat like me

*Charlotte Cohen*

### Poem 1

there I sit,  
fair hair  
cheerfully curled,  
dolls close by.  
another snap,  
a gap-toothed smile,  
the first day of school.

forgotten moments.  
my young life  
has disappeared,  
leaving the smile  
of a Cheshire cat  
in wonderland.

*RosPosel*

### The City of Stone

Jerusalem the city of stone  
For generations deserted and left alone  
In the past she was a glorious beauty  
And a pilgrimage to her was a sacred duty  
Now she is a fading flower  
And what is left is the Western Wall and David's Tower  
In her narrow winding streets  
Weeping angels one meets  
Where has her beauty gone?  
What is left is a city of stone  
Because she was trampled raped and defiled  
By godless and brutal enemies running wild  
Now she has been partly restored  
By the grace of our eternal Lord  
Why she has suffered such a brutalized history  
Will remain an unsolved mystery

*Israel Silberhaft*

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