

JEWISH AFFAIRS

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- **Front cover image:** *A Kid for Two Farthings* by Wolf Mankowitz, Pan Books, 1956

DID THE SAJBD SIT ON THE FENCE UNDER APARTHEID?

Gwynne Schrire

Gwynne Schrire, a veteran contributor to Jewish Affairs and a long-serving member of its editorial board, is Deputy Director of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies – Cape Council. She has authored, co-written and edited over twenty books on aspects of South African Jewish and Western Cape history.

Recently, I was interviewed for a seven-part television series, named *Legends and Legacy: A History of South African Jews*, being prepared with the assistance of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies & Research at the University of Cape Town and Professors Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn. The question was asked, “Did the Jewish Board of Deputies sit on the fence during apartheid?” Although this subject has been rigorously analysed by, amongst others, Gideon Shimoni and Atalia ben Meir (see ‘References’ below), I was looking at it from a Cape perspective. My answer to that question was “Yes ...but”.

The ‘but’ is important.

It is true that in the first decades after the National Party (NP) came into office and commenced introducing and enforcing rigid racist laws designed to separate the society based not on merit but on melanin, the Board consistently followed a policy of collective non-involvement. It was only from the mid-1970s, with increasing international and local condemnation of apartheid, accompanied by increased state awareness that change was necessary, that it became tenable for the Board to climb off the fence without risking the security of the Jewish community. It was not until 1985, however, that the National Board explicitly condemned apartheid.

According to John Simon (Cape Board chairman 1975-1977), the Cape was always in the vanguard of efforts to propel the SAJBD in a more liberal direction. Solly Kessler (Cape Chairman 1981-1983) wrote that in regard to the apartheid regime and its policies of racial discrimination, the SAJBD’s records as well as the recollections of former members of the National councils confirm the distinctly more liberal stance consistently adopted by the Board’s Cape representatives as compared to the attitude evinced by other provincial delegates. Indeed, from as early as the late 1950s, Cape delegates brought resolutions (routinely voted down) to National conferences calling on the SAJBD to denounce apartheid.



John Simon, SAJBD Cape Chairman 1975-1977

To understand the reasons for the National Board's decision to sit on the fence, one needs to look at the matter not with the eyes of the 21st Century, but within the context of the time in which those decisions were made.

The SAJBD was founded to safeguard the civil and religious rights of South African Jewry. It would hardly have helped that community had it become just another of the many organisations banned by the apartheid government. Would this have happened? Who knows, but it was certainly possible.

To judge the Board's policies of neutrality, it must be remembered that when the NP came into power in 1948, its unexpected victory (by five seats) was not welcomed by Jews, and for good reason. Parliament sits in Cape Town and the Cape Board since its inception in 1904, kept an eye on legislation affecting Jewish civil and religious rights. During the 1930s, the Board had been spent much time countering antisemitism both within Parliament and outside. Morris Alexander, a founder and first chairman of the Cape Council, as a Member of Parliament tried to counter antisemitic rhetoric in the House and any threats of anti-Jewish legislation. There were plenty of reasons for the Jewish community to distrust the new government. In 1933 a Nazi movement, the South African Gentile National Socialist Movement (better known as the Greyshirts) was founded by Louis Weichardt just around the corner from Parliament. It held *inflammatory anti-Jewish* meetings across the land, distributing leaflets saying that the Jews were *Asiatics and should be excluded as a menace to the country*. In 1938, the *pro-German paramilitary Ossewabrandwag (OB)* based on national-socialism *was established* and in 1940 the pro-Nazi New Order was founded by Oswald Pirow, who had met Hitler and Mussolini and wanted to establish a Nazi dictatorship. To counter this antisemitic

onslaught, Alexander resigned his chairmanship to conduct a fact- finding and fundraising tour of the country communities and the Board sponsored counter- propaganda in the form of brochures and publication (such as the book on antisemitism by Afrikaans MP Abraham Jonker, *Israel die Sondebok* - the English version was called *The Scapegoat of History*).

Then came the war, the Holocaust and for local Jews the discovery that their relatives in Lithuania and Latvia had vanished, swallowed up in pits in the forest or up the chimneys of Auschwitz. The Board's Relatives Information Service was faced with the task of trying to locate non-existent survivors for traumatised families.

Then the NP came into power. The ban on the OB was lifted and its members, as well as those of the Greyshirts and the New Order were welcomed into the ruling party. Now many of those antisemites were sitting in Parliament. Like the new Prime Minister Dr DF Malan, who in the 1930s had wanted to restrict Jewish immigration and limit their ability to practice certain trades and professions. Like future Prime Minister Dr H F Verwoerd, who had tried to stop German-



Greyshirt leaders, 1934 Libel Trial

Jewish immigration. Like another future Prime Minister and former OB General B J Vorster. Like future State President Nico Diederichs, who had studied Nazi methods in Germany and was regarded as “a Nazi through and through”. Like Greyshirts founder Louis Weichardt, who became a Senator. Like Oswald Pirow, who received a Cabinet appointment. (A Street in central Cape Town was named after him. In the new South Africa, the Cape Board successfully lobbied the City Council to change the name - it is now called after Chris Barnard). Like OB member Hendrik van den Bergh, who became head of the

Bureau of State Security. Like Johannes von Strauss von Moltke, who the Board had successfully prosecuted for his part in forging a document based on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and attributing its authorship to a Port Elizabeth rabbi, and who was now a National Party MP for one of the South West African constituencies.

If SA Jewry had felt threatened by the antisemitism of the 1930s and 40s, this new government hardly made them feel any more secure. Nor would the raft of rapidly-passed racist apartheid laws reminiscent of Nazi legislation and Tsarist discrimination have reassured them. Was it realistic under the circumstances to expect the Jewish community to openly attack the government's policies? It is easy, 25 years into a new and free South Africa, to condemn the Board's stance; we forget how dangerous any opposition was under NP rule. Under the circumstances, it would have been foolish for the Board to attack that government on its racist policies.

In any case, criticism of apartheid was progressively circumscribed over time, beginning with the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act. Restrictions were further tightened in 1962 by the General Law Amendments Act and subsequent legislation. People were arrested, tortured, banned, placed under house arrest and jailed without trial, at first for 90 days, then 120, then 180. I myself had a banned boyfriend who had spent some time in solitary confinement. He could not visit me legally because I lived in a different part of Cape Town. I worked at a welfare organisation. One of its case secretaries was banned. She could not join the other social workers at tea, as she could not meet with more than one person at a time. Both subsequently left South Africa.

It is necessary to stress once more, that when criticising the Board from the safety of the new South Africa, one has to realise the conditions under which South Africans were living prior to the transition to democracy. Basic democratic freedoms - of the press, opinion and belief and association - were severely restricted. Newspapers were banned, as were organisations, and individuals were arbitrarily jailed. It was a country where a TIME Magazine issue containing a photo of a black man dancing with a white woman could not be distributed until the offending picture had been scissored from every copy. Even the children's book about a horse called *Black Beauty* was banned. Once Dr Aubrey Zabow (Cape Board chairman, 1977-1979) was raided in the early hours of the morning because his banned cousin, writer Ronald Segal, had sent him a banned book he had written. Among the books the security branch confiscated was *The Inner Revolution*. Dr Zabow was a psychiatrist and that book dealt with advances in knowledge of brain chemistry. The Zabows went on aliyah after struggling to get passports - a Jewish MP assisted in getting them returned.

These laws controlled virtually every aspect of life, from who one could marry, to with whom one could socialise, where one could live, where one's children could go to school, and what work one could do. There were police informers and special branch policemen whose work entailed looking through keyholes and bedroom windows to see who was sleeping with

whom. It was a country of White suburbs, Coloured suburbs, Indian suburbs and Black suburbs - entering a Black suburb without a permit was illegal. Race groups were segregated into separate elevators, separate post offices, separate park benches, separate beaches, separate cinemas, separate parking areas for drive-in cinemas (with the separated audience sitting in separate cars but watching the same film), separate pedestrian bridges, separate schools, separate hospitals, separate churches, separate graveyards, separate everything. It was a sports-mad country which cancelled the visit of a touring English cricket team (1968) because it included a Coloured cricketer, Basil d'Oliviera; where education was on Christian National Principles and where the constitution of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education had a modified Conscience clause to ensure that no Non-Christian could be appointed to a teaching, research or administrative position. (Their conscience allowed them to accept donations from Non-Christians.) Reluctant to expose their children to Christian National Education, most Jewish parents in Cape Town sent their children to the Herzlia schools.

When my father gave the housekeeper a lift to the station, he took me with him so that he would not be arrested on suspicion of breaking the Immorality Act. An acquaintance's husband, a lawyer, was arrested under that Act. The woman was imprisoned, the man committed suicide and his widow left the country. Actions had dangerous consequences in apartheid South Africa. This article is only looking at how Apartheid impacted on the proportionally tiny Jewish community vis-à-vis the actions of the SAJBD, not on the horrific and all pervasive impact of those discriminatory laws on the large majority of the society not classified as 'white'.

The Board's main task is to protect Jewish civil rights; as such, it is a defensive body, not an activist one. Its constitution restricted it to matters affecting the Jewish community. Would it have been in the community's interest for the Board to condemn the policies of a government on which it relied for its protection, that contained many antisemites and which had the will and power to punish dissenters? As a body that protected a minority community, self-protection came first. Historically, Jewish communities living as a minority in their societies had learnt that sticking their necks out on behalf of other persecuted groups by the rulers was not a good survival strategy and might lead to those heads being chopped off.

Ronald Segal, whose father Leon had chaired the Cape Board in the years 1942-46, thought that the community should have criticised government openly, even if it was punished for doing so. He believed that in as much as whole communities had been martyred in the Middle Ages, so should the Board have taken the risk even if it meant communal sacrifice.

However, the Board and indeed the community thought otherwise. Atalia ben Meir has pointed out that although the Board never undertook a scientific survey of opinions, it had no doubt that the community would condemn it if it criticised the government's apartheid policies. Some brave people were prepared to be martyrs, and we honour them for that, but most were not prepared to be sacrificed. Not even Ronald Segal, as it turned out. His elder brother Cyril once told me how he had smuggled him over the Rhodesian border in the boot of his car after Ronnie's banning in 1959.

The NP had a few Jewish supporters. One was Joseph Nossel from Wynberg, who approached the Cape Board to help him start a Jewish wing of the NP. The Board responded that it had no connection, official or unofficial, with Nossel, that although Jews had an unquestioned right of complete freedom of political action, that right did not extend to anyone wanting to organise a Jewish wing of any political party. The Board thereupon issued a statement stating that Jews, as individuals, could do as they wished, but the Board itself would not take sides on specific government policies unless the rights and dignity of Jews were directly threatened. It repeated the same answer when the English-speaking John X Merriman branch of the Cape NP asked for Board support.

The Board consistently stuck to this policy and repeated it at subsequent conferences. That policy of political non-involvement prevented it from promoting pro-apartheid groups, but also from supporting anti-apartheid statements, and that led to much later criticism and controversy. There were those who said that the Board had no business whatsoever making statements on controversial issues not directly affecting SA Jewry. The Jews were no longer considered Asiatics but as whites, in a white society. As such, they were privileged and did not want to lose those privileges.

Others felt equally deeply that when it came to matters of racial prejudice and denial of human rights the Board, as a Jewish organisation, had an obligation to speak out. Benjamin Pogrund, formerly Deputy Editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*, called the Board timid, pallid and nervous. Wits University's Prof Julius Lewin, despite having previously written that Jews in SA felt nervous and were frightened of the "ruling race", asked why the Board as the community's representative was silent when other communities were enduring such injustice - Jews who had suffered so much should not keep quiet, he insisted. The Student Jewish Association at the University of Cape Town was harshly critical of the Board's stance, particularly in its newspaper *Strike*. However, students did not have dependent families, careers and businesses that might be put at risk.

International bodies criticised the Board, but then they were not in a position where speaking out could endanger their communities. Maurice Porter, chairman of the Board's Public Relations committee, told the World Jewish Congress in 1964 that it would be suicidal to throw the community into the political arena.

The Board maintained that a collective view did not exist, and that its role was to ensure Jewish communal survival, not communal martyrdom. In the early decades of apartheid rule there was broad support for this approach from the community. Both the Board and the community believed that their community would be jeopardised if they opposed the government and its racist policies.

This view was also held by the religious leadership, few of whom had the courage to speak out against policies that went directly against Jewish values. The handful that did, a number of who like Rabbis ES Rabinowitz, Steinhorn, Rosen, Franklin and Sherman, served congregations in Cape Town often faced hostility from their congregations or the prospect of having their visas revoked. Rabbis could also feel fear when living in what Prime Minister Vorster had called "the happiest police state in the world".

Cape Chairman Max Malamet (1957-1959) pointed out that the Board had to weigh the pros and cons of every suggested action very carefully, since their freedom of action was limited by prudential consideration. He believed that whites would have to reconsider their attitudes to non-whites and hoped that even the most dogmatic and militant of their politician would have common sense. This was in 1957. It would be another thirty years before common sense came to the fore.

The Board did struggle with the demands of being true to Jewish ethics and morals and issued bland statements about dignity and freedom and justice for all, from which all political criticism was removed. The National government was not fooled and queried Jewish loyalty. Why, after all, did Jews comprise over half of the 23 whites in the Treason Trial of the 1950s, and all five of the white people arrested at Rivonia in 1963? *Die Burger* pointed out that as far as was known, not a single Jew who supported the NP was in any responsible position on the Board. There was an outcry both within the Jewish community and from the opposition in 1968 when the Minister of Police blamed the Jewish community for not preventing its youth from taking part in protests at UCT. This time the Board responded with firmness that no Jewish body would interfere with its students' political freedom and it was wrong to single out Jews. On this occasion, the NP made an effort to appease the Board.

From the late 1970s, opinions were beginning to shift. The government started to take tentative steps to ease its restrictive policies and it became safer to speak out. Bodies like the End Conscription Campaign and Jews for Justice developed and began openly to challenge apartheid.

At a banquet to honour Prime Minister Vorster following his visit to Israel in 1977, Board president David Mann first uttered a *parev* comment, certainly not a condemnation, but definitely a statement referring to the previously forbidden topic of government policies: “There is a new sense of urgency abroad in our land, a realisation that we must move away as quickly and effectively as is practicable from discrimination based on race or colour.”

Looking at the Board’s fence-sitting policies, we should not look at the Jewish community in isolation; similar policies were practiced by other minority groups for similar reasons of group survival. The Greek, Portuguese, or Italian communities, although not having the same history of persecution, were also hardly outspoken in their criticism, and certainly produced far fewer anti-apartheid activists.

The Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) likewise came in for much criticism from its youth for its silence. Between 1961 and 1964, the MJC issued just five statements condemning acts of apartheid and held only one public meeting. Faried Esack criticised the MJC in terms very similar to the criticism issued by Jewish students, saying that it could and should have done more. The contribution of the religious leadership, he told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), “despite whatever nice words are used...was essentially one of betrayal. There was a denial of space for all those who opposed apartheid and who were part of the anti-apartheid struggle”.

But the MJC, like the Board, was trying to protect its community with the additional disadvantages of being classified as non-white and as followers of what was called a “false religion” and its offices had been raided by the Security Police. Like the Board, it found its voice only later when it became safer to speak out. In 1976, after the Soweto Uprising, it issued a strong letter protesting the police brutality against children and young people and in 1985 the MJC participated in a march to demand freedom for Mandela.

Returning to the Cape Board, there were frequent differences of opinion between the Cape and National Board in Johannesburg. Cape Town has always been more liberal, more *verlig*, than its counterparts further north. This might have been its inheritance from having belonged to a former British colony, not to a former Independent Boer state with more rigid

ideas about colour and *baaskap*. It might have been because it was acculturated to English rather than Afrikaans social and religious mores. Solly Kessler thought it was understandable that Cape Jewry would have a more progressive attitude regarding the apartheid policies (as could be seen in the line taken by the Cape committee) because the social distance between the Cape Jewish community and members of the non-white communities was far less than elsewhere.



Solly Kessler, SAJBD Cape Chairman 1981-1983

This difference between the *verligte* Cape and the *verkrampte* Transvaal was not only found amongst Jews. The Transvaal's Jamiatul Ulama was condemned by Imam Solomon at the TRC for its conservative, sometimes even reactionary stance: "They obstinately refused to be moved from their record of silence on any political issues which would appear to be anti-state... Pressure by the Muslim Youth Movement persuaded the Natal Jamiat to speak out against the election, but the Transvaal Jamiat was consistent in its silence".

There was long simmering disagreement between the Cape and National Boards on the latter's reluctance to condemn. Ben-Meir has recognised that in the latter half of the 1970s, the Cape Council took the lead in totally abandoning the Board's conservative policy towards the political arena, while the National Board was slower to move to active involvement in SA's political problems.

In 1977 National President Mann attended a Cape Council meeting to defuse the differences, without success. Cape Chairman John Simon told him that the Board should be in the vanguard of political change. Archie

Shandling (Cape Chairman 1980-1981) insisted that in view of the Jewish people's long experience of religious and racial discrimination it was a dereliction of responsibility for their community to draw a distinction between moral and political issues. The Cape Council needed to comment on crucial issues in the light of Jewish ethics. It should no longer evade the issue.

Jack Aaron said the Board should stand up and be counted as it was contrary to Jewish ethics to allow discriminatory legislation to exist without voicing condemnation. The preservation of Jewish identity, he argued, was contingent upon displaying such ethical courage. They should oppose all discriminatory practices.

Simon suggested that the Board move beyond the original idea of defending Jewish rights and engage in speaking up on any issue connected to individual freedom, which could ultimately affect the community. However, even the Cape Council felt this was going too far. Zabow reminded him that the Board needed to refrain from making political statements unless this was on a Jewish aspect, as their community was only a minority and furthermore Jews belonged to all political parties.

The only response Mann could give was to repeat the old chestnut that the Board only had a duty to speak out on moral matters if there were a Jewish content.

The following year relations between the Cape Board and the Johannesburg Executive remained strained. Chairman Aubrey Zabow argued that that the time had come for the voice of the Jewish community to be heard on significant moral issues. Views were changing in South Africa - even cabinet ministers (!) were realizing that the old system with its unjust discriminatory practices could no longer persist. The effort was being made everywhere to bring these practices to an end and it was becoming increasingly clear within the Jewish community that it was necessary to relate to the non-white sections as fellow citizens not only as a matter of morality, but of recognising the changing situation in South Africa. The Jewish community should be publicly seen to stand by its principles.

The Cape Board knew that the Johannesburg executive would never approve of their stance. They regretted the divergence of opinion but stood by their conviction that the Board should be committed to the full participation of everybody living in South Africa in every aspect of life.

Simon and Solly Kessler agreed that the National Conference would be unlikely to accept the Cape's statement. Shandling then suggested that even if it meant taking an unpopular stand that would risk estranging the

National Board, and being forced to accept an unsatisfactory compromise resolution, the Cape Board should produce a minority statement.

Dr Frank Bradlow (Honorary life vice president of the Cape Council) realised that these Cape decisions would be perceived by Johannesburg as being contentious. He regretted that the Cape and Johannesburg had different opinion, but also agreed that the Cape needed to express its commitment to full participation by everybody who lived in South Africa.

In 1979, the Cape again clashed with National when it went ahead and issued a statement that silence was not an option when government threatened human rights and started to act on that. In the 1980s, it condemned detentions without trial, the detention of children and the actions of police during peaceful gatherings. It further called on government to allow Coloured learners to write supplementary matric exams when rioting had prevented them from doing so.

In 1981, the *Cape Argus* praised the Board for joining the Council of Churches in condemning the police for invading the Langa bachelor quarters. In 1984, the Cape Council led a delegation to Dr Piet Koornhof asking him to stop the destruction of shacks in Khayelitsha and the *Cape Times* in a leader article commented that the wider community owed a debt of gratitude to the Board for acting as the national conscience.

Finally, in 1983, the National Congress took hesitant steps to climb off the fence and called upon all South Africans, particularly members of the Jewish community, to co-operate in securing “the immediate improvement and ultimate removal of all unjust discriminatory laws and practices based on race, creed or colour”. Then, in June 1985, the Board - for the first time - used the word “Apartheid” in a resolution explicitly stating that the Board rejected it! In that resolution, it recorded its support and commitment to justice, equal opportunity and the removal of all provisions in the laws of South Africa, which discriminated on grounds of colour and race.

The Cape Times

TUESDAY, JULY 24, 1984

Indefensible acts

A STRONGLY worded appeal by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies to Dr Piet Koornhof to halt the destruction of squatter shelters on the Cape Flats was evidently influential in the government's decision to suspend this heartless activity, for the moment at least. News of the deputation to Dr Koornhof, representing all South African Jewry, was disclosed at the weekend in the *Zionist Record*. It was the first time that the Jewish community has approached the government on an issue not solely of Jewish interest.

This was wholly appropriate. As members of a people with a long history of suffering, South African Jewry speak with conviction and insight when they say in their memorandum, as handed to Dr Koornhof: "Acts such as these which result in men, women and children being exposed to the elements and without protection against the ravages caused by cold, wind and rain, are indefensible and cannot be condoned by silence." Morally indefensible such actions most certainly are. The wider South African community owes a debt of gratitude to the Board of Deputies

for acting as the national conscience in this crisis — and doing so bravely and effectively.

The removals policy is a grave disturbance to the domestic peace. It could evoke a violent reaction from increasingly desperate Peninsula squatters. There is also the external dimension: Mr David Rockefeller noted in the journal *Leadership SA* recently that the disinvestment lobby abroad was gathering new momentum. One of the greatest factors strengthening this lobby, he said, was the practice of forced removals, which was seen as a particularly flagrant example of the abuse of human rights. Every new instance undermined those people abroad who favoured a more constructive approach to South Africa, Mr Rockefeller added.

At a time of deepening recession, a continuance of removals is folly. It is estimated that 3 500 000 people have been displaced since 1960 — at colossal expense. In the teeth of the Cape winter the recent respite is cause for gratitude. But it is the underlying policy which must go if there is to be rather more permanent relief.

Did the Board act as a national conscience as the *Cape Times* had so generously claimed? No it did not, and nor did most of the rabbis. Mervyn Smith (Cape Chairman 1983-7 and National Chairman 1991-5) believed that both failed the struggle. He felt strongly that there was a general failure of the community leadership although "there were nonetheless those Jewish leaders of conscience, small in number, who year in and year out attempted to force a moral public stance upon the leadership."

Smith added that he was proud to say that they largely came from the Cape Council. It is hoped that this article will go some way to providing recognition to the attempts by the Cape leaders to push the National Board off the fence earlier.

Would it have made a difference to the government's apartheid policies had the Board taken a moral stance sooner? No, as a small insignificant minority, the community's condemnation would have had minimal effect, amounting as it did to barely a drop in the pond that made up the mind-set of the bigots ruling the country. Would the government have punished the community if its representatives had spoken out? It is difficult to say. Certainly it did so in 1961 by forbidding the transfer of funds collected for Israeli causes when Israel voted against South Africa in the United Nations,



but equally, there was no retaliation when the Board stood up to it seven years later over the rights of Jewish students to protest.

Times change and we change with them. By the 1980s, common sense was at last beginning to prevail. With the recognition that change was inevitable, criticism became more acceptable and it became less dangerous for both the Jewish and the Muslim communities to speak out in language that was not so guarded and diplomatic.

**Mervyn Smith, SAJBD Cape Chairman
1983-1987 & National Chairman 1991-1995**

Were Jewish fears unreasonable under the circumstances? With the community's centuries of experiences of being persecuted and scapegoated, it can certainly be argued that the Board, by its silence, was protecting the community as best as it could. With the background of antisemitism during the 1930s and 1940s, these fears were surely reasonable. The Board at the end of the day was simply behaving in the way that Jewish leadership had learnt over the centuries to be the best way to safeguard the security of those it represented.

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SA JEWRY UNDER APARTHEID – A VERY OLD DEBATE REVISITED

David Saks

David Saks is Associate Director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and editor of Jewish Affairs. This article is adapted from his presentation at Limmud in Johannesburg on 18 August 2019.

Even before South Africa's transition from white minority rule to multiracial democracy in April 1994, a veritable flurry of discussion had gotten underway within Jewish circles concerning the community's political behaviour under apartheid. The topic itself was not a new one. Over the preceding two decades, it had surfaced with increasing frequency at the national conferences of both the SA Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and the SA Zionist Federation (SAZF). University students and members of the leftish Habonim Zionist youth movement in particular had been vociferous in calling for the representative leadership to take a decisive moral stand on the issue. From the beginning of the 1990s, it became one of the dominating topics of the day. Symposiums were convened, many articles and even books written, exhibitions mounted^[i] and conference session devoted to the topic. The earnest, frequently acrimonious debate was still being periodically revived well into the next century.

Sometimes, one could help wondering whether the Jewish community was not making altogether too much of the matter. After all, the political behaviour of a small minority within the white population can hardly be said to have been one of the most pressing issues of the liberation struggle. Yet a great many community members felt otherwise, and with South African democracy having passed its first quarter-century only last year, it may be an appropriate time to re-examine the question.

Why has the subject attracted such enduring interest? Part of the answer certainly is the startlingly disproportionate number of Jewish community members who played a role in the anti-apartheid movement – in many cases a very significant role. From a purely academic point of view, this begs the question. There does also appear to have been a dual motivation, characterized by American Jewish academic Todd Pitcock as a combination of “self-congratulation and self-flagellation”.^[ii] Jews, it seemed, wished to boast about their apartheid-era record while simultaneously apologising for it.

Why 'self-flagellation'? This was due to the reality that at the collective level, the Jewish community and its official leadership had been largely passive during the era of white minority rule. Admittedly the SAJBD, the community's official spokesperson, had eventually adopted an explicitly anti-apartheid position,^[iii] but this occurred rather late in the day, when even sections of the Nationalist government were making similar noises. Categorically denouncing apartheid and all it stood for would have meant a great deal had it occurred in the mid-1960s; that it took place only from the early 1980s onwards greatly lessened its impact, although it would be wrong to conclude that it was entirely without value.



SAJBD President Gerald Leissner and Chairman Mervyn Smith (pictured here with ANC President Nelson Mandela, SAJBD National Congress, 1993) were instrumental in the Board's taking a decisive stance against apartheid in the 1980s.

The 'self-congratulation' aspect is also easy to explain since none of the country's other ethnic white communities came close to producing so high a proportion of individuals who opposed apartheid than the Jewish community. Even a short-list of Jewish anti-apartheid activists would include:

- Parliamentarians Helen Suzman, Harry Schwarz, Sam Kahn, Leo Lovell and Brian Bunting.
- Lawyers (who defended activists in major political trials from the 1940s onwards) Isie Maisels, Arthur Chaskalson, Sidney Kentridge, Joel Joffe, Shulamith Muller, Denis Kuny, Jules Browde and a host of other lesser known but still significant figures.

- Trade unionists Ray Alexander, Benny Weinbren, Solly Sachs and Leon Levy
- Political activists Lionel and Hilda Bernstein, Joe Slovo and Ruth First, Arthur Goldreich, Harold Wolpe, Ben Turok, Dennis Goldberg, Wolfie Kodesh, Paul Trewhela and, later, the Coleman family, conscientious objector David Bruce, Pauline Podbrey and Raymond Suttner.

One really could go on and on in this vein: Journalists, academics, creative artists.... members of the tribe seem to pop up everywhere. How does one explain the fact that two-thirds of the 21 white activists in the Treason Trial were of Jewish origin? Likewise, how does one account for every one of the white activists arrested in the Rivonia Raid and its immediate aftermath being Jewish? Without the Jewish activists, there probably wouldn't have been a Freedom Charter, and perhaps not even an Umkhonto we Sizwe. Later, Jews played a critical part in the establishment of such organisations as the Detainees' Parents Support Committee, the Legal Resources Centre and the End Conscription Campaign.

For SA Jewry, the awkward transition from a society based on entrenched white privilege to non-racial democracy was undoubtedly eased to some extent by the fact that individual Jews had done so much to bring about the new order. Certainly, it helped the Jewish leadership to punch above its weight in terms of accessing government and having input into public policy.

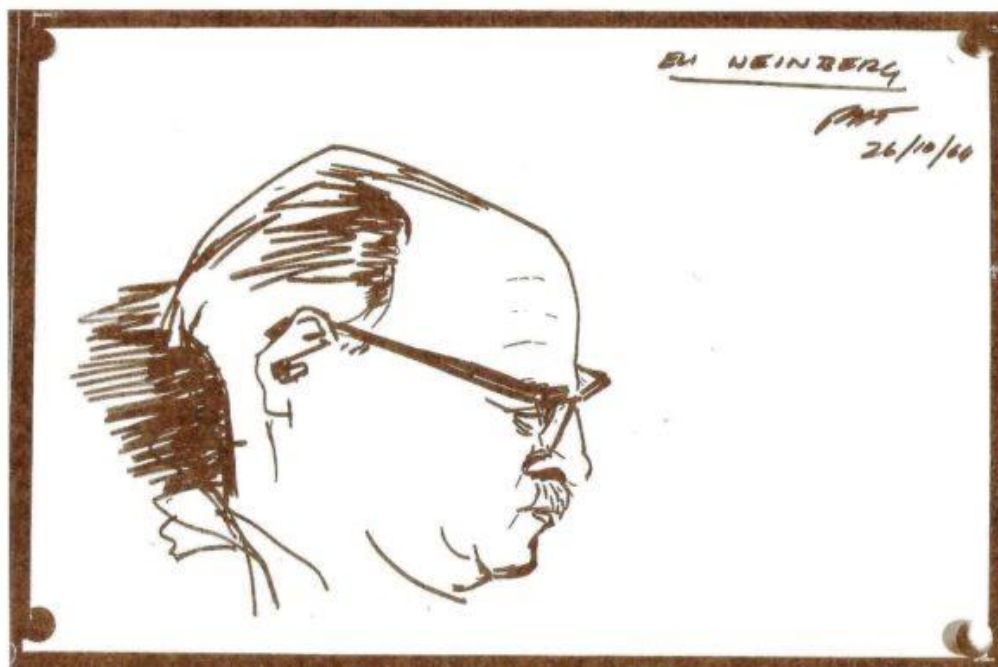
Jews typically relish compiling lists of other Jews who have made it big in some way, from Nobel Prize winners through to film stars, musicians, scientists and inventors and in many other fields. But doing so with anti-apartheid activists is problematical. For one thing most Jewish activists on the left of the spectrum had with rare exceptions never identified as Jews in any meaningful way. Their attitude is summed up by Ray Alexander saying that she did not see herself as Jewish but as "Internationalist", or put another way, a citizen of the world.^[iv] My own view is that so many Jews were attracted to Communism in part because it offered them an ideological escape route through which they could discard their inherited Jewish baggage and reinvent themselves simply as people no different from any others. Ironically, that was part of the attraction of modern political Zionism for many Jews, particularly those living as a persecuted minority in Eastern Europe.

Jewish Struggle veterans, especially those who had fought apartheid outside the legal parameters allowed by the regime, were not going to allow

the mainstream to community to claim credit for the risks they had taken and the sacrifices they had made now that it was safe to do so. They were – not without justification - scornful over how the community now apparently wished to use them as a front to sanitize its collective behaviour when at the time it had by and large been happy to look the other way – or even explicitly distance themselves from people with whom they were now opportunistically trying to ingratiate themselves.

As is almost always the case with sweeping indictments of this nature, the issues are not so simple, and on at least two levels this one is open to challenge.

One rejoinder is that the Jewish leaders who had failed to support Jewish activists at the time and those entrusted with leading the community into the democratic era were not the same people. The latter were from a completely different generation, with many having not even been alive when the likes of Joe Slovo, Esther Barsel, Eli and Violet Weinberg and Denis Goldberg were being imprisoned, detained without trial or banned. During the 1980s, the progressive faction within the SAJBD had finally managed come out on top, and it was they who constituted the leadership of the organisation after 1994. Was it really reasonable, or even fair to accuse them of hypocrisy and opportunism, let alone subsequent generations?



Eli Weinberg in the Johannesburg Fort – sketch by fellow prisoner Paul Trehwela, 26 October 1964

The Jewish establishment can also point out that that Jewish activists - certainly the more radical ones - in reality had turned their backs on all things Jewish well before the rest of the community turned its collective back on them. They had denounced Zionism, scorned Judaism and eschewed any kind of Jewish education for their children. They did not even involve themselves in organisations specifically combating antisemitism, maintaining instead that this had to be subsumed within a broader campaign against racism in general. Worst of all, perhaps, many had actively supported some of the most virulent enemies of the Jewish people in the post-World War II era, including the Soviet Union and the pre-Oslo Palestine Liberation Organisation. What moral right did such people have – as Jews – to lecture the rest of the community on how its members should have behaved?

These are valid points, but in the final analysis one can't help but cringe a little when reflecting on how readily, even obsequiously, the Jewish establishment rushed to embrace those whom they had previously claimed were simply Jews by birth, with no meaningful ties to the Jewish community as a whole.

Jewish anti-apartheid activists fell into two broad categories – liberals and leftists.^[v] Liberals generally campaigned against apartheid from within legally permissible parameters (such as in Parliament and in the courts). They were supportive of Zionism or at least neutral about it, and many were active in the Jewish community as well. Names like Dr Ellen Hellman, Benjamin Pogrund, Jules and Selma Browde and Harry Schwarz come to mind. Leftists, by contrast, tended to be convinced Communists who simply from an ideological point of view did not wish to identify as Jews. At most, their Jewishness was part of a loose cultural inheritance that they and their immediate forebears had brought with them from Eastern Europe and which as such could be no more than superficial. It was within the anti-apartheid left that the disproportionate nature of Jewish involvement was especially striking.^[vi]

While tending to be more connected to the Jewish community, Jewish liberals have also been scathing about the leadership's behaviour under apartheid. One is Benjamin Pogrund, who while not himself a communist as an investigative journalist regularly contravened the law in order to better expose the iniquities of the apartheid system. Accusing the Jewish leadership of "running scared", he maintains that Jewish fears of an antisemitic backlash were exaggerated, saying: "Even with full knowledge of their antisemitic background, it was inconceivable that the Nationalists would have gone any further than perhaps, at most, curtailing money for

Israel. They simply could not afford to add to their problems at home and abroad, by punitive action against the Jews”.^[vii]

I tend to agree with Pogrund’s assessment, but only regarding the period from perhaps 1970 onwards. In the quarter-century immediately following the ascent to power of the National Party, it would have been palpably unreasonable and indeed unjust to demand of Jews over and above everyone else that they stick their heads above the parapet. Of all white South African groupings, Jews had a genuine excuse for remaining quiet. One has constantly to bear in mind how traumatized the community was in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The majority of its members consisted of first and second generation immigrants from Eastern Europe, whose Jewish communities had been all but annihilated. Of the remainder, many were refugees from Germany, or originally came from the island of Rhodes, whose Jewish population was likewise almost wiped out. It would have been difficult to find a single Jewish family in the country who had not lost close relatives. They were grieving for loved ones who had been murdered simply for being Jews; now they found themselves living under a regime which at the time had been explicitly antisemitic, and which included in its ranks people who had been deeply involved in pro-Nazi and antisemitic activities both before and during the war.^[viii] Overwhelmingly, and surely understandably, the focus of SA Jewry at that time was on working to preserve its own safety at home and on contributing to the survival and development of the new-born State of Israel abroad.

One common argument for why Jews should be at the forefront of fighting injustice, especially when it involves discrimination on the basis of race, is that they too have historically suffered such persecution. That notion makes little sense, however. Jews should surely involve themselves in the fight because Judaism teaches that all human beings have a fundamental right to dignity and equality, regardless of race or creed.^[ix] They should do so not because of their collective experience of persecution, but despite it. It is ludicrous, not to say unjust, to impose a higher standard of behaviour on Jews because of their history of oppression – in reality, the opposite should be the case. If we are honest, that is how post-colonial countries, in Africa and elsewhere, have been treated.

For three years Cape Town-born attorney Sam Kahn served as a member of the Communist Party representing one of the constituencies for black voters in parliament. There, he made a name for himself for his devastating attacks on the flood of new apartheid legislation brought in by the National Party government after 1948. According to Joe Slovo – albeit a biased source – during this time Kahn was visited by an anxious delegation of

Jewish communal leaders who urged him to tone things down in view of the risk it was posing to the community. Kahn allegedly responded that if Jews were hated for being Communists, they were hated just as much for being capitalists. "I'll make a deal with you" he supposedly told his visitors, if you give up your business activities, I'll stop being a Communist".^[x]

It is to have a laugh at the expense of the community leadership seventy or so years later, but in reality they had legitimate concerns. The Jewish origins of so many white left-wing activists played easily into stereotypes about Jews being subversive and unpatriotic.

According to *Time* magazine (30 August 1963), the police raid on Liliesleaf Farm, underground headquarters of Umkhonto we Sizwe, in July 1963 "touched off ominous rumblings" against South African Jewry. It was reported that when Criminal Investigation Chief RJ van den Bergh made reference to the raid in a speech, a voice from the audience cried: "Jews!" Van den Bergh's response was that foes of apartheid might indeed be "instruments of Jews".

Around this time, SAJBD Secretary Jack Rich was asked by the pro-government newspaper *Dagbreek* why so many of the white communist plotters were Jews and what the official Board view was on the matter. In response, the Board issued the following statement:

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

The Jewish community condemns illegality in whatever section of the population it appears."^[xi]

Again, it is easy with the benefit of hindsight to dismiss this response as mealy-mouthed and evasive. However, being brave after the danger has passed is one thing; it is another when the threat is all too real and immediate. When Rich received this enquiry, white South Africa was in a state of paranoia, bordering on frenzy, over the exposure of a supposed plot to violently overthrow the state, and the many Jews involved in the conspiracy had not gone unnoticed.

The SAJBD leadership was actually in an unenviable position. Its core mandate, on which understanding they had been elected in the first place, was to protect the community from antisemitism. Here, they were being

virtually railroaded into taking sides between the apartheid establishment and the liberation movements. At that time of near hysteria over communist plots and imminent violent insurrection by the barbarous Bantu, any statement suggesting support for the latter would likely have provoked a strong antisemitic reaction.

On the other hand, adopting the former course - that is, explicitly condemning the underground liberation movements - was likewise not an option. The Board was not mandated to adopt political positions on behalf of SA Jewry as a whole. Moreover most Jews, while not as radical as Goldreich et al, would most likely have been quite strongly opposed to the Board issuing statements in their name that actually endorsed National Party policy. At election time, they overwhelmingly voted against the 'Nats' and until the late 1980s all Jewish Members of Parliament represented the comparatively more liberal Opposition. Under the circumstances the Board's stance (on this occasion at least) should not be regarded as being deserving of harsh moral condemnation, especially not so many years after the fact by those who were not required to make the kind of on-the-spot choices that the leadership had to do back then.

This essay has until now largely focused on the track-record of the SAJBD, as this was the acknowledged representative spokesperson of the Jewish community. However, some comment at least is needed on the role of the religious leadership, who should after all have been freer to denounce apartheid from a purely moral and ethical point of view. Here, unfortunately, the record of the rabbinate is a decidedly unimpressive one. As always, it is possible to point to a few honourable exceptions, such as Rabbis Louis Rabinowitz, Selwyn Franklin, Abner Weiss and Ben Isaacson amongst the Orthodox and Andre Ungar[xii] and Arthur Saul Super from the Reform. Such individuals ensured that the rabbinate was not entirely passive during the apartheid years, but they were so few and far between as to reveal how very silent most of their colleagues chose to be.

A brief account of the extraordinary career of Rabbi Benzion ('Ben') Isaacson is of interest here, in part because it was so revealingly untypical but also because of all the apartheid-era Jewish clergy, none has a greater claim to having been a genuine 'Struggle' activist, even according to how the ANC-led liberation movements understood the term. He was the only rabbi both to join the left-wing Congress of Democrats and later the African National Congress when the movement was still in exile. Isaacson himself was never arrested or banned, although he was monitored by the security police and his home was raided on at least one occasion. Instead, he was regularly forced out by his own congregations. His own tempestuous

personality undoubtedly played a role in this, but his typically fiery and provocative political rhetoric was also a major, perhaps decisive factor.

Ben Isaacson commenced his pulpit career as Assistant Rabbi at the Great Synagogue, serving under Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz who became both his mentor and his champion. Blessed with unusual intellectual and creative gifts, charismatic and a brilliant orator, he was for a time seen by many as Rabinowitz's natural successor. What made his position untenable was a very public confrontation with Dr Percy Yutar, then President of the United Hebrew Congregation and later to gain unhappy notoriety for the over-zealous manner in which he prosecuted Nelson Mandela and other leading activists during the Rivonia Trial. Preaching one Friday evening in the Chief Rabbi's absence, Isaacson lambasted the Jewish community for its political timidity, prompting an enraged Yutar to confront the 'young whippersnapper' for having put the Jewish community in 'disrepute'. Typically Reverend Isaacson (as he was then) did not back down, instead warning Yutar that he would "put him in the Johannesburg Hospital" if he did not let go his arm [xiii].

The immediate upshot of the incident was that Isaacson was summarily dismissed and although soon reinstated (after Rabbi Rabinowitz gate-crashed a committee meeting and declared that unless he was, he would resign himself) it was obvious that another place would have to be found for him. He served for a time as rabbi to the Krugersdorp community, continuing to stridently denounce apartheid from the pulpit and dismaying many in his community by taking in the children of Ben Turok when the latter went underground to evade arrest. Rabbi Isaacson's most sustained period of political activism commenced in the mid-1970s following his return to South Africa from Israel, where he had lived for some ten years. During this time, he was fired by one congregation and saw another congregation he had started eventually collapse as a direct result of his forthright, if sometimes overly strident rhetoric. He even travelled overseas to lobby for economic sanctions against the apartheid state, something strongly opposed even within the more liberally inclined sectors of the Jewish community. Unable to obtain another rabbinical position in South Africa, Rabbi Isaacson took up pulpits first in Harare and afterwards in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Shortly after his departure, the final unravelling of apartheid commenced with the unbanning of the ANC and release of remaining political prisoners in early 1990. Rabbi Isaacson returned to South Africa towards the end of the decade. Apart from a citation from the Union of Orthodox Synagogues, he has to date never received any recognition for his anti-apartheid record either within the Jewish community or from society at large.



Rabbi Ben Isaacson (left) with famed anti-apartheid cleric Reverend Beyers Naude

During the final decade of white minority rule, the representative Jewish leadership did unequivocally condemn apartheid, even if government would hardly have been trembling in their boots over the fact. It gave expression to what was very likely to have been the view of most South African Jews by that time, and it further meant that when the country began entering the new, post-apartheid era at the start of the 1990s, the leadership - by then that would have included Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris - was well-positioned to lead South African Jewry in embracing and being part of the transformation. It must always be remembered that the ability of the Jewish community to impact on events from a political point of view, given that by the 1980s it constituted no more than around 2% of the white population, was always minimal.

In July 2013 the SAJBD partnered with the Liliesleaf Trust in holding a dialogue (which this writer attended) to examine once more the question of

Jewish political behaviour under apartheid. The format was a conversation between the Board's National Vice-President Zev Krenzel, Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre director Tali Nates and anti-apartheid veterans Denis Goldberg, Anne-Marie Wolpe and Albie Sachs. Krenzel used the occasion to apologise to Jewish activists, not so much for not endorsing their political stance but for not assisting them on a basic humanitarian level when they were being persecuted by the apartheid state.

Goldberg's sharp response was that he and his colleagues were not particularly interested in receiving apologies for themselves from the Jewish community. The real apology South African Jewry needed to make, he said, was to those who had actually been subjected to the injustices of apartheid and whose plight the community had essentially ignored.

Ironically, Goldberg himself arguably owed his early release following the life sentence imposed on him in the Rivonia Trial to the intervention both of the Jewish establishment and of Israel. I was present at an interview between historian Gideon Shimoni and former SAZF President Julius Weinstein, when Weinstein described in detail how he and the then Israeli Ambassador David Ariel approached President PW Botha to make the case for Goldberg's release. Botha was reportedly much moved by the plea that Goldberg be allowed to spend his remaining years amongst his own people in the Holy Land, where he would in any case no longer pose a threat to South Africa. According to Weinstein, he exclaimed with tears in his eyes, "This man will be released". And so he was, the first of the eight activists sentenced to life imprisonment to be set free.

Apart from Goldberg, there are other known cases of the SAZF and Israel successfully intervening behind the scenes on behalf of certain detained Jewish activists. Such quiet interventions were no doubt rare, but they also need to be remembered, particularly as neither Israel nor the Jewish leadership had anything to gain from them – indeed, they had quite a lot to lose in the event of it ever getting out.

Nevertheless, I think that what Goldberg said was essentially correct: At a collective level, the organised Jewish community could and should have made a much greater effort to at least help ease the plight of apartheid's victims. This could have been done without taking any formal political stand. With so many top lawyers serving on its councils, for example, the Board could have rendered meaningful assistance to the Legal Resources Centre and other legal aid organisations then operating. It might have worked with the various women's organisations that were affiliated to it to

encourage volunteering for the Black Sash – or even establish on a more modern level a Jewish equivalent of the Black Sash. (That being said, I would stress that the Union of Jewish Women and United Sisterhood had a distinctly better record than most communal organisations when it came to both speaking out against apartheid and, more importantly, taking whatever practical steps they could to alleviate its impact).

Speaking at the SAJBD's national conference in 1985, Arthur Chaskalson – founding director of the Legal Resources Centre and of course part of the defence team during the Rivonia Trial – summed up what he believed the Board's role under apartheid should be. He said that although Jews as a minority had no power to affect real change, in terms of their ethical and moral values, they had a responsibility to do whatever they could in that regard. Here, the SAJBD could play a role through informing, educating and influencing individual Jews, who ultimately had to make their own choice".^[xiv]

This, ultimately, is where I believe South African Jewry – in the words of the Board's then National President Mervyn Smith – “failed the Struggle”.^[xv] It could have been worse – there could have been a great deal more overt support for the regime from the Jewish community than there was. It was only in 1977 that a Jewish candidate ran for election on a National Party ticket, for example, while voting districts with a large Jewish presence consistently supported Opposition candidates. Critics of SA Jewry regularly trot out the example of Percy Yutar as evidence of Jewish collaboration, but the reality is that there were very few Percy Yutars while those on the other side – in the field of law alone - were strikingly numerous. But that was not enough at the end of the day. Great injustices were being committed under their noses, and it was only very late in the day that Jews, on a collective level, began to rise to the moral challenge that this posed. I don't believe that this is a cause for endless breast-beating and self-flagellation, but it was undoubtedly a lost opportunity.

- ***See 'Readers' Comments' after Endnotes***



Nelson Mandela with former employer Lazar Sidelsky (right) and former fellow articulated clerk and friend Nat Bregman, circa. 1994

[i] Most notably the exhibition 'Looking Back: Jews in the Struggle for Democracy and Human Rights in South Africa', mounted by the Isaac and Jessie Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, 1997.

[ii] Cited in Adler, F H, 'South African Jews and Apartheid', in *Patterns of Prejudice*, © Institute for Jewish Policy Research, vol. 34, no. 34, 2000.

[iii] Most notably at its 33rd biennial conference, 31 May-2 June 1985.

[iv] Suttner, Immanuel (ed.), *Cutting Through the Mountain: Interviews with South African Jewish Activists*, Viking, 1997, p44

[v] Shimoni, Gideon, *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa* (Johannesburg: David Philip, 2003), 74, makes a distinction between "liberals," whom he defines as those who confronted the apartheid system only within the parameters deemed legal by the regnant white polity and 'radicals,' most but not all of whom were Communists, who went beyond those parameters.

[vi] Saks, David, 'Jews and Communism in South Africa' in Hoffman, M B and Srebrnik, H F (eds.), *A Vanished Ideology, A: Essays on the Jewish Communist Movement in the English-speaking world in the 20th Century*, University of Albany Press, 2016.

[vii] I thank Mr Pogrund for making these unpublished notes available to me.

[viii] For more on the baleful influence of Neo-Nazi and radical antisemitic ideologies during this period, see in particular Shain, Milton, *A Perfect Storm: Antisemitism in South Africa, 1930-1948*, Jonathan Ball, 2015

[ix] Veteran Struggle activist Albie Sachs provided a characteristically more nuanced comment on the question: 'Philosophically, I have no doubts: Jews have no greater entitlement to be callous or any larger responsibility to be sensitive than anyone else. Yet in my heart I am especially shocked when Jews speak and behave in a racist manner', *Jewish Quarterly*, Spring, 1993.

x] Shimoni, p113

[xi] SA Jewish Board of Deputies - SA Rochlin Archives: Biog. 303 Goldreich A.

[xii] Ungar was briefly the rabbi of the Port Elizabeth Reform community during the 1950s. As a result of his outspoken broadsides against apartheid policy, he became the only Jewish

cleric since Joseph Herman Hertz to be effectively expelled from the country for his political activities when the authorities refused to renew his work visa.

[xiii] Rabbi Ben Isaacson – Personal communication, 2015.

[xiv] Minutes of the 33rd national conference of the SAJBD, 30 May-2 June 1985

[xv] Smith, M, 'Apartheid and South African Jewry' in *Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 4, Chanukah 2003

READERS' COMMENTS

As one of the co-authors of *Worlds Apart: The Re-migration of South African Jews*, I write to suggest that some of what you have written does not accord with our research.

"The majority of its members consisted of first and second generation immigrants from Eastern Europe, whose Jewish communities had been all but annihilated. Of the remainder, many were refugees from Germany, or originally came from the island of Rhodes, whose Jewish population was likewise almost wiped out. It would have been difficult to find a single Jewish family in the country who had not lost close relatives" (my emphases.)

We gave this topic significant attention in our book. As it is now out-of-print, I am attaching the relevant chapter.

It seems as if you have muddled the generations. As my co-author, Professor Colin Tatz ר"ל, often said, "The Holocaust passed South Africa by." The post-war generations of Jews, who lived under apartheid, were mainly third and fourth generation, not first and second.

The ('Russian') Jews (mainly Litvaks) had started arriving in the wake of the diamond and gold discoveries, in the second half of the 19C. Jewish immigration slowed considerably after WW1, and was banned by the SA government in the 1930s.

Most families were like my mother's and father's.

My paternal *zeide* arrived in SA in 1897. His entry papers say "Russian" and "miner". He was following an aunt who had arrived in 1870 ('chain migration'). His first cousins, eight of them, also started arriving in 1897. Others went, around that time, to the USA. My maternal *zeide* married my *bobbe* in Middelburg in 1890.

For families like these, the Holocaust happened to distant relatives 50 or more years after they, themselves, had emigrated. Most known relatives had emigrated well before 1941, when the Germans invaded. (Extract from our book follows.) I have traced some of my such distant relatives to the USA.

In the **1897** census, the Lithuanian Jewish population numbered **755 000** persons.⁴ By the time of the **1923** census, Jews in Lithuania numbered somewhere between **153,743** (the American Jewish Year Book figure) and **250,000** (Dov Levin's figure). Experts consider the 1923 census misleading because Vilnius was (politically) in Poland between the two World Wars. (In the 1925 census, there were 95,675 Jews

in Latvia).⁵ This massive reduction in numbers was essentially because of migration to Western Europe, the United States, Argentina, Palestine, Canada and South Africa. By the time the Nazis arrived in June 1941, the Lithuanian Jewish population was approximately one-third of the 1897 figure, **220,000** according to both Levin⁶ and Efraim Zuroff,⁷ as a result of poverty, persecution, pogroms and the prospect of better life in other places. The ultimate demise of Lithuanian Jewry is a dramatic case study of genocide: from some 220,000 in 1941 to perhaps only 5,000 today. (My emphases.)

A *minority* of Jews living in SA in 1948 and throughout apartheid were like my wife's parents (first generation), who arrived in SA in the late 1920s, leaving behind parents, siblings, cousins and other close relatives who were all killed.

Colin would have appreciated what you wrote about his first cousin, Rabbi Bennie Isaacson, with whom Colin and I were at high school. I would never have imaged *that* member of our rowdy gang becoming a rabbi!

**Dr Peter Arnold,
NSW, Australia**

P.S. anyone interested in obtaining a digital copy of our book can contact me at parnold@ozemail.com.au

David Saks writes:

Thank-you for this considered response on this aspect of my article. What I perhaps should have written was "1st, 2nd or at most 3rd-generation...." Better still, I should have made clearer that when referring to first & second generation SA Jews, the time period I had in mind was in the years immediately following the Holocaust, and not later decades, when there would certainly have been many third and indeed growing numbers of fourth generation Jews in the country. In 1945, though, I think it is correct to say that most of the community would have been first or second generation, with a smaller number of 3rd generation members.

Put simply, the majority of Jews who lived under apartheid were indeed third and fourth generations (certainly after about 1960s), but in the immediate post-war period leading in to the early years of the post-1948 National Party administration, the majority probably still would have been 1st or second generation.

A WUNDERKIND IN WONDERLAND

Douglas Davis

Douglas Davis, born in Pretoria, was exiled from South Africa in the mid-1960s. He has since lived all over the world, including 10 years in Israel, where he was a senior editor of the Jerusalem Post. He was subsequently based in London as the paper's European correspondent.

I didn't know what to expect, but there was no doubt that the figure striding confidently into the car park of the *Jerusalem Post* was Denis Goldberg. He looked completely at ease; as though he belonged; as though he owned the place. He was slight, stocky and bald; a roly-poly figure with a bounce in his step. From a distance I could just detect a smile. He was still, as I remembered him: the cheeky-chappy.

'Hey Denis,' I called out as he approached, a rucksack slung over his right shoulder. He waved and headed towards me with renewed determination. How did twenty-two years in prison affect a man? I was almost afraid to look. But when he was close enough for me to make out his features, I had my answer.

'My God, you've hardly changed at all.'

'You must be...' but before he could complete the sentence I gathered him up and we hugged each other.

'Twenty-two bloody years. It's been a long time.'

'Do I know you?' asked Denis. 'Have we actually met?'

'Not quite,' I replied. 'But the last time I saw you, you were in the dock at the Supreme Court in Pretoria.'

'You were there? In court? Really?' He was flushed with excitement.

His reaction to the news that I had witnessed the defining event in his life suggested that I was now here to acknowledge and validate the huge price he paid for his principles.

'Yes, I was there. But I must tell you that after I heard the judge sentence you to four life terms I never expected to see you again.'

I looked again at Accused No. 3 (after Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu) whom I had last seen at the Rivonia Trial – the Trial of the Century in South Africa – and I was astonished that he had emerged, apparently undamaged, a free man.

Yet the question that filled my head at that moment had nothing to do with his heroics. How, I wondered, did this Jew – for he was unmistakably a Jew in appearance, intelligence, energy, warmth and ebullience – survive the darkest, most brutal days of the apartheid regime in a maximum security jail? Unlike the others who were convicted, all black, Denis was white and Jewish, a double traitor in the eyes of the regime. How had he survived? How did they let him survive?

But the questions could wait.

‘Is this all your luggage?’ I asked, levering the rucksack off Denis’s shoulder and heaving it into the boot of my snow-white **Citroën**. I unlocked the passenger door and ushered him in.

‘Let’s go.’

The image of Denis that had been in my mind since 1964 was of a rather vulnerable figure whose face was dominated by black, owl-like glasses. He was almost swallowed up in the crush of his fellow-accused. The prisoners’ dock has been rebuilt and expanded but it was still inadequate for the ten most dangerous men to threaten the apartheid regime: Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Denis Goldberg...

After my initial shock at seeing the black and white accused together in a single dock – two other white accused, Lionel Bernstein and James Kantor, also Jews, were not convicted – it struck me that they all seemed to be so much older, larger, worldlier and better equipped for survival than Denis. They were grown-ups in a grown-up world, able to take care of themselves in the jungle of a tough prison system. Denis, then aged thirty, was the youngest of the accused. A boy among men.

The accused were intended to be humiliated and rendered anonymous in their identical, prison-issue khaki suits. But Mandela, even before he became Mandela, was a commanding figure. His natural authority was immediately evident, the obvious leader around whom the others fluttered during adjournments. Denis stood out, too, but for different reasons. He was a foot soldier: devoted, dedicated and no doubt technically savvy, but no leader. He was a natural corporal. He did not, never would, have the qualities of a general. He was destined to hang on the coat-tails of others.

His occasional caustic remarks in court revealed an acerbic, talented tongue. Such *chutzpah*, I thought then, might serve him well to keep up his courage and, perhaps, bring comfort to his fellow-accused, but I worried that it would become a liability when he entered the dark heart of the prison system. His jailers were unlikely to indulge his barmitzvah-boy cleverness for long. Still, that was the most optimistic scenario: the smart money was on death sentences.

Denis, a civil engineer, was rounded up with virtually the entire high command of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the African National Congress, when police raided their headquarters on 11 July 1963 (Mandela himself had been scooped up in a road block and was already in prison). The headquarters, a secluded, sprawling complex known as Liliesleaf Farm, was situated in a discreet outer suburb of Johannesburg, Rivonia.



Anne-Marie Wolpe, Judge Albie Sachs, Denis Goldberg and SA Jewish Board of Deputies President Zev Krengel. The picture was taken at a panel discussion on Jewish responses to apartheid held at Liliesleaf heritage centre, July 2013.

Like most of the others, Denis was charged with fomenting revolution, recruiting others to train in the use of explosives, conspiring to assist foreign troops when they invaded South Africa, and soliciting funds from

sympathisers abroad. Each charge carried a death sentence. All of the accused were probably saved from the hangman's noose by Mandela's carefully calculated final statement from the dock, which amounted to a challenge to the judge: a non-racial, democratic South Africa was an ideal which he hoped to live to see, but one for which he was, if necessary, prepared to die. Denis was found guilty and sentenced to four life terms.

He had reason to expect the worst. According to one report, the military shopping list he oversaw called for 48 000 land mines each containing five pounds of dynamite, 210 000 hand-grenades, each containing a quarter of a pound of dynamite, as well as petrol bombs, syringe bombs, thermite bombs, 1500 timing devices for bombs and Molotov cocktails. The requirements also included 144 tons of ammonium nitrate, 21.6 tons of aluminium powder and 15 tons of black powder. There were provisions for a nucleus army of 7000 soldiers, many to be trained abroad. The combat doctrine was based on the successful Algerian and Cuban models.

In 1985, twenty-two years after the Rivonia arrests, Denis was made an offer he couldn't refuse: freedom in exchange for his signature on a document in which he renounced the use of violence. The deal was brokered with the South African regime by a remarkable Israeli. Herut Lapid, a kibbutznik, had set himself the daunting task of freeing Jews from prisons around the world – wherever they were, whatever their offences. Well almost. He won the freedom of murderers and bank robbers, but he declined to campaign for anyone whose conviction involved drugs. Denis's case fell well within his remit and Lapid plunged in enthusiastically. A similar deal had been rejected by Mandela; Denis accepted it. He was soon on a plane bound for Tel Aviv – and freedom.

A few days after Denis arrived in Israel, I tracked him down to Kibbutz Ma'ayan Baruch, the home of his daughter, a couple of miles from the border with Lebanon.

'Can we get together for an interview?'

I was surprised by his immediate and enthusiastic response: 'I'll come to Jerusalem tomorrow.' Then, after a moment's pause, he asked shyly: 'Could you put me up for a few days.'

That is how the chief bomb-maker of Umkhonto we Sizwe came to be sitting in my car, on his way to meet my family, to live indefinitely as a guest in my home.

We drove through Jerusalem on a perfect afternoon in early spring. The Old City walls glowed gold in the light of the setting sun and Denis was staring intently at the chaotic traffic and busy people around us. His face was pressed to the car window like a child outside a toyshop on Christmas Eve, greedily sucking up the sights and sounds. His reaction was not, I suspected, because he was at the epicentre of the Jewish world but because he has not seen so much activity for twenty-two years.

‘You can’t imagine how exciting this is for me,’ he said with childish relish. ‘So many cars, so many people, so many colours, so much movement, so much excitement... It gives me a real high.’

Then came the highlight of his journey: ‘Hey, look at that,’ he cried out. ‘I can’t believe it... Did you see? There’s a guy carrying an entire fridge on his back with just one strap around him holding it on.’ He turned and watched the labourer’s progress until he was out of sight.

‘I hope I’m not being a nuisance,’ said Denis, as we left the commercial centre of the city and headed into the suburbs.

‘Of course not. But I warn you that the accommodation is fairly spartan. Two rather small storage rooms, knocked together, adjoining our apartment.’

‘That sounds great.’

‘Be careful what you wish for,’ I said. ‘There is a bed, a cupboard and only one small, square external window. And I’m afraid to tell you that we call it ‘The Cell’.

‘Perfect,’ said Denis. ‘If there’s one thing I know about, it’s cells.’

Denis was free, but he was a man in torment. And he was eager to talk about it almost as soon as he deposited his rucksack, still unpacked, on to his bed in ‘The Cell’. Should he have agreed to the terms of the South African authorities in exchange for his freedom? What role would he be play in the future of the ANC? Would he have *any* role in the future? And how would his comrades react to news that he had struck a deal? Would they ever trust him again? Would they forgive him and accept him back into the inner circle? Or would his moment of weakness, his eagerness for freedom, expunge the merits of his twenty-two-year sacrifice and cast him into political oblivion?

I feared that the answers would not bring him the comfort he sought. Liberation movements do not deal kindly with those who are perceived to

break the bonds of solidarity and strike bargains with the enemy, even in moments of weakness. Especially in moments of weakness.

‘We’ll speak later,’ I assured him, ‘when we’ve had dinner and the children are in bed.’

His face brightened at the mention of children.

‘Can I meet them now?’

Denis was enchanted. His focus switched entirely to the children, aged four to eleven. The torment of freedom was banished and, once again, he was totally absorbed and at ease. He sat and entertained them while they had their evening meal, coaxing out every detail about each one of them: what they were learning in school, their favourite games, their best friends. Then, always asking permission first, he read them bedtime stories and, when the moment came, he tucked each of the four into bed and, reluctantly, switched off their lights.

He rose each morning at five, still in synch with the prison regime, and was showered and dressed before any of the family was up. When the children awoke, he sat with them at the kitchen table, transfixed, as he watched them eat their cornflake breakfast. And the children responded to the love and warmth he showed them. They were accustomed to guests who came for dinner and stayed for days or weeks or months. It had happened more than once. But they were not accustomed to such high-octane adoration.

‘You don’t have to do that,’ I said after he waved them goodbye on his first morning with us.

‘It’s a great pleasure,’ he replied. ‘I love children, and... well, it’s been twenty-two years since I’ve seen and held a child. You cannot imagine how much this means to me.’

I was beginning to detect several discrete personalities encased in this highly compartmentalised body. Denis not only loved children but somehow seemed to be one of them. Did his emergence as a bomb-maker, I wonder, coincide with the birth of his own children? Was his decision to embrace public violence perhaps a desperate cry for attention at a time when his own small children were soaking up all the emotional and physical energy at home? What was clear was that several personalities were coexisting within a single, spare frame: the man who adored children, the adult who

struggled to be one of them, and the cold-eyed saboteur who was ready to kill for his cause. Charming Denis meet Ruthless Goldberg.

All this touched on other questions that intruded unbidden into my mind: why, after a separation of two decades, did he so enthusiastically accept my invitation and volunteer to come to Jerusalem – unless he was desperate to get away from the working ideal of the collective kibbutz? Or desperate to get away from his daughter? And why did he not mention his son, who was in London? Or his wife, also in London?

The answer to the last question came almost immediately. Would I mind, he asked, if he called his wife from our phone the following morning? He had not spoken to her since his arrival in Israel. I guessed that he had not spoken to her for over two decades, since she last visited him in prison.

It was clear that Denis was estranged from his family. His wife, faced with arbitrary arrest and constant police harassment, moved to London with their two children, aged nine and eleven, just two years after Denis was sentenced. There, she constructed a new life for herself. I suspected, too, that Denis was estranged from his children. Sadly, his Marxist ideological commitment prevented him from taking pride in their life choices and achievements: his daughter had become a Zionist and was living a happy and contented life on a kibbutz (the most positive example of the Marxist ideal), while his son was a successful stockbroker in London. They might have been justified in harbouring a sense of grievance that their father's political commitments had deprived them of a normal childhood.

But I believed Denis's alienation from his family was secondary to his concern about the effect on his reputation of his decision to snatch at freedom while his ANC colleagues continued to languish in jail.

When Denis turned off the children's lights, he found me in the lounge and sat down in a chair opposite.

'Can we have that talk – remember, you promised?'

And so we began hours of discussion which continued long into that night and the subsequent nights he spent with us.

I asked him the first question that occurred to me when we met in the car park that afternoon: how did he survive all those years in jail?

'When I finished school I trained as a civil engineer. In prison I held on to my sanity by returning to studies through the University of South Africa [a

distance-learning institution which offers degrees by correspondence]. I now have degrees in public administration, history, geography, and library science. The downside of my release was that I was still halfway through a law degree...'

He was on a roll. The words tumbled out and his face shone with a boyish exuberance. Denis was clearly an intelligent man. That was the first point – the most important impression – he wanted to make.

But for all that, he continued, his ability to endure prison life was becoming increasingly hard to bear. 'For the past six months I felt I had had enough. I felt it was time to go.'

And so, when he received the offer of freedom, his psychological need to get out was at its height. 'At that stage, I just couldn't carry on.' He paused. 'I have always had a conflict between my duty to the movement and my own personal needs.' And that is as close as he ever came to any meaningful introspection or analysis of his predicament.

'What now?' I asked. 'What does the future hold for you?'

He talked immediately of his passions – his love of art, theatre and music, particularly opera. He cannot wait to attend his first post-prison performance.

Then, suddenly, without warning, his mood changed and he returned to the issues he had raised in 'The Cell'. For the first time, his tone bordered on self-pity. It was the dominant theme in our conversations from then on. Had he betrayed his comrades? Had he tarnished his reputation forever by accepting the conditions set by his jailers for his release? Had he, after all those years in jail, squandered the opportunity of a place in the pantheon of South African resistance leaders? Had he betrayed his pristine Marxist credentials?

He was consumed with the urgent need to do penance for having acted venally by accepting the Israeli-inspired solution; to expiate the mortal sin he felt he now carried. He concluded that he would find salvation only by devoting the rest of his life to working for the African National Congress in London – working in any capacity, however menial, 'even if that means turning the handle on a Gestetner machine putting out ANC literature'.

'You know, Denis, I remember your reaction when you were sentenced to life.'

‘You do?’

‘Yes, when the judge sentenced you to life, you called out, “Life! Life is wonderful!” Don’t you think there’s a clue to your future in what you yourself said then?’

‘Meaning?’

‘Meaning you’ve done what you’ve done, you’ve paid the price – a huge price – and now you have earned the right to a normal life. Give yourself a break. Take walks in the park. Enjoy the theatre, visit art galleries, go to the opera, listen to music. Get to know your family again. Start living. You don’t have to walk around like the man with the fridge on his back. Life *is* wonderful.’

He looked at me for a moment, and I sensed his excitement at the prospect of what freedom offered. But I knew that he also sensed the danger. His identity was totally bound up with his ideological convictions. I was challenging not only his political commitment but also the core of his identity. He realised it, too, as he leant forward, his head resting in his hands, rocking slowly from side to side.

‘How can I do that? How can I? I understand what you’re saying, but it would mean all those years in jail were meaningless. All the sacrifice for nothing. I can’t do it. I just can’t.’

‘You’re in a psychological clip-joint, Denis. For God’s sake, get out now. You’ve already paid a high price. It’s time to go before the price goes up again. This is your chance to escape from the past.’

‘No, no, no...’

‘You have a very rare gift,’ I tell him.

He looks at me, almost imploring: ‘What’s that?’

‘You have a gift for life – you have the passion, the energy and the capacity to extract every ounce of pleasure out of life. There are clearly things that you love, that give you great enjoyment. You have a family. You have your freedom back. There are decades to catch up on. *Carpe Diem*. This is your opportunity. Seize the moment.’

I felt I had his attention again. He was silent for a moment. Then he shook his head again. Slowly, sadly. I detected a momentary flicker, but no, he could not let go of the need to give meaning to the sacrifice he has made.

‘If I do that,’ he said, ‘it will mean that my years in jail were meaningless. A complete waste. I can’t just walk away from everything I have done.’

In spite of his incarceration, Denis retained an enormous vibrancy. Despite his protests, I sensed his pent-up need to take huge gulps of freedom, his appetite to taste life again. I told him that, having sacrificed so much for the fight against apartheid, it was time to put down the burden and devote the rest of his life to family, friends and activities that gave him genuine pleasure. He could, of course, choose the self-flagellating ‘Gestetner’ route, but he really needed to find an occupation that offered a greater challenge to his intelligence than the handle of a duplicating machine. And, having already sacrificed so much that gives meaning to ordinary people’s lives, he still had the opportunity to make up for lost time and enjoy the pleasures, great and small, of a normal life. Who would blame him?

We were locked in a circular argument. From time to time, he seemed to light up at the possibilities, but just as quickly the light was extinguished by the central contradiction in his life: Denis was a natural *bon vivant*, but he was also a doctrinaire Marxist. He seemed to feel guilty about pleasure. In a perverse sense, I think he actually derived pleasure from pain, which was now entirely self-administered: the more he suffered, the closer he would come to absolution; to expiating the sin of his final collaboration. He could not acknowledge that those twenty-two years in jail were simply wasted, or at least that it was time to move on. They must be made to mean something, however discredited he might have become in the eyes of his comrades for having succumbed to a faustian pact with the apartheid authorities.

I realised then that I was not about to change the course of Denis’s life. He did not contemplate settling in Israel, which he found to be an ideological embarrassment, and I had no desire to convert him to Zionism. But he was still in his fifties and had a life ahead of him. I implored him to consider his next steps with the greatest care.

The following night we repeated the conversation. This time I had a task for him. It is the Jewish festival of Purim and next morning the children would go to school in the fancy-dress costumes that my wife, Helen, had made for the occasion. The big girl would be a queen, the younger a witch, and the big boy would be a pirate.

‘As the chief military officer of Umkhonto we Sizwe,’ I asked, ‘would you make a weapon for my little pirate?’

‘It will be a great pleasure,’ he said. Another night of conversation ended at daybreak, by which time Denis had produced an elaborate and wonderfully decorated cardboard dagger which would be the envy of every child in my son’s class.

But amid the fun, Denis was also morose. He had had the first of what would be several very long conversations with his wife in London. From the little he told me, I presumed that they were discussing the possibility of getting together again, and I presumed that she did not regard the prospect of a reconciliation with unmitigated enthusiasm. I had probed deeply into his life, but I did not inquire into this most sensitive issue, and he did not offer any explanation. What I did understand was that putting the pieces of a marriage together after a twenty-year hiatus was a complicated business.

Then, after the fifth morning of whispered conversations, a deal was apparently struck and Denis ended the conversation with a huge beam. He would, he announced, be leaving for London the following day. But on the evening before he left, we receive sad news about a child in our neighbourhood, a contemporary of our son. While walking to the local shopping centre on an errand that afternoon, the boy had idly kicked at a plastic pipe on the footpath. It was a bomb and the boy’s foot was amputated in the explosion. We were distraught at the news. Denis was in tears.

There were more tears the following morning when Denis hugged and kissed each of the children as they left for school. A couple of hours later, his rucksack back on his shoulder, he embraced Helen and I warmly before setting off in a taxi on the first leg of his journey to London that evening. My last image was of Denis blowing us kisses as his taxi disappeared.

We never saw or heard from Dennis again. Not directly. There was no letter of appreciation for our hospitality. Nor was there any acknowledgement of the succour he received from Israel or the role that one dedicated Israeli had played in securing his freedom.

But we did receive an indirect message from him. Somehow, between leaving our home and boarding his flight to London, Denis managed to give an interview to a Hebrew-language newspaper in which he is reported to have justified indiscriminate acts of terrorism by Palestinians on Israelis, even if those attacks led to the mutilation and death of innocent children. And in the many long and self-serving interviews he has given since leaving our home, he never fails to attack Israel and Israelis. In case he has

erased his encounter with Israel from his memory, I hope this helps him to adjust his personal biography.



Portrait of Denis Goldberg by fellow former prisoner Paul Trehwela, London, 2002

I am a simple journalist, lacking the skills of the psychologist. But it is necessary, even for a simple hack, to observe human behaviour, to try to get under the skin of interview subjects in order to understand what makes them tick; what makes them behave as they do.

At the time of his arrest, Denis was thirty years old. I can understand young, unencumbered men taking fantastic risks to promote profoundly held beliefs, but the husband of a young wife and two small children? How could he have risked all that? If he had calculated the risk, as he would have done, he must have known he would almost certainly be captured. And it was highly likely that he would face the death penalty; at the very least, life in prison. By taking the decision he did, he was effectively abandoning his family.

Was this the behaviour of a man who loved children? Or was this the behaviour of a man with the impulses and instincts of a child; a man who was, perhaps, unable to cope with the attention lavished on his own children and desperate to reclaim the limelight for himself? He expressed unlimited love and commitment for the ANC and Marxism, yet showed no remorse for having spent the best part of his marriage and virtually all of his children's childhood in a distant prison cell.

I did not ask why he left his daughter and her kibbutz after just a few days to move in with us. I guessed she might have been less understanding of the uncertainties and ambiguities that he carried to Israel in that meagre rucksack. Nor did I ask about his wife and his son in London, and he did not mention them. Of course, I judge him, but I can afford to judge with a degree of impassivity. I do so without the pain of an abandoned wife or children, who must have suffered terribly from his absence.

I believe that, for Denis, the unkindest cut of all is that he was plucked from the darkness of his prison cell and carried to the bright light of freedom by a man who was a proud Jew and Israeli. And the reason that the kibbutznik Herut Lapid had moved heaven and earth to secure his release was precisely because Denis himself was a Jew. Nor was Denis in any doubt about this.

‘He assured me it was not a political issue,’ he says. ‘He told me he was doing it because I was Jewish – a “member of the family”,’ adding ungraciously: ‘I’ve never heard such nonsense.’

Perhaps not. But was this the same Denis who, on a matter of principle, was prepared to turn his back on his family and spend the best years of their life in jail? Where was the principle that failed to compel him to reject the outstretched hand of the Jew who fought for his freedom? Why did he not simply explain that he did not consider himself a Jew and that his saviour was labouring under a misapprehension; that he did not believe the Jews were a family, a tribe or a people, who, like others, harboured legitimate national aspirations; that he simply could not accept the offer if it was being made on such a basis? Where were his principles when Herut Lapid offered him the chance of freedom – as a Jew?

Most prisoners, like Denis, who can expect their release to come only with the angel of death, might regard a rescuer as an angel of mercy. But for Denis, Herut Lapid was no more than an agent of Zionist imperialism, a legitimate target for Palestinians terrorism – as, of course, was I and my family.

I understand much of the process. I came from a similar genetic pool and had travelled a similar path. Like Denis, I had been spat out by the country of my birth, disconnected myself from my people and regarded the Jewish national home as a colonial aberration. Unlike Denis, I had the great good fortune to find my way back, reconciling body and soul, restoring my identity and my place in the world, while regaining a sense of equilibrium in my life. And all that without resiling from my opposition to apartheid or compromising my loathing of racism.

I had offered Denis the chance to change the trajectory of his story, to regain his authentic identity, to reassess his future. Ultimately, though, he found it easier to cling to his grab-bag of clapped-out ideological orthodoxies.

Which leaves one final question. Could he really have started a new life without the detritus of the old or was he too afraid of the person he might

have met across the ideological divide? Charting a new path, however uncertain, would have involved a potentially perilous journey into unknown territory. It might have been exhilarating, it might have been dangerous, but ultimately he did not have the stomach for the challenge. I know he was tempted, but he could not, would not, take the leap. Instead, he chose to remain locked in the sterility of an ideological prison which he had crafted and from which there was no escape. It was, in my view, a cowardly decision. And a treacherous one.

Treachery is a big word, but it is hard to find a more accurate description. Denis betrayed the trust not only of his family, faith, history, culture and heritage, but also of Israel, the country that had granted him refuge, and the people who had offered him sanctuary. Behind the warm, ebullient exterior beat an icy heart. He was an alienated, eviscerated soul who was incapable of abandoning the dream of his Marxist idyll and of living with a more realistic sense of who and what he is.

Denis Goldberg did pay the price for cutting a deal with the apartheid regime. He would perform menial service for the ANC in London for a further seventeen years before returning to South Africa. And when he did, all that time he had spent in jail and laboured for the ANC did not translate into so much as a hero's welcome. Unlike two fellow Jewish Marxists, Joe Slovo and Ronnie Kasrils, both of whom had spent the apartheid years in exile, there was no high-profile political job for the hapless, deracinated Denis. Instead, he was thrown a bone and appointed a special adviser to Kasrils, who was then Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry.

Denis Goldberg, a confusing mass of duplicity and self-delusion, could not escape his past. He had become its victim.

READERS' COMMENTS

While I respect Douglas Davis's writing on contemporary anti-Semitism, I think my portrait of Denis Goldberg speaks against the tone of Davis's article in the current issue of Jewish Affairs. Had he spent time in prison in South Africa with Denis Goldberg in the struggle against apartheid, he would not have written the way he did.

I first met Denis 58 years ago in Cape Town, and was with him again in prison in Pretoria three years later. He was an inspirational person to be with, and he kept us prisoners in good spirits.

As the only white person to face the death sentence with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and their colleagues when convicted in June 1964 before being sentenced to life imprisonment the next day, Denis was possibly the most central person to validate the ANC's non-racial perspective. The Pan Africanist Congress - and especially its military wing, Poqo, which had already killed white construction workers at Bashee Bridge in Eastern Cape in February 1963 - was dynamic and increasingly popular in opposition to the ANC when Denis and his colleagues were arrested in Rivonia in July 1963.

"It's life, and life is wonderful!" - his shout to his mother after being sentenced (she hadn't heard properly) - has remained his belief, right to this year when, suffering from terminal cancer, in his wheelchair, he said: "We were in crisis then, and we are in crisis now. And only the people can get it right."

The deaths of his first wife, Esme (whom he rejoined in London), second wife, Edelgard (who died in South Africa), and daughter, Hilary, were borne with the same courage.

Denis deserves respect, and gratitude.

Paul Trewhela
Aylesbury, UK.

FEODORA CLOUTS: “THE GRAND OLD LADY OF CAPE TOWN JEWRY”

Hazel Jungbacke

Hazel Jungbacke is the youngest daughter of the late Feodora Clouts. A social worker by profession, she worked for over twenty years for the Highlands House Jewish aged home in Cape Town.

The title of this article is taken from the obituary of Feodora Clouts (1899-1996) by Willie Katz. It well sums up the impact and energy of this remarkable woman, a redoubtable Jewish communal worker, Zionist activist and educationalist, and the mother of, amongst others, the distinguished South African poet Sydney Clouts.

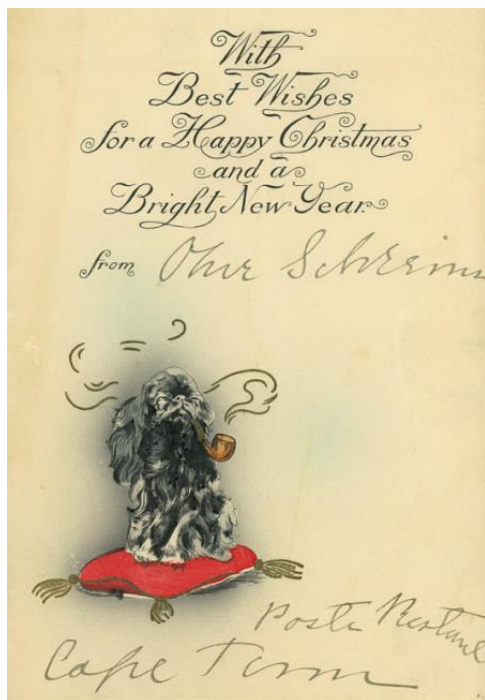
Feodora was the fourth child of Latvian immigrants to South Africa Wulf and Jenny (Sheina) Friedlander. Born in Mitau, Courland, in 1846, Wulf and his brother Isaac arrived at the Cape in 1879 and settled in Rhenosterfontein, where they opened a trading station. Twenty years later, they purchased the farm De Aar for the sum of £11 000. In 1902, they subdivided it into a township, today the main railway junction between Cape Town and Kimberley. In his book *Karoo* (1955), Lawrence G Green refers to the Friedlander brothers as “great figures in the railway camp. During boom times they often filled bucket after bucket with sovereigns in the course of the day. Farmers who distrusted the banks left their money in the safe at the Friedlanders’ store”.



Wulf Friedlander (1846-1928)

During this time, Wulf returned to Latvia where he married a first cousin, Jenny, in 1892. He was 46 years old! This author, his grand-daughter, has a much treasured leather bound collection of the telegrams received on the occasion. The couple had five children before Jenny's untimely passing. Wulf was sufficiently wealthy to travel back to Courland in 1904 with his five children. There he married Johanna Hermer in Konigsberg. Johanna came from Grobin and had attended high school in Libau. Feodora refers to her as a "fine and cultured woman, educated and musical and, a beloved step mother". They had two children together, Max and Sybil. The family then went to London but had hardly settled when Isaac Friedlander lost the family fortune on the London Stock Exchange. They returned to Cape Town and from there moved to De Aar. Feodora mentions a little railway school they attended until standard six. She remembered the family receiving the *SA Jewish Chronicle* regularly and how much they loved reading it.

Olive Schreiner was a regular visitor and there are treasured letters from her thanking Mrs Friedlander for her cake and enquiring about the health of "the little one". In an interview with John Simon in 1981, Feodora remembered how fascinated she was watching Schreiner pacing up and down loudly declaring her views on feminism. It had a profound influence on her. Minna Levitas writes that Feodora was "an avid fighter for the place



of women in the ranks of masculine control in the Zionist circle". This is backed by an interview with Anne Sarzin in the *Zionist Record* of 1 May 1981, where Feodora recalled "the narrow outlook that characterised so many of the men who were in the foreground of Jewish and Zionist activity decades ago". In an interview with Gwynne Schrire, she also describes how ladies were expected to serve tea for Dorshei Zion functions but not invited to attend. She felt that as Chairman of the Bnoth Zion (BZ) she should be allowed in the gallery. When she arrived Mr Gitlin said "you can't come in" and the reply was "I am the chairman and I insist that I come in". This was the beginning of SA women Zionists asserting themselves!

New Year's card to the Friedlander family from Olive Schreiner

Feodora and her sister Annetta attended Ellerslie Boarding School, Sea Point, for two years. I quote from two precious letters sent to them by their father during their stay:

Firstly, above everything remain Jewesses and be proud of it in all your actions and deeds. Never be ashamed of acknowledging that you belong to a Great Race.

Secondly, be honest and truthful in all your actions, as one falsehood leads to endless falsehoods.

Thirdly, I want you to be ladies in the true sense of the word. I do not mean that you should show off either in your dress or loudness of talk as you will find that the more loud and ostentatious they are, soon people get tired of their company.

Fourth, treat your teachers with all the respect due to them

Fifth, do your lessons first and then you can have your play as I wish you to get all the education possible.

Another letter asks them to respect the Sabbath, for which they would be “all the more respected by Jews and Christians alike.”

All this from a Latvian immigrant with no formal lessons in English! Wulf had received a Talmudic education but otherwise was a self-educated man who read widely. Feodora described him as religious but not “superstitiously Orthodox.”

In 1914 Wulf and his family, now in very reduced circumstances, moved to Cape Town. Feodora became a pupil at Good Hope Seminary, where she obtained a first class matric and then a bursary enabling her to study at the University of Cape Town. At UCT, she was elected Head Woman student in 1919, the second woman to receive this honour as the university was established in 1917.

In an article by Mary Simons (UCT Alumni 1986), Feodora mentions the cool attitude towards the Coloured and Jewish students (there were about twenty Jewish women) and



a superior attitude towards the Afrikaners. Cissie Gool and Waradia Abdurahman were students at the time. However despite the prejudices mentioned above the university “was like a family”.

After graduating in 1920, Feodora taught in Cradock and then Boshoff. She recorded that there were three Jewish families in Boshoff and they did not talk to one another (“I was the only one who talked to the whole Jewish community!”). During this time she was in correspondence with a young lawyer, Phil Clouts, who had recently returned to Cape Town after reading law at St John’s College, Cambridge. Rev A P Bender, who had given Hebrew lessons to the two sisters at Ellerslie, encouraged the beginning of a Student Jewish Association at the University and through this the students formed a committee to collect money for a Judaica section at the University library. Phil was also involved and this is how he met Feodora. Sara Sloman and Feodora collected £600 and Chief Rabbi J H Hertz advised on the selection of books that were sent from London.

Feodora and Phil married in January 1925 and twin boys Sydney and Cyril and daughter Jenny arrived in quick succession. I was born somewhat later, in 1940. Although very involved with domestic chores Feodora helped Morris Alexander, MP, in an election campaign. She commented how hard they worked and how a bonus had been meeting Mrs Ruth Alexander (daughter of the famous Judaic scholar Solomon Schechter), “a remarkable woman”.

The following is taken from Sarzin’s 1981 article:

This campaigning might have been a contributing reason for a deputation to Feodora soon after (1929), by members of the Bnoth Zion, asking her to become their chairman. She was not even a member but accepted for a two-year period. She was instantly propelled into the forefront of the conflict between the association and Dorshei Zion, the men’s society. Feodora warmly remembers women of the calibre of Rebecca Zukerman, who stood for Zionist ideals not yet accepted within the community and who would stand up to Jacob Gitlin (a “remarkable dictator, not out of self-interest, but single minded and the women very acquiescent”). She regretted very much that the minutes of the 1929 meetings had been “thoughtlessly discarded”, since these “would have provided a storehouse of information to modern researchers of the communal beginnings in South Africa” and also “revealed the bitter conflict between the BZA and the DZ which high-handedly appropriated the proceeds of BZA fundraising efforts”.

There were arguments about everything. Their idea of establishing a Hebrew nursery school was considered unacceptable. There was

opposition on all sides. Rosa Van Gelderen, then principal of the Girls Central School in Buitenkant Street, wrote to the *SA Jewish Chronicle* maintaining that it was an excuse for lazy mothers wishing to be rid of their children. Shoshana Gordon, a teacher from Israel (Palestine) steeped in the Froebel system, persevered and by 1930 the BZA occupied premises, loaned by Mrs Max Cohen, in Molteno Road. The school flourished and a second nursery school was opened in the Zionist Hall, Hope Street. Feodora mentioned to John Simon that a great deal was also owed to the large influx of young women who had had a very fine education, including Hebrew, at Lithuanian Hebrew schools. This influx was due to the Quota Bill that had just been promulgated.

The Quota Bill led in 1930 to a delegation representing various Jewish organisations and synagogues coming together to approach the Minister of Interior, Dr D F Malan, to get some relaxation of its terms, which would heavily impact on Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. It comprised some thirty people, including MPs Morris Kentridge (father of the famed lawyer Sydney and grandfather of the artist William Kentridge) and Morris Alexander. With much feeling, Feodora told Simon how they were received and how she would never forget the “indignity that we were made to stand as beggars [while] Malan sat there expressionless, cool and aloof.”

Feodora recalls a Zionist conference held in Cape Town in 1930, her strongest recollection of which was that those who spoke most and so well were the Revisionists. There was a lot of argument because Jabotinsky's ideas were beginning to be talked about. In fact, Jabotinsky visited that year and Feodora, in her capacity as BZ chairman, hosted him for many meals at home. She later told Simon that he was “one of the few people that she had contact with that she was grateful for, if for nothing else, the opportunity of having met and spoken to him and his wife. There was an aura about Jabotinsky and even though his ideas were controversial one could recognise he was a great man. People treated him very badly especially as [Jacob] Gitlin did not like his ideas and the BZ was the only organisation that gave him a formal reception to thank him for having come and to pay him respect because he was a man who gave his life to his people.”

Also mentioned were visits by other emissaries. In a letter from Rebecca Sieff (August 1931), after her visit, she writes that she had written “an article for the *SA Jewish Chronicle* on Youth Aliyah in fulfilment of a promise extracted from me by your redoubtable Mr Gitlin.”

Another high-level visit was by Dr Chaim and Vera Weizmann for the Keren Hayasod. As a founder of Wizo, Mrs Weizmann “was an inspiration to the local women.”

Feodora goes on to speak of her friendship with Tony Saphra, whose dream it was to form a Union of Jewish Women (UJW) whose purpose was to complement the work of the Zionist organisations and to combine Jewish with civic and interdenominational activities. Together they co-founded the Cape Town branch in 1932. There was opposition at that time from people like *SA Jewish Chronicle* editor Marcia Gitlin, who thought there was no need for another Women’s organisation. There was also antagonism from other groups such as the Women’s Zionist League, founded by the Weizmanns when they came out that same year.



Union of Jewish Women committee (undated). FC seated, behind table

Feodora's concerns stretched beyond Jewish communal affairs to the great inequalities in South Africa, particularly regarding education. In 1935 she was approached to stand as a candidate for the Cape School Board, was

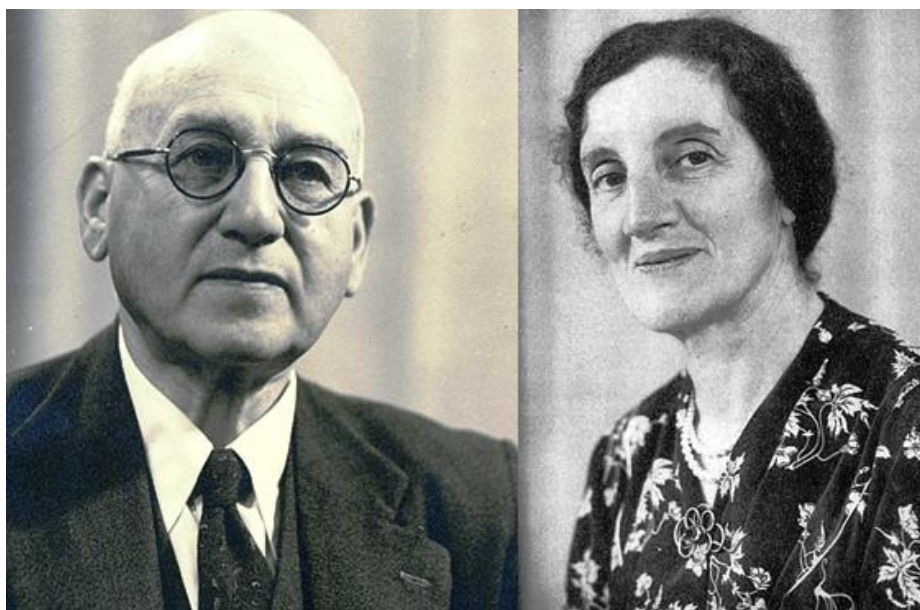
elected and spent ten years as a member. It was a terrible experience for her when the 'purge' started, that is the weeding out of those of not complete 'white' ancestry. She and Phil joined the non-racial Liberal party at its outset.



Rev Bender was also a member of the Board. It was he who persuaded Phil to further his studies at St John's College, Cambridge. Feodora considered him to be "a man of fine scholarship and no pretensions." Rev Bender had no compunction about entertaining the Reform leader Rabbi M C Weiler and did not see the

Reform movement as a threat. He gave lectures on art and had told the sculptor Lippy Lipschitz that his collection of pictures, sculptures and furniture was 'his greatest pleasure.' Feodora treasured a book of fairy tales, illustrated by Edmund Dulac, that he gave her, with an accompanying note expressing the hope that the illustrations would "prove an inspiration" to her.

Philip suffered a serious heart attack in 1942 and his career in law became limited. His condition sadly deteriorated until he became a semi invalid. When he passed away, aged 67, in November 1957, the *SA Jewish Chronicle* reported on a last tribute paid to him by his colleagues in the Supreme Court. On behalf of the Bar and Side Bar, H M Bloch QC addressed the gathering, making special mention of the help and encouragement which the deceased had received from his wife.



Philip and Fedora Clouts

Soon after her retirement Feodora joined her family in London. Both sons and two devoted daughters-in-law plus three grandsons received her with open arms. Hazel had already joined them in 1966. Her sister Jenny and family were living in Miami and Feodora was a regular visitor. Hazel, with her newly wedded husband, returned to Cape Town in November 1970, preceded by a few months by Feodora. She was a devoted mother, mother-in-law and granny to Hazel, Tonny, Cara, Nils and Gina.

In 1979, the year of Feodora's 80th birthday, Herzlia High School held a reception to recognise her and Phil as pioneers of Jewish education. The newly established Judaica library was named in their honour.

Honoured again by the UJW in 1985: "Her perspicacity, wit and humaneness grace her at 86 as they did in her youthful days - She is held in the highest esteem by the UJW and the Jewish Community of Cape Town".

Feodora passed away in 1996 just before her 97th birthday. Until two years prior to this, she had continued to enjoy the New York Review of Books sent to her by a caring nephew. The deaths of her sons preceded her but she was enormously proud of Sydney's achievements in the realm of poetry. Cyril's contribution to early electronic music was only acknowledged in a book published in London a few years ago. How proud that would have made her too!

- *With thanks to Marge Clouts for her guidance and advice.*

SYDNEY CLOUTS – SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH POET

Marge Clouts

Marge Clouts was born and educated in South Africa. In 1961, she and her husband, Sydney Clouts, and their three children immigrated to the UK, where she taught English as a Foreign Language, English literature in various London colleges and Creative Writing in the Cotswolds. She has written many literary reviews for *Jewish Renaissance* and other publications.

‘...at his best, Sydney Clouts was the best: the most intellectually challenging, formally daring, and aesthetically sophisticated poet of the national corpus.’

This quote comes from Prof Dan Wylie's 2018 critical biography of the poet Sydney Clouts (1926-1982). The book is entitled 'Intimate Lightning: Sydney Clouts, Poet' after the title of one of Sydney's most remarkable poems. The above extract shows appreciation of a very high order.

Sydney and his twin brother Cyril were born in Cape Town in 1926. There were also two younger sisters, Jenny and Hazel. Their parents, Feodora (nee Friedlander) and Philip Matthew Clouts were cultured, public-spirited and very active in the Cape Jewish community and beyond. The brothers wrote adventure stories and poems as young boys, but as they grew older, Sydney became more absorbed in reading and writing poetry. He was greatly inspired by the poetry of Roy Campbell. Cyril turned to composing music.

After matriculating at SACS (South African College School), the brothers enlisted in the Union Defence Force, serving in the S.A. Corps of Signals. Both suffered from violent Jew-baiting from their 'brothers'-in-arms.

Sydney gained his BA at the University of Cape Town in 1950. His poems began to appear in small magazines such as *Standpunte*, *Contrast*, *New Coin* and *Jewish Affairs*. Prof Geoffrey Durrant was one of the judges in a 1954 poetry competition, and was sufficiently impressed by Sydney's work as to devote a complete episode of the SABC 'New Soundings' radio series to his poems, commenting, "I am delighted by the purity of their tone, the delicacy of their phrasing, and above all by the strength of mind - the firm foundation-rock of thought which makes the purity and delicacy possible..."



The young Sydney Clouts

More of Sydney's poems appeared in South African anthologies. Prof Guy Butler of Rhodes University, Grahamstown, became a strong admirer of his work, and in time a most supportive and encouraging friend.

Another extract from Wylie's Critical Biography gives some idea of the quality of the poetry: "He brings to his craft an unusually deft and trenchant fusion of cerebral rumination and somatic responsiveness, of eclectic reading and gimlet-eyed observation of the material world." Two early poems, with explicit Jewish content, may in part illustrate this:

RABBI AKIBA

Peacock-irradiant light
paraded the pines as the pine
branches brushed and bristled
continual blaze in the wind,

for a scholar's just replies
to twinge through the shade,
and halt me there with their learned
intensity and the fragrance

of his tangled fire, springing
in its brave complexity.

And then the reddest lines shook down
with blood upon their beard,

casual blood upon the beard,
and the wind burst down
with the passion of wisdom, the spray
of imperative blinding beams.

.....

THE EYE

Let it in, let evil in, the whole of it,
and rage is useless.

Millions done to death with grass in sight
and wheat and small cucumbers.

Grimly, how it loves the present age,
when the sun renews its being in the eye.

Blood's light behind distracts
more sunward than it dares
without me.

What am I without it,
in the dark,
the silent picnic?

Sandwiches and minerals
and lettuces for five
upon the rug, zigzag
of black and of vermillion, raging on the grass
that runs beyond, arriving centuries away
at fields and mounds of the dark ages.

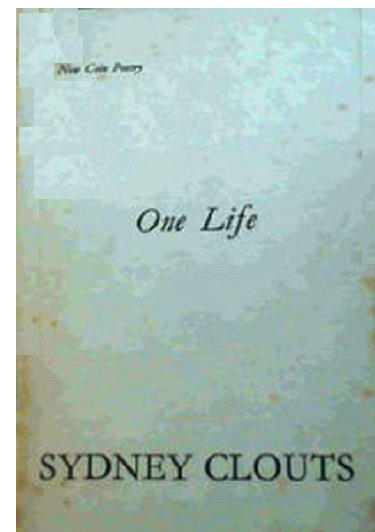
Each century is different.
We have eaten,
we have drunk, in a new silence.
This time is sunflame out of evil
in the way we might have wished it,
for possession, seed by seedling,
of the knowledge of it,
out of passion for the pit;
and no one speaks
unless to joke.

What lovely scenery. . . .

Sydney was painfully aware of the violent excesses of Apartheid. He did not write 'protest poetry', but some of his poems of this period have intimations of disaster. A year after the Sharpeville massacre, he and his family (myself and our three sons) set off for London where Cyril and his wife Rose were already living. Sydney had gained experience as the manager of the International Press Agency in Cape Town, so the two of us started 'The Adamastor Press and Literary Agency' in London. By running the Agency from home, Sydney hoped to have more time to write poetry. (Adamastor was an invented mythical being, 'the brooding spirit of the Cape'. Roy Campbell also used 'Adamastor' as the title of his 1930 volume of poetry.)

In London, a number of young South African writers, many of whom regarded Sydney as their mentor, visited us. Numerous South African relatives and friends also visited, and some came to stay. Friday night Sabbath meals continued, large Seders were celebrated, and in due course three Bar Mitzvahs were held.

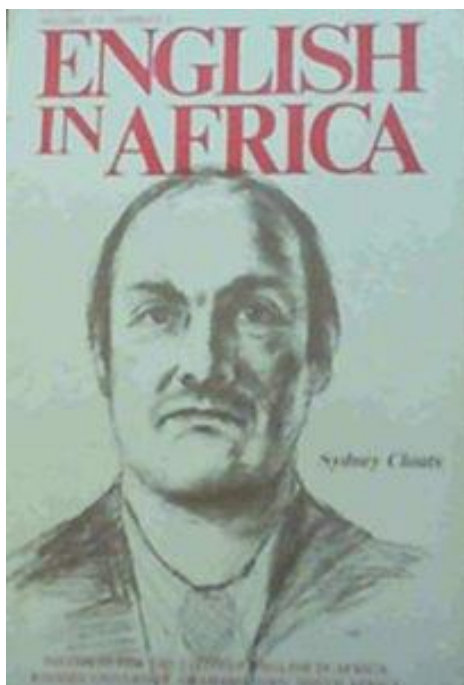
In 1966, Sydney's book of poems 'One Life' was published by Purnell and Sons in South Africa. For this the Olive Schreiner Prize was awarded to him in absentia - he himself was in London. For a poet so immersed in the memory and imagery of the Cape and South Africa, this separation gave rise to an acute sense of dislocation and exile. However, his award of the Ingrid Jonker Prize in 1968 was presented to him in London, at a gathering in his Cricklewood home by William Plomer and in the welcome presence of three other South African poets, Tony Delius, Uys Krige and Roy MacNab.



In 1967, Sydney's solo trip via Milan to Israel, and then joyfully to return to Cape Town to see his mother and other friends, was an exhilarating experience. In his short stopover in Milan, he was able to meet - very briefly - the poet Eugenio Montale, who he greatly admired; Israel 'bowled him over'. He travelled energetically up and down the country and spent time with the monk and poet Elias Pater 'in his cool monastery on the top of Mount Carmel'. Pater (originally a South African Jew) had read 'One Life' with 'such friendly thoroughness'. Between two long sessions of talk, Pater gave Sydney some of his own poems to read. In Jerusalem he walked and

walked, finding it 'beautiful...unforgettable'. When walking toward the Mandelbaum gate, he got talking to Gad Levi, at that time senior editor on Kol Yisrael radio, who then introduced him to Chaim Gury, the Hebrew poet. (Sydney greatly admired the work of Bialik.) Any possible plan to make Aliyah was fraught with difficulties, particularly the need for Sydney, a poet devoted to the English language, to be in an English-speaking milieu. After some time in Cape Town, rejoicing in the sea and the pines, he visited Guy and Jean Butler in Grahamstown, meeting and charming the local literary circle. There the idea of Sydney getting a two-year administrative post at the ISEA (Institute for the Study of English in Africa) in Grahamstown) was first suggested.

In 1969 Sydney's gifts were recognised in Britain in the BBC series, 'The Living Poet'. A programme was devoted to his reading of some of his poems and his own comments on each. This was how he summarised the content and purpose of the long, important poem that he chose to read last: 'Blake's unfulfilled vision of England, the problem of race, a museum of relics, a small farm outside Cape Town, are some of the elements in my last poem which has an Afrikaans title, 'Wat die Hart van Vol Is' (What the heart is full of). The feelings of a South African in England, Europe and in his own country, and expressed in a personal meditation in which I hoped to achieve, with a directness of tone, a flexible rhythmic leap and return, the coiled spring.'



After considerable deliberation, Sydney decided to take up the administrative post in Grahamstown from 1969 to 1971. A conference entitled 'South African Literature in English', which he helped to organise, took place soon after he arrived. He participated in a poetry reading and met Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard and other 'literary luminaries'. Sydney was truly in his element. He was also able to obtain his MA while there. His thesis was called 'The Violent Arcadia': an examination of the response to Nature in the poetry of Thomas Pringle, Francis Carey Slater and Roy Campbell' (three predecessor South African poets). He also had time to give many inspirational poetry readings.

After returning to London and his family in 1971, Sydney became a librarian. He made copious drafts of poems but published very little. In 1974 he felt very fortunate in being able to make another trip to South Africa under the auspices of the British Council, giving readings and lectures in many places. In a further trip in 1980, after time in Cape Town, he paid his last visit to Grahamstown, where he was as always much appreciated.

Sydney became ill in 1981. In July 1982, only a few weeks after insisting on struggling to Cambridge to see his youngest son Philip obtain his MA, he died of pancreatic cancer. He was only 56. A special edition of 'English in Africa' of October 1984 was entirely devoted to Sydney and his poetry. Now, an enlarged Sydney Clouts 'Collected Poems' is soon to be published, which will of course contain one of his most anthologised poems, called 'Poetry is Death Cast Out':

POETRY IS DEATH CAST OUT

Poetry is death cast out
though it gives one chance to retaliate.
Death takes it but the poem moves
a little further beyond death's gate,
and I know the proof of this. Once walking
amongst bushes and lizard stones I found
a little further than I had thought
to go, a stream with a singing sound.

THE TRANSVAAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB - NURSERY OF JEWISH SQUASH STARS

Steven Katzew

Steven Mark Katzew is a Johannesburg-based advocate. He attended High School in Welkom, Orange Free State, going on to study Law at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. His articles on South African Jewish sporting personalities have appeared in *Soul Sport* and *Jewish Affairs*.

This is a story about a few good men passionate about the game of squash who, through using their own resources and endeavours, guided Johannesburg's, and perhaps even South Africa's, best known squash club, the Transvaal Automobile Club (known in squash circles as the TAC) to the official rating as South Africa's Number 1 squash club. It is a story of vision, commitment, perseverance and patience. It is also a story with a strong Jewish flavour, for the TAC is, and remains, one of the adornments of Johannesburg Jewry - an institution that belongs to Johannesburg's early beginnings through which the Jewish community was able to give full expression to its pursuit of the ultimate in excellence in the sporting field.

Perhaps fortuitously, the TAC was not, and never has been, an *exclusively* Jewish club. I say fortuitously because, as will be shown, wonderful non-Jewish players and a superb non-Jewish coach participated in the road to excellence. It is reflective rather of the enormous success of Johannesburg Jewry as a partner in the creation of this great city with a deep culture of institutionalised excellence.

The theme of commitment to excellence has a deeper significance too for the Jewish community. It is what keeps it flourishing and firmly committed to the excellence of its institutions that is so central to its acknowledged status as a flag-bearer for Diaspora Jewry on so many levels.

The story needs some contextualising and background.

The concept of a club as the crucible for sportsmen and sportswomen of a particular national or religious group is not uncommon. It is especially prevalent in the context of Diaspora communities of all persuasions. The reasons for their existence range from a natural tendency of members of a community to congregate in the same institutions to instances where members of a particular group establish their own clubs in response to being denied access to other clubs.

There are a number of examples in South Africa. Prominent amongst them was the erstwhile Jewish Guild in Johannesburg. Although constituted as a Jewish club, with the advent of professional soccer its soccer section attracted outsiders to the community. The result was that the soccer section of the club became a high profile open club with a Jewish ethos. The same applied to the soccer sections of the Greek clubs Hellenic in Cape Town and Corinthians in Johannesburg and to the Italian club Olympia, also in Johannesburg.

The focus of this article is the squash section of the famous TAC (in recent years renamed the Killarney Country Club, or KCC) which, although never constituted as a Jewish club, over time acquired a distinctively Jewish ethos due to the demographics of its surroundings. It nestles in the leafy suburb of Houghton adjacent to populous Killarney. It acquired its name, which is associated with motoring in the early 1900s, when the agricultural holding that once stood on the present site of the club, Cooks Farm, became the recognised rendezvous for burgeoning numbers of enthusiasts of the then nascent pastime of motoring. These informal gatherings of early motoring enthusiasts galvanised into an exclusive club of motoring patrons called the Transvaal Automobile Club, with its headquarters on Cooks Farm. The club evolved into the Automobile Association of South Africa (AASA), which ensured roadside assistance and safety to those early members. The appeal of an exclusive club devoted to motoring began to wane with the mass production of motor vehicles. The Transvaal Automobile Club, under the reconstituted guise of the AASA, relocated to premises closer to the Johannesburg commercial hub to become the ubiquitous dominant service provider of roadside assistance to motorists in South Africa. Cooks Farm, however, retained its status as a social club with its acquired name, the Transvaal Automobile Club.

With the gradual absorbing of the surrounding farmland into rapidly expanding suburban Johannesburg, the TAC became a popular retreat for residents of the neighbouring suburbs and a venue for sedate activities like golf, croquet, tennis and bowls. The squash section was a relatively late addition to the club's range of activities. Although squash was played in South Africa in the early part of the last century at the exclusive Johannesburg Country Club and at certain private schools, it was only after the Second World War that the sport acquired general appeal. Schools, universities and private and municipal clubs added courts to their existing sporting facilities in response to growing demand from young professionals, entrepreneurs and students who were attracted to the sport's high tempo and economy of duration, which suited their busy lifestyles.

Squash was also advancing by leaps and bounds internationally. The quartet of Pakistan, Great Britain, Egypt and Australia comprised the game's leading exponents. Despite attempted boycotts against South African players and teams - especially by Pakistan - in protest against South Africa's then racially based discriminatory legislation, individual South African players and teams still managed to make their mark in encounters with individuals and teams from Australia and Great Britain and even in encounters with individual players from Egypt and Pakistan.

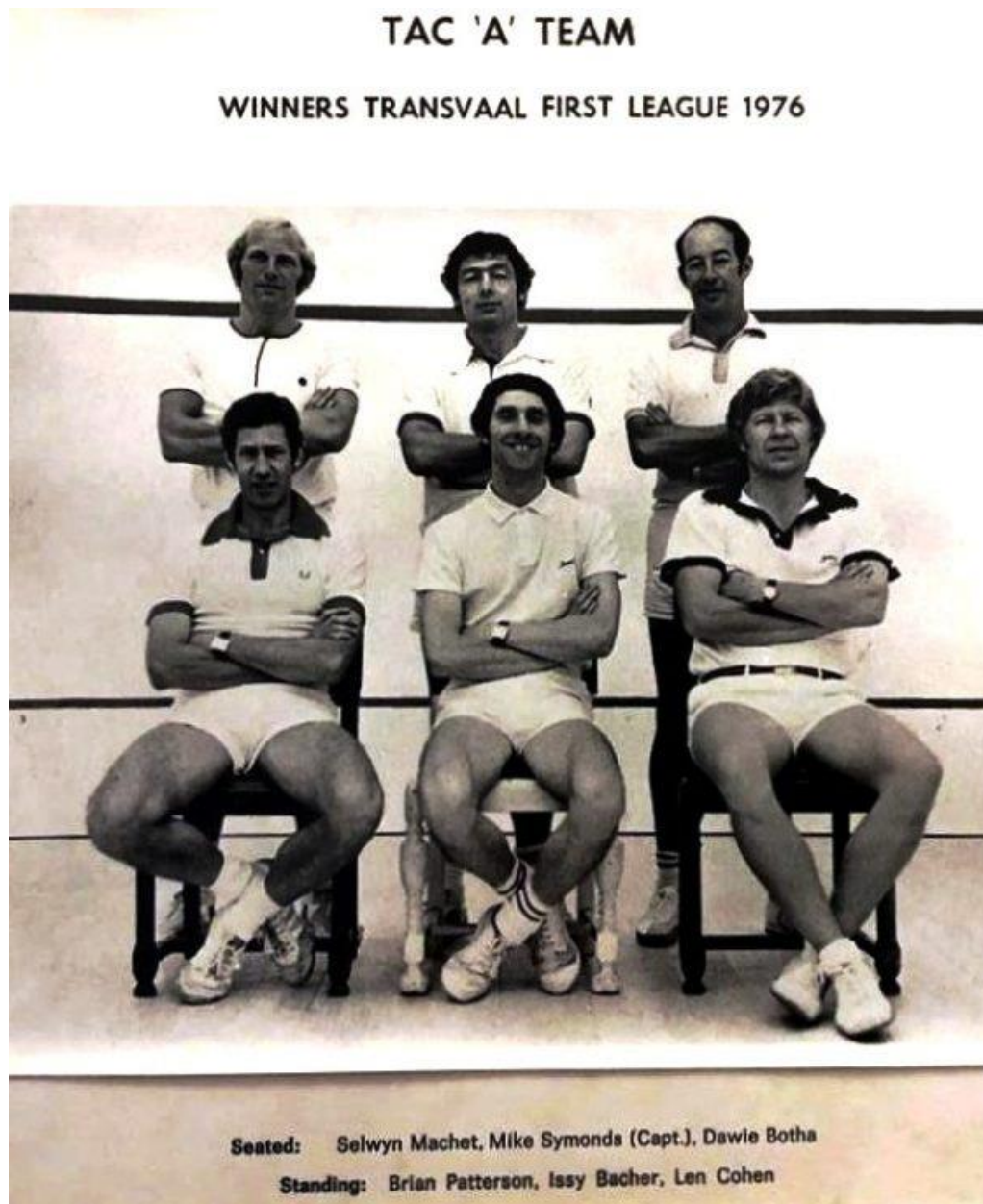
A number of South African squash players, including the likes of Roland Watson, Paul Symonds, Ian Holding and Stuart Hailstone, achieved international acclaim over this period (from the seventies to the millennium), which is generally regarded as a golden era in South African squash. This was also a golden era for Jewish participation in sport in South Africa. Despite sanctions and boycotts against South Africa across almost all sporting codes, extraordinarily high standards of domestic competition were maintained. This manifested in sporadic encounters with individuals and teams from other countries who defied the boycotts to test their mettle against the acknowledged prowess of their South African counterparts. The feats of Jewish men and women who achieved fame in this era in many sports, including high profile national team sports like soccer, cricket, field and indoor hockey and rugby, and on the international tennis circuit as well, are legendary. The list is too long to mention. The stories of many of these Jewish sporting stars have been published. Those who have not received the publicity they deserve are stories for another day.

Jewish participation in squash was no different. The level of commitment of Jewish players was reflected in provincial representation throughout the provinces of South Africa, which still had large and extremely productive and influential Jewish communities.

In this atmosphere of mass participation and high levels of excellence of Jewish sportsmen and women, a coterie of members of the squash section of the TAC, Adrian Hoffman, Len Cohen and Tzody Aron shared a vision of elevating the then already formidable TAC Squash Club into a benchmark of excellence in South Africa. They were (and remain) men of great stature who were prepared to match their vision with personal commitment and sacrifice.

Len Cohen, chairman of the club from 1971 to 1973 and again in 1982, had already started the ball rolling in the 1960s by personally sponsoring the highly rated Dawie Botha's membership of the TAC. Botha became a Springbok in 1965, when he was also the club champion. In 1967, he won

the South African Open Squash Championships and went on to represent the Springboks in international competition until 1973. The intensity of competition for promotion on the club ladder is the strength of every Squash club. Botha's consistent leadership of the TAC ladder in the 60's and early 70's provided the impetus for the dominance in squash the club was to achieve in the 1980s and 1990s.



Around 1970, Len Cohen had the foresight to groom Selwyn Machet as the successor to Dawie Botha at the head of the TAC ladder. Machet, who would go on to win the SA Open in 1977 with victory in the final over

Australian number 1 Dean Williams, and also earn his Springbok colours in the same year, was a young apprentice playing for the Norwood Municipal Club when Cohen approached him to play for the TAC. Machet credits Len Cohen, Natie Lieberman, Issy Bacher and other influential TAC members for sponsoring his membership of the club in those early years, which he gratefully acknowledges put him on the road to numerous tournament titles and to Springbok colours.



Tzody Aron

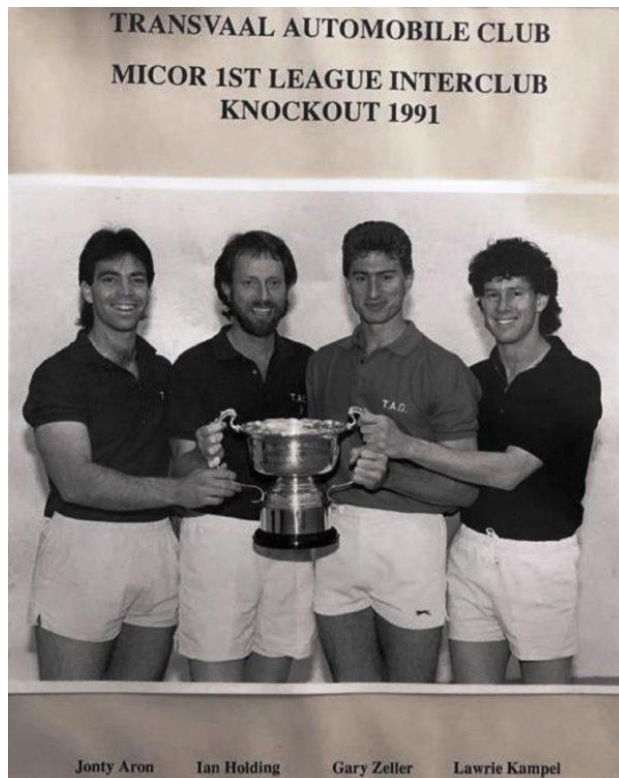
Tzody Aron chaired the club more than any other, first for three consecutive terms from 1979 to 1981 and then for 7 years from 1988 to 1994, with only one break in 1993 when he was relieved by M.S. Gluckman. Tzody realised that the key to the club's success was the putting into action of the club's thirteen league teams every week. He was the prime motivator of every league player who represented the TAC from the late seventies until well past the millennium, inspiring and managing the competitive spirit of the TAC across thirteen leagues. In so doing, he instilled in every league player, right down to the lowest league, a sense of pride and commitment in representing the TAC.

The sheer quality and intensity of this commitment paid off in the years 1980-1982, with the club winning the Transvaal First League and the coveted Banbury Trophy for the top team in league squash in all the provinces throughout South Africa for three consecutive years. This remarkable feat was rewarded with the club becoming the permanent holder of the Banbury Trophy, at the time the ultimate acknowledgement as the dominant force in South African squash.

Key to this success was the appointment of Mike Symonds, himself a member of the star-studded Banbury Trophy winning teams, as the club's full-time coach. Symonds coached Banbury Trophy era stars Laurence Gruskin, Johnny Leeb and Denis Kampel and later groomed Mike Toothill and Jonty Aron as future stars. Testament to the quality of Symonds' guidance was the achievement of Springbok colours by Gruskin and Toothill, the elevation of Leeb to a high of number three in South Africa, a national number seven ranking for Denis Kampel and the winning of the SA Under 19 Title by Jonty Aron.



Besides Springbok Dawie Botha, who played for Northern Transvaal, Springboks Machet, Gruskin, Toothill, one time SA Number 3 Leeb and SA Number 7 Denis Kampel, who all got their provincial colours for Transvaal, the following players from the club also gained provincial colours (Transvaal unless otherwise stated): Issy Bacher, Len Weinstein, Clifford Sneider, Steven Nathan, Gary Bieber, Daniel Lederman, Martin Morris, Gary Zeller, Jonty Aron, Shayne Mann (Eastern Transvaal), Kevin Mann (Eastern Transvaal), Larry Pogir, Bokkie Lipschitz, Laurie Kampel, Martin



Kampel, Michael Bacher, Gary Weinstein, Colin Blacher (Free State), Jonathan Brinkman, (Rabbi) Ryan Zail, Mark Kaplan, Sam Miltz, Warren Getz, Evan Flowers, Natie Lieberman, Len Cohen, Bruno Kampel, Jack Kampel and Mark Paiker (Northern Transvaal).

The club has also made an indelible contribution to the development of Squash in Israel. Selwyn Machet won the gold medal the first time squash was introduced at the Maccabi Games in 1977. Denis Kampel won gold at the 1985 and 1989 Games and the silver medal at the 1993 Games. There are a number of

other club members, including Machet in later years, who have won medals in senior categories at the Maccabi Games.

Another prominent member of the club, Glenn Lazarus, has made a profound contribution to the transformative prestige of the club through his involvement as program director of Egolisquash, a mass participation program for youth from less privileged communities. Participants in the program who have acquired coaching credentials conduct regular coaching sessions for youth from all communities at the club's courts and at other venues.

Measured by its overall influence and impact on squash in South Africa, the TAC can have few peers in the way of Jewish sporting clubs, or clubs with a distinctly Jewish ethos, in Diaspora communities.

I conclude with three personal insights gleaned from writing this article. First, the competition for promotion on the TAC ladder was fiercely contested. Although teammates for the weekly league encounters, in the intervening weeks club members were opponents for promotion - vying for spots in higher league teams. Yet, in all my meetings with players and the one administrator, Tzody Aron, I was overcome by their camaraderie and enduring friendships. Second, all the parties I met felt a compelling need for the TAC story to be told and were prepared to give of their time and effort to facilitate the exercise. None of them, I must emphasise, was in pursuit of personal glory. They all simply knew the importance of preserving their enormous pride in the TAC. My third is more a note of despair – the squash section of the TAC is today a pale shadow of its former self. The once proudly displayed honours board and photographs have been removed. No more the incessant claps of shots ringing all around after work at peak. It saddens me, but helps me understand better the urgent clamour to record the memories of a golden past.

Sources

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Johannesburg Street Names by Anna H Smith

HERBER HOUSE: "A HOSTEL FOR JEWISH CHILDREN" (Part III)

Stuart Buxbaum

***Stuart Buxbaum** has an Honours degree in Sociology from Wits University (1970) and an Honours in Judaica from UNISA (1984). After working in the social research unit of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies in the early 1970s, he farmed for many years in Mpumalanga.*

This is the third and final part of my paper looking at the establishment, running and final closure of Herber House, a hostel for Jewish schoolchildren in Johannesburg established under the auspices of the SA Board of Jewish Education (SABJE) in 1943.

At this point, we will interrupt here the narrative of how the SAJBE lay leadership and staff of Herber House grappled with the short and longer-term challenges of running the hostel to dwell a little on what everyday life was like for those youngsters (including myself) living at the institution.

“Feral Culture”

By the late 1950s, HH was drifting into a benign dystopia. Only the regularity of the school day provided structure to the pervasive laissez-faire spirit, as did the remarkable group cohesiveness of the boarders. From the group we drew our strength, a closeness that persists via shared memories almost sixty years later. How was this culture expressed? Thus: having already *davened shacharit* and breakfasted hurriedly by 7am, we would clamber aboard the buses that would ferry us to school, still isolated from the day scholars. In the song’s refrain, “You could meet us at the back of the bus”, is where we sat bunched together, expressing our otherness by often singing Afrikaans *liedjies* in unison. This is probably where the future Rabbi Philip Heilbrunn received his early *chazanuth* training! Once at the high school, we were not required to attend prayers. Instead we sprawled into a classroom together, chatting and gossiping and completing homework. Break-time would see us reassembling on a bench outside the tuck-shop. The rare purchase of a 15-cent hotdog meant the brave

customer would have but a small portion of the delicacy, the rest being diminished in its passage down the line on the bench. The rule of '*opps*' (sharing) was mandatory, to be ignored at the buyer's peril. We were a band of brothers.

This feral culture had been long in its making. It was the alternate reaction to the state of affairs so often agonizingly mulled over by the committee in their lofty considerations. After the excitement of those early years during the establishment of the hostel, the committee was often preoccupied with the inhospitable physical nature of the property. It was in extent about four acres, rocky and somewhat forbidding. It kept the boarders cut off from the urban environment, accentuating their separateness. Time and again, the committee would bemoan the lack of extensive playing fields, but for the boarders it was a minor inconvenience. There was enough space for endless games of cricket or soccer and daily games of that hostel staple, the game of king stingers.



HH pupils and snowman, KDHS rugby field

Then there was the sandy red landfill, always rumored to be the site of the oft discussed future swimming pool. The outcrop and steep descent formed by the landfill afforded much entertainment. Around the years 1957-8 there was a young lad of quiet charm and much energy about 11 years old, Johnny G. from Middelburg. He led a band of loyal youngsters, a gang

whose main activity was building hideouts, so-called ‘forts’ on the koppie and on the slopes of the landfill. Corrugated iron, scrap planks and bricks were all greatly valued for these hideouts. The boys spent the weekends foraging for material, building and hiding. Some forts were quite elaborate, with peepholes designed as an early warning system. Then down the red, steep sandy hill, boys of the gang and others would slide the dizzying descent on cardboard boxes endlessly of a Saturday, clambering up the hill, down to slide again. Bennie L., a daredevil and brave lad, was particularly comfortable doing the slide. He reveled in the danger. It was told of him that he once sat in a tyre, rolled down the hill and ended up in Doornfontein!

One fine summer’s Sunday morning, it was thought a splendid idea to rise early and engage in a robust game of king stingers. The brisk morning’s shouting and calling awakened one of the masters from his beauty sleep. Quite expressionlessly, he herded us back into the annex where we were rewarded with some swift canings on our backsides. After a short enforced and painful break in the proceedings, we continued where we had left off. Those who had been ‘on’ were still ‘on’, and those ‘off’, still ‘off’. The master meanwhile had nodded off, presumably exhausted by the effort of raising and lowering the stick so many times.

Of all the sins that that could violate the boarders’ credo, ‘squealing’ was the gravest and would lead to severe retribution. You kept your mouth shut, took the blame yourself rather than pointing out the real offender, and met inquisitions with a stony silence. The penalty for squealing was “being sent to Coventry”. You were excommunicated, the equivalent of the rabbinical *cherem*. In such a verbal, tightly-knit congregation, being shunned for a number of days by one’s peers was both dismal and desperate.

From this gang-like behavior and tight group culture, resistance to rules and staff regulations could lead to minor revolts. David A. recounts how a football was confiscated by the sudden and overenthusiastic enforcement of Sabbath observance.^[i] The boys would have none of it and marched around the ‘drive’, a circular road allowing access to the castle. They banged make-shift drums and shouted slogans. Revolutionaries in the making! The ball was returned.

Heilbrunn isolates a further feature of this feral culture: “Conversations often turned to past Herber House heroes who knew how to be tough and take it up to the staff. Chutzpah (*rawfing*) was a trait greatly to be admired.”^[ii] *Rawfing* is a manufactured term that referred to the cheekiness with which boarders responded to the supervisors. It was a response filled

with insolence. Sometimes it was mitigated by humour but some bravery was required to carry it through. It was not appreciated by the staff but enhanced the *rawfer's* status amongst his or her peers.

The converse of *rawfing* was *shlupping*. This was an attempt to curry favour with/ingratiate oneself with authority. It would take the form of an unrequested voluntary passing on of information about the boarders' misbehaviors. Often this behavior was motivated by a genuine need for intimacy, comfort or a sign of acceptance by the staff. By the boarders, *shlupping* was ranked on the same lowly scale as *squealing*.

Still, the feral culture seems to have been spared the worst excesses of 'proper' boarding schools. Certainly in the latter decade, there was no prefect-ship, nor its malign partner, that of being *skivvies* [iii] to senior boarders and prefects. There was largely an absence of the viciousness of initiation and the worst aspects of bullying.

Food was a contentious matter. Suppers were generally regulated with a balanced serving; breakfasts were rushed affairs, and lunches were sandwiches, once a week with polony. Joy indeed! In the early years, a dietician had drawn up an extensive, varied and nutritious menu.[iv] The meals were often not to the boarders liking, especially breakfasts. Gilbert Banda, a legend at the hostel for his many years of service and lilting Malawian accent, was the bell-ringer and meals provider in the dining room. At 6 a.m. every weekday, he would *clangalang* his way up South Street and into the annex. "What's for breakfast, Gilly?" the boys would call. "Flying eggs, bluddy butta and mabella polish" would come Gilbert's reply. That about summed up the morning meal.

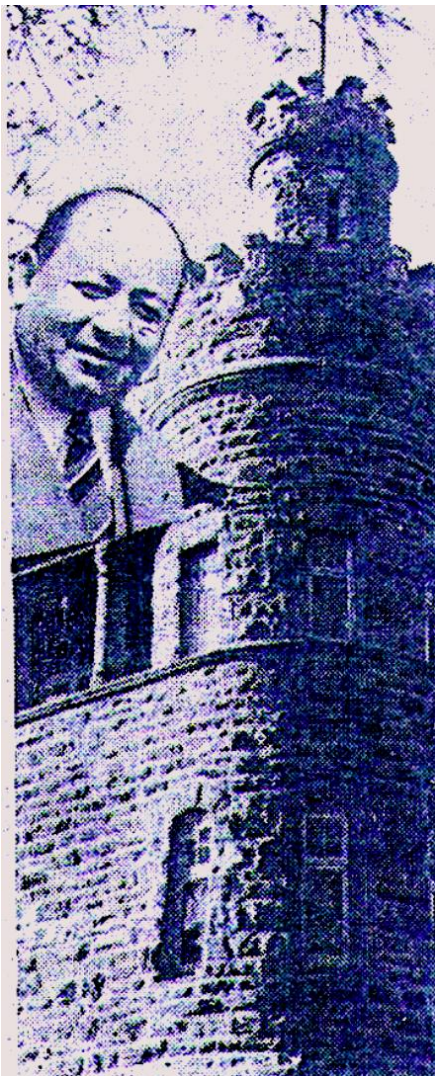
Occasionally, a boycott would be called by dissatisfied boarders. I recall that there was once unhappiness with a particular serving of beef and vegetables at the evening meal. A boycott was called. It was my favorite dish of the week. It dripped with thick, greasy fat. The plates were set in front of us. Longingly, I looked at the roast slice, going hungry during those meals until it was removed from the menu. The kitchen supervisor had gotten the message.

The jargon at the hostel was usually direct, but some nuances did creep in. The all-seeing eyes of the housemaster and housemistress gained them the appellation of Mr Oog and Mrs Oog. Sometimes the diminutive was used as shorthand code, as in *Oogie* or the plural, *Oogies*. Invariably this would be preceded by 'chips'. So in times of danger or the threat of imminent discovery, the call would be 'chips!' More definitively, it would

describe the threat as “chips, the Oog!” The girls had a gentler nomenclature. “Mrs Oog” became “Mrs Poz.”

Reciprocating the compliments, Mr Saltzman would in anger refer to the boarders as *menuvels*. This in its exact Yiddish translation was grossly insulting. Literally, it means an evil doer, a contemptable being, a vile, base and ignoble person.^[v] But the boarders, not being Yiddishists, did not take umbrage and bore the insult with much amusement. Every ex-boarder, whatever their age, would react to this appellation with a nostalgic smile.

The contestation would reach its apogee on Saturday evenings in shul, during the service at the termination of the Sabbath. Tension was heightened. Many and varied had been the transgressions of the boarders all week long. These had been seen and noted. The reproach would



invariably find its way into the housemaster's sermon between *minchah* and *maariv*. We would be reproached as a group of miscreants, called to order as offending individuals, labelled as *menuvels*. But there was a higher sanction: the *sedrah* of the week had warned about such willfulness. We were *menuvels* who had transgressed the Holy Law. Silently we boys sat, a nudge-nudge here, a glance there, and a wink at each other. The girls had been spared this invective. They had done their shul time for the weekend, and indeed the week.

But in this contest of wills, it would be the boarders who had the final say. The dénouement came at the conclusion of the evening service. The new week would be ushered in with song. A blessed week! A good week! *Shavua tov! Shavua tov!* Little could those who generations ago had ushered in the week with this hopeful message imagine it being corrupted by a bunch of lads singing “Shovel it off, shovel it off” with appropriate spade work, completing the arc with a swing over the shoulder! The housemaster's reproaches had missed their target.

And then these same boys would burst out of the shul on those starry skied nights, hoping that that night's film in the high ceilinged hall of the castle would not be the umpteenth showing of

“Chocolate Soldier” with Nelson Eddy, but some real war-time soldiers’ tale. The girls may have wished otherwise.

But not for all would be the Saturday night entertainment! In the tit for tat between

Detail of the castle, the hostel's main building. Inset is Harry Herber, after whom the hostel was named.	boarders and supervisors, there was one sanction still the preserve of the latter: No bioscope for you upstairs in the hall tonight!
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Here again is Heilbrunn’s description: “Those punished (from seeing the film) would...gather in the dining room...with occasional supervision...the staff member usually didn’t stay long and those downstairs would create their own ‘entertainment’, dancing on the tables...There were periodic raids of the kitchen and pantry...our resourcefulness was highly developed. So it was a debatable which group, the ‘punished’ kids below or the ‘privileged’ kids above, were having a better time”.[vi]

Ah, after all these happenings, how different the start of the Sabbath had been! Scrubbed clean and neatly dressed, the boys and girls had sat in shul on Friday evening with so much decorum. The entire service had been chanted, quite melodiously, I always recall. Then to the dining room, the tables all bedecked in white tablecloths. At each table, two candlesticks with candles burning bright sat about six boarders, boys and girls separately. The meal was preceded by everyone singing *Shalom Aleichem*. A special Sabbath meal of soup, roast chicken, potatoes and vegetables and ‘sweets’. Then *Zmirot* all loudly sung as was grace after meals.

But at some point in the meal, the call would start and rapidly become a chorus: “We want Paddy! (Brenda P.) We want Cookie (Tziona P.), We want Adele (Coini)”. Eventually the housemaster would relent and ask the girls to sing. They had beautiful voices. Down the years, I hear them still.....

The formal Friday evening ended with singing, dancing and hand clapping outside the castle, at the apex of the drive: Boys and girls all in a circle, singing repetitive tunes such as “coming round the mountain”. Boys chose girls, girls chose boys and “*tiekie draaied*” [vii] for a few brief moments. The genteel words of the songs would gradually morph into more risqué, ribald rhymes, often referring to the behaviour and dress of staff members. Then a rush to the dormitories, and sometimes a wild, unrestrained feather-lying pillow fight. The girls’ evening ended quietly.

My sister Beatrice found the hostel stifling and confining. The narrow factory-purpose lockers, the regimentation, the rules were constricting. She had lived for the first two years of high school at Ulpan Harary,^[viii] a small family run hostel in the suburb of Observatory where she had felt more comfortable and at ease. She would, after two years at Herber House, board with private families until she matriculated. She would then enroll at the Hebrew Teachers Seminary and qualify as a Hebrew teacher.



Three boarders in the city's centre, 1959.
Brenda Padowitz (left) with Beatrice and
Stuart Buxbaum

Leaving home: parents and children

This was the hardest part and it was not just a four-times-a-year physical separation, but a spatial and psychological one as well. It was both occasional and continuous. It cleaved one's idea of self into two pieces. You were both a small town shop-keeper's son and a hostel dweller. You were a mid-sized town hotelier's daughter and a blossoming young lady in a crowded dormitory with no bedside table, mirror or bedside lamp. Which were you?

And then, for those waving goodbye, it was equally fraught. Believing that it was for the good of the child, the parents justified their loneliness. Sometimes on an isolated farm, relieved that the child was not witness to the ravages of a periodic drought, yet wishing that they were home to lessen the burden of the silent uncompromising sun. There is considerable explanatory literature on this ever present and never satisfactorily answered question: "But was it good for the children? But was it good for the parents?" In the recently re-published Afrikaans book of memoirs, *Koshuis* (NB uitgewers, 2019) Afrikaans writers recall university hostel and boarding school life. The stories serve as articulation. In one very telling

account Frikkie Dippenaar, relates how his parents, living as they did in Bloemfontein, thought it valuable for their young son and daughter to be sent to boarding school in Trompsburg (!). Thus, the family journeys to Trompsburg at the commencement of term. Amid tears and clinging, the children are settled into their new abode. The lad makes new friends; the girl weeps. A few hours later, their father re-appears. He has come to take them home, he says, as the kids hurriedly cram their carefully packed clothes into the vehicle. As they drive away, the father haltingly explains that after leaving the children their mother began to weep softly ([*Sy hef begin verlang*] [she began to pine/yearn for] Mother thought it best to fetch the children and take them back home. "*So het my koshuisloopbaan tot 'n einde gekom*" (thus did my boarding school career come to an end, Grundlingh, op. cit., p126).

In the early 1970s, a speaker on a soapbox in Hyde Park, London, exaggeratedly proclaimed that the family was an "emotional hothouse." Certainly the family can be an arena of contestation. Boarders, by their physical absence, were often not in the house during those gritty moments of family disagreements. But the homecoming during school breaks was mostly celebratory and joyous. The child was a welcome guest, a special visitor. Favorite dishes were the order of the day. The atmosphere was purposely cordial and considered. During term, however, the parents were inured from the crises of the day-to-day lives of their children, or of the adolescent hesitantly finding his way into early adulthood. And as my mother would say when it was that dreaded back-to-hostel time again: "*Oiy! Vider cheder mit groip mit bulves*" (of which a literal translation would read "Oh! Again schoolroom, groats and potatoes!", a resigned reference to the dreariness and repetitiveness of everyday life). Or as Michel K, from Leslie has said: "It wasn't just the night before going back that made me shudder; it started a week before!"

Tribulata continua.... (The troubles continue)

At this point, we return to our embattled HH staff and SAJBE lay leaders and their Sisyphean labours...

On 3 June 1958 Dr Sidelsky, together with Messrs Leibgott and Miller, reported that they had *again* investigated conditions at Herber House. "At the outset he wished to state that the various rumours circulating about Herber House had no foundation whatsoever." But yet: "The committee had concluded that the physical aspects of Herber House militated against the smooth running of this institution." What were these "physical aspects"?

The cardinal feature of the hostel was that it was spread over three buildings, none of them by any means state of the art. The “Main” building (the old castle) housed 28 boarders (12 girls of all ages and 16 boys up to age nine). The Annex housed 30 boys, aged 10-14, and the House 12 boys aged 14-17. There were at this time a total of 70 boarders, 27% down from its peak of 95. This is a telling decline. These constant “troubles” were front and centre at committee meetings for almost a decade, and despite attempts to paper over the shortcomings and keep them out of the Jewish media, the brand was indeed tarnished. It was a reason for some rural and smaller town parents choosing to send their offspring to other boarding schools, such as Jeppe, King Edward VII, and Barnato Park’s Joel House for girls. There was also a private Jewish hostel, Harrarys; Yeshiva College also catered for out-of-town pupils at its hostel.

Returning to the report of Sidelsky et al, more “troubles” were reported. There was trouble with the plumbing which was in a shocking state. There was trouble with the recreational facilities, which were most inadequate (“some sort of a football ground”). There was trouble with the staff compliment: more were needed, but there was a lack of accommodation.

There was some attempt at talking back this mortifying condemnation. Mr Froman, who had made almost a life’s calling of the hostel, “stressed that most of the rumours about the supervision and conditions ... were greatly exaggerated and uncalled for” (3/6/1958). Furthermore, “the members were greatly impressed by the wonderful insight into the Jewish religion and way of life which the boarders received.” This much was largely true. The mode of inculcation was mainly repetition, repetition, and then repetition. The food too, Mr Froman said, was good.

Dr Sidelsky, perturbed though he was, came back with a forceful rejoinder: “Herber House would be a sore point among the institutions of the board until new adequate buildings were erected and the new Herber House was attached to the King David School with suitable sporting and recreational activities and facilities for homework, study...” He felt it would be advisable for the Board to go to the country on a campaign to raise funds specifically for the building of a suitable hostel.

The reaction to this report was generally a positive one. But almost predictably, it was suggested (in this case by Mr Goss) that two other members be co-opted onto an investigative sub-committee and that a full report be submitted in due course.

The 'Cane' Mutiny

It is mentioned in passing in the 3 June 1958 minutes that a Mr Mike Bondezio had joined the staff as a supervisor. This was a sensitive appointment, as it went against Mr Saltzman's earlier rigid standpoint against the employment of non-Jewish supervisory personnel. It speaks of two contradictory needs on the committee members' agendas: the need for supervisory staff who could be role models, be sympathetic and be of a positive outlook, and on the other hand, hamstrung by the oft-repeated conviction that there was no one suitable in the country who could fulfill the role. Oh, and they had to be Jewish to boot, as insisted by Saltzman. And then, oh deary me, the committee in their wisdom fell between the cracks and failed on all counts....

As if to emphasize the mutiny from previous dogma, a second non-Jewish housemaster was added to the staff. He was Mr Henry Erlank. Bondesio taught woodwork at King David High School, and Erlank taught Science and Afrikaans.

Rabbi Philip Heilbrunn, who hailed from the small *dorp* of Sannieshof in the then Western Transvaal, attended HH in 1959-1963. Here is his description of these two men's approach to law and order at the hostel:

Rabbi Saltzman relied heavily on two (non-Jewish) masters to maintain discipline and retain control, and he certainly needed them. The masters were greatly skilled in wielding the cane and lorded it over us, as the Haggadah puts it, "with rigour". Although any time was a good time to mete out discipline, their great moment was at inspection around 6:00pm before Mincha and Maariv. One minute late got you one cut, two minutes, two cuts and so on. Then if your shoes were dirty, it was one extra cut and if your hair was not neat as well or you were...guilty of some other infringement, it was again an extra lash with the cane. Next day on ...the bus to school we would compare our 'war wounds' and rank ourselves...[ix]

Sing Ye the Praises.....

The year 1959 starts on an optimistic, upbeat note. It is January 27. Sixty-five children have been enrolled. Among the new arrivals are the above mentioned Philip Heilbrunn, his cousin from the same *dorp*, Julian K. and Samuel C. from Standerton. Aged 9-10 years, they speak good Afrikaans. Harry J. came from Vanderbijlpark, as did Allan C. Michael K from Leslie

and Desmond L. from Bethal, at 10 and 9 years of age, were already hostel veterans. The numbers however, were well off their peak.

Mr Saltzman is praised for the hostel being in spotless condition. The praise singing continues: "The children," said Mr Froman, "were brought up in a truly Jewish atmosphere." Everything was being done for the physical and spiritual welfare of the boarders. The highlight of Herber House was its religious life; the synagogue services had aroused the greatest admiration of leading educators. He himself had tried to create in the hostel a home atmosphere which the boarders took with them when they left and established homes of their own. Froman had been at the helm of the hostel committee for fifteen years now, since its inception. He took criticism and praise personally.

Interestingly, Froman referred to a recent meeting of HH old boys and girls which he had attended. There, tributes had been paid to the hostel for the part it played in their lives of Orthodoxy, of Judaism.

Mr Goss lent some perspective, saying that the hostel had suffered from too much praise and too much abuse. From a hygienic point of view, the premises were not suitable. But, he said, attending synagogue services at Herber House made one feel as if one were in a yeshiva in Eastern Europe" (27/1/1959).

I can feel a change is a comin'.....

On 3 March 1959, Mr Froman reported that boarders were not getting the maximum input from Mr Saltzman, who had been in poor health. He wished to pay tribute to Saltzman (although acknowledging that he had over the years had many differences with him), but felt that the time had come for a "younger assistant" to take over "his onerous duties". And again, like the proverbial dog unable to let go of the bone, Froman raised the question of inadequate premises. He felt that as a new hostel could not then be built, the present premises should be modernized and the ground not required be put up for sale. Neither of these suggestions was really viable

But pressure was building, and funds being collected for the UCF were a litmus test. Reports filtering in showed that some families in the rural areas were threatening not withhold their contributions unless a modern hostel was established for country children. Goss reported that Kimberley and Bloemfontein had been agitating for a hostel in their own towns and did not want a new hostel in Johannesburg to be established. He was unsure as to whether building a new hostel would lead to more pupils attending. As reported, King David School was completely full. "How then," asked Mr

Mervis, “would the school cope with an extra say, 150 children that might attend a new hostel?” He suggested that the new hostel be housed at the envisaged new North-Western Jewish Day School, and so grow gradually with that school.

According to Goss, Jewish parents were “not hostel minded”. His comment is interesting, mainly as it is partly derogatory, partly misleading and largely incorrect. It is also rather vague. In the triangle of interested parties to the hostel project, being the staff, the committee and the parents, the parents had no particular voice. There does not seem to have been any attempt or even suggestion to create a parents’ hostel association. So a cohesive, coherent voice of one angle of the triangle, that of the concerned parents, remained silent.

There is a different aspect to Goss’s suggestion. Sending a child to a boarding school has its genesis in numerous motivations. Naturally, the need for education is paramount. Similarly, a prevalent stimulus had been the belief that children need to be subjected to discipline, which boarding school could instill. For boys particularly, a motivation has been that they imbibe the supposedly important attributes of “manliness”. This is presumably achieved by growing up in a less empathetic environment than in a (mostly) caring home. There is too, the motivation of encouraging the child to be better able to learn the skills of coexistence, the forging of possible influential friendships that would have a lasting benefit.

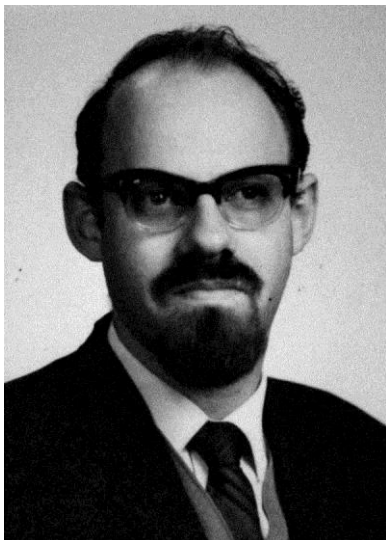
It is suggested that Jewish parents in the rural areas of South Africa were not, indeed “hostel minded” in the sense described above. Their motivation was for their children to have a Jewish education, for the boys to learn for their Bar Mitzvahs and for them to be in a Jewish environment rather than being a small minority in non-Jewish schools where often the medium of instruction in the high schools was Afrikaans.

“Enough!” say the parents

Heilbrunn writes, “I well recall several meetings over the years where parents passionately voiced their criticisms of the dilapidated facilities at South Street and demanded, without success, that their needs be addressed.”[x] A concerted effort to influence the opinions of the committee and to express the parents’ frustration at the situation at the hostel, and its malfunctioning staff complement, reached a peak at a meeting called in the winter of 1959.

Martin Klugman, a pharmacist from Henneman in the (then) Orange Free State, was in the vanguard of this campaign. He requested that all concerned parents meet at the hostel, in an open session to discuss their reservations. A considerable number of parents attended. The *Zionist Record* reported on the meeting: "References were made to the "bad atmosphere and shocking living conditions". (Klugman)...criticised the Board of Deputies and the UCF for having ignored an invitation to be represented at the meeting".^[xi] It further recorded that "Mr Solly Yellin, chairman of the SA Board of Jewish Education, speaking amidst interruptions from the floor, said that the board had long realized that Herber House was unsuitable as a hostel for children." The meeting had been preceded by a scathing letter by Klugman, entitled "The Shocking State of Herber House" in the *Zionist Record* of 8 May, 1959. It included the memorable, oft-repeated line: "The dining room down in the basement is a veritable black hole of Calcutta." It drew a sympathetic reply from a reader (11 June), who concluded with the wish that the sorry state of affairs having been brought to the community's notice, perhaps some steps would be taken to improve the hostel". However, the movement soon lost steam. Parents were spread across the Transvaal and the Free State, and arranging meetings proved difficult, even for a man of Mr Klugman's undoubted energy.

In parallel with these developments, Froman assured the council that the children's welfare was well looked after. Changes in both staff and the physical environment would take place in the near future he said (9/6/1959). An important announcement was made at this meeting, which would, briefly, allow the boarders to experience an entirely different, happier and more constructive managerial approach. Abner Weiss, "a man of ability", had been appointed as acting housemaster.



Rabbi Professor Abner Weiss

Abner Weiss, who was about 21 years old at this time, was familiar to many of the boarders, having assisted as a football coach at the primary school.

A protégé of Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz), he would go on to a stellar career as a rabbi, scholar, communal leader, and professor in both South Africa and the United States. From the outset, he brought charisma, enthusiasm, respect and the energy of a youth leader. The boarders were

drawn to and connected with him. I remember an evening in which he led us in song at the edge of the small playing field, teaching us the songs of the youth movements' joyous repertoire. Heilbrunn describes his, alas too short, tenure: "He was responsible for certain innovations. He encouraged the wearing of *tzitzit* (ritual fringes) and introduced the Singer Siddur with its translation as a replacement for the Shilo large print educational *siddurim* (prayer books) we had been using up to then." He continues ".....perhaps because of jealousy or on an ideological basis, upon Rabbi Zaltsman's (sic) return, he treated the new *siddur* with scorn and hastily set about reasserting his authority. I do recall that (his) reactionary response was not well received by the boarders."^[xii]

That there was appreciation for Abner Weiss's approach and persona was expressed in a letter to the *Zionist Record* (11 June 1959) by two of the older girl boarders and referring to a Yom Ha'atzmaut ceremony at the hostel: "After the candle lighting, a story was told by Mr Weiss. It made a deep impression on the 70 young listeners."

"Close the hostel!" say the committee.

However, reality intruded. A meeting was held on 28 July 1959 at which a broad- ranging report on the finances of the Board of Education was discussed. The campaigns for the UCF, Zionist Federation and Board of Education were analyzed in terms of their overlapping with each other, and of the possibility of sharing resources. It was in this report that the somewhat astounding recommendation was made that Herber House *be closed at the end of the year!* (my emphasis) At the same time it was recommended that the money set aside by the UCF for hostels be allocated to the Board for the erection of a modern hostel in Linksfield.

Naturally, Mr Froman opposed this view, believing that the hostel should remain open until a new one was built. Familiar with the *platteland*,^[xiii] the hostel resonated with him in particular. The number of boarders had fallen to forty-four, and the present facilities were adequate to provide for this reduced number, he argued: "The main thing was that they lived in a Jewish home and were brought up as Jews." Astoundingly Louis Sachs in particular, supported by Mr Kretzmer, stressed that "it was not the function of the Board to provide a home for country children, and that the commission was quite definite on this point." How ironic then, that when the new hostel would eventually be completed in 1966, it would be named Sachs House!

Entering the fray was Rabbi Rabinowitz, supported by Mr Peck. Imagine the authoritative, booming voice of the Chief Rabbi, when he offered the

contrary view, oft stated though it might have been! “The hostel,” he said, “was an important institution which provided a Jewish upbringing for country children even though some of them did not attend the King David School. Had the hostel not existed, the majority of its boarders would have been educated in convents,” he said dramatically.

Imperturbably, the clock ticked down, unruffled by all the background noise. Six and a half years to go.....

The Kuper Commission 1960-1

At its 1960 conference, the SABJE appointed a commission to consider ways and means of setting its financial position on a sounder footing.^[xiv] It was chaired by the Honorable Mr Justice S.M. Kuper. From 19 December 1960, it would hold 23 investigative meetings.^[xv] Its report “recommended that Herber House be closed as the building was no longer suitable and it was being run at a serious deficit. *A large efficiently-run hostel was not only educationally desirable but would affect considerable savings.* The commission noted that “the provision of Hebrew education for children throughout the country is more urgent and a greater priority” than youth and student work.^[xvi] Kuper reported on the parlous state of finances of Herber House. Thus for example, the grant required for the running of the hostel was £698, for October.^[xvii]



Mr Justice Simon Kuper

Ring in the changes: Part one

As if to amplify the findings and concerns of the Kuper Commission, the number of boarders began a downward slide. In particular, the number of girls over fifteen declined considerably. The hostel’s restrictions were especially limiting to young ladies, and boarding in private homes became a better option. While numbers dwindled, mirroring a decline in the number of Jews in the rural areas, there was still much vibrancy in the smaller communities, and sometimes even development: the Leslie and Districts Hebrew Congregation midway between Springs and Bethal consecrated their communal hall and synagogue only in 1963. The pool from which a hostel could draw boarders was still of considerable size. It should have been enough to sustain the numbers. By comparison, the new hostel, opened in 1966, would at its height comprise 130 to 150 children.^[xviii]

Rationalization was needed and in 1961-2,[xix] the amalgamation of the various “campuses” at Herber House came about. Boarders were moved into the central old castle, that dank and dreary place once called “Ellis’s folly”.[xx] The result was large dormitories with a very mixed age grouping.[xxi] Certainly this reduced running costs. The annex in particular was shoddy and required maintenance and staffing.

Messrs Bondezio and Erlank both rode off into the sunset, taking their canes with them. Despite their threatening and authoritarian mien, they were not taken too seriously by the boys, and had very little direction over the girls. During this time, Rabbi Saltzman also left, as did his capable but non-empathetic wife. A succession of short-term replacements followed. Around 1962 Con Pakter, former headmaster of the Jewish Government School, became housemaster, but did not live on the premises. Absence made the boarders’ hearts grow fonder! Pakter brought with him a most unsuitable assistant, also from the Jewish Government School. Haughty and distant of demeanor, his extensive use of pungent cosmetics gave his presence away, so surprise was not a weapon in his armory! He was generally loathed, but the boarders trod warily around him. Heilbrunn describes this period succinctly: “[Pakter] tried to organize and set it up on a more systematic and rational basis. This was a singular failure as he didn’t take proper account of the ‘feral’ culture which pervaded the place”.[xxii]

Ring in the changes: Part two

Pakter’s departure brought to an end those dismal days of his stewardship at Herber House. The constant refrain by the committee over the years was the absence of any really able persons to take charge. The many complaints, the head butting, the disagreements and the pure frustration with the housemaster and Mrs Dubin over the years of their respective offices had had the committee trapped. They were stuck with the staff, and believed there were no able replacements available anywhere. They should have looked harder.

After Pakter, there followed a succession of assistant supervisors: Mr Nel, Mr Land, Mrs Borowitz. Miss Milly Goldstein had for many years supervised the young children in addition to her housekeeping duties, and Mrs Lotzoff had supervised the kitchen. But then, along came Paul Kowarsky, around mid-1962. Heilbrunn describes his arrival: “When Con Pakter left, Paul Kowarsky, a young man of 19 was given the task of running Herber House. In spite of his tender years, Paul possessed the maturity, authority, wisdom and cool personality to make a go of it.”[xxiii] Heilbrunn recounts that Kowarsky, a *kippa*-wearing Bnei-Akivnik had been to a Yeshivah in Israel

and was possessed of a superb voice, particularly for *chazzanut*. He would grace the *bimahs* of many a synagogue in South Africa, and later in Canada. Adding to his “charming charismatic personality”^[xxiii] and his contemporary outlook, his appeal was heightened by the fact that he had matriculated at King David High School. Most of the high school boarders had seen the striking photograph of the First Fifteen Rugby Team of that year, the lads all clad in their blazers, their rugby jersey collars all raised to their very throats. Paul sat in the front row, next to the legendary Meneer Jorrie Jordaan, the school’s Afrikaans teacher and rugby coach. Paul could instantly relate to the boarders who attended the very day school he himself had left but a few years earlier.

In Heilbrunn’s words, Kowarsky “revitalized the *duvvening*”,^[xxiv] teaching the boarders new tunes to the services. On Saturday mornings, the boarders would often accompany him to the Beit Hamedrash Hagadol in Saratoga Avenue, Doornfontein, where he would lead the services. These outings were a great change from the usual Sabbath pattern. On these occasions, with Kowarsky on the *bimah*, the boys often had a riotous time at the congregation’s *brocha*.^[xxv] The walk back to Herber House was usually cheerful and instructive, with Paul always ready to engage the group on a variety of topics.

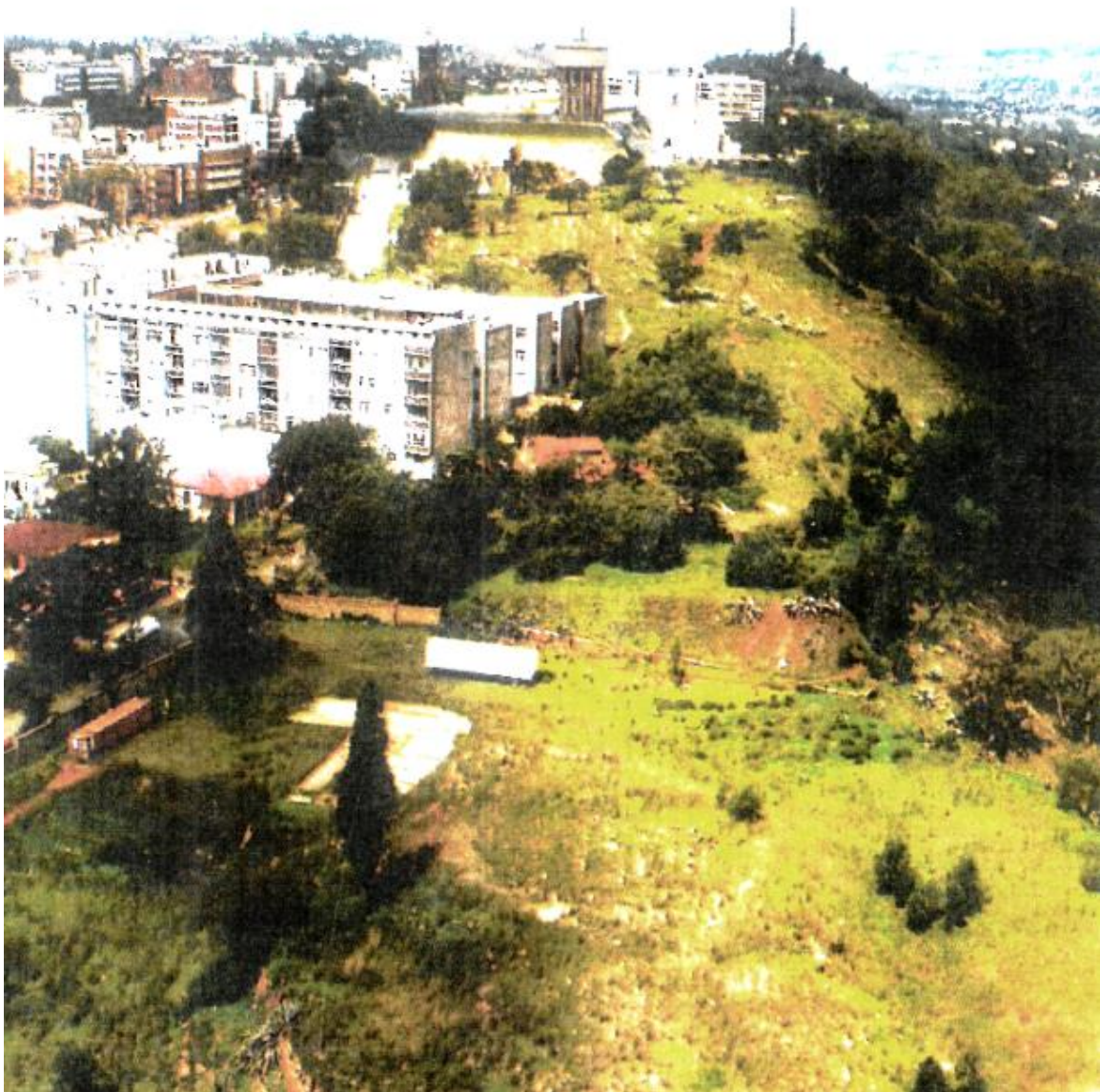
Kowarsky left in 1964, and was succeeded by the similarly youthful Hymie Berkowitz for a few months. The hostel was to be closed at year’s end. Those few boarders who had not yet matriculated spent the next school year boarding with private families. Some of these scholars would move into dormitories at the new hostel on the grounds of King David High School.

And the walls came tumbling down

The grand old Eastington Castle, built out of solid stone in the previous century, would meet its fate at the blows of the sledgehammer. The building and its grounds were sold by the SABJE to a consortium of developers for the sum of R82 000.^[xxvi] In anticipation of the putative new development, the old castle was torn down, razed to the ground, dismembered and disemboweled. A Johannesburg Heritage building had been flattened. The developers’ plans would gather dust. Nothing was ever erected on the site.

Among the ex-hostel dwellers, explanatory myths abounded for this building project’s failure. The ground was too hard for anything to be built on it, some said. Others preferred a gothic interpretation. The many ghosts that boarders believed inhabited the corners and crevices of the old castle,

who had lain dormant all these years, had been roused by the crash and bang of the demolition derby. They would protect their territory from these vile intruders and prevent any other edifice being erected on that hallowed ground. Across the new Harrow Road [xxvii] on a similar koppie, a gigantic circular building – called Ponte - would rear its head and from its great height, cast a leering glance at that vacant, naked erf. The potency of the ghosts was limited to the zone where the koppie met the road, there where during our schooldays we had built our forts, slid down the hill and secretly climbed up at dusk, having sneaked out to play a few games of “sticks” at the Hippodrome Billiards Club in Hillbrow’s Kotze Street.



Site of the former Herber House, Joe Slovo Drive, photographed from the landmark Ponte building.

Epilogue

It is now 55 years since the final closure of Herber House and 75 years since it first opened its doors. The total figure of children who passed through its portals is but an estimate, and in the minutes such numbers have varied from 700 to 1000. We can safely assume the latter figure. So many names, so many towns and villages.

There were certainly different epochs in the time of the hostel's existence. The hostel experience for boarders separated by even five years would render their experiences quite different from one another. The drive to modernity in post-World War II South Africa affected the socio-economic structure of rural and non-metropolitan Jewry in a positive way.

Chaim Gershater, former editor of the *Zionist Record*, alluded to this. At the height of the communal criticism levelled at the hostel in 1959, he wrote: "The days are gone when a parent could be satisfied with his child being accommodated in simple and modest cottages or bungalows." [xxviii] The reference in the minutes that requests permission for children to remain in the hostel over the school holidays is telling. Some simply had no permanent place to call home. A decade and a half later, children came from homes whose material condition had in general improved. Also, the coming-to-be of the day schools had a major impact on the lives of the hostel dwellers and their school and boarding experiences as compared with those of the first generation of lodgers.

In the years soon after its founding, Herber House doubled as hostel and school, offering mandatory Jewish studies after school. For a later generation of boarders the King David schools took care of that. Boarders now lived and learnt in both an encapsulated Jewish hostel and Jewish school environment. The impact of the supervisory staff too was striking. The combination of the Saltzman-Dubin partnership can safely be said to have been a harsh one. Dubin's generation of hostellers was a distance removed from the Kowarsky generation. Still, the similarities of hostel life across the years resulted in a culture quite familiar to all who dwelt there.

Currently, a loose Herber House association of previous boarders is still maintained. From time to time, a get-together takes place, especially when previous lodgers living elsewhere visit Johannesburg. We remain a group of like-minded men and women, always ready to talk and laugh about our common experiences.

More recently, at the initiative of Elliot Wolf, previous headmaster of the high school and now director of the King David Foundation, a framed commemorative plaque showing scenes of the castle was affixed to a wall in the media centre. A modest “Herber House Fund” has been established at the foundation in recognition of the day school education which especially the later generation of Herber House boarders have been privileged to have received.[xxix]



A Herber House reunion, 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. I wish to record my sincere thanks to Elliot Wolf for his support in this project and for granting me access to the minutes of the committee responsible for the establishment and running of Herber House.
2. I wish to thank both Mrs Naomi Musiker (archivist) and Eric Mathobo (librarian) at the Beyachad Community Centre in Johannesburg. These departments and their readiness to assist researchers are indeed treasures this community should greatly appreciate.
3. I have very many fond and enduring memories of the many hostel boarders with whom I shared seven school years. Philip (Rabbi) Heilbrunn, the lad from Sannieshof who would become spiritual head of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation in Melbourne, is gratefully acknowledged for his memoir about the hostel, from which I have freely borrowed.
4. I appreciate the help of the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation for the figures concerning the history of the sale of the Eastington Castle to the SABJE.
5. A special thanks is expressed to my wife Denise for proofreading this article. And to my family for having charitably listened to so many boarding school stories, ad nauseum.

APPENDIX: Boarding School Syndrome and Homesickness

“Boarding school syndrome is increasingly recognized as a specific syndrome by psychologists.” [xxx] BSS is a term used for the display of a cluster of emotions seen to have their genesis in the exposure, especially at an early age, to such forms of institutional living. Two major theorists in this field are the British psychologists Dr Joy Schaverien and Nick Duffel, whose writings are based on the counselling work done with members of the British public who had attended boarding schools in England.

Earlier, in the 1960s, John Bowlby had written about attachment theory, and novelists George Orwell and Roald Dahl about the bleak sides of boarding school and its human costs. Schaverien writes that when a child is brought up at home, the family adapts to accommodate it: growing up, she says, involves a constant negotiation between parents and children. But an institution cannot “rebuild itself around one child. Instead, the child must adapt to the system....this causes the child to shut itself off from the need of intimacy...” [xxxi] These symptoms have been found to have had an effect especially on boarders of a tender age. There seems to be a tendency too, to keep silent about emotional stress. A certain degree of stoicism may result. Inter alia too, the boarding school environment in general (but applicable also to the so called “feral culture” at Herber House) found expression in self-reliance, high moral values and endurance. And strong, bonded friendships.

Every boarder would have experienced the feeling generally referred to as “homesickness”. This term, while prevalent, is indeed a simplification of the depth of feeling it invokes. The archetype of homesickness is recorded in the scriptures. Those exiled from the land of Israel and who found themselves at the rivers of Babylon, wept when they remembered their home country.

Oliver Sacks, celebrated author, physician, neurologist and academic, in the first sentence of his book “On the move”, pithily describes the emotions of a child away from home: “When I was at boarding school, sent away during the war as a little boy, I had a sense of imprisonment and powerlessness, and I longed for movement and power...” [xxxii]

Crying and weeping, so well associated with “homesickness” is indicative of sadness, loneliness, anxiety, separation, longing, and depression. All the elements of boarding school life can contribute to this emotion: the strange environment, the absence of parents and caregivers, the harshness and

brusqueness of supervisory staff, the distance from home, from all that the word “home” implies. It implies the rhythm of the domesticity in the home, of a bedroom, the comfort of one’s own bed, of loved pets, of a stamp collection and dinky toys, the smells of food cooking in the kitchen, the grand puffy bed pillows. The child who was fobbed off as being “just homesick” was experiencing a much deeper range of emotions, and in all probability it was not seen for all its seriousness. Over time, these feelings would diminish as a result of the greater familiarity with the new environment and deeper friendship patterns. But particularly for the more vulnerable, the very sensitive, for the younger ones, these feelings might have eased but were largely just below the surface. The memory of that trauma is embedded in us all. That alone, I believe made us into more sensitive, more empathetic human beings.

ENDNOTES

[1] Dr Abt had “suggested that the children be allowed to play and conduct their games in the hostel grounds on Saturdays although it was not with the strictest compliance of the religious requirements”.

[2] Heilbrunn, op.cit. page 2

[3] Skivvys are, according to an online dictionary, servants who do menial tasks. In boarding school parlance, “you were a slave, a skivvy to a prefect...basically waited on him hand and foot”. Idle, E, *The Greedy Bastard Diary: A comic tour of America*, Hatchette, UK. (date unknown)

[4] A thorough and balanced menu for the hostel, detailing each meal for each day of the week, was approved by Dr Morris Witkin, MD, F.R.C.P. (Edin), (date unknown). Witkin published an article entitled ‘On the management of obesity’ in the *South African Medical Journal*, 19/5/1956.

[5] My thanks to Cedric Ginsberg, teacher of the Yiddish language at the Yiddish Academy in Johannesburg, for his detailed explanation of the term.

[6] Heilbrunn, op. cit. page 8-9

[7] “A fast dance-movement derived from Cape square-dancing in which couples link hands and spin around...” <http://dsae.co.za/entry/tickeydraai/e07171>

[8] Mordechai Harary, housemaster of Hararys Hostel (established 1950) together with his wife Yehudit, was born in Lodz, Poland in 1903, and came to South Africa in 1929. He was an agricultural engineer who had been trained in France. *South African Jewry*, 1976-7, op.cit.p 511.

[9] Heilbrunn, op.cit. p4

- [10] Ibid.
- [11] *Zionist Record*, 25/6/1959
- [12] Heilbrunn, op. cit. p9
- [13] He was a “member of the Country Communities Committee of SA Jewish Board of Deputies. President of Witbank Zionist Society, 1925-1936” in Feldberg, op.cit. p257.
- [14] Katz, op.cit p.434
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] Kuper Commission, op.cit. p6
- [17] Ibid
- [18] Klewansky, G, ‘Home away from home: memories of King David Hostel’, in *SA Jewish Report*, 13/12/2018.
- [19] Heilbrunn, op.cit. p 9
- [20] *Sunday Express*, 19/7/1964
- [22] Heilbrunn, op.cit. p10
- [23] Ibid.
- [24] Ibid.
- [25] Ibid
- [26] *Sunday Express*, op. cit.
- [27] Harrow Road, later re-named Joe Slovo Drive.
- [28] *Zionist Record*, 11 June, 1959
- [29] All of the many preceding pages could succinctly be summarized as follows: “This mansion stood above a rocky gorge and was prominent in the early views of Yeoville Ridge. Years later it became Herber House, a school for Jewish children, after which it fell into disrepair and ended as a pile of rubble - a far cry from its heyday in the early 1900’s”. Walker, op.cit. p15.
- [30] The title of Dr Joy Schaveriens’ study is “Boarding School Syndrome: The psychological Trauma of the ‘Privileged’ child”. .. quoted in “Boarding school syndrome: The symptoms and long-term psychological effects”, by Rosemary Lamaison, <https://www.ibblaw.co.uk/insights/blog/boarding-school-syndrome> p1
- [31] Ibid
- [32] Sacks, Oliver, *On the Move: A Life*, Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2015.p3.