

JEWISH AFFAIRS




Chanukah 2014

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ISSN 0021 • 6313



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JEWISH AFFAIRS

MISSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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011 645 2583

TYPESETTING/PRINTING – Bookpress, Johannesburg

© South African Jewish Board of Deputies 2014

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

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies

JEWISH AFFAIRS is published 3 times annually

Annual subscription R140 including VAT and postage

Overseas Subscriptions R300

Postal Address: PO Box 87557, Houghton 2041

david@sajbd.org

FRONT COVER IMAGE

Jewish Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade in Potchefstroom on the eve of their departure for German East Africa, World War II

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JEWISH AFFAIRS

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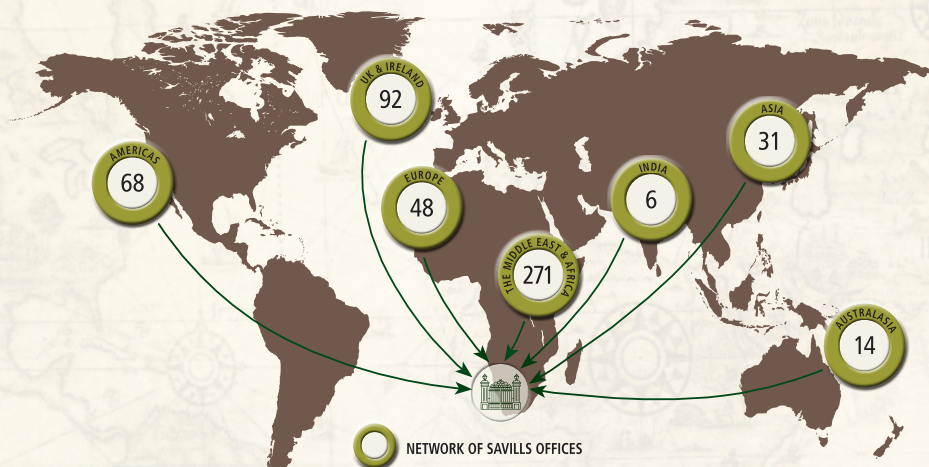


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OBITUARIES

MERVYN MYER SMITH

*

David Saks



Mervyn Smith (right) with Nelson Mandela and Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, when Mandela visited the Green & Sea Point Hebrew Congregation in May 1994.

Shortly before this issue went to print Mervyn Smith, one of the most eminent Jewish communal leaders in South Africa as well as in the arena of international Jewish politics, passed away in Cape Town at the age of 77. It is a mark of the esteem in which he was held that his passing occasioned tributes and obituaries throughout the global Jewish media.

For generations of Jewish communal leaders and professionals, Mervyn Smith provided an invaluable source of support and advice. Michael Bagraim, who in 2003 became the second Capetonian to be elected as SAJBD Chairman, described him as “a friend, adviser and mentor” who had been instrumental in advising and guiding him in most of the positions he had held both within the community and outside. This included his present position as a Democratic Alliance Member of Parliament. Smith was a long-acting DA Attorney, and shortly before his death was awarded the Democracy Award by the party.

While born in Vereeniging in the then Transvaal, Smith lived most of his life in the Cape Province, initially in Vosburg in the Karoo and thereafter in Bellville, Cape Town. He later practised law in Belleville, where he also played cricket for 25 years and ultimately became life president of the Bellville Cricket Club. Other positions he held outside of the Jewish

community included those of President of the Law Societies of South Africa and the chairmanships of the Performing Arts Council of South Africa, the Cape Performing Arts Board and the Cape Town City Ballet.

Parallel to these activities, Smith was involved in Jewish affairs from an early age, being active in Habonim and serving as chairman of the University of Cape Town branch of the Students Jewish Association. He was first elected to the Cape Council of the Board of Deputies in the 1970s, serving two terms as chairman between 1983 and 1987. In 1991, he became the first-ever person outside of Johannesburg to be elected National Chairman of the Board. During his tenure, he was instrumental in establishing the African Jewish Congress to act as the representative, coordinating body for the Jewish communities of Sub-Saharan Africa and served continually as its president for the remainder of his life. His growing stature as an international Jewish leader was demonstrated by his appointment as a vice president of the World Jewish Congress and, in May last year, as co-chairman of its Policy Council. He was also a Director of the Claims Conference for Material Claims against Germany, and for many years represented South Africa on that body.

Smith was a stalwart supporter of *Jewish Affairs*, which he regarded as one of the jewels in the crown of the SAJBD. Over the years, he contributed a number of noteworthy articles to the journal, focusing on issues relating to South African Jewry and politics and legal issues pertaining to the community.

Always deeply opposed to the apartheid system, Smith was at the forefront of those within the SAJBD pushing for the organisation to adopt a firm moral position against it. These efforts bore fruit during the 1980s, when the Board adopted resolutions unequivocally condemning apartheid at its national conferences. During the years of transition to multiracial democracy, he was firmly of the view that the Jewish community should not only welcome the process, but participate in and contribute to it. His chairmanship was very much focused on pursuing those goals, which underpin the

vision and strategy of the SAJBD to this day. For his “contributions to reconciliation, change and empowerment in South Africa in the fields of business and/or art, science, sport or philanthropy”, Smith became only the second Capetonian to receive the Lexus Lifetime Achiever Award.

Another area in which Smith was extensively involved was in combatting antisemitism, particularly in the legal sphere. One of Cape Town’s most respected attorneys, he devoted countless hours gratis to fighting the Board’s battles, of which the epic hate speech cases against Radio 786 and against COSATU International Relations

Spokesperson Bongani Masuku were just two of many examples. He was especially passionate about Holocaust commemoration and education, and in that regard was a long-serving chairman of the Board of Trustees of the South African Holocaust and Genocide Foundation.

Smith is survived by his children Paul, Deborah, Raphael and Abigail, seven grandchildren and brother, David. He was predeceased by his wife Tamar, a teacher who headed the SAJBD’s Religious Instruction Department, and a daughter, Rinah.

Ronnie Mink

*

Isaac Reznik



Ronnie Mink - Yerachmiel Monat ben Dov Eliezer Ronal - passed away in October after a long illness courageously borne. A superb teacher, expert on the Holocaust and brilliant historian, he contributed a number of articles to *Jewish Affairs* on subjects relating to Jewish history and the Holocaust.

Ronnie Mink was born in Vryheid, Natal, to Barney and Cecelia Mink, nee Reichenberg, one of six daughters of the late Rabbi Moshe and Rebbetzin Sima Lieba Reichenberg (with whom I had the honor and privilege to personally be associated with when Rabbi Reichenberg was the Rabbi of the Jeppetown Hebrew Congregation). After matriculating at Vryheid High School, he completed a B.A Degree at the University of the Witwatersrand, and thereafter

obtained a Higher Education Diploma at the Johannesburg College of Education. He also obtained a post graduate B.Ed degree, doing research into the history of education in Swaziland for his thesis.

In 1974, Ronnie was appointed Vice-Principal of the Yeshiva College in Johannesburg. After three years, he joined the staff of King David High School Linksfield, where he served with dedication and loyalty for 34 years. He became Head of the Department of Jewish Studies and a Vice-Principal of the school until his retirement. In 1980, he studied Jewish History at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, specialising in the Holocaust, and during 1984/85 studied at Elton College in Israel.

For eight consecutive years from 1988, Ronnie led learners on the March of the Living to the extermination camps in Europe. Along with the late Dr. Jocelyn Hellig, he gave many lectures on antisemitism and the Holocaust at Wits. He further established and chaired a branch of Yad Vashem in Johannesburg, organizing regular seminars and lectures, and was for many years involved with the SAJBD in organizing the annual Yom Hashoah ceremonies at West Park Cemetery.

Ronnie will be remembered by his colleagues, past pupils and friends as an educator par excellence as well as a kind and compassionate person devoted to his family. He is survived by his wife Marla, daughters Melissa and Daniella, sons-in law, grandchildren and brother Dr. Jackie Mink.

May His Memory be for a Blessing.

RABBI NORMAN (NACHMAN) MEIR BERNHARD

*

Isaac Reznik



Rabbi Norman (Nachman) Meir Bernhard, ztl, one of the leading figures in the South African rabbinate, passed away, aged 81, on 1 October, after a long illness borne with enormous courage and fortitude.

Rabbi Bernhard arrived in South Africa from the USA in 1965. He grew up in the West Bronx of New York City, and attended Yeshiva University. After graduating, he received his rabbinical training under the tutelage of one of the most eminent figures in American Jewish Orthodox life, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik of Boston, in the first class of an expanded new *smicha* programme.

At the time of his passing, Rabbi Bernhard was Rabbi Emeritus of the Oxford

Synagogue Centre, where he served as rabbi for 35 years. During that time, both the Jewish community and the South African nation as a whole witnessed important and indeed fundamental changes. Rabbi Bernhard arrived in the country when the governing system of apartheid was entrenched in the country's political and social life. The Jewish community was numerically much larger than it is now. Religious observance was not as vigorous as it is at present, and Jewish education was in the early stages of dynamic development.

Despite being the spiritual leader of a particular congregation, Rabbi Bernhard played a significant role in all these areas. He was involved in all spheres of communal activity, including with the SA Zionist Federation, SA Jewish Board of Deputies, Federation of Synagogues, Lubavitch Foundation and SA Board of Jewish Education. A prolific writer, he contributed a number of articles to *Jewish Affairs* over the years.

Rabbi Bernhard was a very popular congregational rabbi, public speaker, educationist and raconteur, as well as being an anti-apartheid activist and a much sought-after counsellor. He was the founder of the religious day school that became the Torah Academy, and later founded the Oxford Synagogue Social Action Centre, today known as the Oxford Synagogue Skills for Adults Centre (Ossac).

Rabbi Bernhard is survived by his life partner of 53 years, Rebbetzin Joan Bernhard, who supported him in all his endeavors, his daughters, sons, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and many grandchildren and great grandchildren. South African Jewry owes a great debt of gratitude to him. May his Memory be for a Blessing.

THE GREAT WAR AND WORLD JEWRY – CENTENARY REFLECTIONS

*

Anthony Grenville

August 2014 marked the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, arguably the most important turning point in modern European history. The Great War destroyed the old European order that had lasted since the settlement reached at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. It also ushered in a new and dangerously volatile era of insecurity and conflict, creating the conditions for regimes that were bent on violence and conquest and were prepared to practise mass killing on an



Sir John Monash, Commander of the Australian Corps, widely considered to have been one of the best Allied generals during World War I.

Anthony Grenville lectured in German at the universities of Reading, Bristol and Westminster, United Kingdom, from 1971 to 1996. He is now Consultant Editor of AJR Journal, the monthly journal of the Association of Jewish Refugees, London. This article first appeared in the August 2014 (Vol. 14, No. 8) issue of the AJR Journal, and is reproduced here by kind permission.

unprecedented scale. The First World War was the *Urkatastrophe*, the original catastrophe without which the great dictators and mass murders of the mid-20th Century – Stalin and their imitators – would not have been possible.

Whereas the fate of the Jews of Europe became a central issue during the Second World War, given that Nazi Germany, the power principally responsible for launching that war, wished to destroy them in their entirety, the role of Jews in the First World War is at first sight harder to pinpoint. Nevertheless, the Jews who fought in the armies of the chief European belligerent powers numbered around one million, to which must be added some 200 000 who served in the American forces from 1917.

The attitudes of these combatant Jews varied from country to country. In Tsarist Russia, which contained the largest concentration of Jews in the world, Jews were subject to severe discrimination and persecution. Jews had long sought to escape conscription into the Russian army and, though many fought loyally even in the face of the ingrained antisemitism of the Tsarist officer corps, others were disaffected; after the enormous casualties suffered by the Russian armies in their unsuccessful campaigns of 1914-15, Jews were among those who turned towards the parties hostile to the war and the Tsarist autocracy.

Russia's enemies benefitted from that country's record of reactionary excesses. In Germany, the Kaiser's government portrayed its decision to go to war in August 1914 in part as a defensive measure justified by the expected onslaught of the 'Russian steamroller' from the east. Russia was the natural enemy of the Jews and of the liberal, democratic



Service for Russian Jewish soldiers in the Hammerstein POW camp, West Prussia



A group of Lithuanian Jewish soldiers, World War I

institutions on which their gradual integration into the more advanced societies of Western Europe was predicated. Many German Jews allowed themselves to be persuaded that the preservation of the civil and political rights they had been granted over the decades was bound up with the struggle against Russia. It is, however, undeniable that Germany's Jews were mostly motivated to flock to the colours by pure patriotism. It has long been known that German Jews equalled, or even excelled, their gentile compatriots in their eagerness to fight for their country in time of war.



Berthold Altman, who served in a German Infantry battalion on the Eastern Front.

While their parents sank their savings into German government war bonds, young Jews like the writer Ernst Toller, who was studying at the University of Grenoble in France when war broke out and only got back to Germany with difficulty, proved their patriotism by joining up, inspired by the mood of national

euphoria in August 1914. About 100 000 Jews served in the German forces during the First World War, and some 12000 died. The writer Thomas Mann, whose attitude to Jews had previously been somewhat ambivalent, movingly recorded in his diary the shock he felt when, after the war's end, he saw how many men with the name Cohen were listed among the fallen. In recognising the patriotism displayed by Germany's Jews, Mann was, however, an exception among non-Jewish German patriots and nationalists. As early as 1916, the belief that Jews were failing to support the German war effort was so widespread in right-wing quarters that the Prussian Ministry of War undertook its notorious *Judenzählung* (census of Jews in the German forces), pandering to the swelling tide of war-fuelled antisemitism; when the census showed that Jews were serving in proportion to their numbers in the population, its findings were suppressed.

Many Association of Jewish Refugees members will have had fathers, uncles, grandfathers and other relatives who fought in the First World War and kept their decorations and certificates as proud mementoes of their service to the country of their birth, even though no amount of Iron Crosses could save a Jew from discrimination and persecution after 1933. Before 1914, Jews had not been admitted to the German officer corps; but by 1918, some 2000 Jews had been commissioned as officers, and a further 1200 served as medical officers. This was a source of great pride to the individuals themselves, to their families and to their entire community. Herbert Sulzbach, a German-Jewish refugee who served with distinction in the British army in the Second World War, reaching the rank of captain, remained equally proud of having attained the rank of lieutenant in the Kaiser's army in the First World War. Geoffrey Perry, born Horst Pinschewer in Berlin, who also distinguished himself in the British forces in the Second World War (he captured the traitor William Joyce, aka Lord Haw-Haw) had as a child had to listen so often to his father's patriotic stories of his First World War exploits in the Kaiser's army that he refused to talk about his own wartime experiences until well into the 1970s.

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg has recently written movingly about the deep-felt patriotism of his grandfather, Rabbi Dr Georg Salzberger, who served as a Jewish chaplain in the German army in the First World War and, after immigrating to Britain in 1939, was for many years the minister at Belsize Square. Salzberger, argues his grandson, saw wartime service as the ultimate proof that German Jews had, through their patriotic contribution to the national cause, achieved equality of status with their gentile compatriots. This Jewish patriotism reflected a belief that, as Germans, Jews and Christians

shared a set of moral, social and civic values that bound them together in the name of distinctively German ideals. That form of patriotism could also descend into virulent nationalism: it was a German Jew, Ernst Lissauer, who penned the notorious *Hassgesang gegen England* (Hymn of Hate against England) in 1914.

The situation in Austria-Hungary, with its many competing national groups – almost all of them hostile to Jews – was different. Here Jews felt loyalty to the Empire and the Emperor, Kaiser Franz Joseph, who had come to symbolise the supranational character of the Habsburg Monarchy, standing above the ethnic strife that threatened to engulf the Jews and acting as guarantor of the civic rights that they had been granted under the constitution. In Austria-Hungary the army, like the monarchy, transcended ethnic divisions, at least to the extent that some Jews were admitted to the officer corps. Jews had little problem in fighting as loyal citizens of the Empire for they feared, all too presciently, that the defeat and disintegration of the Habsburg Empire would endanger their position across Central and Eastern Europe. In 1914, Russian armies advanced into Austrian Poland, taking cities like Lviv (Lemberg) and Przemyśl and causing a mass flight of Jews. While the Germans concentrated on the western front, Austria-Hungary bore the brunt of the fighting against Russia in the east, a cause with which its Jewish population could readily identify. However, partly thanks to the incompetence of Habsburg strategists, the Empire also found itself fighting on two other fronts. Unable to overcome the stubborn resistance of the Serbs, Austrian forces became bogged down in a campaign that ended only in autumn 1915, when Bulgaria invaded Serbia. In May

1915, Italy came into the war on the opposite side, involving Austria-Hungary in a long and costly campaign conducted on the mountainous terrain of the Alps on the frontier between the two warring states. The huge losses suffered by the Austrians on this largely forgotten front, principally in the eleven battles fought on the river Isonzo, were in large measure responsible for the war-weariness that eventually swept the Empire away.

Probably the most significant development affecting Jews during the First World War occurred in the Middle East, where British forces faced the Ottoman Empire, Germany's ally. As General Allenby advanced from Egypt into Turkish-held territory to capture Jerusalem, the British government issued in November 1917 the Balfour Declaration, in which it made its celebrated promise of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, previously under Ottoman rule.

The Turks had already practised genocide against the Armenians in 1915. In the wake of the collapse of the Tsarist Russia in 1917, large-scale killings, notably of Jews, occurred across Eastern Europe as rival national and political factions, Poles and Ukrainians, Reds (Bolsheviks) and Whites (anti-Bolsheviks), sought to assert themselves, often by the radical means of eliminating en masse the groups they perceived as supporters of their rivals. The First World War thus created the conditions under which the foundations of the future state of Israel were laid. But it also created the conditions for the Holocaust, and not only through the fateful rise of antisemitism in Germany, a society radicalised and traumatised by its defeat in 1918 and by subsequent political and economic instability.



Jewish soldiers outside the walls of Jerusalem, Pesach, 1918.

SOUTH AFRICAN JEWS IN WORLD WAR I

*

Gus Saron

South Africa began its participation in the far-ranging World War I with the successful subjugation of the enemy forces in South West Africa. It then sent its volunteers into German East Africa and later contributed to the overseas Expeditionary Force which saw service in Western Europe. It was estimated that over 136 000 White troops were sent by South Africa to the different fronts, an impressive proportion of the adult European population given that all were volunteers and a large section of the [Afrikaner] people were averse to taking any part in the war. The heaviest casualties sustained by the South African forces occurred in the Brigade that served in Europe, where 4648 men lost their lives. The total number of deaths in Egypt was 261, in East Africa 2141 and in South West Africa 254.



Grave of Private I Lurie, 4th SA Infantry, Ploegsteert Cemetery.

Gustav ‘Gus’ Saron (1905-1989) served as Secretary and then General-Secretary of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies from 1936-1974. A prolific writer, he authored numerous articles on the South African Jewish community. This article is adapted from notes compiled by him for a book on the history of South African Jewry, which remained uncompleted on his death. A portion of these notes, selected and edited by Naomi Musiker, was published in 2001 by the SAJBD under the title The Jews of South Africa – An Illustrated History to 1953.

As was to be expected the Jewish population was involved in all aspects of the country’s war effort, contributing its share – and perhaps proportionately greater than its numerical share – of the fighting forces and participating to the full in the numerous activities on the home front relating to the promotion of the war. The Jewish press of the day took this so much for granted that (with the exception of certain problems relating to recruiting) it made only very occasional references to the specific contribution which Jews were making. A detailed study of the general press, however, will establish that Jews were not falling short in any way when compared with the contributions made by other sectors of the white population.

It is nevertheless a dismal commentary on the precarious position of Jewish communities in so many countries that so many regarded it as imperative after the war’s conclusion to be able to produce evidence of the contribution they had made to the war efforts of their respective native lands. The laborious efforts made by South African Jewry in compiling statistics of the men who had enlisted for service in the various war zones, of those who had been awarded decorations for gallantry and of those who had made the supreme sacrifice were paralleled by similar undertakings in Britain and the Dominions, in the United States of America, in Germany, Russia and in others of the Central Powers. In erecting monuments and memorials to those who have fallen in war Jewish communities, like others, have primarily been moved by the desire to place on record the gratitude of the living for the noble sacrifices made by the dead and preserving their memory for later generations. It must be conceded, however, that a subsidiary motive has been, as Chief Rabbi J H Hertz wrote in *British Jewry Book of Honour* (published 1921), to furnish the testimony to “help lovers of the Truth in their warfare against the malicious slander that the Jew shrinks from the sacrifices demanded of every loyal citizen in the hour of national danger”. The existence of this motive cannot be denied as being one which impelled the SA Jewish Board of Deputies to continue even after the termination of the war with its endeavours to compile as comprehensive a list as possible of all South African Jews who had enlisted in the various campaigns and from time to time to publish in the *Zionist Record* long lists of officers and men who had joined up, giving their home addresses, regiments and rank.

By the end of March 1919, when the Board's report to the 3rd Congress went to press, a total of 2400 names had been collected. It was admittedly far from a complete list. New names were coming in regularly and it was further common knowledge that many Jews had joined up under assumed non-Jewish names or as members of other religious denominations. On the assumption that these and similar cases would account for perhaps 600, "a very modest computation for various fronts", the SAJBD estimated that at least 3000 Jews had joined the serving forces. According to the most recent census, it was estimated that the total Jewish population of men, women and children was under 50 000, which meant that "6% of the total number of Jews in this country joined up" – a larger percentage in this respect than could be boasted of by the general population.

The afore-mentioned *British Jewry's Book of Honour* listed particulars of Jews throughout the Empire who had fought for the Allied cause, together with a role of honour of those who had made the supreme sacrifice and of those who had received military awards. It included a statement by Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War (March 1920), that "although Jews form but a small proportion of the population of the British Empire, some 60 000 fought in the war in Europe, Africa and Asia. Of these 2324 gave their lives for a Cause and a further 6350 became casualties. Five Jewish soldiers won the Victoria Cross while a further 1533 obtained other honours." The volume included about 1200 names listed under the "South African forces"



THE JEWISH "V.C.'s"

1. The late Lieut. F. A. DE PASS, Poona Horse; 2. Sergt. ISSA SHILO, 1st Manchester Regt.; 3. Capt. R. GEE, M.C., 2nd Royal Fusiliers; 4. Pte. ABRAHAM LEVINSKY, 1st Australian Infantry; 5. Pte. J. WATSON (Winn), 6th King's Own Royal Lancaster Regt.

The five Jewish recipients of the Victoria Cross, as published in British Jewry Book of Honour (1922)



A JEWISH GUARD OF THE CAPE PENINSULA GARRISON REGIMENT.

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(Jewish Chaplain)

'A Jewish Guard of the Cape Peninsular Regiment, 1917-18' (British Jewry Book of Honour, 1922)

(officers, NCO's and men) and also mentioned the various units of the South African army in which they had served.

South African Jewry's participation in the war is well illustrated by S G Cohen in his account of Durban Jewry's involvement ('A History of the Jews of Durban, 1825-1918', MA thesis). Chapter 10 describes the part played in many capacities by the Jewish institutions and individuals in Durban's war effort, presenting in their totality an impressive story of involvement both by individuals and by the community as whole. It may be assumed with confidence that the Durban story was paralleled by what happened elsewhere in South Africa. Indeed, there are occasional references in the Jewish press that Jewish communal life and its requirements were being subordinated to what one writer described as "their [Jews'] usual excess of patriotism" (S Lennox Loewy, *Zionist Record*, February, 1915) and there were also occasional complaints that support for specific Jewish fund-raising efforts was falling off because of the preoccupation by Jews with the general war needed of the country. The unquestioned obligation for Jews, as citizens, to stand by the country and its government was voiced by, amongst others, Chief Rabbi J L Landau. Addressing a military service in Johannesburg's Great Synagogue, he declared that it was in Great Britain alone that Jews freely followed the call of the flag without any State compulsion, impelled only "by the thought that no country is better deserving of their sacrifice of blood, and that in no other Empire is the Jew more sure to receive due and full recognition as an active agent in the political drama".

On Active Service

The sole Jewish Chaplain in the German East campaign was Col Israel Levenson. At the Chanukah service on the second anniversary of the war in the Great Synagogue (*Star*, 4 August, 1916), Rabbi Landau quoted from a letter he had received from him, in which he wrote, "I am pleased and proud to be able to say that our Jews, in whatever capacity they may be, combatant or not combatant, have behaved in an exemplary manner. If two or more capable and conscientious men had been sent out with me to minister to their needs there would have been enough for them to do and to spare. It does make me feel sad when I go into the tents of chaplains of other denominations and find them stocked with all sorts of comforts for their flock, whereas I have absolutely nothing". Col. Levenson noted that one official estimate "from a fairly reliable source" gave the number of Jewish soldiers in East Africa as 1980. When World War II broke out, Levenson held the position of principal Jewish Chaplain for the initial period.

Possibly because of difficulties of communication from the distant war front, there is little descriptive material in the contemporary Jewish press of how Jewish soldiers were faring. One of the exceptions is a letter in the *Zionist Record* of 15 January 1917 from David Ordman (later to become a well-known senior member of the staff of the SA Medical Research Institute). Forwarding a list of a few Jewish fellows on active service in East Africa, he wrote that these men formed "a comparatively large proportion of their respective regiments". That South African Jews had answered the call "with as much enthusiasm as their fellow citizens" was evidenced, Ordman said, by the numbers of them "met with and heard of as being in districts nearby as well as in other parts of the country". He declared his personal view "that there is as much Zionism in these days in following the bugle as in organisation and propaganda" and also referred to the "perfect comradeship in the Jewish and Christian soldier", antisemitic feeling being "very rarely evinced". The military authorities, he said, were willing to place every facility in the way of the Jewish troops as far as their religious observance was concerned. In another context, the *Zionist Record* (15 November 1914) referred to the fact that "a large percentage of the Transvaal Scottish" were Jews, who were also found in substantial numbers in the "Irish Regiment", and that the Wood Rifles and Imperial Light Horse contained "crowds of Jews". The various commandos [presumably, this refers to the militia raised to suppress the rebellion of that year] likewise contained Jews, "principally country storekeepers who have practically ruined themselves by promptly obeying their country's call. Many Jews serving as commissioned officers bear an exceedingly high reputation in their respective corps..."

The Recruitment Controversy

The crude abuse to which some of the speakers resorted, the untoward pressure placed upon young men to join up and the frequent injection of specifically anti-Jewish allegations into the whole sorry business were an unpleasant feature of the recruiting campaigns. It is not surprising that as these polemics periodically flared up they occasioned much concern to the Jewish community and deep resentment on the part of the individual especially when from time to time certain newspapers opened their correspondence columns to discussing the subject. In the early months of 1917, when there was a resurgence of such correspondence in the *Cape Times*, the Jewish reaction was exemplified by a letter addressed to the paper on the 3rd February signed "a British soldier and a Jew". Jews he wrote had sent as many men to the front as my other section of the community in proportion

to their numbers and they had also gained their quota of awards and honours for bravery in the field. "These continued and unfounded charges against the Jew will not induce him to come out" he continued. On the contrary they get his back up, for they convince him of the antisemitic feeling by which he is surrounded. Will you Sir, give your support to stopping this Jew baiting? By so doing you will strengthen the hands of the Jewish leaders who are working quietly but strenuously among their co-religionists with a view to swelling the ranks of the recruits".

Later in the year when there was another spate of anti-Jewish letters in the *Cape Times*, a correspondent who signed himself "one of four fighting Jewish brothers" wrote: "I hold a government position. I served in the German West campaign going right through the country as a simple trooper to the borders of Ovamboland, and have recently returned home invalided from German East Africa. A second brother also served in the German West Campaign. A Third brother has held a commission for nearly three years in the Navy: a fourth brother holds a commission in the Royal Flying Corps. A cousin is with the Infantry in France (no soft base billets eh!). My remaining little brother is still at school...Have your correspondents ever considered the amount of insults levelled at a professing Jew at the hands of the riff raff of which every regiment seems to possess a sprinkling... what about all the beastly remarks about the commercial instinct of the Jew from the same riff raff? Let a Jew stay at home, and in the elegant language of "South African" he is battenning on the "blood and treasure of his English and Dutch fellow citizens". Let him proceed to German West or German East, then what the devil is he out for but to size up the possibility of a new country?" (*Cape Times* 5 October 1917).

In the early critical months of 1918, when the Allied forces were faced by a determined German counter offensive and the South African Brigade sustained grave losses, there was an upsurge of patriotic zeal where all manner of devices were resorted to in order to induce new recruits to come forward. In Cape Town, special services were held in the synagogues, where the Rev A P Bender in the Gardens Synagogue and Morris Alexander in the Roeland Street Synagogue urgent appealed for recruits. "Our duty was always clear" Alexander was reported as saying, "It had become irresistible since the momentous British Declaration regarding the future of Palestine". The *SA Jewish Chronicle*, which throughout the war had loudly beaten the patriotic drum week by week called upon the Jews to show their loyalty to the Flag under which they were either born or had found a safe asylum". This was not a "selfish war" the paper declared, but "a holy cause in which Great Britain and her allies are engaged. And therefore

patriotism is needed that is tantamount to a devout consecration to the noble championship of humanities rights" (3 May, 1918).

Something of the sense of urgency and patriotic fervour which animated responsible Jewish leaders at that time is conveyed not only by participation of the Jewish Platoon in the route march in Johannesburg, but by Max Langerman when he spoke on behalf of the Board of Deputies. He congratulated the several dozen Jewish recruits present upon the example they had set their co-religionists. Their enlistment, he said, dispelled the idea that the Jew was not ready to do his duty in the war. After referring to the desire expressed by some Jews to fight on the Palestine front, Langerman said that the director of War Recruiting had pointed that his instructions were to enlist men only for the Western front. The war would be won in the West and if the Allies were victorious the Jews would have obtained Palestine in any case.¹

We read also of financial inducements to persuade men to enlist. For example the *Cape Times* (2 September 1918) reported that an offer had been made by Max Rose of Oudtshoorn of £5 for each recruit from Oudtshoorn and districts who volunteered for overseas services and who passed the final medical examination at Port Elizabeth. It added that sixteen recruits had at that time already claimed "the bounty".

In the course of the polemics relating to the enlistment of Jews it was probably inevitable that the searchlight should be turned especially upon the attitudes and reactions of the 'Russian' Jews in South Africa and more particularly of the fairly recent immigrant. Against the background of their own personal experiences of oppression and humiliation by the Tsarist regime and furthermore the reports which came of the hardships endured by the Jews of Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and other countries of the eastern war zones, they were not likely to find it easy to reconcile the war for freedom and justice with the acquisition of Russia as an ally. Because of the closer and more intimate connection between the majority of South African Jews with their homelands in Eastern Europe they were likely to find the Russian connection even less palatable than the Jews of America in the period prior to 1917 (when Americans entered the war soon after the Russians Revolution). Of the attitude of American Jewry the historian Rufus Learas points out that for most of the Jews of America the presence of Russia on the side of the Allies "could not be so easily brushed aside. Compared to the Russian brand of antisemitism the German gave the illusion of being innocuous. Russia was the land of the Pale of Settlement, of mass pogrom, of the Beilis blood libels. Countless thousands of Jews in America have felt the Russian knout in one form or another..." So the prevailing sentiment among them began with sympathy for the Central powers rather than

with the Allies. There is no evidence of similar sympathy on the part of South African Jews with the cause of the Central powers but it is clear that their attitudes to Russia were exploited in the polemics relating to the Jewish enlistments.

In the early phases of the war Russian Jews, as unnaturalised aliens, were not eligible to join the South African forces and were in fact rejected. Later when the 'veto' was removed many undoubtedly still had their hesitations about becoming aligned with the antisemitic Russian regime which despite demanding military service from its Jewish subjects showed no inclination of removing the discriminatory disabilities under which the latter laboured.

Even the *Cape Times*, which had so consistently been critical of Jewish enlistments, recognised the predicament of the Russian Jew. It was conceded that "many felt it was difficult to realise that in fighting for the British cause they were fighting for the cause of universal freedom" and recognised that "the sentiment was natural enough for the Russian bureaucracy had treated the Jews abominably". After the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in March 1917, however, the paper contended that whatever validity this excuse may have had before the revolution had now gone. "On the contrary, it was claimed, "If the Russian Jew in South Africa previously hesitated to take the field because he feared a victory for the Allies would rivet the chains of his compatriots he ought to rush to the front now, when he finds that the fight for freedom... has already brought complete emancipation in Russia (*Cape Times* 23/3/1917). A similarly optimistic view of the fruits of the Russian Revolution – unhappily so soon falsified as far as Jews were concerned – was expressed by Rev Bender, who described the Revolution as having "fallen like a flashlight across the dark tragedy of Jewish history".

The 'Jewish Regiment' debate

The context in which this polemic took place between the Rev Bender and Morris Alexander on the one hand and the *Cape Times* on the other should be explained. A Gentile member of the Cape Recruiting Committee of which both Bender and Alexander were members had put forward the proposal that a Jewish regiment should be formed, believing that this would prove an inducement to those Jews who had hitherto hesitated to come forward. The *Cape Times* supported this argument, notwithstanding the fact that the proposal had been withdrawn by the man who made it on learning that Jewish leaders had consistently rejected the idea. Rev Bender pointed out that from the beginning of the war, Jewish leaders had been opposed to any denominational force of Jews being raised, since "Jewish citizens of the Empire have been only too proud to stand side by side with

their fellow citizens". Alexander, supporting Bender, said that he was in close touch with the community and had not heard a single person express any different view from that expressed by Rev Bender: "The Jew did not wish to be singled out from other religious denominations. Should the time come for forming Presbyterian or Baptist regiments that would be the time to ask for a Jewish regiment. In the Jew they could not separate the national from the religious, and there was a strong objection to keeping the Jew in a class apart. In any case, they would have to provide for the withdrawal of all Jewish soldiers from other regiments a completely impracticable suggestion as the South African defence authorities had categorically declared.

This was not the first time that the idea had been mooted that Jewish servicemen should be constituted into a separate Jewish battalion. Indeed it had been raised in the early months of the war partly at least in order to demonstrate the falsehood of the charge that Jews were failing to join the forces. It was periodically revived in the first place after the announcement of the formation in England of a Jewish Regiment which aliens of Jewish birth, mostly Russian, were eligible to join under the conscription laws as an alternative to being repatriated to Russia. The situation in England was clearly not parallel to that in South Africa, where there was no conscription but voluntary enlistment and where responsible opinion (both Jewish and Gentile) was in principle opposed to the isolation or separation of Jews and the creation of religious or national sections in the army. Some of the reasons for Jewish opposition to this idea were set out in a carefully argued editorial in the *Zionist Record* of 15 November, 1914. It was pointed out firstly that no other religious body as such had deemed it necessary to vindicate its patriotism by enlisting its members under the banner of its beliefs and that in fact there was ample scope for Jews to serve in the established units as was the case on the Witwatersrand. A second reason against a separate Jewish battalion was that "the good feeling which existed between Jews and their fellow soldiers does not warrant a segregation, such as is taking place in London, on account of antisemitic feeling in a certain district there. In the third place, "people would point to the strength of this battalion as a measure of Jewish patriotism, forgetting the thousands of Jews serving in other corps" and it would be quite impracticable to draw Jews from different regiments in the Transvaal and band them together in a separate corps.

The situation had changed, however, towards the end of the war, when the conquest of Palestine was one of the Allied objectives and the publication of the Balfour Declaration on 2 November 1917 held out the promise of the creation of a National Jewish home in Palestine. The formation of a South African Jewish regiment

to fight in Palestine then seemed a realistic proposition, especially as Jewish regiments for service in Palestine had been recruited in a number of other countries. Towards the end of 1918, representative Jewish bodies in South Africa sought permission from the military authorities to recruit for special service in Palestine (*Zionist Record*, 16 September, 1918) but the authorities declined, pointing out that the claim of the South African Brigade in Europe was paramount; that the recruiting for Palestine would tend to a loss of strength in Europe; and that in any case the war would be won on the Western front.

Commemorating the Fallen

It is interesting to recall that when General Smuts returned to South Africa from Europe in 1919, he was one of the first to advocate that the Jewish community establish a permanent memorial to those South African Jews who had fallen in the war. When it was decided that a Jewish Guild War Memorial Hall should be erected as a cultural and communal centre, Smuts actively helping to raise funds for this and presided at the laying of the foundation stone in November 1922. A few years after the building was completed, the unveiling ceremony of the memorial tablet which had since been

added was performed by the Earl of Athlone, then Governor General in 1930. Paying tribute to “the gallant and faithful service of over 2000 South African Jews and particularly the sacrifice of those 112 who gave their lives for the cause they served and whose names were there inscribed” the Governor General said that it was a record for which all should feel pride and for which all might be “grateful to the Jewish community in this country” that its sons bore themselves so well.

Speaking at the same occasion, Rabbi Dr Landau once again stressed that the men who had made the supreme sacrifice had “vindicated their people’s claim to unshaken loyalty and devotion to the welfare of the country which they had made their home. Two facts he said deserved to be emphatically stated: that these men “were not forced and could not be forced to join the ranks as there was no conscription in South Africa” and, secondly, that a considerable number of them were not British born and many were not even naturalised, their parents having immigrated to the country only a few years before the outbreak of the war. They had volunteered their services “realising theirs, and their people’s deep indebtedness to the British crown and the British Empire” (*Ha’Ivry*, 1 February, 1930).



Unveiling of memorial tablet, Jewish Guild Memorial Hall, 5 January 1930



APPENDIX

Nominal roll of South African Jews who lost their lives in World War I, 1914-1918

Abelson, Pte. J (Johannesburg); Adler, Capt. G (JHB); Apple, Pte. AN; (JHB); Aronson, Pte. N (JHB); Baker, L-Cpl. H R (Cape Town); Barnes, Pte. J, (Port Elizabeth); Barnett, Pte. P L; Berman, Pte. B; Berman, Gnr. R (Wynberg); Bernstein, Staff Nurse D, (JHB); Bernstine, Lt. I L; Canaric, Pte. C; Chaimowitz, Pte. M (Springs); Chitrin, Pte. H (JHB); Cline, Cpl. D (JHB); Cline, Pte. J (JHB), Cohen, Pte. AM; Cohen, Sig. AV (JHB); Cohen, Capt. B; Cohen, Pte. V (JHB); Colly, Pte. H D (JHB); Comaroff, Pte. H; Cooper, Pte. L (Cape Town); Cripps, Pte. B (Pretoria); Crystal, Sgt. Ins. S; Cummins, Lieut. T M (JHB); Daniler, Sapper H J (Ladismith); Dreyfus, Pte. R; Dumas, Pte. N (JHB); Ellman, Pte. N; Erluk, Pte. L; Esterman, Pte. A (Ceres); Feinberg, Pte. M (JHB); Feinhols, Lieut. H (Cape Town); Franklin, Pte. S (Barberton); Freedman, Pte. A; Freedman, 2nd Lieut. B (JHB); Freedman, Pte. B (JHB); Freedman, Pte. I (Cape Town); Fridjhon, Pte. M (Pretoria); Friedman, N J (JHB); Gluckman, Lieut. P (Port Elizabeth); Gluckman Sig. S (Vereeniging); Goldberg, Sgt-Major S (Bloemfontein); Gold, Pte. D (JHB); Goldblatt, Pte. G (Pretoria); Green, Pte. A B (JHB); Herman, Lieut. J (JHB); Hesse, Sub. Insp. H G B (JHB); Hoffman, Pte. J (Durban); Hymans, Pte. P (JHB); Imroth, Lieut. L (JHB); Israel, L-Cpl. G R (JHB); Jacobs, L-Cpl. A N (Durban); Jacobs, L-Cpl. H M (JHB); Jaffe, Capt. J; Joffe, Pte. M (JHB); Joffe, Lieut. W; Joseph, Sgt. E; Kaplan, Pte. V (Wynberg, C.P.); Kapelusnik, Pte. AJ (JHB); Karet, Head Comd. C (JHB); Katzenstein, Pte. M (Newcastle); Knopf, Pte. D; King, 2nd Lieut. S; Kovanski, Pte. I M; Krauss, Lieut. D; Krawitz, Pte. L; Lack, Pte. L (JHB); Lamschen, Pte. M; Lasker, Cpl. M; Lawenski, Pte. J D; Lazarus, Capt. C H (Muizenberg, G.P.); Lazarus, L-Cpl. J B (Durban); Levin, Pte. M; Levinson, Pte. L (Dordrecht); Lezard, Capt. A G; Liebson, Capt. S (Barkley West);

Lipschitz, Cpl. L (Benoni); Loric, L-Cpl. S W (JHB); Lowenstein, 2nd Lieut. J C (Heidelberg C.); Lurie, Pte. I (JHB); Lyons, Pte. L (JHB); Marcus, Pte. E (Pretoria); Marcus, Pte. R; Marks, 2nd Lieut. LT (JHB); Mendelsohn Dvr. F (Cape Town); Merber, RFNJ (Cape Town); Michaels, Pte. H (Kroonstad); Moss, Pte. I (JHB); Myers, Lieut. F M (JHB); Myers, Pte. H H (East London); Nooll, Pte. B (JHB); Norman, Gnr. H (JHB); Platnauer, 2nd Lieut. LM (Cape Town); Rabinson, Pte. B (JHB); Rapaport, Pte. M (JHB); Raphael, Pte. H C (Cape Town); Raphael, Sgt. S F (Cape Town); Rosen, Cpl. H D; Rothkugel, Pte. M (Cape Town); Rubin, Pte. J (Pretoria); Saville, Pte. H (Durban); Schur, L-Cpl. P (Nababesp, C. P.); Shall, Sergt. I (JHB); Sheirs, Pte. R (JHB); Simon, Pte. M (JHB); Spero, Pte. L (JHB); Solomon, Lieut. B; Sondheim, 2nd Lieut. W; Sonnenberg, Lieut. M C (Cape Town); Starfield, 2nd Lieut. B; Stern, Lieut. S; Sugarman, Pte. S (Cape Town); Terbitt, Pte. I; Troski, Cpl. C T (Ottoshoop); Tyler, Pte. A (Bethlehem); Valentine, Flt. Cdt. J (JHB); Weinberg, Pte. A (Kimberley); White, Pte. J R; Whitefield, Sgt. C S.

NOTES

1. *African Jewish World* 27 June, 1918.



WAR POET ISAAC ROSENBERG – THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

*

Steven Gray



Isaac Rosenberg in the uniform of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, 1916-1917

We are in for many reminiscences and much rewriting of the history of World War I, which was triggered by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28 1914. But what of one of the war's now famous victims, classed among the English "War Poets", but who had crucial South African connections, hardly known?

To be a really great war poet, then and now, you had to be butchered in action for your art. Such was Rupert Brooke with his "begloried sonnets" near Gallipoli, or Wilfred Owen with his gruelling requiems in the trenches of the Western Front.

For our subject, Isaac Rosenberg, what he called his "half-used life" was over during some unrecorded skirmish near Arras. The date was April Fool's Day 1918 when, with the rest of the 11th Battalion of the King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment, he was blown to extinction.

Years later when bits of what may have been his corpse were exhumed from a mass grave, his family back in the ghetto of the East End of London were sent a bill for three shillings and

sixpence, so that he might rest under a Star of David with "Artist and Poet" on his tombstone.

The king's shilling

So impoverished were they that their son and heir had signed up, not for the patriotic glory of their adopted country, but merely for the king's shilling a day.

Edgy, depressed and weak-lunged, the 27-year-old Rosenberg had cadged the £12 Union Castle fare to escape from England to Cape Town, arriving in June 1914, to start a career. Unlike many such refugees, he was diagnosed as non-tubercular.

"This coming away has changed me marvellously and makes one more confident and mature," he wrote back to his confrères at the Slade School of Art, where he had trained as a charity boy and gained his progressive ideas.

His older sister Minnie, whom he had dumped on, still communicated in Yiddish to their refugee pedlar-father and seamstress mother, escaped from the *shtetls* of Lithuania. Isaac's brother-in-law, Wolf, handled the mail since he had landed work as a clerk in the post office. Uncle Peretz was doing even better, as a rabbi up in Johannesburg, although his nephew was -destined never to visit him there.

As Rosenberg had already held a one-man exhibition of his paintings in London, clearly in this newly Unionised outpost he was to be lionised. In numbers of the chic studio journal the South African Women's Council, his lectures on European art history were to be published as celebrated pieces, with some of his output as a poet included as well.

Thanks to a patron like the unmarried sister of Sir James Molteno, the MP who had recently returned from the king's coronation, on their Rondebosch estate for the first time in his life Rosenberg had coffee brought to him in bed, his shoes polished and a room of his own. The skill he intended to live off here was portraiture. One fine sketch in black chalk he did for cash rests nowadays in, of all places, the Imperial War Museum. His subject was Margaretha van Hulsteijn, the daughter of the speaker of the House of Assembly.

Much fun and high jinks were obviously involved, for this lass nicknamed "Scrappy" would play the trouser parts in Stephen Black's

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Isaac Rosenberg - Self-portrait, circa. 1915

roaring farces, marry a future prime minister, JG Strijdom, and, after starring on the West End as Marda Vanne, found our own National Theatre during the next world war.

Other such portraits unfortunately were lost when, eight months later, Rosenberg's folder blew off the deck of the ship on which he returned to Europe to enlist. One of his self-portraits in oils did, however, survive and is now in the Tate Gallery in London.

Dreadfully clogged up

But confidentially, in a letter postmarked July 24 1914 and written to Winston Churchill's secretary, Edward Marsh, requesting slides to illustrate further updates on post-impressionism, cubism, etcetera, he really let rip. The society South Africans he met were "dreadfully clogged up with gold dust, diamond dust, stocks and shares, and heaven knows what other flinty muck. Well, I've made up my mind to clean through all this rubbish!" He adds: "Think of me, a creature of exquisite civilization, planted in this barbarous land!" And here the local economic collapse would soon no longer offer the fees for the luxury goods he proffered.

But now robust and healthy under craggy Table Mountain, he was drastically paring down his notes: from Victorian bombast perhaps best forgotten, into Georgian sappiness about all those "entwining fleshies", into imagism: sparse, precise, pointed. Indeed, his poem, *On Receiving News of the War*, about that "ancient crimson curse", may be taken as the marker between the 19th and 20th Centuries in verse. As such,

I included it in *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*.

Then would come his final Break of Day in the Trenches. In his monumental summary of 1975, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell considered it the single greatest poem of that whole disaster.

Rats crossing back and forth; reaching for a red poppy to put behind his ear. Gazing across the line at Rosenberg Fortress, the camp for officer prisoners, Rosenberg was obliterated. So only in incomplete collected works from Chatto & Windus, and in fascinating scrapings-together from Enitharmon Press, does Rosenberg survive.

In what records there are of his forgotten South African sojourn, it is clear that his breakthrough here invigorated him and fostered his genius.



JACK RICH'S CAREER IN THE JEWISH LEGION, 1917-1920

*

Naomi Musiker

The creation of the Jewish Legion during World War I was largely due to the efforts of two Russian Zionists, Joseph Trumpeldor and Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Both were deeply influenced by the writings of Theodor Herzl. Trumpeldor, a professional soldier who had fought in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, immigrated in 1912 to Palestine with a group of his comrades and worked at the Migdal farm and the Kevuzah Deganyah. He also took part in the defence of the Jewish settlements in Lower Galilee. When World War I broke out, he refused to take Ottoman citizenship and was deported to Egypt. In Alexandria, he agitated for the formation of a legion of volunteers from among the Jewish deportees that would help the British liberate Palestine from the Turks. In this, he was assisted by Jabotinsky, a former correspondent of *Rousski Vedomosti*, and a distinguished author and poet.

Trumpeldor accepted the British Army's proposal to form the Zion Mule Corps, which he regarded as the first step toward the formation of a Jewish military force to liberate Palestine. However, Jabotinsky refused to serve in the Corps because it was used for transport purposes only. The Corps, under the command of Colonel Patterson, took part in the Gallipoli campaign against the Turks in 1915, in which Trumpeldor distinguished himself by his bravery. After Gallipoli, the corps was disbanded. Trumpeldor now joined Jabotinsky in London in efforts to form a Jewish Legion from among the Russian Jews living in England, using a group of soldiers of the Zion Mule Corps as a nucleus.

In 1917, following three years of protracted negotiations, Jabotinsky succeeded in persuading the War Secretary, Lord Derby, to authorize the formation of the 38th, 39th and 40th Battalions of the Royal Fusiliers, which became the first Jewish Battalions. These took part in the Palestinian campaign under General Allenby. Jabotinsky was commissioned Lieutenant in the British

Expeditionary Force and received command of a company in the 38th Battalion headed by Colonel Patterson. He was subsequently decorated and his company given the honour of being the first to cross the Jordan in pursuit of the Turkish forces. The battalion was renamed the Jewish Legion.

An interesting South African connection with the Jewish Legion is that of Jack Rich, who was to become Secretary to the SA Jewish Board of Deputies in February 1939 and held the position for 35 years. Born on 4 March 1897, in Hanley, Staffordshire, Rich revealed his extraordinary abilities in early boyhood by helping his father in the compilation of the minutes of the local congregation, of which his father was honorary secretary and later president. He was a brilliant student, but interrupted his studies at Cambridge in order to volunteer for military service in World War I. He was a member of the Manchester University Officers Training Corps and then of a Cadet School in Cambridge. He was then commissioned and served in the 39th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers under Colonel Margolin.

When a new Jewish battalion was recruited from the Sabras of Palestine, known as the First Judeans, Rich was given command of a company as Assistant Adjutant and Education Officer. He remembered the Hebrew he had learned at *cheder* playing a large part in their initial training. The regiment served throughout the Palestine



Jack Rich as an officer serving in Palestine, 1920

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campaign. Rich was among the contingent which entered Jericho and then Jerusalem under Allenby. After the occupation of Palestine, he was appointed Officer Commanding the troops at Jericho and the Dead Sea, remaining on active service until 1920.

One of Rich's memorable experiences of this period in Palestine had nothing to do with military matters. Rather, it was the friendship he cultivated with the famous pioneering Hebrew lexicographer, Eliezer Ben Yehuda, in whose Jerusalem home he was a frequent visitor.

After the war, Rich completed his studies at Cambridge, where he took his M.A and LLB degrees and became chairman of the University Zionist Society. On the recommendation of the eminent Jewish scholar and writer Dr Israel Abrahams, he was appointed Assistant Secretary and subsequently Secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Additionally, he served as Secretary to the Joint Foreign Committee, the policy body of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Anglo-Jewish Association.

In 1931, Rich became editor of the prestigious *Jewish Chronicle of London*. Cecil Lyons, chairman of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies,

met him in November 1938 and recruited him for the post of Secretary of the SAJBD, commencing in February the following year. Rich went on to become one of the most important functionaries of the Board, respected for his high sense of duty, administrative ability, thoroughness and methodical approach. He was enormously erudite, a prodigious reader and music collector. He remained in service to the Board until late in his career and after retirement acted as Secretarial Consultant. He died in 1987, aged 90.

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**NON-FERROUS
METAL WORKS**

Est 1947



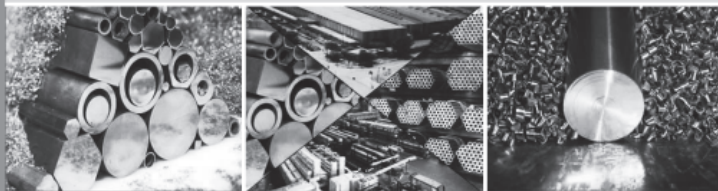
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RHODES ISLAND, FIFTY YEARS AFTER

*

Violette Fintz

In October 1994, at the invitation of the Brussels-based film company, *Les Film De La Memoire*, I returned to Rhodes Island to take part in a film on the Jewish community in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of their deportation. Although I was born on Rhodes, in 1911, I had not been there since 1945, when I returned after surviving Auschwitz, Dachau and Bergen Belsen.

It is a long trip from Cape Town to Rhodes. I was not feeling well at the time and was reluctant to make such a journey into the past. Fortunately, my doctor encouraged me to go and I do not regret it. Even though the experiences I had were emotionally draining, I had wonderful people to share them with and returned home feeling much better.

When I was liberated from the camps on 15 April 1945, I returned to Rhodes because I had left a very good job there as manager of the Singer Sewing Machine Company. However, I found that I could seldom go into the Juderia (the Jewish Quarter) because I would become so emotional. I would cry all the time. Every stone would remind me of all my people who never came back. After a year, I left and joined my sister in the Congo. Now, fifty years later, I had been asked to go back to give my testimony on behalf of the community of Rhodes.

I travelled with Elsie Menasce of Cape Town. We spent two days in Athens with her kind and hospitable friend Bella Restis, whose mother is from Rhodes. On the morning of 17 October, after a forty minute flight, we arrived on the island, at the same time as the producer of the documentary, Diane Perelszteyn. Soon after, all those involved in the production met together at the Plaza Hotel. Apart from the film crew, there were half a dozen volunteers who had left Rhodes before or after the war and three survivors, one from Brussels, one from Italy, and myself. The volunteers were keen to help record what had happened for future generations. Rhodes, once

referred to as the Little Jerusalem, was a great Jewish community that had disappeared tragically in the Auschwitz ashes. In 1925 there were 5000 Jews in a population of 50 000. As a result of continuing emigration, for economic reasons, the community only consisted of 1783 people when it was deported to the concentration camps on 21 July 1944. Of these, 1632 were murdered.

Straight after the meeting, Diane and I went to the Jewish Quarter to see what we could find and what remained of the Rhodes I knew. For me, Rhodes was like a lost planet. I could not even recognise the place where I was born and where I had lived a large part of my life. We went along the road to the Great Synagogue which led to my house. I discovered that the synagogue had bars around it, having been completely destroyed by the wartime bombardment. I looked from right to left because I could visualise the people who used to live there and started crying because every one of them had been killed. Greek people were now living in their homes and I could not see one face I knew.

Our house still stood at the end of the road - the house where I had lived and where my brother and sister had been born, my brother in 1921, my sister in 1924. I cannot describe the feelings I had when I entered the house fifty years after I had been forced to leave. Half of it had been destroyed; the house next door was completely dilapidated. The people who were living there were very kind. We explained what we were doing and they agreed to let us return the following day to film.

We went down the road to my old school, the Alliance Universelle. Once a great school, now there was nothing left but the entrance and the name. We walked along the streets to see what would be suitable for filming. The road was full of puddles because it had rained the previous day. Most of the houses were rundown. I told Diane about the large community centre, the Foundation Notrica, which we had used for festivals like the dance at Purim and how on Rosh Hashanah the Governor of Rhodes used to come to meet the Jewish community there. Some children told me that it was now a school.

I suggested to the producer that we go to the village of Trianda. This was far from the Juderia, so when there was a lot of bombing we used to take shelter there. We walked along the road, but no one had even heard of Trianda. Finally, we discovered that the name had been changed to Ialissos. I went to the nearby bar and

Violette Fintz (1911-2007) was the long-serving chairman of She'erith Hapletah, the association of Holocaust survivors in Cape Town. Committed to the importance of bearing witness, she was among the first survivors to tell her story to Cape Town audiences in the 1980s, and later at Yom Hashoah commemorations and to groups at the CT Holocaust Centre. This article is adapted from an interview, conducted and transcribed by Gwynne Schrire, following her return from a visit to Rhodes Island, her birthplace, in 1994.

introduced myself and was told that my friend's husband had just left. I phoned the son, Nicola.

He said: "Madame Violette! I shall be there straight away."

He was a man of 52, so I was surprised that he should know who I was. When he arrived, he kissed and hugged me with tears in his eyes and told me that his mother frequently cried, saying, "Where is my Violette?" I gave him a photo of his mother from an old album that had been given to me.

I had worked for Singer Sewing Machines from 1930 until my deportation in 1944. One hundred people had worked with me, mainly Christian Greeks, and many were young, but I could find no one I knew. I asked, "What has happened to everyone?" They had all died.

I recognised Mr Orfanidis shop. I went in – the owner greeted me effusively but only because he had heard about me from his late father.

The next day, we started filming at the beginning of the road to the Juderia. Located there was a large building, formerly the Rabbinical College, moving onto the road to the Great Synagogue.

Then we went to my house. I could remember clearly being ten years old, my brother just born and our house full of festivities. All this came to my eyes without my seeing that the house was no longer the same. It had been damaged, but it was our house anyway. The home of joy. There was a little string on the door. I undid it and everyone went inside to film. Our rented house had three rooms. I pointed out where my grandmother and where my parents had slept, and where the Shabbat table had stood. I described the beautiful Shabbat songs we sang and was asked to sing some. I felt very emotional. If it were not so muddy, the plaster peeling and the walls all falling in, I could have kissed every stone. This was the house that my father had had to leave in 1937 in order to go to the Congo to earn some money for his family. Unfortunately, he contracted Black Water Fever and had to return in 1940. The Greek woman now occupying the house was very kind and when I thanked her on leaving, she said, "But it is your house. It is not ours." That impressed me more than anything else.

After this, we moved on through the Jewish Quarter to the school, and the other people in turn gave their testimonies. Everyone had something to say. One of them was Mr Hasson, who now lives in Brussels. He told us how he escaped in a very small boat. The island was fortified and no one was allowed to leave. The other boat in his group was sunk, but his party managed to reach Turkey. He said that his only sorrow was that he had never told his mother that he was planning to leave and that she had never known that he had survived.

We discovered that the boy who had been with him on the boat was living on Rhodes. He

was fetched and they were filmed together. It was a very touching moment.

During the day we would film and at night we would sit at the Plaza Hotel and talk and talk, stories about Rhodes and about our parents and our families who were killed so cruelly. On Friday night there was a beautiful service in the Shalom Synagogue, conducted by two of the volunteers from Brussels. There were quite a lot of people there, including tourists. Although it rained on Shabbat, we kept on going for walks through the Jewish quarter to look for something we wanted to find as though it were really possible to find what we had lost.

We decided to include our wedding customs in the film, which was to be in Ladino with English and French subtitles, so we marched to the synagogue where we sang some beautiful Ladino wedding songs (although these songs were traditionally sung at the house during the celebrations). We also had a service in the cemetery. It was raining so hard that we did not think we would manage to go, but the weather cleared up in the afternoon just in time. The cemetery was full of mud and with great difficulty we managed to go to the monument for the Jewish martyrs and hold a ceremony there.

We spent a whole day filming the place where we were interned before the deportation. It was the former palace of the Italian Air Force. We went to the basement where we had been herded and also filmed the toilets, because the day we were interned the Germans confiscated all our jewellery. They collected two big bags of gold and jewellery, documents and passports. Some people did not want to give it to the Germans and threw it into the toilet. The toilets flooded because the gold and the jewellery blocked the pipes. The Germans kept us there for four days without food or water. Only on the fourth day were we given some soup before we were marched to the harbour.

Two of the survivors marched from the building to the port, which was quite a distance away, to demonstrate how far the old, the young, the sick and the heavily pregnant had been forced to march, carrying their luggage in the July heat. The screaming of the children, the suffering of the old and the ill, the agony of that day was unimaginable. After this, the producer wanted us to describe our deportation.

We moved to the jetty. By chance, two small cargo boats happened to be moored in the harbour, the same kind of boats that had been moored there on that fateful day, fifty years ago, waiting to take us away as human cargo. We were amazed and said, "Look at that! It feels as though we are going to be marched into the same boats all over again."

We told our stories standing next to these ships, one survivor against the one boat, and I against the other. We had not expected to see these boats again, but there they were.

I was filmed in front of the boat and described how on 17 July 1944, the Germans sent a letter to Mr Franco, the President of the Rhodes Jewish community, ordering us to go to the Palace. Every man from the age of 16 had to go to the building. We thought they were reporting for labour. We did not realise that anything was going to happen to us. When the men arrived, their ties and shoelaces were confiscated and two men were sent to the Juderia to fetch everyone else. We had to bring along our jewellery, passports and papers. We were badly treated there. We were given no food or water. There was inadequate sanitation and overflowing toilets. I told them how we had been deported, squashed onto ships, many hundreds pressed into each other.

That is how we were taken to Auschwitz. We did not say more than that, but this is how our community on Rhodes disappeared. Of the one thousand, seven hundred and eighty three Jews who were taken away, only one hundred and fifty one came back!

All the houses in the Juderia had belonged to the Jews, but we received no compensation. When I returned home in 1945, I could not find anything in my house, nothing, not even a spoon. The Greeks denied responsibility for our deportation. After the defeat of Germany, the Allies had ruled Rhodes and the Greeks had taken over from them.

Those Jews who have tried to reclaim their houses have had enormous problems. The Greeks now own everything. Today Greeks live in all these houses. Some look after them, but

others have let them fall into ruin. I remember how, when we lived there, everybody used to whitewash the entrances to their houses just before Passover so that it looked like one garden. It was a beautiful life.

The following day we returned to the synagogue and some of us sang a few Ladino songs to make the film a little more cheerful and add some happiness to it. We had a little tambourine and Diane asked me to sing a song by myself.

We had all felt very ambivalent about returning to this island, which held so many sad memories for us, but we felt satisfied at having had the opportunity to give our testimonies about what our lives had been like in this once dynamic Jewish community and about what had happened to us. We had been enabled to honour the memory of our martyrs in this film.

Today no Jews could live on Rhodes. We used to be very friendly with the Rhodes people. Today the people are no longer the same. We talk nostalgically about, "Aah! Rhodes! Rhodes!"

But it would be too painful to live there now, to walk in the streets and see thousands of people but not one Jew, not one-person one knows.

I was glad to have had this opportunity to return to Rhodes. I felt privileged to participate in the making of this film. At times I was surprised that I had had the strength to do what I did. I am happy to have helped in the filming for future generations but it was hard and so very sad.

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THE DEPORTATION OF RHODES JEWRY – 70 YEARS LATER

*

Zmira Cohen

There is a Ladino saying that goes: *Cuando gan'eden esta'acerrada, guehinam esta' siempre abierto* – 'While the Garden of Eden may be closed, Hell is always open'. It well describes the situation of the Jews of Rhodos – the Greek word for Rhodes Island - in the summer of 1944.

Fast forward seventy years. My husband, Eliakim, and I, are walking in the footsteps of Eliakim's paternal grandparents, who did not return after that fateful day of 23 July, 1944.

The day is very hot, as it was then. The blue/green/turquoise sea washes mini wavelets onto the shore. It is just a few seconds of gentle ascent from the water's edge to the beach road that surrounds the island. The sea sand is speckled with elliptical stones of all sizes and shades. They are called *sheshos* or *sheshicos* (Ladino uses a diminutive whenever it can.) The bigger stones were used to 'pave' the roads, the smaller ones to decorate inner courtyards and floors in the mosaic patterns that are so ubiquitous on Rhodes. On a clear day, the coastline of Turkey is visible.

How could it have been that the Jewish citizens of this island - men, women, children, young, old, ailing or healthy - could have been forced from their homes, made to gather at a place designated by the Nazis and stripped of all their rights to life?

I shall try to sketch a general outline of the history of this community and describe some aspects of our visit on the seventieth anniversary of the Deportation.

Rhodes has a complex history, having been conquered in turn by many different powers. The earliest allusion to a Jewish presence there is in the 1st Book of Maccabees. In the 12th Century, the famous Spanish Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela visited the island and reported that it was home to some 400 Jews. In 1309 the Knights of St. John, after their expulsion from Jerusalem, were successful in their bid to conquer the island. Rhodes had been part of the Byzantine Empire, and its Jews spoke Judeo-Greek. They followed the *Romaniot minhagim* i.e. the customs of the

Jews in the eastern parts of the Roman Empire.

In 1522, the Knights were in turn defeated by the Turks under Suleiman the Magnificent. Thirty years earlier, the Jews had been expelled from Spain. Sultan Bayezid II welcomed into his domain many of these literate, ambitious and industrious refugees, and regarded the Spanish King Ferdinand as foolish for having "impoverished his own country and enriched mine!" With the Turkish conquest of Rhodes, the islands of the Dodecanese as well as mainland Turkey became home to significant numbers of Sephardic Jews, and Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) gradually superseded Greek as the local lingua franca of the community. *Romaniot* customs faded. From the style of prayer and food choices to the melodies and romanzas that were sung in the *cortijos* (courtyards) of Jewish homes, virtually all modes of daily life began to resemble Sephardic patterns.

The next major shift in the life of the *Rhodeslim* was the influence of the Italians, who took over the island after a bloodless coup on the Shabbat of 4 May, 1912. At first the Italian presence was benign, even friendly. When Benito Mussolini first came to power ten years later, this was viewed positively by a significant sector of Italian Jewry. Mussolini publically condemned racism, had met Chaim Weizmann (in 1926) and seemed to be open to the Zionist dream. Mario Lago, appointed by Mussolini as governor of Rhodos, followed a far-sighted policy that respected the ethnic and cultural identity of the colony's inhabitants. His term was remembered for its co-operative nature and produced a sense of well-being in the *Juderia* (Jewish Quarter). A rapid process of Italianization occurred, and is the reason why so many descendants of *Rhodesli* families still hold Italian citizenship.

Largely due to Lago's influence on Mussolini, a Rabbinical College was established, opening its doors on 1 January, 1928. When Meir Dizengoff, mayor of Tel Aviv, visited Rhodes three years later, he congratulated Lago on his part in establishing and sustaining the yeshiva.

By 1936, however, the tide had taken a turn for the worse for the Jewish population. That year Cesare Maria De Vecchi, Count di Val Cismon and Commander General of the Fascist Blackshirts, was appointed as the colonial administrator of the Italian Aegean Islands. Mussolini began to develop closer ties with

Zmira Cohen qualified as a social worker at the University of Cape Town and, until her recent retirement, worked in that capacity for twenty-five years at Highlands House, the Jewish aged home in Cape Town. She has been much involved in the fields of music (particularly Jewish music) and singing, and women's rights issues.

Germany and some Arab lands, at the same time accusing 'International Jewry' of being enemies of Fascism. Cismon began to introduce harsh anti-Jewish laws.

On Erev Yom Kippur 1938, an article appeared in the local paper in which Cismon attacked the residents of the *Juderia*, saying that they should all be sent *al inferno* (to hell). In November, Jews were forbidden to close their shops on Shabbat and Yamim Tovim.

Shechita was prohibited. Italian citizenship was withdrawn from those who had come to Rhodes after 1919 and consequently those people became stateless overnight.

In 1939, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany signed a Pact of Friendship and Alliance. However, when Admiral Campioni took over as Governor in 1941, conditions improved for a while. Campioni, to his credit, removed some of the anti-Jewish regulations. Then, in July 1943, Mussolini fell from power. The Italian army surrendered in September and, after bitter fighting, Germany wrested control of the island on the 15th of that month.

Until 14 July 1944, the 'only' added measures against Jews were that they were forbidden to own radios and to send or receive letters or parcels from anyone not living within the war zone. During this time, Britain had been bombing the island. This resulted in the deaths of a number of Jews in February and in April, on the second day of Pesach. The residents of the Old City were compelled to seek refuge in the surrounding villages outside the town walls. There were dire food shortages.

Deportation and Death: July-August 1944

In the first week of July 1944, the Gestapo arrived. This was the beginning of the end for the Jews of the *Juderia*, of the jewel of the Mediterranean, on the Isle of Roses. The Jews had no country to call their own, no protector, no capabilities for defence, no protective magic garment to act as a shield. They were easy prey to any malevolent force that wished to destroy their tranquil presence and wipe them off the face of the earth, simply because they were Jews.

From archival evidence and personal testimonies, we know that the Nazi administration demanded that all Jewish males over sixteen report to the Naval Institute by the 18th July with their identity documents and work permits. This seemed to imply that they were to be deployed for some type of labour, but on arrival, all documents were confiscated and the men herded into the building basement. Next came the order for the women and children to present themselves with their valuables at the same venue the following day. They were warned that failure to do so would result in their closest male relatives being executed. On the arrival of the women, their valuables were

immediately confiscated.

Some of the German soldiers on Rhodes showed reservations about the tasks they were expected to perform. They were threatened with dire consequences should their orders not be complied with, but nevertheless, a few tried to help. One even offered to take the child of one of the deportees to Europe, to 'safety.' The offer was rejected by the tearful parents.

The prisoners were held with no food other than that which they had brought with them, very little water, inadequate toilet facilities and no bedding until 23 July - the date of their deportation. It is not difficult to imagine the hopelessness and fear that must have engulfed them. To prevent curious or even sympathetic islanders from observing their pitiful march to the harbour that day, a siren was set off so that the villagers, believing that an air raid was imminent, would remain indoors.

The journey, by cattle boat to Piraeus via Kos and Leros, took eight more days of hell, during which about 95 other Jews were hurled on board. Several died on that journey. Only one incident of humanity is recalled - the provision by the captain of a nearby ship of some water and bread for the prisoners, who had been given no other supplies. Arriving in Athens, they were kept in the Haidari concentration camp till about 2 August, when they were loaded onto cattle trucks. Destination: Auschwitz /Birkenau.

On 16 August 1944, the prisoners arrived. All those deemed 'useless' were immediately gassed, my husband's grandparents among them. In all, 1673 Jews were deported. 151 survived.

Selahattin Ülkümen – Righteous Gentile

One of those active in processing the deportation and annihilation of the Jewish population of Greece and the Aegean islands was Kurt Waldheim. After the war ended, strangely enough, these brutal deeds seem to have been forgotten. He came to hold the position of Secretary General of the United Nations and was elected President of Austria.

On the other hand Selahattin Ülkümen, the Turkish consul on Rhodes at the time, proved to be a man of great courage and compassion. By his own efforts, he saved some fifty people (the exact number is not certain; two of the group were known to the writer) through acquiring Turkish passports for them in many ingenious ways. As Turkey was neutral, a Turkish passport enabled one to travel freely. What was his reward? The Nazis deliberately bombed his house, killing his wife who had just given birth to a son. The boy, Mehmet, survived, and went on to work for the United Nations. About twenty years ago, the Sephardic community brought him to Cape Town, where he was honoured for the person he had become and for the great human being who had been his father. Selahattin Ülkümen

has been recognised by Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous among the Nations.

July 2014 – Remembrance and Renewal

Fast forward to July, 2014, when over 400 Jews from South Africa, Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and a sprinkling of other places have come to Rhodes to participate in a Memorial Week marking the 70th anniversary of the Deportation.

We were on Rhodes for five days and each day became a journey of optimism for me. A full programme of activities had been planned, with the University of the Aegean hosting a three-day symposium with academic presentations from Yad Vashem, mainland Greece and the universities of London, Newcastle, Limerick, Hartford USA, Milan, Calabria, Florence and Naples. Lectures and documentaries covered various historical aspects of the Holocaust in the Dodecanese, as well as proposed pedagogic models for teaching this history in schools in light of the resurgence of fascist movements in the region. It also probed methods for assessing the value of verbal and written archival data for accuracy and referred to the existence of material available but not yet studied, which could throw light on many gaps in existing knowledge on the period.

Parallel to the symposium were other events. On the morning of 23 July - seventy years ago to the day when the Deportation commenced - two large busloads of attendees were taken to a ceremony where a plaque was unveiled on the exterior walls of the entrance of the old Aviation Institute. This had been known as the warehouses of Chemelnik (its Turkish name). It was where the community had been forced to assemble and been held before being forced to march down to the beach in the early hours of the morning, through '*la puerta de la mar*' (the gate to the sea) to the three filthy boats that were to take them to Athens.

After the ceremony, the buses drove to the new Jewish cemetery where, in a beautifully tended area in a large plot of land, white graves were set above ground in rows on one side of along avenue of steps. Some survivors participated in a moving programme where different speakers shared information about the events in the months leading up to the arrival of the Gestapo, and told us that not all the names of victims of the Allied bombing raids could be identified. Due to the turmoil of those days, some of the graves have remained unmarked.

The community had been so brutally weakened and terrorized during these tragic times, that long before the final order to quit their homes and assemble at the old Aviation Institute had been issued, fear coupled with despair had filled their hearts. Their physical and mental strength to rebel against their captors had

been relentlessly diminished by each successive draconian measure imposed upon them.

The atmosphere at this ceremony was electric. It seemed to contain both infinite grief and tremendous pride - pride in the resurgence of a new generation of descendants of Jews, whose legacy and heritage lay here, on this little island. Their memory had not been obliterated. These were Jews of all ages, lifestyles and nationalities, who spoke English, French, Greek and Hebrew, who held different opinions about almost everything, yet they had come together to pay homage and declare who they were and where their allegiance lay. It seemed to me to meld all of us there, at that moment, into a strong segment of Jewish Oneness.

The candle lighting, the *El Male Rachamim* for the victims, the prayer for the soldiers in Israel again being called upon to defend the citizens of the Holy Land, the blowing of the shofar, the recording of one of the women survivors singing in Ladino to the melody of *Hatikva* as they did in the camps in an attempt to raise their spirits, the communal singing of *Hatikva* in *Ivrit* - it was all so very powerful, I do not have the words to describe the experience. Time seemed to stand still. Nothing had changed....except our ability to respond and not passively submit to a fate that those who are not our friends may again wish to impose on us.

The following day, Thursday 24 July, another remarkable event occurred when the 60-something son of a Shoah survivor went through a rite of passage that had not happened at the designated age of 13. His mother (she is in her nineties, the tattoo clearly visible on her arm) had hidden her identity after the war and he had, therefore, not been aware of his Jewish heritage while growing up. Here on Rhodes, he had asked to be called up to the Torah in the Kahal Shalom for a barmitzvah before his mother's eyes and before the rest of the congregation in the synagogue of his forbears. Not a dry eye was to be found as he, haltingly but proudly, pronounced the Hebrew blessings before the Torah reading. Afterwards, a lovely table was set out for the guests in the upper courtyard-cum-coffee bar, above the synagogue.

The conversation between the visitors, the connections between families re-discovered and old friends recognized after decades of absence - it was all fascinating. New strands of Jewish memory were being woven into the tapestry of our present lives in every shared phrase.

That night, three haunting documentaries were shown in an amphitheatre near to the shore. The first, produced in Uruguay, was a ballet with the performers dressed as faceless figures in black skin-hugging costumes with no dialogue. Background music accompanied the movements of the dancers. The choreography simulated the history of Jewish life, the destruction of the Shoah and the rebirth of Israel, hope reinstated. I

keep re-seeing this wistful, wry and very Jewish response to tragedy.

The second documentary employed a very different technique. It was created by Barry Salzman, a photographic artist formerly of Cape Town, now of New York, whose mother's family is Rhodisli. He and his cousin, Lisa Capelouto, used photographs of survivors, some of whom we knew, set in square frames, sometimes in silence, sometimes with audible voices, sometimes with multiple voices being heard simultaneously. Long after the screen shut down the images remained with us.

The third documentary was all the more powerful for its producer being a Christian Greek man, born elsewhere but who completed his schooling on Rhodes and taken it upon himself to research the reasons behind the many boarded-up, partially destroyed, uninhabited buildings there about which no one spoke. He discovered the stories about the former Jewish communities in the Dodecanese and mainland Greece, about their contribution to the worlds they had inhabited and their pitiful demise. This film was the result of much painstaking research and distinguished by the most illuminating photographic detail.

All three documentaries were powerful in their observation of human behaviour and the choices that people are able to make, some intrinsically malevolent, others humane and elevated - and about the consequences that follow such choices.

Part of Friday morning was spent on a tour of the *Juderia*. We were shown a place used as a *Beit Midrash*, one of many which had existed, a communal baking facility and the *geniza* where damaged or worn-out prayer books, scrolls and out-of-date personal documentation had been stored prior to burial. Had we not been shown, we would not have known where to look but as we were, we were able to marvel at the many inscriptions on buildings, some in Ladino in Hebrew characters, some in Hebrew, with the Jewish calendar date, with newer wall plaques in Italian or French. Every plaque alluded to a personal story, as they described their donors, the purpose of the donated property and - usually - something about how that community asset was to be managed. In one of the restaurants, we saw a plaque on the archway of an inner wall. It was dated 5624 (corresponding to the secular year 1864) and recorded the donation by the Rothschild family of this building for use as a place of study.

All of the activities of the residents of the *Juderia* were interlinked. Everyone knew everyone else and for the most part were linked by close family ties. One could have spent many hours learning about the homes, places of prayer and learning, places of entertainment, the school, parks and open spaces, where people had met and spoken and lived out their lives.

On *Erev Shabbat*, the restored synagogue was



The author outside the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* school, established in 1904 by Baron and Baroness Edmond de Rothschild.

filled to capacity - possibly 400 people - and at least half had to sit outside on the veranda for lack of seating. It was again very hot. *Arvit* started after 19h30 as the sun sets late in the Mediterranean in July. As the rabbi, who had especially come from Athens for this week, chanted the familiar prayers in the same way that generations before him had done, I wondered, could it be that somehow the disembodied souls of this '*Chica Yerushalayim*' ('Little Jerusalem') were aware that their holy places were once more being used by their descendants for thanksgiving? Walking back to our Shabbat supper through the winding streets and alley ways, I had the incongruous feeling that amidst the sound of



The Kahal Shalom synagogue, view from the Women's Gallery

partying revellers from every corner of the world, their souls were suspended somewhere empowering us, accompanying us.

On Shabbat morning we participated in the traditional service, not as well attended as on Friday night but with almost all the seating being taken up nonetheless. It was particularly special to me to hear my husband Eliakim join with his brother Jo and some others in saying the *Birkat Ha Kohanim*.

The last of the public events that I will describe took place in the Kahal Shalom on the concluding Sunday morning. It consisted of shared memories, memorial prayers intoned by the rabbi and speeches by members of the small permanent community on the island, some municipal figureheads and an amazing, articulate, energetic survivor, now living in the USA, Stella Levi. Stella's upbeat optimism for the future, despite what she had lived through, is truly something to share whenever despondency may rear its head in conversations about Jews and Israel. Her knowledge of the *Juderia* was excellent. She showed us where her family had lived and confirmed where my husband's family had had their home. She told us that in addition to the official street names, the Jews gave their own names to their streets, such as the 'cool street', or the 'place of the date tree'.

After the service the congregation, joined by others who had just arrived, took a short walk to the Monument to the Victims of the Holocaust on Rhodes. Situated on a wooded traffic island in

one of the main shopping areas of the Old City, it is just a five-minute walk from Simiou Street, where the synagogue is situated. A wreath was laid at the foot of the Monument, a black oblong structure, about six feet tall with inscriptions in several languages - Ladino, Ivrit, French, Italian, English and Greek. A municipal band played what sounded to me like the national anthem and that was the official ending to this week of memory and renewal.

Did the shoppers, locals and tourists, give any more than a cursory thought to what was taking place? I do not know. But I will always remember what I saw and the conversations shared.

There is so much more to see and learn about Rhodes. This interested reader is invited to delve deeper into the repository of information that is available.

Most of this community's infrastructure, the restored synagogue, the museum alongside it and another on the site of the cemetery, plus the planning and implementation of the events of 21–27 July, 2014, was underwritten by Mrs Bella Restis, whose family were from Rhodes and Salonika and who has a brother, sister and other close family in Cape Town. Thanks must also go to the thorough organizational efforts of the very able Carmen Cohen, Community Secretary, and the multi-talented Isaac Habib of Cape Town, who acted as museum curator, tour guide and much else over this summer season. To them, and their helpers, *Kol HaKavod*.



Eliakim Cohen, Rhodes beachfront.

FOREVER LINKED - RHODOS 2014

*

Maurice Turiel

We came from all over the world, from Caracas to Cancun; from Seattle to Sydney; from Hong Kong to Cape Town. We were all there, 400 of us on Rhodes, to commemorate the deportation of our dearest families from the “*Chica Yerushalaim*” (Little Jerusalem).

At the beginning of the 20th Century, there were 4500 Jews on Rhodes, living harmoniously with their Greek and Turkish neighbours. Italy gained control of the island in 1912, and in 1938, the Italian Fascist government passed a number of anti-Jewish decrees. When Italy capitulated to the Allies in 1943, Rhodes was occupied by Germany. On 18-19 July 1944, all Jews were summoned to report to the old Aviation Institute building at the Aeronotica, and stripped of all their possessions. They were imprisoned in the basement of the building and kept there for three days without food or drink. The savagery included separating men and women, tearing their clothes and forcibly removing any gold they might have had in their teeth. On Sunday, 23 July 1944, the Jews were marched to the port and made to board three old, coal-carrying ships. The trip to Athens took eight days. Thereafter, they were held in the notorious Haidari concentration camp, along with Greek partisans, and on 2 August, were herded onto trains, 65 people per wagon. On 16 August, they arrived at Auschwitz. On that day, 1200 were taken to the gas chambers. That was 28 Av. Only about 120 women and thirty young men out of almost 1700 escaped death. Today, only three Jewish families live on Rhodes. And that is the reason why every year on 28 Av we, Sephardi Jews with roots in Rhodes, commemorate that terrible loss.

The week-long programme commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the deportations commenced on Monday, 21 July, with a day trip to the island of Kos to visit the cemetery. The following day, lectures analysing the deportations and the Holocaust were given by a range of experts.

On 23 July 2014, all those who had come to Rhodes for the commemoration assembled

at the original building on the Aeronotica, now called the Aster Building, just as our loved ones did all those years ago. A plaque was unveiled, and an explanation given as to why we were there, followed by a speech in Ladino. We were then taken to the cemetery, where Bella Angel Restis unveiled a plaque commemorating the deportation from Kos. Survivors lit memorial candles; a young *Chazan* from Rome sang the memorial prayer and sounded the shofar. Prayers were also said for the soldiers in the Israel Defence Force. The extremely moving ceremony concluded with the singing of Hatikvah. Buses then took us to the Kallitheas Springs for a superb lunch, to mix and mingle with friends and family we had not seen for 30, 50 and 60 years. It was a very emotional time for me to rekindle friendships after such a long time, especially as I was surrounded by my family from Belgium, Canada, USA, Venezuela and Hong Kong.

On Erev Shabbat, we gathered in the Kehila Shalom, our synagogue, for the return of a *Sefer Torah* which for many years had been in safe-keeping in the Congo. This was followed by the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service, conducted by the Rabbi from Athens, ably assisted by the young Italian *chazan*. We all sang the tunes that our families had sung in the past. It was magnificent, not only to hear voices raised in song and prayer, but to see the aisles and courtyard of the synagogue packed to capacity. This was followed by a superb dinner at the Albergo delle Rose, known today as the Casino Rhodos. Some people sang and danced to celebrate their joy at being together with long lost families and friends.

Saturday morning, after a lovely service, we were treated to a Sephardi *beracha* and that night went to the Melina Mercouri open air theatre to watch an Israeli group perform. On Sunday morning, we all gathered at the synagogue for a memorial prayer and speeches by the representatives of the Greek government, the mayor of Rhodes, the head of the Jewish community in Greece and Stella Levi, herself a survivor. Finally, we all marched to the memorial monument to the Jewish community for a concluding wreath-laying ceremony.

For all of us, it was the culmination of a memorable week. To me in particular, it had been a celebration of life, in which we all rejoiced at being able to be together to remember our dear families and loved ones.

Maurice Turiel attended the ‘70th Commemoration of the Martyrs of Rhodes’ event held on Rhodes in July 2014. This article is adapted from the addresses he gave on his return to the Sephardi Hebrew Congregation and Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

THE FORGOTTEN SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH SOLDIER WHO DIED ON RHODES

*

Isaac Habib

For the last few years, I have been visiting Rhodes, where both my parents came from. Today, it is part of Greece but it had changed hands for over two thousand years. Being a strategic island, it was invaded by the Romans, Venetians, Crusaders and Ottomans. Closer to our time, in 1912, this beautiful land became part of Italy after the Balkan War between the Turks and the Italians. Prior to that, it had belonged to the Ottoman Empire since 1522. Under the Ottomans, the Jews in Rhodes were able to practice Judaism, albeit having to pay a tax to the Turkish government for that right (as did Christians). Jews and Muslims lived within the medieval wall built by the Crusaders, while Christians lived outside the old city. Jews and Turks lived in perfect harmony, with mosques towards the upper part of the town and the Jewish Quarter and its six synagogues situated in the lower part of the inner old city, close to the port.

In 1789, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen was proclaimed in France, and on 27 September 1791, a decree emancipated forever the Jews of that country. On 17 May 1860, a group of Jewish French intellectuals founded the Alliance Israelite Universelle, with the aim of organising Judaism on a universal basis and with the moral duty of uplifting and educating their poor co-religionist around the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and the European territories of the Turkish Empire.¹ Thus it came to be that one of these schools was to be found in the heart of the Jewish Quarter of Rhodes. Built in 1904 by the Baron and Baroness Edmond de Rothschild, the children in *Alliance Israelite Universelle* school had to learn French, but the community dictated a religious teaching and the upkeep of Jewish traditions.

In 1912, the Treaty of Lausanne gave Rhodes and all the other Dodecanese islands to the Italians. The latter proceeded to develop Rhodes, building a road network and, after 1922, massive buildings glorifying the power of Fascism under Mussolini. Italian culture was brought to the island; schools had to educate their pupils according to an Italian curriculum and the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* became the Italian

Jewish School. Children were taught Italian and embraced the Italian culture. While their mother tongue was Djudeo-Spanish (Ladino), brought by their forefathers from Spain after the Edict of Expulsion of 1492, Jewish children were thus able to converse, read, and write both French and Italian.

The beginning of the 20th Century, as a result of economic difficulties, saw the commencement of emigration from Rhodes, to the USA, Argentina, Belgian Congo and Rhodesia. The Italian government, unable to expand their territories further, saw, through the Jewish community, a way to expand culturally. The Governor of the Island, Mario Lago, suggested to the central government in Italy the creation of a Rabbinical College. This was approved, and in 1928, the Collegio Rabbinico di Rodi opened its doors. Youngsters came there from various countries, graduating with a diploma signed by the Governor, the Beth Din, and the Director of the school, Ricardo Pacivici.

Life for the Jews of Rhodes seemed destined for a good future until, in 1938, Mussolini made an alliance with Hitler's Germany and imposed Nazi-style racial laws against the Jews of Italy and its colonies. Jewish life in Rhodes took a turn for the worst. Children were expelled from non-Jewish schools, no Jews could be civil servants, kosher slaughter was prohibited, Jews had to work on Shabbat and the Rabbinical College was closed down. Unable to find work, more young Jews emigrated. But worse was to come when, that same year, the new Governor of the Island, Mario de Vecchi di Val Cismon, ordered the relocation of the Jewish cemetery to its present sites. The Rhodian Jews had the heavy task of exhuming the bodies of their loved ones and burying them for a second time.

Today, one can see the Rhodes British War Cemetery opposite the Jewish cemetery. After Italy broke its alliance with Germany in 1943, Germany invaded the island and, on 23 July 1944, the Jewish community of Rhodes was deported to Auschwitz, where most of them perished.

Rhodes was liberated by the British army. During one of my many trips to the island, I decided to go and explore the British War Cemetery, where Christians, Moslems, Hindus, and Jews served with or alongside the Royal Air Force. As I entered, two tomb stones attracted my attention. Both had a Magen David on them. Coming closer, I saw engraved on one of them a Springbok with the slogan, in English and

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Afrikaans, “Union is strength/*Eendrag maak mag*”. I stood in front of this stone, speechless. How could it be? In Rhodes, so far from home and on this island so dear to me, a young South African Jew had found his final resting place!

The name on the tombstone read, “Lieutenant I M Seel, S.A.A.F. 19th September 1943, age 24”. Below the Magen David was the legend, “Gone to rest through the pathway of duty, venturing his life that others may live”. September 1943 - those very same months when Germany occupied Rhodes. The inscription on the other stone read, “Pal/8363, Gunner H. Federmann, Royal Artillery, Long Range Desert Group, 24th October 1943, Age 22”. As we Jews do, I placed a stone on each of the graves.



Two years later, I went back to Rhodes with two cousins from Johannesburg. We visited the old, no longer Jewish, Quarter, and the Shalom Synagogue, built in 1577 by Sephardic Jews who

had fled Spain and who began arriving in Rhodes after 1522, the year it fell into Ottoman hands.

We had a wonderful time together, moments of joy, times of melancholy. We could not but think of our parents, all from Rhodes, relating the stories they used to tell us, almost comparing notes. Our mothers were sisters. Miriam's mother, my aunt, left Rhodes before the war, to get married in Salisbury, and my mother, with two sisters and our grand-mother, were sent to Auschwitz. My mother survived the various camps and after the war decided to join her two sisters in Rhodesia. On the way there, she met my father in the Belgian Congo. He had been born in Turkey but had little recollection of it as he came to Rhodes as a child.

Our grand-father, Nissim Capelluto, was among those exhumed from the old cemetery and reburied in 1938. The three of us went to meditate at his grave, washing the tombstone, scrubbing it and restoring its white marble colour. As we left the cemetery, I wanted to show my cousins the tombstones of those young Jews who had fought to free Rhodes. When we entered the British War Cemetery, however, I was stunned. Two empty spaces now stood among all the graves. No Stars of David. Gone! How could this be?

Back in Cape Town, in one of our second generation survivors meeting at the Cape Town Holocaust Centre (where I do voluntary work as an educator), we were asked if we had anything to share. Sitting next to me was Gwynne Robins from the Jewish Board of Deputies. I related what had happened in the British War Cemetery. Gwynne asked if I had any pictures of the missing stones. Luckily, I had kept every picture. As soon as she received the pictures, she set the ball rolling, going through all the various channels to get an answer. And the answer came back: It was an act of antisemitism. Not even those responsible for British military cemeteries had been aware that this evil act had taken place on Rhodes.

Two new stones, identical to the ones removed, were ordered from France. It took two years, but eventually they were erected over the graves.

On 23 July 2013, after the *Haskarah* ceremony for the Jews of Rhodes who perished during the Shoah, we went to the British War Ceremony and said *Haskarah* and *Kaddish* in memory of I M Seel and H Federmann. As we did not know their full names, the rabbi found a way to say the *Haskarah* for them. Thus were these two young men remembered, seventy years after their passing.

NOTES

- 1 See Wynchank, Anny, 'In the beginning was a school: The Alliance Israélite Universelle and its Legacy', *Jewish Affairs*, Chanukah 2013.

SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH POWS IN WORLD WAR II

*

David Saks

On 21 June 1942, the British in North Africa suffered a heavy defeat with the fall of Tobruk to German and Italian forces. Amongst the 33 000 soldiers captured were 10 722 South Africans, all drawn from the 2nd South African Infantry Division under Major General H.B. Klopper. For most of them, nearly three years of captivity lay ahead, initially in POW camps on the Libyan Coast the Mediterranean coast, thereafter in Italy and finally in Germany.

One of the Jewish veterans¹ who later wrote about what it was like to be caught up in the debacle was N Rosenberg, for whom (as was probably the case with many of his comrades), falling into enemy hands was even more traumatic than the defeat itself. Rosenberg and a handful of others tried to make a break for freedom following the surrender, but were soon captured by Italians ("holding their rifles horizontally and pumping them up and down over their heads like prize-fighters just declared winners"). They were marched off to El Adem and the following day transported back to Tobruk:

Trucks were waiting with fair-haired members of the Afrika Korps beside them. We were piled on and driven off. We looked at the two German soldiers on the truck with us and the German driver in the cab. Why not overcome them and dash for it in the truck? But where? We did not know where we were. We thought these thoughts until we reached the great big barbed wire camp in Tobruk, teeming with prisoners of war. We had never seen so many men together. It looked like the whole British Army. Our world collapsed as the great iron gate closed on us.²

Private Stanley Smollan of the 2nd Transvaal Scottish also made an unsuccessful attempt to escape after the surrender. After recovering from a neck wound received at Sollum, he had been drafted back to the Battalion on 15 June and reached it on the 20th, just in time to be involved in the fall of Tobruk the following day:³

Our particular platoon was right on the western perimeter and we saw the frightful saturated Stuka bombing of all the outer defences. There was very little left inside. In my opinion it was a hopeless situation. General Klopper was severely criticised but really, there was

nothing there - it would have been a massacre. Finding ourselves in this position we broke up into small parties and four of us went into the desert out of the western perimeter to see if we could get well into the desert and possibly back to Cairo. Some chaps actually succeeded. One of the Company Commanders of the Transvaal Scottish, Captain Paddy Cook got through. He went right into the desert, caught up with the Desert Rats and got back to Cairo. However, not many managed this. We were soon rounded up two days out by a German patrol. The German officer spoke to us, inquired where we came from and learning that we were South Africans, asked why didn't we do what the Irish did - join them and tell Britain where they got off. Of course, we replied that we would find that difficult! Anyway, he was very decent to us and said, "look chaps, I'm sorry but I'm going to hand you over to the Italians".⁴



Stanley Smollan (right) with fellow Jocks Herby Justus and Jim Kinnear outside the Jewish Club in Cairo.

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Conditions in the POW camps during the five months in which the prisoners were held in North Africa were exceedingly grim. This was not, as Smollan stresses, due to any particular harshness on the part of their Italian captors, but to the latter's lack of capacity:

After we were taken prisoners we found ourselves in a pretty awkward position. They had no equipment, barely had clothing, were using pre-1914 rifles and were themselves poorly clad and underfed. Now they were required on top of this to cope with tens of thousands of prisoners. We were first taken to Benghazi, where a camp was hastily constructed. Unfortunately, things deteriorated very rapidly. The situation in the camp was soon reduced to one of almost anarchy. Eventually a Transvaal Scottish Sergeant Major Cockroft, together with a Guards Officer, took charge of things, restored order and things got a little better, but it was very grim. The German Command seemed to want us out of the way. They wanted to use Tobruk to supply the run they were doing down the desert. It was this run which proved their undoing, because they over-reached themselves and were destroyed at Alamein.⁵

Subsequently, some 2000 prisoners were put onto trucks and driven over ten days to Tripoli in Libya, then an Italian colony. There, they were held in an old Italian barracks in Tarhuna, a small neighbouring settlement. It had been built to accommodate no more than three to four thousand soldiers, and the prisoner population in due course much exceeded that figure.

The old cloakrooms and drainage system were not functioning and very quickly there was a danger of disease breaking out. There was still very little food available. We called for volunteers with knowledge of plumbing and drainage and formed work parties and got things into reasonable working order. This went on for three or four months. We didn't have enough food, they didn't have enough food. We had no Red Cross support because we were caught up in North Africa. They could not get their supplies in and couldn't feed us. So we were caught in an ugly position. But we survived it and most of the prisoners, particularly the South Africans, conducted themselves very well, they kept themselves clean, kept their spirits up, exercised where they could. It was a matter of keeping one's self-respect and lasting it out.⁶

Smollan appears in the memoirs of fellow prisoner David Brokensha, whom he befriended and assisted. Brokensha recalls how moved he was when Smollan presented him with a desperately-needed greatcoat, which, being a

non-smoker, he had obtained through bartering his cigarette ration: "When he gave it to me, I had to try hard not to weep, it was one of the most welcome presents I have ever had, and one of the most disinterested gestures I have ever known".⁷

Under such primitive living conditions, especially in the absence of a Jewish chaplain, observing even a rudimentary form of Judaism was extremely difficult. It nevertheless proved possible to organise High Holiday services that year. How this came about was described some three decades later by David Katzeff ('Yom – [not so] – Tov 1942', *Judean*, 1974):

I was approached by a young fellow called Mendelsohn. Apparently he had quite a flair for languages and had quickly picked up a smattering of Italian. He became friendly with one of the guards and during discussion with him mentioned that we were in the period of the Jewish New Year. The guard then disclosed that there was a small Jewish community in the village, and also a Jewish Minister, and undertook to take the risk of trying to secure a Prayer Book and smuggling it in to us. The risks involved affected not only the guard, but also Mendelsohn, the Jewish community of Tarhuna and their Minister. However, the operation was safely completed and the following day Mendelsohn arrived with a Prayer Book in Hebrew only, covering all the services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. 31 Jewish POW's again assembled and agreed that we would have all the services from *Kol Nidrei* right through to *Neila*. Unfortunately, we would have to forego the *Havdalah*.

The whole plan was, however, beset with a number of problems. Firstly the venue, but this was easily solved. Underneath one of the barrack-rooms was a sort of dungeon-cellar large enough to accommodate us with a small open window at ground level and secured with steel bars. The window space was about 18' wide by 24" high and on the little ledge in front, the Prayer Book could rest, with ample light provided for the reader. This then became the readers-desk-cum-pulpit. The next problem was to arrange with our Gentile colleagues to draw our rations for the day, the bread in the morning and the rice-soup in the afternoon. This was not so simple because we had to take into consideration the serious temptation that would be placed before even the most responsible chaps who at this time were already in a state of advanced starvation. We needed not to have had any fears over this, as you will read later, and I agreed to accept the post of Reader.

On Yom Kippur eve, we duly recited the *Kol*

Nidrei three times and managed to conclude the service before dark. We assembled again the next morning and it soon became apparent that it would be a tremendously onerous task, particularly in the physical state we were in, for one reader to conduct the whole day of prayer. A volunteer emerged in the form of one Len Rubenstein, and between us we managed to perform what I think anyone will agree was under the circumstances a reasonable job.

At dusk, we dispersed to our various quarters and then experienced what, to me at any rate, will always be remembered as one of the highlights of three years as a POW. Not only had our Gentile friends carefully guarded our rations and handed them to us, but between themselves had collected for us from their secretly hoarded treasures, a gift of a few cigarettes each.

Ben Hermer was one of those involved in arranging the Yom Tov services. Prior to this, he had sought to ameliorate conditions in the camp by petitioning the camp commander to provide better hygiene facilities, and used his medical knowledge to assist his fellow prisoners. The historian Karen Horn describes how Hermer subsequently managed to escape, thereby avoiding being sent to Italy when the camp was evacuated:

When the transports to Italy began, Hermer was desperate not to leave the continent because he received news that his fiancé was missing somewhere in Germany. While prisoners were lining up to go on board ships, Hermer's anxiety got the better of him and he told the camp commander that one of the POWs had contracted typhoid. The commander, already impatient with Hermer, was forced to take action and because the Italians went looking for the non-existent patient, Hermer simply walked out of the camp. On his way to Allied lines Hermer's life, like other escaped POWs, depended on the goodwill of the local people and in this case Hermer spent several days with a Senussi family, recovering from dysentery and waiting for news about Allied advances. Following his rescue by Allied forces, he flew to Cairo, where by extraordinary coincidence he came across his fiancé, who had escaped from Nazi Germany with her mother.⁸

In November 1942, the situation in North Africa changed dramatically with the defeat of the Germans and Italians at El Alamein. The prisoners' barracks at Tarhuna were now urgently required, so the inmates had to be hurriedly moved elsewhere. Smollan was amongst those who were loaded onto the ship *Coldelana* and transported across the Mediterranean to Naples:

It was a 10 000 tonner and the first prisoners were put down into the bottom of the hold. Then planks were laid for the next layer of prisoners and so on until all were loaded. It was an unpleasant situation and to top it everyone had dysentery, so if you were on a lower level you weren't too well off. Somehow we survived the trip over to Naples which took four days, ducking and diving aircraft, submarines, etc.

After the four day trip we eventually arrived in Naples and were entrained to a camp (Camp 66) in Capua, a little town not far from Naples. Here things got a bit better. The Red Cross appeared but were not then able to perform because we were still posted as "Missing, whereabouts unknown". Our families had no idea whether we were dead or alive. We were classed as "Missing believed Prisoner". This situation went on for nearly a year. At Capua, things got a little bit better. We started getting used to POW life, books began to arrive (literary critics judged a book by its length, not by its quality!) We interested ourselves in various things, exercised and did the best we could under the circumstances. There was never any ill treatment.⁹ The Italians tried their best - then all of a sudden things changed and the Red Cross parcels arrived and we found ourselves in the pound seats. They contained cigarettes, tea, jam, salmon, all sorts of things, and these then became currency. The tea (and the rest) was very valuable. So the situation would be that one would see an Italian soldier with his rifle on the ground and the prisoners over the strands of barbed wire would be throwing over a packet of tea and the soldier would be throwing over four loaves of bread, which was the rate of exchange. Ten cigarettes were also worth a loaf of bread and a bar of soap also had its value. But the chaps quickly saw the opportunity to do some unfair trade with the Italians, who didn't know that the tea had already been brewed once or twice, dried on the roof and then repacked to be traded for bread or whatever. These packets were probably destined for the "black market" in Rome. So this kind of thing went on. The food in the camp wasn't great but we got enough and were busy building ourselves up again. This continued for about three months and then we were moved to a Camp south of Rome called Fara Sabina (Camp 54) where there were about two to three thousand prisoners. Much the same conditions prevailed. The men in the camp became very alert and active and made articles, some of which are now in the Transvaal Scottish Museum. They made things out of tins, for instance, articles which brewed up tea. So we all got by. This was then in early January 1943. Not previously mentioned is the fact that from the start, when

we were at Benghazi, lice became our constant companions and followed us throughout – we never got rid of them and it was the worst thing we ever had to endure.

One morning we were lying around the camp, delousing ourselves, or attempting to do so, when we heard a tremendous crescendo of noise. Looking up in the sky we saw a raid on Rome on the railway yards by 350 American Bombers escorted by fighters. You can't imagine the noise that this created. We heard the Ack Ack and then saw and heard the bombing. There was this column of smoke rising up. The effect on the prisoners was electric. Here we saw our own aircraft! We saw them clearly weaving and sort of signalling (they knew we were there). This was a show of force. Mussolini had been forced to abdicate and this was to show who was boss. The next thing was that Italy sued for peace with America and when we woke up two mornings later, there were no guards in sight and the gates were open.¹⁰

Despite appearances, liberation was not at hand. Shortly thereafter, the camp was secured once more and most of those prisoners who had left were recaptured. As the Allies advanced up the Italian peninsula, the prisoners were moved further north, until winding up in POW camps in Germany for the remainder of the war. Smollan, however, evaded that fate. On waking up to an unguarded camp, he and five others made for the nearest mountain village, and there spent the next four months or so as fugitives.



Stanley Smollan (far right) with five other escapees. From left, Colin Stewart, Ron Tacon, Bill Trout, Cedric Whitelaw, Basil Hall.

Crucial assistance was provided by an elderly couple, Berchina and Attilio Venettoni who, at considerable risk, provided them with food and civilian clothing and hid them in caves in the valley. They also put us in touch with the Italian underground and British agents. Several other escapees joined them during this time, including Smollan's former Parktown Boys' schoolmate, Royce Schulman. Once it became apparent that the Germans were searching the countryside,

Smollan, Schulman and four others decided to move on, using one of the maps given to them by the underground:

We had no money but still were provided with food and lodging as we went our way. All we could do was issue our own form of Credit Card written on the back of one of the leaflets dropped by the Allies urging Italians to look after the prisoners of war and promising a reward, asking Montgomery to recompense the family for their help to us! It was by then snowing in the mountains, so we made our way to the plains, making for a place called Tivoli. Here it was warmer and we stayed there for about ten or twelve days and became very involved with the families there. They gave us Italian names, tried to make good Catholics of us, and treated us wonderfully well. They were good, kind people who really risked their lives for us. I visited them after the war and renewed the acquaintanceship. We set ourselves up at Gerano with the de Lellis family. The underground was pretty active in the area. One day sometime in January, they alerted us that the BBC had announced that a landing had taken place at Anzio to the south of us on the coast.

Anzio is a marshland area, called the Pontine Marshes (it is now the site of the Fumicino airport). Two landings had been made on either side. The underground told us to get moving and see if we could make our way there. It was about 130 kilometres away, and we went in a party of four. We decided to keep to the fields, and intended to follow the German troops, who were very methodical. They were trying to throw an iron ring around Anzio. By a miracle, on day four, after walking the 130 kilometres, we got into a canal in the middle of the two landings. There was shelling going on overhead, and the Royal Navy was firing in from the sea. We suddenly saw the sea, and came up through the canal and here we were challenged. We thought, "Oh hell, this is it! We've come so far only to be caught!" But it was the Americans, who took us to their HQ. There we were put under arrest (we had no papers, of course), and then handed over to the British.¹¹

Within four weeks of setting out for Anzio, Smollan and his companions arrived at Waterkloof Airbase in South Africa. Officially, they were still part of the armed forces, but after they had been put through psychological and physical tests, the decision was made to demob and return them to civilian life. They were duly paid out their accumulated army pay, plus £37.10 to buy a new outfit of clothes and, as Smollan put it, "that, for us, was that!" For thousands of other South African POWs, however, many

long months of captivity still lay ahead.

In 2006, Smollan was presented with HM Armed Forces Veteran's Badge by the UK Ministry of Defence. He dedicates the award to the other members of the quartet who made their successful bid for freedom, the now late Royce Schulman, Colin Stewart and Bill Berridge. Smollan was to become a member another 'quartet', one of the Wanderers' Bowling Club's four oldest active members. Since the other three had turned a hundred, whereas he was still only in his nineties, he was known as the 'baby' of the group. With the passing earlier this year of Norman Gordon, the Jewish Springbok cricketer of 'Timeless Test' fame, the quartet is now a trio.

NOTES

- 1 Proportionately, Jews constituted nearly five percent of the 211 000 whites who served in the Union forces (9400 men and 600 women), hence Jews probably constituted around 400 of the POWs taken at Tobruk.

- 2 Rosenberg, N, 'The confusion that was Tobruk', *The Judean*, September 1963. The latter publication was for many years the monthly bulletin of the SA Jewish Ex-Servicemen's League.
- 3 Smollan, S, address to Military Medal Society of South Africa, 26 August 2002 (hereafter 'Smollan, 2002').
- 4 Other things Smollan remembers the officer saying are, "We've just had some of the wonderful fruits and jams from your supply post, which we've just captured" and, regarding the Italians, "You had them in the last war and we have them in this one" (personal communication, September 2014).
- 5 Smollan, 2002.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Brokensha, D, *Brokie's Way: An Anthropologist's Story: Love and Work in Three Continents*, Amani Press, 2007.
- 8 Horn, K, 'Narratives from North Africa: South African prisoner-of-war experience following the fall of Tobruk, June 1942', *Historia*, vol.56 no.2, 2011.
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DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH AND HIS JEWISH SYMPATHIES

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Cecil Bloom

In pre-revolutionary Russia, most Jewish composers wrote for their own people, using Jewish subjects; very few composed for the wider community. Some leading non-Jewish composers, however, did occasionally incorporate Jewish themes into their works. The first was Mikhail Glinka, who's *Jewish Song* was an arrangement of a song he had written for one of his Jewish students. Mira Balakirev's *Hebrew Song* was composed 1859 and Modest Moussorgsky's *A Jewish Song* in 1867. Mussorgsky's unflattering portrait of the two Jews, Goldenberg and Shmul, forms a well-known section of his *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov wrote *Hebrew Song* early in his career, but he is best remembered in the above regard for the manner in which he urged Jewish pupils to concentrate on Jewish music. Sergei Prokofiev's most important 'Jewish' work is his *Overture on Jewish Themes*, which was commissioned by a New York chamber group in 1919. As a child, he had heard Jewish *klezmer* bands and *klezmer*-like melodies appear in this work. Igor Stravinsky also used Jewish subjects. His *Symphony of Psalms* was composed in 1930 and *Abraham and Isaac*, a sacred ballad for baritone and orchestra, in 1962, in honour of the State of Israel.

After the Revolution, music using specifically Jewish subjects became less common in Soviet Russia until Dmitri Shostakovich became interested in Jewish issues, an interest that began during the violent anti-Jewish period in Stalin's regime. Ultimately, he used Jewish idioms far more than any other non-Jew in the Soviet Union.

Shostakovich was a titanic and tragic figure. His stance regarding Communist Russia and especially on his Jewish connections has been vigorously debated and a number of books have been published on his attitude towards Jews. He is not thought to have had any Jewish family background, but his sympathies for the Russian-Jewish people are well documented, particularly in his book *Testimony*. Published in 1979, these

are said to be Shostakovich's memoirs imparted by him to Solomon Volkov, who immigrated to the United States after Shostakovich's death.¹ The authenticity of the book has been much debated, but it is now generally accepted as being essentially well-founded. At first, Shostakovich's son Maxim expressed doubt as to whether it was his father's testament and claimed that it gave a false picture containing too many contradictions and inaccuracies. However, after finally leaving the Soviet Union, he withdrew this statement, saying in a BBC interview, "It's true. It's accurate. Sometimes for me there is too much rumour in the book but nothing major. The basis of the book is correct". Shostakovich's daughter, Galina, also endorsed the book's accuracy as did the well-known Russian pianist/conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy, who described it as "a highly realistic and genuine illustration of Shostakovich's life". A contrary view has been given by Boris Tishchenko, a former pupil of Shostakovich, who believed that Volkov's book presented a false picture on Shostakovich's views. Much has now been written about the Shostakovich/Jewish relationship but, with the exception of one or two critics, it is now generally conceded that his Jewish connections are indeed completely genuine.

Shostakovich's father worked at the St Petersburg Bureau of Weights and Measures as an assistant to the chemist Mendelayev, whose name is immortalised as the deviser of the Periodic Table of (Chemical) Elements. The family was unusual in that it was sympathetic to Jews and Dmitri was brought up to believe that antisemitism was 'a shameful superstition'. *Testimony* has many references to Shostakovich's attitude towards antisemitism and the revulsion he felt for it. For instance, he observes: "[But] even before the war, the attitude towards Jews had changed drastically. It turned out that we had far to go to achieve brotherhood. The Jews became the most persecuted and defenceless people of Europe. It was a return to the Middle Ages. Jews became a symbol to me. All of man's defencelessness was concentrated in them. After the war, I tried to convey that feeling in my music. It was a bad time for the Jews then. In fact, it's always a bad time for them." He added that he never condoned an antisemitic tone, even as a youth refusing to repeat popular antisemitic jokes. He broke with

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good friends if he perceived any antisemitic tendencies in them. There is, however, one indication that Shostakovich may have been tainted with some antisemitism in his youth because in the papers of Valerian Bogdanov-Berezovsky, a composer and musicologist friend of his when he was sixteen, Volkov did find a note: "Mitya came and for three hours we talked about *kike* domination in the arts". In *Testimony*, Shostakovich does comment that, as a youth, he came across antisemitism amongst his peers, who thought that Jews were receiving preferential treatment. One of his teachers at the Leningrad Conservatory was a Jew, Maximilian Steinberg, who was Rimsky-Korsakov's son-in-law. Steinberg's third symphony contains some strains of Jewish music.

In *Testimony*, Shostakovich approvingly quotes an incident in Tsarist Russia when Glazunov refused to tell the Russian Prime Minister the number of Jewish students enrolled in the St Petersburg Conservatory; he likened him to Rimsky-Korsakov in his hatred of antisemitism. However, despite composing his Hebrew Song, Balakirev was accused of having become "rabid with the filthy trait [of antisemitism] in his old age". He once told Flora Litvinoff, daughter-in-law of Stalin's Jewish Commissar for Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinoff, that antisemitism was a "struggle with culture and reason. It is an admission we are worse, more stupid, less cultured than Jews". When he went to America in 1973, Shostakovich saw the film *Fiddler on the Roof*. The longing of Jews for their Russian homeland impressed him deeply and he commented, "It would be good if Jews could live peacefully and happily in Russia where they were born. But we must never forget about the dangers of antisemitism and keep reminding others of it because the infection is alive and who knows if it will ever disappear". Strangely, there appears to be only one minor reference to the State of Israel in any writings or conversations associated with Shostakovich. One might have expected him to have commented on Golda Meir's arrival in Moscow as Israel's first ambassador to a tumultuous Jewish welcome, but he appears to have been silent. In *Testimony*, he does refer to an incident when he was in a queue waiting to be served. A Jewish-looking woman with 'an accent' complained and she was told by the salesman, "Why don't you go to Israel?" implying that things were better there. Shostakovich commented that this meant that Israel was pictured in a positive way compared to life in Russia. It is worth noting, however, that when a total of over 4000 Jews from the Ukraine, Siberia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Armenia immigrated to Israel in 1996 and 1997, the ship that carried them was called the *Dmitri Shostakovich*.

Shostakovich has written that many of his works reflect his impressions of Jewish music

but he seems to have been first drawn to Jewish sources in composing his 7th (Leningrad) Symphony in 1941, partly inspired by the *Psalms of David*. His original plan was a large work for soloist, chorus and orchestra based on the Psalms but he abandoned it for the symphony. For him, David had "some marvellous words in blood, that God takes revenge for blood. He doesn't forget the cries of victims". He saw the symphony as being about "terror, slavery, the bondage of the spirit". Despite this philo-Judaic focus, he was awarded a Stalin Prize for the work. It is claimed that a *klezmer* dance melody erupts at the climax of the march in the opening movement. Shostakovich's especial interest in Jewish music, however, had begun just as life was becoming difficult for Russian Jewry. He first used Jewish subjects in *Rothschild's Violin*, an opera based on a Chekhov story that one of his students, Benjamin Fleischmann, had started to compose with his encouragement. Chekhov's story is about the non-Jew, Yakov Ivanov, who regularly mocks the Jew, Rothschild, but shortly before his death, he repents and gives Rothschild his violin. This was perceived as having similarities to Russian-Jewish relationships. Fleischmann died in the Battle of Leningrad and Shostakovich completed the opera and orchestrated it. He was proud of this, but for his efforts, he was labelled as a Zionist and the work was described as a 'Zionist opera'.

Shostakovich's first composition actually to contain Jewish musical elements is the Second Piano Trio, Op. 67, composed in 1944. It was dedicated to his close friend Ivan Sollertinsky, who died just as he began writing it. Sollertinsky, a tragic figure, had been denounced in 1936 as the 'bard' of formalism principally because he was deeply attached to Shostakovich's music. But Shostakovich's grief at his friend's death, of starvation during the war, was not the sole reason for the work. Maxim Shostakovich has said that his father used the Jewish people as a symbol of human suffering and this comes over clearly in this work because it was also in remembrance of the millions who perished at Hitler's hands. He was writing it just as details of the Holocaust were beginning to emerge and he was horrified when he heard that SS guards forced victims to dance over their graves. The Trio also evokes scenes of horror pictured in Picasso's painting *Guernica* and only the forces of evil, destruction and death prevail in the work. The final movement contains typically tragic Jewish dance music enclosed within some very dark passages reminiscent of death; the work actually ends with a picture of death as the Jewish motif vanishes. No solace, alleviation or absolution comes through, and the forces of evil triumph. There is also a suggestion of the *Kol Nidrei* melody in the third movement. The allegretto final movement was encored at the trio's first performance both in Leningrad

and Moscow and Rostislav Dubinsky, the first violinist of the Borodin String Quartet, who was present at the Moscow premiere, has written that “the music left a devastating impression. People cried openly”. The critic, Norman Lebrecht, has paid tribute to this work in heartfelt terms, saying that Shostakovich wrote it when the world was silent and Churchill refused to bomb the Auschwitz railroad. Nevertheless, the only reference to the work in *Testimony* is a comment that its ‘Jewish theme’ is present in his eighth quartet.

The years 1947-9 were particularly difficult for Russian Jewry and for intellectuals in general. Shostakovich was especially worried about the rise in antisemitism and the personal verbal assaults on Jews even though the horrors of Hitler’s camps were now well-known. It was at this time that three important works with Jewish motifs were composed - his first Violin Concerto followed quickly by the Jewish Song Cycle and then the 4th String Quartet. All three works were only premiered many years after they were composed and all after Stalin’s death. The *scherzo* of the concerto, the second of the four movements, contains a *Chassidic* dance rhythm. One listener at the first performance has said that all present realised that a Jewish idiom was present “some jubilantly, some fearfully” even though Stalin was no longer alive.

Shostakovich was always interested in Jewish folk-lore and was attracted to Jewish folk music: “I never tire of delighting in it, it is multifaceted, it can appear to be happy while it is tragic. It’s almost always laughter through tears ... Jewish folk music is unique... Many of my works reflect my impressions of Jewish music”. The genesis of his vocal cycle for soprano, contralto, tenor and piano Op. 79, later orchestrated, is interesting. His regard for Jewish folk music may have originated when he was at the Moscow Conservatory in 1946. Moshe Beregovsky had written a Jewish work, *Yiddishe Volks-Lieder*, in 1938 and in 1946 he presented a thesis on the subject for which Shostakovich was his examiner. This may have motivated Shostakovich into learning something of the Yiddish language because in May 1948 he asked a Jewish friend about the pronunciation of some Yiddish words. Sometime later, he was passing a bookshop where he saw what he thought was a volume that contained songs. As it was, it was merely the written texts of some Jewish songs but the words impressed him. He then decided to set eleven of these texts to music, which gave him the opportunity of using music to describe the fate of the Jews in his country. Two of the songs (nos. 2 and 5) are versions of well-known Yiddish folk songs. Eight songs refer to life in pre-revolutionary Russia and three post-revolution. The last of the pre-revolutionary songs, *Winter*, starkly illustrates his understanding of and sympathy

for Jews living in Tsarist Russia:

My Sheyndl is in bed,
And with her a sick child.
There’s not a splinter in the unheated hut,
And outside the wind howls. Ah...Ah...Ah...
The cold and the wind have returned,
One cannot bear it and be silent.
So scream, so weep, children,
For winter has come back...Ah

In *Lullaby*, the child’s father is “far away in Siberia” while the mother suffers in misery. In *The Abandoned Father*, the father appeals desperately but unsuccessfully for his daughter not to go off with a police officer, with his daughter answering, “Mister Police Officer, quickly chase the old Jew away”. The words of the last three songs give the impression of optimism and refer to the so-called ‘happy life’ under Stalin, but the music conveys the impression that this is a delusion. What made him decide on this composition, especially given the deteriorating political situation faced by the Jews in Russia? Natalya Vovsi-Mikhoels, daughter of one of the leading Jewish actors in Russia, Solomon Mikhoels, and wife of one of Shostakovich’s close friends, Moise Weinberg, is certain that it was his protest against the treatment of Jews by the state. He came back to this song cycle some fifteen years later, in 1963, producing a version with orchestral accompaniment.

Shostakovich’s interest in Jewish folk music was deep and lasting, as shown by his involvement in 1970 when a fourteen-composer collection of twenty-nine songs entitled *New Jewish Songs* was issued. He did not compile this collection but was listed as its editor-in-chief despite not appearing to have carried out any work on it. The artistic quality is mediocre, but he seems to have been happy to associate his name with the collection, no doubt to show his support for and interest in Jewish music. He wrote an introduction to the collection:

The birth of new original national songs always makes me happy. Jewish folk music is unique in its emotional content. We can hear its reverberation in works of many great composers. In our days, Jewish folk music is alive and develops [and] new proof of this is the present collection where works are included written by Soviet composers in recent years. I wish the new Jewish songs a happy journey.

The final movement of the 4th String Quartet, the first of these three works to receive its first public performance, has strong Jewish colouring and rhythms. It was written soon after the Communist Party attack on ‘western modernism and home-grown formalism’ in music. This attack

focused to a large extent on Jewish musicologists and was just at the time when Solomon Mikhoels, who was head of the Soviet-Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee that had been set up primarily to obtain support for the Soviet Union among Jews in the West and whom Shostakovich admired, was liquidated during the great purges in 1948. When he heard of Mikhoels' death, he told some of his friends that "this is a campaign which starts with the Jews and will end with the whole of the intelligentsia". Shostakovich himself went through a deep crisis at this time as in March 1949, he was sent to the 'Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace' in the United States and there was forced to condemn some of his musical friends as well as some of his own music.

Much later, in 1960, Shostakovich was in Dresden working on his 8th String Quartet at the same time as composing a score for a film about the war-time bombing of the city. He dedicated the work to the memory of the victims of Nazism and of war, and in it used subjects from a number of his other compositions. The second movement contains the same Jewish theme as in his Piano Trio, Op.67. Incredibly, the quartet was completed in three days; it is autobiographical, depicting in music important events in his life. When the Borodin String Quartet played the work to him in his home, he told the players that "this is myself" as he sat "tormented, listening to his story about himself, his musical confession, the sorrowful cry of a soul where each weeps with pain". Shostakovich wrote of this quartet that, "when I die, scarcely anyone will write a work in my memory. Therefore, I have decided to write one myself".

The 13th Symphony was conceived after Shostakovich read and was overwhelmed by Yevgeny Yevtuschenko's poem *Babi Yar*. This described the massacre by the Nazis of 70 000 Jews at the Babi Yar ravine near Kiev in September 1941 and also condemned antisemitism *per se*. At first, his plan was to write a symphonic poem based on this text, but he finally settled on a five-movement symphony, adding four other Yevtushenko poems also on forbidden (but not Jewish) subjects. The work itself has no specific Jewish musical features, but it was clearly intended to demonstrate its composer's deep sympathy for the Jewish people. True to his stance, Shostakovich always wanted to remind of the dangers of antisemitism and the *Babi Yari* poem allowed him to show that the attempts of the Germans and their Ukrainian collaborators had failed to destroy the memory of the massacre.

Although Stalin was long dead and Krushchev was now in power, Shostakovich was still criticised for his use of dubious non-conformist literature. However, at its premiere in Moscow in December 1962, a wild burst

of spontaneous applause followed the stunned silence that marked the symphony's completion. The work was, however, formally banned the very next day and was not heard again in Russia with the original words for another ten years. Interestingly, on its premiere the French Communist Party newspaper *L'Humanite* published an article headed "*Succes triumphe de la 13e Symphonie de Shostakovich*". Shostakovich wrote that Krushchev 'didn't give a damn about the music' and was merely angered by Yevtuschenko's poetry. The *Babi Yar* poem is a memorial for all victims of Nazism, the antisemites and the ruthless nationalists: "And I am one silent cry/over the many thousands of the buried;/I am every old man killed here,/ Every child killed here."

The poem has references to Alfred Dreyfus, to an un-named little boy from Bialystok who was trampled to death by some drunks and to Anne Frank. Yevtushenko has written that Shostakovich wept as he sang his setting of the line, "It seems to me that I am Anne Frank" which, together with the line "I feel now that I am a Jew", again points to identification with Jews. The final words of the symphony's first movement demonstrate incontrovertibly Shostakovich's commitment: No Jewish blood runs in my blood,/but I am as bitterly and hardly hated/by every antisemite/as if I were a Jew/And that is why I am a Russian. The leading Jewish musicologist, Joachim Braun, believes the work to be "one of the greatest manifestations of Shostakovich's sympathy for the Jewish case and in an unparalleled way combines socio-political criticism with the Jewish subject".²

Unsurprisingly, Shostakovich had much difficulty in getting this work performed because of his choice of words. Even his soloist, Vitali Grodansky, queried this, asking Shostakovich why he chose the *Babi Yar* poem "when there is no antisemitism in the Soviet Union". Shostakovich answered him vehemently saying that there was in fact much antisemitism, "which was outrageous and must not be forgotten. We must fight it from the roof-tops". The poems representing the other four movements are all moving ones, dealing with the power and importance of humour in the face of despotism, women's hardship in life, the terror of the secret police despite the choice of words which try to suggest all was now well in Russia and the issue of conformity and its opposite. The fourth movement has these bold words: "The secret fear of an anonymous denunciation,/The secret fear of a knock upon the door."

Other Shostakovich works contain some Jewish elements. *Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues for Piano* Op. 87 was written in 1950-51 for the great pianist Tatiana Nikolajeva and there are Jewish strains in three of the preludes (No's 8,17 and 19) and in two fugues (No's. 8 and 24). These motifs are related to

the *Jewish Folk Poetry* song cycle, but the 24th fugue contains melodies of the *chazzan*. *Four Monologues on Texts of Pushkin Poems* for bass and piano Op 91 (1952) has some Jewish themes. The first song, *Fragment*, has a portrait of an impoverished Jewish family. Kozelkov's 'Dance with Friends' in the ballet *The Bolt* has some Jewish idioms. The second movement of the 2nd String quartet has also been claimed to be 'Jewish' music and his first cello concerto Op. 107 has Jewish elements with some typical *Chassidic* dance tunes.

Irina, Shostakovich's third wife, was Jewish (she had a Jewish mother and non-Jewish father) and Jews were clearly numbered amongst his friends. Israel Finkelstein was his assistant at the Leningrad Conservatory and Finkelstein and his family were helped materially when war-time conditions were dire. He helped bring Finkelstein's musical compositions into prominence. One of his close friends was Moisey Vainberg, a talented pianist, and he often tried out new works with him playing four hands on one piano. Vainberg was Solomon Mikhoels' son-in-law. When Vainberg and his wife were arrested in 1953 on a charge of Jewish bourgeois nationalism, Shostakovich was prepared to look after their seven-year old daughter and he also sent Beria, the notorious post-Stalin dictator, a testimonial of support about him. When Isaak Schwartz's father was arrested in 1936 and the boy was looked after by Shostakovich's sister, Shostakovich took a fatherly interest in the boy. Other Jewish friends included the virtuoso violinist David Oistrakh, to whom he dedicated his second violin concerto, film producer Leo Arnshtam, Isaak Glikman, a literary and drama critic, and writer and musicologist Daniel Zhitomirsky. The pianist Leo Oborin was also a close friend. In those days, it was not easy for Russians to befriend many Jews. Shostakovich was also concerned to counter direct action against Jews. Once he signed a petition protesting against the threatened dismissal on racial grounds of Yevgeny Gusikov, a Moscow conservatory professor. Shostakovich had a platonic relationship with a Jewess, Elmira Nazirova, a pianist from Baku who studied for a short period under him in Moscow and who immigrated to Israel in 1990. He confided in her a great deal, both directly and in a lengthy correspondence. The horn theme in the third movement of the Tenth Symphony is a monogram constructed from the letters of her name.

Braun has explained the manner in which Shostakovich used Jewish elements in his music, arguing that he used them to climax an entire work or an individual movement as well as to demonstrate dissidence except where the text itself (as in the *Babi Yar* symphony) makes this clear. He maintains that the Jewish idiom usually coincides with episodes of high harmonic tension and sharp dissonance.³ In an article in

Musical Quarterly, Braun discusses the double meaning of Jewish elements in Shostakovich's music. He defines the Jewish elements in his compositions as those based on both Jewish secular and religious melodies and on his use of Jewish subjects (like *Babi Yar*) and he argues that these elements reach far beyond their specific Jewishness. To Braun, the essential meaning of these elements can be interpreted as 'concealed dissidence' and that well-versed listeners would understand what the composer was communicating to them.⁴

There is one further aspect of an opinion about Shostakovich that should be recorded. The musicologist Timothy Jackson has put forward the view that Shostakovich identified himself closely as a Jew and that there were Jewish elements in his music long before he wrote the 7th Symphony. His article, in *Shostakovich Reconsidered*,⁵ is actually entitled 'Dimitri Shostakovich: The Composer as Jew'; he submits that Shostakovich identified himself as a persecuted Jew as early as 1937. According to Jackson, one factor pointing to this is what he sees as the *chazzan's* chant in the Largo of the 5th Symphony. He argues that the 'Amen' cadence, that is predominant in Jewish liturgical services, is also present in this symphony and which Shostakovich may have heard in a synagogue. There is no evidence that Shostakovich ever attended a synagogue service although, as Jackson points out, the main Leningrad one was but three blocks from the Conservatory. This 'Amen' cadence is present in Ernest Bloch's *Schelemo Rhapsody*, composed 1916, and Leonard Bernstein's *Jeremiah Symphony*, composed 1944. Shostakovich's 5th was composed in 1937. Jackson is also the only musicologist to make Jewish claims for the 15th Symphony, believing it to be "Holocaust-haunted music" and that its finale shows Shostakovich to have been a "quintessentially Jewish composer".

NOTES

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- 3 Braun, J, *Jews and Jewish Elements in Soviet Music* (Tel Aviv 1978), p163.
- 4 Braun, J, *Musical Quarterly* op. cit., pp68-80.
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DECONSTRUCTING THE IDEOLOGICAL WAR AGAINST ISRAEL

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Shelley Glaser

The State of Israel is a country under ideological siege. Critics of the Jewish state advance their agenda by employing a number of dubious political comparisons. They accuse Israel of being an apartheid, racist, colonial state engaged in acts of genocide against the Palestinian Arabs. Many detractors have no qualms about dubbing Israel a Nazi regime.

The Palestinians are seen as the victims of Israel's very existence. Israel's retaliatory attacks against Hamas-run Gaza is viewed as genocide. John Dugard, the former South African professor of law, presents the view that Israel had no reason to attack Gaza at all. Israel, he says, was not acting in self-defence but rather as an occupying power. According to Dugard, Israel acted to enforce its occupation as Nazi Germany did during its occupation of Belgium and France.¹

Friends of Israel continually engage and defend Israel against every one of these charges. Yet critics are seemingly unable or unwilling back up their arguments with rational arguments or credible facts. Take, for example, Richard Pithouse, a South African political science lecturer, who describes Israel as a colonial power and a racist and apartheid state. In his article, 'Gaza & the Long History of liberal brutality', Pithouse states, "The Israeli state is in the hands of a brutish nationalism that, in many respects, is certainly illiberal even within its own borders and with regard to its own citizens. Yet it seeks to legitimate itself via, among other strategies, a claim to be an encircled outpost of liberal enlightenment on matters pertaining to gender, sexuality and democracy".²²

This statement is not even an observation, just a long-winded rhetorical device in the guise of intelligent argument. Read the essay, and you will see how Pithouse fails to back up his outlandish claims with actual evidence. But this was never his aim. Rather, his intention is to outline his spurious claims and leave it to the reader to decide which version of reality he or she feels most comfortable with. In other words,

it is a type of propaganda.

Perhaps we need to focus our attention on the reasons why a particular ideological charge is singled out for use against Israel in a particular context. For example, comparing the Jewish state with Apartheid South Africa is meant to illicit the strongest, most visceral reaction from South Africans and from those who fought for the liberation from Apartheid. It's a kind of psychological manipulation aimed at maximising public support for the Palestinian cause.

Many of those who were involved in the fight for social justice in South Africa, particularly intellectuals, have defended Israel against the accusation of apartheid. It has been both rationally and logically argued that in Israel, Jews and Arabs are equal before the law and that Israel has none of the apartheid, racist legislation that discriminates and separates people. It has no Group Areas Act, Separate Representation Act, Mixed Marriages and Immorality Act, Population Registration Act, Separate Amenities Act, nor any no-pass laws. All citizens vote on the same voters' roll in regular, multi-party elections. There are Arab parties and Arab members of other parties in the Knesset. Due to Israel's proportional representation system, Arab voters, although a minority, have often been partners in various coalition governments. Arab Israelis, like Jewish Israelis, can express themselves and act freely as members of a transparently democratic society, where criticism of the government in an aggressively free press is the norm.

Further, Arabs and Jews live and work together, share all public facilities, including hospitals, schools, buses, trains, cinemas, swimming pools and parks. Israel protects religious freedom and is always very sensitive and respectful in its management of the holy sites.

Israel is also accused of being a colonial power. This accusation, too, has been methodically denounced by various writers and thinkers. Palestine was a name given to the land by its British colonisers. This land in which Jews are the majority and Arabs the minority, is according to Friedman, 0.2 per cent of the Arab world. It is 20,770 square kilometres in extent. The Jews who came to live there did so to escape the Eastern European pogroms in the late 1800s. It was never about colonisation and subjugation. The fleeing Jews merely wished to establish a safe haven in the land of Israel, a place which

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has been home to Jews for millennia.

The racism charge against Israel is often linked to Zionism. At its core, Zionism is the belief that the Jewish people have a right to self-determination, a necessity born of unrelenting antisemitism and its accompanying horrors of inquisitions, pogroms and mass extermination. The Jewish right to statehood was recognised by the United Nations in 1947. The creation of the State of Israel was a realisation of this right. Statements such as “Zionism is racism” and “Palestine is colonised by Israel,” aside from being far from the truth, are expressed with the intention of denying Israel’s right to statehood. As Eylon Aslan-Levy points out, Zionism is routinely denounced as racist by the very states whose racism against Jews generated the initial demand for the Jewish right of return to their ancient homeland.³

Dumisani Washington, who heads a group called the Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel, stated in September this year that, “The claim that Israel is a racist/colonial/apartheid state is a blatant, bald-faced lie.” He adds: “Further, those false accusations cheapen the experiences of South Africans, Black Americans and others who experienced those horrors - like my parents and grandparents. Israel is diverse in virtually every facet of society. It is intellectual dishonesty to affix those gross labels on a liberal democracy.”⁴

Perhaps most hurtful is the claim that Israel is a Nazi state. It was Nazism and the extermination of six million Jews that finally convinced the world that a Jewish homeland was a moral necessity. When Jews were being transported to Dachau, Bergen Belsen and Auschwitz, public announcements, telephone calls and flyers were not dropped by the Nazis warning them of their impending deaths. They were not afforded the opportunity to flee. To even imply, never mind openly state, that Israel is a Nazi regime, is to spit on the unmarked graves and mass burial grounds of our families who died in the Holocaust.

Despite the fact that the apartheid, colonial, racist and Nazi accusations against Israel are so obviously inappropriate, they continue to be levelled against Israel. The charges are ones of association, and the emotional response which it evokes, rather than intellectual or factual ones. The oft-quoted Palestinian spokesperson, Hanan Ashrawi, echoes this fact. She told Reuters that presenting an alternate version of reality creates awareness and the “perceptions that are presented affect public opinion.” Therefore, even though these charges, when examined rationally, make no logical or political sense, they have been successfully used to sway public opinion against Israel and towards the Palestinian cause. They continue to be used simply because the associations and perceptions they create, are such emotionally charged and thus, extremely

effective ones.

We need to understand that antisemitism is the core principle of anti-Zionism. This can hardly be denied after this summer’s upswing in anti-Jewish sentiment. One just has to look at the banners held at protest marches promoting the Palestinian cause. Slogans like “Gas the Jews” and “Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the Gas” are increasingly commonplace in Europe. In Belgium, a cafe owner recently put up a sign that read, “Dogs are welcome, but Jews are not.” Not to mention the Nazi insignia painted on walls in Jewish neighbourhoods in Europe and Australia, and at college campuses in the US. In Australia, eight men got on to a bus full of Jewish school children in Sydney, shouting “Kill the Jews” and “Heil Hitler,” while threatening to slit the children’s throats. Many Jews are so afraid of being targeted that they have decided not to wear *kippot* or their Stars of David in public.

It is also notable that there is a growing trend in liberal circles that endorse the Palestinian agenda, to silence its opponents with bullying tactics such as booing and heckling, and telling Jews that they are “baby killers,” “murderers” and “racists.” This is akin to a type of Brown-Shirt fascism that uses intimidation and harassment to crush dissent.

Each of us as individuals, whether we are an Israeli Jew, an Arab-Israeli, a South African, a European or an American, need to promote why we believe in the Jewish right to statehood. We might not be able to completely dismantle the ideological siege on Israel but we may be able to highlight the ongoing problem of antisemitism and why Israel is an absolute necessity.

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Do you have old banknotes?

Tokens? Medals?

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Old silver, gold and copper coins?

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World or SA Coins?

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**See Collectors Investments,
Page 5**

DEIR YASSIN – THE MASSACRE THAT WASN'T

*

Kenneth D Penkin

Winston Churchill once quipped that, “a lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on”.

One of the worst and oft-told calumnies against the State of Israel is that the battle for the village of Deir Yassin on 9 April 1948, fought in the course of relieving the blockade of Jerusalem, was a ‘massacre’. Whenever anti-Zionists wish to attack Israel, they invariably refer to Deir Yassin to blacken the name of the Jewish State. It is important, therefore, to show that, in fact, the battle which took place at Deir Yassin was not a massacre, and that its depiction as such constitutes a massive international propaganda fraud against the Jewish people.

On 29 November 1947, the UN voted in favor of partitioning the former British Mandate territory of Palestine into two states: one Jewish, the other Arab. The Jewish leadership accepted that partition plan, and the following year Israel came into being as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

Arab acts of hostility reached their peak in March 1948; moreover, Arabs now controlled all the inter-urban routes. The road to Jerusalem was blocked, settlements in the Galilee and the Negev were likewise cut off and convoys were subjected to daily attacks. In the four months since the UN resolution, some 850 Jews had been killed, most of them in Jerusalem or on the road to the city.

In this context, the Israeli high command launched Operation Nachshon on 6 April, 1948, with the aim of opening up the road to Jerusalem. The village of Deir Yassin was included on the list of Arab villages to be occupied as part of that operation. The Israeli forces were represented by both the Hagana (operated by the Jewish Agency) and the Irgun/Lehi forces, who undertook the attack with the written consent of the Hagana. The Hagana commander in Jerusalem, David Shaltiel, asked that the timing of the operation be so coordinated as to coincide with the scheduled renewed assault on Castel. He despatched identical letters to Mordecai Raanan and Yehoshua Zetler, respectively the

Irgun and Lehi commanders in Jerusalem, in which he gave the operation his approval: “I have no objection to your carrying out the operation on condition that you are capable of holding on to it”.

It is significant that until this operation, the Israelis had generally been reactive, responding to Arab attacks rather than taking the initiative. Now, they were taking the offensive. The Jewish people and the world at large needed to be shown that the Jews of the *Yishuv* were not going to give up Jerusalem, which the UN intended should become an international city.

Deir Yassin is today a suburb of modern Jerusalem. Thus, in 1948 it was not some outlying, faraway village, but was in the very centre of military operations. It was next to the only road into besieged Jerusalem from the coast, and blocked the entry road into the city, thus halting supplies and other access.

Was the battle for Deir Yassin a massacre? To answer that question, the following must be taken into account.

Firstly, strict orders were given in advance to the Irgun/Lehi fighters not to harm the elderly, women and children. It was also stated explicitly that any Arab who surrendered was to be taken prisoner (and not harmed). That instruction is not consistent with a massacre. The officer in charge of the Israeli forces, Yehuda Lapidot, was present during the entire attack. Much of what follows is *directly* reported by Lapidot. It also features in an interview conducted with him by Yehuda Avner, who quotes from it in his book *The Prime Ministers*.¹

Secondly, an unprecedented action took place at Deir Yassin - a loudspeaker was installed on an armoured car to inform the population that the road to Ein Karem was open and safe, that the attackers had left clear the western exit from Deir Yassin and that whoever left the village would not be harmed. Lapidot told Avner that his force announced in Arabic on the loudspeakers: “You are being attacked by superior forces. The exit from Deir Yassin leading to Ein Karem is open. Run immediately – don’t hesitate – our forces are advancing.” The announcer was an Iraqi-born Jew, fluent in Arabic. It is thus most unusual and surprising that the Jewish strike force was actually prepared to forfeit the surprise element of battle; they placed themselves at risk in order to issue these instructions and thus to prevent Arab civilian casualties. The Arabs themselves do not deny the use of a loudspeaker; indeed, an Arab League report entitled ‘Israeli

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Aggression' states, "On the night of April 9, 1948, the peaceful Arab village of Deir Yassin was surprised by a loudspeaker, which called on the population to evacuate it immediately".

Thirdly, it is universally agreed that there was bitter fighting at Deir Yassin. There were more than a hundred Arab fighters, well equipped and with large amounts of ammunition and occupying fortified positions in stone buildings. In response to the intense gunfire directed at them, the attackers were forced to charge, throw grenades and, in several cases, to blow up houses. As a consequence (and despite the loudspeaker warnings) women and children were unavoidably among the dead. Where houses were blasted during the fighting, some collapsed, with soldiers and civilians inside being killed. During the battle, Arab women ran from houses under fire, collected weapons which had fallen from the hands of Arab fighters and brought them back into the houses. Several Arab women were found dead with guns in their hands, indicating they had taken part in the battle. One dead Arab soldier was found to be a Yugoslavian Muslim officer whose identification papers indicated he had been with the all-Muslim units of the Nazi SS organised by Haj Amin el-Husseini, the Palestinian leader and Nazi collaborator in World War II.

According to all the documents and testimonies, it is clear today that fewer than one hundred Arabs were killed at Deir Yassin, and not the 240 as published. The Irgun and Lehi forces suffered a casualty rate of 35%, with five dead and 35 wounded. This was the first instance in the War of Independence where a battle had taken place in a built-up area.

It must be stressed that all the Arab casualties were *sustained in the course of the fighting*. Villagers who surrendered - men, women and children - were taken prisoner and came to no harm. Lapidot told Avner, "...So I say to you again ABSOLUTELY NO - there was no massacre. When the firing ceased, they were transported by truck to East Jerusalem and handed over to their Arab brethren. They were not shot!" This is first hand evidence from someone who was personally present throughout the attack. Yunes Ahmed Assad, a Deir Yassin survivor, later told the Jordanian newspaper *Al Urdun* (9 April, 1953), "The Jews never intended to harm the population of the village, but were forced to do so after they encountered fire from the population, which killed the Irgun commander."²

'Massacre' means the premeditated slaughter of defenseless human beings. The Thesaurus consulted by this author provides the following similes: "Annihilation, blood bath, butchery, carnage, killing, mass slaughter, murder, slaughter, exterminate, cut to pieces, slay, wipe out."

The battle of Deir Yassin fits none of these definitions.

The Red Cross Rape Allegations

The charge of rape on the part of the Jewish soldiers involved, while regularly levelled, lacks support. The behaviour of Israeli soldiers in the many wars is in any case completely against sexual assault and is an outrage against Jewish ideals and principles.

One would normally expect to place great import on a report on the affair prepared by the International Red Cross which, in addition to the respected name of that institution, carried references to Sir Henry Gurney from Richard C. Catling, the Assistant Inspector General of the Criminal Investigation Division and a specialist in Jewish matters. Catling, however, was hardly the most objective person to be investigating whether or not atrocities against Arab civilians had been carried out. He only visited the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan five days after the battle, where he interviewed a number of Arab women who claimed to have been present. However, we find that "the women were very shy and reluctant..." and that they "needed great coaxing" - this from British officers whose hostility to the Jewish people pervaded their attitude. The report makes such averments as, "...no doubt sexual atrocities were committed by the attacking Jews. Many young schoolgirls were raped and later slaughtered...." and, "many infants... a 100 year old woman...."

The report is notable for its lack of corroboration from other sources. It is not the kind of report one expects from such a body as the IRC. Dr. Engel, who accompanied Jacques de Reynier of the IRC, reported that he "did not see any signs of defilement, mutilation, or rape". On 12 April two Jewish physicians, Avigdori and A. Droyan, were sent to Deir Yassin at the request of the Jewish Agency by the Histadrut Medical Committee. According to their testimony, their examination of the bodies indicated that "all the bodies were clothed, the limbs were intact, and no sign of mutilation was visible on them."

The battle for Deir Yassin was nevertheless publicized throughout the world as the 'Deir Yassin Massacre', causing great harm to the reputation of the *Yishuv*. The various Arab propaganda channels widely disseminated the story at the time, and continue to do so to the present day. Their stated intention was to instil in the Israeli Arab population a spirit of religious fervour; what happened instead, however, was that they intimidated and alarmed them, a mistake they themselves now admit to.

Hazem Nusseibeh, editor of the Palestine Broadcasting Service's Arabic news in 1948, later admitted in an interview for the BBC television series 'Israel and the Arabs: the 50-year conflict' that he fabricated claims of atrocities at Deir Yassin. Describing an encounter with Hussein Khalidi, secretary of the Arab Higher

Committee, he said, "I asked Dr Khalidi how we should cover the story. He said, 'We must make the most of this'. So we wrote a press release stating that at Deir Yassin children were murdered, pregnant women were raped. All sorts of atrocities."³

Abu Mahmud, a Deir Yassin survivor, said the villagers protested at the time, insisting that there had been no rape. However, Khalidi told them, "We have to say this, so the Arab armies will come to liberate Palestine from the Jews."⁴ For his 1998 article 'Deir Yassin - a casualty of guns and propaganda', Reuters journalist Paul Holmes interviewed Mohammed Radwan, who was a resident of Deir Yassin in 1948, and fought for several hours before running out of bullets. Radwan told him that he never believed that more than 110 people had died in the battle, and accused Arab leaders of exaggerating the atrocities.⁵

For those propagating the 'massacre' version, evidence is cited by Catherine Stewart in an article for *The Independent*.⁶ Among the documents believed to be in the state's possession is a damning report written by Meir Pa'il, a Jewish officer who condemned his compatriots for bloodthirsty and shameful conduct on that day. After the fighting had wound down, Mr Pa'il described how he heard sporadic firing from the houses, and went to investigate. There he saw that the soldiers had stood the villagers in the corners of their homes and shot them dead. According to Daniel McGowan, executive director of Deir Yassin Remembered, surviving photographs "clearly show there was a massacre. ... Those photos show [villagers] lined up against a quarry wall and shot."⁷

What is disconcerting is that such important documents, while frequently quoted, have never been published.

Conclusion

The attack by the Irgun and Lehi on Deir Yassin had important consequences. In the immediate term, it cleared the road to Jerusalem, and allowed for the entry of much-needed supplies and arms. More broadly, it had a disastrous effect on the local Arab population, which commenced fleeing from Israel despite the invitation by Ben Gurion to stay. The Arabs were encouraged by their leaders to ignore Ben Gurion as the Arab countries were confidently expected to forcibly take back Israel on their own terms and without invitations from the Jews.

Avner writes, "Like Scheherazade narrating one of those Arabian night tales, Arabian story tellers continue to weave their grizzly fiction resurrecting the ghosts of Deir Yassin from generation to generation."

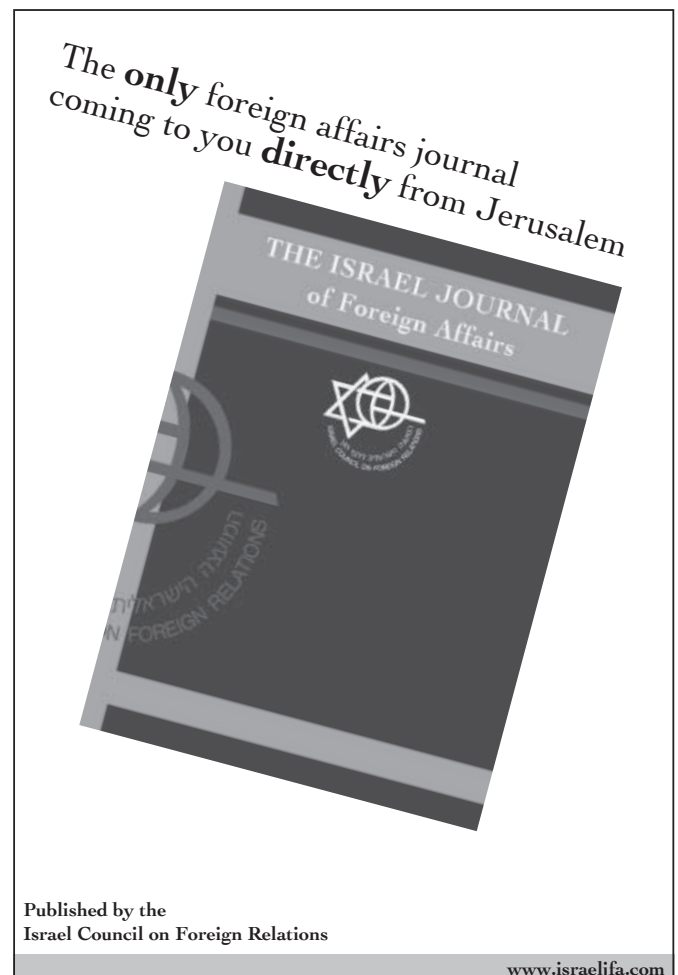
Based on factual evidence it seems overwhelmingly true that there was no massacre at Deir Yassin, but only a substantial amount of

misinformation, aka lies. In 2011, speaking in Brooklyn to some 3000 rabbis, the then Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Lord Jonathan Sacks, said, "Non-Jews respect Jews who respect Judaism".

It is now up to us to go out and earn that respect by telling the truth of Deir Yassin.

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LIFE BEFORE BIRTH - LESSONS FROM THE WOMB

*

Bernard Levinson

*'There are many events in the womb
of time, which will be deliver'd'*
Shakespeare. Othello, 1, iii.

Everything that makes my life possible and meaningful I learnt in my mother's womb. An intense nine months learning experience that I use every single day of my life. The primal rhythms that I identify with for the rest of my life.

An angel sits in the womb with the baby. It comforts the child. Sings to it. Whispers to it. Cradles the baby in its wonderfully secure arms. It softly whispers all the secrets of life. The sorrows and the joys. At the moment of birth the angel places its forefinger against the baby's lips, creating the central indent from the baby's nose to the upper lip...Swearing the baby to a vow of silence. The baby then enters our world.

The Talmudic scholars who wove this tapestry created a wonderfully simple philosophical thesis out of this moment in time. It is easy to accept that baby's urgent need at that moment would obviously be to return to the safety, the dark blue serenity, the total reassuring presence of the angel. But at that moment the uterus is getting smaller and the baby is getting bigger. There is no going back. For the rest of one's life. This is certainly true for some situations. Go back to the boulevard memories of your childhood and discover how you bump your elbows on the narrow streets of reality. Everything is suddenly small. You have gotten bigger...

We never stop trying to return to the womb. And we happily do re-enter it in many ways on a daily basis. For the rest of our lives we recreate unconsciously the reassurance, the serenity and calm of that intrauterine existence.

In the Beginning the uterine wall supports the baby's back. As the baby grows the uterus grows. Completely in tandem. Finally at term the uterine wall is stretched to its own magical limit and it then squeezes baby out of the vagina. Pregnant mothers are aware of moments of relaxation during the pregnancy when the uterus

seems to let go, and the baby moves freely. A flutter of arms and legs. Then the comforting embrace of the uterine wall returns and baby is again still.

The French gynaecologist Leboyer (1994) understood this. He understood the dark, muffled sound-proof world of the uterus and the ubiquitous support of the uterine wall. On delivery he dimmed all lights, and insisted on silence in the delivery room. He made entry into the world as comfortable as possible for this new arrival. On delivery, he immediately supported the baby's back with his hand. Gently squeezing the back was enough to reassure the child that its old friend the uterus was still there. His babies rewarded him with a Buddha smile.....

We carry this need within us forever. The need to be held. To have our backs rubbed. To be supported.

This nine month back support is so profound and primitive that it has seeped into the basic body idioms of our language: If you feel unsupported, I will send you 'a back-up'.....If you feel totally unsupported, you have 'your back against the wall'..... A 'pat on the back' reinforces the good feeling of being supported.

We return to the security and serenity of the womb the moment our backs are supported. The simple universal procedure of having a back massage is always deeply relaxing. Many countries have made this an important national pastime. It goes with a sauna culture.

By the twenty-fifth week of uterine existence the baby is actively listening. The baby is bathed in the sound of the mother's heartbeat. A seventy two beats a minute rhythm in a relaxed mother. This rhythm dominates our entire lives. Montague (1971) records the amazing re-creation of this rhythm in the basic nurturing of our children. Mothers instinctively place their baby against their left breast, closest to their hearts. They then gently rock to and fro. This is always at seventy two beats a minute. All cradles and prams are rocked at seventy two beats a minute. Videos we have of Khoi shaman dancing around a fire in a nomadic Kalahari setting clearly have a seventy two beats a minute rhythm. The identical rhythm is demonstrated in the American Indian shaman shuffling around his fire. The ultra-orthodox Jews praying in the Synagogue wrap their prayer shawls over their

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heads creating a womb-like sealed off intimate space. They gently rock forward and back while reciting their prayers. The rhythm is seventy two beats a minute. Music played at this amazingly hypnotic beat 'sends' the dancers. Any club with this relentless beat fills their dance floor with mesmerised swaying dancers. Everyone is 'out of themselves'. They are no longer aware of their bodies or indeed of any bodily need. They are in the music.

The idioms here are complex. This eternal echo creates a state of mind. A stillness. A serenity. A state of 'being out of one's self'. We speak of 'being sent'. Of 'being in grace'. 'In sync.' Of being 'at one with'.

For nine months the baby swims through the rush and flow of Mothers breathing. This is a twenty beats a minute rhythm. This too remains a powerful backdrop to the entire uterine existence. It sends out a never ending nostalgic memory. All relaxation and meditation techniques revolve around 'breath watching'. Controlling the breathing. Slowing the breathing. Bringing the ancient twenty beats a minute rhythm into the minds ear. Blocking all distracting stimuli and highlighting the moment.

The familiar idioms are: To be overwhelmed, one might say 'it took my breath away'; In apprehension, 'I held my breath...' A moment of respite could be 'a breathing space'. A space where one can for a moment regain the reassurance of a twenty beats a minute relaxed, unthreatened, breathing memory.

The baby floats in the dark purple-blue aura of the great placental venous pool. This becomes a significant colour for everyone. It is the royal colour. The purple trimmings of royal cloaks. The blue blood reference to an upper class is a memory of a serene unhurried, harass-less complacency. In Turkey, the blue *nazar boncugu* beads are everywhere to ward off the evil eye. In Greece, doors and sometimes window frames are painted sky blue. This soft turquoise creates an invisible shield protecting them from the evil eye.

Ancient eastern writers knew that if you went to bed, listened to your breathing and visualised the colour dark blue, sleep would be almost instantaneous. In the Brahmin Upanishads this colour dark blue is associated with the Crown Chakra. The centre of the forehead, ensuring connection to the universal sources of energy. It is the colour of serenity - the colour of peace and tranquillity.

For its entire mystical journey the uterus sleeps snugly in a nest of small bowel. The endlessly curling, gurgling, mumbling dance of the alimentary canal. Intimately caressing the womb. Talking to the womb. That beautiful onomatopoeic word borborygmus. Perhaps even transmitting important messages to the womb. A unique personal rhythm. We now know that neuronal tissue actually exists in the bowel

walls. Gershon (1998) calls this the 'enteric nervous system'. It has a basic electrical rhythm of thirteen waves a minute. There are sheaths of neurons embedded in the walls of the entire gut, estimated at some 100 million neurones. This makes it more extensive and sensitive than the spinal cord or the peripheral nervous system...Gamma-aminobutyric, acid the chief inhibitory neurotransmitter, is present in the enteric nervous system. This has a calming effect on the individual. It further suggests a possible profound relationship between the growing foetus and the insistent surrounding bowel. What is the bowel saying to the baby? The fact that we are capable of totally focussing our awareness in that moment of 'feeling out of it' is highly suggestive of the neurological role gamma-aminobutyric acid plays in the brain. This enzyme enables the individual to inhibit unwanted stimuli, leaving a powerful beam-focus on wanted activity. Knowing that this enzyme exists in the gut, is this the message, the built-in capacity to shut out the world and return to the calm womb-like existence that the restless nest of bowels shares with the growing babe? Does the nest awaken in the babe the entire augmented neurobiochemical capacity to 'switch off'?

Is this the secret source of all intuition and coincidence? Is this the home of synchronicity? We speak of having 'a gut-feel' about a situation. A primitive internalised unconscious knowledge that is so basic it seeps into all languages.

In German '*Mein bauch sagt mir.*'

In Russian '*Ot moux kumok.*'

In French '*Je le sens dans les tripes.*'

In Ethiopian (Amharic) '*Behodish ya jue.*'

In Ghana (Akan) '*Di wo yem.*' Two African languages unrelated to each other. Both describe holding feelings in the gut.

The Dutch call the amniotic fluid that bathes the baby '*Vruchtwater*'. Fruitwater. The idiom in Dutch is '*ik voel het aan mijn water.*' Feeling it in the amniotic fluid...

An amazingly primitive direct reference to the gut.

In Afrikaans we say '*Ek voel dit in my binneste*'.

There is a powerful primitive drive to lose our moment-to-moment awareness of ourselves. Our bodies. The very clothes we wear. Our life events. The awkward, uncertain, embarrassed, sometimes threatening interaction with our dynamic environment. For that moment of being out of ourselves we are not afraid, not alone, not intimidated by life. We are happily in the moment. We can shut out the world and return to the calm womb-like existence.

We lose ourselves in many ways. Some fortunate individuals can do this happily in a religious experience. A shared sense of being

'in touch', out of the body and totally in the experience.

Many individuals experience this in the act of loving. In the moment of ecstasy. The out of time moment of being pain free, time free, body awareness free, in a divine free fall of completeness. The 'addiction' to sex may have this as an element of that desperate drive.

Music does this for almost everyone. From the unique whirling Dervish dancers to the ordinary individual on the dance floor. The music takes us. Envelopes us. Wraps us in a cocoon of wellbeing. We become the music. Free and unshackled. For that moment we have returned to the mystery of the womb.

We lose ourselves in work and in play. At its most divine, the act of creating takes the artist into a timeless world. They become part of the creation. Not only have we a memory of a rhythm that blots out all stimuli leaving us amazingly focussed, we also have a primitive neuronal system reinforcing the ability to shut

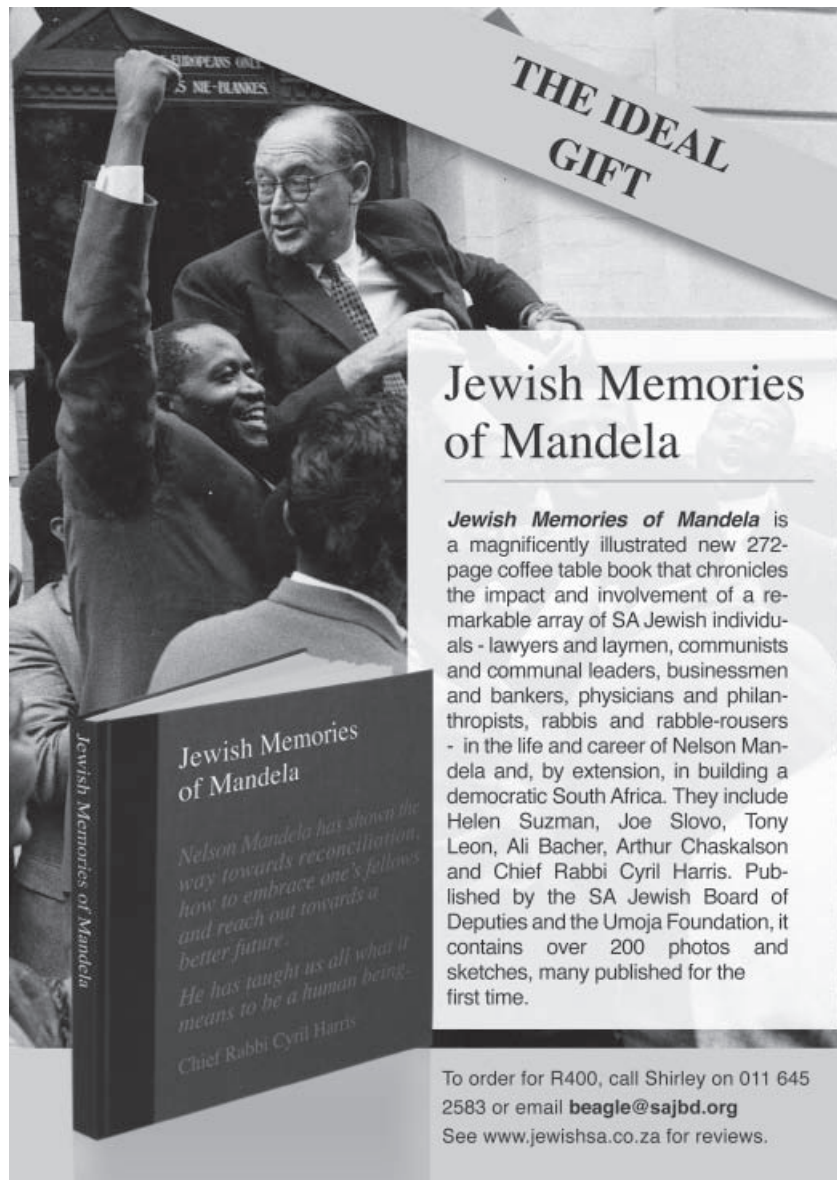
out unwanted distractions. In the womb all is calm, focussed and certain. The child's gut is being triggered to augment this ability to protect itself.

Part of the real distress in severe pain or in grief is the individual's inability to escape the moment. To be even momentarily distracted. To lose themselves. To be away from their grief. To be outside the pain.

The ever-present momentum of the uterine teachings save us. Our conscious moments are softened and life is bearable. Nine months in the womb makes it all possible.

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THE IDEAL GIFT

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BLOOD MONEY - THE CYRIL KARABUS STORY

*

Ralph Zulman

In August 2012 Professor Cyril Karabus, a 77 year-old retired pediatric oncologist much respected in his profession, stopped over in Abu Dhabi on an Emirates flight on his way home to Cape Town. He had been visiting his family in Canada. At the airport, without any prior warning, he was arrested on a charge of murder, and detained for nine months before being allowed to return to Cape Town. *Blood Money - The Cyril Karabus Story* tells the story of his detention and eventual release. Its author, Suzanne Belling, has worked as a reporter, serving her internship at the *Cape Times*. She was editor of several newspapers in the former Publico stable and is the former managing editor of the *SA Jewish Report*.

The book consists of 23 chapters, an epilogue, acknowledgements and photographs. The chapter headings, which give the flavor of the book, are entitled: 'Murderer', 'The jail in the desert', 'Bid for Blood Money', 'A stoic in shackles', 'Bail granted', 'Free the Prof', 'Nemesis of justice', 'Waking to a nightmare', 'Strange bedfellows', 'Wheels within wheels', 'In the public domain', 'Hyperbole and hypothetical', 'Bring him home', 'The doctors' diagnosis', 'Cyril's gynae', 'Viva Karabus, viva', 'Survivors', 'Cat in the flat', 'Kafkaesque court', 'Justice delayed is justice denied', 'Foreign affairs', 'Knights in shining armour' and 'Cape doctor'.

Fanus Venter of the South African embassy in Dubai visited the professor in prison and tried to assist with his release. Cyril was fluent in Afrikaans and spoke to him in that language so that their conversation would not be understood by the jailors. Venter revealed that he had learnt that Cyril had been tried in absentia ten years earlier and found guilty of causing the death of a three year-old girl leukemia patient in the United Arab Emirates, and also of forgery. This shocked Cyril to the core. The entire case

seemed to have been based on the eagerness of the girl's father to obtain 'blood money', which is available under Sharia law as a punishment. The 'evidence' against Cyril consisted of what were ostensibly hospital records and the testimony of a poorly qualified Filipina nurse. The latter never appeared in court, and her entire story was hearsay. It was suspected that she was coerced, even bribed, into putting it forward.

Some five months after his arrest, Cyril was able to obtain a copy of the judgment against him, which he had translated into English. It revealed that he had been sentenced to three years imprisonment for the forgery of an official document and to one year for manslaughter. He was also ordered to pay blood money amounting to hundred thousand dirham (roughly equivalent to R265 000). The three-judge court termed him a fugitive, accused him of having left the country before the end of his contract and of claiming to have 'legally notified' him. The girl's father, a 42 year-old Yemeni working in Abu Dhabi, said that his daughter had been treated in the Sheikh Khlifa Hospital by Karabus.

The court found that the professor had falsified data in the hospital file at a later stage of the reports of the daughter's blood tests. A Dr Liola told the father that Karabus, after a brain haemorrhage, had failed to transfuse platelets properly. One Dr Rabai, a forensic medical consultant, reported to the court that a professional error had been committed by Karabus in not providing the patient with the required platelets to stop the haemorrhage which caused her death.

Cyril had a daunting, if not impossible task ahead of him. It entailed proving that the judgment was based on incorrect evidence and that he had never in fact received the documents which the court found were delivered to him. In addition, in the Emarati courts, unlike in the West, defendants are presumed guilty until proven innocent.

Cyril's colleagues, family and friends considered it unthinkable that he could be guilty of any crime, misdemeanor or breach

Mr Justice Ralph Zulman, a long-serving member of the editorial board of Jewish Affairs and a frequent contributor to its Reviews pages, is a former Judge of the Appeal Court of South Africa.

of ethics, either professionally or personally. His only 'faults' were, perhaps 'his disarming honesty, frugality of expression and frankness in delivering his opinions'. He was amazingly 'stoical or, perhaps, a fatalist' about his detention. At his third court appearance on 26 August, the judge refused bail. The upfront fee of the Abu Dhabi lawyers then representing him was 'in the region of US \$80 000'.

Cyril was then transferred, in shackles, from the Khaladiya prison to the central jail in Abu Dhabi. On 19 September, he was able to see his wife, Jen, and son for about two minutes following his court appearance. On 13 October, he was back in court for his seventh appearance. He was later informed that he would be granted bail in an amount equivalent to R250 000.

Haematomas on his wrists caused by his shackles had worsened. The hospital authorities confirmed in writing that because of his wrists and a pacemaker he would not be required to pass through a metal detector.

The bail money was paid by a former South African businessman living in London. Cyril now left the prison and moved into the home of Dr Elwin Buchel, who had connections with the Abu Dhabi royal family. Elwin had written a letter supporting the grant of bail.

A Canadian company, Interhealth Canada, was running the Sheikh hospital during Cyril's time there and had arranged his locum in September and October 2002. In May 2003, the management was taken over by the Heath Authority of Abu Dhabi, which paid the blood money to the father as per the order of the court. This was apparently reimbursed by Interhealth Canada.

The print, radio and television media were fast to catch on to Cyril's unfair detention. A petition for his release was published on Facebook by a global civic organization, and this was sent to the UAE Minister of Justice. People wore 'Free Prof. Karabus' badges.

Throughout his ordeal, Karabus' loyal attorney, Michael Bagraim (Bags), now a Member of Parliament, fought assiduously and untiringly for his client's release. At the commencement of his involvement, he optimistically said to his partner, 'I'll have Cyril back by December'. This was not to be, despite all his efforts. He never expected having to abandon his other legal work for almost the entire nine months that Karabus was detained, but did so "with a willing heart - and the results spoke for themselves".

As soon as Karabus' daughter had informed him of her father's arrest, Bags sprang into action, making contact with his friend Joe Emeran, who was very close to the UAE consul in Pretoria, and also with Fanus Venter of the SA Embassy in the UAE. In addition, he spoke to an attorney in Abu Dhabi; he wanted \$1000 000 upfront to represent Cyril. (After the first three hearings, the services of this attorney

were terminated and new lawyers appointed). Bags also contacted Archbishop Tutu, who had a contact in the UAE. Tutu said that his contact knew about the matter and "was trying to speed things up".

Bags contacted Australian, Israeli and Canadian newspapers about Cyril's plight. Professor Irwin Cotler, former Canadian Justice Minister, wrote a letter which appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*. It was headed, 'Doctor's Nightmare Stopover in Dubai' and concluded, "A 77-year old doctor cannot wait much longer."

Tony Blair agreed to write a letter to "the powers that be about the matter". The Anglican Bishop of Cape Town, Thabo Magoba, also penned a letter as did seven Nobel peace laureates whom Bags contacted via the FW de Klerk Foundation. CNN never came to the media party. Zapiro produced two brilliant cartoons about Cyril's confinement.

Cantor Ivor Joffe of the Sea Point Hebrew Congregation arranged a fund raising concert. This took place on 4 November 2012. Within 48 hours of being advertised, the concert was sold out. Proceeds topped the R150 000 mark.

The SA Medical Council issued a statement advising South African doctors to avoid working in the UAE and went on to advise doctors to be actively aware of the risks involved in practicing there. The British Medical Association stated that it was concerned about Karabus' detention. An article appeared in the British Medical Association journal protesting, inter alia, the conditions in which he was being held and undertaking to carefully monitor the allegations against him. Dr Theo Kopenhager, a distinguished South African gynaecologist and obstetrician, wrote to the organisers of a medical conference in Abu Dhabi to which he had been invited to attend, protesting at the "disgusting manner" in which Karabus was being treated. The Islamic Medical Association, represented by Dr Asad Bhorat, wrote a letter condemning the entire process to which Cyril had been subjected to.

Cyril had been in the Emirates for seven months when supporters staged a protest outside the UAE Embassy in Cape Town. All wore 'Free Karabus' T-shirts. Bags invited a group of former patients of Cyril (the 'survivors') to a reception at his offices, which was filmed.

Cyril's wife, who had a thirty-day visa, attended Cyril's eighth court appearance, which took place on 20 November. Cyril's hospital notes were not produced. He was permitted to give a statement to the judge, which he did, saying that his human rights had been abused (detention in the UAE including eight weeks in prison). The notes with one or two pages missing were received by Cyril the next day. There was no evidence of a blood transfusion in them. The 12th court appearance was on 2 January 2013, but there was no apparent progress towards Cyril's release.

The bid to have him released intensified. Cyril sank into despondency. The judge was informed by the Higher Committee for Medical Liability that an expert medical panel had been formed to study the case, and that the committee would present a report to the court 'at the earliest'. The next court hearing was on 27 February. That date came and went and but there was no report.

The President of the World Medical Association, which represents millions of physicians world-wide, wrote a blog entitled 'Justice Delayed is Justice Denied', detailing the detention of Professor Karabus. The Jewish Community was asked to welcome Cyril to its Seder table. Cyril received an offer from an unnamed person to smuggle him out of the UAE on a tanker that the person owned. Tempting as the offer was, he declined it. There were other offers, some for exorbitant payments, to 'spring' Cyril from the UAE, and were likewise declined.

The then South African Deputy Minister of International Relations, Marius Fransman, visited the Emirates. He asked for 'a compassionate discharge' of Cyril, saying he believed him to be innocent. Dr Iqbal Surve then entered the scene. He asked for Cyril's release on humanitarian grounds or for a pardon. He met with Cyril at the apartment in Abu Dhabi, and was taken by him through all the clinical records. What Cyril told him made complete sense. Iqbal was taken aback that the medical committee had had not even interviewed the accused doctor. What then happened was that the medical committee met and ruled that Cyril was innocent.

On 21 March, Cyril appeared once more in court, and this time was "acquitted, cleared of all charges." The prosecution was given 28 days to appeal. 9 April was Cyril's sixteenth

court appearance. The hearing was postponed to 23 April as the files were missing and no translator was available. Iqbal returned to the Emirates. Cyril's final court appearance took place on 23 April. He again pleaded not guilty, and the prosecution's appeal was turned down.

Cyril now faced a long wait for the return of his passport. He also required letters from the court to say that his case was over. Finally, at 04h00 on 16 May, a flight with Cyril on board took off from Abu Dhabi for Cape Town. Hundreds of people were at the airport to welcome him home. Iqbal said: "Cyril's story is one of hope, resilience, of people coming together. It's the triumph of the human soul, celebrating someone. His life is about saving people. The irony is that he saved people and therefore people saved him. Karma..."

Cyril subsequently repeated his story to numerous congregations and communities throughout South Africa. Jane Raphaely, Chairman of Associated Media Publishing, spearheaded a fund to help him to pay back his loans. Through an appeal in the *SA Jewish Report*, the fund had swelled to R400 000 by November 2013.

One minor complaint about the book is the absence of an index.

Blood Money makes engrossing reading on what is best described as a real life nightmare. It is written in a lucid and easy-to-read style. I commend it to all who are interested in what can happen to a clearly innocent person.

Blood Money - The Cyril Karabus Story by Suzanne Belling, Jacana Media, 2014, 208pp.

IN ISHMAEL'S HOUSE: A HISTORY OF JEWS IN MUSLIM LANDS

*

Gary Selikow

Martin Gilbert is one of the world's most prolific contemporary historians, Churchill's official biographer and a foremost authority on Jewish history, the Holocaust and the roots of the Middle East conflict. With *In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands*, he takes the reader from the period of the millennium prior to the emergence of Mohammed and Islam

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

through to the present day. It is reasonably comprehensive volume, highly nuanced and an absorbing read.

In Chapter Two, 'The Prophet Mohammed and the Jews', Gilbert details Mohammed's emulation in some respects of the Jewish faith when creating Islam. He goes on to describe his rage at the Jews for rejecting him as the final prophet and his massacre and expulsion of Jews in the Arabian Peninsula. The latter was carried out after the signing agreements that he intended to break under the Muslim practice of

Taqiya - strategic deceit permitted, and actually mandatory, in the Islamic faith. The tribes of Qurayza and the Jewish community of Khaibar were destroyed and the Jews were expelled from the city of Medina, where they had lived for centuries.

Down the centuries, different Muslim empires, kingdoms and regimes treated the Jews in their realms in a variety of ways, ranging from toleration and even favor (providing they strictly kept to their *dhimmi* – subordinate – status) to cruel persecution and massacres. Here, it should be stressed that at all times, their future and conditions were dependent on the will of the Muslim leaders of the day. They were always expected to accept their subordination as a *dhimmi* community to their Muslim overlords, even when they were prosperous and influential. After an age of tolerance and prosperity for the Jews in the 1000s CE, the invasion of the Almoravids, a puritan Muslim sect from Morocco, meant great persecution for the Jews of Spain, mass forced conversions and massacres and pogroms for those who refused to accept Islam.

In Persia at the beginning of the 16th Century, the situation became particularly dire for the Jewish community. The first Safavid ruler of Persia, Shah Ismail I, established Shiite Islam as the state religion, giving the clerical elite almost unlimited control and influence over all aspects of public life. The clerics emphasised the ritual uncleanness of *dhimnis*, and Jews in particular, making this the cornerstone of Muslim relations with non-Muslims. *Dhimnis* were barred from building any structure higher than a Muslim one, 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 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.

The 19th Century saw an increase in anti-Jewish persecution in the Ottoman Empire, including in the Levant. In Jerusalem, a traveler recorded, “Scarcely a day passes that I do not hear of some act of tyranny and oppression against a Jew”. In his 1854 article in the *New York Daily Tribune*, Karl Marx wrote a hard hitting report of how cruelly Jews were treated in the Holy City. They lived, he wrote, in “the most filthy quarter of the town between the Zion and the Moriah, where the synagogues are situated, the constant object of Mohammedan oppression and intolerance”. While Jews formed a plurality in Jerusalem, Marx witnessed how Muslims were the masters in every respect.

Jews were taught that they were the Muslims’ ‘dogs’. The idea of an autonomous Jewish

state - no matter how small - in the heart of the Arab-Islamic world was hence unendurable. The ‘insult’ was compounded by the defeats the lowly-regarded Jews inflicted on the Arabs after Israel’s establishment.

The 1930s, as Gilbert recounts in Chapter Eleven, saw a great deterioration in the condition of Jews in the Middle East, with the spread of Nazi radio propaganda from Germany. Gilbert includes hundreds of eyewitness accounts by Jews who suffered injury and insult at this time, through all the Muslim countries included in his study. The pogroms of 1920, 1921, 1929, and 1936-1939 carried out by Arabs in the British Palestine Mandate coincided with the increasing intolerance of Jews in the newly independent Arab states of Egypt and Iraq. As Gilbert observes, “From a Muslim perspective... Zionism...was seen as an unacceptable challenge to Arab national aspirations, and to the deep-seated Islamic perception of the Jew as an infidel”.

To appease Arab aggression (as demonstrated by the Nazi-backed Arab Revolt of the late 1930s), the British colonial government issued the 1939 White Paper. This severely restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine so that there could never be a Jewish majority. Addressing the House of Commons on 23 May 1939, Churchill commented, “So far from being persecuted, the Arabs have crowded into the country and multiplied till their population has increased more than even all world Jewry could lift up the Jewish population. Now we are being asked to decree that all this is to stop and all this is to come to an end. We are now asked to submit, and this is what rankles most with me, to an agitation, which is fed with foreign money and ceaselessly inflamed with Nazi and Fascist propaganda”.

As Gilbert demonstrates, Churchill was completely correct, showing, through meticulous use of primary documentation and census data of the time, that between 1922 and 1939, more Arabs than Jews had entered Palestine. There were immigrants, including many illegals, from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Iran and Syria, as well as from Transjordan, Sudan and Saudi Arabia. In 1948, many of these Arab immigrants were to be included in the statistics of ‘Palestinian’ Arab refugees.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, anti-Jewish pogroms broke out across North Africa and the Middle East. A Jewish survivor of three days of anti-Jewish riots in the Tunisian city of Gabes recounts the tragic fate of a Jewish woman, when a group of Arabs broke into her home: “They grabbed a pot of boiling soup, poured it over her, tortured her in her house, stoned her and then killed her”. The Vichy French in North Africa and the Germans when they occupied Tunisia set up concentration camps, and deported a number

of Jews to death camps in Europe. They were enthusiastically cheered on and assisted by the local Muslim population. Gilbert describes similar such events taking place elsewhere in Middle Eastern countries, including the role played by the Mufti Haj Amin al Husseini as an active collaborator with the Nazis.

The crux of the book involves the fate of the 900 000 Jewish refugees from Arab lands who fled Arab pogroms with nothing more than the clothes on their back and their battles to gain the same recognition as the 700 000 Arab refugees who left Palestine in 1948. These are known as the 'forgotten refugees', as their plight is seldom highlighted. Most of them settled in Israel and are the forebears of many Israelis; this needs to be highlighted to demonstrate the falsehood of the notion that Israelis are transplanted Europeans

who displaced the 'indigenous Palestinians'.

The author concludes by recounting the persecution post-1948 of Jews in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Yemen and, following the overthrow during the 1979 Islamic Revolution of the friend of Israel and protector of the Jews Shah Reza Pahlavi, in Iran. This includes sham trials and executions of Jews accused of 'Zionism' and espionage.

In Ishmael's House is an important work on a subject that has received insufficient attention.

In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands by Martin Gilbert, Yale University Press, 2011, 448pp.

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READER'S LETTER

*

Re Gwynne Schrire's 'The Cousins Zangwill, Eder and Cowen - the causes they championed and the South African connection' (Rosh Hashanah, 2014): What a privilege to be given so fascinating an insight into the forgotten lives and times of our early Zionists in London and their learning how to live comfortably with themselves as Jews for the first time, with guidance from Herzl, Weizmann and others. I found fascinating the ways in which the essay ties in with some odd shenanigans, in a little-known set of bohemian Freudians braving Victorian/Edwardian mores concerning adultery (considered so shocking at the time). They seem to move swiftly out of the ghetto to achieve, in some cases, prosperity, assimilation and celebrity in England. Then, an amazing spill-over into what was then faraway Johannesburg, where one could change names with impunity, and return to respectability and even to Zion. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose. Thanks to Gwynne Schrire for her joyful and thorough historical research.*

Reading about Israel Zangwill, easily the best-known Jewish writer in English of the period, reminds me that he portrayed a wide variety of Jews in stereotypical, sometimes peculiarly nasty ways. *Children of the Ghetto* (1892) has for its subtitle, 'Pictures of a Peculiar People', while *The King of Schnorrers* (1894) is subtitled, 'Grotesques and Fantasies'. Both feature a wide gamut of Jewish cardboard characters, "the better-off relatives, the exploiter of workers, the saintly rabbi who gives his last coins to others and the rabbi who left his pulpit because of his doubts. A fictionalised Naphtali Herz Imber, author of *Hatikvah*, is seen as an unsavoury Jew.¹ So it comes as no surprise to hear that D H Lawrence, while in Italy in 1913, wrote to a friend asking him to send some novels from England, but "not Zangwill, though - I hate him".² I wonder which of Zangwill's works he had already read?

Lawrence was known as another expat keen to get away from chilly England after the horrors of his wartime experience - rejection from the army after being turned down because of frail health (incipient TB?). This propelled his longing for the healing powers of the sun, away from a society that had banned his novel *The Rainbow* (1916). The novel was 'jinxed' not so much for the overt sexuality that later caused controversy with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, but because it was dedicated in German, 'Zu Elsa'. Elsa was his wife Frieda's sister, and a cousin of the Red Baron, Manfred von Richthofen, who was downing British planes during WWI. Lawrence admired Elsa for defying her father in marrying a Jewish economist, Edgar Jaffe, who was also a friend and correspondent. *The Rainbow* was only unbanned in 1948, after another world war!

In a chapter in his 1923 Australian novel *Kangaroo*, 'The Nightmare Years', Lawrence reflects his disillusion with war-time England. He describes the ways in which he was harassed and spied upon by his Cornish neighbours, who accused the Lawrences of espionage, and of signalling to German submarines when they used a lantern to light the way to the outside toilet on the farmhouse at Zennor - a patently untrue accusation.

It is little known that Lawrence was part of the intimate Jewish circle in London described by Schrire, which included the early Zionist and first English Freudian psycho-analyst, whom he knew as Dr David Eder, after his name-swap in Johannesburg.

The Lawrences considered staying temporarily with Eder in Wellgarth Road, in Hampstead Garden Suburb, but found a rented house, 1, Byron Villas, in the Vale of Health, and frequently walked over for tea at the Eders. It is interesting that psycho-analyst Dr Montague David Eder's adultery with Florence Herring scandalised society in much the same way as had Lawrence's affair with Frieda Weekley - there would have been much empathy in this friendship. Lawrence was also to publish his own odd responses to Freud in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* in 1921 and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* in 1922.

DHL even considered a trip to Palestine with Eder in 1916, but in a letter to 'Kot' (as he called his close friend Samuel Kotliansky), while the guns were still firing in Europe, he held out for his idea of California for his utopian vision, Rananim. This was to be a collective escape of like-minded friends to know "a good peace & a good silence & a freedom to love & to create a new life." Later that year it was to be in the Andes, then, in February, 1918, in the Abruzzi region of Italy. Lawrence learned the meaning of the Hebrew word *Rana'anim* ('let us dance') from his Jewish friends. "Rananim" would be an ideal place to find freedom in friendship. Lawrence did not succeed in his quest, but his friendship with Kot serves as an example of the kind of relationship

he hoped to create.³ In her memoir *Not I But the Wind*, Frieda Lawrence wrote, "Koteliensky sang soulfully his Hebrew song, *Ran-an-u Za-di-kim l'Ad-noi*". This appears, together with the music, in a letter to Kot. The words are the first verse of Psalm 33 ('Rejoice in the Lord'). *Ra'ananim* may also mean green, fresh or flourishing, found in the 14th verse of Psalm 92. 3 (The town of Ra'anana in Israel is said to have similar derivations).⁴ DHL himself was steeped in the imagery and rhythm of the Bible stories of the King James version, and enjoyed hearing Kot's stories too.

Other Jews to whom Lawrence wrote frequently over the years were Edith and her sister Barbara Low, another two of the daughters of Maximilian Low mentioned in the Schrire essay, his New York publisher Benjamin Huebsch, and Ivy, Maxim, and Michael Litvinov. Samuel Koteliensky was Lawrence's most important Jewish friend and correspondent. He wrote more letters to Kot, this "Russian Jew of Bloomsbury", than to anyone else except for his sister in Nottingham. When Lawrence met him, Kot was the impecunious correspondent for the *Kiev News* in London.⁵ He had escaped pogroms and poverty in Ostropol, Ukraine. The latter was famed for its Jewish life in the 17th Century, and was the birthplace of the noted Rabbi and Kabbalist, Samson ben Pesah Ostropoler and of the hero of Jewish humour, Herschel of Ostropol.

DHL encouraged and supported Kot, introduced him to the London Bloomsbury literary set, and Lady Ottoline Morel at Garsington Manor, Oxford. He revised and made readable in English, Kot's translations of Chekhov before their submission to Leonard Woolf at the Hogarth Press. (Constance Garnett had been Chekhov's first translator.) Later on, Virginia Woolf took over this chore. Katherine Mansfield also read and admired Kot's translations of Chekhov before they were published, and was accused of plagiarism. Her story, 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired' used Chekhov's 'Sleepy' in a slightly different setting.⁶

In return, Kot sent Lawrence all sorts of things, including winged collars and shirts to "support the Adam's apple". They read Dostoyevsky's books together, reviewing them in horror and amazement. Lawrence encouraged Kot to write a novel of a Jew growing up, while commenting that he was bored with Kot's idea that he should write about the life of a young Englishman.

Another friend with whom Lawrence was entirely comfortable was an East End Jewish artist, Mark Gertler, proclaiming his war painting, *The Merry-Go-Round*, "the best modern picture I have seen" – the friendship endured until Gertler's suicide in 1939.

Despite D H Lawrence's, for me, occasionally chilling words about some of the Jewish characters in his later novels, it is little known that he was part of an intimate Jewish circle, where he supported and found real friendship with those who were Jewish. Perhaps the last word should be left to Anthony Julius, who determinedly 'outed' many antisemites in his encyclopaedic *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-semitism in England* (2010). In 811 pages, there is no comment at all about D H Lawrence, though many famous names are there, from Sheridan to Shakespeare, Thackeray to Virginia Woolf, Hilaire Belloc to T S Eliot.

Sorrel Kerbel
Cape Town

NOTES

- 1 Cecil Bloom, "Israel Zangwill" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Jewish Writers of the 20th Century*, Sorrel Kerbel (ed), 2003.
- 2 See the many letters to Dr David Eder, Samuel Koteliensky, Barbara Low, Ivy Litvinoff, Huebsch, in the Cambridge Edition of *The Letters of D H Lawrence*, Volume III, 1916-21, edited by James T Boulton & Andrew Robertson, 1984. Letter to Dr David Eder quoted in J.B.Hobman, ed., *David Eder: Memoirs of a Modern Pioneer*, 1945, p119. Also quoted in Mathew Thomson's essay, 'The Solution to his Own Enigma: Connecting the life of Montague David Eder 1965-1936', *Cambridge Journal of Medical History*, 2011 January; 55(1) 61-64.
- 3 See *The Quest for Ranim: D H Lawrence's Letters to Koteliensky 1914-1930*, George Zytaruk (ed), McGill U. Press, 1970.
- 4 Frieda Lawrence, *Not I but the Wind*, Sante Fe, 1934, p1, and letter to Kot, in The Cambridge Edition of *The Letters of D H Lawrence*, Volume II, 1913-16, 1981, p252.
- 5 Galya Diment, *A Russian Jew of Bloomsbury: The Life and Times of Samuel Koteliensky*, McGill University Press, 2011.
- 6 Christian Schlegel, April 17, 2001, "Rewriting Chekhov: a comparison of Mansfield's 'The Child-Who-Was-Tired' and Chekhov's 'Sleepy', seminar paper, 2001 in *English Language and Literature Studies-Literature*. 2001.

new POETRY

I am a Healer

I am a healer - my place of work: Hadassah.
 Young girls and boys, limbs torn, bodies bleeding,
 Cry out in fear and pain.
 I cry for the mother's anguish, for the father's tears.
 But their physical hurt is not my work -
 I heal their heads, their minds -
 I return to them their youth poisoned by terror.
 My patients are Arab and Jew, adult and child,
 I make no distinction,
 Just like the indiscriminate bomb makes no distinction.
 Last year, Sarah, my friend, was shot
 While driving to see Rachel, her daughter.
 I was deeply angered -
 But not enough to make me forget my oath.
 I am a healer, my place of work: Hadassah.
 Then they built a wall.
 Too late for Sarah – but not too late for Rachel.
 Rachel can visit her mother's grave in Jerusalem
 Without being shot.
 Those in cities far away – strangers to terror -
 Who sit in barricaded, safe homes
 So they and their loved will not be shot -
 Sit and criticise the wall -
 Let them tear down the first stone.

Rodney Mazinter

Need

Your white bulk beckons
 The salve you bear within your hulk
 Makes me your slave

I salivate

My back blocks out
 The blackness
 Of not only the night ...

I grab with greed
 Cheese, a peach
 A piece of pie
 Anything ...

I feed
 With abandon
 To fill the void
 And appease the need

Charlotte Cohen

Rhodes in mourning - 70 years.

In these narrow streets, I am wandering around
 In beautiful Rhodes. I am searching and searching,
 In the annihilated Jewish Quarter, I keep on going.
 Only empty houses are facing me,
 Yet, joyful faces are surrounding me,
 But they are not the faces of my people.
 The Germans invaded Rhodes,
 And took away the descendants of Abraham.
 In one single day, my Djuderia expired,
 And since, Rhodes, my beloved,
 Has been dressed in mourning.
 Seventy years have gone by
 Since the Jews of Rhodes entered Auschwitz;
 Auschwitz! Residence of death!
 Seventy years later, I entered Auschwitz.
 I walked in the footsteps of my brethren who
 suffered.

The sky was the colour of ash,
 I wanted to weep, but I could not.
 The mist shrouded the infinite
 Expanse of this sad and soulless place
 From where tall chimneys had spat
 From their wombs fumes of flesh and bone.
 On the 16th of August 1944,
 1900 Rhodian Jews went up in smoke.
 600 - with sunken eyes, forlorn looks,
 Terrified, shaven, tattooed, skin and bones -
 Were destined to suffer.
 A little more than a hundred survived.
 A handful only are still with us.
 In Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen,
 Terezin or Mauthausen,
 Rhodes, Cos or Salonika,
 I hear Jews or Non-Jews mumbling:
 "Walk in our footsteps!
 We shall always be present!
 Invisible, indiscernible, impalpable!
 Are we the wandering spirits
 Of these ghastly camps?
 Are we condemned to roam endlessly?
 Our faces have lost their features,
 We have neither sepulchres nor shrouds,
 We are smoke, ash and bone meal.
 Are we the fruit of human evil?"

As the smoke dissipating in the air,
 As the waves disappearing in the sand,
 As the sun hiding in the horizon,
 As the flame about to die,
 As the story book coming to an end,
 The Holocaust without its survivors
 Shall enter some, but alas,
 Not all the history books.

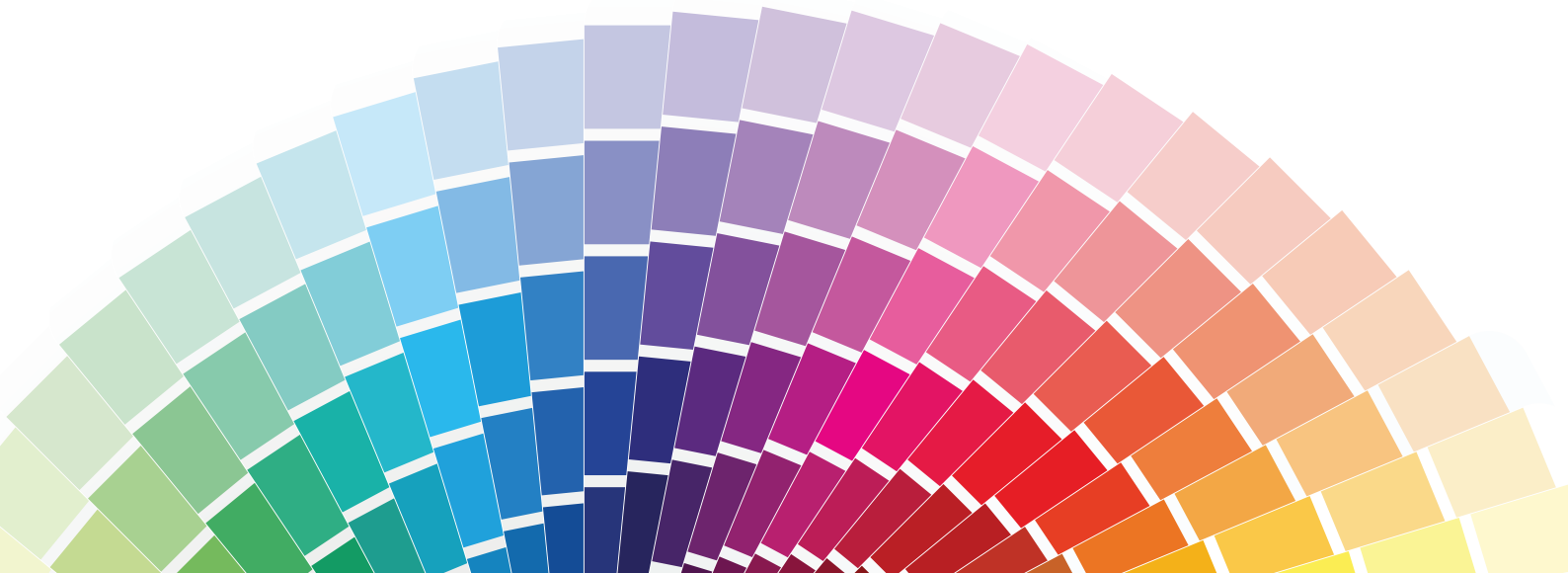
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