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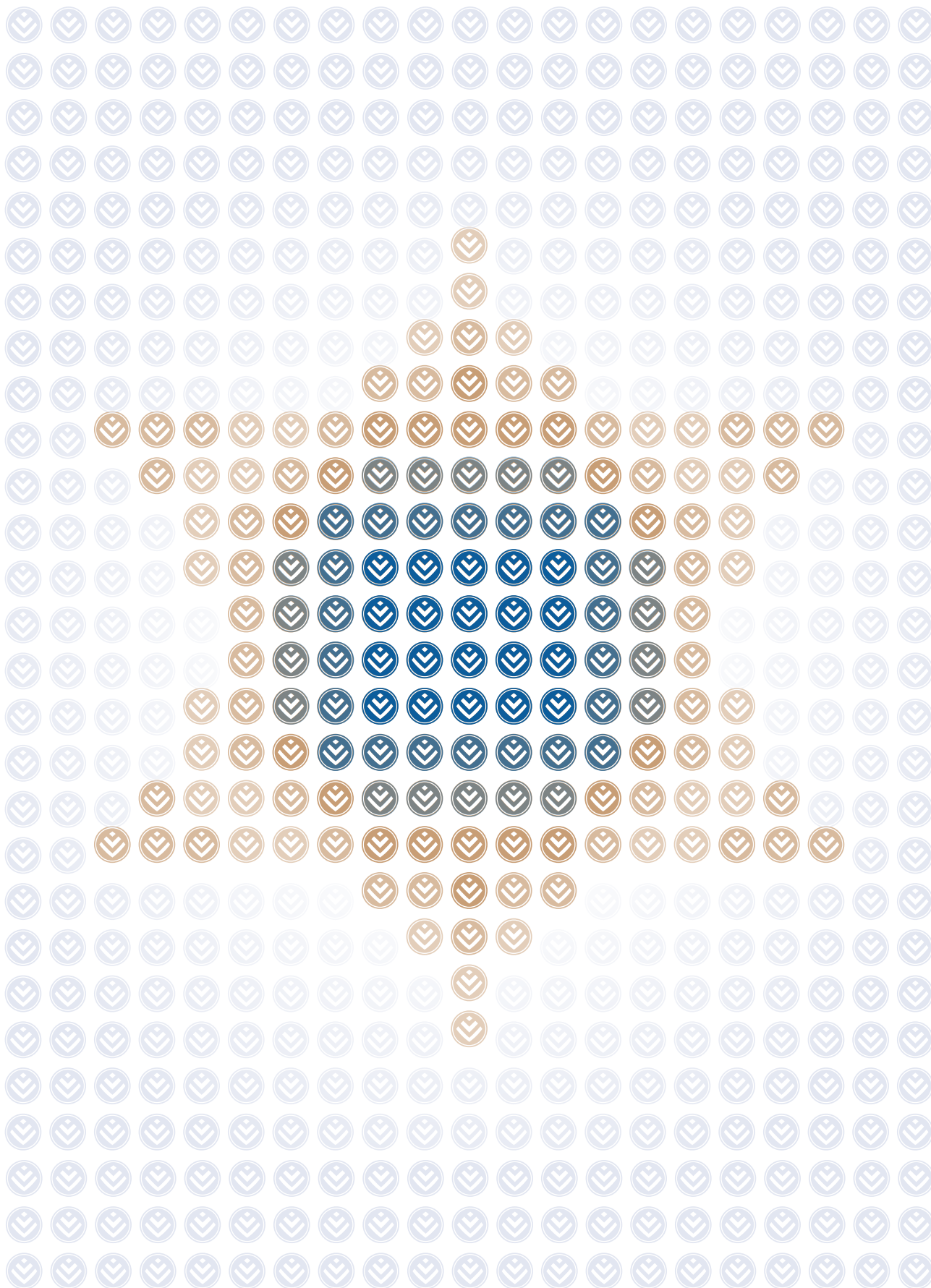
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JEWISH AFFAIRS

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.

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Moritz Oppenheim (1800-1882): A Jewish Wedding, 1861.

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JEWISH AFFAIRS

VOL. 71 ♦ NO. 1 ♦ PESACH 2016

Editor: David Saks

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OBITUARY:

REUBEN MUSIKER

(1931-2015)



Editor's Note: In December 2015, the editorial board of *Jewish Affairs* lost one of its most loved and esteemed members, and South African Jewry one of its most venerated academics, with the passing of Professor Reuben Musiker. In this overview, long-serving JA board member and contributor Naomi Musiker provides what is necessarily only an outline of her late husband's distinguished career. The Editor, for his own part, would like to emphasize the invaluable contribution that Reuben made to this journal, whether as a regular contributor of scholarly articles and reviews, or as a member of the editorial board. On a personal level, Reuben was an unfailing source of warm encouragement, support and sage advice to him, for which alone he will be greatly missed.

Reuben Musiker was born in Johannesburg on 12 January 1931, the youngest child of Judel and Sarah Musiker. He qualified with a Medical BSc from the Witwatersrand Medical School, having studied for this degree in order to save what was left of an incompatible period as a dental student, following a severe hearing loss. In 1954, he obtained, with distinction, a Higher Diploma in Librarianship from the University of Cape Town School of Librarianship. The following year, he started work at the Johannesburg Public Library, under the guidance of R F Kennedy, City Librarian.

Reuben's seven years at the JPL were extremely stressful but, from a career point of view, richly rewarding. He gained invaluable experience in the Periodicals, Reference, Africana, Cataloguing and Lending Services, rising to the post of Organiser of Branches. During this period, he began to publish books and articles, including the first edition of his *Guide to South African Reference Books*, which eventually ran to five editions. He also tutored students taking the correspondence courses of the South African Library Association. Reuben was an inspiring and patient teacher, and in later years advised and assisted many post-graduate students in bibliographical style, citation of notes and references. He was responsible for the compilation of a *Style Guide for Theses and Dissertations*, published by the University of the Witwatersrand in 1980.

In 1961, Reuben successfully applied for the position of Deputy University Librarian at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, serving in this capacity for eleven years under Dr Frank van der Riet. During this period he obtained an MA (with distinction) from the University of Pretoria for his dissertation on *The Special Libraries of South Africa* (published, in 1970, by Scarecrow Press, US). He also played a part in Jewish communal life, as secretary of the Grahamstown synagogue committee.

In 1973, Reuben accepted an invitation to take up the post of University Librarian at Wits University, where he also served as professor of librarianship and bibliography. He was active in the field of bibliography for over 40 years, with six books and over 150 articles to his credit. After his retirement in December 1991, he was made emeritus professor.

In 1999, Reuben was invited to become Library Consultant to the SA Jewish Board of Deputies. He was responsible for the initial installation of a computerized cataloguing system for the library and archives, and also advised on book purchases, library and archival publications and catalogues and cultural events connected to the library. When the SA Jewish Board of Deputies became part of the Beyachad Centre, Reuben had considerable input in the design and layout of the Board's library and archives, despite funding restrictions.

Reuben was also very active in Jewish studies, research and publishing. He served for many years on the Editorial Board of *Jewish Affairs* and contributed numerous reviews and articles. In 1984, at the suggestion of the renowned Yiddish scholar and senior lecturer at the University, Dr Joseph Sherman, he accepted the Mendel Tabatznik Yiddish Collection as part of the Landau Library at Wits. With a generous donation from the Sheila Samson Fund, the Landau Library grew in stature and importance, and other Yiddish collections were added. In 1986, Reuben was elected chairman of the SA Association of Jewish Studies and was responsible for organising the Association's Tenth Anniversary Conference at Wits in September 1987. The papers delivered at the Conference were published the following year in a volume entitled *Waters Out of the Well* in 1988. This was followed by a translation of Leibl Feldman's Yiddish monograph *Oudtshoorn: Jerusalem of Africa* (1989), the publication of which was partly funded by the Feldman family.

Reuben had a passionate interest in light orchestral music in the years 1950-1980. Many of the composers and conductors of this period were of Jewish origin. His collection of vinyl records commenced in the 1950s, and was supplemented by a remarkable reference library covering every aspect of the subject. This interest resulted in the production of two reference volumes, *Conductors and Composers of Popular Orchestral Music* published by Greenwood Press in 1998, and a semi-autobiographical volume entitled *With a Song in My Heart: Aspects of 20th Century Popular Music*, published in 2013.

SOUTH AFRICA THEN AND NOW: BELLIGERENT NATIONALISM, ETHNIC SCAPEGOATING AND THE POLITICS OF XENOPHOBIA

*

Tony Leon

In a recent essay, entitled 'Fear', published in *The New York Review of Books*, the prize-winning US novelist Marilynne Robinson accused certain extremist strands in contemporary American Christianity of being 'unchristian' in that they pedal a noxious cocktail of "Ignorance, intolerance, and belligerent nationalism."¹

Had she written her piece, say, last week and despite her literary gifts, she might have found insufficient words in our lexicon to give adequate expression to describe the hate-fuelled festival of violence the Islamic State Jihadists unleashed on over 120 innocent Parisians. And the commensurate fear and loathing it has induced across both sides of the Atlantic and doubtless far beyond.

But her description strikes an apt note on which to launch Professor Milton Shain's excellent new book *A Perfect Storm: Anti-Semitism in South Africa 1930-1948*. We meet in the impressive precinct which houses the centre of Cape Town's vibrant and modern Jewish communal life, including this iconic SA Jewish Museum. As Shain notes toward the end of his 296-pages of impressive scholarship, we do so in broad conditions of peace and amity for this community in today's South Africa. Despite the background noise generated by the BDS and the occasional political tourism to these shores visited upon us by Hamas, I think Shain is correct to state, "With the celebration of cultural diversity after 1990 in the new post-apartheid democratic South Africa, the threat of crude anti-Semitism receded even further."

But this book covers two of the most important decades, between world wars, of South Africa's turbulent twentieth century, from 1930 until the end of the 1940s. During this time, as the author describes it, "The South

African Jewish community was under siege domestically and helplessly observing the plight of their co-religionists in Europe...And, for a great number of whites, both English and Afrikaans speakers, the Jew was an unwelcome challenge and a disturbing addition to society."

If you substitute the word 'Zimbabwean' or 'Somalian' or 'Malawian' for 'Jew', you will immediately see how very strong the xenophobic thread remains in contemporary South Africa, on which more reflections further on.

Professor Shain's gift to us, in the form of this new work, is not simply his meticulous research and careful chronicling of a now almost forgotten era. These are far more important and enduring than the 'agit-prop' rhetoric which seems to consume certain of his former colleagues at the University of Cape Town and his book is a timely reminder that proper research is far more persuasive than, for example, angry op-eds in the *Cape Times*. But what is so striking in *A Perfect Storm* is the way it dramatically revisits the *sturm und drang* of the clashes and conflicts and the naked racism and nativist impulses in which such a small, even marginal, fragment of the white community, the Jews, assumed centre-stage in the melodrama of local politics.

Shain has unearthed from multiple archives a treasure trove of documents, speeches and articles which spotlight the dangerous bigotry around events from over seventy years ago. And it illustrates how these were exploited, both from inner conviction and also for reasons of political opportunism, by some of the leading figures of those times. He vividly revives a host of characters, many of them villainous in their race prejudice. This book is also a reminder that not all of 20th Century politics was concerned with anti-black prejudices and practices by the ruling white minority, but the fear of 'the other' and 'the outsider' also fuelled extreme reactions within the white community itself.

Many of the leading antisemites described in these pages were 'sincere' in their Jew-hatred and regarded the resolution of the "Jewish Question" as part of resolving the economic deprivation of the significant 'poor white' population; in 1932, both 'poor' and 'very poor' Whites constituted around 56% of

Tony Leon is a former Member of Parliament who served as leader of the Official Opposition (Democratic Alliance) in the years 1999-2007. From 2009-2012, he was South Africa's Ambassador to Argentina. This article is adapted from his remarks at the launch of A Perfect Storm: Antisemitism in South Africa 1930-1948 by Milton Shain at the SA Jewish Museum, Cape Town, on 23 November 2015.

the total White population. Thus, the author notes, "Jew hatred was not a marginal factor in South African public life during those troubled years. Indeed, awesome and nefarious power was conferred on a community that comprised a mere 4.5% of the total white population. Defined by the radical right as an existential danger, the Jewish population in reality posed no challenge to power and made no claim on state resources."

Many of the leaders of the most virulent anti-Jewish agitation of the day were marginal figures from the Afrikaans speaking community, such as Louis Weichardt, founder of the Greyshirts. Others were extreme far-right figures in the ascending power constituted by the *Herenigde Nasionale Party* [Reunited National Party] which would win power in May 1948. The utterances of Oswald Pirow, Eric Louw, and Nico Diederichs, for example, are usefully revisited. In their world view, a strident anti-capitalism - assisted by the depiction in the cartoons in *Die Burger* of "Hoggenheimer".

However, by far, the most interesting and certainly the most powerful political figure depicted in *A Perfect Storm* is the leader of Afrikaner nationalism, and of the HNP of the day, Dr D F Malan. He emerges from these pages as both a crafty politician - determined not to be outflanked in anti-Jewish prejudice from the far right - and as a five star opportunist. He cynically noted in an interview in 1931, "It is very easy to rouse a feeling of hate towards the Jew in the country." As leader of the opposition, Malan assiduously fanned these flames of enmity and yet as soon as he achieved power as Prime Minister, dropped antisemitism from his political repertoire, and went in the opposite direction. Of his malleable antisemitism the author records that, once in power, Malan would switch from depicting the Jews as 'unassimilable' to using their example as model for Afrikaans survival in a rapidly decolonising world.

While the United Party of Jan Smuts and J H Hofmeyr emerges from this account as holding the line against the extreme anti-Jewish feelings of the day, even the liberal Hofmeyr, who opposed the Quota Act stoutly, warned in 1930 that South Africa needed to maintain its 'racial stock'. Smuts, as in most areas barring his crucial inability to apply his generous sense of humanity to the issue of Black advancement in South Africa, saw the danger of prejudice against Jews in larger terms. He told a 1943 election meeting in Cape Town, "Today it is the Jew who is attacked; tomorrow it may be your own rights. You never know when it will stop."

It would be wrong to infer that the two decades of rousing anti-Jewish prejudice in the inter-war years was confined to Afrikaans

leaders, or was simply used as a lever to advance the interests of an impoverished element of white society, pummelled by the Great Depression and bad economic choices, such as clinging for too long to, and then precipitously abandoning, the Gold Standard. It is striking, for example, to read the correspondence of leading UP politician, later Governor-General and founder of a liberal family, Sir Patrick Duncan. He wrote of Muizenberg in 1935, "I have many Jewish friends whom I like and admire. But something in me revolts against our country being peopled by the squat-bodied, furtive-eyed, loud-voiced race which crowds Muizenberg...we have too many of them."

Since various accusations of racism are currently being levelled against faculty members of the University of Cape Town, one would be hard pressed to find as stellar an example today as the holder back then of the prestigious WP Schreiner Chair of Roman Law and Jurisprudence, Professor Kerr Wylie. His open support for neo-Nazi causes in the 1930s led to an interrogation by the UCT principal and vice chancellor, to which he responded: "Organised Jewry is the leading agent of the devil on earth."

While *A Perfect Storm* ends its account in 1948, a great deal of the prejudice and populism it describes has, some sixty-seven years on, direct application to politics both in South Africa today and the wider world. Jihadist terrorism and the push back against migrants are two obvious examples. The politically popular chord which Donald Trump in the US and far right populists in France (for example, Marine Le Pen) strike with voters is another.

In a very significant speech delivered in Mexico City last month, Western Cape Premier Helen Zille - herself the daughter of German refugees who fled the Nazi regime and arrived in South Africa after World War II - joined the dots from the past to the furies of the present debate in the world and in this country.² Noting that the populism of the left and the right has become "increasingly indistinguishable from each other", she accurately states that "xenophobia sits comfortably with populists of all persuasions". Populism, as she describes it, is "a political response to a context of widespread public grievance and a pervasive sense of disempowerment. It divides society into 'victims' and 'villains', 'saviours' and 'scapegoats'". Populism further "flourishes on conspiracy theories, conjuring up sinister forces seeking to undermine people's interests." Zille provides details of the contemporary basis which makes it "easy to mobilise a populist agenda on the agenda of race in South Africa." Whites - in her view - "...fulfil the criteria for becoming a scapegoat for contemporary South Africa's problems and policy failures."

Echoes from the Jew-baiting past of 1930s

South Africa and the race-coarsened discourse of today are very apparent. There is little difference between, for example, the ethnic scapegoating of Jews by Weichardt's Greyshirts in the 1930s and the anti-white rhetoric of Julius Malema's red overalls, other than a difference in their uniforms and their targets.

The presumed power and wealth of the 1930s Jewish community finds contemporary expression in the attacks, on all fronts these days, on the white community as a whole. Back then there was the issue of Jews being seen as agents for a foreign ("Jewish-British") and malignant force dragging South Africa into the Second World War. Today it is the 'CIA' (for whom a deputy minister suggested the Public Protector was an emissary) or simply "a bloody agent" to borrow Mr Malema's preferred put down of a foreign journalist. Last week in *Business Day*, the ruling party chief whip in parliament, for example, mined this trope even further. He accused the Democratic Alliance of supporting foreign interests and external capital in its standpoint on AGOA.

One of the most interesting items Shain unearths is an article written way back in October 1937 by the editor of *Die Transvaler*, one Dr H F Verwoerd. I will not enter into the political quicksand of suggesting whether or not Dr Verwoerd was a 'clever politician'. But what his article, entitled '*n Botsing van Belange*', reveals is that he provided an intellectually respectable case for the assault on the commercial and professional interests of Jews. This was different in form – though not in essence – from the crude race baiting of the 'shirt movements' and later *Die Ossewabrandwag*.

And, most strikingly from the vantage point of today, it is perhaps the first, although certainly not the last, time in South Africa that the concept of 'representivity' and setting quotas to achieve ethnic targets in the professions and the economy as a whole received an airing.

Shain summarises Verwoerd's argument, in part: "At the root of the conflict between Afrikaners and Jews, maintained Verwoerd, were material interests. The Nationalist did not hate the Jew... (but) Verwoerd accused Jewish businesses of employing only fellow Jews, thereby hindering opportunities for Afrikaners." In similar vein, areas of conflict had been exacerbated by "Jews moving into the professions, thus further blocking Afrikaner advancement."

As a solution, Verwoerd advocated a piece of socio-economic engineering "to remove the source of the friction, namely the disproportionate domination of the economy by Jews, by ensuring that Afrikaners received a share of commerce and industry proportionate to its percentage of the white population" (my emphasis). His radical plan

was not implemented, formally at least, until eleven years later, when his party achieved political power. But today, with the necessary substitutions, you can trace a direct line between his proposals then and the theory and practise of employment equity targets and the strategy of black economic empowerment. We await the definitive Constitutional Court judgment in the recently argued Correctional Services case, but there is something rather extraordinary in the genesis of 'representivity' as a catch-all for economic advancement, and discrimination, in this country.

Perhaps, all ethnic nationalisms, both here and everywhere, have similar outcomes, and perpetuate the marginalisation of a minority to advance the majority interest. Or, to quote the novelist William Faulkner, "The past is never dead. It is not even past."

NOTES

- 1 Marilynne Robinson: *New York Review of Books* (September 24-October 7th 2015), p28.
- 2 Helen Zille: Keynote Address on "Populism": Liberal International Conference. Mexico City, Mexico. 30 October 2015.

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MILTON SHAIN'S *A PERFECT STORM* – HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY ANGLES

*

David Saks

In the 1930s and '40s, radical antisemitism in South Africa reached heights of virulence never before attained, and never to be equalled thereafter. In the introduction to his acclaimed new book, *A Perfect Storm: Antisemitism in South Africa, 1930-1948*, Professor Milton Shain sums up the situation that confronted the Jewish community, the majority of whose members were first generation immigrants from Eastern Europe, during those years:

... (R)adical right movements mushroomed across the country, flourishing especially in the south-western and eastern Cape Province, northern Natal and on the Witwatersrand. Doing their best to appeal to dislocated and unskilled whites, these movements consistently blamed the Jew for the country's woes. By mid-1936 six independently branded 'Shirtist' groups were in existence, some operating as breakaways, others newly created. Led for the most part by disillusioned and angry young men, these fascist clones traversed the country aping the politics of their European mentors. Filled with conspiratorial bluster, they crudely alerted South African whites to the exploitative, menacing and evil Jew. Propagating fantasies, flirting with notions of 'Aryanism, and peddling international Jewish conspiracies and other outrageous fabrications, they took advantage of enhanced rail and road communications and improved literacy to spread their toxic message.

The most prominent of these right-wing groups was the South African National Party (SANP), headed by Louis Weichardt. Better known as the Greyshirts, the party had its headquarters in Cape Town and maintained branches in all four provinces. Himself of German extraction, Weichardt dedicated his efforts in the pre-war years to spreading the doctrine of National Socialism throughout the country, and to that end relied heavily on crude Jew-baiting strategies. His activities comprise a sizable part of Shain's study. Other right-wing organisations with explicitly antisemitic programmes active during the period included the *Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Demokratiese Beweging* (Blackshirts), *Bond van*

Nasionale Werkers (Brownshirts), *Oranjehemde* (Orangeshirts) and *Volksbeweging* (aka the South African Gentile Organisation).

Even in its heyday, the radical right operated on the margins of South African politics, and were decisively defeated on the few occasions that they put up candidates for election. However, the influence they exercised on the policies of the mainstream parties was far from negligible. As Shain demonstrates, they "succeeded in shifting the 'Jewish Question' from the political margins of South African public life to its centre", with the result that matters relating to Jewish immigration and their place in the economy being serious topics of debate in Parliament as well as hot-button issues at election time. While economic restrictions were never placed on Jews, the agitation was decisive in the passage of further legislation restricting Jewish immigration, viz. the Aliens Act of 1937. Antisemitism was a major issue in the 1938 General Election, when it was used by the opposition as a stick with which to beat the government. As for the actual performance of ultra-right candidates in elections, the fact that they invariably lost their deposits does not mean that the number of votes they gained was of no significance. Shain describes a by-election in Port Elizabeth, where the candidate for the *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party* (as the National Party opposition was then calling itself) lost by only 90 votes. Had the pro-Afrikaner Nationalist vote not been split by the SANP, whose candidate received nearly 500 votes, the seat would have gone to the Nationalists. Such development will have contributed to the NP itself adopting an antisemitic platform after 1930, since it was obviously a message that resonated strongly with part of its core constituency.

Antisemitism was especially pronounced in Afrikaner nationalist circles. This can be explained in large part both by the prevalence of severe poverty ('Poor Whiteism') in the Afrikaner community and by the rapid burgeoning during those years of an assertive, exclusive form of Afrikaner nationalism, which mirrored in many ways the basic tenets of German National Socialism. One of the reasons for why many identified strongly with Germany was because of its antagonistic relationship towards Great Britain, the *bête*

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

noire of Afrikanerdom. Bitter memories of the Anglo-Boer War and the loss of independence of the two Boer republics were still very much to the fore in the 1930s.

Antisemitic notions, albeit not to the same degree, were common currency amongst English speakers as well, including some prominent intellectuals. A particularly egregious example of the latter was UCT Law Professor Kerr Wylie, whose observations on Jews included his remarking (in a letter to University of Cape Town Principal Sir Carruthers Beattie), "Everything point to the fact that the Jews' game in South Africa is up, and, if they have any sense, they will realise the fact and try to effect compromise. But history shows that the greed for gold and lust for power is so engrained in the Jewish race that they will cling to their gold and power until it is too late".

On Wylie, Shain observes, "That a Professor of Law at the University of Cape Town could so brazenly display his anti-Jewish prejudices suggests a certain confidence that antisemitic comments were acceptable, even at the highest level". Taking this further, it would explain why by and large (and not forgetting such honorable exceptions as J C Smuts and J H Hofmeyr) even people with genuinely liberal leanings tended to be distinctly lethargic when it came to confronting it. Indeed, on closer examination (as the example of Governor-General Patrick Duncan shows), many had to at least some extent taken on board certain anti-Jewish tropes in their own thinking. It is further apparent that even while a broad majority of white South Africans rejected the more rabid forms of antisemitism being propagated by the extreme right, the general sentiment was that there had been enough Jewish immigration and that measures needed to be taken to curtail it.

Shain's book has considerable value for the fresh insights it provides into the unfolding of white political developments during that time, particularly the rise of the *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party* ('Purified National Party', formed as a breakaway from the ruling United Party in 1935) and the rise of a resurgent and aggressive Afrikaner nationalism. Moreover, one can hardly miss the resonance its themes have in terms of what is happening in South Africa in our own times.

In his address last November at the Cape Town launch of the book (the full text of which appears elsewhere in this *Jewish Affairs* issue), Tony Leon caused ructions by drawing parallels between South Africa as it was then and the situation today, commenting that, "The presumed power and wealth of the 1930s Jewish community, finds contemporary expression in the attacks, on all fronts these days, on the white community as a whole in South Africa". Back then, Jews were scapegoated as

the cause of the country's economic plight, accused of excessive control of the economy and depicted as being an alien, unassimilable element operating as the agents of sinister foreign powers. This, increasingly, was how whites were now being spoken of.

Leon further suggested that today's controversial "black empowerment" questions also have their counterpart back in the 1930s when Hendrik Verwoerd, amongst others, argued for quotas limiting the number of Jews in the professions and the economy and thereby facilitate the socio-economic upliftment of the Afrikaner. There is merit in that comparison, but in this writer's view, closer parallels can be drawn between racial quotas to advance Black empowerment in our own times and the National Party's programme (with the shadowy Broederbond active behind the scenes) to move Afrikaners into all levels of the civil service and other State structures, from the top leadership positions downwards (this included, of course, significant interference in the sports arena).

Leon has interesting observations to make about Dr D F Malan, leader of the National Party in the period the book covers. He notes that while not sharing the extreme antisemitic views of the extreme right, Malan did not scruple to exploit such sentiments for political gain, notably when attacking the United Party government of the day. The situations may differ in many important ways, but it can hardly be denied that today's ruling party is increasingly resorting to anti-white racial rhetoric as a way of keeping its supporters within the fold. This tactic, of course, has from the outset been at the core of the programme of the Economic Freedom Front (EFF). In the Western Cape, former African National Congress Provincial Leader Marius Fransman has even on occasion singled out Jews for special negative attention (such as alleging during a 2013 radio interview that Jewish businessmen were unfairly benefiting at the expense of Muslims through the iniquitous policies of the DA).

Without pushing the comparison too closely, it is not altogether fanciful to see today's ANC and EFF as being in some way the counterparts of the National Party and the radical right-wing movements of the 1930s and '40s. The former are now to a greater or lesser extent pushing what is essentially a black empowerment agenda, one of the clearest proofs for this being that the Coloured (mixed race) and Indian minorities have long supported the official opposition Democratic Alliance, alongside their erstwhile white oppressors. Taking this further, one might even liken the ANC that won the inaugural democratic, multi-racial elections in 1994 to the pre-1948 United Party government. Both, in their particular contexts, sought to provide

a broad tent within which all components of the electorate would feel comfortable. The UP eventually fell because a growing proportion of the electorate came to support the promotion of a more exclusive Afrikaner nationalism. Similarly, the ANC has since changed its focus in response to pressures from its own core support base favoring black empowerment and upliftment over that of other, minority, racial groups.

A common theme of antisemitic discourse in pre-1948 South Africa was, naturally, that Jews exercised too much economic power, to the detriment of the rest of the white population. Shain records how Weichardt, citing “outrageously inflated statistics”, would tell audiences that 90% of licensed hotels, 100% of wholesale butcheries, the stock exchange, theatres and bioscopes”, 70% of retailers and 90% of the press were in Jewish hands. As was intended, such ‘revelations’ did much to stir up feelings of resentment and distrust against Jews, and to at least some degree we are seeing similarly emotive, and factually questionable, claims being made about whites in 2016. The afore-mentioned Fransman, for example, told the Cape Town Press Club in October 2013 that whites (and particularly Jews) constituted 98% of land owners and property owners – a palpably incorrect assertion. As the economic situation of South Africa worsens, such claims, often accompanied by aggressive demands for restitution, have become commonplace.

Discussing parallels between South Africa as it was then and as it is now is a perfectly valid approach to Shain’s book, but in doing so, one must also make sure to point out where the respective situations differ. For a start, it means distinguishing between the motivations behind the kind of charges levelled against pre-war Jewry and those currently being made against whites.

In terms of their small numbers, Jews were – as they are today - indeed disproportionately represented in business and the professions. Likewise, whites remain disproportionately represented in the economy, even two decades after the transition to democracy. The difference is that Jewish success back then did not come about because Jews were given an unfair advantage at the expense of the rest of the population. There was no legislation that specifically discriminated against other whites and therefore prevented them from achieving the same thing. Jews, in other words, essentially succeeded by their own efforts. When it comes to understanding why whites are disproportionately represented in the economy, on the other hand, one cannot say the same thing. True, the discriminatory laws of the apartheid era that made it all but impossible for blacks to progress beyond a certain level have long been consigned

to history. It is also true that the law now discriminates against whites in the job market (albeit not to nearly the same extent as was the case under apartheid’s ‘colour bar’ legislation). However, it is undeniable that to a greater or lesser extent, whites continue to benefit from what was acquired – whether by themselves directly, or by their forebears - under the apartheid system, and prior to that through the colonisation process. There is, in other words, a very real legacy of historical injustice that has somehow to be rectified.

Regarding pre-war anti-Jewish prejudice, this can only in part be attributed to factors like political expediency and fears of competition at a time of widespread economic hardship. Shain stresses that the Jew-baiting rhetoric of the time “resonated precisely because a widely shared negative Jewish stereotype had been firmly laid in the preceding decades”. By contrast, anti-white feeling amongst blacks, rather than being driven by crude race or religious-based prejudices, are rooted in very real and bitter historical experiences, even if this often manifests in questionable generalisations, over-statements or factual inaccuracies.

Engrained prejudice dies hard. Beneath the surface, racist notions continue to fester in South Africa, as the bitter furor that erupted in the early weeks of 2016 over racist Facebook comments by white Durban resident Penny Sparrow made all too clear. At the same time, we find that resentment over wrongs endured in the past does not simply disappear once the cause of that resentment has been removed. Rather, it, too, lingers within the collective consciousness of the former victims, often resulting in their discriminating against and even oppressing others in their turn. Thus was the case regarding Afrikaner nationalism, which was to great extent driven by an abiding sense of injustice over their loss of independence to Great Britain. Something similar appears to be unfolding within black African politics today, and particularly amongst the youth. Sometimes, the Jewish community is denounced specifically – this theme appears frequently in the social media arena, as well as on radio phone-in shows. In KwaZulu-Natal Province, it regularly surfaces in rhetoric against the economically prosperous Indian minority. Primarily, though, the hostility is being directed at whites, and as the frenzied and often overtly threatening reaction to the whole Penny Sparrow affair demonstrated, these feelings run alarmingly deep. Sparrow’s likening of black beach-goers to monkeys was shameful, and she deserved all the opprobrium she received. Even more shocking, however, was the succeeding torrent of tweets and Facebook comments calling for whites to be, *inter alia*, massacred, raped, dispossessed and expelled from South Africa. Clearly, the responses were about more than

just one white woman's racist musings.

A Perfect Storm concludes with the General Election of 1948, in which Malan's National Party emerged triumphant over Smuts' United Party and went on to rule South Africa for the next 45 years. Shain records how even before gaining their objective of achieving political power, the focus of the NP had moved sharply away from pushing antisemitic ideologies, and that in the election itself, antisemitic motifs played that hardly any role. The ban against Jews joining the NP in the Transvaal was soon afterwards lifted and Malan was the first foreign head of state to visit Israel. No doubt, Shain is correct in attributing this shift in part to the fact that the destruction of most of European Jewry in the war and the creation of Israel had removed the perceived threat of large-scale Jewish immigration. As he also stresses, however, the paramount political issue for whites in the post-war era was the preservation of white power and privilege against the growing resistance of the black majority. For this, unnecessarily dividing the white population through sowing conflict between its various ethnic constituencies had to be avoided. An additional reason for the abating of anti-Jewish sentiment was the steady socio-economic advancement of Afrikaners, a process that was already well underway even before the war.

If the National Party post-1948 eschewed antisemitism, the same could not be said for antisemites. Amongst those with antisemitic records who went on to enjoy long political careers within the party were three future Prime Ministers (Hendrik Verwoerd, Hans Strijdom and B J Vorster), one State President (C R Swart) and at least two Cabinet Ministers (Eric Louw and Oswald Pirow). As for Louis Weichardt, he went on to serve for fourteen

years as a Senator for Natal, while Johannes von Strauss von Moltke became an MP for a South West African constituency. The presence after 1948 of former Nazi sympathisers and crusading antisemites within the leadership of the ruling National Party can never be downplayed when assessing the collective political behavior of the Jewish community during the apartheid era.

In the early part of the 20th Century, when people spoke about the problem of 'racism' in South Africa, they were referring to tensions between the English and Afrikaner sections of the white community. Only much later did prejudice against what can broadly be termed "people of color" become an issue; prior to that, it was considered quite normal, even in liberal circles, to hold and express derogatory views about blacks, and for that matter people of mixed race and Asians.

Similarly, prejudice against Jews – whether based on religious or racial grounds or, as was usually the case, on both – was not seen as being something to be particularly embarrassed about. Only after World War II, for various reasons, did antisemitism, at least when openly expressed, become taboo in polite society, and by and large that is the case today. *A Perfect Storm*, which builds on Shain's previous groundbreaking work in this area, is undoubtedly the definitive study of a period when anti-Jewish sentiment in South Africa took on a virulent, programmatic new form, one that went far beyond the relatively casual manner in which it had manifested before. Beyond its value in terms of purely South African historiography, it is a significant contribution to the literature on global antisemitism in the pre-Holocaust era and on the kind of thinking that ultimately made the Holocaust possible.



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THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION COMES TO SOUTH AFRICA

(Part II)

*

Hadassa Ben-Itto

Editor's Note: This is the second of a three-part feature reprinting (with slight editing) Chapter 10, as well as the relevant section of Chapter 12, of Hadassa Ben-Itto's *The Lie That Wouldn't Die: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Valentine Mitchell – London, 2005). A best-seller on its publication, the book was quickly recognized as being amongst the definitive studies on *The Protocols*. It includes a chapter on the famous Grahamstown libel trial of 1934, where the SA Jewish Board of Deputies lodged a case against prominent members of the SA National Party (Greyshirts) movement after they had forged a document with contents closely based on the antisemitic conspiracy theories of *The Protocols* and falsely intimated that Rev. Abraham Levy of Port Elizabeth was its author. The action was successful, making this one of the first cases where *The Protocols* was debunked in a court of law.

The first section, published in the Chanukah 2015 of *Jewish Affairs*, provided the background to the trial and concluded with the trial itself about to commence. This second section deals with the presentation of the plaintiff's witnesses, including Rev Levy himself and the then World Zionist President Nahum Sokolow, an expert on *The Protocols* who providentially happened to be visiting the country at the time.

The Editor thanks Judge Ben-Itto for allowing *Jewish Affairs* to reprint this chapter, as well as part of a second chapter relating to the subsequent history of *The Protocols* in South Africa. Elsewhere in this issue, David Scher reviews Rodney Mazinter's recently published *By a Mighty Hand*, a novel whose central theme is the spread of *The Protocols* after World War I and how it impacts on the book's fictional protagonists. In the course of researching the subject, Mazinter was in contact with Judge Ben-Itto, and was subsequently instrumental in arranging for *Jewish Affairs* to republish the relevant chapter from her book.

The Lie That Would Not Die is available through the publisher (frank.cass@vmbooks.com), from the distributor in the USA (wendy@isbs.com) and at Amazon.

A trial in Grahamstown

10 July was a cool and cloudy day. It was the middle of winter in South Africa. The courtroom was packed from an early hour. Members of the *Grey Shirts* were in uniform, some in the courtroom and others outside, making loud derogatory remarks at passing Jews. A hostile and tense atmosphere prevailed. Reporters swarmed over the place, accompanied by photographers. The two robed judges took their seats and the court came to order.

On the witness stand, Reverend Abraham Levy carried himself with quiet dignity. The court attendant administered the oath, and his lawyer quickly led the Rabbi through the technical facts. He described his functions at the synagogue. He had never seen the document published by the defendants, he never used notes in his sermons and the only documents they sent out were notices of convening monthly meetings of committee, and annual reports. These were all printed, not typewritten. They did not even have a typewriter. The Hebrew words used in the document could not have



The defendants in the Grahamstown libel trial, J von Strauss von Moltke, H Inch and DH Olivier, outside the courtroom (SA Rochlin Archives, SA Jewish Board of Deputies)

been written by a Jew, even if he was illiterate.

Then came the first surprise, the journalists busily making notes. The Rabbi placed a folded newspaper on the judges' bench, pointing out to the court that all the phrases in the document, purporting to have a Jewish meaning, were copied from one issue of the *Jewish Chronicle* dated 9 March 1934, some of them misspelled even in English. The *Jewish Chronicle* was published in London in the English language.

It was time to introduce the 'Protocols', Reynolds decided.

'Do you see any resemblance between this document and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*?' he asked the Rabbi. 'Yes', the Rabbi answered, adding in an excited voice that there was no 'High Circle of the Jewish Citizens of Port Elizabeth', there were no 'Council Meetings of the Select', there was no 'Trustee and six members of the Council'. They had originally appointed two trustees who had no power to authorize anything, and anyway, both trustees had been away in England for 8-9 years. They had never been replaced by substitutes.

Getting down to specifics, Rabbi Levy stated that he had never heard that the Jews conspired with Luther and the Reformation. 'This is a new doctrine', he said with a smile, noticing that the judges were also smiling. This was a good sign, he thought.

The Jews had no 'World Socialistic Movement', the witness continued, and he had never heard that the Jews were behind the revolution in Russia. Jews who were communists, he said heatedly, were those who had abandoned their faith. The Bolsheviks had no regard for religion of any kind, he stated. They had no book called 'the Talmud Tora', these words mean an elementary school for children, not a book. No Jew would make such a mistake. The judges could not help but notice the amused looks of the Jews in the audience.

Examining the Inch document once again the Rabbi continued, saying that he had never organized anybody to go to a *Greyshirt* meeting and they never instructed anybody to 'smash everything they could, carry pepper-pots, blackjacks, knuckle-dusters, revolvers, lead piping, sticks, stones, and boxing glove'. He had never heard such nonsense.

With his next question Reynolds knew he might be exercising the patience of the Judges, but decided to try and educate the court on some Jewish terms. How else would these gentile judges be made to realize the extent of absurdity in the allegations presented in the forged document?

They had discussed this at length. One cannot turn a courtroom into a seminar, his colleague argued, you will either alienate the judges or, what is worse, bore them. But

Reynolds was an experienced lawyer. To win a trial, he used to say, it is not enough to prepare your witnesses well. This is not a solo game, you have an opponent, and you must be as familiar with his arguments as you are with your own. You cannot ignore even those that seem worthless. A judge might see them in a different light. Ignoring or underestimating an argument of your opponent is the most common cause of losing a case.

He had spent the last weeks studying the matter of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. He had collected various versions of the book concentrating on the introductions, which varied from one edition to another. He soon realized that the *Protocols* were presented as a modern version of the so-called 'Jewish Plot', which was supposed to be as old as the history of the Jews. As proof they often quoted the Talmud, sometimes using fake quotations, which their audience was not equipped to check, and other times using accurate quotes, completely out of their original context. This tactic, he soon learned, was very effective, as it lent to the promoters of the *Protocols* an image of learned academics. Suspecting that the defendants would use the same technique, he decided to be prepared.

Impressed by Rabbi Levy's vast knowledge on the subject, he was sure the judges would not be bored. But he also realized that they must find another expert witness, preferably non-Jewish. Unfortunately, the Rabbi had remarked at one of their meetings, a Jewish scholar, even the most prominent one, would automatically be suspected of bias. If the court ruled in favor of the plaintiff, the judges would immediately be accused of being in the pocket of the Jews. 'Believe me', the Rabbi had said with a sad smile, 'this is no Jewish paranoia, this is the result of age-old experience.'

Keeping his fingers crossed and praying for the indulgence of the court, Reynolds now asked the Rabbi with obvious distaste: 'They say in the document that the Gentiles will be forced to drink the piss and eat the dung of the Jews. And that there has been a conspiracy through the ages taught and founded on the Jewish books against Christianity.'

'It is a lie,' the Rabbi cried. Then, in a calmer voice he patiently explained that the Talmud was comprised of discussions of Rabbis on the text called the *Mishna* or Oral Law, extending over a period from 500 BC TO 500 AD. It was first transmitted from one generation to another orally and then reduced to writing. Various Rabbis commented on the text and that is the Gemara, popularly known as the Talmud. There are all sorts of contradictory statements there representing the views of the Rabbis in their debates. 'It is silly to maintain that there exists some sort of conspiracy', he stated.

The judges listened attentively as the witness gave a short summary of Jewish history, while Reynolds heaved a sigh of relief. Surprising even his lawyers, the witness stated that the texts from the Talmud used by the defendants had already been the subject of litigation in a German court. The courtroom was now very quiet as the Rabbi continued. Most of modern anti-Semitic feeling is based on the perversion of Jewish texts, he explained. The first one to try to extract from the Talmud texts to be used against the Jews was one Isenberger in his book *Judaism Unmasked*, published in the year 1700. At the end of the nineteenth century professor Rohle from Austria propagated these texts supposedly taken from the Talmud. A man called Block accused him of being a perjurer and sued him. By the court's request *The Oriental Society of Berlin* and a Catholic professor of Prague nominated two scholars, Noldke and Wuenche, who presented a report on 400 texts, vindicating the Talmud completely. Rohle had to withdraw his defense and admit he was a perjurer.

Some of these same texts were re-used by the defendants, the Rabbi said, pointing at them. 'It is a malicious lie that the Talmud says we are human beings and the nations of the world are beasts', he cried, removing his spectacles and wiping them vigorously, 'nowhere in the Talmud does it say that a Jew may rob a Goy!'

The audience was fidgeting as the witness went on to explain in detail Hebrew terms and Jewish customs, but not once did the judges interrupt.

Then it was time for cross-examination.

Cross-examination can be a traumatic experience in any court operating under the English adversary system. In the inquisitory system applied in all countries on the European continent, it was the judge who questioned witnesses, and he would never badger or insult them. Even defendants in criminal proceedings are questioned politely and courteously. Not so in the English system, where cross-examination often resembles a police third degree. A lawyer may raise his voice to witnesses, accuse them of lying, expose them to every kind of embarrassment with questions concerning their private lives. Skeletons in their closets are dragged out in an attempt to impeach them, sometimes harming their reputations irreparably. Yet, this is considered the best tool in the arsenal of a lawyer to try and get at the truth, and although some judges do their utmost to protect a witness, they are not supposed to deny an attorney his right to pressure a witness in an attempt to reveal facts beneficial to his client.

Rabbi Levy had never been in a court of law, and Reynolds had done his best to prepare him for what was to come. Yet, he

gasped audibly when Inch rose arrogantly and shot at him his opening salvo:

Q: Can one be a Jew and an Englishman?

A: Certainly, if he is born in England.

Q: Can a Chinaman be a Britisher?

A: Certainly, if he is born in England.

Q: But that means that a goat can be a horse!

It took the witness a minute to control his anger and respond with dignity.

A: A Chinaman has a land of origin, he originates from China, but if he is born in England he is entitled to British protection, he is also an Englishman.

'I want to prove that in South Africa a Jew can no more be a South African than a horse can be a donkey', Inch stated, turning to the audience with a smirk. The judges sat stone-faced, but did not interfere.

Asked why he had 'dragged them to court', the Rabbi cried out: 'I have suffered in my feelings, I have suffered anguish that such a statement should be fastened on me by the person who forged this document. I have suffered very grievously by having such a filthy, blasphemous and scurrilous statement fastened upon me.'

Trying hard to regain his composure, the Rabbi answered every specific question with as much restraint as he could muster: No, they had no occult movements; meetings of Jewish bodies in the Synagogue were open, nothing secret, they had no Higher Council, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were false, they never existed, there was no Jewish plot, either local or international.

Suddenly Inch raised his voice: 'Why should we believe you', he asked, 'Did not Jacob use camouflage to get the birthright of Esau?' The witness looked helplessly at the court, not trusting his voice.

Then it was the turn of Von Moltke, who read his questions from a prepared document, sometimes not even waiting for an answer: Are you a Son of the Covenant; Have you been circumcised; Are you an Ashkenazi Jew and are you aware of the fact that is the worst type of Jew you can get in the world; What is your religion; you know Jews have all sorts of religions as long as they can pervert Christianity; To whom are you subordinate ecclesiastically.

When court was recessed the Rabbi seemed on the verge of collapse. Why don't judges protect a witness from insulting questions, he asked his lawyers on the way out. This is the system, they explained, the judges must look neutral. This is the English way of finding out the truth. The Rabbi shrugged. He knew by heart all the rules of the Jewish Halakha

concerning the conduct of a trial. This is insane, he thought, the Jewish rules made much more sense. But he was too tired to give it much thought.

Next morning Von Moltke started as soon as the Rabbi took the stand: Do the Jews keep two sets of Talmud, one to present to a Gentile court, and another one in a secret court; Are you acquainted with all occult movements or societies in South Africa; Is there no such thing as 'Jews of the High Circle' in South Africa in Jewish religion? Could you give us an explanation why the Jews are always persecuted in every country, by every nation?

He kept answering in a tired voice, sometimes in monosyllables. He was ashamed to have to answer such questions. He had never felt more degraded. But he could not believe his ears when Von Moltke approached the stand and asked 'Why do you go out of your way to drag a few poor old *Greyshirts* into court?'

Not able to restrain himself, the Rabbi raised his voice: 'You have been cutting the Jewish people for months, and there are young Jewish children born in this country who look upon themselves as good citizens, and they cannot hear these words of blasphemy used day after day.'

Inevitably the *Protocols* came up again:

Q: You say that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are a forgery?

A: Let me say definitely that there is absolutely no connection between the contents of these *Protocols* with any of the Jewry in any part of the world.

Q: Would you consider the man who forged, or compiled or wrote this book of *Protocols*, would you consider him a prophet?

A: Certainly not!

Q: Would you consider Mr. Henry Ford a prominent Gentile?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know what Ford said about the *Protocols*?

A: Yes, and do you know what he said after he said what he had said about the *Protocols*?

Then it was the turn of Olivier, but his questions were mostly repetitious.

Suddenly it was over and the court stood in recess. Everybody in the courtroom was looking bored. Long hours, which ran into days, were wasted on boring testimony concerning the theft of the document. Inch had presented an affidavit describing the manner in which the document had come into his hands. Two young boys, one blond and one dark, had watched the synagogue and had brought to him two unsigned documents which included suspicious remarks about a Jewish anti-Christian plan. That is when he had decided to break into the

synagogue, where he had found the document in issue. The two boys remained anonymous to the end of the trial, but his description of the synagogue and the manner of his entry did not fit the physical facts. So the court was compelled to listen for long hours to boring testimony of witnesses on technical matters. Even the journalists looked bored and almost left, but then an old man took the stand and the atmosphere suddenly changed.

Preparing for trial the lawyers were in a dilemma. They only had a few short weeks to create their list of witnesses. As soon as they decided to center their argument on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, rather than the locally forged document, they realized the tremendous responsibility they had undertaken. Unlike their colleagues in Bern, they did not have at their disposal witnesses who could testify directly to the forgery of the *Protocols*. They would therefore concentrate on testimony proving the absurdity of the allegations both in the *Protocols* and in the Inch document. They needed an outstanding witness, of international repute, but how do you get such a person to travel to South Africa on such short notice, they wondered.

But luck was with them. A few days before the trial they suddenly learned that Nahum Sokolov was expected on a short visit to South Africa.

Sokolov was at that time president of the World Zionist Organization, having been elected in 1931 to replace Chaim Weitzmann. He carried his 75 years well. Against the advice of his doctors he did not spare himself and traveled to Jewish communities to raise the necessary funds to keep the Zionist enterprise going. Hitler had risen to power in Germany and funds were urgently needed to help Jewish refugees settle in Palestine.

They knew what a burden he was carrying and hesitated to ask him to interrupt his mission and testify at the trial, but he readily volunteered. He was very familiar with the matter of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and would do anything to reveal the truth to the public, he declared. What better forum than a court of law. They warned him, describing the humiliating cross-examination of the Rabbi, but he said Jews were used to such ordeals.

He was one of the most important Jewish leaders of his generation. A kibbutz and streets in most towns in Israel carry his name. Few are aware of the fact that it was Sokolov who gave the title *Tel-Aviv*, to his Hebrew translation of Herzl's book '*Altneuland*', a name later adopted by the largest city in Israel.

A journalist and a writer of world repute, in full command of many languages, his writings published in many countries, Sokolov was received by heads of state and by the Pope, and had their ear and their respect. He

had headed the Jewish delegation to the Paris Peace Conference after World War I, and the Committee representing Jews at the League of Nations. He was recognized as one of the best-educated persons on Jewish as well as on general matters. They could not have prayed for a better witness.

Duly sworn by the court attendant, Sokolov described his credentials. As instructed by the lawyers, he then patiently waited for Reynolds' questions.

Q: Is there any truth whatsoever in the suggestion that there is a Jewish plot to overcome the other nations of the world or anything of that kind?

A: No, I don't believe that.

Pointing to a locally published copy of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and to the forged Inch document, Reynolds continued:

Q: Is there any suggestion of truth whatsoever in any of the statements in these documents, is there any truth in what they say about the objects of the Jewish race?

A: No, every word is a lie.

They needed this witness not only to deny the existence of a Jewish conspiracy. They needed his first-hand information to confront the specific allegation that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were an authentic record of secret meetings held behind the scenes at the first Zionist congress in Basel in 1897.

Questioned about Zionism in general, Sokolov now explained that the Zionist movement had nothing to do with Jewish Ecclesiastical Law; it was an attempt to re-establish the Jews as a territorial nation.

'I attended personally the Basel Congress in 1897 and took considerable part in its organization and the drawing up of its agenda', he stated, 'there is not one word of truth in the allegation that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were promulgated by Dr. Herzl at the Zionist Congress.'

'In 1920', the witness continued, 'I heard for the first time the claim that a document like that existed. It was hearsay. In 1897 this slanderous document was never even heard of.' They had made a special effort for the proceedings of the Congress to be public, he said, everything was conducted in the most open fashion.

Sokolov then explained how in 1920, on a visit to Paris, he had learned that such a slanderous pamphlet was being circulated in London, having been brought there by some adventurer who came from Russia. It worried him, so he traveled to London to see for himself.

Turning to the judges he stated in his

authoritative voice: 'I can tell you that every word in the *Protocols* was a mischievous lie, it was clear to me it was written in order to excite the Gentiles against the Jews, as they always do!'

He then went on to describe how he had later met Philip Graves, how he had read his articles published in the *Times*, how he had gone to the British Museum, which he frequented for his own reading and research, and how he had seen there the book of Maurice Joly. He had personally compared the Dialogue written by Joly with the *Protocols*, realizing how cleverly the forgers had substituted the Jews for Napoleon III.

Hearing this story for the first time, the judges were so intrigued that, uncharacteristically, they interfered: 'Did you actually see the original yourself?' they asked. 'I saw the original in London', Sokolov answered, and explained how the articles in the *Times* had been published in the form of a pamphlet that can be presented to the court. 'I compared the original by Maurice Joly with this document', the witness repeated, 'and we were very much amused at that sort of rot that the man should have taken out the whole text with the only difference that instead of Napoleon III there was Herzl, and instead of the French people of the Napoleon supporters there were substituted the Jews.'

It was Reynolds' turn to be surprised, realizing how attentively the judges were listening to Sokolov's testimony. They now asked him: 'Were you also acquainted with this incident concerning the Austrian professor Rohle?'

'Yes', came the ready answer, 'I know the controversy between Dr. Bloch and Rohle. I knew Dr. Bloch personally, he was a friend of mine in Vienna, and he controverted with Rohle, who was a Professor in Prague and who was known as a very aggressive anti-Semite. Rohle used to write against Jewish religion much more than against the Jewish people and he wrote a number of articles about the Talmud. Let me say that I consider this literature as no literature at all, it is rubbish, it is full of ignorance. Rohle was an ignorant man, he could not read the Talmud, not even the Bible, in the original. You have to devote years to understand the language of the Talmud. Rohle was disproved by a number of very great Christians of great repute like Noldke and Professor Wuensche, who was a Protestant who translated a considerable part of the Talmud into German. He was recognized as an authority by the whole world. Rohle got his texts not from the originals but from some pamphlets. These scholars mentioned some 500 quotations of Rohle to be false! He quoted from anti-Semitic writings of the 17th Century which were disproved a hundred times!'

Seeing that the judges had finished, Reynolds

resumed his questioning:

- Q: Are you familiar with what is going on in Russia?
- A: I have never been in Soviet Russia but I know what is going on there. The Soviet is against religion, against nationalities in every respect in any race, it does not matter, Jew or Christian, we suffer very much from their persecutions and we have quite a number of Zionists who have been thrown in prison and made to suffer violently; some of them have been deported to Siberia and they ask for our help.

The testimony in chief of the witness ended with his firm statement: 'I say most definitely that there is no politics in any synagogue in the world. A congregation is a religious unit and the synagogue is a place of worship and also used for benevolent purposes of the congregation.'

It was time for lunch, and the old man on the stand descended with dignity, not revealing his great fatigue.

I am a Jew, of the Jewish race, born in Poland, a naturalized British citizen, my real native national language is Hebrew', the witness stated after lunch in answer to Inch.

- Q: Why have you asked to give evidence at this trial?
- A: Mainly because of this foolish mention of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* that never existed. As the president of the Zionist organization I know this document has never existed and had never been mentioned at the Zionist congress in Basle.
- Q: Are you here to clear the name of world Jewry?
- A: I am interested in disputing foolish inventions against Zionism and to refute the existence of the so-called '*Elders of Zion*'. I am not defending the Jewish race, as you put it, I am contradicting a blatant lie! I did not come especially for the trial, I happened to be here and I heard of this foolishness about the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and I offered to testify. I volunteered to give evidence.
- Q: You are considered to be a very important Jew in your race...
- A: My modesty does not allow me to accept that.
- Q: You say that the *Protocols* are completely false?
- A: Yes.
- Q: But will you admit that nothing can be false that turns out to be right?
- A: This will never turn out to be right.
- Q: The counsel for the plaintiff said there was no world organization of Jewry. Do you agree?

- A: Yes..
- Q: Do you admit that practically all the film agencies, cinemas, and so on, are controlled by the Jews?
- A: I am not prepared to answer this question, I don't know the film business. I have never made any statistics as to how many Jews are in films!
- Q: Do you agree with the barrage of filth that is usually shown in our bioscopes, or to be more open in this point, do you agree that they should put half-naked females on the posters for our children to see when they advertise a film, our womenfolk half naked, in a suggestive manner?
- A: I am not a great admirer of nakedness, I do not agree.

No, he answered to another question, the Jews definitely did not control all the big newspapers in the world. Asked for examples he mentioned the *Times*, and the *Daily Herald* in London, the *Le Temps* in Paris and others. He admitted he had not personally checked the ownership of every newspaper in the world.

When Inch asked whether the Jews practically monopolized the white slave traffic, even the court was outraged. Judge Gutsche interfered saying that this was a most improper statement.

- Q: You say everything quoted against the Jewish race is entirely false. Why, through the thousands of years has Jewry been persecuted, and no other race has ever been persecuted in a similar manner?
- A: Please ask the persecutors!

'It is unfortunate to be a permanent minority in the world', the witness added.

There followed numerous questions to show that Jews control everything under the sun and the witness answered them all with one word: rubbish. It was not true that the Rothschilds controlled all the gold in the world, 'your country does', he retorted to one of the questions.

He was becoming very angry. He was not here to defend Jews to this ignorant rude man. He came to testify about the falsity of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. So, not waiting for another question, he declared: 'My conception of this book is that the author maintains that there has been since 1897 at the Zionist congress under the leadership of one of the noblest men who lived on God's earth, Dr. Herzl, and with the cooperation of your humble servant, such *Elders of Zion* who decided to conquer the world. That is the point that interests me. I do not make any declaration about Oppenheimer's diamonds, or Samuels' silver or about Rothschild's gold. I declare to you that that book is slanderous!'

Inch: The *Protocols* are true because what they say has come true!

Sokolov: It is a lie.

Inch: Do you agree that Bolshevism is essentially Jewish in origin and practice?

No, the witness answers with a resigned gesture.

Von Moltke was much better prepared, and now it was his turn.

‘Do you admit that Great Britain, which was the Premier World State at that time, succumbed and humbly bent the knee to a handful of international Jews?’

Sokolov: ‘I deny that most emphatically!’

For hours on end the witness had to stand and deny that the Jews and the Zionists were manipulating every prominent leader in politics, in the economy, in finance and in press.

Most of Von Moltke’s questions were more like statements - a scurrilous excursion into Jewish history. The witness, tired of what he considered to be beyond his dignity, answered in monosyllables.

Olivier returned to the Talmud, they realized, when he compelled the witness to explain yet again that this was an old book and it did not refer to Christians but to Pagans.

Everybody in the courtroom was beginning to look bored when Olivier shocked them all with his next question. Would it not be advisable for all the governments in the world to act in conjunction with the Jews and burn the Talmud and start a new one? he suggested with a straight face. Not believing his ears, Sokolov exclaimed: ‘Would you like to return to the middle ages when they burned books, and they even burned people?’

They were all mesmerized and listened in stunned silence to Olivier’s next words. Looking straight at the witness, he declared, emphasizing every word: ‘If it is necessary at the present moment I would not mind that the Jews should be burned and their Bible burned!’

The questions did not end there, but Sokolov answered as if in a haze, not remembering later what he had said. Is this what is going to happen, he asked himself, not even daring to share the terrible thought with his friends.

He never learned the horrible answer. He died two years later, at the age of 77.

Unfortunately, they all thought that these were the words of a lunatic. Who could foresee that they were actually materializing into a plan of action, I think, almost 60 years later, reading again and again the printed words of the court record.

It had not been necessary to bring from abroad a non-Jewish expert. There was one obvious choice, right there, in their neighborhood: George Frank Dingemans, a professor of Dutch at the Rhodes University

College in Grahamstown, a Hebrew scholar, a Christian philologist and historian.

After presenting his credentials to the court, the professor came right to the point. He had examined the Inch document and could state unequivocally that this was not a secret document drawn up by an educated Jew. He based his view on the defective Hebrew script and the ludicrous incongruity between the Hebrew words and the purpose of the alleged ‘lectures’.

He followed this statement with a detailed and learned explanation, to which the judges listened attentively. The content of the document was utter nonsense, reflecting the lack of intelligence of the writer, he stated.

After the witness had torn the document apart, limb by limb, both in language and in content, Reynolds sat down, turning the professor over for cross examination. He hoped they would not abuse this man, who had courageously offered to testify.

Inch came first:

Q: What is your nationality?

A: I am a Dutchman of British nationality, born in Holland.

Q: Will you explain why you are so sympathetic towards Jewry?

A: I am sympathetic to all nations. And I am sympathetic to the Jews because my Lord and my Savior was a Jew and he said ‘Salvation is of the Jew’...I am not prejudiced in favor of the Jews.

Q: Did the Jews crucify Jesus Christ?

A: Yes!

Q: Have you any Jewish blood in your family?

A: No.

Q: If Jesus was a Jew, why didn’t he have a crooked nose?

There followed a long inquiry into Communism and Marxism and a very long argument about the meaning of Christianity. With real anguish in his voice the witness whispered, as if speaking to himself: ‘The history of the Christian Church shows that we who constitute the Churches are very often but poor specimens of what we ought to be. We show so little of the spirit of Christ, and that is true of individuals, and I am afraid it is also true of Churches. The factor which has contributed to that fact is that the Bible has so often ceased to be the real law book of the Churches. There are Churches in which the Bible is almost an unknown book.’

Then came the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

He was an expert on the subject and was particularly upset by the use made of this document by vicious and ignorant men. ‘I wish to inform you and the court’, he said, looking at Inch, ‘that this book, the *Protocols*

of the Elders of Zion, has been exposed over and over again as a forgery.' Turning to the Judges, he continued: 'If I am an enemy of any particular race I can easily write stuff to vilify that race and attempt to create the impression that the statement which I made emanated from the people whom I wish to vilify. That is an easy thing to do.'

Pointing to the Inch document, the witness added: 'this document also pretends to be what it is not. It pretends to be stolen from a synagogue, it pretends to be written by a learned Jew, and I maintain that if it ever came from the Synagogue it was put there by the person who wrote it, and he was not a learned Jew, nor was he a learned Gentile.' Turning his attention to Rabbi Levy in the audience, he continued: 'A Rabbi is the highest intellectual title it is possible for a Jew to achieve. A Rabbi or a college of Rabbis are what you may call the Ecclesiastical Supreme Court of Jewry.....Such a man is always a scholar.'

Q: Could an uneducated Communist Jew have compiled that document?

A: No, because I do not think that a Jew would ever sink so far.'

But the longest answer was delivered by the witness when asked about the Talmud. Although his answer was turning into a speech, nobody interfered.

The Talmud is a vast work covering a period of more than a thousand years, the professor explained, from before the birth of Jesus Christ until roughly 1000-1100 A.D. It contains the opinions of a vast number of men living in various countries, and the opinions expressed are often contradictory and conflicting. It is 'the ocean of Judaic learning'. It may be compared with, say, the whole of the medieval literature in England, Holland and France....A well known Rabbi says that the first few years of a child's education should be spent on the study of the written law, and then afterwards he should devote himself to the talmudic law.

It is said that there are remarks against the Christians or Christianity - well, is that peculiar to the Talmud? No. There is such a thing as historic sense. A famous writer of about 1800 once and for all formulated the principles which ought to underlie all attempts at historic appreciation, and that principle is that men should be judged by the standards of their age. Now, some of my ancestors, for all I know, may have taken pleasure in burning witches or in capturing slaves and selling them, but it would be somewhat strange if I, living in the twentieth century, were to be charged with being in sympathy with witchcraft or with the measures which were in the past adopted against witches. Such a charge would be perfectly absurd,

because it violates every principle of historic criticism. There was a time when religious dissent was regarded as a political crime punishable by death. Subsequently in many countries, for instance in Protestant countries, religious dissent from the national church, though not punishable by death any more, they imposed severe and grievous disabilities. What would any reasonable man say today if he was charged with the beliefs and practices practiced by his ancestors two or three or even more centuries ago? In the Talmud you will occasionally find bitter expressions about Christians, but it should be borne in mind that in the earlier parts of the Talmud the world was largely pagan still, and that the Jewish sages of the time often refer to idolaters and heathens. Subsequently, when, at least in the west, Christianity spread, then you will find sometimes references to the Christians, and no doubt, I feel quite sure, that one could find somewhere in the Talmud bitter expressions about Christianity, and when one thinks of the barbarous persecutions which are matters of common knowledge to all students of history, when one thinks of the persecution to which the Jews in the past ages were submitted, if one thinks of the constant ignominy to which they were exposed, then one can hardly blame here and there a certain Rabbi for indulging in strong language about the Christians. If they had not done so I submit they would have been more than human.

In medieval literature you will find reference in Christian literature full of hatred against the Jews, and I submit that the men who still take that attitude towards the Jews are responsible for the bitter feelings which Jews sometimes entertain for so-called Christians whose conduct towards Jews seems to me to violate every principle of Christianity.

'Tolerance', the witness added after a pause, 'is of slow growth but unfortunately hatred is of rapid growth, and those knowing it make use of the fact. It takes a wise man to sow sympathy between men but it often only takes a fool, inspired by hatred and possessing the gift of the gab, to sow hatred.'

You could hear a pin drop in the courtroom, when the witness stepped off the stand and Reynolds announced that he was through with him, apologizing that he had taken up so much of the court's time.

It was time for the defendants to present their witnesses.

BRITISH FASCISTS AND THE JEWS

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Gabriel A. Sivan

Like many, I thought that organized antisemitism in the United Kingdom had its origin in Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) until a book by Colin Cross entitled *The Fascists in Britain* (1961) made me revise my ideas and undertake some intensive research. In the first place, it was not Mosley who established Fascism as a political movement in the UK. Secondly, there is no evidence that Mosley was a dyed-in-the-wool Jew-hater from the start. Thirdly, we must abandon various misconceptions about Fascist and Nazi sympathizers, Anglo-Jewry in the 1930s, the celebrated "Battle of Cable Street" and the long-term effects of antisemitism in Britain.

Origin of Fascism

The political movement known in Italian as *Fascismo* was first established by Benito Mussolini, a former Socialist, in 1919. Aspiring to revive the power and glory of ancient Rome, he drew his new movement's name from the *fasces*, a bundle of rods with an axe tied together with a thong, which was carried before Roman magistrates as a symbol of their authority. Mussolini and his adherents made it their emblem and called themselves *Fascisti*. He assumed dictatorial power as *il Duce* ("the leader") in 1925, suppressing all other political parties in the following year. Ultra-nationalistic and violently anti-Communist, Mussolini headed an autocratic, centralized government that stood for economic and social regimentation, dominating Italy from 1922 until 1943.

Mussolini's Fascist government and its Blackshirt cohorts were imitated by totalitarian movements in Europe and other parts of the world. According to Winston Churchill (in *The Gathering Storm*), "as Fascism sprang from Communism, so Nazism developed from Fascism".

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Proto-Fascism in Britain

Long before Mussolini gained power in Italy, the British Brothers' League, whose slogan was "England for the English", campaigned against the unrestricted influx of Russian and Polish aliens into Britain. The League's campaign was launched on 14 January 1902, at a mass meeting "in favor of restricting the further immigration of destitute foreigners", chaired by Major Evans-Gordon, a Conservative M.P., and held at the People's Palace, Mile End. Although the BBL was not initially antisemitic, those "destitute foreigners" whom it sought to exclude were mostly Jews – and they became the focus of its campaign, especially in east London.

Attempts to organize the League on paramilitary lines were largely unsuccessful, but the fact that its rallies were stewarded by guards who ejected vocal opponents was a sign of things to come. The Aliens Act of 1905, restricting immigration, was mainly attributed to the League's campaign and its support then dwindled. However, this dislike of "bloody foreigners" would resurface as Germanophobia in 1914, when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (for example) made a token contribution to the outmoded BBL's funds. Drawing its membership from die-hard elements in the Conservative Party, the British Brothers' League never aspired to become a separate political movement, but its platform would inspire far-right groups in the country – from the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s to the League of Empire Loyalists after World War II.

Antisemitism and the Early Fascist Movements

The first movement that took its inspiration from the *Duce* was the British Fascisti group, established by Rotha Lintorn-Orman as early as 1923. The granddaughter of a Field Marshal, she was a staunch imperialist and had distinguished herself in women's hospital service during the First World War. The rise of the Labour Party made her seek recruits for an organized force that would tackle the supposed threat of Red Revolution in Great Britain. Miss Lintorn-Orman attached herself to Fascism because of her admiration for Mussolini and his action-based style of politics, but she never formulated a coherent policy

of her own. British Fascisti maintained that they were defending the monarchy, Toryism, free enterprise and Christian values against Socialism, the trade unions, free love and atheism. As such, the movement appealed to right-wing Conservatives, blimpish retired generals and admirals, minor industrialists and some Anglican clergymen.

They elected a Grand Council, with branches from London to Scotland, and claimed a membership of 100 000 by August 1924, when the hierarchy organized “flying squads” and the stewarding of Conservative Party meetings. No uniforms were worn, but Rotha Lintorn-Orman (who reputedly carried a sword at times) designed special badges and prescribed a “Fascisti salute” to accompany playing of the national anthem. How the movement’s name should be pronounced gave rise to controversy: the leadership mostly favored the anglicized *Fassist*, while others preferred the sound of *Fashist*.

Though not particularly antisemitic, the British Fascisti denounced “alien forces” at work in the country; and when Lintorn-Orman was temporarily consigned to the background, Brigadier-General R. G. D. Blakeney reorganized the movement and gave emphasis to the maintenance of law and order. At Portsmouth in 1925, he delivered a decidedly racist speech, asserting that Communism was run by “international Jews” seeking world domination. Splinter groups constantly plagued the movement, with some members demonstrating their support for the authorities during the 1926 General Strike. Rotha Lintorn-Orman designed a British Fascisti uniform – black shirts for men and black blouses for women, the latter patrolling London streets, rescuing prostitutes and heckling their political opponents. Oswald Mosley’s creation of the British Union of Fascists in 1932 sounded the death knell of her movement, its more radical elements leaving to join the BUF. For her part, Rotha Lintorn-Orman would have no truck with Mosley, whom she viewed as a near-Communist. Rumors claiming that she took drugs and participated in orgies destroyed her reputation and ended her financial support. When she died, barely 40, in 1935, her movement was already defunct.

Before Mosley’s somewhat reluctant turn against the Jews (discussed further on), antisemitism was only the creed of a few eccentrics with no real political influence in Britain. Their most bizarre representative was Henry Hamilton Beamish (1873-1948), the son of an admiral, whose experiences as a soldier in the Anglo-Boer War and while living in South Africa made him a fanatical antisemite. He claimed that the Anglo-Boer War was fought to preserve Jewish control of the gold and diamond industries; and, after

returning to England, he founded The Britons, an anti-Jewish propaganda organization, in 1919. A poster that he distributed that same year targeted Sir Alfred Mond, a Jewish industrialist and a Zionist, who served as Commissioner of Works in Lloyd George’s cabinet. Beamish denounced him as a traitor and Mond, who was later raised to the peerage as Baron Melchett, sued him for libel and was awarded damages amounting to £5000. Beamish fled the country without paying the fine and became a “travelling salesman of antisemitism”, preaching Jew-hatred from Europe to America and the Far East. With the notorious forged *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* as his textbook, he asserted that “wars, revolutions and every social evil were the work of the Jews, Communism and capitalism were the twin manifestations of Jewish power” and that the Jews “also worked through Freemasonry, Black Magic and the Christian religion”. The Britons Publishing Company, which he established in 1921, produced no less than 85 editions of the *Protocols*, as well as similar anti-Jewish works. Beamish is known to have corresponded with Henry Ford, the US automobile magnate, whose weekly magazine, *The Dearborn Independent*, also utilized the *Protocols* in a nationwide antisemitic campaign (1920-27).

Equating Bolshevism with Judaism, Beamish was far closer ideologically to Adolf Hitler’s National Socialism than to Benito Mussolini’s Italian Fascism. He was received by the Führer and by Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, who treated him as an honored guest at the Nuremberg Rallies. While visiting North America in 1937, he met and admired the Canadian Nazi leader Adrien Arcand in Montreal, and addressed a mass meeting of the German American Bund, a uniformed Nazi organization, in New York. Beamish finally settled in Southern Rhodesia, where he became an MP in 1938 and was interned during World War II (1940-43) as a Nazi sympathizer.

Arnold Spencer Leese (1878-1956) was the first man in Britain to combine antisemitism with Fascism in a coherent political form. Born in Lytham St. Annes, a coastal resort near Blackpool, he qualified as a veterinary surgeon and made his career in London, India and East Africa, becoming an authority on camels and the treatment of their diseases. After serving in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps on the Western Front and in the Middle East during the First World War, Leese opened a practice in Stamford, where he worked until his retirement in 1927. There he became friendly with an antisemitic economist, who gave him a copy of the *Protocols* and persuaded him that control of money, the key to power, lay in the hands of “international Jewry”. His opposition to *shechitah*, inspired by a vet’s love of animals, was another factor in

his obsessive hatred of Jews. Having joined Lintern-Orman's movement in 1924, he and a colleague won a municipal by-election in Stamford, the only declared Fascists ever to gain office in Britain.

After abandoning the British Fascisti, Leese established his own Imperial Fascist League (IFL) in 1929. He and his followers espoused a violently racial form of antisemitism and were closer than any other British movement of the far right to Hitler's Nazis. Their aim was to abolish the democratic system, replace it with a new "governing caste" and establish a totalitarian corporate state. They targeted Freemasonry, and (like Beamish) Leese maintained that Christianity was part of a Jewish scheme to undermine the "Nordic race". IFL men wore black shirts and breeches, which made them hard to distinguish from Mosley's BUF members, whom Leese derided as "kosher Fascists". In 1933, their *fasces* emblem on banners and armbands was changed to the Union Jack with a swastika superimposed. Leese visited Germany and conferred with Julius Streicher, whose Jew-baiting cartoons in *Der Stürmer* were subsequently emulated in Leese's monthly, *The Fascist*. He also published articles justifying the blood libel and proposing the mass murder of Jews in gas chambers (1935-36). Though an indifferent public speaker, Leese exerted an influence far beyond the Imperial Fascist League's insignificant membership – an influence that would still be felt after the Second World War.

Enter Oswald Mosley

We now come to the central figure in British Fascism, Sir Oswald Ernald Mosley (1896-1980), whose character and political career have been the subject of innumerable books, articles and television presentations. After surveying his many turnabouts, from Conservative to Labour and then to Fascist, I will discuss Mosley's change of attitude toward Jews and the Anglo-Jewish community's reaction to him.

Born and raised in the minor aristocracy, Oswald ("Tom") Mosley was the eldest son of a baronet distantly related to Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the future wife of King George VI. His front-line experiences during the "War to End Wars" changed Mosley's view of British society and led him to enter politics. At the age of 21, as Conservative MP for Harrow, he was the youngest member to take his seat in the House Commons after the General Election of 1918. A gifted, often sarcastic orator who dispensed with notes, he championed the League of Nations and the rights of demobilized servicemen, advocating the retrospective taxation of war profiteers and a range of social reforms that had little

to do with Conservative policy. In August 1920, he married Cynthia ("Cimmie"), the attractive and highly intelligent daughter of Britain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon. Shortly after their marriage, to the horror of his new father-in-law, Mosley crossed the floor of the House and took his seat as an Independent behind the Labour Opposition benches. One reason for this break was the Government's use of irregulars, the dreaded Black-and-Tans, to repress civil disobedience in Ireland; he likened these reprisals to "the pogrom of the barbarous Slav". He built up a following in his constituency and retained the Harrow seat against a Conservative challenge in the 1922 general elections.

By 1924, however, Mosley saw his future elsewhere, joined the Labour Party and allied himself with the left. Since Harrow would clearly not re-elect him on the Labour ticket, he had to choose a new seat and campaigned against Neville Chamberlain in Birmingham Ladywood. There he infuriated the Tories by stigmatizing Chamberlain as a "landlords' hireling" and, after several recounts, lost the election by just 77 votes. Now outside Parliament, Mosley formulated the "Birmingham Proposals", constituting the basis of his economic policy. He recommended higher wages and shorter hours, slum clearance and improved health services. When the Labour-held seat of Smethwick fell vacant in 1926, Mosley won the December by-election and returned to Parliament, where he proved to be one of the very few members capable of standing up to Churchill. Lady Cynthia Mosley, who had adopted her husband's Socialist outlook, was elected Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent in 1929. They had three children, but Oswald was an incorrigible womanizer, even indulging in affairs with Cimmie's younger sister and (for a time) with her stepmother.

Being close to Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and extremely ambitious, Mosley looked forward to attaining high office after Labour won the general election in 1929 as the Great Depression tightened its grip on the country. However, the only post offered to him was outside the Cabinet, as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with responsibility for solving the unemployment problem. After his first proposals were blocked by the Cabinet, he devised the more comprehensive "Mosley Memorandum" which, in addition to the nationalization of key industries, called for a public works programme and other radical measures. When his scheme was again rejected in May 1930, he resigned in protest against Government inertia and made one last attempt in the following October to gain support from the Labour Party Conference. Faced with yet another defeat, Mosley chose to quit the party instead of remaining to fight another day. Three

decades later, in 1961, Richard Crossman would state that this 'brilliant' memorandum was "a whole generation ahead of Labour thinking".

From the New Party to the British Union of Fascists

Mosley founded his short-lived New Party in March 1931, but its only effect was to split the left-wing vote at successive by-elections, allowing Conservatives to top the poll. Many of those in the Labour Party (such as Aneurin Bevan and trade union leaders) who had expressed support for Mosley and his economic programme condemned his growing interest in Europe's so-called "Modern Movements", which were actually Fascist. When angry Labour opponents disrupted his meetings, a 100-strong force of young hearties trained by Ted ("Kid") Lewis, a Jewish former world boxing champion, kept order and served as Mosley's bodyguards. Dressed in black uniforms, they were nicknamed "Blackshirts"; newspapers dubbed them "Mosley's Biff Boys". Some intellectuals were drawn to the New Party, notably Raymond Mortimer, Eric Partridge, John Strachey, Osbert Sitwell and Harold Nicolson (who edited *Action*, its literary and political weekly), but this political manoeuvre failed completely. At the general election held late in 1931, all the New Party candidates – including sitting MPs like Mosley – suffered a humiliating defeat. "Kid" Lewis fared worst of all, securing only 154 votes in his native Whitechapel.

Undeterred by this setback, Mosley embarked on a study programme of the new "Modern Movements" in Europe. Visiting Italy in January 1932, he met Mussolini and was impressed by the Duce's success in restoring the nation's order and prosperity. Back home, Mosley decided that Britain's democratic system had failed and that its only hope lay in a Fascist corporate state that he would lead. However, Britain was not Italy. The economic crisis that had resulted in widespread unemployment was beginning to recede, a National (coalition) government under Ramsay MacDonald retained power, and the British were averse to any kind of dictatorship. Ignoring public opinion was Mosley's fatal mistake.

After disbanding the New Party in April 1932, Mosley spent the next few months developing his latest political programme, *The Greater Britain*, and aimed to incorporate small groups on the far right within the movement that he launched in October and partly funded, the British Union of Fascists. After another audience with Mussolini, in April 1933, he secured the Duce's financial backing (£60 000 per annum) for the BUF, whose nucleus was provided by the "Biff Boys" and remnants of the New Party's youth movement. Between January

1933 and June 1934, the BUF's membership grew from 10 000 to five times that number. Its supporters included establishment figures and members of the aristocracy, who saw in Mosley's Fascists a dynamic element that the Labour and Conservative parties lacked and a bulwark against Communism. Some of these supporters were the Duke of Bedford, Baron Redesdale, Sir Alliot Verdon Roe (the aeronaut), Sir Reginald Goodall (the conductor), St. John Philby, A. K. Chesterton and Sir Malcolm Campbell (the racing motorist). *The Remains of the Day* (1993), a film based on the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro, indicates the appeal that Fascism had for many upper-class Britons in the 1930s.

Viscount Rothermere, owner of the *Daily Mail* and a right-wing Tory, was a case in point. He met and was photographed with Adolf Hitler soon after the Nazis came to power, and in a *Daily Mail* editorial (10 July 1933) wrote that "a few isolated acts of violence" had been exaggerated by the Reds "to give the impression that Nazi rule is a bloodthirsty tyranny." The Führer sent him a letter of thanks for this unsolicited testimonial. Rothermere's poor judgment was displayed once again in January 1934, when he signed a full-page article in the newspaper entitled "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!" Naively, he also maintained that there was no "racial prejudice" in the BUF.

Since the earliest Fascist movement in Britain was founded by a woman (Rotha Lintorn-Orman), the fact that Mosley gained considerable support from women admirers is scarcely surprising. Emmeline Pankhurst, who had been imprisoned at Holloway in 1914 as a militant suffragette, would land there again in 1940 because of her Fascist involvement. Mary Richardson, another leading suffragette, went on to head the women's section of the BUF; and at parades of women Blackshirts in the 1930s, Mosley often took the salute.

Mosley and the Jews of Britain

There is no hard evidence of antisemitism in Oswald Mosley's outlook up to the middle of 1934. When Arnold Leese alleged that he had married a half-Jewess because the name of Cynthia's grandfather, a Chicago department store millionaire, was Levi Leiter, Mosley was able to prove (for genealogical, not anti-Jewish reasons) that Leiter was actually of Dutch Calvinist or Mennonite descent. There were Jews in his social circle and among his early supporters. He admired Harold Laski, the political scientist who played an influential role in the Labour Party, while "Kid" Lewis served for a time as his chief bodyguard. The January Club, a 'front' organization that held dinner parties "to inquire upon modern methods

of Government” (1934-35), had two prominent Jewish members. Ralph D. Blumenfeld, a former editor of the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*, was a Zionist and a campaigner against antisemitism. Major Harry Nathan, a lawyer and MP active in Jewish communal affairs, would become a Labour peer (as Baron Nathan of Churt) in 1940 and Minister of Civil Aviation in the postwar Labour government.

Initially, anti-Jewish propaganda was not conducted by the BUF. Mosley had attacked anti-Fascist hecklers, dubbing them “class warriors from Jerusalem,” but insisted that he was not against Jews as such, only those who “financed Communists or were pursuing an anti-British policy.” What in the main led to his rather surprising about-face was pressure from William Joyce and other leading Blackshirts, who blamed most of the world’s troubles on “international Jewry.” However, this change of heart did not occur overnight.

Emulating Mussolini’s technique, Mosley organized the first of three rallies at the Royal Albert Hall on 22 April 1934, when his audience was treated to a display of Fascist pageantry and a long speech by The Leader outlining the BUF’s creed. To make the most of this successful event, Mosley decided to hold an even bigger rally on 7 June at London’s Olympia Hall. While 13000 places were sold in advance, another 2000 seats were available free of charge. A fair number of those attending were peers and MPs, diplomats, tycoons and journalists who wished to gauge the BUF’s strength. On this occasion, the atmosphere more closely resembled that of the Nuremberg Rallies organized by the Nazis since 1927. Wearing his Blackshirt outfit, Mosley stood on a raised platform surrounded by spotlights and party banners. Some 500 anti-Fascists, including some Jews, had managed to gain entrance, but

Mosley was prepared for them. When they began loudly heckling his speech, he made regular pauses that enabled 1000 Blackshirt ‘stewards’ to deal with their opponents inside and outside the auditorium.

Hitherto neutral members of the audience who rose from their seats to protest against this Fascist brutality were also manhandled, sensational press reports emphasizing the deliberately organized violence of Mosley’s thugs. As a result of the ensuing public outcry, anti-Fascist sentiment grew and middle-class support dwindled. Letters from several Conservative MPs, who had walked out in disgust, appeared in the national press, one signed by Geoffrey Lloyd, Stanley Baldwin’s Parliamentary Private Secretary, who wrote: “I came to the conclusion that Mosley was a political maniac and that all decent people must combine to kill his movement”. Less than a month later, Hitler’s bloody purge of disaffected Nazis received wide coverage in the media, where the “Night of the Long Knives” was associated with BUF tactics at Olympia.

Faced with signs of growing Jewish participation in the anti-Fascist demonstrations, and with a majority of his followers expressing their admiration for Hitler, Mosley found it difficult to resist pressure for the BUF to adopt an antisemitic line. He then argued “that a dynamic creed such as Fascism cannot flourish unless it has a scapegoat to hit out at, such as Jewry”. This was reflected in his speeches at rallies and parades from the autumn of 1934 onwards. Now even Lord Rothermere became alarmed. Not wishing to be tarred as a racist or to lose the *Daily Mail*’s Jewish readers and advertisers, he urged Mosley to undertake policy changes in the BUF dropping its “Fascist” title, for example, and repudiating antisemitism. When these proposals were



Mosley reviewing Blackshirts, 1935

rejected in July 1934, Rothermere formally withdrew his support for the BUF. Lord Beaverbrook, another Conservative press lord, had opposed Mosley all along, even permitting left-wing writers to attack Fascism in the columns of the *Daily Express*.

By the time his second Albert Hall rally took place, on 28 October 1934, Mosley's speeches had become more aggressively antisemitic. "I have encountered forces which I did not dream existed in Britain," he declared. "One of them is the power of organized Jewry, which is today mobilized against Fascism". Since the British Empire comprised "numerous races, bound together in a mighty unity", the BUF did not attack Jews on racial or religious grounds, but "because they fight against Fascism and against Britain." He went on to assert that although Jews constituted "only six per cent of the population", they had been responsible for fifty per cent of the attacks on Fascists". The real threat came not from "little Jews in the streets, the sweepings of foreign Ghettos", but from "big Jews working in secret". They controlled the press, and the cinema was "Jewish from beginning to end". Their allegiance was not to the Empire but to their own "kith and kin in nations beyond our frontiers". Invoking the Fascist cult of youth, Mosley announced that his movement would get rid of "the old men" in government and rebuild the country. "We fought Germany once in our British quarrel. We shall not fight Germany again in a Jewish quarrel". The inconsistencies and nonsensical claims in Mosley's speech were overlooked by the audience, which gave him the ovation of his life.

Paradoxically, of course, those "big Jews" he singled out for attack were the very ones who had been in favour of "keeping a low profile" as long as the BUF was not openly antisemitic. That was the policy of the Anglo-Jewish establishment, headed by the *Jewish Chronicle* and the Board of Deputies. Neville Laski, Harold's elder brother, had been elected president of the Board in 1933. A traditional Jew, he was the son-in-law of Haham Moses Gaster. A fourfold strategy was adopted by Laski and his colleagues to defeat the BUF and similar movements: 1. Anti-defamation, refuting lies told about the Jews; 2. Intelligence gathering of Fascist activity for the British Home Office; 3. Lobbying the authorities to clamp down on antisemitic activity; and 4. Avoiding direct confrontation with the Blackshirts. Most Jewish MPs, Labour and Conservative, backed this strategy.

Yet those "little Jews" whom Mosley discounted were the very ones his followers now targeted. The BUF embarked on an "East End Campaign" in 1935, with the aim of intimidating thousands of Jews living there, as uniformed Blackshirts marched through

the streets chanting "The Yids, the Yids, we gotta get rid of the Yids!" Rejecting the establishment line, East Enders supported the Jewish People's Council Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism, a left-wing defense organization that called for physical opposition to the BUF and its uniformed thugs. They could not forget how Jewish ex-servicemen and trade unions requesting affiliation with the Board of Deputies had been turned down, on the grounds that they were "too close to the Communist Party". So it was that when the Deputies finally agreed to set up a Jewish Defence Committee in mid-1936, the matter was (for the time being) out of their hands. The watchword of Spanish Republicans battling the Falangists, "They Shall Not Pass!" (*¡No Pasarán!*), became that of Jewish and Gentile anti-Fascists alike.

The "Battle of Cable Street" - Fact and Fiction

It was only in the East End of London that Mosley and his BUF gained a mass following. How and why this came about is easily explained. From Whitechapel to Mile End, kosher butcher shops and bakeries, Jews speaking Yiddish and the quiet descending on Shabbat typified this whole area. Some Cockneys, lacking ambition and resenting it in others, noted the Jewish drive to work hard (especially as tailors and carpenters) in order to provide their children with a good education. There was little social contact between Jews and Gentiles, intermarriage was scorned on both side, and anti-immigrant feeling had given rise to a smouldering antisemitism that only needed Mosley to ignite it.

As a show of strength, and to mark the fourth anniversary of his movement's birth on Sunday, 5 October 1936, Mosley planned a march through the East End by several thousand Blackshirts, including women, cadets and four bands. At stops en route he meant to address crowds of his supporters. Labour Party leaders warned the Home Secretary, Sir John Simon, that this march was bound to provoke violence and should be cancelled. For Socialists and Communists it was a British version of Franco's revolt in Spain. Jews feared that it might herald a pogrom and the Board of Deputies urged them keep away.

Sir Philip Game the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, was determined to maintain order and drafted 10 000 constables, including his entire mounted police force, to prevent any disruption of the march by anti-Fascists. Mosley and his henchmen arrived in newly designed uniforms (resembling those of Hitler's SS) to inspect their troops and begin the march at Royal Mint Street near the Tower of London. What Mosley and Sir Philip had not reckoned

on, however, was the strength of the opposition and its resolve that "They Shall Not Pass!" At least 100 000 anti-Fascists took advantage of the fine weather and prepared for action. Blackshirts who reached the Commercial Road at Gardiner's Corner found their way blocked by anti-Fascist demonstrators and then sought an alternative route via Cable Street. There they were awaited by a vast number of local residents, Jews and non-Jews, together with Labour and Communist party stalwarts, trade unionists and Irish dockers, who erected a whole series of barricades which the police were hard pressed to dismantle.

What followed was *not* the legendary "Battle of Cable Street" between Mosley's Blackshirts and Jewish East Enders, but a violent struggle between massed anti-Fascists and the Metropolitan Police. Demonstrators and householders, convinced that the police were siding with the Blackshirts, pelted them with broken furniture, stones, rotten food and other junk, while children rolled marbles under the hooves of police horses, toppling their riders. Casualties mounted as the demonstrators were subjected to repeated baton charges. One of the injured was Fenner Brockway, the Independent Labour Party's general secretary, who managed to reach a phone box and warn the Home Office that the streets would flow with blood unless the BUF march was cancelled or diverted. That opinion was shared by Sir Philip Game, who ordered Mosley to call off his parade but allowed the Fascists to turn west, under police escort, along the Embankment and to end their march at the Strand. "The Government surrenders to Red violence and Jewish corruption", Mosley declared. "We never surrender". This was simply double-talk, because an alliance between parties of the Left, the trade unions, the Jewish People's Council and most of the local population had outwitted the enemy and sent him reeling.¹ In any case, as we shall see, Mosley was not inclined to waste time arguing with the authorities on that particular day.

According to a Special Branch report, there was far more support for Mosley in East London than his opponents claimed and the recent disorders were "largely Communist-inspired". The *Manchester Guardian* and other newspapers gave a rather different picture of the events. Antisemitic violence reached its height a week later when about 100 young toughs who invaded the Mile End Road smashed the windows of Jewish shops and homes, attacking anyone they thought to be Jewish. A hairdresser and a four-year-old girl were hurled through a plate-glass window.

Following the East End disturbances and the Mile End pogrom, a Public Order Act was hurried through Parliament and became law on 1 January 1937. This Act banned the wearing

of political uniforms in the public domain; strengthened the existing law that made it an offence for speakers to use insulting and inflammatory words liable to cause a breach of the peace; and gave the police more power to ban provocative marches and processions. Deprived of their uniforms, the Fascists appeared nondescript and lost much of their glamour, while any adherents who defied the ban on insulting speech could be fined on the spot and threatened with a jail sentence. With the enforcement of these regulations it became increasingly difficult for the Fascists to hold marches and rent halls for meetings in London and the Provinces. Although the BUF survived until 1940, the Public Order Act was largely responsible for its political decline.

Friends and Foes of the Nazis

Anti-Jewish sentiment in British politics was not confined to the Fascist movements. After the Olympia rally's display of Blackshirt violence in 1934, there was a revealing exchange in the House of Commons between two wealthy Conservative MPs. "Is it not a fact", one asked, "that 90% of those accused of attacking Fascists rejoice in fine old British names such as Ziff, Kernstein and Minsky?" Another could not resist adding: "Were some of them called Feigenbaum, Goldstein, Rigolsky and other good old Highland names?"

Ever since the Zinoviev Letter, a fabrication meant to discredit the Labour Party, made headlines in 1924, right-wing Tories had feared a Communist take-over in Britain. Once Mosley began associating Jews and 'Reds', he gained recruits from high society who admired the Nazis. They included Lord Redesdale and two of his extraordinary daughters, the Mitford Sisters. Unity Valkyrie Mitford (1914-1948) was infatuated with Hitler and even hoped to marry him. Britain's declaration of war in 1939 found her in Munich, where she promptly shot herself in a suicide attempt. The Führer arranged for her to be sent home, brain-damaged; she died in 1948.

A blonde, blue-eyed beauty whom Hitler called "a perfect specimen of Aryan womanhood", Diana Mitford (1910-2003) visited Germany with her sister and attended several of the Nuremberg Rallies. In 1932, while married to Bryan Guinness of the wealthy brewing family, she and Oswald Mosley embarked on a love affair. Although Diana divorced her husband, Mosley refused to leave his wife, who had loyally followed him from one party to another. Not until 'Cimmie' died of peritonitis in 1933 would he consider marrying Diana. She finally persuaded Mosley, who looked down on Hitler as an upstart, to have their union solemnized in Berlin. Immediately after the "Battle of Cable Street", he flew



Unity Mitford (left) and sister Diana at the 1937 Nuremberg Rally

to Berlin, where the wedding ceremony took place before a registrar at the home of Reich propaganda minister Josef Goebbels, whose wife (Magda) was a friend of Diana's. Hitler, one of the few guests attending, gave the newly married couple a framed portrait of himself.

Nancy Mitford (1904-1973), their older sister, became a successful novelist and biographer. Her anti-Fascism was displayed in *Wigs on the Green* (1935), which satirized the Blackshirts (as "Union Jackshirts"), with Unity appearing (thinly disguised) as a rabble-rousing aristocrat. Caring for Spanish Republican refugees in France and Jewish evacuees from blitzed areas of the East End strengthened Nancy's hatred for the Nazis. After the outbreak of war, she provided MI5 with information about her sister, Diana Mosley, "a devoted Fascist and admirer of Hitler". Nancy Mitford later established her literary reputation with *The Pursuit of Love* (1945), a bestseller, while *Noblesse Oblige* (1956) made her the arbiter of "U" and Non-U" speech, a concept that became widely popular, though meant as a joke.

Known as the "red sheep of the family", Jessica Mitford (1917-1996) left home at 19 to marry her second cousin, Esmond Romilly, a left-wing nephew of Winston Churchill who had recently fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. They moved to the US in 1939, but Esmond served with the Royal Canadian Air Force and died on a bombing raid over Hamburg in 1941. Two years later, Jessica married Robert Treuhaft, an American Jewish civil rights lawyer. They joined the Communist Party at the height of the McCarthyite "Red Scare" (1953), but resigned in protest against Soviet repression in 1958. Like Nancy Mitford, Jessica became a successful writer, publishing *The American Way of Death* (1953), an exposé of the funeral business. *Hons and Rebels* (1960) described her upbringing in the Redesdale household.

Decca: The Letters of Jessica Mitford (2006) includes a note concerning the visit she and her little son Benjamin paid to Britain after the war. Diana Mosley apparently invited them to come and see her. "I thought better not", Jessica wrote, "as I didn't want Benjy turned into a lampshade".

The Windsors

Among other events, 1936 saw the formation of a Popular Front government in France, the outbreak of civil war in Spain and German troops reentering the Rhineland, not to mention the BUF's renaming as the British Union of Fascists and National Socialists (or simply the "British Union"). Most traumatic in Britain was the crisis ending in December 1936 with the abdication of King Edward VIII. It is still often maintained that Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, and the Archbishop of Canterbury forced the king to abdicate because he insisted on marrying Wallis Simpson, a twice-divorced American socialite. Recent evidence clearly indicates, however, that matters of state security rather than Church precept were responsible for this drastic solution to the problem.

As Prince of Wales, Edward was proud of his German descent, spoke fluent German and felt an emotional and racial tie with the Nazi leaders. In July 1933, he told Prince Louis-Ferdinand, the ex-Kaiser's grandson: "It is no business of ours to interfere in Germany's internal affairs, either re Jews or anything else. Dictators are very popular these days, and we might need one in England before long". Wallis Simpson had been close to a series of Fascists, detested Blacks and was openly antisemitic (except when she had something to gain from rich Jewish acquaintances). She never wanted to be the exiled Duchess of Windsor but the king's mistress, enjoying all the pomp and influence of a queen without the official title and helping to influence the

course of political events.

An FBI file in Washington indicates that the contents of documents entrusted to the king had somehow reached Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German ambassador in London, and that Mrs. Simpson (identified as the leak) was under surveillance by MI5. Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, became her implacable enemy. "The prospect of a Nazi king backed by an infinitely more able and resourceful Wallis Simpson was intolerable" and all secret information was henceforth withheld from her lover. Although it came as a great relief to Baldwin, when Edward chose "the woman I love" and quit the throne, he still constituted a menace abroad. Invited to visit Germany in October 1937, the new Duke of Windsor made a point of greeting enthusiastic crowds with the Nazi salute. He and Wallis were received by the Führer at his Berchtesgaden retreat, where they were photographed with him. His visit and tête-à-tête with Hitler received wide and unfavourable coverage in the British press.

Since he favoured peace with Germany at almost any price, Nazi leaders considered Edward a potentially valuable ally. The Duke and Duchess had moved to neutral Lisbon in 1940 when the Gestapo's No. 2 man, Walter Schellenberg, arrived there on a cloak-and-dagger mission to fly them to Berlin. Word of this scheme reached Prime Minister Winston Churchill, one of Edward's keenest supporters four years earlier, who was now determined to keep him way out of Hitler's reach. In the comic opera scene that followed, Schellenberg was outwitted by Churchill's agents, who quickly had the Windsors shipped off to the Bahamas, where Edward spent the rest of the war as nominal Governor in privileged captivity. Left to his own devices, the foolish, egotistical Duke might well have become the puppet ruler of a Nazi-occupied Britain.

Did any other members of the Royal Family have Fascist (let alone Nazi) sympathies? Nothing has ever been proved, but there was a burst of outrage last July when *The Sun* published a home movie clip dating from around 1933-34, in which the future King Edward VIII is seen encouraging his niece, the present Queen of England, to make a Nazi salute. That absurd caper was filmed soon after Hitler rose to power: little Princess Elizabeth must have thought she was playing a game and could scarcely have imagined what Nazism would inflict on humanity, but Edward was already pro-Hitler. As Duke of Windsor, he would blame "Jews and Reds" for World War II and even suggest in 1940 that the Nazis should bomb Britain into an alliance with the Third Reich. After Buckingham Palace was hit during the London Blitz, King George VI appeared to be convinced that Edward had

given targeting advice to the Luftwaffe. Queen Elizabeth, his wife, loathed the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and denied her brother-in-law the right to walk behind the coffin in her husband's funeral procession.

Towards the end of April 1945, the king had ordered a dependable emissary to retrieve certain documents from Schloss Kronberg and other castles belonging to distant cousins of his in Germany. They were thought to comprise letters written to and from Queen Victoria, King George V and the Dowager Queen Mary, as well as some of their personal effects. However, this clandestine operation also unearthed Third Reich documents showing that members of the princely Hesse-Kassel family related to the king had been leading Nazis. Worse still, a thick dossier of microfilmed telegrams in one specially labeled German Foreign Office file revealed the extent to which the Duke of Windsor had not merely admired Hitler but involved himself in Nazi political intrigues. There was consternation at Buckingham Palace, and Churchill wished to have all the evidence destroyed, but George VI had other ideas. The incriminating documents were and are now safely locked away in the Royal Archives. Incidentally, the king's emissary was a certain Major Blunt, later Sir Anthony Blunt KCVO, Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures and Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art at London University. In 1979, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher named him as a Soviet agent who, for ten years, had served the Kremlin rather than the Crown. As for the mission he undertook on the king's behalf, even Blunt's MI5 interrogator was never permitted to learn its secret.

Mosley's Decline and Fall

Let us now return to Sir Oswald Mosley and the problems he and his movement increasingly faced. Whereas German industrialists provided Hitler with huge financial resources, British support and Mussolini's subventions dried up after 1936. Mosley was then forced to pump his own cash reserves (about £100 000) into the BUF to keep it solvent, and to stop paying most of his organizers to save costs. Furthermore, serious differences emerged between the head office, which concentrated on antisemitic propaganda in East London, and the Provincial branches where this activity had far less appeal to disgruntled but patriotic Tories. Again and again, Mosley had misjudged public opinion, first by switching from one party to another and then by exploiting yobbish Jew-hatred to further his political ambitions. After a vain attempt to keep Edward VIII on the throne, he continued to lose support by ignoring the Nazi *Kristallnacht* pogroms and by justifying the *Anschluss* and Hitler's annexation of Czechoslovakia.

In *Tomorrow We Live* (1938), Mosley again distinguished between 'good' and 'bad' Jews, proposing that those who (allegedly) worked against British interests should be expelled, that the rest be treated as foreigners and that ultimately they should all be given a national home – not in Palestine but in one of the "waste places of the earth possessing great potential fertility". Even so, he made little attempt to define who was or was not a Jew. Arnold Leese and his Imperial Fascist League were far more specific, anticipating Goering's Nuremberg Laws and Hitler's Final Solution. "The most certain and permanent way of disposing of the Jews", he wrote, "would be to exterminate them by some humane method such as the lethal chamber". Alternatively, everyone of Jewish extraction would be relocated to Madagascar, where the existing population would be removed and the world's navies would ensure no Jew ever escaped. An uninhibited disciple of Julius Streicher, Leese resurrected the mediaeval blood libel, claiming that Jews kidnapped and murdered Gentile children whose blood they used for baking *matzah*. None of these revolting charges found their way into Mosley's propaganda.

Although British Union candidates made a reasonable showing in the London County Council elections of March 1937, not one was returned and they never fought a General Election. Mosley's campaign against war with Nazi Germany allied him with prominent appeasers, but outraged anti-Fascists in all the major cities. While touring the country in an effort to drum up support, he showed undeniable courage when facing his opponents. In October 1937, for example, while standing on a loudspeaker van to address followers in Queens Drive, Liverpool, he was showered with missiles, one of which struck him on the head. Rescued from an angry crowd by mounted police, he was rushed to Walton Hospital and spent a week there recovering from his injuries. This was by no means an isolated incident.

A "Mind Britain's Business" rally at Earl's Court in July 1939 was Mosley's last desperate attempt to keep his ship afloat. By then, leading British Union figures had cast adrift. John Beckett and William Joyce, who had been made redundant and had lost faith in the Leader, set up the even more extreme National Socialist League. Charles Wegg-Prosser left because the movement's anti-Jewish line sickened him. In a letter republished by the Board of Deputies, Wegg-Prosser accused Mosley of imitating foreign dictators: "You sidetrack the demand for social justice by attacking the Jew; you give the people a false answer and unloose the lowest mob passion". Up to the summer of 1940, Hitler pinned his hopes on the Anglo-German Fellowship, the

Right Club, the National Socialist League and, of course, the Imperial Fascist League – pro-Nazi organizations that could be manipulated to win over and neutralize the British Empire. For Sir Oswald the Führer had neither time nor money.

War and Internment

Following the outbreak of World War II on 3 September 1939, Mosley urged party members not to do anything that would harm the country or assist a foreign power. Taking advantage of the "phony war", the British Union contested three Parliamentary by-elections (February-May 1940), but its candidates never received more than 3% of the poll. Churchill succeeded Chamberlain as Prime Minister on 10 May, when German troops invaded the Low Countries; on the 22nd, while enemy tanks were driving into France, Mosley was nearly lynched at Middleton in Lancashire. That same day, an amendment to Defence Regulation 18B empowered the Home Secretary to imprison without trial anyone thought likely to endanger the safety of the realm. Mosley and eight other leading Fascists were promptly interned and, by 27 May, dozens more had been jailed. The British Union was dissolved and its publications banned three days later. This sounded the British Union's death-knell.

Arnold Leese, Britain's would-be Gauleiter, went into hiding and managed to avoid arrest until November 1940. Diana Mosley was also interned, a week after her husband; they eventually received VIP treatment in the shape of a four-room apartment with cooking and other facilities at Holloway Prison, remaining there until Sir Oswald's release on health grounds in November 1943. William Joyce, the BUF ideologist and Mosley's former right-hand man, fled to Germany a few days before Chamberlain declared war. Derisively nicknamed "Lord Haw-Haw", he became notorious for his sardonic propaganda broadcasts in English from the Third Reich. He was captured after the war and, though an American by birth, was hanged as a traitor in 1946.

Postwar Fascism and Some Recent Developments

Movements of the radical Right, from mildly Fascist to neo-Nazi, reappeared in Britain soon after World War II. Arnold Leese churned out more vicious nonsense, beginning with *The Jewish War of Survival* (1945). A. K. Chesterton, one of Mosley's prewar allies, founded the super-patriotic League of Empire Loyalists in 1954. After demobilization, Jeffrey Hamm set up the British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women, which drew support from people who, like himself, had

been youthful members of the BUF and who would form the nucleus of Mosley's postwar Union Movement.

Far more dangerous than any of these was Colin Jordan, a Cambridge graduate and disciple of Leese, whose fanatical ideas and activities led him from the League of Empire Loyalists to the White Defence League and from there to the British National Party (BNP) in 1960. Two years later, after a split in the BNP, Jordan and John Tyndall founded the National Socialist Movement on Hitler's birthday (20 January). At their Trafalgar Square rally on 2 July 1962, a banner proclaimed "Free Britain from Jewish Control" and the ensuing riot led to Jordan's dismissal from a teaching post and to police surveillance. He went on to establish a World Union of National Socialists, of which he was elected "World Führer" with George Lincoln Rockwell (head of the American Nazi Party) as his deputy. Throughout the 1960s, Jordan was fined and jailed for offences against the Public Order and Race Relations Acts, such as attempting to organize a paramilitary force on Nazi storm trooper lines. At the Leyton by-election in 1965, he led 100 neo-Nazis who tried to stir up racial hatred at a Labour Party meeting, where Denis Healey, the Secretary of Defence, punched him in the face! A Holocaust denier and a defender of Adolf Eichmann, Jordan believed that Hitler was the only "true savior". National Socialist Movement thugs who carried out 34 arson attacks on Jewish property in North London included John Tyndall's ex-fiancée, Françoise Dior, the French fashion designer's niece. Other NSM terrorists stockpiled weapons to assassinate Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Happily, Jordan's political career was brought to a premature end in 1975 when he was caught shoplifting at Tesco's in Leamington Spa.

Encouraged by Jeffrey Hamm and the League of Ex-Servicemen, Mosley returned to active politics in 1948 with his concept of a united "modern movement" for the whole of Europe.² Demographic changes as a result of the war had their effect on his domestic policy, antisemitism now giving way to the "colour problem" and the focus of Union Movement activity shifting from the East End of London to Notting Hill Gate. Still in his prime (63) when he stood for North Kensington in the 1959 General Election, Mosley called for the prohibition of mixed (interracial) marriages and the expulsion of West Indian and other coloured immigrants (except bona-fide students). He came bottom of the poll (with 8.1%) and, for the first time in his political career, lost his deposit. Nothing daunted, he proceeded to contest the 1966 election at Shoreditch and Finsbury, where his final share of the vote was even worse (4.6%).

The Mosleys returned to Paris, where Sir

Oswald published his memoirs and died in 1980. After his death, one of his harshest critics turned out to be his eldest son, the writer Nicholas Mosley (3rd Baron Ravensdale), whose works of non-fiction include *Rules of the Game* (1982) and *Beyond the Pale* (1983). These two books question his father's political motives, make no attempt disguise his personal failings and constitute the basis of a Channel Four TV series entitled *Mosley* (1998).

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NOTES

- 1 The 'Battle of Cable Street' is now commemorated by a large mural there, as well as by a wall plaque in Dock Street.
- 2 The author once heard Mosley speak at an Oxford Union debate in 1957, and found his way of commanding an audience to be impressive. However, undergraduates who encountered him afterwards at the Union bar, when he had had a few drinks, reported a few incautious remarks.

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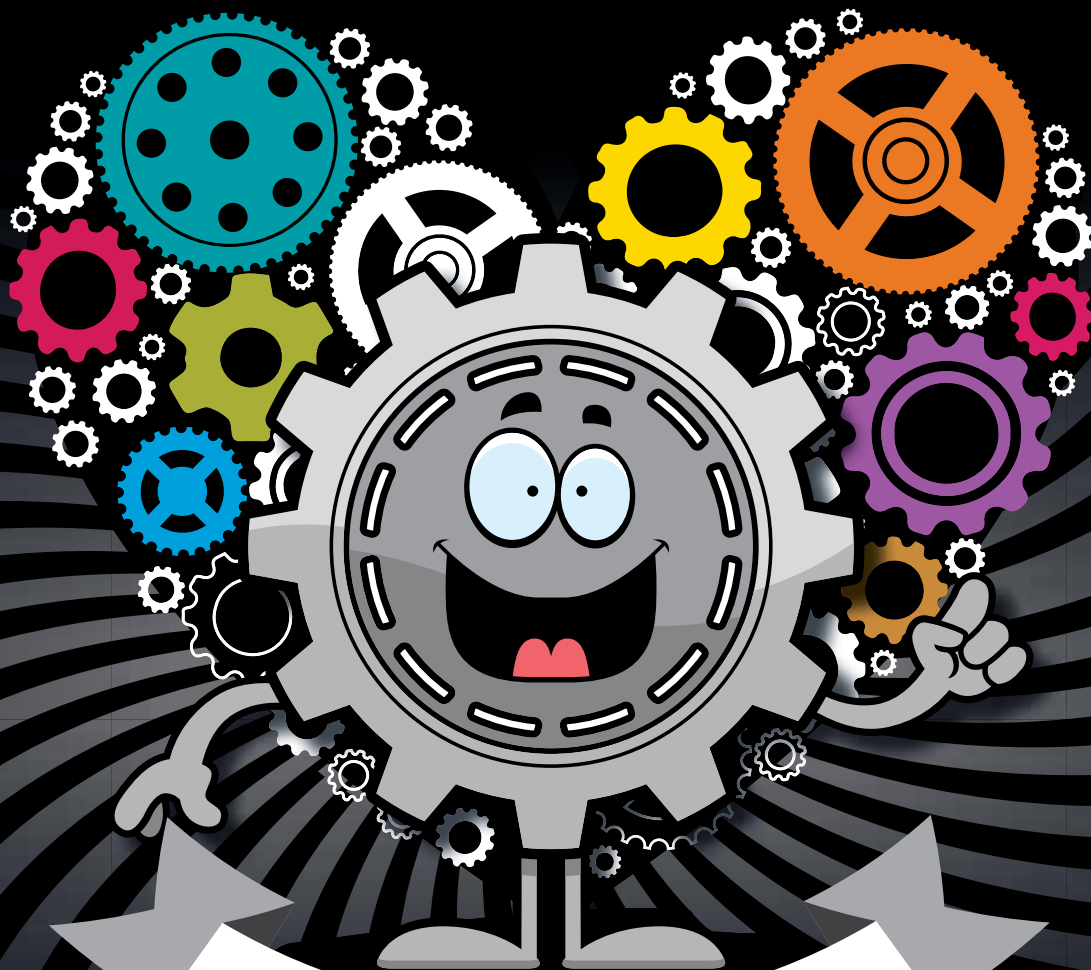


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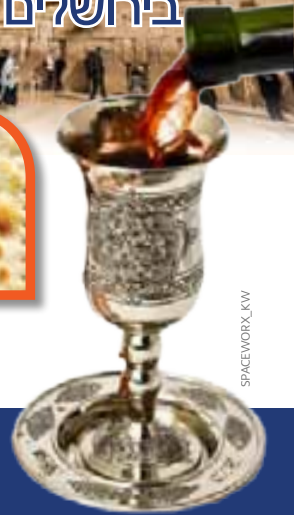
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WHERE ARE THE WOMEN YIDDISH WRITERS?

*

Cecil Bloom

Like their non-Jewish counterparts, Jewish women have over many years put their pens to paper. Certainly, they have been prominent in writing fiction in English and Hebrew, with much of their work matching that of their male counterparts. The work of the 19th Century English writers Grace Aguilar and Amy Levy is of high quality, and such 20th Century writers as Glenda Charles and Bernice Rubens in Britain and Anzia Yezierskia, Cynthia Ozick and Grace Paley in the US have continued this progress. In Israel, women writers writing in Hebrew include Orly Castel-Bloom and Shulamith Hareven. But where are, or were, the women who wrote in Yiddish?

Males dominate the lists of Yiddish writers, whereas few Yiddish stories by women have appeared in the many English-translated anthologies that have been published. Perhaps the leading Yiddish anthology of stories translated into English is *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories*, edited by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg. This contains the short stories of 23 male writers, but no female ones. *An Anthology of Modern Yiddish Literature*, edited by the eminent literary critic Joseph Leftwich and published by the prestigious International P.E.N. Books, contains nine stories, all by men. The book's lengthy bibliography likewise lists only male Yiddish writers. Charles Madison's *Yiddish Literature* and Sol Liptzin's *A History of Yiddish Literature* are two other major works on the subject. They list many writers, but their extensive bibliographies include no women authors. *From a Land Far Off*, a selection of South African Yiddish writers, contains fiction by fourteen writers, all male. The Foreword and lengthy Introduction, written by Dan Jacobson and Joseph Sherman respectively, make no reference to female writers. There is only one woman who wrote in Yiddish mentioned in some works on the subject, namely Glückel of Hameln (1646-1724). However, the period in which she lived is well outside the scope of this essay.

While much fictional writing in Yiddish by men has been in the short-story form,

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long novels have also been written. Those by Mendele Mokher Seforim, Sholem Aleichem, Sholem Asch, the Singer Brothers, Der Nister (Pinchas Kahanovitch), Chaim Grade and David Bergelson are some examples. With very few exceptions, those women who have written Yiddish fiction seem generally to have ignored the full-length form. But women have been prominent in writing poetry in Yiddish, and much of this is considered to be of high quality. There is now much interest in Yiddish fictional works by women, and female (but not male) literary critics have been addressing the reasons for why women writers have been neglected. A few anthologies have been published that have concentrated on these writers. These show that women, mostly born in Europe but generally ending up in the United States or Canada, were writing fiction in Yiddish much earlier than was generally believed. Of the 24 writers listed below, sixteen were born in the 19th Century and only one post-1918. Quite a few were near-contemporaries of some of the leading Yiddish male writers, and some were arguably just as talented but have not been properly recognised as such. Nevertheless, the compendium *Jewish Writers of the Twentieth Century* (2003), which lists 343 writers, of whom 102 were born in the previous century, mentions only three women as having written fiction in Yiddish. *No Star Too Beautiful*, a short story collection published in 2002 and edited by Joachim Neugroschel, contains stories written from 1382 to the present, and lists 45 Yiddish writers from the 19th and 20th Centuries; of these, only seven are women, all 20th Century.

Some recent publications, however, have properly drawn attention to women writing in Yiddish.

Found Treasures, published in 1994, noted that while women prose writers were hardly acknowledged to exist, over three hundred women actually did publish Yiddish literature between 1927 and 1986. The book identifies some eighteen of these, and includes stories by them. The anthology *Beautiful as the Moon, Radiant as the Stars* (2003) contains stories by twelve women writers and *Arguing with the Storm*, published four years later, lists nine more. Carole Balin's *To Reveal our Hearts* refers to the presence of sixty-seven Jewish women writers in Czarist Russia. Of these, only six wrote in Yiddish, seventeen wrote in

Hebrew and, incredibly, the remainder wrote in Russian. Even more recently a 2013 anthology, entitled *The Exile Book of Yiddish Women Writers*, has appeared, contains 22 stories by thirteen women. These books all demonstrate that Jewish women, while they have been prolific in English and Hebrew novel-writing, have generally ignored full-length fiction in Yiddish.

One explanation put forward for the paucity of women writing Yiddish fiction is that they had little time for literary efforts due to their domestic duties. This, however, would appear to be a weak excuse, since many were attracted to the writing of poetry, surely just as difficult as writing fiction. Anita Norich of the Department of English and Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, has suggested that poetry can sometimes be written despite hectic schedules that include the responsibilities of earning a livelihood and raising a family, whereas the expansive form of the novel requires time and publishing resources rarely available to women. Is this really true, however? Norich further suggests that the many women who immigrated to the United States before 1924 and who did write never conceived of themselves as a literary group, since they were equally cut off from one another and from the centres of Yiddish publication. These women were educated in Eastern Europe, for the most part receiving a better secular education but a less complete religious education than their brothers. The argument that men could use their religious learning to help them in telling stories in contrast to women who were generally confined to the home is surely a tenuous one. Another explanation put forward for male domination in fictional writing is that the Jewish storytelling tradition is associated with religious learning, *midrash* and *aggadah* and men could tell their stories in the prayer house, between prayers, even as prayers but women, for the most part, could not do so. Early on, there was at least one male who understood the problem resulting from the absence of women being accepted as Yiddish fiction writers. He was the poet Aaron Glants who, in 1915, wrote that the full development of Yiddish literature would only be achieved if women played a full role in it.

Hereunder follows a list, with accompanying biographical details, of some of the women who wrote in the Yiddish language:

- Dvora Baron (1887-1956) was born in Lithuania and went on *aliyah* in 1910. She wrote mostly in Hebrew but her early work was in Yiddish.
- Polish-born Lili Berger (1916-1995) was a prolific writer of novels and short stories.

Her major work *Fun haynt un nekhten* (Of Today and Yesterday) dealt with Jewish life in Poland.

- Rokhl Brokhes (1880-1945) was born in Minsk, Russia, and was murdered by the Nazis. She wrote many short stories. A *zamlung dertseylungen* (A Collection of Stories) described the life of impoverished Jewish women in Russia.
- Celia Dropkin (1888-1956) wrote much poetry, but also many short stories, a single volume of which was published after her death.
- Rochel Faygenberg (1885-1972) was born in Belarus. Moving to Odessa, she published many stories, the first at the age of twenty. A novella *A mame* (a Mother), appeared six years later and was followed by a number of short stories. She eventually settled in Palestine and wrote both in Hebrew and Yiddish. She published over ten books of translations, fiction and historical documents, as well as essays on Jewish thought, literary criticism, and the status of women. Her first novel *Af fremde vegn* (Alien Paths) appeared in 1925. She continued to write in Yiddish, although Hebrew became her main language.
- Sheindl Franzus-Garfinkle (1889-1957) was born in the Ukraine and moved to Montreal in 1922. Her short stories and novels on life in the Russian villages, *Rokhl* (Rachel) and *Erev Oktober* (On the Eve of October), received much critical praise.
- Shira Gorshman (1906-2001) was born in Lithuania. In 1924, she went to Palestine, where she worked for the great Hebrew poet Bialik. A few years later, she moved to Odessa and then to Moscow, where she wrote short stories mainly about life in the Russian *shtetls*. Later she returned to Israel. *33 Noveln* (33 Short Stories), published in 1961, contained much of her output.
- Frume Halpern (1888-1966) published stories in a Communist paper after arriving in the US in 1905. Perhaps her most memorable story is *Drei mol bagegn* (Three Meetings), the setting of which is the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist fire in New York that claimed the lives of over a hundred workers.
- Sarah Hamer-Jacklyn (1905-1975) was born in Poland to Chassidic parents, with whom she moved to Canada. There, she flirted with the Yiddish theatre, and wrote many short stories concentrating on women's life in the *shtetls* that appeared in a number of Canadian and American journals. Two important publications are her first collection *Lebens un gestalten* (Lives and Portraits) and *Shtamen un tsveygn* (Sumps and Branches).
- Rachel Korn (1898-1982) was Galician-born and is best-known for her poetry. Her first literary language was Polish but, taught by her husband, she switched to Yiddish. She went to Russia during World War II and then back to Poland where, in 1946, she

was the first Jewish writer to be invited to join the PEN club in Stockholm. She lived in Stockholm until 1948, when she finally moved to Montreal. Korn wrote much poetry, which was well received, as well as two volumes of short stories. She won the Israeli Manger Prize for Yiddish literature in 1974.

- Esther Kreitman (1891-1954) was the elder sister of two of the greatest Yiddish writers of the 20th Century, Israel Joshua and Isaac Bashevis Singer. While her output was low, she is unquestionably the greatest of the writers in this list, and the best known woman who wrote in Yiddish. Today, she is acknowledged as a writer of stature. Kreitman's short stories and two semi-autobiographical novels should at the time have been noted by the critics who, however, sadly neglected her work. Her first novel *Der Sheydim Tants* (Dance of the Demons) was published in Poland in 1936, appearing in English as *Deborah* in 1946. Clearly autobiographical, it begins in pre-World War I Poland. The daughter of a respectable, principled, unambitious rabbi very similar to Kreitman's own father, Deborah wants to marry a Marxist she met in the Warsaw ghetto. Instead, she is forced into an arranged marriage, from which she eventually escapes. Kreitman's second novel, *Brilyantn* (Diamonds), also semi-autobiographical and a family saga, first appeared in 1944 in London and in English translation, many years later, in 2009. It is based on life firstly in Antwerp and the diamond business there and then later in London, and describes the pressures on a traditional Jewish family forced to change their way of life in the modern world.
- Malka Lee (1904-1972), born in Galicia, moved to New York on her own at the age of sixteen. She wrote much poetry but also short stories, written for her son, called *Mayselekh far Yoselen* (Little Stories for Joseph).
- Born in Belarus, Bertha Lelchuk (1901-after 1940) spent some time in Palestine and then moved to the US in 1923. There, she wrote stories and articles for Yiddish periodicals around the world, and is believed to have appeared in some Hollywood films. Although she did not experience life under the Nazis, she wrote many stories about those who did.
- Blume Lempel (1907-1999) was born in Galicia. In 1929, she moved to Paris and ten years later to New York, where she wrote stories for Yiddish magazines and newspapers. Two collections of these are *A rege fun emes* (A moment of truth) and *Balade fun a kholem* (Ballad of a Dream).
- Helen Londynski (1896- 1992) was born in Poland to a wealthy *Chassidic* family. She worked in Warsaw for a company that published Yiddish literature (including that of I J Singer), and in 1942 moved to New York after many years as a refugee in different countries. There, she wrote pieces for a number of Yiddish journals.
- Ida Maze (1893-1962) was born in White Russia, but she lived most of her life in Canada. A prolific poetess, her one novel, *Denah*, describes the Jewish life of her childhood.
- Kadya Molodowsky (1894-1975), a rabbi's daughter, was born in Lithuania. She became a leading figure in Yiddish literary circles, both in Warsaw and later in New York. She published many poems, plays and essays as well as two novels, *Fun Lublin biz Nyu York* (From Lublin to New York) and *Baym toyer: roman fun dem lebn in yisroel* (At the Gate), a novel of life in Israel. She also wrote a short story collection *A shtub mit zibn fenster* (A House with Seven Windows) and in 1971 received the Manger Prize for Yiddish Literature.
- Rikudah Potash (1903-1965) was born in Poland and settled in Jerusalem in 1934. Her novel *In geslekh fun Yerusholoyim* (In the Alleyways of Jerusalem) is about Sephardi Jews coming to Israel and their problems in settling there.
- Born in Poland, Chava Rosenfarb (1923-2011) survived the Holocaust and went to Belgium and thereafter to Canada. She wrote poetry and many novels, winning the Manger Prize amongst other prestigious awards.
- Dora Schulner (1889-1962) was born in Kiev and immigrated to the US. She wrote many short stories that covered religious as well as secular life in Russia and in America. Her two novels are *Miltchin* and *Esther*.
- Yente Serdatsky (1877-1962) was born in Lithuania. She moved to Warsaw to develop her writing skills and then to the US in 1907 where she published stories in a number of Yiddish periodicals including *Der Forverts* (Forward). Her only collection entitled *Geklibene shriftn* (Selected Works) was published as early as 1913.
- Mirl Erdberg Shatan (1894-1982) was born in Poland and moved to Montreal in 1926. There, she worked at a Yiddish newspaper and published many short stories.
- Fradel Shtok (1890-after 1945). Born in East Galicia, she immigrated to the US in 1907 and began writing fiction and poetry. Her only published collection contains stories about the *shtetl* from which she came and about life in New York. Shtok also wrote one novel in English, entitled *For Musicians Only*.
- Sarah Smith (1888-?) was born in Budapest and moved to the US as a child. At the age of twenty, she began writing stories, published in *Der Forverts*, that described impoverished Jewish and non-Jewish life.

SYNAGOGAL WEDDINGS FROM A HALACHIC VIEWPOINT

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David Sher

One of the foremost Anglo-Jewish customs is the convention of performing weddings in synagogues, often with both floral and choral complements. The custom has proliferated wherever the British Empire has extended and is the prevalent *minhag* (custom) in former imperial strongholds such as Johannesburg, South Africa. Indeed, Rule 73 adopted in the 1915 Bye-Laws of the United Hebrew Congregations of Johannesburg, located at the much-loved Great Synagogue on Wolmarans Street, declared: “The solemnisation of Marriage shall take place in the Synagogue unless application be made that it shall take place elsewhere...” To this day the wording of the latest edition of the celebrated Singer’s Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth reflects the prevailing Anglo-Jewish custom of synagogal weddings. It cites the tradition of singing *Baruch HaBa* (‘Blessed is one who cometh’) ¹ - “As the bride *enters*”, which intimates as she enters the synagogue as opposed to her arrival at an *al fresco* location. The same prayer book also recalls the custom “for words of blessing to be addressed to the couple” under the bridal canopy (*Chupah*) and that afterward “the officiant pronounces the blessing” ² of the Priestly Benediction. ³ Earlier editions of Rev. Simeon Singer’s (1846 – 1906) eponymous *Authorised Daily Prayer Book of the British Empire* recall that at ‘choral’ weddings Psalm 150 is intoned to mark the termination of the service. ⁴ Conversely, the indoor wedding custom is not accepted by many strictly-Orthodox communities worldwide, yet is tenaciously adhered to in the Germanic *Haredi* communities. The clash has meant that some individuals, whose ancestors have long had the custom of an indoor wedding, are in certain cases, in fits of (somewhat meretricious) fastidiousness, deleteriously opting to forego this solemnisation practice. Why do such diverging viewpoints exist?

To address this issue, it would be prudent to follow the lead of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1833 - 1904), who opined that in Torah study one must always “learn the Torah out of itself” by reviewing the original sources. ⁵ The

sources in this article have been translated on an almost word-for-word basis by the present writer, with the caveat that fully rendering some abstruse terms from Hebrew into the vernacular is well-nigh impossible and that readers should consult both an ecclesiastical halachic authority and the original Hebrew text for a final ruling on the matter. Where necessary, I have inserted a word or phrase to make the meaning of the literal translation of the florid old Hebrew easier to comprehend. Such additions have been demarcated with parentheses. Unless otherwise indicated, the italicisation of certain passages, for purposes of emphasis, is also by this writer.

Sources against having a Synagogal Wedding

There are three primary sources *against* having a wedding in a synagogue:

- 1) The first, most widely touted one, is the gloss of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (c1520-1572, known, by his acronym, as the Re’ma) on the Code of Jewish Law (*Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer* 61:1), which declares “there are those that say to make a *Chupah* beneath the heavens for a good sign (*siman tov*).”
- 2) The next is the Chatham Sofer (1762-1839), who wrote in his commentary on *Even Haezer* (*Siman* 98), “and those who do not desire blessing and wish to distance themselves from it, who intend to learn from the way of the nations of the world who are not blessed with the stars and wed themselves in their house of prayer, shall be like them”.
- 3) Finally, there is an objection raised by, *inter alia*, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Halevi Herzog (1888—1959), Chief Rabbi of Ireland and afterwards of Israel. It is worth quoting his fascinating responsum dealing with the subject in full. It appears in Volume 7 of his *Pesakim Uktavim, Siman* 83. ⁶ Rabbi Herzog commences thus his response to the Sephardi Chief Rabbi (known as the *Rishon LeZion*) Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Chai Uziel (1880-1953):

Behold in Poland, land of my birth, and in Lithuania and according to what is known to me in all the nations which were included in Russian rule until World War I, they had the custom to make the

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Chupah under the canopy of the heavens and there was no room for this question, only generally they would beautify [the *mitzvah*] by having it in the synagogue courtyard or near the synagogue. And when my father, my enlightener, of blessed memory, came to the country of England, and brought me with him, there we found that they have the *Chupah* in the synagogue. Nonetheless, his opinion was not entirely happy with this, yet it was not within his power to alter [the custom], for they had already abided by this custom for many years. And also I, after him, may I be distinguished from him for a good and long life, when I was appointed to my first Rabbinate in the city of Belfast I found the same custom in Ireland and I was unable to change it in any way; however, I did not allow them to acclimate themselves to play during the *Chupah* with a ‘pas harmonium’ or even a piano.

Yet here in our Holy Land...we do not have this bad *minhag* and whosoever changes [from the status quo], he has the bottom-most hand. Not only the Ashkenazim should not change from their *minhag* to have the *Chupah* beneath the cover of the heavens but even amongst the Sephardim who are not particular about this and make the *Chupah* in the house; it is definitely upon us [and them] to be against any innovations to make the *Chupah* in our small *Beth haMikdash* [term to denote a synagogue].

Here the Chief Rabbi quotes the Sde Chemed (1833 - 1904), who provides several reasons not to have an indoor wedding.⁷ He continues:

And I add, that it is prohibited to kiss even small children in the synagogue (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, Siman 95, Re'ma, Se'if 1*) and with a *Chupah* it is impossible to prevent degrading kissing [from occurring]; that not only the bridegroom and bride kiss but even relatives and friends, men and women, and enough disgrace and wrath [Hebrew: *ketzef*] and a literal prohibition of closeness to immoral relationships and *Nidda* in a house hallowed for worship of the L-rd. And I constantly warned in the Diaspora in written and spoken word [for them] not to kiss and on occasion they listened to me, but numerous times they did not listen and I was aggrieved due to this.

And so too [was present] the great transgression in that men and women mixed and although in the earlier days which were better than these it

was possible to arrange that only the mother[s] of the bridegroom and bride entered [the synagogue], or the marriage attendants [*shoshvinim*] in their place, as is brought [i.e. stated] in the Maharil [Rabbi Jacob Ben Moses Moellin, one of the earliest and foremost Rabbinic authorities c1360–1427], nonetheless today it is impossible to set boundaries in this [of only attendants entering the main sanctuary], and annulled is the great rectification that they instituted at that period, already in the times of the Temple, and our small *Beth haMikdash* has been desecrated by this.

Blessed be the L-rd that I have merited to come to our Holy Land and my eyes have ceased seeing these desecrations, at least in holy venues. And we are pained by the former ones [i.e. former desecrations] and now they have come to initiate innovations. It is certain that we need to stand by any means against these innovations. For “out of Zion shalt go forth the Torah”,⁸ and it is for the Diaspora to learn from the Land of Israel, and not that we [in the Holy Land] learn from innovations that were done in the lands of Western Europe, of which our hearts were sickened over them and we lacked the wherewithal to prevent them.

And if their intention is to add to the wedding ceremony the addition of “holiness of the surroundings” it is fitting for them to institute to hold it [the *Chupah*] in the synagogue courtyard. And it is also possible to erect a variety of structure in the synagogue courtyard that will open above the location of the *Chupah* in a way that it will be under the covering of the heavens. And it will be done with the addition of the ambience of a holy surrounding and the Sephardim are not concerned with it being open above [i.e. under the heavens] but nonetheless [it is fitting] that there should be in the unique structure - in the “courtyards of the House of the L-rd”⁹ - a variety of the wedding halls which were previously found in all Jewish cities, as is found in *Choshen Mishpat, Siman 163*, but under no circumstances [are we to permit] to have the *Chupah* inside the actual synagogue. And He who sanctifies His nation Israel may He sanctify us with a heavenly holiness and purify our hearts to serve Him in truth.

The responsum of Chief Rabbi Herzog ends here. We now turn towards the issues he and the other authorities presented, particularly how other sages of towering stature and influence

assuaged some of these concerns.

Responses to concerns over Synagogal Weddings

- a) The saintly Rabbi S R Hirsch addressed the first point regarding the Re'ma's suggestion of an outdoor wedding in *Siman* [section] 80, where he declares (after opening salutations and comments to his correspondent) that he would be forthright "regarding my custom from the time of my appointment to minister in holiness, to orchestrate the weddings in the synagogue as I have seen it to be the custom in many districts of Germany [lit. *Ashkenaz*] and this custom is founded in holiness in days of yore. And although the Re'ma writes in *Even HaEzer*, *Siman* 61:1, 'there are those that say to have a *Chupah* under the heavens for a positive sign [*siman tov*]', nonetheless he does not write 'for *thus* is the custom' or '*thus it is to have* the custom', and au contraire, now that you have commented on this....in *Yoreh Deah*, *Siman* 391:3 it appears incontrovertible that also in the days of the Re'ma it was the custom to have the *Chupah* in the synagogue..."

Rabbi Hirsch goes on to bring several other sources proving the ancient *halachic* provenance of holding weddings in synagogues; we shall return to these shortly.

It is worthwhile examining the section of the Re'ma that Rabbi Hirsch refers to, which conclusively proves that even in the Re'ma's days there was a custom to hold synagogal solemnisation of marriages. The Re'ma (*Yoreh Deah*, *Siman* 391:3) discusses the prohibition of mourners entering houses filled with joy due to weddings and the like; and he declares:

"...however, he should not enter the house at all" when they are preoccupied with wedding issues of a bridegroom and bride, "and thus is the custom in Germany [*Ashkenaz*] and in these [i.e. Poland and surrounding areas] countries, and all this [applies] in a house where they make the *chathuna* [wedding], for they eat and drink and rejoice there, however with a *Chupah* which they have in a synagogue where they bless there the betrothal and wedding blessings [*birchath erusin v'nisuin*] and there is no rejoicing at all, there it is permitted [for the mourner] immediately after the *shivah* [mourning period]...and there are places where they are stringent for the mourner to stand all twelve months outside the synagogue to hear the benedictions and nonetheless it appears that the mourner is allowed to bless the betrothal and wedding benedictions beneath the *Chupah* which is inside the synagogue...." Here we have indisputable proof that a (if not *the*) prevalent custom in the days of the Re'ma was to have a wedding within a synagogue sanctuary.

- b) The second issue of the Chatham Sofer's pronouncement regarding the holding of weddings indoors is addressed by the greatly revered Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986), a product of Lithuanian Jewry who later immigrated to the USA. In his responsa on *Even HaEzer* (Volume 1, *Siman* 93), Rabbi Feinstein addresses a responsum to Rabbi Samuel HaKohen Roth, who inquired if it was permitted for a rabbi to officiate at a wedding in a synagogue and also if it was allowed due to the possibility that the synagogue's wardens would dismiss the rabbi for not doing so. Responding in Hebrew, he wrote, "it is obvious and clear that even without the possibility that they would dismiss him, not only is it permitted to go, rather it is even an obligation to go for upon him rests [the duty] to oversee that the marriage is conducted according to Torah Law and also because of his obligation to his congregation, for this is of the obligations [incumbent upon] a rabbi to his congregation. And thus did great Rabbis and *Geonim* [great sages], also in New York, [where] also there are those that make the *Chupah* in houses and they [the esteemed rabbis] went there to conduct the marriage and also for [attendance at weddings] of relatives and friends."

Rabbi Feinstein continues:

[F]or to have a *Chupah* under the heavens is only something that was a custom for a *siman* [sign] of blessing and *this is not an institution of the sages* and also *not a custom due to any Din*, or possibility of prohibition, or a subject of *mitzvah* that you will consider someone who goes against this – and makes the *Chupah* in a house - to be a transgressor. And the custom [of an outdoor wedding for a 'sign of blessing'] is no better than the blessing the sages instituted to marry on Wednesday....and it is clear at the commencement of Tractate *Kesuboth* in the *Tosafoth* [a Talmudic commentary] that [for not following an activity advised 'for blessing'] one is not considered a transgressor. For it is *merely general good advice* and all the more so are custom(s) which are only advised for blessing and [of which] there is no source from our sages; it is certain that they are only an entity of good advisement and [refusing to follow them is] not called a transgression. And also that which is written regarding an outdoor wedding being a *siman* of blessing, this is the same status of blessing of which the Re'ma writes in *Siman* 64:3 and also the *Mechaber* [Rabbi Joseph Karo, 1488-1575, compiler of the Code of Jewish Law] in *Yoreh Deah* 179 to

only marry at the commencement of the month, that virtually the entire world are not cautious in this, only individuals are [particular to follow this point], and so Heaven Forefend to consider them [those holding synagogal weddings] as transgressors! So it is permitted to go to such a *Chupah* even without considering the possibility of monetary loss by dismissal [of the Rabbi who refuses to attend].

And the Chatham Sofer in *Siman* 98 *also did not say over there to prohibit* [synagogal weddings] *only if it was their intention to learn from the ways of the nations* and also on them he *did not say it is prohibited* rather he said upon them “and those who do not desire blessing and wish to distance themselves from it, who intend to learn from the way of the nations of the world who are not blessed with the stars and wed themselves in their house of prayer shall be like them”, for this wording is not a prohibition, rather [it indicates] that the sages’ opinion is not pleased with them. And the matter is logical that the Chatham Sofer *did not write this only in his place* where there began the evil entitled Reform to uproot all customs of Israel and many primary matters of the Torah and because of this they wanted to customise to [hold weddings] in synagogues and to change the custom [to conduct a wedding] under the heavens. Therefore he wrote upon them “and those who do not desire blessing.” *However if* [the reason one] *does not wish* [to hold his wedding] *beneath the heavens is not with reformist intentions he did not say this.* And thus we do not find it that he says this on those who marry at the end of the month that “he does not desire blessing”: au contraire; surely even a *siman* [sign] of blessing that the Sages *instituted* we lack in our time and also [lacked] in the time of the *Rishonim*...for surely a woman is wed in our time on *any* day as it says in the Code of Jewish Law *Siman* 64, and ‘for blessing’ it should [according to this reasoning] be upon us to marry on Wednesday. The Pne Yehoshua [Rabbi Jacob Joshua Falk Katz, 1680-1755] stood firm on this and Pithche Teshuva [Rabbi Abraham Zvi Hirsch Eisenstadt, 1812-1868] *Siman* 106 brings....that we are not particular even for a blessing instituted by the sages and if so, *all the more so for Simanim* [signs] *of blessing which were customised a great deal of time after the Geonim* for in the days of Tosafoth and the Rosh [Rabbenu Asher

ben Jehiel c1250 – 1328, both primary Medieval commentators on the Talmud] *there was no such custom* [of a wedding to be held under the heavens] since in the Tosafoth and the Rosh, Tractate *Sukka*, Folio 25, they write that *only on occasion*, even in a city square - when the people are numerous and unable to enter the house – [only then] we may bless the wedding benedictions. And it is an astonishment on the Chatham Sofer for writing that the Tosafists [1100-1328] had this custom [of outdoor weddings] and perhaps his intention was for their disciples’ students. And so, *one should not prohibit holding* [a wedding] *in a synagogue* because the gentiles have their weddings in their house of prayer because this is not like them, as this is our synagogue and the main services [held in the synagogue] prove this [that it is no imitation of gentiles]. As we have seen, the *kadmonim* [great sages, lit. ‘ancients’] *held their main wedding solemnisations in a synagogue* i.e. a *Chupah* with blessings on the *bimah* [elevated reading desk] as the Chatham Sofer himself brings. All in all, even according to the Chatham Sofer there is no prohibition for the Rabbi to arrange a wedding with a *Chupah* in a synagogue. *Only in his time, in his location* where there was a slight concern of Reform he mentioned only a withholding of blessing on the bridegroom and bride and parents. *And in our times this does not apply* and so the rabbi is obligated to go and arrange the marriage for he is obligated from the side of his obligations and on the side of overseeing it is done according to Law. And [attendance] even for [weddings of] relatives and friends there is no prohibition and no saintly conduct not to go. From your friend, Moshe Feinstein.¹⁰

Rabbi Feinstein’s response renders nugatory the notion that a contemporary synagogue wedding conducted with people with no reformist predilections is included in the excoriation of the Chatham Sofer. Rather, as he makes clear, it was a measure elicited due to the extreme exigency facing the Chatham Sofer with volatile and heretical reformists and was applicable “*only in his time, in his location.*”

Other Key Responsa on Synagogal Weddings

Another key responsum of Rabbi Hirsch on the subject is addressed to Rabbi Aaron HaLevy Green, who had been approached by congregants desirous of having their wedding

in the synagogue.¹¹ The Jews were being mocked by the gentiles when they had their weddings outdoors; moreover the streets were unsanitary. Rabbi Green was loath to sanction the request. Community tension was running exceedingly high and so he contacted Rabbi Hirsch, to deliver a halachic ruling. Rabbi Hirsch declared, “according to my humble opinion *there is not a trace of prohibition* in it, rather, on the contrary, *it is beautiful and fitting to bless* [i.e. pronounce] the ‘Who createth man’ *benediction in the House of the Creator of man*. For surely the holding of a *Chupah* in the synagogue is an extremely old custom of our ancient [sages], the genii [*Geonim*, 589-1038] of old...”

Rabbi Hirsch also quoted from the Maharil (*Hilchoth Nisuin*, Laws of Marriage, *Siman* 3):

And this is the wording of the Maharil in the laws of marriage: “...and they bring the bride with musical instruments until the entrance of the synagogue and she waits there until the Rabbi walks the bridegroom to the *Almemar* [elevated reading desk] of the synagogue etc. And afterwards the Rabbi goes, and important personages with him and brings the bride. And the Rabbi would hold [i.e. take] her by her clothes and walk her and stand her to the right of the bridegroom etc. and he would stand beyond them to the north and their faces [were turned] to the south and the mother of the bridegroom and of the bride would walk and stand next to her on the *Almemar* at the time of the blessing, or other relatives in [their] place.” Until here [I quote] his words. And the author of the *Kerem Shlomo* [published Pressburg, 1840] of blessed memory¹² (*Even HaEzer*, *Siman* 61) definitely did not see the actual words of the Maharil and so he took out [i.e. mistook] the intent of his words and the words of the Beth Shmuel¹³ [Samuel ben Uri Shraga Phoebus, 1650-?, *Siman* 30, *Se’if Katan* 9] to a different meaning, and with [begging] the pardon of his honour he erred. And so is the testimony of the Rivash¹⁴ *Siman* 206 in its place [supporting the notion of synagogue weddings] and so I have seen in holy congregations in Germany [*Ashkenaz*] and so I have conducted [lit. been accustomed] in my days.

Rabbi Hirsch then explains how the *Kerem Shlomo* sought to prove from a *Tosafot* in *Kiddushin* Folio 52b that it is not correct to marry in a synagogue; the matter appeared otherwise to Rabbi Hirsch – indeed, this

particular source and others across the Talmud proved that there would be no issue with conducting a wedding even in the Temple *Azara* [part of the Temple precincts]. He also clearly illustrates the way the *halachic* authority Beth Shmuel (*Siman* 30 *Seif Katan* 9) regards the synagogue as a typical venue to have a wedding. Rabbi Hirsch concludes his convincing argument thus:

[T]herefore it appears to me that it is definitely a correct *minhag*, a *minhag* of our ancients [*kadmonim*] to hold a *Chupah* in a synagogue....We should be an iron pillar and copper wall against all the transgressors in the people when there is truly an issue of sin and destruction of religion. However, with any matter where there is no trace of prohibition we should be as flexible as a reed and not stiffen our necks and then also to our reprimanding on sin...they will incline an ear...and if the sons and daughters of his congregation wish to be blessed in the synagogue, then bless the covenant of their youth with a desirable heart and you will reach blessings and fullness of happiness from the G-d of Peace.

The Situation Today

The worry about emulating the gentiles in synagogue service was not unfounded. In the commentary to the *Authorised Daily Prayer Book of the British Empire* (1946 edition) appears the following:

The Marriage Service proper is usually preceded by a special prayer offered by the minister or by a brief address on the sacredness of the occasion and the solemn duties of Holy Wedlock. The readiness of the bridegroom and bride to assume those duties is sufficiently indicated by their presence for the marriage ceremony. Still, there are those who desire verbally to express their consent, and their acceptance of the undertaking set forth in the *Kesubah*. To them the minister may put the following questions, either before or after his address:

Minister: “You (A) and (B) are about to be wedded according to the Law of Moses and Israel. Will you (A) take this woman (B) to be your wedded wife? Will you be a true and faithful husband unto her? Will you protect and support her? Will you love, honour and cherish her?”

Bridegroom: I will.

Minister: Will you (B) take this man (A) to be your wedded husband? Will you be a true and faithful wife unto him?

Will you love, honour and cherish him?"
Bride: I will.¹⁵

Sceptics will almost hear the bells of Westminster Abbey chiming in the background of these marriage vows, which clearly did not carry the full support of even the Chief Rabbi who authored them, and who regarded them as superfluous. They will be incensed at how, despite the fact (as averred by the British Chief Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz, 1872-1946)¹⁶ that Christians plagiarised virtually all of the principal concepts of marriage from Judaism, peripheral elements in the Jewish faith wanted to introduced certain suspiciously church-like customs into wedding services. Nonetheless, it may be noted that by and large, coating every aspect of the United Synagogue in severe Anglicisation was a factor historians held pivotal in ensuring that 75% of British Jewry remained, nominally at least, within an Orthodox synagogal framework. As Sharman Kadish put it, "Adlerian Orthodoxy meant traditional Jewish content dressed up in English packaging: top hats and dog collars and canonicals worn by clergy, professional cantors leading choral services in an aesthetically pleasing environment. 'Decorum' in the synagogue was calculated to appeal to English-born Jews. The recipe was effective; it staved off the inroads of Reform...until well into the 20th Century."¹⁷

All the reasons to continue synagogue weddings as offered by the great Rabbi S R Hirsch would appear to be in *halachic* quandary should certain conditions not be met. The first condition that would have to be imposed to enable *halachically* compatible synagogal weddings would be that the bridegroom and bride may not kiss or hug at all in the synagogue. Chief Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits (1921-1999) insisted upon this in synagogues under his jurisdiction: "...I have always endeavoured to prevail on young couples after I solemnised their marriage to leave the show of their affections until they met privately following the ceremony. Only one expression of love belongs in the synagogue!"¹⁸ Rabbi Jakobovits was himself married in Paris' Rue de Cadet Synagogue (that of his father-in-law Rabbi Elie Munk, 1900-1981), clad in morning dress and top-hat and *seated* beneath his wedding canopy in the synagogue as per Parisian custom.¹⁹

Rabbi Hirsch introduced the ancient custom of holding synagogal weddings in the Jewish community of Moravia which he served, and he also had the Rabbi address the newlyweds under the *Chupah*, a custom he continued in Frankfurt. To this day the *Authorised Daily Prayer Book of the British Commonwealth of Nations* indicates that the Rabbi is to deliver a 'Prayer or Address' to the couple during the

marriage service. It is vital to note, however, that apart from the accompaniers of the bride or bridegroom, no women in Rabbi Hirsch's congregation were allowed on the ground floor; the women viewed the ceremony from the well-placed women's gallery. Indeed, on one occasion in Nikolsburg, in the middle of Rabbi Hirsch's address under the *Chupah*, a group of women entered the men's section of the synagogue, whereupon he interrupted his speech and insisted that they leave immediately.²⁰

Hence, the second proviso for a synagogue wedding would be that the men and women (apart from those accompaniers of the bride and groom) are separated during the service and do not embrace (or similar) at any point. Indeed, even in Great Britain's exceedingly anglicised synagogues, including Western Marble Arch, New West End (London) and Higher Crumpsall (Manchester), the men and women sit apart during the marriage service. Photographs from the Great Synagogue of Johannesburg indicate that for gatherings convened for purposes other than a wedding, the guests followed the separate custom as practiced in England.²¹ It is a most regrettable fact that in South Africa to this day all guests at the wedding service sit completely mixed and emotional embracing of men and women - including married to unmarried individuals - takes place, thereby contravening *halacha*. It would be relatively simple for the present South African Chief Rabbi and Beth Din to shore up Orthodox practice by following the institution upheld in Great Britain, for many years.

Another factor worthy of cogitation is whether Lithuanian Jews, whose ancestors did not have the custom of synagogal weddings, are obliged to have an outdoor wedding. Nonetheless, several contemporary synagogues have overcome the never prohibitive issue of the wedding taking place "beneath the heavens" altogether. In Budapest a *Chabad* Rabbi installed a roof that opens within the synagogue to fulfil this extra opinion for directing the service. The colossal Jerusalem Great Synagogue has installed a similar device and weddings are held in the synagogue and beneath the sky to accommodate having the solemnisation underneath *kipath hashemayim* - the canopy of the heavens.

This article has demonstrated that those synagogues upholding the custom of a synagogue wedding, even without the skylight device, are certainly not engaging in what some misinformed individuals may regard as an "apotheosis of an anachronism". Indeed, we have extensively documented the ineluctable fact that the custom is a rabbinic tradition that dates back to the medieval period. Given that the question involves following one's *minhag*, if all *halachic* requirements are met it is

incontrovertible that synagogal weddings will be on the scene not only in German communities but in Great Britain and countries once part of its extensive Empire for the foreseeable future.

- *The author would like to thank Jewish Heritage UK's director, Dr Sharman Kadish, with whom he has worked on heritage matters in Britain, for reviewing and making helpful suggestions regarding this article.*

NOTES

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- 6 Yitzchak Isaac Halevy Herzog, Chief Rabbi, *Pesakim Uktavim - Responsa of Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Halevy Herzog*, Jerusalem, Mossad HaRav Kook, 1996, p495.
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- 12 Rabbi Shlomo Hess of Dreznitz.
- 13 Incidentally, his daughter married Rabbi Aaron Hart (1670-1756), Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and spiritual leader to the London Great Synagogue.
- 14 Rabbi Isaac bar Sheshet, 1326-1408.
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- 20 Eliyahu Meir Klugman, *Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch - Autobiography*, 3rd edition, New York, Artscroll-Mesorah Publications, 1998, p103.
- 21 A photograph of what appears to be the King David School 'Bnot Mitzva' service held at the Great Synagogue in Wolmarans Street, Johannesburg, testifies to this fact. See photograph in *Celebrating Great Park, Great Park 100, 1913-2013*, dir. Andy Spitz, Johannesburg, Left-Eye Productions, 2013, [DVD].



Exploring the outdoors since 1933.



CAPE TOWN WOMAN NOMINATES RIGHTEOUS GENTILES

*

Gwynne Schrire

And so we must know these good people who helped Jews during the Holocaust.
We must learn from them, and in gratitude and hope, we must remember them.
(Elie Wiesel)

On 21 July 2014, some 400 Jews assembled on the Greek island of Rhodes for a week-long programme to commemorate the deportation to Auschwitz of almost their entire centuries-old community seventy years before. They came from all over the world, from Caracas to Cancun, Seattle to Sydney, Hong Kong to Cape Town.¹ The Chanukah 2014 issue of *Jewish Affairs* has articles by Zmira Cohen and Maurice Turiel describing their experiences at the memorial ceremonies.² Among those who attended were the Kantor family.

Lina Kantor, neé Amato, was born on Rhodes, where her father was the manager of the Bank Solomon Alhadeff et Fils, and her mother was a musician. When the German occupiers detained the Jews prior to their deportation, her parents arranged for their Italian schoolteacher friends, Bianca and Girolamo Sotgiu, to take in eight-year old Lina. She was smuggled into their home one night without the knowledge of their neighbours, to be hidden there for her safety.

Lina remembers arriving at the Sotgiu home, a frightened little girl, and being handed the Sotgius' toddler to hold in order to distract her from an environment of drama and tension. Bianca sent Lina to the cathedral every day, where their priest familiarised Lina with the service and taught her how to pray in Latin and make the sign of the cross.

Fortunately, Lina's family escaped deportation and she was soon able to return to them since - unlike the rest of their family - her grandmother had refused to take Italian citizenship and had retained her Turkish nationality. This had saved them when the Turkish consul, Selahattin Ülkümen, took all the Turkish Jews under his protection. In all, 39 Jews from Rhodes and 13 from Kos owed their lives to his intervention.³

Ülkümen had gone to the German

commanding officer, General von Kleeman, and demanded the release of the Jews, not only those with Turkish citizenship but their spouses and relatives as well, even though many of the latter were Italian and Greek citizens. He insisted that, according to Turkish law, spouses of Turkish citizens were considered to be citizens themselves.⁴ No such law existed - he had invented it to save more Jews.⁵

Ülkümen recalled, "The German commander said that, according to Nazi laws, all Jews are Jews and had to go to concentration camps. I objected. I said that, under Turkish law, there is no difference between whether a citizen was Jewish, Christian or Muslim. I said that I would advise my government if he didn't release the Jewish Turks, and that it would cause an international incident. Then he agreed."⁶

While von Kleeman, reluctantly, released the Jews, and they remained under Ülkümen's protection so that Lina could return home, he maintained them under stressful conditions of constant harassment, including having to report daily to the Gestapo. All the remaining Jews on the island, some 1700, were deported to Auschwitz, where 90% were murdered.

In retaliation for Ülkümen's interference, two German planes bombed the Turkish Consulate building, seriously injuring Ülkümen's 28-year-old pregnant wife, Mihrinissa, and killing two consular employees. Mihrinissa died from her injuries a week after giving birth to the couple's son, Mehmet. Soon after, in August 1944, Ülkümen was deported to Piraeus on mainland Greece, and spent the remainder of the war there in confinement. He was released after the German surrender on 8 May 1945 and returned to Turkey. He died in Istanbul on 7 July 2003⁷ after a long diplomatic career.

Mehmet followed in his father's footsteps, eventually becoming Chief of Protocol at the UN in Geneva. He was brought to Cape Town in 2004 to open the exhibition, 'Visas for Life: The Righteous and Honourable Diplomats', arranged by the CT Holocaust Centre to pay tribute to foreign-service officers of various countries who had helped save Jews during the Holocaust.⁸ In his honour, the Sephardi

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community held a cocktail party. There, Mehmet added a further tragic note to the story, telling Lina that his maternal grandmother committed suicide on learning of her daughter's death and that he had been sent to Istanbul to be brought up by his paternal grandmother.⁹

Mehmet also recounted his father telling him that saving the Jews was not just the right thing, but the only possible thing he could do: "He always used to say, 'We Muslims are like Jews. We share the same father and the same God. We also share the same belief, which as we know is deeply rooted in Jewish teaching, that he who saves a single life saves a whole world.'"¹⁰

In 1989, Yad Vashem decided to honour Selahattin Ülkümen as a Righteous Gentile. This was part of an international project that it had begun in 1963 to pay tribute to those, called "The Righteous among the Nations", who had risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. Unlike the majority of their neighbours and colleagues, who had been bystanders, collaborators or perpetrators, these individuals had been prepared to help the victims despite the serious consequences to themselves that might result. Ülkümen's name was inscribed at the memorial and a tree planted in his honour at the 'Path of the Righteous'. A postage stamp honouring him was issued by Israel the following year. In 2001, Turkey granted Ülkümen her highest honour, the Supreme Service Medal, and also issued a postage stamp depicting him.

While in Rhodes last year, Lina's son Gary made a most surprising find on the internet. It turned out that in 2002 Bianca Sotgiu had published, in her native Italian, a book called *Da Rodi a Tavolara* (From Rhodes to Tavolara). One chapter, titled the 'Deportation of the Jews', was available to download. Sitting in a café in the heart of the Juderia, Lina read the chapter, translating sentence by sentence to the family, Bianca's own account of the rescue of the small group of Rhodesli Jews with Turkish citizenship.

Bianca described how her husband provided the Amato family with news of the war. Just before curfew one night, Albert Amato came to see them. All Jews had been ordered to register for transport to a nearby island. That "nearby island", unknown to them, was to be Auschwitz. Clearly Albert had a good sense of their likely fate. With tears in his eyes, he asked them to hide and protect Lina. The Amatos had recently lost a baby boy. The Sotgius agreed to take Lina.

Bianca and Girolamo also put into action attempts to assist other Jews. Bianca, heavily pregnant, cycled 10 km to the Consul Ülkümen, to beg him to protect any Jews with Turkish citizenship. "You are like God in what you are able to decide", she told him. The Consul

said he would think about it and asked her to return the following evening. The next day, Bianca returned to the consulate, where this time Ülkümen saw her immediately and told her that he had completed the paperwork to take the Turkish Jews under his protection.

Gary got in touch with the publisher, who gave him the contact details of the Sotgiu children in Italy. Lina phoned - and the Sotgius were delighted to establish contact and sent her a copy of their mother's book. They have been communicating by Skype ever since. Lina is treated like family in this warm, new-found relationship.¹¹

Gary also contacted Marco Clementi, a historian who attended the conference on the Holocaust in the Aegean that ran concurrently with the commemorative events on Rhodes. Clementi had been responsible for finally opening the locked door leading to the Rhodes Island Police Archives. Unopened for nearly seventy years, it revealed a room with one crumbling wall. Everything underneath had been destroyed, but along the other walls were 90 000 documents in bookcases, boxes and brown folders labelled in blue, yellow and red pencil - the fruits of a long forgotten, zealous bureaucracy. Among them was a five-columned, six-page list of Rhodes Island Jews, which the Washington Holocaust Museum is now cataloguing and digitizing.¹²

There, Clementi found a file in Lina Amato's name. It contained a document certifying Lina's adoption by Bianca and Girolamo Sotgiu. The Sotgius had taken the precaution of backdating the document to 1942, when they married - instead of the actual date in 1944, when they agreed to hide Lina just before the deportation of the Jews.

Part of Lina's story is also told by Martin Gilbert¹³ in his book, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust*. He received the information from Lina's father, in a letter dated 12 December 1987.

Gilbert records the story like this:

An Italian teacher from Sardinia, Girolamo Sotgiu, did what he could to help the Jews when deportation was ordered.

He started by disguising himself as a porter, Albert Amato recalled, "in order to bring some food and some comfort (with the news that there had been an attempt to kill Hitler) to the men already herded together. Secondly he told my wife that our little daughter Lina, then aged eight years old, should not go to the concentration point and he risked his life taking her and hiding her with him. Thirdly he managed to find a horse carriage (the island was under blockade and there was no petrol for the cars, nor feed for the horses), and took my mother to interview the Turkish Consul in

a nearby village where the consulate had been transferred, owing to the bombing of the port and the town by the Allies.”

The Turkish Consul, Selahattin Ülkümen provided protective documents in all, for fifty two Jews on Rhodes (and nearby Kos) who had been born on the islands before 1912, when they were part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. All fifty-two were saved. After the war, Giralamo Sotgiu returned to his native Sardinia.

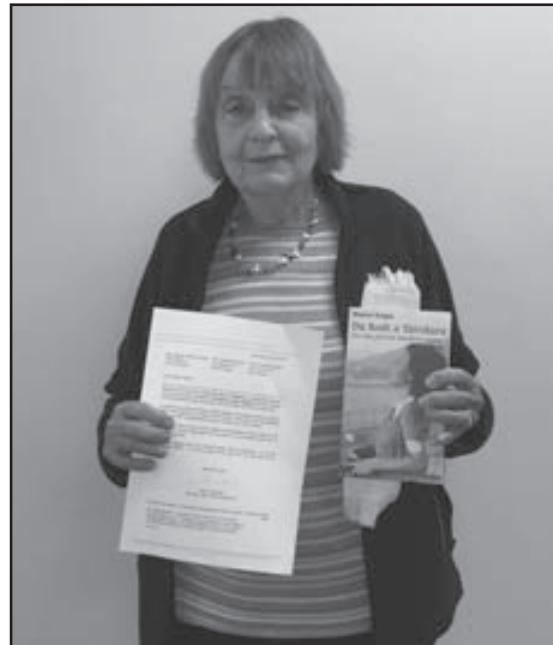
As with all memories of the same event recorded by different people, the details are the same, only different, because they are reflected through different eyes. In her autobiography, Bianca recalls cycling to the Consul to beg him to save the Jews. In his letter to Martin Gilbert in 1987, Albert credits Girolamo with hiring a horse carriage to take Alberto's mother to the Turkish consul to beg him to save them. He told Lina that Girolamo took her to the consul to ask him to include her son and daughter-in-law under his protection even though they were Italian citizens, which he did. Bianca recalls Albert coming to her husband with tears in his eyes, begging the Sotgius to take Lina. Albert recalls his own wife being begged by Girolamo for the Sotgius to do so. Whichever version is closest to the facts, the Sotgius and/or the Amatos played an unaccredited role in the rescue of the 52 Jews by approaching Consul Ülkümen. The Sotgius were prepared to put their lives in danger in order to rescue Lina.

Armed with this information, the Kantors now approached Yad Vashem to ask them to award the Sotgius with the status of Righteous Gentiles.

The Yad Vashem website observes that in a world of total moral collapse, there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values. These were the Righteous among the Nations. They stand in stark contrast to the mainstream of indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust. Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation.¹⁴ The Sotgius were such people. Yad Vashem describes them as “ordinary human beings, and it is precisely their humanity that touches us and should serve as a model”. The website further explains that the centre has “recognized people from 44 countries and nationalities; there are Christians from all denominations and churches, Muslims and agnostics; men and women of all ages; they come from all walks of life; highly educated people as well as illiterate peasants; public figures as well as people from society's margins; city dwellers and farmers from the remotest corners of Europe; university professors, teachers, physicians, clergy, nuns,

diplomats, simple workers, servants, resistance fighters, policemen, peasants, fishermen, a zoo director, a circus owner, and many more.... Bystanders were the rule, rescuers were the exception. However difficult and frightening, the fact that some found the courage to become rescuers demonstrates that some freedom of choice existed, and that saving Jews was not beyond the capacity of ordinary people throughout occupied Europe. The Righteous among the Nations teach us that every person can make a difference.”¹⁵

Lina has since received a copy of a letter from Yad Vashem – copies of which were sent to the children of the late Giralamo and Bianca Sotgiu, Maria, Antonello and Donatella - informing them that a medal and certificate of honour would be mailed to the Israeli embassy in Rome. The latter would organise a ceremony and reception in their honour, to take place in Cagliari, Sardinia, early in 2016.



Lina Kantor with the letter she received from Yad Vashem acknowledging that they would make her rescuers Righteous Gentiles and the book in Italian written by the rescuers mentioning her.

Lina and her family hope that they will be able to attend the ceremony, which is planned for her birthday month, so that they can thank the Sotgius in person for their lives. As Elie Wiesel has pointed out we must remember in gratitude and hope these good people who helped Jews during the Holocaust and this is what the Kantors are doing.

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- 6 Selahattin Ülkümen - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selahattin_Ülkümen
- 7 Selahattin Ulkumen - Telegraph www.telegraph.co.uk/News/Obituaries He remained in the Turkish diplomatic service for another 34 years, serving in Europe and later as Consul General in Beirut and Cairo, and as Deputy Secretary General of Central Treaty Organisation, aimed at committing Middle Eastern countries to mutual co-operation until he retired aged 65. Some authorities say that he died aged 89, others aged 92
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BY A MIGHTY HAND

✱

D M Scher

Some years ago Rodney Mazinter, vice-chairman of the Zionist Federation, Cape Council, and a frequent contributor to the press in defense of Israel, was attending a conference in Israel on the topic of antisemitism. He happened to sit next to a small, grey-haired lady and remarked that the role of the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was often overlooked as a prime generator of antisemitism. The lady concurred. It turned out that she was Judge Hadassah Ben-Itto, an internationally renowned legal authority, who had served as president of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists. After her retirement in 1991, she had researched and written an authoritative book on the Protocols, entitled, *The Lie That Wouldn't Die – The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Addressing the Cape Town Jewish community in April 2001, Judge Ben-Itto noted that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was a document that had been translated into every known language, even dialects, though never in Hebrew. It continued to be published around the world in millions of copies – “in the 20th Century, in more numbers even than the Bible”. Yet, she added, “we Jews never read it – and therefore never took the trouble to confront it *The Protocols* is indescribable – such a terrible document. And it is convincing!”

The Protocols is purported to be the actual record of secret meetings of an international Jewish government, which conspires to dominate the whole world. It first made its appearance in Western Europe in 1920, brought by refugees from Russia.

Bizarre though it now seems, *The Protocols* was examined seriously by newspapers like *The Times*, accepted by others, such as the *Morning Post* and by Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent*. It was lapped up by swarms of antisemites and crackpots, some of whom were able to do immense harm. Its vicious message

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reached to the highest levels of government. According to Ben-Itto, after her execution the book was found on Tsarina Alexandra of Russia's bedside table, together with *War and Peace* and the Bible!

Norman Cohn, author of *Warrant for Genocide, a study of the Protocols* (1967), stated: “Very many people who were neither demented nor illiterate were convinced that everything that happened in the political, social and economic fields – from minor diplomatic appointments to slumps, revolutions and wars – were ordained by a secret organization of the Jews”.

Fortunately, a series of exposures and court cases effectively destroyed the myth of *The Protocols*. In August 1921 Philip Graves, then correspondent of *The Times* in Constantinople, revealed that it was largely adapted from a pamphlet attacking Napoleon III of France. Published in 1865, it took the form of 25 dialogues between Montesquieu and Machiavelli, the two protagonists discussing how best a ruler might enforce his authority under contemporary circumstances. Montesquieu presented the case for liberalism, Machiavelli the case for cynical despotism. The parallels between Machiavelli's policy and that of Napoleon III were viewed as so explicit that a French lawyer, Maurice Joly, author of the dialogue, was sentenced to 15-months imprisonment.

In the event, the publication fell into the hands of the Russian security police, who had accreditation at the Russian embassy in Paris. They had a special department that invented alleged anti-government plots and forgeries, and it was one of the employees of this organization, Sergei Nilus, who doctored the work of Joly so that it morphed into *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The Russians saw it as a means of whipping up antisemitism, so as to distract its subject peoples from the calamities in their own empire.

In 1933 the Swiss Jewish community, shaken by the wave of antisemitic propaganda then seeping into the country from Germany, began

a long drawn-out legal battle against the Swiss Nazi National Front, which ended, four years later, in the complete collapse of any pretence that *The Protocols* was a genuine document.

Interestingly, around the time of the Berne trial, in a libel action instituted by the Rev. Levy of Port Elizabeth (with the support of the South African Board of Deputies) against three members of the pro-Nazi Greyshirt movement, Judge President Sir Thomas Graham, with Mr. Justice Gutsche concurring, declared on 24 August 1934 *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to be “an impudent forgery, obviously published for the purpose of anti-Jewish propaganda.”

It is against the background of the malicious spread of *The Protocols* that Mazinter has crafted a sweeping novel that crisscrosses the European continent as it closely examines the lives of a cluster of individuals and families.

This novel is ‘faction’ at its best. The author has woven into his text a set of real and fictional characters that blend seamlessly into his narrative. He has superbly recreated the European world of our Jewish people in the first half of the twentieth century – a world of unimaginable hardship and hatred, culminating in the Holocaust.

Central to the novel are the tribulations of the Berg family. Some of their story is based on the experiences of the author’s own family in Lithuania. For South African Jews, this will resonate deeply. Apart from family memories, Mazinter has clearly engaged in a great deal of historical research to buttress his narrative.

The novel begins and ends with *The Protocols*. I have always been struck by how much the Jews have suffered over the centuries

from words – spoken and written. Words can kill. *The Protocols* is a prime example of this.

Writing in *Commentary* in June 1999, the historian Richard Pipes points out that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* “laid the basis for the later Nazi assault against the Jews just as surely as Communist literature targeting the bourgeoisie laid the groundwork for the terror-to-come of Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot, or the anti-Kurd spouting’s of Saddam Hussein’s regime prepared the way for the genocide in the north of Iraq. If conspiracist tracts of this nature cannot be entirely discredited, it is nevertheless of critical importance that they be exposed and denounced. At the very least, one can thereby hope to minimize the damage they are likely to do!!!”

Pipes’ comments – and indeed Mazinter’s novel – have a direct relevance to us in South Africa today. Tuning in to Radio 786, a Muslim community radio in Cape Town, on 29 September 2014, what should this reviewer hear quoted by Magboeba Davids, spokesperson of the Islamic Unity Convention? Why, of course, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*!

The danger is, in truth, ever present.

Summing up, I do not exaggerate when I say that I found this novel extremely engaging – and unsettling. For an excellent ‘feel’ of the European world of our forebears, and for a disturbing look at the destructive power of the Protocols, I recommend this book most strongly.

By a Mighty Hand by Rodney Mazinter is available from the author/publisher in hard copy and on Kindle (Cell: (082) 436-8678; mavrod@iafrica.com).

JAN SMUTS: UNAFRAID OF GREATNESS

✱

Ralph Zulman

In *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of Greatness*, the author Richard Steyn succinctly summarizes the life of his subject as follows:

Jan Smuts was an Afrikaner of extraordinary intellect, versatility and resilience. A scholar, lawyer, guerilla leader, military commander,

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.

philosopher, scientist, political and international statesman, his uniqueness as a human being lay in his deep spirituality, his physical bravery, his love of nature, the Spartan quality of his personal life, and the pleasure he derived from simple things. Like Job, above all, he was a seeker; a lifelong searcher after religious truth and those eternal values that could be applied to politics and other spheres of human endeavor. Like Job, his faith was sorely tested throughout a tumultuous, 80 year-long life marred by personal tragedy, inner struggle and despair, and the bitter enmity of many Afrikaners who had once revered him.

Steyn, a graduate of Stellenbosch University, practiced as a lawyer before switching to journalism. From 1975, he edited the *Natal Witness*, and was editor-in-chief of *The Star* from 1990-95. He served as Standard Bank's Director of Corporate Affairs and Communications from 1986-2001, before returning to writing and book reviewing. *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of Greatness* is divided into two parts: 'Life & Times' (18 Chapters) and 'The Man' (28), in addition to an author's note, prologue, notes, select bibliography, index and numerous photographs.

In a recent tribute, Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC wrote that a proper understanding of Smuts in terms of the political and human rights of black people has to be contrasted with the position that faced Mandela in the latter years of the last century. Smuts chose to "sidestep the problem" while Mandela, in different circumstances, "confronted it head on and was not distracted by other issues". If Smuts "lacked the compassion and forbearance of a Lincoln or a Mandela, his other spiritual intellectual and moral qualities made him an exceptional human being".

This is a man whom the current generation of South Africans has chosen to ignore or forget. The author believes that it is now time to revisit our history through the "life and times of one of our finest sons, of whom Churchill said: 'He did not belong to any single state or nation. He fought for his own country, he thought for the whole world'".

September 11 (or 9/11) was a day of a tragedy in New York. Many years earlier, on 11 September 1950, it was day upon which Smuts died of a heart attack at his home in Irene. He was 80 years old. His passing, as the *Rand Daily Mail* put it, was as "the toppling of an oak tree under which we have sheltered for generations". On hearing the news, the then Prime Minister Dr D F Malan was visibly upset, so much so that that a cabinet minister told a reporter that he had never seen him so affected. The 'Oubaas', who had dominated South Africa's political life for almost half a century, was no more. British Prime Minister Clement Attlee commented, "A light has gone out in the world of free men". A visibly emotional Sir Winston Churchill told parliament that "in all the numerous fields in which he shone – warrior statesman, philosopher, philanthropist- Jan Smuts commands in his majestic career the admiration of all. There is no personal tragedy... in the close of so long and complete a life as this ... we and lovers of freedom and civilization in every land salute his memory".

Not all South Africans remembered the *Oubaas* with as much affection. *Die Transvaaler* wrote: "The outstanding tragedy was that he stood entirely apart from the struggle and emergence

of his own people". It was, however, obliged to concede that he served the world "with distinction".

The *Rand Daily Mail* commented editorially that that no one had been invited to speak on national radio on behalf of South Africa's million 8 'natives'.

Steyn writes that Smuts and Mandela were two men who "left deep footprints on the sands of time." Furthermore, "Mandela has rightly been canonized for seizing the opportunity to bring South Africans of all races together for the first time in his country's history. But Jan Smuts, of an earlier time and in different circumstances, also deserves an honored place in our pantheon of heroes."

Jan Christiaan Smuts was born on 24 May 1870 on the farm Bovenplaas, Riebeck West. A frail and sickly child, he grew up tending sheep and cattle and had no formal schooling until he was twelve. He was, "A solitary contemplative soul who much preferred reading his books to playing games with his fellows, when he went home for the holidays, his parents often found him wandering around the farm, lost in contemplation."

Smuts spent only four years at school instead of the usual seven and passed out second in the Colony's standard eight examinations in 1886 at the age of 16. He then went to Stellenbosch to matriculate (which he did with distinction) and thereafter to study for a degree at the town's Victoria College. There, he was painfully shy and kept away from other students, who regarded him as aloof. He began courting the girl he was eventually to marry, Sybilla Margaretha Krige (better known as Isie). He started to show an interest in politics and Afrikaner unity, and commended Rhodes by echoing his views on the need for a unified Africa.

After graduating, Smuts was awarded the Ebdon scholarship to Cambridge. It was probably at Cambridge that he became inspired by the notion of an Afrikaner-led empire in southern Africa stretching from Table Bay to the Zambesi. His achievements in the law finals were spectacular. He became the first person at Cambridge to take the parts of the Law Tripos in the same year and was placed first with distinction in each.

In June 1895, Smuts returned home to find a faithful and welcoming Isie on the quayside to meet him. Her parents were unable to pay for her medical studies and she was forced to take a lowly paid job as a country school teacher. It was some time before her impecunious husband-to-be was earning enough money for them to marry (which they did in 1897).

Smuts settled in Cape Town, where he set up practice as barrister but, despite his "stellar reputation", he found briefs hard to come by. According to his biographer FS Crafford, the

reason for this was his austere personality.

Smuts was fervently nationalistic. Though sympathetic to the ideals of the Transvalers, however, he regarded Paul Kruger as "narrow-minded and inward looking and too disposed to employ Hollanders instead of Afrikaners." Rhodes, by contrast, offered "an inspiring vision of a greater, united nation of Afrikaners". Smuts was warned by his fellow Afrikaners that Rhodes was not to be trusted. The Jameson Raid laid bare Rhodes's 'machinations', and Smuts found himself to be in the 'quick-sands'. He then joined John X Merriman on an anti-Rhodes platform, where the two denounced the "Englishman's duplicity." Thereafter, he renounced his British citizenship and "threw in his lot with his fellow Afrikaners in the north".

At the young age of 28, Smuts was appointed as Transvaal's Attorney General and he and Isie moved to Pretoria. He drew extremely close to Kruger; the two men were "hardly different in character." Despite discussions with Milner, who had been sent to South Africa in 1897 in the aftermath of the Jameson Raid, "To universal astonishment - war broke out between the two Boer Republics and the 'all-powerful British Empire.'" The war lasted three years, and although eventually defeated, the Boers "[captured] the imagination of the watching world" and inflicted "lasting damage on British imperial prestige and self-confidence." Chapters 4 to 6 (entitled 'The Boer Strategist', 'Fighting the British' and 'Aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War') deal with Smuts' role in the war.

Smuts was, by common consent, the architect and designer of the Union of South Africa, with his "painstaking handiwork" in this regard coming together on 31 May 1910, shortly after his fortieth birthday. There was no man alive that he admired more than Prime Minister Louis Botha, his fellow Boer leader, although their characters were different in every respect. Smuts was much more dominant in parliament than Botha. In 1915, the first five-year term of the Union Parliament came to an end. That year's election was a bitter affair, which left its mark on him.

The atmosphere of peace and goodwill which accompanied the birth of Union was short-lived. Among the issues was the 'Indian question' and strikes. Smuts succeeded in putting down a rebellion by miners, and earned much praise for his successful role in the defeat of Germany in German South West Africa in 1914/5. Within a month of his arrival in Mombasa, he was able to transform the military situation in German East Africa, and by January 1917, he had accomplished what the British government wanted him to do there. Smuts, like Churchill believed that the way to make history was to write it oneself. He declared that "... South Africa, instead

of being a small puny country, gnawing at its own entrails, will have a larger freedom and a better life and will become the great country which is its destiny."

Smuts was given a "rapturous reception" in London. In 1918, he was made a Privy Councilor and Companion of Honour by the King and presided over an Irish Convention (he also, as a private citizen under the pseudonym 'Mr Smith', met with the Sinn Fein leadership). With the war at an end, he resigned from the British war cabinet and went to Paris to represent South Africa at the Peace Conference. The Conference eventually resolved, in terms of a formula devised by Smuts, to separate the territories to be assigned to the League of Nations into 'A', 'B' and 'C' mandates. South West Africa fell into category 'C' and was entrusted to South Africa on terms which amounted to virtual annexation. In 1921, he attended the Imperial Conference, where his most "pressing purpose" was to settle the status of the Dominions.

On 27 August 1919, Louis Botha died, and Smuts, at the age of 49, became South Africa's new prime minister. In early March 1920, South Africa held another general election, and Smuts' South African Party government was re-elected with a slender majority. Smuts called another general election in 1921, securing what the UK hailed as a "resounding victory". The victory was, however, a 'pyrrhic' one.

The forcible end to a mining strike in 1920, in which eleven African miners were killed and 120 injured, was "a prelude to even greater conflict." In late 1921, the Chamber of Mines announced plans to do away with the colour-bar in semi-skilled jobs. The following year, mobilizing a 20 000-strong security force, Smuts saved the country from anarchy around the Reef as strikers picketed mines and threatened 'scabs'. The strikers were driven relentlessly from their strongholds. 43 members of the army, 21 policemen and 81 civilians lost their lives in the fighting and 650 civilians were injured. Around this time, Smuts made an attempt to draw Rhodesia into the Union as a fifth province but failed, with white Rhodesians voting against it by a narrow margin of 2785 votes.

In 1923, Smuts attended what was to be his last Imperial Conference. At home, without consulting his cabinet or party, he resigned and called a general election. The SAP was badly beaten and Smuts lost his seat. At the age of 54, he found himself to be a prophet without honour in his own country, "even in his own Transvaal bailiwick". He had been prime minister for a little over five years.

Although politically frustrating, the years 1924-1933 were some of the most "fulfilling and productive of Smuts' life." He found time to read, think and write, completing his book,

Holism and Evolution. Albert Einstein, who read it, wrote that there were “two mental constructs that would direct human thinking in the next millennium: his own theory of relativity and Smuts’ theory of relativity”. (By contrast former United Party member Dr Bernard Friedman, among others, was “trenchant in his criticism of Smuts as a political leader and scornful of his holistic philosophy.”) In 1929, disillusioned at the thought of having to spend another five years on the opposition benches, Smuts took refuge in solitary walking, plant collecting and reading and - as always - thinking. His favorite hobby was the study of botany. According to Dr Poole Evans, he was the first political leader to discover the vital role that grasses play in the life of a country.

Smuts was much in demand as a public speaker across the United Kingdom and North America. Showered with academic and civic honours, he embarked, in 1930, on a tour of America and Canada, giving 26 addresses in 18 days in support of the Jewish cause in Palestine and the embattled League of Nations. He left for home “exhausted but happy”. On board ship he learned “to his consternation that the government had introduced a Quota Bill to restrict Jewish immigration to South Africa; worse still, his entire SAP caucus, with the exception of five Jewish members and two others had supported the Second Reading”. Arriving at Parliament during the Third Reading, an infuriated Smuts took his party to task so effectively that during the final division of the Bill, every SAP MP voted against it. Government members taunted him for being the “King of the Jews” (see also Crafford - *Jan Smuts*, p314). While the Quota Bill was being fought, Smuts received what he regarded as the greatest honour in his life - an invitation to preside over the Centenary Meeting in London of the Association for the Advancement of Science in September 1931.

Soon after the 1929 election, economic depression swept South Africa and the rest of the world. Smuts took office under J B M Hertzog as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice. The Hertzog-Smuts coalition “held together for six years, largely because of Smuts’ determination to keep Afrikaners and English South Africans together in the common interest”. Addressing the House of Assembly on 4 September 1939, Hertzog claimed that in going to war, Germany was “only trying to recover from the humiliation of Versailles” and that therefore, South Africa should “remain neutral unless the Union’s interests were directly threatened.” Smuts’ understanding of world affairs, by contrast, brought home to him that neutrality was never going to be an option for South Africa. He told the house that Hitler was intent on world domination. Hertzog’s motion that South Africa remain

neutral was defeated 80-67, whereupon he resigned and Smuts was called upon to form a new government. This he did “without great enthusiasm”. Aged nearly 70, he was prime minister of South Africa once again.

The nation was divided. Oswald Pirow, Hertzog’s Minister of Defence, was pro-Nazi, and many die-hards opposed to the war joined him or the more militant Ossewa Brandwag. In 1940, Hertzog and Malan formed a new *Herenigde Nasionale Party/ Volksparty*. The 1943 election became a battle between Smuts and Malan, Herzog having died earlier. The election of 110 pro-war MPs against 43 for the anti-war parties gave Smuts “his most emphatic mandate ever”. In 1945, Smuts signed the UN Charter in San Francisco. The visit in 1947 of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth and their two daughters offered him “a welcome distraction from his domestic difficulties”.

Mustering as much energy as he could, Smuts approached the general election in May 1948 over confidently. The result came as “a stunning shock to the Nationalists as much as to Smuts himself”. He lost his seat in Standerton, by 224 votes. Malan came to power with less than 40 percent of the total vote. Smuts determined to “soldier on.”

Smuts loved the land and acquired several farms. Doornkloof, at Irene on the outskirts of Pretoria he treasured most. It was an “anchorage, a refuge where he could set aside his onerous political burdens and do what he loved best - commune with nature.” There, he led a patriarchal Afrikaner life. The house was completely unmodernised and “always gloriously untidy”. On 11 September 1950, accompanied by Isie, “he went on his last drive.” After supper that evening, while being helped into bed by his daughters, he “slumped forward and lost consciousness.”

The offer by the Malan government of a state funeral was declined in favor of a military ceremony. A bilingual funeral service was conducted.

Smuts’ defining characteristic was his intellect. He possessed “not only a daunting intelligence but a photographic memory”. Another of his outstanding qualities was his physical courage. In the author’s opinion, “whatever present-day critics of Smuts, with the benefit of hindsight, might say of him, both friend and foe agreed that his readiness to bear the burden of leadership throughout his long life, despite soul-tormenting personal challenges and setbacks, was simply astonishing. [He] never lost the desire or determination to be of service to his country.”

Spirituality (his proficiency in Greek enabled him to read the New Testament in its original form) was the element of Smut’s character that distinguished him from most of his peers. As with his politics, his religious

beliefs gave rise to public controversy and drew criticism from his enemies. He never yielded to despair. Regarding the opposite sex, he once confessed that he had a weakness for women, not in “the sexual sense but from some inner affinity and appeal”.

Smuts’s own instincts were paternalistic and pragmatic. He foresaw that a future South Africa faced two fundamental problems: white disunity and a white policy towards other races. A practical compromise on race was always to elude him.

Smuts had a long-lasting friendship with Chaim Weitzman, a founder and first president of Israel, and he had been a driving force behind the Balfour Declaration of 1917. In a letter to Weitzman in 1944, Smuts commiserated with him over the inability of the Jews to establish their homeland, saying that Arab pressure was forcing the British government to move slowly. In May 1947, he responded to a “sad letter” from Weitzman that much as he (Smuts) longed for an undivided Palestine, partition seemed to be the only way out. On the eve of his election defeat in 1948, Smuts announced South Africa’s recognition of the

state of Israel – ensuring that it was among the first countries to do so. Much against his family’s wishes, the ailing Smuts journeyed to London by air to speak at a dinner in honour of Weitzman and launch an appeal for funds to plant a forest in Israel to be named after him. He paid tribute to Weitzman and his achievement of leading his people back to their ancient home, something which bore comparison to Moses.

Steyn fittingly concludes his book as follows: “While many of his countrymen derided him for being an Englishman at heart, in Britain and around the world, General Smuts was revered for being a true and patriotic Afrikaner - the finest example of his tribe.”

Jan Smuts: Unafraid of Greatness provides a detailed, interesting and insightful overview of the life of a man who played so vital part in the history of South Africa. It is highly recommended for all those interested in learning more about this remarkable individual.

Jan Smuts: Unafraid of Greatness by Richard Steyn, Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg & Cape Town, 2015.

SABA RABA

(Chief Rabbi Bernard Moses Casper z.tl)

*

Isaac Reznik

How often does one come across a biography of a father co-written in perfect harmony over a period of four years by a sister and brother? The aim of the two children of Rabbi Bernard Moses Casper, Batya and Lionel, is to capture and record some of the many accounts of this great man, one whose memory shines as a beacon of light to guide future generations.

I had the pleasure and privilege of being a very close friend of the late B M Casper z.tl, from the very first day he arrived in South Africa to take up his position as Chief Rabbi. He was one of my closest mentors. Described by Menachem Begin as “one of the greatest Jewish leaders of our times”, Rabbi Casper’s selflessness, love of the Divine and integrity, discipline and tolerance was an inspiration to all who knew him. Rabbi Casper never doubted the efficacy of prayer and the enormous potential for good to overcome evil. He had the strength to forgive and move forward, and the belief that truth and honesty will prevail.

As their *Abba*, Rabbi Casper was the

purveyor of good tidings to his children and to his grandchildren, whom he adored, he was *Saba*. To his great-grandchildren, who did not come in time to call him so directly, he is *Saba Raba*.

More than a quarter of a century has passed since Rabbi Casper’s passing, and many of those who knew him are no longer with us. In their letters of sympathy on his sudden death, such people revered his humility, his stately and regal presence and spirituality, piety, compassion and clarity of purpose. They further record his sense of right and wrong, optimism (both political and personal), outstanding scholarship, powerful oratory and his wish always to be heard in agreement with his mentors and not in dissenting from them. These and other aspects of Rabbi Bernard Moses Casper are captured in this new book on his life and personality.

Saba Raba is published privately. For further information, contact the reviewer at isaacrez@yebo.co.za.

JEWIS AND WORDS

*

Beverley May

Jews and Words is described by the authors, Amos Oz and Fania Oz-Salzberger, as a “speculative, raw, and occasionally playful attempt to say something a bit new on a topic of immense pedigree.” They describe themselves as secular Jewish Israelis and “a father and a daughter. One is a writer and literary scholar, the other a historian. We have discussed and disputed topics relevant to this book ever since one of us was about three years old.”

Carefully crafted, this book will challenge and delight. Natasha Lehrer’s review (*Jewish Chronicle* - UK) described it as a “provocative, playful, speculative journey thought the rich, centuries-old heritage of Jewish literature. Father and daughter Amos Oz and Fania Oz-Salzberger propose a ‘textline’ rather than a bloodline – a notion of Jewish lineage that is etched not in blood but in words.”

Irreverent reverence is a theme that runs through the book: “Argumentativeness and humor breed that other Jewish trait, irreverence. Rather peculiarly for a people of staunch faith, and certainly untypical of other monotheistic religions, Jewish chutzpah targets prophet and rabbi, judge and king, gentile and coreligionist. Its earliest recorded target was the Almighty himself.”

A national survey of the South African Jewish community (*Shirley Bruk, Milton Shain – Kaplan Centre, 2005*) reported that 12% of all adult South African Jews were secular and that 23% believed that the Torah is an ancient book of history and moral precepts recorded by man. Empirical evidence suggests that this demographic falls, to some extent, outside of the organised South African Jewish community and perhaps even outside of our consciousness.

This book is a reminder that secular Judaism falls squarely within the Broad Tent.

Discussions on the topic include the following: “Secularism is not permissiveness, nor is it lawless chaos. It does not reject tradition, and it does not turn its back on culture, its impact and its successes” (quote from *The Courage to Be Secular* by Yizhar Smilansky, pseudonym – Sameach Yizhar).

Beverley May is deputy-chairperson of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (Western Cape). She has an MBA from the University of Cape Town, specializing in economics and finance, and has been running her own investment business in Cape Town since 2000

This father and daughter team present their secular approach to the biblical texts as follows: “To secular Jews like ourselves, the Hebrew Bible is a magnificent human creation. Solely human. We love it and we question it. Our kind of Bible requires neither divine origin nor material proof, and our claim to it has nothing to do with our chromosomes. The Tanach, the Bible in its original Hebrew, is breath-taking. Its splendour as literature transcends both scientific dissection and devotional reading.”

They also describe their approach to the interpretation of ancient verses: “For us, the rules are something like this: Read in growing circles around your quotation rather than pluck it out of context. Cherish discovery and surprise more than your own agenda. Acknowledge the shortcomings of texts and authors you love, and the merits of those you dislike. Look hard to see the inner logic of a paragraph, a page and a chapter.”

Of Talmud the authors say, “Much of the Talmud is alien to us Israeli-born seculars. It holds vast inaccessible stretches, either because they are in Aramaic, or simply because they seem atavistic, legalistic, or nitpicky. But the Talmud steered a dramatic new road, shifting away from biblical intimacy with divine intervention. While Abraham argued with God and Moses reiterated God’s words, the Mishnaic and Talmudic rabbis are in the business of unravelling, elucidating, explaining and counter-explaining God and Abraham and Moses.”

The book also explores the Jewish model of collective memory shared from generation to generation. The authors quote Mordecai Kaplan: “No ancient civilization can offer a parallel comparable in intensity with Judaism’s insistence upon teaching the young and inculcating in them the traditions and customs of their people.” They explain that there is one amazing characteristic of Jewish history - that every boy was expected to go to school from the age of three to thirteen and that this imperative was administered and often subsidized by the community. Through the ages, while other cultures left their boys in their mothers’ care until they were old enough to work, Jews started “acculturating their youngsters to the ancient narrative as soon as the tots could understand words, at two years old, and read them, often at the ripe age of three.”

In the chapter entitled 'Time and Timelessness', that explores Jewish dealings with time, the authors find a way to link a prophet and modern day Jew: "Consider two truly timeless Jews, the prophet Zechariah and Albert Einstein. Zechariah foresaw a day coming near, only God knows when, which shall be neither day nor night, both evening and noon, both summer and winter. Albert Einstein, for his part, changed our grasp of time by incorporating it as a factor in his special theory of relativity, and quipped: 'The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once.'"

A chapter entitled 'Vocal Women' includes a discussion on current affairs in Israel, with specific reference to the role of women in Jewish society. It contains the following: "We must revisit those strong female Israelites talking and singing their way up and down the Hebrew Bible, because they offer cutting-edge significance to twenty-first-century Israel and present day Jews. As this book is being written, a vociferous debate is ablaze in Israel over the ultra-Orthodox Jewish demand to silence women's voices and erase or blur female images in the public sphere. The Bible is teeming with women 'going on the streets.' Sorry, Maimonides. And it has a great many women singing outdoors, to mixed audiences. Miriam sang, drummed, and possibly also danced in

front of a whole people. Deborah sang her own lyrics from the very seat of government, performing a duet with her chief of staff."

In addition to dealing with challenging topics such as our textline, time, secularism and feminism, *Jews and Words* also takes on the very notion of Jewish disputation:

The Jews chose God and took his law
Or made God up, then legislated.
What did come first we may not know
But eons passed, and they're still at it:
Enlisting reasoning, not awe,
And leaving nothing un-debated.

To conclude, the style of writing is conversational, frank and entertaining, moving seamlessly from one idea to the next. The discussions have the feel of Shabbat dinner conversations sewn together into a rich tapestry of argument, debate and agreement. The book is also full of wry humour, punctuated with stories and parables, often masquerading as jokes.

As readers of *Jewish Affairs*, we ourselves are a reflection of the 'textline' discussed in *Jews and Words* - confirmation that we do, in fact, put great store in our heritage of words.

Jews and Words by Amos Oz and Fania Oz-Salzberger, Yale University Press, 2012


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SOUTH AFRICAN JEWRY – 175

2016 marks the 175th year since the founding of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation and the holding of the first formal Jewish religious services in South Africa. This marked the formal birth of South African Jewry as an organised, distinct community. To celebrate this milestone, the Rosh Hashanah 2016 issue of *Jewish Affairs* will be devoted to reflections on what it has meant, and means to be Jewish in South Africa and the role that Jews, as individuals and as a collective, have played in the unfolding story of their country.

The *Jewish Affairs* editorial board cordially invites readers to get in touch via the editor regarding any ideas – or even better, contributions – they might have for this special issue.

new POETRY

Times of Trouble

Our Homeland is being attacked again on all fronts by War,
by land and sea, by propaganda on all media.
Never a day goes by when the people of Israel are allowed to live in peace

There are moments when we panic,
understandably,
when cars are rammed randomly into our people
and you can be stabbed anywhere at any time.
Rockets are close by from over the border,
your neighbours, who are your enemies,
have access to chemical and nuclear warfare,
and they use it on their own people

I will keep my faith alight,
The *Shekhinah* will not leave her people,
and we must continue to support, visit and live in the Holy Land.
There is no other way
we have no other option,
we cannot abandon ourselves
in times of trouble

Abigail Sarah Bagraim

Du!

Du binst Yinger fun mir, Yo!
Bald a kind meiner in yoren
Aber ich hob dir zeier lieb.
A kerper host du vos
Ich hob lieb tsertlen.
Zaier farlangen tsu halten nont!
Ven mir kussen mein hartz druk vil staighen
Un ich halt dain dicke un tsiter
Fun die fagenigen vos volgt
Derum binst du zaier teier!

Maurice Skikne

(You!
You are younger than I, Yea!/Almost a child of mine in years/But I love you very much./You have a Torso which/I love to caress./I long much to hold you close/When we kiss my heart pressure rises/And I hold your thighs and tremble/For the pleasure which follows/Thus are you precious to me)

Under Wraps

Sometimes ...
Every now and then
We bare the inner self
Grabbing at laughter and funniness
And teasing and pleasing
And friendship
And sentiment and silliness
To erase the emotions that surface
Ever mindful, ever watchful
Of the sensitive strings
And hidden nerve endings
That tenuously keep us sane.

Don't expose them
Don't break them
Hide them: there, deep down, dug-deep,
In the recesses of your senses
In the silent, secret passages of your mind
In the darkest corners of your being
In all that is left behind.
Nurse them
With well-oiled lightness
And frivolous, brazen brightness.

Never let it show. Never let them know
That you're grief-numb beyond belief
That you'll grab every scrap of levity
To ensure that not one iota
Or sobriety or self-pity
Still filters through your psyche

Laugh with me. Laugh at me.
But make me laugh!
Look at me. Look beyond me
But not *into* me.
For that is mine
To nurse and to rehearse
Until the climb is over

That pain is mine.
It belongs solely to me...

But please ... make a start
Lift my lead-embedded heart
Bring me a sprig of resuscitating relief
And just for a while
Make me giggle; make me smile.
Smooth into my soul
The salve that soothes.

C'mon ... Get a grip
Sober up
And make me laugh.

Charlotte Cohen

We'd like you to meet the
Family...



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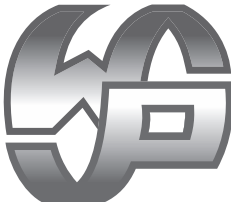
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